For Generation Ace

Like our stories? Have something to share? Send in your bouquets and brickbats to absoluteindiadesk@gmail.com

facebook.com @absoluteindianews | twitter.com @absoluteindnews | instagram.com @absoluteindianews | Live TV Live Tv @absoluteindianews

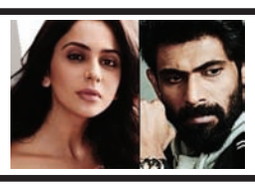
absolute india

VOL. 4, ISSUE 275, NEW DELHI | THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2021 I 5 I PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL

NATION >02

ED summons Rakul Preet, Rana Daggubati and 10 others...



HOLLYWOOD > 06

Iggy Azalea announces her own make-up line...

SPORTS > 07

England surge ahead after flawless display ...

COVID VAX FUELS 100-FOLD RISE IN ANTIBODIES IN LACTATING MOTHERS

When babies are born, their immune systems are underdeveloped, making it hard for them to fight infections on their own. They are also often too young to respond adequately to certain types of vaccines. During this vulnerable period, breast milk allows nursing mothers to provide infants with "passive immunity".

> Think of breast milk as a toolbox full of all the different tools that help prepare the infant for life. Vaccination adds another tool to the toolbox, one that has the potential to be especially good at preventing Covid-19 illness.
>
> *Josef Neu, Professor at the varsity's College of Medicine.*

NEW YORK | Agencies

The breast milk of lactating mothers vaccinated against Covid-19 contains a significant supply of antibodies that may help protect nursing infants from the illness, according to new research from the University of Florida. The study showed a robust antibody response in blood and breast milk after the second dose -- about a hundred-fold increase compared with levels before vaccination -- higher than those observed after natural infection with the virus.

The findings, published in journal Breastfeeding Medicine, strongly suggests that vaccines can help protect both mother and the baby, another compelling reason for pregnant or lactating women to get vaccinated. The study was conducted between December 2020 and March 2021, when the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines first became available to health care workers. For the study, researchers recruited 21 lactating health care workers who had never contracted Covid-19. The research team is continuing to explore how breast milk, containing Covid-19 antibodies gained through vaccination, protects babies who consume it.

Vaccinate all teachers before Teachers' Day: Govt

New Delhi: Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday said more than two crore additional COVID-19 vaccine doses are being made available to states this month and they have been asked to vaccinate all school teachers on priority before Teachers' Day on September 5. The Centre had allowed the reopening of schools as per the COVID-19 situation in October last year. With an improvement in the COVID-19 situation again, several states have begun reopening schools now even as concerns have been expressed over the staff and teachers not being completely vaccinated.

MP breaks its own record: 23 lakhs vaccinated in a day

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had announced a vaccination campaign "MP Vaccination Mahabhiyan-2" in the state a few days ago. He had said that this time the target will be on applying the second dose of the vaccine. In view of this, the campaign of vaccination started across the state on 25 and 26 August. On August 25, the state government set a target of administering the first and second doses of the vaccine to 20 lakh people. At the same time, on August 26, the target was set to apply only the second dose to 10 lakh people. The second phase of the vaccination campaign for 20 lakhs was also seen to be as successful as the first phase. On the very first day of the first campaign that started on June 21, about 17 lakh 42 thousand people were vaccinated. At the same time, 20 lakhs people got vaccinated on the first day in the data released till the time of going for print.

INDIA RECORDS SHARP SINGLE-DAY SURGE WITH 37,593 NEW COVID CASES

New Delhi: India on Wednesday witnessed a surge in new Covid cases after 37,593 fresh infections and 648 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, as per the Covid bulletin released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This is a sharp increase in the numbers as on Tuesday the country had registered 25,467 new Covid cases and 354 deaths in the last 24 hours.

New domestic travel guidelines issued for nationwide uniform protocol

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday issued revised guidelines for domestic travel across the nation during the ongoing Covid pandemic.

"The Union government has not recommended any restrictions on inter-state travel in the context of Covid-19. Further, states were allowed to develop their own protocols with regards to quarantine and isolation as per their assessment."

As per the new guidelines, passengers should self-monitor their health and travel only when they have no symptoms related to Covid-19. All passengers shall follow Covid appropriate behaviour at all times which includes use of mask, face cover, hand hygiene and physical distancing of six feet, as far as feasible.The mask or face covers must be worn properly to cover nose and mouth, while touching the front portion of mask/face covers, is to be avoided. All passengers will have to download Arogya Setu app on their mobile devices. If any passengers develop fever during travel, they will have to report this to cabin crew/TTE/bus conductor.If any passenger develops symptoms after reaching their final destination, they shall inform the District Surveillance Officer or the state or national call centre.

MP schools to reopen in September for Classes 1 to 8

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Now preparations are being made to open primary and middle schools in Madhya Pradesh soon. Classes from class I to VIII can open from the second week of September. School Education Minister Inder Singh Parmar said that the cases of corona are continuously decreasing in Madhya Pradesh. Similarly, if the decreasing figures of Corona keep coming till the end of August, then from the second week of September, classes from class I to VIII will start. The arrangements for reaching the school will be different for the students of classes I to V. For the students of classes VI to VIII, the system of reaching the school will be completely different. Preparations are being made to organize classes for students from class I to V, one to two days a week. Students will reach the classes with 50 percent capacity. If there are 40 students in a class, then on the 1st day 20 and on the second day 20 children will be called to school. Parental consent will be made mandatory to reach the school. Students will not be admitted to the schools without the consent of the parents.Primary and middle schools across the state are closed for one and a half years in Madhya Pradesh. School Education Minister said that even after the opening of schools, online classes will continue to be operational.

Madras HC disallows 10% EWS quota in medical/dental seats

Team Absolute | Chennai

The Madras High Court on Wednesday struck down 10 per cent reservation for the economically weaker sections (EWS) for admission to medical and dental seats in All India Quota (AIQ) seats surrendered by the Tamil Nadu government, as this breaches the 50 per cent cap set by the Supreme Court.

A bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice P.D. Audikesavalu said: "EWS quota is impermissible till the same is approved by the Supreme Court of India."

The court, however, said that the 27 per cent reservation notified by the Union government for OBCs in AIQ seats surrendered by Tamil Nadu government for admission to medical and dental courses is possible, and this need not provide the 50 per cent reservation as followed in the state.

It also dropped a contempt of court moved by the state's ruling DMK against the Central government for failing to implement the reservation in the current academic year. The party also wanted the court to direct the Central government to provide 50 per cent reservation for OBCs in the AIQ seats as per the state policy and not the 27 per cent that is being followed by the Central government.

The Union government, contesting the prayer of the DMK, said that the reservation for SC/ST communities have been provided in the AIQ seats on the basis of the Central government Act. If state reservation was to be followed in the AIQ for OBCs, it would lead to a different scenario.

'NOTHING WILL BE SOLD OFF': SITHARAMAN

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rebutting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the National Monetisation Pipeline, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said that the government will not give away ownership of assets under the asset monetisation plan and they will be mandatorily handed back to the government.Addressing the media in Mumbai on Wednesday, Sitharaman hit out at the opposition citing monetisation processes undertaken under by the Congress-led UPA government.

Citing the example of the New Delhi Railway Station, she took a barb on the Congress and said: "Who called the RFP (request for proposal) on it? Is it owned by 'Jijaji' now!"

"We are not selling off, there will be a strict handing back," she said.

A day after the government unveiled the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) worth Rs 6 lakh crore, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of bringing the process of selling the "crown jewel" assets built by his party in last 70 years.

IAF MIG-21 CRASHES IN BARMER, PILOT EJECTS SAFELY

Jaipur: A MiG-21 fighter jet, on a training sortie, crashed near a village in Rajasthan's Barmer district on Wednesday evening but the pilot managed to eject safely, the Indian Air Force said. The IAF, in a tweet, said: "At around 1730 hrs today, an IAF MiG-21 Bison aircraft airborne for a training sortie in the western sector, experienced a technical malfunction after take off. The pilot ejected safely. "A Court of Inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the cause",it said.As per the information, the IAF plane came crashing down near Matasar Bhoortiya village, leaving the impact spot and the area around it devastated. The villagers, as well as a police team, rushed to the spot to offer help.

EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN AFGHANISTAN WAS ANTICIPATED: GEN RAWAT

New Delhi: Everything that has happened in Afghanistan was something that had been anticipated but the timeline had changed, India's Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a seminar co-chaired by Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral John C. Aquilino, he noted that from the Indian perspective, "we were anticipating that Taliban would take over the Afghanistan". "We were concerned about how the terrorist activities from Afghanistan could spill over to India ... our contingency planning has been ongoing and we are prepared for that. The timeline has certainly surprised us," General Rawat said. He, however, pointed out that Taliban is same as it was 20 years ago. "It is the same Taliban with different partners," he said.Earlier in the day, General Rawat and Admiral Aquilino held a meeting in New Delhi over the prevailing crisis in Afghanistan.

CHINA IN TALKS WITH TALIBAN TO EXPAND CPEC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

At a time when world leaders are still wary of diplomatic dealings with Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, China has established its first diplomatic contact with the militant group, aimed at pushing forward its ambitious project -- the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) -- to Kabul.Sources said that in a bid to push the CPEC, China is exploring opportunities to exploit Pakistan to enter the war-torn country.

Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan, Wang Yu, met Abdul Salam Hanafi, the deputy head of the Taliban political office in Qatar, in Kabul and had unimpeded and effective communication and consultation, sources said.

Talking about the meeting, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in a media briefing in Beijing, "China respects the Afghan people's independent decision on their own future and destiny, and supports the implementation of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned principle."

He also said that China will develop good, neighbourly relations of friendship and cooperation with Afghanistan and play a constructive role in the peace and reconstruction of the country. Sources said the Chinese are in talks with the Taliban and has again proposed the construction of the Peshawar-Kabul road.

India to soon launch 'Mission' for improving air quality

- INDIA IS CONSIDERED AS THE SECOND MOST POLLUTED COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WITH REGARD TO AIR POLLUTION. SOME OF THE MOST POLLUTED CITIES ARE IN INDIA.
- DOMESTIC FIREWOOD BURNING, CONSTRUCTION DUST AND THAT FROM ROADS, OPEN FIELDS, AGRI-WASTE BURNING, INDUSTRIAL BURNING OF COAL AND OTHER FOSSIL FUELS, THERMAL POWER PLANTS, BRICK KILNS, VEHICULAR EMISSIONS AND DIESEL-POWERED GENERATOR SETS ARE SOME OF THE PROMINENT SOURCES OF AIR POLLUTION.

Nivedita Khandekar | New Delhi

With the aim at tackling the pan-India problem of air pollution, India is set to announce a 'Mission' for air quality management soon.

In all likelihood, the announcement would be made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This will replace the existing National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

A top government official told correspondent: "The countours are being worked out, modalities are being set."

He, however, refused to put a date for the announcement. It may or may not be ahead of the annual global climate change meeg to be held at Glasgow in November this year.

The Centre had launched the NCAP in January 2019 as a long-term, time-bound, national level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner. It had targetted to achieve 20 to 30 per cent reduction in Particulate Matter concentrations by 2024, keeping 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration. There are 132 non-attainment cities under NCAP programme.

NO REASON...': SC CONCERNED OVER DELAY IN PROSECUTING CASES AGAINST MPS/MLAS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed concern over the inordinate delay by central agencies, the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate (ED), in completing investigations, while hearing a plea to fast-track criminal cases against sitting and former MPs /MLAs.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to have a discussion with the Directors of the CBI and the ED to find out if they require additional manpower to complete investigation in a time-bound manner.

"We are sorry to say that the report is inconclusive... there is no reason for not filing charge sheet for 10-15 years, and also for not filing anything," the Chief Justice, while citing the report filed by amicus curiae on status of pending cases against MPs/MLAs by the CBI and the ED.

The bench, also comprising Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant pointed out that in ED cases, properties worth crores are attached, but no chargesheet is filed. "Simply attaching the property does not serve the purpose," it noted.Senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, amicus curaie in the matter, cited a 2013 case registered under the NDPS Act in which charges were framed in 2017 and is pending before Special Judge, NDPS FTC, Manipur. "The expected time for completion of the trial has been stated to be 2030," said the amicus.The bench expressed shock at the projection of the completion of trial.

"Do so something, don't keep the sword hanging on somebody's head," the CJI told Mehta, adding that the trial should be completed, and if somebody is guilty, he should be punished.Hansaria submitted before the court that data of pending criminal cases against MPs and MLAs is shocking and disturbing and emphasised on expediting the trial proceedings.CJI Ramana also drew a parallel between the problems faced by the judiciary and probe agencies like the CBI or the ED. "Just like us, probe agencies are suffering from lack of manpower, infrastructure and everybody wants the CBI to investigate their matter. "We don't want to say anything about these agencies because we don't want to demoralise them, they are overburdened. Same with judges."According to the amicus report, 51 MPs and 71 MLAs/MLCs are accused in cases arising out of offences under Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, while a total of 121 CBI cases against MPs/MLAs are pending before court.

Citing the report, the CJI said: "Cases range from 8 to 10 years... 58 out of them are punishable with death or life imprisonment. The oldest case is from 2000. 37 cases of CBI are still under investigation."Mehta submitted that in many ED cases, response from foreign countries is often required. He added that Letters Rogatories are sent to various foreign countries seeking information. "Some send response early. Some late", he added, citing the cause for delay in investigation.

He suggested that the court may set an outer limit for trial to end.

To this, the Chief Justice responded: "It is easy for us to say expedite trial and all... but where are the judges?"

After hearing detailed arguments in the matter, he said the court will pass order.

Hansaria, appointed amicus curiae in a 2016 petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay seeking direction to fast-tracking of criminal trials against sitting and former MPs/MLAs, has filed a report in the

CBI files charge sheet against 18 in Rs 209 cr bank fraud case

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday said that it has filed charge sheet against 18 people including a Chartered Accountant and several others in connection with Rs 209 crore bank fraud case.

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday said that it has filed charge sheet against 18 people including a Chartered Accountant and several others in connection with Rs 209 crore bank fraud case. A CBI spokesperson here said that the agency has filed charge sheet against 18 persons, Adarsh Manchanda, the then AGM, Syndicate Bank, Mahesh Gupta, the then Manager, Syndicate Bank, Bharat Bomb, a Chartered Accountant, private persons Pavitra Kothari, Anoop Bartaria, Kamal Sharma, Mahender Meghwal, Ravi Prakash Sharma, Pragati Sharma, Dilip Kumawat, Kamal Atri, Satish Khandelwal, Gaurav Dhanwal, Vikram Jain, Daulat Raj Kothari, JLN Metal House through its partners, Riddima Infratech LLP through its partners and Samriddhi Siddhi Builders and Developers Pvt Ltd through its Directors.

The official said that the agency filed a charge sheet before a court in Rajasthan's Jaipur. The CBI had registered a case on March 23, 2017 on a complaint from Syndicate Bank against six private persons including the Chartered Accountant, and several others.In the complaint it was alleged that 118 loan accounts were sanctioned and disbursed by three branches of Syndicate Bank.

Teachers' suicide bid in Bengal: Condition of 3 still critical

Kolkata | Agencies

A Day after five contract teachers of a primary school in West Bengal attempted suicide by consuming poison in front of the state education department at the Bikash Bhavan in Salt Lake near here, the condition of three of them still remains critical.

In a shocking incident, five contract teachers of Sishu Siksha Kendra -- all women -- tried to commit suicide on Tuesday in protest against their transfer to North Bengal, which is far off from their homes. They were first rushed to the Bidhannagar Sub-Divisional Hospital. After the condition of Shikha Das and Jotsna Tudu deteriorated on Tuesday, they were shifted to the NRS Hospital. The remaining three teachers -- Putul Jana Mandal, Chaki Das Hajra and Anima Nath -- were shifted to the RG Kar Hospital. Police personnel have been posted outside the hospitals and no one is being allowed to meet the sick teachers.

Student gang-raped, boyfriend thrashed in Mysuru

Bengaluru | Agencies

A student in Karnataka's Mysuru city was gang-raped and her boyfriend was thrashed on Tuesday night. According to reports, the survivor is a student of a private college in Mysuru. Even though the incident had taken place on Tuesday, a case was registered on Wednesday.

The FIR mentioned that a group of men surrounded the couple and asked for money while they were returning from Chamundi Hills around 7.30pm. When they refused to pay, two of them allegedly raped the woman while the others thrashed the boyfriend.

Sources said the accused are still missing as the couple recovers in a local hospital.

Home minister Sri Araga Jnanendra informed that a special investigation team has been formed to nab the culprits, who were involved in the rape on Tuesday night.

The Mysuru police commissioner, Dr Chandragupta, visited the spot and formed multiple teams to probe the case. Reacting to the incident, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai told reporters in Delhi that he has directed the Director General of Police Praveen Sood to initiate steps to nab the culprits.

"Based on the statement, a case has been registered. I have directed the DGP that whoever has perpetrated it, should be identified and stringent action should be taken against them," Bommai said.

Araga Jnanendra, home minister of Karnataka said: "An FIR has been registered and our officials have been sent to Mysuru from Bengaluru. I am also going to Mysuru tomorrow. This is a very unfortunate incident. Two students visited the forest near the helipad yesterday evening at around 7:30pm. A group of miscreants committed the crime after following them."

ED summons Rakul Preet, Rana Daggubati and 10 others in 4-yr-old drugs case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned 12 Tollywood actors and directors, including Rakul Preet Singh, Rana Daggubati and Ravi Teja, in connection with a four-year-old drugs case.

An ED official confirmed that the financial probe agency has summoned Rakul Preet, Daggubati, Teja, Puri Jagannadh, Charmme Kaur and Mumaith Khan, among others, for questioning on separate dates.

The official said that the agency has asked Jagannadh to appear before it on August 31, Rakul Preet has been asked to join the probe on September 6, while Daggubati and Teja have been asked to appear before the agency on September 8 and 9, respectively. The official said that the agency had taken over the probe on the basis of a case registered in Telangana in 2017 in connection with a high-end drugs racket. The Telangana SIT had arrested a South African national in August 2017 for allegedly supplying cocaine from Mumbai to Hyderabad.

6 DEAD, 3 INJURED IN UP AFTER TRUCK HITS TEMPO

Badaun: Six people, including two women and a child, died and three others were injured on Wednesday when their tempo was hit by a truck in Kunwargaon area in Uttar Pradesh's Badaun district, police said.

The deceased have been identified as Munesh (45), Murari (38), Bundi (54), Premlata (55), Sapna (24) and Kavya (4), ASP Praveen Singh Chauhan said. The incident took place near Lalai village when the tempo carrying the victims fell into a roadside ditch after being hit by the truck, he said. The officer said the tempo was overloaded due to which its passengers could not escape. The bodies have been sent for postmortem, he said. No arrests have so far been made in this connection, the ASP said, adding that the matter is being probed.

Mamata criticises Centre's asset monetisation policy

Kolkata | Agencies

A couple of days after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the National Monetisation pipeline (NMP), listing out the government's infrastructure assets to be sold over the next four years, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday came down heavily on the Narendra Modi-led Central government, alleging that it is a ploy to sell government assets and create a reserve funds for fighting elections. "I strongly condemn this. Those who cannot do anything are selling railway stations, ports, PSUs, insurance firms. The Centre is trying to sell all these to create a reserve fund for fighting polls, as they only want to be in power. I do not support this. First let them save the country and then they should come to Bengal," Banerjee said at a press conference at the state secretariat Nabanna on Wednesday.

Alleging that the BJP at the Centre is planning to sell everything, including road and railway assets, airports etc., the Chief Minister said, "We are shocked. I hope that the entire country will rise in protest against this. They want to sell everything in the country. They are not Modi's assets. Modi cannot sell the country's assets as they are public properties. This is not BJP's party affair; it is the country's affair. The BJP should be ashamed. No one has given them the right to sell our nation's assets."

New chiefs of BSF, ITBP appointed

New Delhi: IPS officers Pankaj Kumar Singh and Sanjay Arora were on Wednesday appointed the new Directors General of the Border Security Force and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), respectively.

"The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has approved the proposal of the Ministry of the Home Affairs for appointments of Pankaj Kumar Singh, IPS (RJ:88) presently Special DG, BSF as Director General, Border Security Force from the date of joining the post and up to December 31, 2022, that is day of his superannuation or till further orders, whichever the earlier. The appointment will take effect after August 31, 2021.

"The appointment of Sanjay Arora, IPS (TN:88), presently special DG, CRPF, as Director General Indo-Tibetan Border Police vice S.S. Deswal, IPS, (HY:84) due for superannuation on August 31, 2021, from the date of joining the post and up to July 31, 2025, the date for his superannuation or till further orders," an official notification said.

Deswal has been holding the additional charge as DG, BSF following the appointment of then BSF Chief Rakesh Asthana as Delhi Police Commissioner on July 27 this year.

In an another notification, the government, on the proposal of the Union Home Ministry, appointed IPS officer Balaji Srivastava, of Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territory cadre as Director General of Bureau of Police Research and Development(BPR&D) from the date of his joining till his superannuation on March 31, 2024 or till next orders.

Rainfall likely to stay subdued in NW India, enhanced in NE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Even as rainfall remains subdued in northwest India, widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy to very heavy falls is very likely to continue over the northeast, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, and Sikkim till August 27 and will reduce thereafter with isolated heavy rainfall over the region, the IMD said. Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy to very heavy falls is very likely to continue over Uttarakhand till August 29 and isolated heavy falls are likely over Bihar and east Uttar Pradesh till August 27, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a release on Wednesday.

There would be scattered to fairly widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy falls over Tamil Nadu during next 5 days and over Kerala and Mahe between August 27 and 29.

Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning is likely over east India during next two days, while subdued rainfall activity is likely to continue over northwest, central India, and the west coast during next four days, the IMD said.

Elderly man dies after jumping into wife's funeral pyre in Odisha

Nilamani Sabar, an elderly man from Odisha's Kalahandi district, died after jumping into the funeral pyre of his wife, the police said on Wednesday.

Bhubaneswar: The socking incident occured at Sialjodi village under the Golamunda block of Kalahandi district.

According to the locals, Raibari Sabar (60), the wife of Nilamani Sabar aged around 70 years, died of cardiac arrest on Tuesday. Raibari's body was taken to the local crematorium for last rites, which were performed in the presence of the deceased person's family members and relatives.When those present for the cremation went to take bath at a nearby pond, Nilamani jumped into the funeral pyre. Despite attempts made by the people present there, Nilamani succumbed to burn injuries, said Damba Parija, an officer from the Kegaon police station.

An unnatural death case has been registered in this connection, he added.

Local sarpanch Danara Bag said, "Both were staying in a small house. The couple loved each other so much that Nilamani couldn't bear the loss which prompted him to take the extreme step. The couple is survived by four children."

Corona is a polymorphic disease: Vaccination is the only shield

SAVE LIVES BY GETTING VACCINES: CHIEF MINISTER

IF THE SECOND DOSE OF VACCINATION IS NOT ADMINISTERED, THE FIRST WILL BE USELESS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that door-to-door search campaign will be launched for vaccination. We all have the responsibility of finding, motivating and vaccinating the people who have not got the vaccination done. Vaccination is the dose of life. This is a shield to avoid corona infection. Therefore, all of us should get the vaccination done and also motivate the people of our respective areas for vaccination. This activity should be ensured in every village and ward of the state. All public representatives, members of Crisis Management Committee, administration staff, voluntary organizations, religious, social, political, government-non-government organizations and aware citizens should fulfil this responsibility with utmost seriousness.

Chouhan launched the state-wide mega vaccination campaign-II by reaching the Jain temple at Jawahar Chowk, Bhopal.

Chouhan was given a batch of "Iam Fully Vaccinated" by Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang and Minister Bhupendra Singh. In the program, Chief Minister made everyone take an oath to make the vaccination campaign a grand success.

Chouhan said that corona is a polymorphic disease, it is not certain when it will increase, so continuous precaution and vigilance is a Must. Cases are increasing in countries like America and Britain. Similar is the situation of Kerala in the country. We cannot bear the suffering of Corona again. Hence protection is necessary. The opinion of scientists and doctors is that prevention of corona is possible only through vaccination and corona precautionary behavior.

Chouhan said that due to the control of Corona, gradually people are getting rest, but this is not right. We have to do our duty to protect from Corona. If the second dose is not administered after the first dose, then the dose will become useless. Therefore, for the awareness among the people, the second phase of the vaccination campaign has been started. Our target is that by September 21, all the eligible people of the state should get the first dose of the vaccine and by December 21, all the eligible people should get the second dose of the vaccine.

Chouhan while thanking Prime Minister Modi said that on the basis of 11 lakh doses approved by the Government of India, the second Maha Abhiyan is being conducted in the state. There is no shortage of dosage in the state now, but there is a lack of awareness, which we have to remove.

Chouhan visited the exhibition focused on the ongoing vaccination campaign in the capital Bhopal. The role and public cooperation of public representatives, social workers, administrative officers and voluntary organizations in vaccination were displayed in the exhibition.

Chouhan visited the mobile vaccination van started under the name of Kovid Tika Express. These vans will be operated by the district administration and the Care India organization for the convenience of the differently-abled and elderly.

Sarang put a double tick seal after both the doses of Corona vaccine to Chouhan. Chief Minister put double tick seals on eligible participants who participated in the vaccination campaign with the aim of motivating the general public to get both the doses of vaccination. Chouhan also took a photograph at the selfie point in the campus. In order to motivate the people for vaccination, Chief Minister has instructed to make selfie points at the vaccination centers with the aim of inculcating the feeling of "Maine Tika Lagwaya - Aap Bhi Lagwayen" among the people. Ministers present with Chouhan also took selfies.

Congress workers demanding easing of Covid curbs lathi-charged in Indore

Team Absolute | Indore

The Indore police on Wednesday lathi-charged protesting Congress workers who were demanding permission for political rallies and lifting of the ban on public celebrations of the upcoming Ganesh festival. When the Congress workers tried to enter the collector's office while taking out a silent rally from Rajwada, Indore, the police used force on them.

The Madhya Pradesh government has banned public rallies, religious and political events due to the pandemic. Only a limited number of people are allowed to participate in these events.

Protesting against this, Congress workers gathered at the Rajwada and staged demonstrations against the government. The protesters were carrying placards with slogans against the administration and the government. Many Congress workers were seen wearing saffron clothes. These protesters who tried to go to the collector's office from Rajwada, were stopped by the police, who first used water cannons on them and when the workers did not stop, they used force.

Condemning the police action, former Chief Minister and State President of the Congress, Kamal Nath said, "In Indore, free hand to the BJP's 'Jan Ashirvad Yatra', hundreds of stages in the middle of the roads, welcome gates, hours of jam on the main roads, all the Covid safety rules were blown away, and today, when thousands of Congressmen in Indore demanding permission to celebrate major religious festivals like Ganesh Utsav, Dol Gyaras, Anant Chaturdashi, Navratri, Eid, Dussehra, Deepawali, Guru Nanak Jayanti, Christmas, etc, they were lathi charged, water cannoned to suppress them."

Immense enthusiasm for vaccination seen in the first hour itself

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the first day of the Vaccination Mega Campaign-2, which began in the state from today, there was immense enthusiasm in the public towards vaccination in the early hours itself. Till 10 am, 92 thousand 232 citizens got vaccinated. Long queues started forming from early morning at the vaccination centres set up for the vaccine. Some got the first dose of the vaccine and some others got the second dose and got protection from corona infection. The people who got the vaccine took selfies by getting the stamp of I Am Vaccinated and inspired people to get the vaccine.

On the call of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, corona volunteers, social workers and other motivators, by creating an atmosphere of awareness about the vaccination campaign in their respective areas from morning itself, inspired people to get the vaccine, as a result of which people are reaching at the centres with enthusiasm.

Sanskrit Week will be organised every year in schools: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the State Government is making every effort to make Sanskrit language common and known to the masses. The people and institutions who are working for Sanskrit will now be given protection and work will be done by the state government for the expansion of their efforts. It is only through Sanskrit that the accumulated knowledge of Indian culture can be passed on to the next generation. Sanskrit Week will be organised every year in all the schools of the state.

Chouhan was virtually addressing the concluding programme of Sanskrit Week from his residence today. As many as 2175 schools were connected with the virtual programme. Under the Sanskrit week, yoga activities and Sanskrit based competitions are being organised in all the schools of the state from August 18 in all 52 districts of the state.

Chouhan said that from the very beginning, our state has been revered as the best study centre of Sanskrit knowledge tradition. Ujjain and Omkareshwar have been centres of Sanskrit learning. That is why the first Jagadguru Krishna and the second Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya came to Ujjain and Omkareshwar respectively to receive education. Therefore, the responsibility of the state increases for the education and expansion of Sanskrit language. The state government will make every effort for the expansion of Sanskrit by connecting saints and institutions working for Sanskrit.

Chouhan said that Sanskrit is an ancient and great language. This is the basis of our culture, because all our texts are in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is also the mother of all languages. Vedas are not only knowledge but also a treasure trove of science, craft, skill, spirituality, which we cannot understand without Sanskrit. Many countries have done scientific study of Vedas and have also made achievements in the field of science.

Chouhan said that we are forgetting our tradition and culture under the influence of the West. In such a situation, organising Sanskrit Week will be helpful in making Sanskrit universal and introducing it to the next generation. It is essential for the continuation of our knowledge tradition. Chouhan said that Yoga Se Nirog Programme and Devarnya Yojana will prove helpful in connecting the coming generation with their culture and roots.

In the programme, the President of Maharishi Patanjali Sanskrit Sansthan Bharat Bairagi informed about the activities conducted by the institute. Area Organisation Secretary of Sanskrit Bharti, Pramod Pandit said that this is the first time that a programme focused on Sanskrit is being organised at the Chief Minister's residence.

CM TAKES STOCK OF ARRANGEMENT OF KATJU VACCINATION CENTRE

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan visited KN Katju Covid Vaccination Centre and inspected the arrangements there. In the Vaccination Mega Campaign-2, special arrangements have been made for the Divyangs and the elderly at the Katju Vaccination Centre. Here both Covaxin and Covishield vaccines are available. An observation room has also been set up at the centre. Chouhan also discussed with the people who came for vaccination including the staff of the vaccination centre. Chief Minister while motivating to get both the doses of the vaccine said that the cycle of protection from corona will be effective only when the person takes both the doses. Therefore, get both the doses yourself and also motivate your acquaintances to get both the doses within the time limit. Chouhan distributed certificates after vaccination to the people who came for vaccination and also put a double tick seal.

CM PLANTS NEEM SAPLING IN SMART GARDEN

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a Neem sapling in Smart Garden today. Chouhan plants a sapling every day in fulfilment of his resolve. Rich in antibiotic elements, Neem is known as the supreme medicine. Neem may be bitter in taste, but its benefits are like nectar. Neem is also very useful from environmental point of view.

Scindia's exit from State Congress ended groupism: Jaivardhan Singh

Team Absolute | BGwalior

Madhya Pradesh Congress leader Jaivardhan Singh on Wednesday said factionalism in the state unit of the party ended after the exit of Jyotiraditya Scindia, who joined the BJP last year and recently made a Union minister.

Singh, son of Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh, also claimed Scindia's entry into the BJP has led to the creation of three factions in the state BJP unit.

Scindia, a former MP from Guna, joined the BJP in March 2020.

After his exit, several MLAs also quit the party, resulting in the collapse of the then Congress government led by Kamal Nath.Scindia was made Civil Aviation Minister in the recent expansion of the Union cabinet."There was groupism in the Congress till Scindia was there. Now it has ended. But Scindia's entry in the BJP has led to the creation of three groups- 'Shivraj BJP', 'Maharaj BJP' and 'Naraz BJP', 'Jaivardhan Singh, a former minister, told reporters.

He was apparently referring to BJP leaders loyal to Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and those loyal to Scindia, whom his supporters address as "Maharaj" because of his royal background. The 'Naraz' dig apparently meant those leaders of BJP who are not happy with Scindia joining the saffron party.Jaivardhan Singh will visit various areas in the Gwalior and Chambal divisions which were hit by floods triggered by heavy rains earlier this month."Congress is now free of this disease of groupism in Madhya Pradesh," he claimed.He also criticised BJP leaders whose photos were printed on the bags meant for the distribution of free ration."When people of the region were facing hardships due to floods, members of the ruling party were celebrating 'anna utsav' even though this scheme was originally launched by the Congress-led UPA government," he said.

"One day these BJP leaders will get their photos printed on food grains as well," Jaivardhan Singh quipped.

Poacher Arrested With Tiger Bones,Deer Horns

Team Absolute | Seoni

A forest department team has arrested a man hailing from Maharashtra and seized tiger bones and deer horns from him in Seoni district, an official said on Wednesday.

Following a tip-off, a joint team of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and the forest department's Special Task Force (STF) arrested the alleged poacher from Khawasa village located on the borders of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra on late Tuesday night, Forest Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) SK Jauhri said.The team seized 8.9 kg of tiger bones and deer horns from the possession of the poacher, Balchand Barkade, a resident of Nagpur in adjoining Maharashtra, he said.

Jauhri said during interrogation, the 40-year-old man admitted he had earlier killed 3 to 4 tigers and sold their body parts.It is suspected that Barkade may be part of a gang of wildlife smugglers and poachers active in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, and a forest team is working on tracing his associates, he said.

The forest officer said Barkade is a habitual offender and cases of wildlife smuggling had been registered against him earlier too.

Khawasa is located on the MP-Maharashtra border and a large part of the Pench National Park is spread around the village.

NAAC evaluation must for quality

Universities should come forward to implement NEP: Governor

UNIVERSITIES MUST COOPERATE IN ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the universities of the state will have to come forward to implement the National Education Policy. As per the policy, special efforts should be made in the areas of making education employment oriented, skill promotion, partnership with industries and national and international academic partnership. He also stated the need for NAAC evaluation to ensure quality. It has also been emphasized that the government and private universities of the state should make efforts to be included among the best higher education institutions of the country.

The Governor was presiding over the 99th meeting of the University Coordination Committee held at Raj Bhavan on Wednesday. Principal Secretary to the Governor, Principal Secretary Higher Education, Law-Legal, Finance and vice-chancellors of government and private universities were present in the meeting. Patel said that universities should include social concerns in their responsibilities. By adopting some villages in the activities of the universities, the benefits of schemes of central and state governments should be made accessible to the beneficiaries. Work should be done on issues of cleanliness, women empowerment, agriculture, health check-up etc. He said that in the perspective of Atmanirbhar Bharat being run at the national level, the state government has started the Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh programme. The cooperation of universities is required in the fulfilment of its goals. He asked the universities to bring the education system back on track with new energy and create a better academic environment. He said the following the academic calendar is the biggest responsibility of the universities. He said that teachers have the responsibility of building the consciousness and character of our youth by their behaviour and conduct so that the future of India remains bright.

The Governor said that we have learnt a lot from the use of technology in education in the Corona period. It is such a mode in which teachers and students have to acquire better skills to ensure which good arrangements have to be made. He said that due to the variation in the provisions of the Acts of the universities, the entire working style becomes different. For maximum uniformity in the working style, the Acts of the universities should be reviewed, necessary improvements should also be made in them. Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav said that the results of united efforts in the field of higher education have started showing in the state. The system is ready to take off in a new ambience and attire. The state is rapidly approaching the national average in gross enrolment in higher education. He said that work is being done in the field of higher education in the state with a holistic vision. He told the universities to focus on economic management. He said that efforts should be made to enhance financial resources. He told the need for speedy recruitment of vacant posts and uniformity in the system of fees and penalties of universities.

EDITOR'S SPECS

BJP eying on OBC

The increasing focus of the opposition in Uttar Pradesh on caste census, the poll narrative in the state where elections are due early next year has started changing. From Hindutva and Ram temple, the spotlight is shifting to casteism. The BJP, sensing the change in narrative, will now be using Kalyan Singh's legacy to counter the opposition campaign. The party, according to sources, plans to project the departed leader as the 'tallest OBC leader who had the right mix of backward politics and Hindutva.' The BJP government in the state has already decided to name the Aligarh airport after Kalyan Singh and roads after him in half a dozen districts. The party is mulling a proposal to take out Kalyan Kalash Yatra with urns containing the late leader's ashes. The proposal is awaiting a final approval from the BJP and RSS leadership. The Yogi Adityanath government is also preparing to unveil various initiatives as a tribute to the former chief minister. Almost all parties are warming up to OBCs and the demand for caste census is a part of this game plan. The Samajwadi Party, till recently, has been the custodian of OBC votes but the BJP is now aiming to make a dent by playing the OBC card with Kalyan Singh, whose politics was a heady cocktail of caste and Hindutva. Scores of BJP leaders have already launched a major offensive against the Samajwadi Party over the absence of SP leaders in the final rites of Kalyan Singh. Kalyan Singh died on August 21 in Lucknow, following a prolonged illness. Kalyan Singh who belonged to the Lodh sub-caste of OBCs and the BJP used him to counter the 'Mandal' (caste) agitation with 'kamandal' (Hindutva) by taking up the issue of temple at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya in the early nineties.

AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE

Asad Mirza

The Talibans takeover of Afghanistan has once again put a big question mark on its future, but it has also offered a glimmer of hope for the redevelopment of this war-ravaged country utilising its natural resources.

The Taliban have once again captured the power in Afghanistan. In one of the swiftest operations the Taliban took control of all major cities including Kabul within a ten-days period. This feat has however, put them in a tight bind on whether to continue with their old traits or try to portray a new picture of the Taliban, which has moved along with the world in the last 20 years and one which is more pragmatic and tolerant and most of all which is politically savvy not violence prone.

A widely held belief is that the Taliban would like to be seen as more pragmatic and inclusive force rather than the one, which brutally ruled Afghanistan earlier. Whatsoever be the case, it would be reckoned by the group's attitudes towards jihadis and other militants present in Afghanistan, ethnic and religious minorities, women and governance.

Future Government

It has been a week since the Taliban captured the national capital but they are yet to announce any government and its structure. This has led to speculations that intense political activities are going on behind the scenes and the world is waiting with bated breath to know the outcome. In the meantime Taliban have tried to calm concerns about their rule by urging women to join a government that has yet to be formed, declaring an amnesty for people employed by the former government or US and other foreign forces. To assuage these feelings, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in May that the group, once in power, would write laws to ensure the participation of women in public life.

However, reports from Kabul indicate that the former President Hamid Karzai and former Minister of External Affairs Abdullah Abdullah are still present in the city. This leads credence to the fact that any future government might be based on Islamic foundations but it might be an amalgamation of Islamic and liberal democratic principles.

Karzai and Taliban's current supremo Haibatullah Akhundzade are relatives and belong to the Popalzai tribe, tracing their lineage to the Durrani clan. So in a possible scenario Haibatullah might lead the Islamic Council, wielding control and power, as in the past and Karzai might be named as the president or prime minister of the new government, in which Abdullah Abdullah might also be included. In addition, non-Taliban leaders like Hizb-i-Islami's Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and former deputy president Karim Khalili might also be included in the new setup.Further, we also have to take into consideration the rise of young blood amongst the Taliban ranks. Figures such as Mulla Yaqoob, son of former Taliban supremo Mulla Umar now leads its military branch and is credited with the swift capture of power in the country with less bloodshed. This young generation is tech and media savvy, many Taliban leaders now announce the latest developments on Twitter. Coupled with this the Taliban delegation, which took part in the Doha talks, has experienced exposure to the liberal views and they might be more amenable to a not strictly Islamic form of government. As far as the role of Taliban is concerned, they were accepted as an important political force when the former American president invited them to the Doha Talks, lending credence to them as a group, which needs to be engaged with for any feasible solution of the on-going war.

Afghanistan's mineral wealth

The Taliban's resurgence has once again brought renewed focus on Afghanistan's vast untapped mineral wealth and resources that could transform its economic prospects if developed judiciously. Some conspiracy theories circulated earlier, which claimed that behind the on-going military campaign in Afghanistan, the American experts were also exploring the mineral deposits in Afghanistan.

Lending credence to these theories, CNN on August 17 carried a story, which said that Afghanistan possesses mineral deposits worth nearly $1 trillion. Iron, copper and gold deposits are scattered across provinces. There are also rare earth minerals and, perhaps most importantly, what could be one of the world's biggest deposits of lithium - an essential but scarce component in rechargeable batteries and other technologies vital to tackling the climate crisis.

Said Mirzad, former head of the Afghanistan Geological Survey, told Science magazine in 2010 that if Afghanistan has a few years of calm, allowing the development of its mineral resources, it could become one of the richest countries in the region within a decade.Three countries, which have been wooing the Taliban based on this assessment, are Iran, China and India. All of them could provide the expertise, infrastructure and labour force for the further prospecting, mining and processing of these minerals.

Iran and China have been early starters in this regard. Iran has been hosting Taliban delegations to Teheran since last year and in late July 2021, before the recent developments, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with a delegation led by the head of the Afghan Taliban political committee Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Tianjin.

India on its part began engaging with the Taliban leaders in Doha since September 2020 when the intra-Afghan dialogue began even as New Delhi refused to spell out its policy clearly and said it continues to engage with "all stakeholders".

Afghan Psyche

Before commenting on the future of Afghanistan, we have to understand the geographic location, socio-cultural fabric and the internal forces, besides the Afghan psyche, all of which have always managed to play a key role in any political activity in the country.

The tribal Pashtun population of Afghanistan, which approximately is 42 per cent has always enjoyed political influence both at the local and national stage. The Pashtun by virtue of being the largest tribe in the south and east has always dominated the national politics of Afghanistan, since the time of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1722-72). Moreover, the central authority in Kabul has always governed the country through a loosely federal structure. Which means that the central law was more or less observed in major cities and some smaller cities, but at the district and village level the tribal writ was imposed with a heavy hand.

Added to this is the overall Afghan psyche, which has always remained fiercely independent and loyal to its tribal and clan ties besides being devout Muslims. To control them through a loose federal system remains the only wise choice, so as to let the tribal and clan ties continue and dominate the rural population but the major decisions are taken by the powers in the big cities.

This might be one of the reasons, which is forcing Taliban to evolve a government, which rules with an iron fist from the centre but at the village and district level the local tribes manage their affairs in their own style whilst participating in the development of the rural areas and the country as a whole.

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

international

G7 LEADERS AGREE IT IS MORAL DUTY TO HELP AFGHANS'

Brussels | Agencies

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that G7 leaders agreed that it was their collective "moral duty" to help the Afghan people amid the current situation in the war-torn country following the Taliban takeover."We all agreed that it is our moral duty to help the Afghan people and to provide as much support as possible as conditions allow," von der Leyen said at a press conference following a meeting of G7 leaders on Tuesday."To protect these most vulnerable, it is clearly a matter for global cooperation and it has to be dealt with as such from the start. These people should not fall into smugglers' hands, they need safe pathways," she added.

She said the Commission will propose to almost quadruple the humanitarian aid coming from the European Union (EU) budget, to "over 200 million euros ($236 million) for the year 2021. This will help meet the urgent needs of Afghans both in Afghanistan but also of course in the neighbouring host countries".

However, von der Leyen added that "the future development assistance has to be condition-based. It always is condition-based, linked to fundamental values, human rights, and of course women's rights."

The EU has set aside one billion euros for Afghanistan's development in the next seven years. But "the aid is frozen" until the bloc "has solid guarantees and credible actions on the ground that the conditions are being met", von der Leyen said.

Addressing the same press conference, Charles Michel, president of the European Council, called on the new Afghan authorities to allow free passage to all foreign and Afghan citizens who wish to get to the airport.

"We have also raised this issue with our American friends and partners on two particular aspects: first, the need to secure the airport as long as necessary to complete the operations; and second, a fair and equitable access to the airport, for all nationals entitled to evacuation," said Michel.

"Today it is too early to decide what kind of relations we will develop with the new Afghan authorities," he noted.

"We call for an inclusive political settlement and if we want to remain a positive influence for the Afghan people, especially in supporting their basic needs, we will have to deal with the new authorities."This will be subject to strict conditions, regarding the deeds and attitude of the new regime," he added.

In a joint statement issued after a virtual emergency meeting, the leaders of the US, the UK, Italy, France, Germany, Canada, and Japan called for "calm and restraint to ensure the safety and security of vulnerable Afghan and international citizens, and the prevention of a humanitarian crisis".

The G7 leaders also expressed "grave concern about the situation in Afghanistan".

"Our immediate priority is to ensure the safe evacuation of our citizens and those Afghans who have partnered with us and assisted our efforts over the past 20 years, and to ensure continuing safe passage out of Afghanistan. We will continue to coordinate closely on this."

Pak SC summons govt on harassment of journalists

Islamabad | Agencies

The Pakistan Supreme Court has asked three senior officials to appear before it on Thursday to hear the governments version on the rising incidents of harassment of journalists.

The three officials are: the Interior Secretary, the Federal Investigation Agency's Director General and the Islamabad police inspector general, Dawn news reported.

The court issued the directives in response to a four-page petition complaining that journalists in Pakistan were facing increasing acts of intimidation at the hands of security agencies.

The court regretted that the FIA appeared to have overstepped its mandate and undermined the nation's confidence in the judiciary.

A two-judge SC bench, consisting of Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, also issued notices to the secretaries of information and broadcasting; religious affairs and human rights ministries; as well as to the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE); All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS); the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA); Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ); and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra), asking them to state whether the allegations made in the application were correct or not.

The apex court took up the matter after Abdul Qayyum Siddiqui, a former President of the Press Association of the Supreme Court (PAS), drew its attention to the rising incidents of harassment of journalists.

According to the order, journalists were being harassed, intimidated, attacked and shot at.

"There are no consequences for the perpetrators and those who should be protecting journalists and ensuring freedom of the press are themselves involved."

Syria refutes US accusation of 2013 chemical attack

Damascus | Agencies

Syria's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday slammed the US State Department's recent statement accusing the Damascus government of carrying out a chemical attack in a former rebel-held area in 2013,

The Ministry dismissed the Department's statement as "baseless allegations... through which the US tried to distort facts and spread lies" about the alleged chemical attack in the Eastern Ghouta countryside of the capital Damascus, reports Xinhua news agency.The State Department made the accusation in a recent statement alleging that the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad used "nerve agent sarin" in the Ghouta district of Damascus to kill more than 1,400 people.The Foreign Ministry, in its response, said that the statement clearly reflects "the US continued hostile method against Syria which comes to cover its failure in Afghanistan and its support to terrorism that Syria encounters"."The government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms once again that it stands against the use of that kind of weapons in any place, at any time and under any circumstance and by any side as it is an issue that opposes Syria's principles and moral," said the Ministry.The attack, during the Syrian civil war, took place in the early hours of August 21, 2013, when opposition-controlled areas in Ghouta were struck by rockets containing the chemical agent sarin.

TALIBAN WON'T ALLOW AFGHANS TO LEAVE COUNTRY: SPOKESMAN

Kabul | Agencies

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that Afghan citizens will not be allowed to leave the country any more by the ongoing US evacuation process, while also warning that Washington should withdraw all troops and contractors before the August 31 deadline and no extension would be possible.Mujahid's remarks on Tuesday came as US President Joe Biden told G7 leaders that he aims to stick with his August 31 deadline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan as long as the Taliban does not disrupt ongoing evacuation operations or airport access.

Addressing a press conference here, Mujahid said that while foreign nationals could continue travelling to the airport, the huge crowds of Afghans that have gathered there in recent days should return home and would not face reprisals from the country's new rulers."The road, which goes to the airport, is blocked. Afghans cannot take that road to go to the airport, but foreign nationals are allowed to take that road to the airport," Mujahid said.

"We are not allowing the evacuation of Afghans anymore and we are not happy with it either," he added.

The doctors and academics of Afghanistan "should not leave this country, they should work in their own specialist areas" Mujahid said, adding: "They should not go to other countries, to those Western countries."

He also said that "there will be no extension for the ongoing evacuation" process by the US.

"We want them (Washington) to evacuate their citizens, they have planes and the Kabul airport control is with them now, the US should withdraw all its troops, people or contractors before the deadline."

As to the widely concerned women's rights to study and work, Mujahid said the Taliban is working on a procedure so that women can work in the future.

He also urged female Afghan government workers to stay at home before Afghanistan's security situation improves.

Mujahid said the Taliban does not want foreign embassies in Kabul to shut down or stop work, and has assured them of security.

The Taliban is meeting with officials from various foreign embassies including the US embassy to maintain diplomatic relations, he said.

Asked about the statement from the Taliban, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that should not impact Afghans who were prioritized by the US to leave the country. "No. That is not how you should read it," Psaki said.

"Our expectation, which we have also conveyed to the Taliban, is that they should be able to get to the airport. " US-led troops have been ramping up the evacuation of foreigners and Afghans out of Afghanistan as the deadline looms.

About 50,000 foreigners and Afghans have left the country from the Kabul airport during the past nine days, according to the US government said.

Also on Tuesday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that G7 leaders agreed that it was their collective "moral duty" to help the Afghan people amid the current situation in the war-torn country following the Taliban takeover.

"We all agreed that it is our moral duty to help the Afghan people and to provide as much support as possible as conditions allow," von der Leyen said at a press conference following a meeting of G7 leaders.

"To protect these most vulnerable, it is clearly a matter for global cooperation and it has to be dealt with as such from the start. These people should not fall into smugglers' hands, they need safe pathways," she added.

She said the Commission will propose to almost quadruple the humanitarian aid coming from the European Union (EU) budget, to "over 200 million euros ($236 million) for the year 2021. This will help meet the urgent needs of Afghans both in Afghanistan but also of course in the neighbouring host countries."

NO ACTION AGAINST RANE TILL SEP 17, MAHA GOVT TELLS BOMBAY HC

The submission came in a plea filed by Rane seeking to quash the Nashik FIR and all other cases that may be lodged in future, and interim protection from arrest, which came up for hearing before a division bench of Justice SS Shinde and Justice NJ Jamdar.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Wednesday told the Bombay High Court that no coercive action will be taken against Union Minister Narayan Rane till September 17 in the FIR lodged by Nashik police in the 'slap slur' against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

The submission came in a plea filed by Rane seeking to quash the Nashik FIR and all other cases that may be lodged in future, and interim protection from arrest, which came up for hearing before a division bench of Justice SS Shinde and Justice NJ Jamdar.

Rane's lawyers Satish Maneshinde and Aniket Nikam sought protection in all other cases that may arise out of the Union Minister's statement of August 23.

Senior counsel Amit Desai, appearing for the state government, said that no coercive actions will be initiated against Rane in the Nashik FIR till the next hearing on September 17.

However, Desai said a blanket statement on protections could not be made as Rane's petition mentions only the Nashik FIR, after which the latter's team said they would amend the plea with all the details.

Rane was arrested on Tuesday afternoon in Ratnagiri for his utterances against CM Thackeray and was produced before the Mahad court in Raigad late last night.

Mahad Judicial Magistrate First Class SS Patil, while saying the arrest was justified, sent him to magisterial custodial remand till September 4, and later granted conditional bail to Rane.

"Won't Let Maharashtra Become West Bengal:" Narayan Rane On 'Slapgate'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Union minister Narayan Rane out on bail after being arrested for his controversial "slap" remark on Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray remained defiant on Wednesday. Citing Thackeray's earlier "will hit with slippers" comment about his Uttar Pradesh counterpart Yogi Adityanath which is being discussed in social media he contended that his remark was no different.

Then in a jibe at Mamata Banerjee, one of most voluble opposition leaders, he added, "We won't let Maharashtra become West Bengal, Thackeray government is a guest for a few days."

Thackeray, an NDA ally, had broken off in 2019 after months of acting the in-house opposition of the BJP.

A three-year-old video clip of him criticising Yogi Adityanath was widely circulated on social media today in the wake of the action against Rane. "He wore chappals (slippers) while garlanding Shivaji. I felt like hitting him with the same chappal. Who are you to even stand before

a statue of Maharaj?" Thackeray had said.Rane, a minister in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet, was arrested yesterday and got bail late in the evening, nearly nine hours in police custody.

"Considering the reason for arrest and other reasons, I found that the arrest is justified," said the judge at a Raigad court who granted him bail. The Sena has filed multiple cases against Rane. The Maharashtra government has said it would not take any coercive action against the Union minister.

The 69-year-old sparked off a row during his address at the Jan Ashirwad Yatra, saying it was "shameful" that the Chief Minister does not know the year of India's independence.

According him, the Chief Minster needed to clarify it with an aide during his address on Independence Day. "Had I been there, I would have given (him) a tight slap," said the minister, a former leader of Thackeray's Shiv Sena who joined the BJP in 2019 and became known as a Sena baiter.

Asked about being dubbed a "gangster" in an editorial in Sena mouthpiece Saamna, Rane said, "Shiv Sena made me the Chief Minister. Who makes a gangster the chief minister?"

Video showing minister ordering for Rane's arrest goes viral, BJP seeks action

- Anil Parab, who is also the guardian minister of Ratnagiri where Rane was arrested and a close aide to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, is purportedly heard giving instructions to arrest Rane even without any warrant and for the use of force

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A video clip showing Shiv Sena leader and Maharashtra minister Anil Parab purportedly issuing orders for Union minister Narayan Rane's arrest on Tuesday has gone viral and triggered an angry reaction from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP said it will now move the court over the alleged political pressure on police to arrest Rane.

Parab, who is also the guardian minister of Ratnagiri where Rane was arrested and a close aide to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, is purportedly heard giving instructions to arrest Rane even without any warrant and for the use of force.

"What are doing? Why are you not arresting him? Why are you not taking him in custody? You will have to do it. Which order they are asking for? There is no need for any such order as the high court and session court have turned down their plea for bail. Use police force and arrest him," Parab is purportedly heard telling someone over the phone as he receives a call in the middle of a press conference in Ratnagiri. The conversation was caught on the camera of a Marathi channel. It is unclear to whom he was giving the purported instructions. BJP's Maharashtra chief Chandrakant Patil said they will move court against Parab for misusing the police force. "The ruling party (Shiv Sena) is taking the law into its hands. The government is being run using the police force. How can a minister ask the police officers to use force to arrest a Union minister? We are seeking court intervention in this entire episode."

BJP leader Vishwas Sawant registered a case against Parab in Nalasopara and sought action against him for allegedly ordering Rane's arrest.

Parab was unavailable for comments despite repeated calls and messages. HT also reached out to Shiv Sena for comments. The copy will be updated once it reacts.

BJP leader Pramod Jathar on Tuesday claimed Ratnagiri police superintendent told them there was tremendous pressure on his force from "the higher-ups" to immediately arrest Rane.

Rane was arrested on Tuesday for saying he wanted to slap Thackeray. The ruling Shiv Sena workers went on a rampage over the remark that set off another political face-off between the ruling three-party alliance in the state and the opposition BJP.

Rane became the first sitting central minister to be arrested in two decades since Murasoli Maran and TR Baalu were picked up in a midnight raid in Chennai by the Tamil Nadu Police in 2001. The 69-year-old was produced in a court in Mahad in Raigad on Tuesday night and granted bail.

6 million cases likely in Maharashtra in third wave, Mumbai may see 1.3 lakh cases on peak day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The state may report 60 lakh cases in the event of a third wave and the most cases on peak day are likely to be from the city and Pune, estimates the public health department.

The city reported 91,100 cases at the peak of the second wave on March 11, while on the peak day of the third wave the department expects 1.36 lakh cases. In Pune, 1.25 lakh cases were reported on peak day on March 19, and it is estimated that 1.87 lakh cases will be reported on the peak day of the third wave.

"The most number of cases will be in Pune and Mumbai and the public health department will have to draft a omprehensive action plan to tackle the situation," a bureaucrat said.

Of the estimated 1.36 lakh patients in the city on peak day, 88,823 are likely to remain under home quarantine, 47,928 are likely to be hospitalised, and 957 might require ICU beds with ventilators. In Pune, 1.21 lakh persons might remain in home isolation, and 1,314 might require ICU beds with ventilators.In neighbouring Thane district, the peak day during the second wave threw up 86,732 cases, while the third wave is likely to have a peak day with 1.3 lakh cases and 911 persons requiring ICU beds with ventilators.

In Nagpur, the number of cases is likely to go up from 80,000 on the peak day of the second wave to 1.21 lakh on the peak day of the third wave with 850 persons requiring ICU beds with ventilators.

The city will need 250MT of oxygen, Pune will require 270MT, Thane 187MT, Nagpur 175MT and Nashik 114MT. The bureaucrat said that for ICU beds, including non-ventilator beds, at least 30 litres per minute per bed would be required.

For beds outside the ICU, it would be 10 litres per minute per bed. The public health department has made it clear that no medicine is to be procured or distributed which is not mentioned in the protocol. The state is in the process of procuring medicines and consumables for the third wave and all the medicines will be supplied by the government. At least two months of buffer stock will have to be kept in a district.

US-born Dalit scholar Gail Omvedt passes away in Sangli

Team Absolute | MSangli

Gail Omvedt, US-born renowned Dalit researcher, writer on Ambedkarism and the movement for the oppressed classes, passed away following a brief illness at Kasegaon, here early on Wednesday, said an aide.

She was 81 and is survived by her husband Dr. Bharat Patankar, a daughter Prachi, son-in-law Tejaswi and grand-daughter Nia, who have settled in the US. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray expressed grief over the demise of Dr. Omvedt and recalled her services to the social movements.

"She made immense contributions in various fields like rights and justice for women and underprivileged, literature, social fields, besides being a researcher and scholar," Thackeray said in a message. All India Kisan Sabha President Ashok Dhawale described her as "a progressive intellectual-cum-activist par excellence" and offered condolences to the bereaved family. Born in Minneapolis in the US state of Minnesota, Dr. Omvedt came to India after completing her higher studies and plunged herself into the various social movements for the Dalits, poor and downtrodden, farmers, women's liberation and empowerment, the rights of tribals and other public causes.The Omvedt-Patankar couple founded the Shramik Mukti Dal in the early-1980s, while she became an Indian citizen around 1983. She authored several books on various social subjects, taught in colleges and universities and penned columns for various newspapers, worked for the United Nations Development Programme, Oxfam NOVIB, and other international bodies. The aide said that

Omvedt was involved with various social campaigns across India for Dalits, anti-caste, environment, land and water rights, and was active with SMD, Stree Multi Sangharsh Chalval and Shetkari Mahila Aghadi which works for land rights for women farmers.

A prolific writer, she penned over a dozen books on a wide range of social issues, prominent among them being "We Shall Smash This Prison: Indian Women In Struggle" (1979), "Violence Against Women: New Movements And New Theories In India" (1991), "Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste" (2003), "Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India" (2005), "Seeking Begumpura: The Social Vision of Anticaste Intellectuals" (2009), "Understanding Caste: From Buddha To Ambedkar And Beyond" (2011), "Songs of Tukoba" with Bharat Patankar (2012), and more. She was conferred several awards and honours like Savitribai Phule Puraskar (2002), Ambedkar Chetna Award (2003), Matoshree Bhimabai Ambedkar Award (2012), and served as a visiting faculty for many national and international universities.Omvedt's last rites shall be performed on Thursday morning at the Krantiveer Bapuji Patankar Sanstha campus in Sangli, the aide said.

Bombay high court dismisses woman's petitions against Raut

Bombay High Court on Wednesday dismissed three petitions filed by a 39-year-old Mumbai woman who alleged laxity in the police investigation into her allegations of "stalking, harassment, abuse, assault and attack" at the behest of leader and other unknown persons.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A division bench of Justice SS Shinde and Justice NJ Jamadar held, "Prayers like a direction for arrest and custodial interrogation of respondent no.4 (Raut)," search and seizure at his residential and office premises, and prohibitory and injunctive reliefs, "simply do not deserve countenance.'

The HC said that the petitions deserve to be dismissed, but directed the magistrate to decide the closure reports on merits, within three months from September 20 and 22. The court had on July 22 reserved its verdict on three petitions filed by the woman who said she is a "multi-talented person".

Her petitions argued by her counsel Abha Singh sought orders of the arrest of Raut to ascertain "extent of his misdoings and misuse of power and position" and to Vakola police to investigate her FIR of 2013, a departmental enquiry against senior police inspector for 'failure' to take prompt action, besides protecting her from Raut "to ensure she is not stalked, harassed or molested any further

directly or indirectly."

She had claimed that in June 2013, while in a car, an unknown person suddenly came in front of the car and smashed the windshield with an object.'' She sustained injuries to her eye. She lodged a complaint of the "assault" but for 8 years met only police "inaction" which she alleged is "direct outcome of the strong influence and political power" of Raut a sitting Member of Parliament. Her other two petitions sought orders in two other FIRs of 2013 of alleged extortion calls received by her and assault by a motorist, and a 2018 FIR of stalking by a motor-cyclist. Singh said On HC's order, the Mumbai police commissioner submitted a report on June 30, saying "fair, impartial and unbiased action as per law has already been taken in the grievances raised" by her.

Public Prosecutor Aruna Pai said criticism against police is unjustified. Police filed an 'A' summary (closure report) in a 2013 case in 2015 and the matter is to be heard next by the magistrate in December 2021 as she did not appear on "30 occasions.'' A similar closure report was filed in the second 2013 case, earlier this year and in the 2018 FIR, an accused was arrested and chargesheet filed.

Raut through senior counsel Prasad Dhakephalkar sought dismissal of her petitions on grounds of suppression of truth.

The HC said, "It is not the case that in the FIRs... any role was attributed to (Raut)' "and allegations against him "range from personal to professional to familial pursuits of the petitioner." The bench judgment said that the "petitioner can appear before the jurisdictional Magistrate and raise the grievance that the investigation is incomplete or unsatisfactory.

The bench said it would be inadvisable to the HC to interject in the proceedings pending before the competent court.

Court says Rane's arrest 'justified', warns him against repeating 'slap slur' offence

RAIGAD | Agencies

In a significant ruling, the Mahad Court has held that the arrest of Union Minister Narayan Tatu Rane by the Maharashtra Police was "justified" in the case pertaining to the 'slap slur' against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, and ordered him not to repeat it.

While sending Rane, 69, to Magisterial Custodial Remand till September 4, the Mahad Court Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) S.S. Patil ruled: "Considering reason of arrest and reasons discussed above (in the order), I found that arrest is justified."

Spelling relief for the police, the court also held that there are grounds in the Criminal Procedure Code when "a police officer can arrest anybody without a warrant".

The JMFC's ruling effectively punctures the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders' allegations targeting the Maha Vikas Aghadi government for the 'illegal arrest' and dark warnings that it could lead to repercussions.

Shortly after Rane was granted magisterial custody for 10 days, his legal team comprising lawyers Rajendra Shirodkar and Sangram Desai applied for bail which was granted by JMFC Patil imposing several conditions late on Tuesday.

The Assistant Public Prosecutor Prakash Joshi and his team of lawyers strongly opposed the bail, submitting that the accused was a Union Minister who could make similar statements which could lead to disharmony among the people.

However, the court said that "no prejudice will be caused to the prosecution

if the accused (Rane) is released on bail on certain terms and conditions".

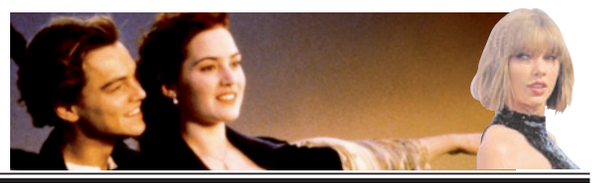
In the Mahad Court, Rane said he was not ill-treated by the police, was ready and willing to cooperate with the investigations, would not abscond, furnish surety and abide by any terms and conditions imposed upon him.

Rane has not denied the ('slap slur') offence against the Chief Minister made out by the police and now has been advised by his lawyers not to make such statements in public, but was not prepared to give any written undertaking to the effect before the court.

The JMFC further held that all the offences, cognisable and non-cognisable, registered against Rane are triable by the court."Offences under Sections 153-A(1)(b),(c) and 505(2) of the Indian Penal Code are non-bailable, but not punishable for imprisonment for life or death. The offences are punishable which may extend upto three years. Rest of the offences (189, 504, 506 of IPC) are bailable," said JMFC Patil.

Citing grounds for rejecting police custodial interrogation, the court said that Rane made the alleged ('slap slur') statements before the police and the media, it was viral on social media, and his lawyers have also now advised him to refrain from making such utterances in public. The court granted bail of Rs 15,000 to Rane, ordered him not to tamper with evidence, threaten or induce any witnesses or the police, report to the Alibaug Police on August 30 and the second Monday of September.

The JMFC Patil further ordered Rane to cooperate with the police investigations, to provide his voice samples if required for the case investigation but the police must give him seven days' prior notice.



Jake Gyllenhaal to star in 'Oblivion Song'

New York | Agencies

Jake Gyllenhaal is all set to star in 'Oblivion Song', an adaptation of Robert Kirkman and Lorenzo De Felici's graphic novel. Released by Image Comics in 2018, 'Oblivion Song' chronicles Nathan Cole, a man who makes daily trips to try and rescue those still living in 'Oblivion', an apocalyptic hellscape in Philadelphia that was lost a decade prior, along with 300,000 of its citizens.

New Republic Pictures announced on Tuesday it had optioned the rights to the story, with plans to turn it into a feature film as published in Variety.

Jake's production company Nine Stories will produce the film with Riva Marker and Kirkman via his Skybound Entertainment.

Kirkman is best known for co-creating 'The Walking Dead' and 'Invincible', in addition to writing Marvel Comics such as 'Ultimate X-Men' and 'Irredeemable Ant-Man'.

Jake will next star in Michael Bay's action thriller 'Ambulance' for Universal, as well as Antoine Fuqua's 'The Guilty' for Netflix.

Sofia Vergara wows in bold blue at AGT red carpet

Los Angeles | Agencies

Sofia Vergara is seen sparkling in bold blue at a red carpet event for America's Got Talent at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

The reality television presenter appeared to be savoring the spotlight as she posed for a few shots before heading into the venue for the taping of the hit NBC competition series.

Vergara wore a stunning blue dress that clung tightly to her hourglass figure. She also wore a pair of eye-catching gold high-heeled shoes during the event.

The Modern Family star added various elements of shine to her outfit with numerous articles of jewelry.

Her lengthy brunette locks gracefully cascaded onto her shoulders and chest as she posed for a few photos.

The longstanding talent show is currently midway through its 16th season, and a spinoff series focused on high-flying stunts is set to make its debut in the near future.

Megan Thee Stallion cleared to release reminx of BTS' 'Butter'

New York | Agencies

A Texas court has given American rapper Megan Thee Stallion the green light to release the remix of the BTS chart-topping number 'Butter' that features her.On Wednesday, the rapper posted on her Instagram page a release poster of the remix and wrote: "LOVE YOU ALL. BUTTER REMIX 8.27." She tagged the Korean boy band's Instagram page alongside her post.The news was confirmed by the BTS record label, BigHit Music, which said the remix would be released on August 27.Megan Thee Stallion had planned to release a remix of 'Butter' this past Friday, but she alleged that she had been prevented by her record label from releasing the song.The entertainment magazine 'Variety' reported that the rapper had filed a petition on Tuesday in a Harris County, Texas, court, alleging that 1501 Certified Entertainment and its CEO Carl Crawford were stopping her from releasing the song.

Iggy Azalea announces her own makeup line

Los Angeles | Agencies

Iggy Azalea is launching a brand new capsule makeup collection in partnership with BH Cosmetics.On Tuesday, the 31-year-old Australian singer confirmed her new line 'Totally Plastic' was set to launch later this month - weeks after she announced she was quitting the music industry for 'a few years' in July.

The 13-piece collection will be available from August 29 on Ulta, and is inspired by the fashions of the 2000s. Speaking to newbeauty.com ahead of the launch, Iggy admitted she's "never been able to let the nostalgia of the noughties go".

Revealing why she wanted to delve into the world of cosmetics, she added that her passion for creating dramatic looks during her larger-than-life music videos has inspired her to try it out for herself.

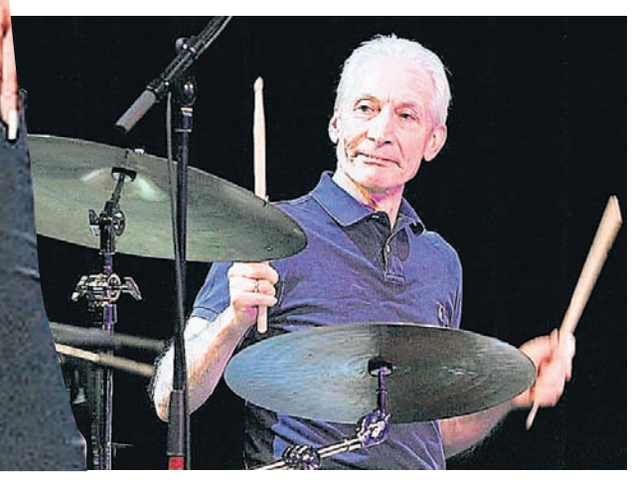
Kanye West legally changes his name to 'Ye'

New York | Agencies

Kanye West has filed papers to change his name to 'Ye'. The rapper, 44, was born Kanye Omari West, but he filed the legal paperwork for the new name on Tuesday, according to docements obtained by HollywoodLife.

Kanye had previously expressed interest in changing his name to 'Ye'. In a 2018 tweet, he said, "The being formally known as Kanye West. I am YE."Kanye's four children - North, 8, Saint, 5, Chicago, 3, and Psalm, 2 - and ex-wife Kim Kardashian all share 'West' as their surname, so if Kanye gets his wish, he'll no longer share his last name with them.

Legendary Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts dead at 80



London | Agencies

In his autobiography, 'Life', Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards says Charlie Watts "has always been the bed that I lie on musically". That bed -- the dapper, reserved drummer of the British rock group, who was the polar opposite of its flamboyant and raucous frontman Mick Jagger -- has been moved out by the hand of God. Watts died on Tuesday in London, aged 80.Earlier this month, Watts had undergone an emergency medical procedure for an unspecified condition, which was the reason he was not named for the Stones' scheduled 'No Filter' tour of the US. For millions of Stones fans around the world, the man universally acclaimed as the best rock drummer of his generation, who defined immortal numbers such as 'Paint It, Black', 'Ruby Tuesday' and 'Honky Tonk Women'. Famous for his immaculate Savile Row suits, Watts was on 'Vanity Fair' magazine's International Best Dressed Hall of Fame in 2006 (an honour also accorded to him by the 'Daily Telegraph' newspaper).

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Ashley Roberts

India vs England WTC Cricket series - 3rd Test, Day 1

ENGLAND SURGE AHEAD AFTER FLAWLESS DISPLAY

Leeds: | Agencies

England took stranglehold of the third Test on the first day itself after bowling out India for 78 and then moving to 120 without loss to be 42 runs ahead here at the Headingley on Wednesday. The Indian batting crumbled against exceptional swing bowling from England pace attack led by James Anderson, who removed the top order, picking three wickets. Craig Overton also took three wickets.Only Rohit Sharma (19) and Ajinkya Rahane (18) were the top scorers for India.Openers Haseeb Hameed (batting 60) and Rory Burns (batting 52) then drove England to stumps on the third day.

Brief scores
India 78 all out in 40.4 overs (C Overton 3/14, J Anderson 3/6, O Robinson 2/16, S Curran 2/27) vs England 120/0 in 42 overs (H Hameed batting 60, R Burns batting 52).

India's 78 is their third lowest total in England

India's 78 against England on Day One of the third Test here at Headingley on Wednesday is their eighth lowest score in Test cricket and third lowest in England.India's lowest in England was 42 at Lord's in London in 1974. The Ajit Wadekar-led side had made 302 in first innings against England's 600-plus score and then following on, folded for just 42 with Eknath Solkar top-scoring with unbeaten 18 and no other batsman getting into double figures.The 58 in 1952 in Manchester is India's second lowest in England. The Vijay Hazare-led side lost that Test -- the third of the series -- by an innings and 207 runs. After folding for 58 in first innings, they were bowled out for 82 in the second innings.

Covid could alter schedule of women's cricket team's tour of Australia

Tokyo | Agencies

The Indian women's cricket team's mixed tour of Australia, which includes a one-off Test, three One-day Internationals and an equal number of T20I, could see a possible alteration due to the evolving Covid-19 situation and lockdowns in Sydney and Melbourne besides some states imposing border restrictions.

The series is scheduled to commence on September 19 with the first ODI at North Sydney Oval before matches in Melbourne and Perth.

But even as both countries have announced their squads, Cricket Australia (CA) continues to negotiate with government authorities about the schedule for the upcoming matches, reported cricket.co.au on Wednesday.

India on Tuesday announced a combined squad for the series, which includes Railways medium-pacer Meghna Singh and Baroda left-handed batswoman Yastika Bhatia, both uncapped. Left-arm spinner RajeshwariGayakwad, who missed the recent tour of England due to knee injury, has also been included for all formats. "The tour, details of which were announced in May, is currently scheduled to begin with an ODI at North Sydney Oval on September 19 before matches in Melbourne and Perth. But the ongoing Covid-19 lockdowns in Sydney and Melbourne as well as state border closures make that unlikely," wrote cricket.com.au. It said that Cricket Australia is currently speaking with government authorities about how, where and when the seven games can be played.

Sudirman Cup Badminton: India grouped with 11-time champions China

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

India have been drawn with China, Finland and Thailand in Group A of the 2021 Sudirman Cup badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

The Chinese team, already the most successful one in Sudirman Cup history, will have the opportunity to consolidate their gains as they seek their 12th title.

Among other contenders is Japan, which is drawn with Malaysia, England and Egypt in Group D.

Indonesia, winner of the Sudirman Cup in its inaugural year 1989, is in Group C with Denmark, Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) and Canada, while Group B consists of Chinese Taipei, South Korea, Tahiti and Germany.

The Sudirman Cup is the world mixed team badminton championship which takes place every two years. The 2021 Sudirman Cup will be held from September 26 to October 3 in Vantaa, Finland.

The top two teams from each group progress to the knockout round or quarterfinals. The quarterfinals draw will be held immediately after the last group match.

IPL 2021: Aussie pacer Tye pulls out, RR bring in spinner Shamsi

Jaipur | Agencies

South African spinner TabraizShamsi, the world No. 1 bowler in T20 International cricket, has joined Rajasthan Royals squad for the second leg of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 which will resume in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from September 19.

"IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals today announced the signing of South Africa's TabraizShamsi, the world No. 1 ranked T20I bowler who will be joining the Royals squad for the remainder of IPL 2021 to be held in the UAE from 19th September 2021. The left-arm leg spinner from Johannesburg is the second replacement player for the franchise," said Rajasthan Royals in a statement on Wednesday.

The 31-year-old Chinaman bowler, who made his international debut for South Africa during a bilateral T20I series against England in 2017, has 45 wickets in 39 T20Is. He has also picked 32 wickets in 27 ODIs. Shamsi has an economy rate of 6.8 in T20 International cricket.

In the IPL, Shamsi has played four matches and taken three wickets for Royal Challengers Bangalore, who had recruited him as a replacement player during the 2016 season.

The Royals also confirmed that Australian pace bowler Andrew Tye won't be available for the remainder of the IPL season.

RCB rope in Garton for pacer Richardson

Royal Challengers Bangalore have signed English fast-bowler George Garton as replacement for Australian pace bowler Kane Richardson for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021, which resumes on September 19 in the United Arab Emirates.

The left-arm pace bowler, who represents Sussex at domestic level and hasn't represented England so far, has featured in 38 T20s and taken 44 wickets with a bowling average of 20.06.

As a batsman, Garton has an average of 20.77 in T20s, with a strike rate of 124.66 although he hasn't scored much. This will be Garton's debut season in IPL. Garton was RCB's fourth replacement of the season.

DURAND CUP: HYDERABAD FC TO FACE ASSAM RIFLES IN THEIR OPENER

Hyderabad: Excited to make their debut in the historic 130th edition of the Durand Cup, Indian Super League (ISL) side Hyderabad FC will kick off their campaign with a clash against Assam Rifles on September 12 at the Mohun Bagan Ground in Kolkata. Hyderabad FC will also be up against 2019 winners and defending champions Gokulam Kerala FC and then Army Red in Group D. Back in Kolkata after a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the 2021 edition of the Durand Cup which will start from September 5, is the world's third oldest and Asia's oldest existing football tournament. This year it will be played across three venues in Kolkata - Mohun Bagan Ground, VYBK Salt Lake Stadium and Kalyani Stadium. The Hyderabad FC squad that will participate in the tournament will consist of a mixture of first-team players along with youngsters from HFC's reserve side.

ASIAN JUNIOR BOXING: INDIA'S MUSKAN ENTERS FINAL

New Delhi: Continuing her brilliant form, Indian pugilist Muskan advanced to the final of the ASBC Asian Youth & Junior Boxing Championships in Dubai on Wednesday.

According to information received here, Muskan (46kg) blanked YelyanurTurganova of Kazakhstan in a one-sided bout that saw the Haryana boxer playing swift and smart from long range. She maintained her dominance throughout the three rounds and secured a unanimous 5-0 win. In the bantamweight semifinal, Aarzoo (54kg) faced tough competition from Uzbekistan's TileubergenovaGuldana in an evenly-contested bout. The Indian pugilist gave her best but narrowly lost the bout 2-3 in an intense clash. eanwhile, Devika (50kg) and Supriya (66kg) also lost their respective semifinal bouts and had to be content with bronze medals. In the junior boys' section, RohitChamoli (48kg) and Bharat Joon (+81kg) cruised into the finals after registering identical unanimous victories in their respective last-4 bouts. On the other hand, Ankush (66kg) suffered a 0-5 defeat in his semifinal match.

AFC Cup: Bengaluru FC crush Maziya, finishes campaign on a positive note

Male (Maldives) | Agencies

Indian Super League (ISL) club Bengaluru FC defeated Maldivian side Maziya Sports & Recreation 6-2 in their AFC Cup Group D South Zone encounter at the National Football Stadium in Male to end the tournament on a positive note.

Bengaluru FC looked like a different team and made waves early into the game as Udanta opened the team's account in the sixth minute. SarthakGolui was the architect of the goal as he provided a near-perfect cross into the box from the right and Udanta met the ball with his head and sent it past opposition goalkeeper Hussain Shareef to put his side ahead.

In the 13th minute, it could easily have been 2-0 for Bengaluru FC but Augustine failed to provide the finishing touch onto a pass from the left from Udanta. Six minutes later, they went 2-0 up. Goalkeeper Shareef came several steps out to catch a ball but he misread its trajectory. The ball landed behind him and Silva ran ahead and pounced on the opportunity to put his name on the scoresheet. It was not long before Bengaluru FC went 3-0 up.

Maziya pulled one back in the 67th minute against the run of play. Hamza Mohamed had plenty of time and space to beat Bengaluru FC goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu after receiving the ball from well outside the box.

Bengaluru FC responded quickly through substitute Sivasakthi, and in the 70th minute restored their three-goal lead. Udanta provided the cross from the right and the youngster controlled the ball nicely before hitting it into the far corner.

WA marks race walker Amit Khatri as a bright prospect

Nairobi | Agencies

World Athletics (WA), the global track and field governing body, has marked India's latest race walk sensation Amit Khatri as the one to watch out for in the future, after the athlete won the 10,000m race walk silver at the World Athletics U20 Championships here recently.

"Two nations that had never appeared on the medal stand for race walking in previous editions of the championships were India and Kenya. But that changed last weekend in Nairobi, with HeristoneWanyonyi of Kenya and Amit (Khatri) of India dominating the men's race to win gold and silver respectively," wrote WA in its featured article dedicated to the two athletes on Tuesday.

WA felt that an Indian and a Kenyan making it to the podium was proof that race walking is branching out of its typical strongholds and connecting with new pastures and unearthing fresh talents. Among the countries that have dominated the 10,000 race walk events globally in U20 and senior category are China, Russia, Ecuador, Spain and Mexico, where the event is held in the highest esteem.

Serena Williams pulls out of US Open due to torn hamstring

New York | Agencies

Six-time US Open champion Serena Williams has pulled out of this edition of the Grand Slam due to a torn hamstring. Serena posted on Instagram to reveal the news of her withdrawal, saying she is pulling out to heal completely from a torn hamstring.

"After careful consideration and following the advice of my doctors and medical team, I have decided to withdraw from the US Open to allow my body to heal completely from a torn hamstring. New York is one of the most exciting cities in the world and one of my favourite places to play - I'll miss seeing the fans but will be cheering everyone on from afar. Thank you for your continued support and love. I'll see you soon," wrote Serena in her Instagram post on Wednesday. The 39-year-old had suffered a leg injury after slipping on Centre Court against AliaksandraSasnovich in the first round of Wimbledon in June. After retiring from the match at 3-3 due to the injury, Serena hasn't played on the tennis circuit. She withdrew from the Southern and Western Open in Cincinnati to continue focusing on her recovery. She looked set to play in New York vying for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title.Williams is the latest big name to withdraw from the final Grand Slam of the year. Earlier, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Dominic Thiem had also pulled out of the tournament due to injuries.

Afridi moves into top-10 in World Test rankings

Tokyo | Agencies

A superb Test series against the West Indies has moved Pakistan pace bowler ShaheenAfridi into the top-10 of the ICC Test Bowling rankings for the first time.

Climbing 10 spots to make his entry, Afridi is the highest-ranked Pakistan bowler in the new rankings - eighth with 783 points. In the ICC Test Batting rankings, Afridi's compatriot and skipper, Babar Azam, has jumped to seventh spot.

Afridi, the left-arm quick picked up 18 wickets across the two Tests, seven more than the next-best bowler, Jayden Seales of the West Indies. Taking eight wickets in the first Test, Afridi went on to claim career-best match figures of 10/94 in the second match, spearheading Pakistan's charge to a 109-run victory at Sabina Park.

Afridi took a wicket roughly every four overs, at an average of just 11.27, dismissing seven West Indian players at least twice in the series. West Indian wicketkeeper Joshua da Silva fell to Afridi in three of the four innings.

Afridi has enjoyed a stellar start to his Test career, having taken 76 wickets in 19 matches at an average of 25.25.

Babar Azam was consistent with the bat across the series, reaching 30 in all four innings and passing 50 twice in tricky Sabina Park conditions. He finished with 193 runs, more than anyone else in the series, at an average of 48.25.

FawadAlam, after a superb knock of 124 not out in the first innings of the second Test, has moved up 34 places to 21st spot - his highest career ranking.

VIJAY SETHUPATI ANNOUNCES RELEASE OF NEXT FILM 'LAABAM'

Team Absolute | Chennai

Actor Vijay Sethupati updated fans about the release of his much awaited film 'Laabam' on Wednesday. The film will hit theatres on September 9. Vijay took to his Instagram account to share news. He captioned it as: "#Laabam Grand Release On September 9th in Theaters Near You."

The film, directed by S.P. Jhananathan, stars actress ShrutiHaasan as the female protagonist in the film. The actress too posted the same still from the movie and updated fans about the theatrical release. 'Laabam' was shot and ready for release before the second wave of Covid-19 hit the country.

Vijay had earlier clarified that the film will never have a direct OTT release. He had taken to Twitter in December 2020 and tweeted: "Socio political thriller #Laabam, it's not a direct OTT premiere, it will have a big theatrical release".

Yami Gautam finishes her shoot for 'Lost'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress YamiGautam wrapped up her shooting schedule for the film 'Lost' on Wednesday. The actress says that parting ways with the 'City of Joy' Kolkata and the film's team makes her emotional. "You know you had an incredible experience working on a film set when the goodbye feels daunting and a little emotional. It was fantastic to work with a team so passionate and excited to tell a story. I am really looking forward to the next part because 'Lost' is one of those films that will instantly connect and communicate with the audiences," said Yami. The actress will be seen essaying the role of a feisty crime reporter based in Kolkata, highlighting the issues of media integrity in today's time. The film is directed by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury and backed by Zee Studios, ShareenMantriKedia, Kishor Arora, Sam Fernandes, and Indrani Mukherjee. The drama also stars Pankaj Kapur, Rahul Khanna and an ensemble of younger talent, including Neil Bhoopalam, Pia Bajpiee, Tushar Pandey, in pivotal roles. Besides this, Yami will be seen in 'Dasvi', 'A Thursday' and 'Bhoot Police'.

Shalini Pandey: I owe everything to 'Arjun Reddy'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shalini Pandey is all set to make her Bollywood debut in 'JayeshbhaiJordaar' opposite Ranveer Singh. On the fourth anniversary of 'Arjun Reddy', a film that catapulted her to instant stardom in the south, Shalini credits the film and her director Sandeep Reddy Vanga.

Shalini said, "I owe everything to 'Arjun Reddy' because it put me on the map as a performer. I had done my level best to put in a performance that I was immensely proud of and I'm glad that audiences appreciated my hard work."

She added, "I owe everything to my director Sandeep Vanga Reddy for his belief in me as an actor. I'm fortunate that I was a part of his vision to create an unparalleled love story that has etched its place in the hearts and minds of film lovers across India."

The actress said that 'Arjun Reddy's success fuelled her passion to be recognised as a versatile artiste.

Swara Bhasker: I'm offered many 'tough women' roles

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress SwaraBhasker will soon be seen playing an investigative officer in the film 'Mimamsa'. The actress says that she is often offered action-packed, strong characters.

Swara, also played a cop in the web series 'Flesh 2'. "I get offered a lot of 'tough' strong woman parts. I think it's always interesting to play the character in a way where in places you play it against the writing. So, find the moment where you can show the resilience of a shy and meek character; or the vulnerability of a strong character. I think 'Mimamsa' gave me a few such worthy moments," reveals Swara. Swara's character, Adhira Dixit, in the film deals with the mind of a serial killer. To understand the psychology of criminal minds better, the actress met with clinical psychologists to ask questions about how a criminal mind functions. "More than understanding criminal psychology I was interested in understanding what must happen to the psyche of cops and law enforcement - they are human after all," she says.

India's Olympic hockey champs to appear on 'The Kapil Sharma Show'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Kapil Sharma Show' is all set to host the Indian men's and women's hockey players led by captains Manpreet Singh and Rani Rampal, this Saturday.

The bronze medal-winning men's hockey players Manpreet Singh, P.R. Sreejesh, Rupinder Pal Singh, BirendraLakra, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh and Harmanpreet Singh and Rani Rampal, Savita, Gurjit Kaur, Neha Goyal, SushilaChanu and Navneet from the women's team will be welcomed by host Kapil Sharma.

A lot of conversations will be featured in the show in which players shared their experience on and off the field and most of all their sentiments towards representing the country internationally.

Kapil Sharma himself performed a stand-up comedy that turned out to be a real entertainer for the entire team. So it will be a fun filled occasion for the entire team and everyone present at the show.

Actor and comedian Krushna Abhishek took to social media and shared his experience saying: "Every artist is always happy to perform on stage but today was a special day to perform in front of real-life heroes who made our nation proud. It made me feel so special to make them laugh and give them some light moments."

'The Kapil Sharma Show' airs on Sony Entertainment Television.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Tamannaah Bhatia

Owned, Published and Printed by Yogenra Chaturvedi at Indian Express, A-8, Sector-7, Noida (UP) and Published from 23, Hanuman Road, Cannaught Place, New Delhi-110001 Editor- Yogendra Chaturvedi, (responsible for selection of news under PRB ACT). RNI Code DELENG/2017/19576, Phone No. 011-23346744, www.absoluteindianews.com,E-mail: absoluteindiadesk@gmail.com (Bhopal will be the jurisdiction of any dispute.)