

absolute india

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INDIAN EVES PAVED HISTORY IN TOKYO OLYMPICS GAMES



TOKYO | Agencies

The Indian women's hockey team scripted history on Monday by qualifying for the Olympic Games semifinals for the first time, beating three-time champions Australia by a solitary goal. A day after the Indian men's team entered the Olympic semifinals following a 49-year gap, the world no.9 women's side also entered the history books with a phenomenally gritty performance. Coming into the match, the odds were totally against India as world no.2 Australia, a mighty unbeaten opponent, awaited them in the last four rounds. But the Indians, determined to prove a point, produced a strong and brave performance to eke out the narrow win over the Hockeyroos. Drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur rose to the occasion when it mattered and converted India's lone penalty corner in the 22nd minute to surprise the Australians. India's best performance in the Olympics came way back in the 1980 Moscow Games where they finished fourth out of six teams. In that edition of the Games, women's hockey made its debut in the Olympics and the sport was played in a round-robin format with top two teams qualifying for the final. The Rani Rampal-led side will play Argentina in the semifinal on Wednesday.

THE NEW DEFINITION OF WALL

Apart from Gurjit's goal, it was goalkeeper Savita Punia's heroics that helped India stun Australia 1-0 to reach their first-ever Olympic semi-finals.

The credit for the win goes to the Indian defence that did not allow Australia to score in the entire second half. And whenever the Aussies got past them, goalkeeper Savita was there to save India as she pulled off at least seven brilliant saves to thwart the Hockeyroos. The Indian deep defence's superiority could be gauged from the fact that Australia had 14 shots at the goal but could not score even one. They earned nine penalty corners, tried two drag flickers and a few indirect variations but all were thwarted by the Indians.



Researchers estimate spike of new Covid wave, peak in October

INDIA ON THE VERGE OF 3RD WAVE

The country may see a worsening of its outbreak as soon as this month, with the next wave peaking in the best-case scenario with less than 100,000 infections a day, or nearly 150,000 in the worst scenario, according to estimates by researchers led by Mathukumalli Vidyasagar and Manindra Agrawal at Indian Institute of Technology in Hyderabad and Kanpur respectively.

▶ THE NEXT WAVE IS LIKELY TO BE FAR SMALLER THAN THE SECOND WAVE THAT PEAKED AT A RECORD 400,000-PLUS DAILY CASES ON MAY 7 AND DECLINED SHARPLY THEREAFTER. BUT THE FORECAST STILL UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR INDIA TO ACCELERATE ITS VACCINATION CAMPAIGN, DEPLOY SURVEILLANCE METHODS TO CATCH EMERGING HOTSPOTS AND STAY VIGILANT THROUGH GENOME SEQUENCING GIVEN THE POTENTIAL FOR NEW VARIANTS TO EMERGE.



Team Absolute | New Delhi
India is likely to see a rise in Covid-19 infections building into a new -- though smaller -- virus wave that may peak in October, according to a mathematical model by researchers who accurately predicted the tapering of a brutal surge of cases earlier this year. The delta strain now causing renewed outbreaks across the world was first identified in India last October. Experts are concerned about complacency setting in as people resume social and business activity in the face of waning infections. India's first outbreak last year ebbed with limited damage, leading to a quick resumption of local travel and large-scale festivals that drove the emergence of a devastating second wave in

southern state of Kerala, making it potentially the next hotspot. "If infection begins to increase in a few large states, the present balance will tip, and cases are likely to begin growing again in the country as a whole. We might expect to see a slow-burn in the country for a duration -- this can be expected to last till vaccination coverage is sufficiently high to induce herd immunity," said Paul Kattuman, professor in the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge, which has developed a Covid-19 tracker for India. India has so far administered 470.3 million vaccine doses, but only 7.6%

of the population is fully vaccinated, according to Bloomberg's vaccine tracker. The relatively slow uptake has added to concerns that the country may not be fully geared for the next wave.

Covaxin effective against Delta Plus variant: ICMR



New Delhi: The domestically developed Covaxin is effective against the Delta plus variant of Covid-19, claims Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in its study released on Monday.

The study states: "The sera of individuals who were fully immunized (with 2 doses) didn't show significant fold-reduction in the NAB titer against Delta, Delta AY.1 and B.1.617.3." The study points that Delta variant with its characteristic spike protein mutations has mutated further into four sub-lineages with an additional mutations which are associated with higher transmission and probable immune escape.

US AIRSTRIKES HIT TALIBAN IN HELMAND, 40 KILLED

New Delhi: The US army on Monday conducted aerial strikes against the Taliban in Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand Province in Afghanistan, killing around 40 Taliban fighters, sources said. Though the Afghan government did not confirm civilian people being hit, sources in the provincial capital said that eight members of a family, including children, were killed in the strikes. The sources added that the fighters had attacked the central prison in Lashkargah city which was driven back by the strikes.

SC issues notice to states/UTs on scrapped section 66A of IT Act

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to all state governments and union territories (UTs) on a plea complaining that people were being booked under Section 66A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, which has been quashed by the top court. A bench directed that notice should be served to registrar general of all high courts and listed the matter for further hearing after 4 weeks. The Centre has told



the top court it is the primary duty of states and UTs to stop registering cases under Section 66A of the IT Act after the provision was quashed by it. The Supreme Court, earlier this month, had said it was "shocking" and "distressing" that people were being booked under Section 66A though the provision was quashed.

SC TO HEAR PEGASUS PLEAS ON AUGUST 5

New Delhi: Five journal-

ists have moved the Supreme Court, contending the unauthorised use of surveillance by government agencies have violated their fundamental rights and they are directly affected by the use of Pegasus spyware. The petitioners -- Paranjay Guha Thakurta, S.N.M. Abdi, Prem Shankar Jha, Rupesh Kumar Singh, and Ipsa Shatakshi -- urged the top court to issue directions to the Centre to produce and disclose all materials and documents, with respect to all investigation, authorisation, and orders pertaining to the use of Pegasus on them. The petitioners alleged they were subjected to deeply intrusive surveillance and hacking by government or some other third party. In July, veteran journalists N. Ram and Sashi Kumar had moved the top court seeking a direction for an independent probe by its sitting or retired judge into the alleged Pegasus snooping scandal. Advocate M.L. Sharma and CPI-M Rajya Sabha member John Brittas have also moved the apex court seeking probe into the spying allegations. A bench of Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and Surya Kant is scheduled to take up matters connected with Pegasus snooping on August 5.

Court hands 7-year RI to 2 accused in Vyapam case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

CBI court has sentenced Om Prakash Tyagi, a candidate and Satish Jatav, a middleman, to seven years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) in the Vyapam case -- related to the 2013 Madhya Pradesh Police constable recruitment test. A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) spokesperson here said that the Special Judge CBI in

Bhopal has convicted the two and sentenced them to undergo seven years rigorous imprisonment. He said that the CBI had registered the case and taken over the investigation on August 27, 2015 from Madhya Pradesh Police on the orders of Supreme Court dated July 9, 2015. The case was earlier registered on the allegations of impersonation in the Madhya Pradesh Professional Examination Board

(Vyapam) by Tyagi who had arranged the impersonator through a middleman for passing the written examination of PCRT-2013. "After investigation, the CBI filed chargesheet against three accused in June, 2016. During trial, one of the accused expired and hence trial against him was abated," he said. "The Trial Court found the two accused guilty and convicted them," he added.

Covid-19 virus leaked from China's Wuhan lab: US Republican report

WASHINGTON | Agencies

The Covid-19 pandemic emerged from a genetically modified virus which leaked from the infamous Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), according to an investigation by the US House of Representatives Republicans into the origins of Covid-19, released on Monday. The report by Representative Michael McCaul, a top Republican at the House Foreign Affairs Committee, is based on open source material, the Hill.com reported. "As we continue to investigate the origins of the Covid-19

pandemic, I believe it's time to completely dismiss the wet market as the source of the outbreak. Instead, as this report lays out, a preponderance of the evidence proves that all roads lead to the WIV (Wuhan Institute of Virology)," McCaul said in a statement. The report also raises concern that the lab was conducting "gain-of-function" research in an unsafe environment. Meanwhile, China has dismissed the allegations, maintaining that the first cases likely emerged from animal to human transmission at a wet market in the city of Wuhan.

माँ का दूध, अमृत है ये बूंद

नवजात शिशु के लिए माँ का दूध अमृत समान है। यह नवजात का पहला टीका है, जो उसे रोगों से लड़ने में और जीवनभर उसके उत्तम स्वास्थ्य तथा सही शारीरिक एवं मानसिक विकास में सहायक होता है। विश्व स्तनपान सप्ताह 2021 पर हम हर माँ का साथ देने और शिशु को जन्म के तुरंत बाद स्तनपान कराने हेतु प्रोत्साहित करने का संकल्प लें।

आइए! अपनाएं स्तनपान के 3 मंत्र

1 घंटे

शिशु जन्म के पहले घंटे में ही स्तनपान करना चाहिए।

6 महीने

पहले 6 महीने दिन रात शिशु को केवल स्तनपान कराएँ, ऊपर से दूध, घुट्टी या पानी बिल्कुल न दें।

2 साल

6 माह पूरे होने पर ऊपरी आहार की शुरुआत करें। 2 साल या अधिक उम्र तक शिशु की मांग अनुसार स्तनपान जारी रखें।

किसी भी प्रकार का ऊपरी दूध, माँ के दूध की जगह नहीं ले सकता। विशेषकर बीमार, कम वजन या समय से पहले पैदा हुए कमजोर नवजात के लिए डिब्बा बंद दूध हानिकारक हो सकता है। माता के स्तनपान कराने में असमर्थ होने पर स्तन से निकाला हुआ दूध या अन्य स्वस्थ माता का दान किया दूध शिशु को पिलाएँ। स्तनपान कमजोर शिशुओं को बीमारियों से बचाता है और उन्हें जल्दी स्वस्थ होने में मदद करता है।

माँ अथवा शिशु के बीमार होने की दशा में भी स्तनपान जारी रखें तथा इन 3 बातों का ध्यान रखें।

- संक्रमण से बचाव करें।
- साफ-सफाई का ध्यान रखें।
- डॉक्टर से सम्पर्क करें और डॉक्टर की बताई गई बातों का पालन करें।

अधिक जानकारी के लिए स्वण्ड चिकित्सा अधिकारी/मुख्य चिकित्सा एवं स्वास्थ्य अधिकारी से सम्पर्क करें

लोक स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग, मध्यप्रदेश शासन द्वारा जनहित में जारी



NO TRUCKS ON HIGHWAY TO MIZORAM, STATE STARTS TO FEEL PINCH

In a bid to resolve the inter-state border row, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday night said that he will send two senior Ministers to Aizawl on August 5 for "a meaningful dialogue" with the Mizoram government.



Subir Bhaumik | Kolasib (Mizoram)

Assam and Mizoram say they have taken steps to defuse the border tension, but the national highway connecting the two states are still bereft of transport carrying essential supplies.

During a three-hour trip from Aizawl Airport to Kolasib, the border district with Assam, this correspondent could find only three trucks on National Highway 306. All were carrying bamboos within Mizoram, the drivers said. Kolasib residents say no truck carrying essential supplies from

elsewhere in India through Assam have arrived in Kolasib on way to Aizawl. "It is due to the blockage started by Assam. Their government has stopped all trucks to Mizoram. Most of them carry essential supplies like Covid drugs and testing kits," said Kolasib resident Andrew Vanlalauva.

Roadside eateries between Aizawl and Kolasib say their business is down. "Truck drivers are our biggest clientele. Most come to eat when going towards Aizawl. We cannot find customers since the border trouble started," said V.Sailo, owner of a roadside eatery in Kolasib.

Last Monday, Assam and Mizoram Police fought pitched gunbattles on the Cachar-Kolasib border, leaving six Assam policemen dead, while 60 others, including many policemen and civilians on either side were injured, many seriously. A war of words followed but intervention by Union Home Minister Amit Shah has helped contain the situation. But landlocked Mizoram has already begun to feel the pinch. Prices of all essential commodities are rising.

MIZORAM GUV MEETS SHAH, DISCUSSES SECURITY SITUATION

New Delhi: Amid the Mizoram-Assam border row, Mizoram Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati on Monday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the national capital and discussed the prevailing security situation in the bordering areas with Assam. This was the first meeting of Mizoram Governor with the Union Home Minister after a bloody clash over the border dispute between the police personnel of the two states on July 26, killing 5 policemen of Assam Police and injuring over 50 persons including one superintendent of police.

To take this goodwill gesture ahead, I have directed the Assam Police to withdraw the FIR against K. Vanlalavena, Hon'ble MP, Rajya Sabha from Mizoram. However, cases against other accused police officers will be pursued. He (Vanlalavena) was not in that area on that day. We had booked him only for provocative statements.



Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister, Assam

Can't detain person on possible apprehension of breach of law, order: SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday observed that a possible apprehension of breach of law and order cannot become a ground to detain a person under a preventive detention law, as it rejected the contention that a liberal meaning must be given to the expression "public order" in the context of such a statute. A bench of Justices R.F. Nariman and Hrishikesh Roy said: "It is clear that at the highest, a possible apprehension of breach of law and order can be said to be made out if it is apprehended that the detenu, if set free, will continue to cheat gullible persons." It noted this may be a good ground to appeal against the bail orders granted or to cancel bail but certainly cannot provide the springboard to move under a preventive detention statute.

The bench pointed out that mere contravention of law such as indulging in cheating



or criminal breach of trust certainly affects "law and order", but before it can be said to affect "public order", it must affect the community or the public at large.

The Telangana government counsel argued that the detenu was a habitual fraudster who had created fear amongst the gullible public, and since he was likely to commit similar offences in future, it was important to preventively detain him, as the ordinary law had no deterrent effect on him.

BIRLA READY TO GIVE UP VODAFONE-IDEA STAKE TO GOVT ENTITY



New Delhi: Kumar Manglam Birla, the chairman of Aditya Birla Group, has written to the Cabinet Secretary saying that he is ready to hand over his stake in Vodafone-Idea to any government entity. In a letter to Cabinet Secretary, Birla said that, with a "sense of duty" towards 27 crore Indians connected with Vodafone Idea, Birla is willing to hand over his stake to public Sector Unit (PSU), a government entity or any domestic financial entity, or any other entity that the government may consider worthy of keeping the company as a going concern. In the letter, Birla sought clarity on adjusted gross revenue (AGR), adequate moratorium on spectrum dues and floor pricing adding that without immediate and active government support VIL's operations will be at an "irretrievable point of collapse". He also said that investors have also sought clarity on these issues.

300 STRAY DOGS POISONED IN ANDHRA VILLAGE, ACTIVISTS FUME

ELURU | Agencies

The killing, allegedly by poisoning, of more than 300 stray dogs by a village panchayat in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district has sent local animal rights activists into a fury. The gruesome incident first came to light on July 29 when animal rights activist Sri Latha Challapalli received a tip-off. She went to the village and was shocked to find the decomposed carcasses of the dogs in a shallow pit on its outskirts.

"The killings took place on July 24 and I got information on July 29. I went to the village and saw the decomposed bodies buried in a pit near the pond. Initially, the local police were not willing to file a case under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act," she said. According to Sri Latha, the village panchayat officials had roped in members of a local dog-catcher community, to kill the animals. "The dogs could have easily been sterilised instead of murdering them," she contends. A case has been registered at on the basis of her complaint at the Dharmajugudem police station, under section 429 of IPC and Section 11(I) of Prevention of Cruelty to



Animals Act, 1960, a police official said.

Meanwhile, the BJP's national Secretary and co-in charge for Andhra Pradesh, Sunil Deodhar, demanded action against the perpetrators of the brutal act. "Shocking! As result of patronising evils, 300 innocent stray dogs were poisoned & dumped in pits in Lingapalem, Andhra Pradesh #AnimalLovers & any sensible human should not let these barbaric killers go unpunished. CM @ysjagan must bring out those guiltily to justice," he said in a tweet.

Normal rainfall likely in Aug-Sep across nation: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rainfall over the country as a whole during the second half (August to September period) South-West monsoon season is most likely to be normal with a tendency to be on the positive side of the normal.

Monthly rainfall for August is most likely to be normal -- 94 to 106 per cent of Long Period Average (LPA), IMD Director General said. The LPA of the August to September period rainfall over the country as a whole for 1961-2010 is 428.3 mm. The IMD said this year, it expects the rainfall to be 95 to 105 per cent of the LPA for August to September.

The spatial distribution suggests that below normal to normal rainfall is likely



over many parts of the northwest, east and north-east parts of the country and normal to above normal rainfall is most likely to be experienced over most parts of peninsular India and adjacent central India, he said. July month witnessed very heavy rainfall (115.6 to

204.5 mm) events at 567 stations of IMD across India while 112 stations witnessed extremely heavy rainfall events (more than 204.5 mm). In July 2020, 90 stations witnessed extremely heavy rainfall while 447 witnessed very heavy rainfall, IMD data showed.

MAN ARRESTED FOR FAKING GOA CM'S FACEBOOK PROFILE, SOLICITING MONEY

Panaji: A man, who made Facebook accounts of several bureaucrats and politicians, including Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, and then used to solicit money from the target's friends and acquaintances, has been arrested from Uttar Pradesh, police said on Monday. A statement issued by the Goa Police's Crime Branch said that 200 SIM cards were also recovered from Mohammad Shakir after his arrest in Mathura, in a joint operation with officials from the Haryana and Uttar Pradesh Police.

"During interrogation and initial investigation, it was found that accused Mohammad Shakir used to create the fake social media profiles of various public servants and politicians which would mimic their original profiles. He would then use the fake profile to contact 'Friends' and ask for money on various pretexts like medical emergencies, etc," it said. In July this year, an FIR was filed against unknown persons after a fake social media account in the name of Sawant was created and messages were sent to people known to the Chief Minister requesting for money to be transferred to Shakir's account via PayTM. Shakir has been arrested under sections 66C and 66D of the IT Act and Sections 419, 420 and 511 of the Indian Penal Code. "Discreet and technical investigation crime revealed that the present crime was being committed from Mewat in Haryana, Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, and the surrounding area. Accordingly, information regarding the suspect was shared with the Mewat and Mathura police," the statement said.

BIHAR BJP MINISTER'S REMARKS REKINDLES SPAT

Patna: Friction between NDA alliance partners in Bihar on Monday resurfaced after a BJP minister's remarks on coalition governments. Panchayati Raj Minister Samrat Chaudhary said that running a coalition government in Bihar is extremely tough.

"Despite having 74 seats, we have given the post of Chief Minister to a leader of a party having only 43 seats to follow the coalition pact. Bihar has a coalition government of four parties and each of them have different ideologies. In this case, running a government is not an easy task," Chaudhary said while addressing his party members in Aurangabad district. Keeping this in view, BJP supporters should maintain patience, he added.

Noting that the BJP has governments in many states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc, he said that running a government there is very easy, but execution of work in states like Bihar is extremely tough, as even officials are not listening to the ministers.

Reacting to Chaudhary's statement, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar asked him to specify who is not listening.

"If he (Chaudhary) is having any issue, why don't he talk to leaders of his own party," he said after his Janata Darbar on Monday. "We have been running a coalition government for many years in Bihar and there is no such issue. The coalition is running smoothly between all alliance partners," he added.

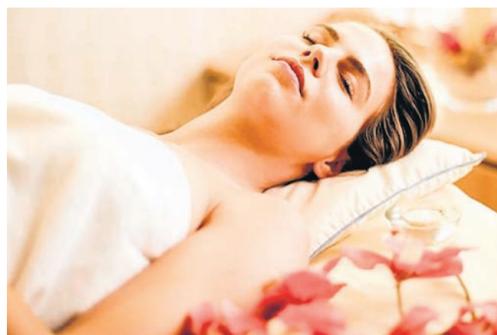
Delhi govt issues new guidelines for spa, massage centres

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi government on Monday issued new guidelines for operation of spa and massage centres in the city with strict measures to ensure prevention of sexual abuse and trafficking and to ensure the security of patrons as well as employees. The new guidelines strictly prohibit any kind of cross-gender massage in the premises in view to protection of children from sexual offences, preventing sexual harassment, and trafficking among others.

"The guidelines have been made while keeping in mind the safety and security of the consumers as well as the employees on the premises.

"The centres have to ensure utmost safety inside their prem-



ises like provisions of self-closing doors and prohibition on latches and bolts inside the doors of the massage centre chambers while keeping external doors open during working hours. The cen-

tres will also need to have separate toilets and bathrooms for males and females as well as separate changing rooms," an Delhi government statement said.

Will continue to work as MP: Babul Supriyo

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Union minister Babul Supriyo, who had recently announced quitting politics, said on Monday that he will continue to work as an MP. Supriyo's remarks came after a meeting with BJP chief J.P. Nadda at the latter's residence here.

It was the second meeting between Nadda and Supriyo in the last 48 hours after the BJP MP from Asansol in West Bengal announced about quitting politics in a Facebook post on Saturday.

The two-time MP from Asansol said that he will continue to work in his constituency.

"I will remain an MP and fulfil my constitutional duties as an MP, but not participate in politics. I will also give up my official bungalow and the central security provided to me. There is politics beyond the constitutional post and I withdraw myself from it. I will not join



any other party," Supriyo said after the meeting with Nadda.

Sources said that the BJP chief asked Supriyo to reconsider his decision and not resign from his Lok Sabha membership.

In a Facebook post on Saturday, Supriyo announced that he has decided to quit politics. He had also said in the post that he will resign from his post as Member of Parliament.

India, China agree to resolve remaining border dispute

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India and China agreed to resolve remaining border issues in an 'expeditious manner' in accordance with the existing agreements and protocols and maintain the momentum of dialogue



of remaining areas related to disengagement along the Line of Actual Control in the Western Sector of India-China border areas," said Indian Army in the statement. "The two sides also agreed that in the interim they will continue their effective efforts in

ensuring stability along the LAC in the Western Sector and jointly maintain peace and tranquility," the force added. The talks between two countries happened after a gap of three months. Indian military delegates discussed disengagement at friction areas like Hot Springs, Gogra and 900 square km Depsang plains.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi University (DU) has started the admission process to undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) courses across various colleges affiliated to it. This year a large number of students have secured more than 95 per cent marks in their class 12 exams as a result of which students seeking admissions in DU colleges are likely to soar.

The last date for filling forms for seeking admissions to UG programmes is August 31. The admission process will be strictly online.

Many DU colleges already have had a very high cut-offs for admissions in various courses.



These colleges include Hindu College, Hansraj College, Ramjas College, Daulat Ram College, Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) and St. Stephen's College.

The DU V-C said, this time the merit list may soar up even higher as compared to previous years. However, despite this, admissions in DU will be conducted on the basis of merit only.

The admission process for the UG courses in DU began on Monday (August 2) while that for the postgraduate programme started from July 26.

DU has decided to maintain the eligibility criteria of the last year for the benefit of the students keeping in view the challenges faced by the varsity due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.





Flooding rains in MP to continue for 24-48 hours

CM CHOUHAN SEEKS AIR FORCE'S HELP IN FLOOD RESCUE OPS

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued red and orange alerts of rainfall in many districts across the state for the next two days. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in a tweet that he has requested 5 IAF helicopters from Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and three have already left for rescue operations in Shivpuri district.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

As the monsoon continues to create mayhem in the Sheopur and Shivpuri districts of Madhya Pradesh, the state government has sought the India Air Force's help to rescue people. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has held meetings with the authorities undertaking rescue operations. He has been taking updates of the situations in these districts, where many residents have been stranded in buildings amidst heavy rainfall. The state has received heavy rainfall leading to loss of lives and damage to property. In a tweet, Chouhan said that over 60 people who were stranded

have been rescued safely in the Sheopur district. The rescue operation has been going on for the past three days. Several areas of Sheopur were inundated after the Parvati river breached its banks following heavy showers. The district has been witnessing heavy rainfall for the past few days. In another tweet, Chouhan said he has requested 5 IAF helicopters from Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and three have already left for rescue operations in Shivpuri district. The CM said that he himself is monitoring the situation in Shivpuri and urged people to remain calm. He said all possible help will be provided to them. The state government has

given instructions to send additional teams of SDRF from the Gwalior and Jabalpur districts. Shivpuri and Sheopur administrations have been asked to remain alert and provide necessary help to all the affected. For the past 20 days, Madhya Pradesh has been witnessing rainfall. More than 6 inches of rainfall was recorded in more than 36 cities of the state on Sunday. Many districts are also facing flood-like situations due to heavy rainfall. The state has received 9 percent more rainfall than normal in this monsoon season, so far. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued red and orange alerts of rainfall in many districts across the state for the next two days. The red

alert was issued for very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall and the orange alert was issued for the possibility of heavy rainfall. Meanwhile, heavy to very heavy rains have been lashing parts of Madhya Pradesh, parts of Rajasthan. Moreover, areas in Uttar Pradesh, bordering Madhya Pradesh have also seen some heavy showers. In fact, during the last 24 hours from 8:30 am on Sunday, Datia recording a whopping 132 mm, Sheopur 115 mm, Guna 107 mm, Tikamgarh 91 mm, Nowgong 80 mm, Pachmarhi 61 mm, Shajapur 46 mm, Bhopal 42 mm, Khajuraho 38 mm and Raisen recorded 33 mm rain. May continue until Aug 3rd.

CM monitors flood hit areas from State Situation Room



■ Interacted with local officials from the Situation Room at Mantralaya
■ Villagers should not worry, all arrangements for relief including helicopters are being provided

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that two helicopters will reach by this evening to rescue people trapped in three villages due to the floods of Parvati river in Shivpuri district. Talks have already been held with the Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in this regard. Army and Air Force officers are in constant touch. District administration and SDRF teams are active in relief and rescue operations. NDRF team is also reaching the spot. Chouhan took stock of five villages surrounded by water in

Shivpuri district from the Situation Room at Mantralaya and also inquired about relief works from the local officials. Additional Chief Secretary Home Rajesh Rajoura and other officers were also present. It is noteworthy that 6 villages Kupwara, Harrai, Akurni, Barkhedi, Chilapai and Raipur of Bairad tehsil of Shivpuri district are surrounded by the flood waters of Parvati river. Of these, villagers from Kupwara, Harrai and Akurni villages have been shifted to safer places. Villagers in Barkhedi, Chilapai and Raipur are surrounded by flood waters. Chouhan spoke to the

SDM, station in-charge, local sarpanch, panchayat secretary and Anganwadi workers on mobile from the Situation Room and inquired about the situation. Chouhan said that the villagers should be safely transported to a higher place in the village itself so that the villagers are not affected by the flood waters. Chief Minister encouraging the villagers said that all possible relief efforts are being made. As soon as the helicopters reach, the work of shifting the villagers to a safe place will start. He urged the villagers not to worry the safety of all the people is the top priority of the state government.

Banks should boost entrepreneurship and skill development at village level: CM

■ Chouhan during meeting with Smita Bhagat, Group Head of HDFC Bank and other officials in Mantralaya said that banks should cooperate in promoting entrepreneurship, skill development and activities of self-help groups at the village level.



level. Chouhan said this during his meeting with Smita Bhagat, Group Head of HDFC Bank and other officials in Mantralaya. Bhagat informed that camps will be organized by the bank at the urban body level for the convenience of beneficiaries under the street vendor scheme implemented in the state. There is also a plan to provide Rs 400 crore to self-help groups of more than 4 thousand villages of the state. Along with setting up of smart classes in 100 schools of the state, 10 bedded ICUs will also be set up in district hospitals. Each ICU will cost Rs 30 lakh.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that banks should cooperate in promoting entrepreneurship, skill development and activities of self-help groups at the village

PROVISION OF STRINGENT PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE ENGAGED IN ILLEGAL LIQUOR TRADE: CM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that deaths caused by spurious liquor is a very serious crime. While amending related laws, a provision will be made for stringent punishment for those engaged in the illicit liquor trade. Strict action should be taken against the persons involved in illegal liquor business with immediate effect. Delay in this will not be tolerated. All possible efforts should be made in a concerted manner to check illegal liquor being brought from neighbouring states. The issue must be discussed with concerned states. Chouhan directed that cent percent transportation of OP alcohol tankers from the distillery must be ensured with e-lock system. If any distillery of the state is found involved in illegal transportation of OP alcohol, it should be shut down immediately.

Self-help groups in MP empowering women

■ Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while taking steps towards Atmanirbhar ('self-reliant') Madhya Pradesh, said, "an effective action plan has been made for the empowerment of women in the state."

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Women in many parts of Madhya Pradesh associated with several self-help groups are not only making themselves financially independent but have their families wriggled out of the debt trap. Some women have also succeeded in freeing their land from the control of the money lenders.

The government has made self-help groups arrange bank loans at the lowest interest rate. This has not only helped women free the mortgaged

land from the money-lenders but this is also proving to be a lifesaver in avoiding to pay high interest rates.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while taking steps towards Atmanirbhar ('self-reliant') Madhya Pradesh, said, "an effective action plan has been made for the empowerment of women in the state. This year the assistance limit given to women self-help groups through banks has been raised from Rs 300 crore to Rs 2,100 crore. It has also been decided that the interest rates lent by the banks will not exceed four per cent. The state government will pay the extra interest rate if charged." The Chief Minister said that through self-help groups, rural women are provided markets to sell their products. The products made by these self-help groups have been linked to the digital platforms through a portal for marketing. The self-help group members have



now stopped mortgaging their land and ornaments to money-lenders for funds. This has transformed the lives of such poor families, he said.

In Udaigarh block of Alirajpur district, 85 members of 59 self-help groups across 32 villages have freed 189 acres of mortgaged land by paying Rs 31,72,000. Similarly, Geeta Lodhi of Jamui village under Sohagpur development block in Shahdol district has also freed her mortgaged land with the help of a self-help group. The mortgaged land belonging to a member of Jai Durga Aajeevika Self-Help Group in Chhirkhura village under Timarni block in Harda district has been freed from moneylenders.

Under the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission which comes under the state Panchayat and

Rural Development Department, more than 37,70,000 rural poor families have been linked with over 3,30 lakh self-help groups. Nearly 2,92,000 self-help groups have been provided financial assistance in the form of bank loans worth Rs 2,900 crore which helped create more than 100 types of agriculture and non-agriculture activities. Under the mission, nearly 12,23,000 families have been directly linked to agricultural and animal husbandry-based activities in the state. Out of these, nearly 5,02,000 are engaged in vegetable production, 1,72,000 in agriculture and 1,55,000 women in dairy business. Similarly, nearly 4,62,000 families have been linked to non-agriculture-based activities. In the same way, nearly 61,000 self-help group members are engaged in sewing work. Nearly 12,000 women have been associated with sanitary napkin manufacturing and re-packaging work, 15,000 women in incense sticks manufacturing, 14,000 women in bamboo production and 12,000 women in handloom business.

It is necessary to increase employment opportunities in state - CM

■ Developing furniture and toy clusters in Indore is commendable
■ Industrialists met Chief Minister Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the state government will provide all possible support to the furniture and toy clusters to be developed in Indore. The employment opportunities in the state will increase with the units established in the cluster. This is necessary for the creation of self-reliant Madhya Pradesh. Developing furniture and toy clusters in Indore is a commendable initiative of the industrialists. Chouhan was discussing in Mantralaya with industrial-



ists who had come to meet him regarding the Indore furniture cluster and toy cluster. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Omprakash Sakhelecha, Commissioner Industries and

Secretary Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Vivek Porwal were present. A furniture cluster is being developed in Betma, Indore in an area of 154 hectares at a cost of Rs. 600 crores. 171 investors will set up their

units in the cluster. This will provide employment to about 5200 people. Chief Minister Chouhan agreed to the demand of the representatives for allotment on the basis of conversion, permission to develop the cluster in three phases, electricity sub-station, one MLD water and construction 45 meter road. There is a plan to set up 20 units with an investment of Rs 70 crore in the toy cluster to be built in the industrial area of Rau Rangwasa in Indore. This will provide employment to about 4 thousand people. The estimated production for the first year is about Rs 250 crore. The delegation made a demand for the cluster to be developed by the government and allocated directly to the members at the departmental rate. Giving its consent, Chief Minister Shri Chouhan also gave approval for two FARs for the construction of the building.

CM congratulates MP's Olympic hockey player Vivek Sagar over phone

■ "I'm proud of you, Vivek" CM says play and win, congratulations from the people of Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday called up member of Indian Hockey team, from Madhya Pradesh, Vivek Sagar, and congratulated him for his excellent performance. Chief Minister Chouhan while talking to Sagar said that 'Many congratulations to you and the Indian hockey team for their excellent performance in the Tokyo Olympics, I am proud of you and have full confidence that the Indian hockey team will continue to achieve success. You play and win, many congratulations from the people of Madhya Pradesh. Chouhan expressed hope that Vivek Sagar, who hails from Hoshangabad district, and other players have performed brilliantly as members of the Indian Hockey team. In the same week, Vivek Sagar also scored a goal in the Hockey



Olympic match against Argentina, as a result of which India's team was victorious. The Vijay-Yatra of the Indian team continues.

Due to the good performance of Vivek Sagar, the Indian team reached the quarter-finals by winning 3-1. Now the Indian team has reached the semi-finals. Chouhan said that Vivek Sagar has brought glory to Madhya Pradesh. Due to the policy of promotion of sports persons in the state many talents are performing well at national and international level.

IGRMS 'Exhibit of the Week' "KERING / KERANG" WAIST CLOTH MADE OF BARK STRING IS EXHIBIT OF THE WEEK

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under its Latest and popular online series Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) entitled 'Exhibit of the Week' the "KERING / KERANG" Waist cloth made of bark string collected from 1995 is at display. The Community of Parenga of Koraput, Odisha. It's Measurement Length - maximum 99 cm., Width - maximum 51 cm. displayed in the audience as the First Exhibit of the month of August, 2021 through official website, Facebook, Instagram and twitter page of the IGRMS.

In this regard Praveen Kumar Mishra, Director, IGRMS said that Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (National

Museum of Mankind), Initially this series will focus on the masterpieces from its collection which are considered as unique for their contribution to the cultural history of a particular ethnic group or area. Kerang, is an inseparable cultural entity of Gadaba and Parenga women. It is also a mark of origin of clothes among some tribals of Koraput and Malkangiri district of Odisha. It was compulsory for a woman to wear and to weave this skirt after achievement of her puberty. The fibre from Kerang (Calotropis gigantea), a deciduous shrub is used as a major element to weave Kerang. The cutting of shrub with the help of a small knife is done by the women. To make the fibre strong they

bury the small branches under the stream or the mud for few days. It is then allowed to expose to the sunlight. The soft branches thus collected are beaten against a stone with a wooden mallet to obtain fibre. The fibre is beautifully coloured by the different vegetable and natural dyes. The dried fibres is then polished and rolled to prepare yarn and weaving is done on their small indigenous loom. Visitors can see this object from home through the Official site (https://igrms.com/wordpress/?page_id=4068) and Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/NationalMuseumMankind>), Instagram and twitter page of the IGRMS.

Scindia Stamps Authority, Supporters May Get Lion's Share of Appointments Ahead of Civic Polls

In the run-up to civic body polls, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in Madhya Pradesh is planning to go into these elections as a cohesive unit, keeping resentment at bay.

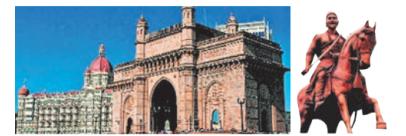
Team Absolute | Bhopal

Having secured a berth in the Union Cabinet after a wait of almost a year, Jyotiraditya Scindia seems to be stamping his authority on political affairs in Madhya Pradesh as his supporters are expected to be rewarded with political appointments soon.

In the run-up to civic body polls, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in Madhya Pradesh is planning to go into these elections as a cohesive unit, keeping resentment at bay. The party is wary of the polls, especially after a sour defeat in Damoh by-poll early this year. The sched-

ule is yet to be finalised by the Election Commission as the fear of third Covid-19 wave looms. However, 'poll-ready' BJP has already geared up with organisational preparations. To start with, the party has finalised appointments for boards and corporations and Scindia supporters are set to get lion's share in these political postings. Keeping these organisational matters a low-key affair, CM Shivraj Chouhan had rushed to New Delhi to meet Home Minister Amit Shah last Saturday. Even after returning to Bhopal, Chouhan remained incommunicado. However, the chief minister had a marathon 10-hour meeting with

state head VD Sharma and senior office-bearers, including Suhas Bhagat and Hitanand. If sources are to be believed, a first list of appointees is ready and could be released anytime soon. Along with some independents, Scindia supporters, including Jasmant Jatav, Raksha Sironia, Munnalal Goyal, Imarti Devi, Manoj Chaudhary and others, could be accommodated in the list. Scindia backers like Aidal Singh Kansana, Girraj Dandotia, Raghuraj Singh Kansana and Ranveer Jatav are also awaiting return to political mainstream and are likely to get political appointments later.



CENTRAL TEAM RUSHED TO MAHARASHTRA AFTER ZIKA REPORT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has rushed a multi-disciplinary team to Maharashtra to monitor a Zika virus case reported and assist the Uddhav Thackeray government in effective management in case of an outbreak amid an ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Pune city reported the Zika case, after neighbouring Kerala reported a few. Maharashtra on Sunday reported its first-ever case of Zika virus infection. A 50-year-old woman from Purandar area in Pune district also tested positive for Chikungunya, said health officials on Sunday. The state officials have appealed to people to not panic and follow the safety precautions.

The first case of the Zika virus, amid the already continuing coronavirus pandemic, has prompted the Union Health Ministry to rush the three member expert team. It consists of a public health expert from the office of Regional Director, Pune; a gynaecologist from Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi; and an entomologist from National Institute of Malaria Research (NIMR), ICMR, New Delhi.

The team of experts will take stock of the ground situation of Zika virus in the state and assess whether the Union Health Ministry's Action Plan for Zika



Management is being implemented properly. It will also recommend necessary public health interventions for the management of Zika.

Several cases of fever were reported from Belsar village in Purandar tehsil from the beginning of July.

Out of five samples sent to National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, for testing, three of them tested positive for Chikungunya.

Only Kerala had reported cases of Zika virus infection this year till the Pune case came to the fore. Kerala currently has 63 cases of Zika. Aedes mosquitoes spread Zika virus. They are also carriers of Dengue and Chikungunya.

Anil Deshmukh once again skips ED summons

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra Home Minister and senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Anil Deshmukh, who is being probed in an alleged money laundering case, skipped the Enforcement Directorate (ED) summons for questioning once again on Monday.

"Deshmukh has skipped summons and has sent a two-page letter to the agency through his advocate," an ED official related to the probe told IANS.

This is for the third time Deshmukh has skipped ED summons in connection with the case. The official said the financial probe agency had sent fresh summons to Deshmukh and his son Hrishikesh Deshmukh on Friday asking them to join the probe with the agency on Monday.

On Friday, the Supreme Court did not grant any protection from arrest to Deshmukh on his plea seeking protection from any "coercive action" in the money laundering case registered against him by the ED and scheduled the matter for hearing on August 3.

Deshmukh, who had skipped the previous summons by the agency, had, in the plea to the top court, challenged these summonses and sought protection for both himself and his son.

Deshmukh has been accused of extortion from



a bunch of Mumbai orchestra bars and money laundering, and the matter is being probed by the ED.

It has been alleged that Rs 4.7 crore was collected as "extortion" from the orchestra bars by the now-dismissed Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze allegedly on Deshmukh's instructions. Later, this amount was transferred to

Deshmukh's Nagpur-based educational trust by his son, Hrishikesh. According to the allegation, the transaction was routed via two hawala operators and was showed as a "donation".

The 71-year-old NCP leader is the president of the trust and his two sons, Salil and Hrishikesh, are trustees. On May 11, a case was registered against the former minister and on June 25, the ED raided Deshmukh's residences in Nagpur, Mumbai, and three other places.

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

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

Earlier this week, the top court had adjourned the matter for a hearing on Friday and asked Deshmukh's legal counsel to provide a copy of the plea to the ED and the Maharashtra government.

The ED had earlier arrested Deshmukh's personal secretary Sanjeev Palande and personal assistant Kundan Shinde after carrying out raids against them and the NCP leader in Mumbai and Nagpur.

Maharashtra BJP's end is near: Shiv Sena

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Fuming over a Bharatiya Janata Party legislator's threat to 'raze the Shiv Sena Bhavan', the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)'s saffron ally on Monday warned that the "BJP's end is near" and those who cast an evil eye at the party headquarters, "will be found floating in the Worli gutters."

A BJP MLC Prasad Lad raked up the row by commenting on the posse of police presence outside the Sena nerve-centre in south-central Dadar, and said, "if needed, the Sena Bhavan could be demolished", sparking an ugly verbal spat with its former ally.

Though Lad apologised later and expressed regards for the Sena founder the late Balasaheb Thackeray, but as the controversy snowballed, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis quickly detached himself from the fracas, saying the BJP doesn't believe in "the culture of destructive politics".

Shiv Sena President and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray himself launched a veiled "Dabangg" Sainik-style fighter attack on Sunday, saying they "are not scared of a slap" but those who dared to do it would be paid back in the same coin and in dou-



ble measure. hile the divide between the two ex-allies just became deeper, the Sena scoffed at the BJP, saying "people who threaten the party are light-weight lowly ruffians, who simply just cannot digest the Sena Flag fluttering atop the Sena Bhavan."

In sharp edits in the party newspapers, 'Saamana' and 'Dopahar Ka Saamana', the Sena said the "chindi-chors" (small-time crooks) who talk of attacking the Sena Bhavan are actually tar-

getting the empire of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and the 'Marathi Pride' of the 'sons of the soil', cemented by the Hindu Hriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray.

It pointed out how the BJP was once a party of "loyal grassroots workers working for the Hindutva ideology, but now it is full of outsiders (defectors from other parties), who have sidelined the original activists to the dump yard -- That is why this party (BJP)'s end is looming near..."

Lampooning the BJP, the Sena said during the post-Babri riots of 1992-1993, the Sena Bhavan was the true protector of the Hindus and Marathis who believe in Hindutva, while these "rioters of today were scared of Pakistan and wetting the mattress at home."

The edit said that Shiv Sena represents justice, hope and aspirations, while the BJP was a traitor party which did not live up to its promise, but despite this, "today, Sena has become the ruling party in Maharashtra."

Throwing the final gauntlet, the Sena said that those who showed the daring to reach the Sena Bhavan on their feet would not return likewise, "so they should ensure they come with a few who can carry them back on their shoulders."

Shiv Sena activists tear down Adani hoarding at Mumbai Airport

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A group of slogan-shouting Shiv Sainiks vandalised and tore down a brand new hoarding erected by the Adani Airport Holding Ltd (AAHL) outside the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport here on Monday afternoon.

The Sainiks, led by Sanjay Kadam and others, were protesting against what they alleged the AAHL's unilateral move to abruptly "change" the name of the CSMIA and replace it with the Adani Group brand name.

"The AAHL has merely only been permitted to manage the Mumbai Airport and they cannot make any changes to the name, etc.



This is an insult to the people of Maharashtra. We shall not tolerate this," said one Sainik at the site. Raising slogans of "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj ki jai ho", the Sainiks trooped onto the landscaped garden, planted saffron flags, and uprooted the AAHL name-boarding in English and Marathi before stomping out of there. An AAHL spokesperson said that the company has only "replaced

the previous branding with Adani Airports branding" after the company took over the prestigious airport last month.

"No change has been made to the CSMIA's branding or positioning at the airport terminal. The branding at the CSMIA is in compliance with the norms and guidelines of the Airport Authority of India Ltd," the spokesperson said.

We don't deserve a media trial: Shilpa Shetty Kundra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra took to social media on Monday to issue a statement, saying she and her family do not deserve a media trial.

Shilpa's statement comes at a time when her husband, businessman Raj Kundra has been granted judicial custody till August 10 in a case pertaining to alleged production and distribution of porn content.

The actress said she will not comment on the case as it is subjudice and also requested the media for some privacy saying the past few days have been challenging for her "on every front".

Shilpa shared her statement on Instagram on Monday, which reads: "Yes! The past few days have been challenging, on every front. There have been a lot of rumours and accusations. A lot of unwarranted aspersions on me cast by the media and (not so) well wishers as well. A lot of trolling/questions posed...not only to me but also to my family."

"MY STAND...I HAVE NOT COMMENTED YET and will continue to refrain from doing so on this case as it is subjudice, so please stop attributing false quotes on my behalf.

Reiterating my philosophy of, as a celebrity 'Never complain, never explain'. All I will say is, as it's an ongoing investigation, I have full faith in the Mumbai Police & the Indian judiciary," she added.

"As a family, we are taking recourse to all our available legal remedies. But, till then I humbly request you - especially as a MOTHER - to respect our privacy for my children's sake and request you to refrain from commenting on half-baked information without verifying the veracity of the same," Shilpa further wrote. "I am a proud law-abiding Indian citizen and a hardworking professional for the last 29 years. People have put their faith in ME & I've never let anyone down. So, most importantly, I request you to respect my family's and 'my right' to privacy in these times. We don't deserve a media trial. Please let the law take its course. Satyamev Jayate!" she concluded. Shilpa Shetty Kundra's statement talking about her "right to privacy" comes just a few days after the Bombay High Court reportedly refused to restrict media and social media platforms from publishing reports which talk about her. The court reportedly told the Bollywood actress that she has chosen a public life.

Maharashtra invites suggestions, objections about its amendments to Centre's farm law

The Maharashtra amendments seek to strengthen the agriculture produce market committee (APMCs) and make minimum support price (MSP) and license for traders procuring farm produce from land tillers in Maharashtra mandatory.

Team Absolute | Pune

The Maharashtra government has sought suggestions and objections from general public regarding the amendments it has carried out to the three central legislations. The last date for filing the same is September 20.

During the recently concluded monsoon session of the state assembly, the Maharashtra government carried out the amendments to the three central farm laws. Majority of the Opposition-ruled states have either refused to implement the laws, or like Maharashtra, amended the same in their state.

The farm laws have become a sore point for the central government with the farmers, mainly from



Punjab and Haryana carrying on an almost year-long protest against them.

The amendments that Maharashtra carried out is more suited to the state's existing eco system. The main amendment carried out by the state in the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, is to specify that pre harvest contracts between the farmer and the buyer should not be below the government declared minimum support price (MSP). In case an agreement is made for a price below the MSP, it will be valid only for two years. Also, instead of the sub-divisional officer,

who is designated in the central act to hear complaints, the state's law makes provision of competent authority and appellate authority to hear cases of dispute.

Similarly, for the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, is to introduce the need for buyers to take licence before trading outside the trade areas. Trade areas, as per the definition in the central act, are the physical boundaries of the wholesale markets or mandis. In the central act, free trade outside the mandis was allowed, for which traders would not have to take any licence from any authority. Maharashtra's amendment while allowing for such trade has made it mandatory for the trader to procure license before they trade.

Also, the dispute redressal mechanism is made robust in Maharashtra's amendment. Of the three central acts, this was perhaps the most contentious as farmers feared the collapse of the present mandi system would leave them at the mercy of big traders. The state government in its amendment to the Essential Commodities Act, 1950, took on the power on itself to prescribe stock limits on essential commodities. The softcopy of the all the three acts are available on the website of Maharashtra legislature (www.mls.org.in). Suggestions and objections can be mailed to al.assembly.mls@gmail.com.

Maharashtra to lift curbs on shop timings in districts with low positivity rate

In a measure of relief to Maharashtra's retailers and shop owners reeling under heavy economic losses due to the pandemic, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday said the hitherto curtailed shop timings would be extended till 8 p.m. in districts with a low case positivity rate.

Team Absolute | Pune

Thackeray, who was visiting rain-battered Sangli district in western Maharashtra, said an official order would be issued extending the timings from 4 pm to 8 pm.

The Chief Minister's statement comes a day after the Pune Chamber of Commerce, stating that repeated lockdowns had left traders and shopkeepers in dire economic straits, had threatened that it would keep all shops open till 7 p.m. from August 4 onwards in defiance of pandemic regulations.

"While I am sympathetic to the plight of traders and shopkeepers, I am not going to be scared off by such threats...let me remind of the lethality of the second wave and the grave oxygen crisis a month ago. The State has a capacity of producing only 1,200-1,300 metric tonne (MT) oxygen. At the peak of the second wave, we faced a massive shortage of 500 MT shortage...fulfilling this deficit had proven arduous and we could secure oxygen from neighbouring States with great difficulty," said Thackeray.

The Chief Minister warned that the Centre, too, had advised stringent adherence to regulations if a third wave was to be averted.

"In the event the third wave strikes, we might be staring in the face of a severe oxygen shortage, and procuring the same from neighbouring States will not be easy...so, while shop timings will be extended till 8 pm in places where cases are in check, rules would not change in districts where cases and fatalities are still high," Thackeray said.

Earlier, the Pune Chamber of Commerce had complained that the State government had not lifted the restrictions despite the number of cases in Pune city steadily declining.

"There is huge dissatisfaction within the business community as a result. Consecutive lockdowns since the first wave and the resulting economic depression caused by this situation has led many traders to commit suicide...if Pune is in the list of places where restrictions on shop timings are to be lifted, then we welcome the decision. If not, we will keep our shops open till 7 pm and beyond from August 4," said Fatehchand Ranka, president, Federation of Trade

Association of Pune (FTAP).

Ranka said traders had uncomplainingly cooperated with the government thus far, despite incurring heavy losses. "In the last one and a half years, due to complete lockdowns or mini-lockdowns, city traders have suffered staggering losses to the tune of ₹75,000 crore. Uncertainty in the business has caused many to lose their jobs, with families of traders and their employees in financial straits. E-commerce companies, on the other hand, are permitted to do a lot of other things."

Ranka said the Pune Municipal Commissioner's directive on Saturday mandating that no restrictions would be lifted was akin to rubbing salt into the wounds of the traders despite the promises of Guardian Minister Ajit Pawar on extending the timings. "Unscientific policies of the local administration and the State government have made the business class worse off than the effects of the pandemic. Our federation has set up vaccination facilities at our own cost...the government has not taken any decision on vaccination of traders, employees and their families when it



ought to have. Now, it cannot dictate us to keep our shops closed," said Ranka. Besides Pune, traders' associations in Mumbai and Nagpur have been frequently petitioning the State government in the past month to lift restrictions on shop timings.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Spike in Covid is dangerous

The third wave of Covid-19 lashing countries across the world is creating fertile breeding grounds for extra infectious and probably vaccine-resistant new variants, scientists warn. The World Health Organisation has announced an 80 per cent average increase over the past four weeks in five of the health agency's six regions, a jump largely fuelled by the Delta variant. According to virologists, the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19, might have already developed into extra threatening kinds which have, to date, evaded detection since they have not infected sufficient people, the Financial Times reported. "We've been surprised more than once by the evolution of variants, though maybe we shouldn't have been because the virus only recently moved into humans and is still adapting to its new hosts," Nick Loman, professor of microbial genomics at Birmingham University in the UK, said, it reported. Covid infections have surged to a mean of 540,000 per day, and a mean of just about 70,000 weekly deaths, the WHO stated this week. Faster rate of vaccination can reduce the probability of emergence of a resistant strain. On the contrary, lifting Covid measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing at a time when over a majority of individuals of the population have already been vaccinated, the probability of emergence of a resistant strain is greatly increased. The institution of a resistant pressure at the moment might result in serial rounds of resistant-strain evolution, with vaccine growth taking part in catch-up within the evolutionary arms race towards novel strains. The scientists noted that evolutions of the virus are inevitable due to the best way the genetic code may be altered by errors within the copying mechanism throughout replication. Most mutations are impartial, however, sometimes one will increase the "health" of the virus, enabling it to contaminate human cells extra simply, the Financial Times reported.

INSTABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN A POTENT THREAT FOR INDIA

Vinod Kumar Shukla

Security forces of the United States of America are leaving Afghanistan which has resulted in the Taliban capturing almost 80 per cent of the country. Bloodbath in the country is continuing with Taliban killing Afghan military personnel and vice versa. Growing violence in Afghanistan and the disturbed country will have a manifold impact on its neighbouring countries especially on India. This will have its bearing from investment to security to possible refugee influx in India. India and Afghanistan share a very cordial government to government relations and India has invested hugely in various development projects in the terror-torn country including building Parliament of Afghanistan. But with Taliban taking over the country and their atrocities against people will trigger the possibilities of Afghans fleeing the country to take refuge in India. Pakistan has always been instigating and helping Taliban to make Kashmir a new target and now all

development projects are getting shelved in the country which are the major challenge before India. As far as development is concerned, the role of India in Afghanistan has been providing assistance like building roads, dams, power transmission infrastructure, schools and hospitals which is estimated to be worth over \$3 billion. India has delivered in Afghanistan projects like 42-MG Salma Dam in Herat inaugurated in 2016 which is known as the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam. The 218-km-long Zaranj-Delaram Highway project was built at the cost of \$150-million. Zaranj is located close to Afghanistan's border with Iran. Parliament of Afghanistan in Kabul was built at the cost of \$90 million. It was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015. Stor Palace was restored and inaugurated in 2016 by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Stor Palace in Kabul was originally built in the late 19th century. India helped Afghanistan in building power and health infrastructure. Indian

Medical Missions' have held free consultation camps in several areas. India gifted 400 buses and 200 minibuses for urban transportation, 105 utility vehicles for municipalities, 285 military vehicles for the Afghan National Army, and 10 ambulances for public hospitals in five cities. It also gave three Air India aircraft to Ariana, the Afghan national carrier, when it was restarting operations. Besides all these big projects, India contributed to building school infrastructure including desks and benches. It also built solar panels in remote villages and Sulabh toilet blocks in Kabul. India has also played a role in capacity building, with vocational training institutes, scholarships to Afghan students, mentoring programmes in the civil service, and training for doctors and others. India had entered into an agreement with Afghanistan for the construction of the Shatoot Dam in Kabul district to provide safe drinking water to 20 over lakh residents. The agreement also announced the start of some 100 community development projects worth \$80 million. India also pledged \$1 million for another Aga Khan heritage project,

the restoration of the Bala Hissar Fort south of Kabul, whose origins go back to the 6th century. But with the new aggressive, violent and radical Taliban taking over the country, all the ongoing projects will come to a halt and such projects will also be impacted whose maintenance and technical assistance come from India. Hatred of Taliban for India that was reflected in the killing of Danish Qureshi - an Indian photo journalist - would force many in the country to flee. And India being a friendly country for refugees is likely to get many refugees from Afghanistan. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, there are at least 11,000 Afghan refugees living in India. They are not Hindu or Sikh refugees but mostly Muslim refugees. The number will increase with the Taliban taking over the country putting extra burden on India.

Besides this, all Indian investment in Afghanistan will be impacted as all Indian workers have come back to India leaving their ongoing projects where they were working. So much so that Indian mission is running with skeleton staff. If the Taliban captures the entire country, there are chances that India is forced to shut down its mission in Kabul. But the biggest threat for India is Pakistan which Pakistan might help Afghan mercenaries infiltrating India to destabilise the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir which has drastically improved after Article 370 was made inapplicable in the erstwhile state and J&K was turned into Union Territory. Though security forces wiped out foreign mercenaries in the J&K and democratic process in the region is continuing but with Taliban controlling Afghanistan, threat of Taliban intruding into Indian territory cannot be ruled out. There will be extra pressure on Indian security forces as buffer of the Afghanistan government will not work in the present scenario. Pakistan will do everything and try every bit to make Jammu and Kashmir a disturb area by giving direct and indirect assistance to Taliban to cross over. (Writer is a journalist based at Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

'1 in 3 Indian PC home users at high risk of cyber attack'

Nearly one third (28.22 per cent) of PC home users in India are at high risk of cyber attacks, according to a report by digital security and privacy provider Avast. Avast's latest Global PC Risk Report also looked into the possibility of users facing advanced threats -- defined as more sophisticated or threats never seen before, designed to bypass common protection technologies included in security software, such as signatures, heuristics, emulators, URL filtering, and email scanning. For this type of threat, Indian home users have a 5.78 per cent risk ratio, which is higher than the global average. Home users around the world have a 29.39 per cent chance of encountering any type of PC malware, which represents an increase of around 5 per cent compared to the previous year. Geographies with more conflictive socio-political situations, such as the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe, seem to be

facing more risk in the online world as well. "The risk ratio has increased worldwide for all malware attacks, and we can see that India is no exception. In the pandemic, the internet has been kind of a 'life saver' for many, empowering them to stay connected with loved ones during the lockdown, to attend virtual workout sessions, get together, classes, and work remotely," said Michal Salat, Director of Threat Intelligence at Avast, in a statement. "But cybercriminals have also taken notice of this, and so we have seen a variety of tailored campaigns taking advantage of increased online activities, such as Covid-19 related attacks, sextortion campaigns, spyware, and ransomware," Salat added. The data included in this report is collected from Avast's threat detection network, and represents a data snapshot, constructed with the threats Avast protected its PC users between March 16 and April 14, 2021.

ONLY 3% LABOURERS GOT JOBS UNDER MNREGS IN BIHAR IN 2014-19: CAG

Bihar's Nitish Kumar government managed to give only 3 per cent employment to labourers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme between 2014 to 2019, the Comptroller and Auditor General said in a report. As per the report, there were 26 to 36 per cent people in Bihar who applied for 100 days guaranteed employment under the MNREGS but only 3 per cent got work. The report further said that 86.61 per cent labourers do not have land in Bihar and were completely dependent on the scheme. It conducted a survey among 60.88 lakh labourers before preparing the report. The CAG has also found financial irregularities in the Nitish Kumar government's



ambitious project, Lohia Path Chakra, the multi-purpose grade separator on Bailey Road near Raj Bhavan in Patna. The government auditor said that construction company Bihar Rajya Pul Nirmaan Nigam Ltd (BRPNL) has taken some wrong decisions during plan-

ning, preparation of Detail Project Report (DPR) and construction, wrongly expending Rs 6.04 crore in design, Rs 10.86 crore on specialist observers, and Rs 1.52 crore on other expenses. As a result, the state exchequer bore a loss of Rs 18.42 crore, it said.

international

US BLAMES IRAN FOR TANKER ATTACK, PREPARES FOR RESPONSE

Upon review of the available information, we are confident that Iran conducted this attack, which killed two innocent people, using one-way explosive UAVs, a lethal capability it is increasingly employing throughout the region.



Washington | Agencies

The US has blamed Iran for carrying out last week's deadly drone attack on an oil tanker in the north Arabian Sea, saying "an appropriate response" is forthcoming.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the State Department said: "Upon review of the available information, we are confident that Iran conduct-

ed this attack, which killed two innocent people, using one-way explosive UAVs, a lethal capability it is increasingly employing throughout the region.

"There is no justification for this attack, which follows a pattern of

attacks and other belligerent behaviour. These actions threaten freedom of navigation through this crucial waterway, international shipping and commerce, and the lives of those on the vessels involved.

"We are working with our partners

to consider our next steps and consulting with governments inside the region and beyond on an appropriate response, which will be forthcoming."

Zodiac Maritime, a London-based firm owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, said on July 30 that its oil tanker Mercer Street was attacked a day earlier.

The two dead crew members were from Romania and Britain.

Also on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett blamed Iran for the attack, saying his country has intelligence evidence of Tehran's involvement and expects the international community to exert pressure on the Islamic Republic that "made a serious mistake". So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has dismissed the allegation, saying they were "baseless."

'Ending Israeli settlement important step for trust-building'

Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the executive committee of PLO, told reporters here on Sunday that "the Israeli settlement building and the confiscation of Palestinian land must stop."

Ramallah | Agencies

Ending Israeli settlement in the Palestinian territories, mainly in East Jerusalem, is an important step for trust-building with the Jewish state, a senior official said here.

Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the executive committee of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), told reporters here on Sunday that "the Israeli settlement building and the confiscation



Palestinian side handed US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Israeli and Palestinian Affairs Hadi Amr a document of trust-building measures with Israel.

The newspaper unveiled that the document called for bringing the Palestinian-Israeli relations to pre-2000 and resuming the direct peace negotiations between the two sides, which stopped in 2014. The document included 30 items related to security, political and economic demands, including freezing settlements, maintaining the status quo at al-Aqsa Mosque and stopping demolishing Palestinian homes, it said. The document also called for reducing the Israeli commission on tax revenue dues from 3 to 1 per cent, stopping Israeli deductions on Palestinian funds, and reviewing the Paris Economic Agreement, it added.

US SENATE INTRODUCES BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

Washington: The US Senate has introduced a long-awaited and hotly debated infrastructure bill after hours of efforts to finalise the legislative text. Late Sunday night, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said that given the bipartisan nature of the bill, he believed that the chamber could quickly process amendments and pass the bill "in a matter of days", reports Xinhua news agency. This came just days after a bipartisan group of senators reached an agreement on the major issues of the \$1.2 trillion bill infrastructure plan, which is much smaller than the plan President Joe Biden originally proposed. The bipartisan bill includes \$550 billion in new spending on infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, passenger rails, drinking water and waste water systems. The rest of the package involves previously approved spending.

Afghan VP continues unabated Pakistan slamming

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Afghanistan's First Vice President, Amrullah Saleh is clearly the pre-eminent face of the country's leadership who is not mincing words against Pakistan and its leadership in fomenting trouble.

In a latest tweet, Saleh blamed Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi for "once again speaking on behalf of Taliban".

"Once again speaking on behalf of Taliban terrorists, the strategic proxy of his country in Afghanistan & the region, Foreign Minister Qureshi is louder. But can he explain where does he gets his confidence? When was the latest meeting of GHQ with Qetta Shura & HQN?" Saleh queried in a tweet on Sunday.

The tweet comes after Qureshi said that the Taliban would not allow the Islamic State (IS) militants to penetrate into their country.

All of Saleh's messaging over the last few days and weeks is directly attacking Pakistan, the ISI, Pakistan Army and the Taliban.

In an earlier tweet he said:



"Afghanistan is under a full scale invasion of Taliban terrorists who have an organised backing & sponsorship in Pakistan. It has to be tackled. Talibs use Doha office for deception. They have no intention to engage in meaningful negotiations." There have been calls to shut down the Taliban's Doha office which is being used to garner legitimacy for its terrorism.

After a huge rally by Pashtuns in Waziristan which slammed Pakistan's role in the proxy war in

Afghanistan, Saleh again attacked Pakistan for extortion. "Pak used to portray Waziristan as a lawless tribal land sending fighters & terrorists to Afg. Give us 10 digit \$\$ & we will fix it, GHQ/ISI used to demand from the West. Now an awakened Waziristan has crushed that falsehood & openly echoes Afghan voices. Higher lies fall harder," he said in an earlier tweet. The First Vice President has also accused Pakistan of full scale invasion of Afghanistan.

"The propaganda stunts won't change the reality & improve Pakistan's image in my country. The reality is that Pakistan Army is the architect, strategic master & low profile supplier of the ongoing full scale terror invasion in my country. Forty second twitter clip won't change the reality," he tweeted.

Saleh also said that Taliban is a replica of the IS and Al Qaeda with links to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

"Pakistan's diplomatic community is working hard painting & decorating a fictional image for Talibs. On the ground however Talibs 2.0 is nothing but an Afghan replica of IS-K & Al Qaeda, providing bases to foreign 'good & bad terrorists'. The 'good' LeT is their buddies in allegiance." To this date no member of the Afghan intelligentsia, no business person other than opium sellers, former or current diplomat, no Afghan of reputation and dignity has joined the Talibs. None. The reason is simple. People are united against a Rawalpindi's GGH backed clerical dictatorship," Saleh said while implying that Afghans are revisiting Rawalpindi's dictatorship.

No decision yet over annual military drills with US: Seoul

South Korea's Defence Ministry said on Monday that no decision had been made yet over the joint annual military exercise with the US this year.

Seoul | Agencies

Ministry spokesman Boo Seung-chan told an online press briefing that nothing was finalised yet over how, when and on which scale the annual South Korea-US command post exercise would be conducted, saying it would be decided by the authorities of the two nations, reports Xinhua news agency.

The combined forces of South Korea and the US have annually staged the summer-

time command post drills around mid-August, which North Korea has denounced as a dress rehearsal for invasion. Boo said Seoul and Washington were in close consultations over the issue taking into account the overall situations, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the combined defence posture, the transfer of the wartime operational control, and the support for diplomatic efforts to establish lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. In a statement on Sunday night, Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, said that the joint military drills were "an undesirable prelude which clouds the way ahead" in Pyongyang-Seoul relations. She noted that the restoration of the inter-Korean communication lines should not be taken as anything more than just the "physical reconnection".



CHRISSY TEIGEN'S 'ITALIAN GETAWAY' WITH JOHN LEGEND

Los Angeles | Agencies

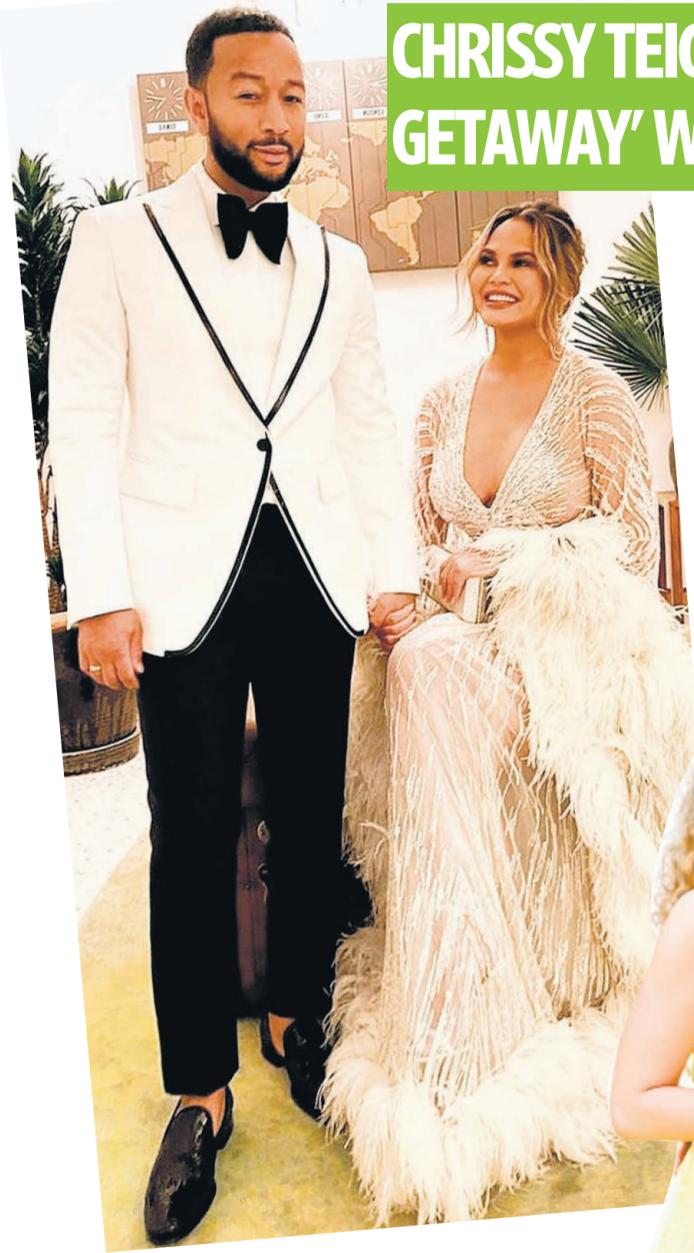
Chrissy Teigen is at her most glamorous in a sheer feathered dress as she celebrates her 'first sober Italian getaway' with husband John Legend. She traveled to Italy early last month to take her mind off her social media bullying scandal. The model showed off a stunningly glamorous outfit on Instagram to mark the occasion while joking that she finally had her 'first sober Italian getaway.'

Chrissy channeled 1920s high-society style with the gown, which was lined with voluminous white ostrich feathers. She was seen showing off her show-stopping looks in various parts of her living quarters, before her husband John posed with her next to a thick wooden trunk.

John looked dashing as ever in a white tuxedo jacket with peaked lapels and a thick black bow tie.

John joined Katy Perry and others to provide some of the musical entertainment for the evening, according to Vogue.

Among the other celebrities at the event were Emily Ratajkowski, Nicky Hilton, Eiza González, Sean Penn's daughter Dylan Penn and Borat 2 star Maria Bakalova.



THERE'S NO BREAK FROM PARENTING: KIT HARRINGTON



Los Angeles | Agencies

'Game Of Thrones' star Kit Harington and his wife Rose Leslie welcomed their first child, a baby boy, five months ago. The actor admits he wasn't prepared for just how "big" a job raising a family is.

"They tell you and they don't tell you (about fatherhood). Everyone goes, 'Look, it's big what you're about to go through.' You have no way of knowing that until it happens. What surprises you is: You go, 'Oh, this goes on forever.' Like, you don't get a break from it," Harington told Access Hollywood.

The 'Modern Love' actor loves how having their baby has brought him and his wife closer together, reports femalefirst.co.uk. "Every day, I wake up and I look after this little human and now we're part of a unit together. I think the thing that surprises me most about fatherhood is you are now a unit, the three of you. And that's a whole new dynamic you need to find," he said.

Los Angeles | Agencies

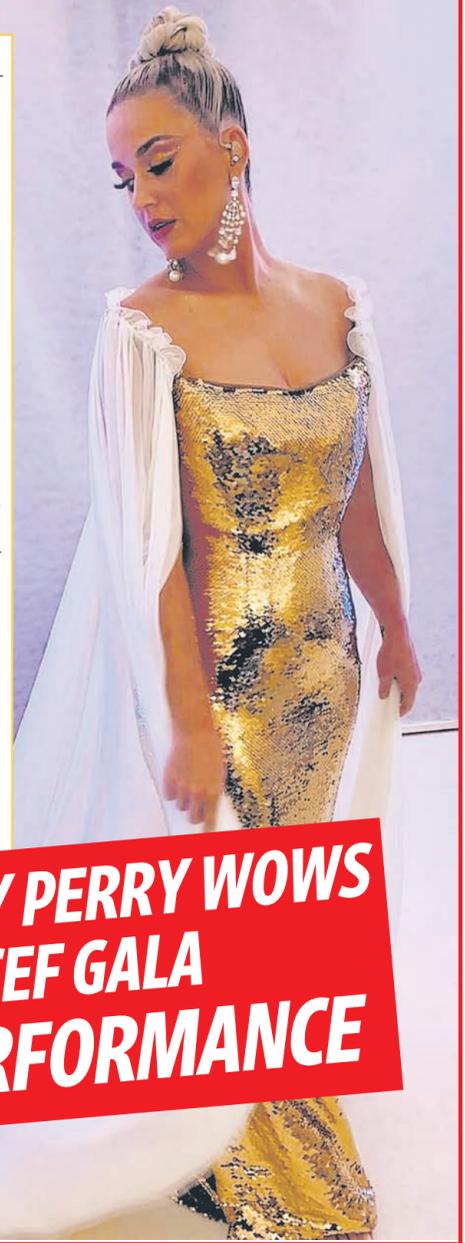
Singer Katy Perry wowed in gold as she gave a stellar performance at the UNICEF gala in Capri on Sunday. She dazzled in the sparkly gold ensemble which featured a dramatic white cape as she took the stage at La Certosa di San Giacomo.

All eyes were on Katy as she stood on the steps, with her golden locks swept into a high plaited bun, while she opted for a rich palette of makeup which boasted sparkly gold eyeshadow and a light pink lip.

The Roar hitmaker accessorised with a pair of statement diamante and pearl drop earrings to really make her outfit pop.

Katy took to Instagram on Sunday to thank the charity for letting her perform. The star captioned her large image carousel: 'ty @luisaviaroma & of course my friends @unicefitalia'

Her dramatic performance comes after the singer hit up the UNICEF fundraiser event with her handsome beau, Orlando Bloom.



KATY PERRY WOWS UNICEF GALA PERFORMANCE

"Memories bring back you"

Blake Lively credits eatery for igniting romance with hubby Ryan

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Blake Lively, who has been married to actor Ryan Reynolds since 2012, has shared that their relationship began after a date night at a Japanese restaurant.

The star couple went down memory lane over the weekend and revisited the sentimental venue.

Lively took to social media to let her

fans know how important the place is to her. She wrote alongside a picture of her husband standing outside the restaurant: "If it weren't for this place. We wouldn't be together. No joke. No restaurant means more to us."

In a second post, the actress noted that it had been roughly 10 years since they first visited the restaurant, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She added: "10 years later. We still go out on our 'first date'. But in much more comfortable shoes."

Matt Damon stopped using 'homophobic slur'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar winning actor Matt Damon has revealed that he stopped using 'homophobic slur' only after his daughter told him that it was not only wrong but also 'dangerous'.

"The word that my daughter calls the 'f-slur for a homosexual' was commonly used when I was a kid, with a different application," Damon said to Sunday Times of one of the four daughters whom he shares with wife Luciana, reports aceshowbiz.com. "I made a joke, months ago, and got a treatise from my daughter. She left the table," he added. The 'Jason Bourne' actor also shared: "I said, Come on, that's a joke! I say it in the movie 'Stuck on You'. She went to her room and wrote a



very long, beautiful treatise on how that word is dangerous. I said, I retire the f-slur, I understood."

This is not the first time for Matt to talk about his relationship he shares with his daughters.

Last month, in an episode of 'Sunday Morning' he shared that his 15-year-old daughter, Isabella, doesn't want to see her dad in 'Good Will Hunting', the 1997 film that helped him launch his career into international stardom.

'Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard' set for theatrical release

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard', the sequel to the successful 'Hitman's Bodyguard' starring Ryan Reynolds and Salma Hayek, is all set to have its theatrical release on August 6 in India. Reynolds will be reprising his role as Bodyguard Michael Bryce and actor Samuel L. Jackson will once again bring hitman Darius Kincaid to life in the sequel. The two are back on another life-threatening mission. The cast also features Antonio Banderas and Morgan Freeman.

The action comedy is directed by Patrick Hughes and distributed by MVP Entertainment.

In the sequel, three years after the events of the original film, bodyguard Michael Bryce continues his friendship with assassin Darius Kincaid as they embark on a new adventure to save Sonia, Darius' wife, from new threats.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Lady Gaga

HISTORY ON RUN, AUSTRALIA STUNNED!

Underdog Indian women make historic entry into semifinals



Tokyo | Agencies

For the first time ever a brave and determined Indian women team entered into the semifinals of the Olympics hockey tournament here on Monday. India defeated world No. 2 Australia 1-0 in the quarterfinals to storm into the last-four stage, marking their maiden entry into the medal round with a brilliant performance against a team that had dominated the tournament so far and was one of the favourites to win the gold medal.

India will now meet two-time silver medalists Argentina in the semifinals on Wednesday, with a win taking them into the final, which would be unprecedented. The biggest surprise in

women's hockey till date has been Zimbabwe winning the gold medal in the 1980 Olympics in Moscow.

India dominated the first half; they enjoyed more possession and created better chances against an Australian team that had finished Pool B with an all-win record in five matches.

Australia earned the first chance when Ambrosia Malone struck the post off their first penalty corner.

The Indians started aggressively and did not allow the Aussie forwards, who have been rampant in the group stage, many chances. They defended well and in numbers, especially Deep Grace Ekka and Monika were solid and brilliant as they cut down many Australian moves. Goalkeeper Savita was rock solid and pulled off a number of good saves.

The second quarter changed the complexion of the match as the Indians went into the lead, leaving Australia frustrated.

India earned a penalty corner in the 21st minute of the match and went ahead, increasing the pressure on the Hockeyroos. Drag flicker Gurjit Kaur, who had failed to score a single direct goal despite a bag full of chances, struck for India, her drag-flick getting deflected from a defender's stick and looping over goalkeeper Rachael Ann Lynch's outstretched leg into the goal.

Australia attacked in numbers but found the Indian defence, especially goalkeeper Savita, impregnable. The Australians earned three penalty corners but could not capitalise on any. They had seven shots at the goal.

China's Zhang takes shooting gold; Tomar, Rajput falter

Tokyo | Agencies

Zhang Changhong broke the world record to win the last shooting gold of the Tokyo Olympics and the fourth for China in men's 50m rifle 3 positions, even as India's Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeev Rajput failed to reach the final on Monday.

Tomar, the gold medalist in the event at the ISSF World Cup in New Delhi this year, finished 21st with a score of 1167, while Rajput was placed 32nd with a score of 1157 at the Asaka Shooting Range.

With 466 points, the 21-year-old Olympic debutant Zhang set a new world and Olympic record to beat Russian shooter Sergey Kamenskiy, who bagged the silver with 464.2 points. The result is 0.7 points better than the 465.3-point world record set by his fellow country-



man Yang Haoran in 2018. Milenko Sebic of Serbia took the bronze.

Earlier, Indian's Tomar and Rajput failed to reach the final, finishing 21st (1167 points) and 32nd (1157) respectively.

Tomar started his prone position series with 98 and

99. But his next two series of 97, resulting in a score of 391, pushed him out of the top eight.

In prone, Rajput began well with a 97 followed by a perfect score of 100 in the second series. Consecutive series of 98 saw his score in prone

become 393 and a 23rd place.

Only Saurabh Chaudhary was able to reach the final of an event, finishing seventh in the men's 10m air pistol final while the rest of the contingent couldn't clear the qualification stage.

INDIA'S KAMALPREET FINISHES SIXTH IN DISCUS THROW



Tokyo: Indian discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur has finished a commendable sixth in the final of the women's discus throw final at the Tokyo Olympics on Monday. Kamalpreet, on her Olympics debut, had a throw of 63.70m to be placed sixth. Valerie Allman of the USA won the gold medal with a throw of 68.90m in her very first attempt. Valerie's throw put her immediately on top of the competition, which proved not only to be enough for gold but more than 2.4 metres beyond anyone's throw at the Olympic Stadium.

Kamalpreet started off with 61.62m in her first attempt. Her second attempt was a foul. Rain brought a halt to the proceedings with Kamalpreet in seventh position. After resumption, Kamalpreet's throw of 63.70m took her from ninth to sixth place. Her fourth throw was invalid as her foot touched the rim of the circle. The 25-year-old's fifth throw got her a distance of 61.37m. Kamalpreet's final throw was her third foul of the night as the discus landed well outside the radar. Kamalpreet was only one of two athletes to meet the automatic qualification mark of 64m. She made the final from Group B ranked 2nd in qualification after Valerie's throw of 66.42m.

Include shooter as additional participant in Tokyo Paralympics: SC



Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a big relief to five-time Paralympian shooter Naresh Kumar Sharma, the Supreme Court on Monday directed the Paralympic Committee of India to recommend his name as an additional participant in the Tokyo Paralympic Games.

Earlier in the day, senior advocate Vikas Singh, representing the petitioner, mentioned the matter before a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and sought urgent hearing, as the

date of selection for shooting in Tokyo Paralympic is August 2 and if the matter is heard on August 6, as scheduled by the Delhi High Court, it would make the plea infructuous.

Later, in the afternoon, a bench comprising Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, B.R. Gavai, and Krishna Murari took up the matter. After hearing arguments, the bench directed the committee to immediately recommend Sharma's name as additional participant or additional entry in the 50 m para shooter category of the Paralympics.

India in England: Agarwal suffers concussion, ruled out of first Test

NOTTINGHAM | Agencies

After losing opening batsman Shubman Gill to injury, the Indian Test team in England suffered another blow as opener Mayank Agarwal was ruled out of the first Test after being hit on the head on Monday during practice. The first Test begins at Trent Bridge here on Wednesday.

"Opening batsman Mayank Agarwal was hit on the helmet while batting during India's nets session at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Monday," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

India are struggling for opening options as they have already lost opener Shubman Gill to an injury on his lower left leg and his replacement Prithvi Shaw is yet to arrive in England. Shaw and



Suryakumar Yadav are being sent as reinforcements after three of the 24 players in the Indian squad were ruled out due to injuries. Washington Sundar and Avesh Khan too are out besides Gill.

India will now struggle to bring in someone to partner Rohit Sharma at the top. KL Rahul, who had opened in the past, is an option.

Team vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane, who spoke to the media on Monday, did not mention the playing XI or who would open but ruled out the possibility of No. 3 batsman Cheteshwar Pujara being pushed up the batting order. "Pujara is our No. 3 batsman. We are again finalising our combination. So it has not yet been finalised.

Simone Biles to participate in balance beam final

Tokyo | Agencies

Star American gymnast Simone Biles will be taking part in Tuesday's balance beam final of women's artistic gymnastics at the Tokyo Olympics.

"We are so excited to confirm that you will see two U.S. athletes in the balance beam final tomorrow - Suni Lee AND Simone Biles!! Can't wait to watch you both!" said the USA Gymnastics through a tweet on Monday.

Arriving for the Tokyo Olympics, Simone was looking to defend her four gold medals from the 2016 Rio Olympics. But after being unable to do two-and-a-half twists on vault during the first rotation of the women's team final last week on Tuesday, she withdrew from the com-



petition in order to protect her mental health.

Simone had later said that she would make a decision on her participation in each event by every day. Later, she proceeded to withdraw from the individual all-around,

vault, uneven bars and floor exercise finals.

Now Simone, the winner of four gold medals at 2016 Rio Olympics, has the chance to claim her first gold in Tokyo.

DUTEE FINISHES 38TH OUT OF 41 ATHLETES IN 200M

Tokyo: India's top woman sprinter Dutee Chand failed to advance in 200 metres, finishing last in her heat at the Tokyo Olympics, clocking 23.85 seconds to end seventh. Her personal best in 200m is 23.00 seconds, set at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta. The 25-year-old Dutee was 38th out of 41 in the overall standings despite a season's best time of 23.85. Namibia's Christine Mboma won the heats with a timing of 22.11 seconds, a new national record, while Gabrielle Thomas of the USA -- the world-leading time holder for the season -- was second in 22.20 seconds. Earlier, the Indian sprinter had bowed out of the 100m competition on the opening day of track & field competitions, clocking 11.54 seconds to finish seventh in her heat that also featured two-time Olympic champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica. The world champion, however, was later pipped by her compatriot Elaine Thompson-Herah in the final for the gold medal. Shericka Jackson took the bronze medal in the women's 100m to complete the all-Jamaican podium.



Match proves dreams can come true: Sjoerd Marijne

Indian women's hockey team coach, Dutch tactician Sjoerd Marijne, said after his side's historic win against world No. 2 Australia in the quarterfinals at the Olympic Games that his mantra to the girls before the match was to "stay in the moment" and that is what made "a big difference" on Monday.

"After we qualified for the quarters, I told the team about the importance of being in the moment and not thinking about what-ifs and that is very difficult for an athlete because there are many things that are constantly playing in your mind, things like what if we win, what if we don't win, what if I don't stop the ball. So what I did is showed the team a movie and the film is about staying in the moment and I think that made a big dif-



ference in this match against Australia," said Marijne. Marijne told the team to play without pressure as it had nothing to lose. "Today, I told the girls to just play freely. The pressure is on the other team and that's

really important to know. The quarterfinal matches are really difficult for the teams who are higher ranked. And I wanted the players to be proud of themselves today, regardless of the result."

"This match also

proves dreams can come true. If you start believing and you keep believing, and you keep working hard, things can happen. You have to do the work to fulfil your dreams and that's what we did today," said the coach.

CHINA'S SHUTTLE CHEN YUFEI WINS WOMEN'S SINGLES GOLD



Tokyo | Agencies

China's top seed Chen Yufei defeated Chinese Taipei's world No. 1 Tai Tzu-ying 2-1 in the badminton women's singles final at the Tokyo Olympics here. Scores seasawed from the onset before Chen led from a 17-17 tie to 21-18. Chen raced to an 11-8 lead in the second game, but Tai recovered from 12-14 down to win 21-19. In the decider, Chen dominated to clinch a 21-18 victory. Chen, 23, who is a two-time bronze medalist at the World Championships, thus took her first Olympic gold in her competition debut, reports Xinhua. Silver medalist Tai said she will take a break after the end of this year before deciding where to go next. Earlier, India's No.7 Pusarla Venkata Sindhu beat Chen's teammate He Bingjiao 21-13, 21-15 to bag the bronze.



Dino Morea's first look from 'The Empire' unveiled



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Dino Morea's first look from 'The Empire' has been unveiled. Dino looks regal and ferocious as a warlord in the most awaited magnum opus 'The Empire'. He said: "My look in 'The Empire' is everything you imagine to be dangerous and ferocious. His hair, scars and his costume are detailed in a way that makes him look deadly yet maybe desirable. Could probably make the audiences feel fear but will still keep looking. The makeup and the costume team have done a brilliant job at crafting the perfect look."

'The Empire' is produced by Nikkhil Advani's Emmay Entertainment and directed by Mitakshara Kumar and produced by Monisha Advani and Madhu Bhojwani (Emmay Entertainment).

'The Empire' will stream on Disney+ Hotstar.

PC appointed as 'Bvlgari Global Brand Ambassador'



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Italian luxury brand Bvlgari on Monday said it has appointed actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas as global brand ambassador.

In her new role, the company said Chopra Jonas will support the Roman high jewellery house in amplifying the brand around the world, with a particular focus on themes of women empowerment, diversity and inclusion. Bvlgari is known for its gemstone jewellery, watches, fragrances, accessories and leather goods. "India holds a special place in our hearts at Bvlgari, since it doesn't only offer us a continuous source of inspiration, but this rich, incredible land provides us with some of the most precious gems of nature to craft our creations, from jewellery to fragrances," said Bvlgari chief executive Jean-Christophe Babin.

"I'm beyond excited that Priyanka is joining our family. I'm sure that together we will develop exciting projects, with a significant social impact."

KARAN DEOL ELATED TO WORK WITH ABHAY IN 'VELLEY'

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Sunny Deol's son Karan Deol is on cloud nine as he got the golden opportunity of working with his uncle Abhay Deol in the upcoming film 'Velley', produced by Ajay Devgn and directed by Deven Munjal. Karan feels that this dream-come-true opportunity is something he will cherish for a lifetime and he is keen on working with his uncle Abhay, whom he calls, "Dimpy chacha" with love. "I would like to thank 'Dimpy chacha' (uncle) for always having my back! He has always been an inspiration for me and working with him is something I will always cherish," he said.

This film is a remake of the Telugu crime comedy, 'Brochevarevarura'. Abhay Deol who was away from the screen for quite some time will be sharing the screen with Karan Deol.

The 'Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas' actor further asserted that he is supremely thrilled for his next project. "I am excited for everyone to see what we have been shooting for," he concluded.



Prateik Babbar on his 'game changer' project

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Actor Prateik Babbar, who has been in the Hindi film industry for over a decade now, says that his film 'Dhobi Ghat' which released in 2011, has been a prominent game changer for him.



The 34-year-old actor made his debut in Bollywood with 'Jaane Tu...Ya Jaane Na'. He was later seen in films such as 'Dum Maaro Dum', 'Aarakshan', 'Mulk' and 'Chhichhore' among many others.

Talking about a project, which he can tag as a game changer for him, Prateik said: "I would say 'Dhobi Ghat' was a prominent game changer for me. It was the one."

The actor, who is the son of politician Raj Babbar and late actress Smita Patil, says he has a set of projects lined up for release and hopes that changes the course of his career.

"I have a couple of projects coming out this year. Hopefully fingers crossed. It would hopefully change the course of my career for the better. Hopefully," said the actor.

Revealing about his upcoming work, Prateik said: "There's a film with Netflix called 'Cobalt Blue'. It is a Netflix original. It has me in the lead with some new people."

RASHAMI DESAI WANTS NATIONAL AWARD

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Rashami Desai, who gained her fame through television, has now transitioned to the digital medium. The actress recently debuted on OTT with the web series 'Tandoor'. She revealed that she has got offers for few other roles but wasn't quite convinced about them. She explained, "When you do a show on OTT, not just your character but the subject too is important. Often word-of-mouth publicity works for digital projects, so one has to choose wisely. And, I have to say it has been a fabulous experience." She added, "I wanted to explore OTT as an actor as I have many dreams which I want to fulfil. I want a National Award and I am working towards it." The Uttaran star admits that she is ready to learn new things and feels she is limitless. "It does take time to convince me to do something. I have learnt from my mistakes and have become choosy than before," said Rashmi.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sonakshi Sinha