

# absolute india

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## COVAXIN KIDS TRIAL OVER, BHARAT BIOTECH TO SUBMIT DATA TO DCGI NEXT WEEK

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech has completed the Phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of coronavirus vaccine, Covaxin for use in the age group of 2 to 18 years. The Hyderabad-based vaccine maker is expected to submit the data by next week to the DCGI. Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director of Bharat Biotech International Ltd, said Covaxin production would touch 55 million doses next month as against 35 million in September. Ella also said the Phase 2 trials of the company's intranasal vaccine against coronavirus is expected to be over by next month. "Paediatric Covaxin just completed phase 2/3 trials. The data analysis is going on. We will be submitting the data (to the regulator) by next week. The number of subjects (volunteers) is touching 1000," the founder and chairman of Bharat Biotech said.



Intranasal immunization can create an immune response in the nose, which is the point of entry for the virus—thereby protecting against the disease, infection, and transmission also, he noted. As per Ella, the intranasal vaccine trials are conducted on three cohorts in which one group is administered Covaxin as the first

geared up with safety and other parameters are in place. Other than its own facilities, Bharat Biotech has tied up with Indian Immunologicals and Hester Biosciences, to manufacture Covaxin. "We are supplying 35 million this month. Next month we will be definitely supplying 55 million doses. Production at Bangalore is catching up very fast," he said replying to a query. On exports of Covaxin to other nations, Ella said if the government permits, the company is ready to export the job, though the firm is not in a hurry to look for overseas markets. According to Ella, the Centre's focus is to fulfill domestic requirements. India will resume export of surplus Covid-19 vaccines in the fourth quarter of 2021 under the 'Vaccine Maitri' programme and to meet its commitment to the COVAX global pool, but vaccinating its own citizens remains the topmost priority of the government, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has said.

## India to reciprocate if UK fails to recognize Covishield

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India will reciprocate the same discriminatory protocols for the UK nationals if the British government fails to recognize the Indian Covid-19 vaccine Covishield, the sources said on Tuesday. The non-recognition of the Covishield vaccine has impacted the Indians, especially students travelling to the UK. This issue was flagged during the meeting between Indian External Affairs Minister Dr Jaishankar and UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss on Monday in Washington DC. Truss has assured India that the UK government will review its policy against Covishield in a day or two. If the situation remains the same, India will be forced to apply the

same discriminatory protocols for their citizens, a top source in the External Affairs Ministry said. Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla while addressing the media on Tuesday asserted that non-recognition of Covishield was a discriminating policy and "it impacts our citizens travelling to the UK. The EAM has raised the issue strongly with the new UK foreign secretary. I am told that certain assurances have been given that this issue will be resolved." The vaccine, Covishield, is a licensed product of the UK manufacturer and about five million doses have been supplied at the request of the UK Government as part of the National Health System. On September 20, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya

announced that India will resume the export of Covid-19 vaccines under Vaccine Maitri initiative in October. Noting that the vaccination of its own citizens remains the top priority of the government, he also said that the decision to resume vaccine exports has been taken "in order to fulfil the commitment of India towards COVAX, in line with our motto 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family). As part of the Vaccine Maitri initiative earlier this year, India had supplied over 66 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to more than 70 countries including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Morocco, South Africa, Afghanistan, Mexico, DR Congo, Nigeria and the UK.

## AUKUS doesn't have any impact on QUAD: India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Tuesday said that the trilateral military treaty among Australia-UK-US or AUKUS was not very relevant from its perspective and also does not have an impact on the functioning of the QUAD. Addressing a media briefing here, Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said that QUAD and AUKUS were not groupings of a similar nature. "The QUAD is plurilateral grouping - a group of countries having a shared vision of their attributes and values QUAD is designed to cater to requirements of the Indo-Pacific region", he said. QUAD is a grouping of US, Australia, Japan and India. He said that AUKUS was a military alliance of the three nations and India was not a party to this alliance. From our perspective, it was neither relevant nor will it have any impact on its functioning, he added. Informing

about the QUAD's initiatives, Shringla said, "It has adopted a positive pro-active agenda that has wide array of initiatives at the global level to address some of the issues of the day, this includes dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, including supply of vaccines to Indo-Pacific region. It includes working on new emerging technologies, it includes working on issues like climate change, infrastructure, maritime security, education and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)." As per the newly signed trilateral alliance, the AUKUS grouping would assist Australia in procuring nuclear-powered submarines and deal with China's military assertiveness in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region. QUAD is a grouping of nations of the Indo-Pacific region, which China observes as a block to contain its influence in the region. This grouping vouches for a free,

open, transparent and inclusive Indo-Pacific region based on international law and order. Informing about the itinerary of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US, the Foreign Secretary said PM Modi will be leaving on September 22 and after his arrival in the US, he will first attend the Covid-19 Summit. On September 24, PM Modi will hold bilateral talks with US President Joe Biden. He will also hold bilateral discussions with his counterparts from Australia and Japan. On the same day, the heads of QUAD member nations will meet to discuss the Indo-Pacific region among other issues. On September 25, the Prime Minister will address the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York and will likely take up the issues of cross border terrorism, the current situation in Afghanistan, climate change, emerging technologies.

## ED files PMLA case in 3,000 kg drug seizure at Mundra port

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a money laundering case in a drug trafficking case where 2,988.22 kg of heroin was seized at Mundra port in Gujarat. In the case two people were arrested and the role of some Afghanistan nationals are being investigated. A top government officer said that Enforcement Directorate has registered a money laundering case under various sections of Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002. In what is said to be one of the largest ever drugs seizures in the world, the entire operation was carried out by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) which resulted in seizures of two containers carrying about 2,988.22 kg of heroin at Mundra port in Gujarat. A senior officer in the DRI stated that specific Intelligence was developed by them that a consignment imported by Aashi Trading Company, Vijaywada declared as semi-processed Talc stones originating from Afghanistan and shipped from Bandar Abbas Port, Iran to Mundra Port, Gujarat is suspected to contain Narcotics drugs. Intelligence indicated that these drugs have originated from Afghanistan.

## Every poor family will have their own house: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Tuesday that I am going to take a historic decision for the entire state from the land of Pandhana. No poor in the state will stay homeless. Every poor family should have a piece of land for housing. Residential land will be given by the state government to every poor family of the state to live in a suitable place. Under the Jan Kalyan and Suraj Campaign Chief Minister felicitated the girls of the state with scholarships and financial assistance to the women at Pandhana in Khandwa District. Chouhan also distributed nutrition rights notifications to the mothers of children who have come under normal nutrition category from malnutrition category in 22 districts. Chouhan said that development work did not stop in



the state despite the Corona pandemic. Every effort was made by the state government to reach the benefits of development works and public welfare schemes to each and every person in the state. In Madhya Pradesh, the interest of farmers was kept on priority. When the whole country was facing lockdown, the state government procured every grain of wheat in Madhya Pradesh and also purchased paddy and moong. Chouhan said that only when the women of the state are healthy, a healthy future can be built. Therefore, nutrition gardens are being constructed in the state, so that nutri-

tion to the tribal and poor students. Chouhan said that the state government will take the responsibility of the fees of the poor children of tribals, whether they want to study in any medical, engineering or world class college in the country. Chouhan said that the PESA Act would be implemented in a phased manner in the tribal areas of the state. Simultaneously, the provisions of the Fifth Schedule will also be implemented. Self-governance will be strengthened in tribal dominated areas through PESA Act. Chouhan said that welfare of every section is the aim of the state government. He said that for the welfare of the poor belonging to the general category, a General Category Commission has been constituted in the state so that all may get social justice and social harmony may be established.

## Air Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari to be next IAF chief

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Air Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari will be the next Indian Air Force chief, the government announced on Tuesday. "Government has decided to appoint Air Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, PVSM, AVSM, VM, presently Vice Chief of Air Staff, as the next Chief of Air Staff," a Defence Ministry statement said. He will succeed Air Chief Marshal R.K.S Bhaduria who retires from service on September 30. Commissioned into the IAF's fighter stream on December 29, 1982, he has held various command, staff, and instructional appointments at various levels. Air Marshal Chaudhari, who took over as the vice chief on July 1, has flying experience of more than 3,800 hrs on a wide variety of fighter and trainer aircraft, including missions flown during Operation Meghdoot and Operation Safed Sagar. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, he has



commanded a frontline fighter squadron and a fighter base. As an Air Vice Marshal, he has been Deputy Commandant, Air Force Academy, Assistant Chief of Air Staff Operations (Air Defence) and Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Personnel/Officers). He has also held the coveted appointments of Deputy Chief of the Air Staff at Air HQ, Senior Air Staff Officer at the Eastern Air Command, and the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Air Command.

## 'Not granting stay:' HC declines relief to Abhishek Banerjee in PMLA case

Abhishek Banerjee, nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and his wife Rujira Banerjee, have challenged the September 10 summonses. Banerjee and his wife were asked by the ED to appear before it in Delhi on Tuesday. The couple has contended that they are residents of Kolkata and should not be compelled to join the probe here.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday declined interim relief to Trinamool Congress General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee and his wife, who sought quashing of summonses, issued by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), in connection with a money laundering case linked to alleged coal scam in West Bengal. Abhishek Banerjee, nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and his wife Rujira Banerjee, have challenged the September 10 summonses. Justice Yogesh Khanna said: "Let me be very clear. I am not granting any stay. I am issuing notice." He added that the court will issue notice and then the parties can file their reply in the matter. The high court asked the ED to respond on Banerjee's and his wife's plea within three days and scheduled the matter for further hearing on September 27. Abhishek Banerjee and his wife

were asked by the ED to appear before it in Delhi on Tuesday. The couple has contended that they are residents of Kolkata and should not be compelled to join the probe here. The ED submitted before the court that money laundering has national and trans-national ramifications and its investigation is not restricted to any police station or area. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the ED, submitted if they have any apprehensions, they can take appropriate remedy. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the couple, contended since the high court is seized of the matter, the agency should not proceed against them. "We have given the documents to the agency, but we are not appearing in person. I hope no coercive action will be taken," he submitted. He added that they can do the questioning in West Bengal. However, the court declined to grant any interim protection.

Citing that Banerjee had already appeared before the agency several times, Sibal vehemently argued that the ED was entitled to investigate but it should not harass his client. "All this is in West Bengal. The woman has to be interrogated at her house. They are most welcome to interrogate us in the jurisdiction of West Bengal," he argued. Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, also representing the ED, contended under the PMLA, there is no territorial jurisdiction for carrying out investigation and there are no territorial limits unlike under the CrPC. He added that Banerjee attends the Parliament regularly and the agency also has proof to show that the date when his wife replied that she is in Patna and cannot come to Delhi for questioning, she was in a beauty parlour in Delhi. The ED lodged a case on basis of the CBI's FIR lodged in November 2020 in the alleged multi-crore coal pilferage scam connected to Eastern Coalfields Ltd mines.

## MAHARASHTRA CONGRESS CHIEF DEMANDS NIXING OF NEET IN STATE

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government should exempt medical courses aspirants from the National Entrance-cum-Eligibility Test (NEET) on the lines of Tamil Nadu, the state Congress said on Tuesday. The Maharashtra government should exempt medical courses aspirants from the National Entrance-cum-Eligibility Test (NEET) on the lines of Tamil Nadu, the state Congress said on Tuesday. NEET favours students who pass std 12th from central board schools, claimed Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole. Congress is part of the ruling alliance in the state. "Students from CBSE and other similar (central) boards are increasingly cracking NEET (in higher numbers) than those from the state board. Exam papers are getting leaked and cases of dummy students appearing for the exam have come to light," he told reporters. "The Maharashtra government should take a decision about NEET on the lines of Tamil Nadu," Patole added. The Assembly of the southern state on September 13 passed the Tamil Nadu Admission to Undergraduate Medical Degree Courses Bill which seeks to stop medical admissions on the basis of NEET. Patole claimed that before NEET was introduced, 71.73 per cent of students who got admission to medical colleges in Tamil Nadu were from the state board while the proportion of CBSE students was only 0.13 per cent. But in 2020-21 the proportion of CBSE students rose to 26.83 per cent while that of Tamil Nadu state board students fell to 48.22 per cent, he added. "It is not just a case of injustice but also of inequality. NEET is curbing the opportunities for students of state boards, many of whom are from economically weaker sections," the Congress leader said.



## ALL COUNTRIES SHOULD RECOGNISE EUL VACCINES: WHO CHIEF SCIENTIST

Team Absolute | New Delhi

World Health Organization Chief Scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan on Tuesday said that all countries are supposed to follow the WHO recommendations. Talking to IANS on the ongoing row over the new UK COVID travel rules that prescribed that vaccinated Indians also need to go for a 10-day quarantine Swaminathan said, "All countries are supposed to follow our recommendations. They are not binding".

According to the new UK rules, Indian travellers who have received both doses of the Covishield vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) will be considered unvaccinated and will have to undergo self-isolation for 10 days.

The UK government's recent order which has set off a controversy says that persons vaccinated in countries like the UAE, India, Turkey, Jordan, Thailand, Russia, or the continents of Africa and South America, will be considered as unvaccinated and will have to undergo a mandatory 10-day quarantine upon their arrival. On being asked about the WHO's next move in this regard, Swaminathan said that the WHO position is clear on this that all countries should recognize EUL vaccines.



The new UK travel rule adds that only people who have got both shots of a double dose vaccine such as AstraZeneca, Pfizer or Moderna or the single shot Janssen vaccine "under an approved vaccination program in the UK, Europe, US or UK vaccine programme overseas" will be considered fully vaccinated.

India's mass vaccination program is being run with mainly two vaccines Covishield and Covaxin. Covishield was developed by researchers at the University of Oxford and pharma giant AstraZeneca. Covaxin was developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research.

## SC reserves order on dropping stringent section against accused

GAURI LANKESH MURDER:

The Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved its order on an appeal filed by filmmaker Kavitha Lankesh, sister of journalist Gauri Lankesh, challenging the Karnataka High Court order quashing charges under the Karnataka Control of Organised Crimes Act (KCOCA) against one of the accused in the murder of her sister.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmed, representing Lankesh, contended before a bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar that

the charge sheet categorically made out a case of a syndicate involved in the offence, therefore the argument whether a particular person was not part of earlier crimes of the syndicate was irrelevant. Citing that incident occurred four years ago, he added that charges were yet to be framed in the case. Senior advocate Basava

Prabhu Patil, representing the accused Mohan Nayak, cited distinction between "abettor" or "harbourer" and "a member of a crime syndicate" under the KCOCA, and emphasised that the abettor cannot be necessarily equated to a syndicate member.

Querying whether it is correct to brand a person as a

member of organised crime, at the stage of FIR against him, he cited the absence of proof against his client, establishing his participation in unlawful activities of the syndicate. The bench also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and C.T. Ravikumar after hearing detailed arguments in the matter reserved the order.

Ahmed, contesting Patil's submissions, contended since the accused had harboured other accused, he was deemed to come under the organised crime act.

Earlier, the apex court had ordered that Nayak's bail plea, after dropping of stringent charges, cannot be allowed until it decides this matter.

The plea claimed the investigation by the SIT has revealed that Nayak was part

of the syndicate led by Amol Kale which has committed multiple organised crimes apart from the murder of Gauri Lankesh.

The plea said charge sheets have been filed with respect to the murders of Dr Narendra Dabolkar in 2013, Govind Pansare in 2015, Dr M.M. Kalburgi in 2015 and conspiracy to murder Prof Bhagavan in 2018.

"Accordingly, the condition of at least 2 charge sheets having been filed against the syndicate in the last 10 years along with cognisance by competent court stands fulfilled and invocation of KCOCA against Respondent No. 6 (Nayak) stands justified," added the plea. Gauri Lankesh was killed on September 5, 2017 outside her house at Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Bengaluru.

## K'taka Police in touch with IB, RAW over satellite phone calls to foreign countries

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said on Tuesday that the state police department was in touch with the central intelligence agencies, IB and RAW, over satellite phone calls from the state to various foreign countries.

Replying to a question raised by former minister and Congress MLA U.T. Khader, on the issue of usage of banned satellite phones in the state, the minister said that after the Mumbai attacks in 2011 the use of satellite phones has been banned in sea waters by the Director General of Shipping in 2012. Their usage has been banned generally in the coun-



try. However, despite the ban, as many as 250 satellite phone calls

were tracked in 2020 and 220 satellite phone calls were tracked in 2021 till date in various parts of the state. The government has taken serious note of the development and was keeping a close watch on this, he said.

Araga Jnanendra explained that the state police department is in touch with central intelligence agencies such as Internal Security Division (ISD), IB (Intelligence Bureau) and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

"We are exchanging inputs with them. Since it is a matter of national security and it is regarding international calls being made from Malnad region and other places, the issue cannot be discussed openly,"

he said.

Araga Jnanendra while commenting on the arrest of Pakistan's ISI spy in Bengaluru said, Karnataka Police have arrested an agent of Pakistan. "They are gathering information from him. Though the developments have caused a sense of fear, we have faith in our security agencies and the threats will be properly dealt with," he said.

The satellite phone calls were tracked to Pakistan and other countries from the dense forest areas of Dakshina Kannada, Chikmagalur and Yadgir districts recently.

The hilly region of Yadgir district was earlier used as sleeper cell pocket by then banned SIMI outfit.

Lucknow | Agencies

The Yogi Adityanath government has set up an 18-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the mysterious death of Mahant Narendra Giri, the chief of the Akhil Bhartiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP).

The SIT will be headed by Ajit Singh Chauhan, circle officer. It also includes four

inspectors, three sub inspectors and other police personnel. The SIT will probe the mysterious death of the Mahant from various angles.

Earlier, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday assured that those responsible for the death of Mahant Narendra Giri would not



be spared at any cost. The SIT is also likely to probe the circumstances leading to the death of the seer after recovery of the suicide note, purportedly written by him.

The suicide note, running into almost 6 pages, reveals that the seer was deeply disturbed but does not mention clearly the incidents that drove him to take the extreme step.

The Mahant has said that he was disturbed because of his estranged disciple Anand Giri and the priest of the Hanuman temple, Adya Tiwari and his son Sandeep Tiwari, but did not elaborate.

## K'taka Police grills ISI agent to track local network in Bengaluru

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Police were grilling accused Jitendra Singh, arrested on charges of spying for Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), for tracking down the network in Bengaluru.

The City Crime Branch (CCB) in a joint operation with the Military Intelligence had arrested the accused on Monday. Sandeep Patil, the Joint Commissioner (Crime) stated that the accused has been remanded to police custody for 12 days for further interrogation. Police sources said that they have launched a hunt for four persons who were staying with him and presently have disappeared. The investigators are inquiring about his specific purpose of visiting Bengaluru, known as the IT capital of the country. The police have retrieved his mobile data and started tracking his contacts.

The accused identified as Jitendra Singh hails from Barmer district in



Rajasthan. The accused took the videos and photos of Army bases, firing ranges and movement of the Indian Army and then used to send them to the ISI agents, sources say. The accused wore an Indian Army uniform while taking photos and videos. After sending the videos, photos, voice messages he would delete them. However, the police officers have managed to retrieve all the deleted messages, sources said. The accused spy was trapped by a fake Facebook account called 'Neha Aka Pujaji'. The ISI had made friends with Jitendra Singh on

Facebook as he had put up a picture of him in army uniform.

Sources further said he got in touch with the ISI in 2016. After sweet talks for years, he was asked to send videos, photos and other information in return for a huge sum of money. The accused agreed and carried out their orders. He was paid digitally from different accounts, sources added.

The military intelligence, after noticing the communication on Facebook between Jitendra Singh and Neha started monitoring the accounts. The account of Neha showed the IP address of Karachi in Pakistan.

Jitendra had shifted to Bengaluru about two months ago. Here he posed as a footpath cloth merchant who sold clothes to shop keepers in Jolly Mohalla of Cottonpet, sources added.

The Military Intelligence sleuths and Karnataka Police City Crime Branch (CCB) police picked him up in a joint operation.

## Pilot met Rahul Gandhi in Delhi to discuss Rajasthan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot met Rahul Gandhi over the weekend, sources said and discussed the issue of Rajasthan and also impending cabinet reshuffle and organisational rejig in the state.

However, neither Pilot nor State In-charge Ajay Maken spoke anything about the meeting but the two did meet and held discussions on Rajasthan politics, sources say adding that Rahul Gandhi has assured Sachin Pilot about an amicable settlement after talking to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot who is likely to travel to Delhi after he gets well.

While Pilot and Maken did not respond to mes-



sages and calls about the meeting, the office of Rahul Gandhi also did not.

Congress General Secretary in charge of Rajasthan Ajay Maken last week at a press conference in Delhi had said that roadmap is ready for cabinet expansion and organisational rejig in the state.

"If Ashok Gehlot had not fallen ill we would

have done cabinet expansion and the roadmap is ready for appointment at board corporations and district presidents," Maken had said on Thursday.

The Congress leader said that Gehlot is still unwell and doing his work from home and as he gets well this will be done.

When asked about Sachin Pilot, he said, "At

the state level, we are discussing all issues but if something is given at the AICC level it's beyond my purview."

Sources say around five from the Pilot camp will be accommodated in the Gehlot cabinet, and also the appointments to the posts of chairman of boards and corporations have also been finalised.

While sources say that Gehlot is keen on cabinet expansion, the high command wants a cabinet reshuffle.

Friction between the two Congress groups in Rajasthan, led by Gehlot and former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, continues as the Pilot camp insists that the issues raised by him last year have not yet been resolved in the party.

## At 26,115 new Covid cases, India sees dip in infections

New Delhi: India's daily Covid tally marginally improved with 26,115 new cases in the last 24 hours against the 30,000 plus cases that were reported daily for the last few days.

Out of total fresh Covid cases reported in the last 24 hours across the country, 15,692 were reported from Kerala alone while Maharashtra accounted for 2,583 cases, according to the Union Health Ministry's report. India also witnessed slight dip in daily Covid related deaths in the last 24 hours and with 252 fatalities, the total death tally in the country so far reached 4,45,385. The fatality rate has remained at 1.33 per cent for the last few days.

Also, the number of recoveries in the last 24 hours was higher than the numbers of new positive cases registered. According to the Union Health Ministry's data, a total of 34,469 people infected with Covid have recovered, pushing the cumulative recoveries so far to 3,27,49,574.

The Covid recovery rate was reported at 97.75 per cent on Tuesday. At present, India has 3,09,575 active cases, which is 0.92 per cent of the total positive cases registered since 2020.

The daily positivity rate declined to 1.85 per cent, which remained below 3 per cent for the last 22 days, while the weekly positivity rate was at 2.08 per cent, remaining below 3 per cent for the last 88 days, according to the health ministry.

A total of 55.50 crore (55,50,35,717) Covid samples have been tested so far in the country, out of which 14,13,951 were tested in the last 24 hours, the Health Ministry data said.

Till date, the country has administered 81.85 crore (81,85,13,827) doses of Covid vaccines, out of which 96,46,778 jabs were given in the last 24 hours, the data added.



## What is govt doing, asks Cong over 3K kg drug seizure at Adani port

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress launched an attack on the government over the seizure of drugs at Mundra port, alleging that it must be the largest illegal drug haul in the world. The Congress questioned the silence of the government and the measures it is taking to deal with it, particularly drugs from Afghanistan.

Addressing a press conference in Delhi on Tuesday Pawan Kherra, Congress Spokesperson, said, "The latest raid and seizure of almost 3 tonnes, should be the largest illegal drug haul in the world, not just India. But how did it come to this? What has the Government and Narcotics Control Bureau been doing all this while?" He alleged that the smuggling of drugs into India has increased substantially over the past few months, and this has been going on for a few years now which can destroy the youth of the country.

Kherra asked whether the



Gujarat coast has become the most preferred route to smuggle drugs and said these revelations are just the tip of the iceberg. He said there has been a pattern of drugs being smuggled into India through the ports of Gujarat. "Why have the Government and NCB failed at taking corrective and proactive measures", he asked.

The Congress spokesperson questioned, "How is such a drug

syndicate operating in India under the nose of the Government of India, Government of Gujarat and the Narcotics Control Bureau? Why has it not been exposed yet? Who are these operators, importers and individuals/syndicate running the procurement and distribution network of drugs in this country?"

He said the position of a full-time Narcotics Control Bureau

Chief has been lying vacant for 18 months now. And, the Government thinks it is not significant enough to appoint a full time Chief of the NCB for over 18 months.

"It would lead to the almost three tonnes of heroin worth Rs 21,000 crore in the international market which as per Indian Government estimates is worth Rs 9000 crore reaching the Mundra Port - a privately owned port of the Adani Group in Gujarat," said Kherra.

He said that over the last few years, the Gujarat coast has become the favourite route for smuggling drugs into India from Pakistan, Iran or Afghanistan.

"Let us understand the chronology of events from the recent past. In July 2017 an Indian Coast Guard vessel had seized approximately 1,500 kgs of heroin valued at about Rs 3,500 crore from a merchant vessel off the coast of Gujarat. In January 2020, five Pakistani nationals on a fishing boat were apprehended mid-sea

off the coast of Gujarat while they were attempting to smuggle drugs worth Rs 175 crore into the state and country."

"In April 2021, eight Pakistani nationals onboard a boat were apprehended with heroin worth Rs 150 crore off the coast of Gujarat. On September 17, 2021, three tonnes of heroin was seized by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) during an operation where two containers were seized at the Mundra Port, a privately owned port by the Adani Group in Bhuj in Gujarat. The value of the heroin is estimated to be around Rs 21,000 crore."

On September 18, 2021, the Coast Guard and the Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Gujarat Police in a joint operation against an Iranian boat found 30 kg heroin worth more than Rs 150 crore off the coast of Gujarat, Kherra said.

It is suspected that this heroin was originally sourced from Afghanistan and was smuggled through Iran's Bandar Abbas Port, Kherra said.



## PLANS SHOULD BE REVIEWED ON THE BASIS OF GROUND IMPLEMENTATION: GOVERNOR

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the schemes should be reviewed on the basis of implementation on the ground. Officers should undertake continuous tour of the area. He said that the implementation work should be reviewed on a practical basis considering the aim of the scheme.

Patel was discussing with the officers regarding various schemes of Panchayat and Rural Development Department at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday. Minister of State for Panchayat and Rural Development Ramkhelawan Patel were also present.

Patel has told the officials that the intention and success of the scheme should be



decided on the basis of its ground nature. For this it is necessary that the officers should review the implementation of the scheme on the spot. They should get information by communicating with the villagers. He stressed on ensuring the quality of construction works. Explained the need for regular monitoring of works at various stages of construction. He told the officers that if any deficiency or irregularity is found in the work, then

it can be rectified in the initial stage itself.

Patel said that the spirit of the worker is very important in the success of any work. He said that the work done for the poor and needy gives immense self-satisfaction and joy. Governor Patel was told that under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, 150 days of employment is provided in a year to the families of forest land title holders and 100 days to oth-

ers under the Forest Rights Act 2006. Under the scheme, 162 types of works are done for the creation of permanent assets along with employment. It has also been made mandatory to have 30 per cent women's participation in employment generation.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary to Governor DP Ahuja, Principal Secretary Panchayat and Rural Development Umakant Umrao, Commissioner MNREGA Council Sufia Farooqui Wali, Director Panchayat Raj Alok Kumar Singh, Chief Executive Officer RRDA and Director Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Tanvi Sundriyal, Chief Executive Officer SRLM LM Belwal, State Programme Officer SBM and Director RGM Nidhi Nivedita were present.

## BOOK PRESENTED TO CM



Bhopal: Bharati Thakur presented her book "Narmada Parikrama Ek Antaryatra" to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday. In the book, experiences related to the nature as seen while undertaking a Parikrama of the Narmada, its different beautiful forms, the cooperation received from the tribal brothers and the curiosity of the people displaced due to the dam have been collected. Nimar Abhyudaya Rural Management and Development Association was established in 2010 by Bharati Thakur on completion of Narmada Parikrama. This organisation arranges free education for poor children from Balwadi (kindergarten) to high school. Efforts are being made to make the students of Nimar region self-reliant by giving training related to welding, furniture making, plumbing, joining work, food technology, organic agriculture and cow science. The arrangements for accommodation, food and education of forest dwellers are made here free of cost.

## Start repairing Bhopal roads from October 1 : Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The repair work of Bhopal city roads should be started from October 1. The repair work should be done as per the prescribed norms. There should be no compromise on the quality of work. Urban Development and Housing Minister Shri Bhupendra Singh gave these instructions during the review of the roads of Bhopal city.

Singh said that according to the Meteorological Department, there is a possibility of rain in the remaining days of the month of September. Therefore, immediately after that the work should be started from October 1 and completed within the time-limit. He said that the repair work of the roads under guarantee period should also be done by the concerned contractor from October 1. Commissioner Municipal Corporation Bhopal KVS Chaudhary said that an action plan has been prepared for the repair of



288 different roads of the city with an estimated cost of Rs 70 crore 60 lakh. Singh said that regularization of unauthorized colonies should be done as per the prescribed action plan. He said that it should be kept in mind that now illegal colonies should not come up in the city. Shri Singh also directed to take action related to compounding. The Municipal Corporation Commissioner informed that FIR is being done against those who build illegal colonies. Principal Secretary Urban Development and Housing Manish Singh, CEO Smart City Ankit Asthana along with officers of Municipal Corporation and CPA were present in the meeting.

## IMC Official Suspends Employees For Throwing Ganesha Idols Into Water Body

A video had gone viral where Indore Municipal employees were seen throwing Ganesha idols from dumpers to water bodies. Congress had also demanded action.



Team Absolute | Indore  
Taking strict action against those who were seen throwing idols of lord Ganesha from dumpers into a water body, Madhya Pradesh Municipal officials on Tuesday, September 21, terminated the service of nine employees and suspended two. Earlier on Tuesday, Congress leader Digvijaya Singh had heavily criticised the actions while sharing a video of the same. The Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) also

lodged a complaint with police against nine employees. Indore Municipal Commissioner Pratibha Pal takes stern action against nine employees.

While sharing the video of the wrongful actions, Congress leader Digvijaya Singh tweeted in Hindi- 'Is this religion? Should we immerse those whom we worship with faith in this way? Madhya Pradesh Congress leader Sanjay Shukla posted a video

demanding action against officers responsible for the mess and also FIR against them. The Municipal Corporation of Indore had set up idol collection centers in all zonal offices. People had handed over the idols they had installed in their houses to IMC employees at the collection centers. The Municipal Commissioner had also said that the idols should be immersed in environment-friendly artificial ponds.

## CM to dedicate 73 works costing Rs 1000 crores

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will virtually dedicate 73 development works costing more than Rs one thousand crores in Minto Hall on September 22 at 12 noon under Jan Kalyan and Suraaj Abhiyan. Also, on the recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission, Rs 299.04 crore will be distributed to 402 cities with a single click. The programme will be shown through Doordarshan, YouTube, Facebook Live and webcast. The webcast link of the programme is <https://webcast.gov.in/mp/cevents>.

Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh has informed that 13 devel-

opment works will be dedicated in Bhopal and Narmadapuram divisions, 15 in Indore, 2 in Sagar, 17 in Jabalpur, 19 in Ujjain, one in Rewa, 6 in Gwalior-Chambal and 6 development works of the Madhya Pradesh Housing and Infrastructure Development Board. In Bhopal division, 13 works worth Rs 242 crore 61 lakh 46 thousand will be dedicated. These include construction of Mahalaxmi 551, residential complex, construction of road from MR-2 Mata Mandir to New Market, drinking water scheme Shamsabad, place making work at various places under the Tactical project, CC road and drain construction in various wards of the city and CC con-

struction and beautification work in Masaniya Talai, development of Ward 29 Nehru Nagar Police Line Garden, development of garden near AVM School in Nehru Nagar, construction of commercial complex in Transport Nagar, development of Yaad e Shahjahan Extension Garden, development of 7 gardens in Zone 18 Indus Colony and construction of passenger waiting room at ward no. 14 bus stand, Silwani. In Jabalpur division, 11 works costing Rs 49 crore 57 lakh 50 thousand will be dedicated. In Ujjain division, development works constructed at a cost of Rs 313 crore 39 lakh 45 thousand will be dedicated.

## CABINET APPROVES ESTABLISHMENT AND UP-GRADATION OF 263 HEALTH INSTITUTIONS



Bhopal: In the virtual meeting of the Council of Ministers held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the proposal for establishment/up-gradation of 263 health institutions was approved for the purpose of improving health services in the state. In this, the number of beds in 07 district hospitals is to be increased, 21 civil hospitals, 49 community health centres, 73 primary health centres, 113 sub health centers are to be established/upgraded.

The cabinet also approved the proposal for continuation of 375 temporary posts under Public Relations Department from March 1, 2021 to February 28, 2022. The national anthem Vande Mataram was recited at the beginning of the meeting of the Council of Ministers.

## CM PLANTED KADAMBA SAPLING

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted a Kadamba sapling in Smart City Park today as he plants saplings every day. Kadamba is a flowering tree. Its leaves are like mahua leaves and fruits are round like lemon. It is important for increasing greenery and from an environmental point of view.



आज़ादी का अमृत महोत्सव

# जन कल्याण और भुरोज अभियान

17 सितम्बर से 7 अक्टूबर, 2021

## नगरों का कायाकल्प हमारा संकल्प

प्रदेश के नगरों में ₹1000 करोड़ के विकास कार्यों का लोकार्पण एवं

15वें वित्त आयोग के अंतर्गत ₹299 करोड़ की राशि का वितरण कार्यक्रम

22 सितम्बर, 2021

समय : दोपहर 12:00 बजे | स्थान : मिंगो हॉल, भोपाल

◀ स्वच्छ भारत, स्मार्ट सिटी, अमृत योजना, पीएम आवास तथा पीएम स्वनिधि जैसी योजनाओं ने नगरीय विकास को नये आयाम एवं नयी गति दी है। ▶

नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

“ प्रधानमंत्री जी के सपनों का भारत निर्माण हम सभी की जिम्मेदारी है। प्रदेश में नगरीय विकास की योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन के सुखद परिणाम सामने आने लगे हैं। ”  
शिवराज सिंह चौहान, मुख्यमंत्री

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आयोजन : म.प्र. माध्यम/2021 D11066/21



EDITOR'S SPECS

NRC PROCESS DONE AND DUSTED

While there may have been lulls aplenty, the next twist or turn in the long-running saga of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) update for Assam is never far. The latest seeks to imbue a sense of finality to the exercise, though it has come from what is only a quasi-judicial body. A Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) in Karimganj district of southern Assam, while removing the ambiguity around a man's citizenship, has pronounced that there is no doubt that the NRC published on August 31, 2019, is the final one. The exercise left out over 1.9 million from a list of around 33 million applicants, whose citizenship would be determined at the FTs. The entire updating process was monitored by the Supreme Court and executed by the State's administrative machinery. Unsurprisingly, its publication annoyed political parties across the ideological divide, with some alleging it victimised document-less Bengali Hindus and indigenous Assamese people and others that it targeted the State's Bengali-origin Muslims. In the run-up to the publication of the final document, Assam and the Centre had petitioned the Supreme Court for re-verification of a sample of names included in the draft NRC 20% in the border districts and 10% elsewhere but this was dismissed after Prateek Hajela, the State NRC Coordinator, said re-verification of 27% names had been already done. In May this year, the State NRC authority, now led by Hitesh Dev Sarma, filed a petition in Supreme Court seeking re-verification of the August 31, 2019 list, citing inclusion of ineligible names and exclusion of eligible ones, and other errors. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is already on record as having said the State government wants 20% re-verification in the districts bordering Bangladesh and 10% in others. The crux of the matter is that post-publication progress on the NRC has been excruciatingly slow, and not just due to the pandemic. More crucially, on the execution side, the issuance of rejection slips to those left out of the NRC has not begun, a necessary step to file appeals in the FTs.

# BIDEN, MODI OR WHO? WANTED A WORLD LEADER AT UNGA THIS WEEK

Who could be the 2-3 personalities from among the 200 or so heads of governments, who could rise and shine, and give hope to humanity, freedom and peace, this week at New York?

As the United Nations convenes its annual General Assembly in New York City this week, a galaxy of world leaders is arriving to address the world's most important podium, and audiences. They will step up to the podium to share their 2 cents, in their 2 minutes of speech time (ok, may be 7-8 minutes), to give solutions to the challenges and opportunities in the present and future of humankind, and co-existence on, and with planet Earth.

Make no mistake, this year the gathering is historic. In fact, the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly should rather have been named as 'The 1st UN General Assembly Meeting in Year 1 of the Post-Covid Era'.

A once in a century pandemic, unprecedented and quantum leaps in technology, the shambolic end of America's longest war of 20 years, and the dark shadow of a looming China - all have created perfect conditions for a once-in-a-century storm, as the post-Covid era begins.

Other global re-calibrations and tectonic shifts, too, are underway. Including a reality that climate change is knocking at our doorsteps, with wild-fires, floods, droughts destroying our homes and lives, among other dire scenarios.

The UN may be much derided and has not delivered on what its founding principles were, but yet it remains and is the only world platform which can be nearest to a global problem-solver-in-chief. That the global problem-solver-in-chief is itself in deep problems that cannot be resolved, is another matter, and the world will have to manage whatever best can be.

But still there is hope. And there is scope. Some leader must, and has to, show leadership.

After all, mere words will not do. Firstly, there has to be depth behind the words, and a will and a path to take the words ahead into measurable outcomes. Secondly, the country that the leader represents, on which s/he builds the edifice of a powerful, persuasive



world-vision, must have material strengths of population size, economic heft, and military power.

And thirdly, the leader must also bring a legacy, showcase some simple but big human, humane, and social principles, and inspirational energy for the good of humanity that has emanated in the last 100-200 years from the country that s/he represents.

As the sun rises on a post-Covid world order in the 21st century, there are very few countries that have a combo-pack of above three vectors. One, of course is the United States, which is the world's oldest democracy, the world's largest economy, with the largest military today.

The other, China, though a rightful claimant, rules itself out since it advocates an authoritarian governance, control on human lifestyles, and is contra-freedom of thought and choices.

Another up and coming force for good in the world is India - which is the world's largest democracy, with a rising economy and

military might. More than that, India brings a voice of calm, co-existence and peace. The challenge for India is to bundle all its assets and offerings into a cohesive, demonstrable message, and to drive a buy-in and mobilisation across the world.

Whoever it may be, will have to persuade, lead by example, and give the world some simple mantras and do-able solutions. It is equally possible that none of the leaders soar and truly inspire in their speech, bring nothing new, remain parochial and non-futurist, churn out same old arguments, and prescribe the same non-doable solutions that are routinely parroted out, year after year.

Thus, the world is looking eagerly, nay desperately, to US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to hear their vision of a new world order, and to know how they will execute on the mission that they define for themselves, their nation, and the world. Or maybe they will be insipid and disappoint.

At same time, this year a

surprise, last-minute, wild-card entry to this club may be France - led by President Emmanuel Macron. France has all three of the above cited vectors in reasonable proportion, and for long it has been aspiring to play a global role. The geopolitics of 21st century is in a flux, including on how to deal with China's rise, and the outcomes of Afghanistan. And for France, additionally, it is now a downhill trust in a US-led world order as a consequence of the US-UK-Australia submarine deal and formation of the AUKUS military alliance. Thus, while the world has much to look forward this week from Biden and Modi, I will not be surprised if Macron, and France, may have reached a tipping point wherein Macron sketches a world vision that may well see the birth of a new world-pole in geopolitics. After all, it is the French who gave the world the French Revolution.

## international

# 17 INDO-CANADIANS ELECTED MPS AS TRUDEAU FAILS TO WIN MAJORITY

Toronto | Agencies

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's gamble to seek a majority by calling a snap election has not paid off even as 17 Indo-Canadians were elected as MPs.

In the elections held on Monday, Trudeau's ruling Liberal Party again ended up 14 seats short of the 170-mark in the 338-member House of Commons.

The Jagmeet Singh-led New Democratic Party (NDP) will again hold the balance of power as it increased its tally from 24 to 27.

The main opposition Conservative Party ended up with a tally of 122 seats - one up from the dissolved House.

Among the 17 Indo-Canadian winners are Jagmeet Singh, former Minister Tim Uppal and three current Cabinet Ministers Harjit Singh Sajjan, Bardhis Chagger and Anita Anand. Defence Minister Harjit Singh Sajjan again won from Vancouver South by beating Sukhbir



Gill of the Conservative Party.

Chagger, Minister of Diversity, too retained her Waterloo seat as did Public Service Minister Anand her Oakville seat. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh also retained his Burnaby South seat in British Columbia.

In British Columbia, three-time Liberal Party MP Sukh Dhaliwal retained his Surrey-Newton seat by beating fellow Punjabi Avneet Johal

of the NDP. Two-time Liberal Party MP Randeep Singh Sarai also won the Surrey Centre seat by beating Sonia Andhi of the NDP. In Quebec, the sitting Indo-Canadian Anju Dhillon retained her Dorval Lachine LaSalle seat.

In Alberta, Jasraj Singh Hallan retained the Calgary Forest Lawn seat, but his fellow Conservative MP Jag Sahota lost to fellow Sikh George

Chahal of the Liberal Party.

Uppal is back once again after retaining the Edmonton Mill Woods seat for the Conservative party.

He is the brother-in-law of Congress MLA from Jalandhar Cantt, Pargat Singh.

Ontario, the Punjabi-dominated city of Brampton again re-elected all the four sitting Indo-Canadian MPs Maninder Sidhu, Ruby Sahota, Sonia Sidhu and Kamal Khara against fellow Indo-Canadians Naval Bajaj, Medha Joshi, Ramandeep Brar and Gurprit Gill, respectively.

The winners belong to Trudeau's Liberal Party.

Chandra Arya too retained the Napean seat in Ontario.

Lawyer Iqwerind Gaheer, who won the Mississauga-Malton seat for the Liberal Party, will be one of the youngest MPs to go the House of Commons in Ottawa.

Sitting Conservative Party MP Bob Saroya was another known Indo-Canadian face to lose on Monday.

Paris | Agencies

# AUKUS deal is crisis of trust between allies: French FM

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that the nuclear submarine deal between the US, the UK and Australia, known as AUKUS, represents a "crisis of trust" between allies that requires explanations.

"It's not so much about breaking a contract... It is of course having a negative impact on France. But of course, first and foremost, this is a matter of breaking the trust between allies. And it brings about some heavy reflections on behalf of us, the Europeans, as to the way we see our alliances and partnerships," Le Drian told reporters in New York on Monday. "What matters now is, first of all, the breach of trust between partners. Because trust, partners and alliance mean transparency, predictability. It requires explanations. It's about talking to one another, not hiding from one another, in particular on matters of importance. And all of that did not happen."

"We need to talk about it: why was all that missing, why was all that hidden, and made public without telling us ahead of time?" he queried. Le Drian, who is in New York for the high-level week of the UN General Assembly, said he did not intend to meet US Secretary of



State Antony Blinken, Xinhua news agency reported. "Of course I may see him here or there in the corridor," said Le Drian.

Under the new security partnership unveiled on September 15, Canberra will build nuclear-powered submarines with American and British technology.

The new trilateral partnership has angered France after Australia pulled out of a 56-billion-euro (\$65.6 billion) contract.

Back in 2016, Australia signed a contract with France for the purchase of 12 conventional diesel-electric submarines.

On September 16, Australia announced that it planned to acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines from the US and the UK. Outraged by the abrupt move without notice, France recalled its Ambassadors to the US and Australia.

# JAPAN TO DETERMINE NEW PM ON OCT 4

Tokyo: The Japanese government on Tuesday announced its decision to call an extraordinary Parliament session on October 4 to determine a new Prime Minister, ahead of a general election likely to be held in November.



The leadership election of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) scheduled for September 29 is expected to effectively decide the next premier succeeding the outgoing Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who is to resign at the end of this month, as the LDP controls the powerful lower house of parliament, reports Xinhua news agency. Four candidates, former Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, former Communications Minister Sanae Takaichi, Vaccination Minister Taro Kono and executive acting secretary-general of the LDP Seiko Noda have announced their bids for the LDP race. The new Prime Minister is expected to launch a new Cabinet on the same day and decide on deputy ministers and other personnel later. All four candidates have said they would deliver a policy speech and hold a question-and-answer session with opposition parties if elected. In this case, the two most likely timetables for the general election are to begin campaigning on October 26 for the poll on November 7, or campaigning on November 2 for the voting on November 14. Four candidates are projected to continue to exchange opinions on industry groups and local organisations.

# NZ to pass counter-terrorism law after stabbings, mass shootings

Washington | Agencies

A counter-terrorism legislation bill has returned to New Zealand's Parliament for second reading in an important step taken by the country towards giving enforcement agencies greater power to tackle terrorist activities.

The legislation is expected to introduce the criminal offence of "planning or preparation for a terrorist act", Justice Minister Kris Faafoi said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Minister added that this change has been long recommended to plug up a loophole in New Zealand's legislation to help prevent terrorist attacks, reports Xinhua news agency.

The bill is expected to go through its final stages in Parliament to become law by the end of this month.

The move was considered as a response to a horrific knife attack at a supermarket earlier this month.

The attacker was shot dead by police on the spot after injuring seven people,



including three in critical conditions.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said it was a terrorist attack carried out by an "extremist" known to authorities since 2016. The legislation also responds to the Christchurch mosque shootings on March 15, 2019 that killed 51 people and injured 40. "They are reminders of how crucial it is to have laws which provide the tools we need to act early to prevent

and disrupt terrorist activity," Faafoi said. The bill addresses longstanding gaps in New Zealand's counter terrorism legislation that seek to protect New Zealanders, the Minister said, adding it incorporates public input including a recommended change to the definition of a terrorist act to include the intention to intimidate, rather than to induce terror, as is defined in the current law.

# TALIBAN NAMES REMAINING MINISTERS IN CARETAKER GOVT

Kabul: The newly-established Taliban caretaker government in Afghanistan has named the remaining Ministers and members, the group's spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said on Tuesday.

"The newly introduced members of the cabinet are professional personalities including doctors and highly educated persons, also from minorities," Mujahid told reporters at a press conference. The newly introduced cabinet members have been appointed in line with the decree of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, Mujahid said. The spokesman said that a veteran businessman, Hajji Nurudin Azizi, has been appointed as acting minister for commerce, and Qalandar Ebad as the acting minister for public health. Mujahid also expressed hope that the international community would give recognition to the Islamic Emirate. At the press conference, he rejected the presence of the Islamic State, Al Qaeda or any other terrorist groups in Afghanistan, saying the Islamic Emirate is capable enough to smash any extremist organisation and won't allow any Afghanistan soil to be used against any country.

The spokesman also announced that the inauguration ceremony for the new government has been cancelled due to their focus on providing service to the people at this point, TOLO News reported. Regarding the country's economic situation, he said that the domestic revenues might be enough for basic needs. "We are using all diplomatic channels to unfreeze the Afghan assets." When asked about the women's affairs ministry and girls' education, Mujahid said the caretaker cabinet is working to address women's demands for work and education.



# MAHA: NEW 'LETTER-WAR' FLARES UP BETWEEN KOSHYARI, THACKERAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A fresh 'letter-war' has erupted between the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and the state Raj Bhavan, this time a fallout of the recent Sakinaka brutal rape-cum-murder incident.

Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari had recently written to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray expressing concerns over the tragic incident and urged the latter to call a special session of Maharashtra Legislature to discuss the specific (Sakinaka) issue and the safety of women in general.

Firing a missile on Monday, Thackeray endorsed the Governor's sentiments and pointed out that the question of women's safety is not confined to Maharashtra alone but is a national issue.

He cited a string of incidents of atrocities on women in Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, BJP-supported Bihar, Delhi where the police is controlled by the Centre and Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir under the Central administration.

In view of these, Thackeray urged Koshyari to request the BJP-led Central government to convene a 4-day special session of Parliament to deliberate on women's security in which even the Sakinaka incident could be included.

Taking a potshot, the CM said that women being 'unsafe' in the state appeared to be the Governor's sole opinion and his agony was akin to that of a 'political activist.'

"The minute people inimical to the state government talked about calling a special legislature session, the Governor joined their clamour for the same, which is detri-



mental to the system of parliamentary democracy. Your demand could stoke a fresh controversy," cautioned Thackeray.

Harking to the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Thackeray pointedly asked whether women are really safe there under the 'Gujarat Model'.

"As per a Gujarat Police report, daily 14 women face rapes and exploitation, in recent past, 2,908 women went 'missing' in Ahmedabad, in two years 14,229 women have 'disappeared' in the state and since 2015 atrocities on women have peaked

there. To discuss all this, Gujarat would require a 'month-long' special legislature session," Thackeray wrote, no-holds-barred.

Dwelling on Delhi where the law and order is the Centre's jurisdiction, the CM said that in past few years, it has become infamous globally as the 'rape capital' and its needs special attention.

"Last month, a 9-year-old Dalit girl was gangraped and murdered by a priest and his three associates in a crematorium, they even attempted to destroy evidence by forcibly cremating her. This is the scenario in the city where the entire country's

Cabinet is based," said Thackeray without mincing words.

He drew the Governor's attention to the BJP-supported Bihar where a BJP MP allegedly raped a woman activist of the same party, the police refused to lodge her complaint owing to political pressures and only after a court order three months later that an FIR was lodged against the culprit.

Giving examples of Uttar Pradesh, where the Lord Ram Temple is coming up, Thackeray said that earlier this month, a kho-kho player was brutally raped and murdered and her body was found near Bijon railway station.

"Such incidents have taken place in UP's Hathras, Unnao, Badaun where two cousin sisters were raped and murdered. Even the NCRB has said that such atrocities are on the increase in UP, but nobody from the BJP seems to have made demands for a special legislature session there," Thackeray hit out.

Pointing at the 'dev-bhoomi' of Uttarakhand, of which the Governor himself was a 'Sputra' (son), Thackeray said atrocities on women have shot up by 150 per cent in that state, and enquired "if there can be a special legislature session there too."

The CM also listed the immediate steps taken by the MVA government after the Sakinaka incident of September 10 to ensure justice to the victim and her minor children. He said that Maharashtra is the state of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who always gave importance to women's dignity and safety, and the MVA government is following in his footsteps.

Thackeray, 61, said he expected Governor Koshyari, 79, who is like an elder, to extend his blessings in this endeavour.

## No Indication of Covid Third Wave in Maharashtra So Far: Tope

He, however, warned of an increase in infection due to the upcoming festivals but said it can be curbed by increasing vaccination.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said there is no indication of the Covid-19 third wave hitting the state. "As of now, there is no indication of a potential third wave in Maharashtra. However, the daily tally is likely to increase due to crowding to celebrate festivals," Tope was quoted as saying on Monday by the Hindustan Times.

However, he warned of an increase in infection cases due to the upcoming festivals but the transmission can be curbed by increasing the pace of vaccination.

The remark comes as vaccinologist Dr Gangandee Kang said local flare-ups that will be smaller and spread wider across the country may add up to form a third wave of the pandemic. Kang had said while there might be a third wave, the scale will not be like before. He noted that after the second wave, maybe a quarter of the country's population continues to be susceptible to the virus. But he said the same numbers and the same patterns like in the second wave will be unlikely.

"Now if that will collect to form a third wave, that may happen if we have a lot of behaviour change around festivals, but the scale is not



going to be anything like what we saw before," he added.

Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra saw a dip on Monday as the state reported 2,583 new coronavirus positive cases, the lowest after February 9. The tally of COVID-19 infections in Maharashtra now stands at 65,24,498 and the death toll reached 1,38,546. The number of recoveries rose to 63,40,723, leaving the state with 41,672 active cases, the official said.

The daily cases and fatalities witnessed a marginal dip on Monday compared to the previous day when Maharashtra recorded 3,413 infections and 49 deaths.

## Maha: Non-BJP groups gear for Sep 27 'Bharat Bandh'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nearly 100 groups comprising national political parties, farmers' organisations, trade unions, teachers, women, youth, labourers and others will join the September 27 'Bharat Bandh' called by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), top organisers said here on Tuesday.

The decision was taken at a state-level meeting of all the groups chaired by AITUC National Working Committee Member Dr. Bhachandra Kango, held here on Monday with the participation of over 200 leaders of around 100 organisations, said All India Kisan Sabha President Dr.



Ashok Dhawale. The speakers dwelt on the ongoing farmers' struggle, the workers' issues and the importance of the 'Bharat Bandh' against "the bankrupt policies" of the BJP-RSS regime at the Centre led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he added. A delegation called on Congress State President Nana Patole, NCP State President and Minister Jayant Patil, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and senior NCP Minister Dr. Jitendra Awhad who assured support of the Maha Vikas

Aghadi parties to the nationwide action of next Monday. The prominent participants included Vidya Chavan (NCP), Raju Korde (PWP), Meraj Siddiqui (SP), Dhyananjay Shinde (AAP), Prabhakar Narkar (JD-S), Dr S.K. Rege (CPI-M), Prakash Reddy (CPI), Ulka Mahajan (Sarvahara Jan Andolan), Teesta Setalvad (Sabrang India), Ferz Mithiborwala (HBKLI), Anil Tyagi (SUCI), Kishor Dhamale (SCP), Subhash Kakuste (LNP), Dr Vivek Monteiro (CITU), Prof Tapati Mukhopadhyay (MFUC-TO), Milind Ranade (NTUI), Yuvraj Ghatkal (NAPM), Prachi Hatwilekar (AIDWA) and leaders of several other organisations.

## Ex-Shiv Sena Union minister calls Sharad Pawar 'backstabber'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Shiv Sena Union minister and senior leader Anant G. Geete has spewed venom at Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar, calling him a 'backstabber', creating ripples of anxiety in the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra.

While the three allies Sena-NCP-Congress attempted to distance themselves from Geete's remarks, the Opposition BJP sought to exploit them politically to highlight the 'cracks' in the MVA.

Geete, 70, said that Pawar, who had 'backstabbed' the Congress to form the NCP, cannot be the 'guru' for Shiv Sainiks and termed the MVA government as a temporary 'adjustment'.

"People may praise Pawar, but our only 'guru' is (the late) Balasaheb Thackeray," Geete said at a rally in his erstwhile bastion, Raigad, which was captured by the NCP's Sunil Tatkare in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. He also accused Pawar of betraying the Congress and launching the NCP, saying that if the two parties cannot join hands, there is no need for the Sena to completely follow



the Congress. Though claiming that he harboured no ill-will towards the MVA and wanted it to work well, Geete also cautioned that after the separation, Shiv Sainiks will stick only to the Sena. Shiv Sena chief spokesperson and MP Sanjay Raut sought to label Geete's statement as 'personal opinion' and not the party's view.

"I am not aware what he has said. I can only say that Sharad Pawar is a big leader and the main pil-

lar of the MVA government," Raut said. State Congress President Nana Patole said that while it is an internal matter between the Sena and the NCP, Geete's remarks were unfortunate though they would not affect the MVA government.

Tatkare, who was lauded as a 'giant-killer' for trouncing the Sena's former Union minister in Raigad, said that Geete's outburst should not be taken too seriously as he seems to have made it out of frustration. Geete should understand how coalition governments work. He was part of a coalition as an MoS for Finance, then handled power and industry ministries at the Centre for nearly eight years," said Tatkare, whose daughter Aditi Tatkare is a MoS in the MVA government.

Reacting to the developments, BJP's Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis backed Geete and reiterated that the "MVA is an unnatural alliance which will not last for long."

As per political sources, six-term MP Geete maybe spooked at the erosion of his support base on his home-ground with the NCP trouncing him in 2019, and reports of the Sena-NCP planning an alliance for the upcoming local body elections could prove more detrimental.

## Delta derivative AY.4 soars in Maharashtra & Indiasamples, but not of concern yet

Delta continues to be the dominant in circulation in and India, but the presence of one of its derivatives or sub-lineages, named AY.4, is growing. Scientists said it's too early in the Covid cycle to ascertain if AY.4 is a matter of concern.

Covid-19 Genome Surveillance. Its proportion increased to 2% in July and 44% in August. A closer look at the August report showed that while Delta (B.1.617.2) was found in 111 (36%) of the 308 samples analysed, AY.4 was found in 137 samples (44%).

At the all-India level as well, AY.4's presence increased from 5% of all samples tested in June to 8% in July and 45% in August. The last Indian Covid-19 Genome Surveillance report said while Delta and Delta sub-lineages continued to be the main variants of concern globally, AY.4 is the main global sub-lineage. The latest genomic sequencing series completed in the Kasturba Hospital lab last week, too, showed the pres-

ence of many "Delta derivatives", including AY.4. "Delta and its derivatives, which were previously called Delta Plus, are not considered to be separate entities yet," said a civic source.

BMC executive health officer Dr Mangala Gomare said there are Delta derivatives in circulation, "but it is not significant." The BMC team is in the process of correlating the Delta reports with clinical reports of patients to map out if and how the variants have changed Covid's symptoms and severity. "A variant becomes a matter of concern only if we can establish it has increased transmissibility, causes severe infection and/or it can cause breakthrough infection," said

a doctor. The evaluation for AY.4 is on at a global level.

The BMC's genomic survey report last week showed that the main Delta variant was responsible for breakthrough infections, but except for four fully vaccinated patients needing oxygen support, the others had mild illness. The latest release from the Insacog network of laboratories that maintain the Indian Covid-19 Genome Surveillance said there are problems with tools for classifying AY.4 to AY.25 lineages. "While Insacog has started reporting the new lineages for better epidemiology, they are all Delta for clinical and public health purposes," said the release.

## BJP using ED, CBI to threaten Maharashtra govt: Shiv Sena

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is using the central agencies like Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to threaten the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra, alleged Saamana editorial on Tuesday. The's mouthpiece said that BJP leaders in Maharashtra think that central investigation agencies like ED, CBI are in their pockets and at their behest, they can

threaten political opponents. "BJP state president Chandrakant Dada has threatened Hasan Mushrif of Kolhapur that while fighting ED he will start foaming from his mouth. Former MP Kirit Somaiya has made some allegations against Hasan Mushrif. These allegations must have been made at the behest of Chandrakant Patil," it said. The editorial alleged that BJP's only policy is to stop the development of the state and create panic by making baseless allegations. "From

the Governor to the leader of opposition, everyone is behaving like an enemy to the Maharashtra government. The government of Maharashtra is not falling even after the 'central' pressure, so the foam coming out of the opposition here is clearly visible," it said. Saamana said no one in the state takes BJP's Chandrakant Patil seriously and he is doing the work of defaming the central agencies while adding that people will lose faith in ED or CBI due to his behaviour.

# Maharashtra Minister Threatens To File Defamation Suit Against BJP Leader

Maharashtra Minister Hasan Mushrif said the allegation made by Kirit Somaiya against him are part of BJP's conspiracy, of which Chandrakant Patil is the mastermind.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and Maharashtra Rural Development Minister Hasan Mushrif on Monday said he will file Rs 100 crore defamation suit against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kirit Somaiya.

Briefing mediapersons, Mr Mushrif said, "The allegation which is being made by Kirit Somaiya are part of BJP's big conspiracy and Chandrakant Patil is the mastermind of this. I have been very vocal about the Centre using central agencies against Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and on the issue of (former Mumbai Police commissioner) Parambir Singh. It is the reason I am being framed by BJP through Kirit Somaiya to stop me."

"All allegations against me and my family are false and baseless. I am going to file Rs 100 crore defamation suit against Kirit Somaiya. Kirit Somaiya should apologise to me. I will file an FIR against Chandrakant Patil for a Rs 150-crore hybrid annuity scam done during the BJP government," he added.

Somaiya last week had alleged that Mushrif and his family members are involved in money laundering and have stakes in shell companies.

Speaking to media-persons, the BJP leader had said, "Hasan



Mushrif, his wife Sahera Hasan Mushrif and their son Navid Mushrif, the whole Mushrif family have their shares in these fraudulent practices in money laundering and Benami property." "There are records in various agencies that the companies, in which these people were involved are actually shell companies. In his election affidavit, he has mentioned these shell companies. I do not know how he could do that," he had alleged.

To validate his claims, Somaiya had presented a few documents and the election affidavit of Hasan Mushrif.

"Tomorrow, I will file a formal complaint against Hasan Mushrif in Enforcement Directorate (ED) with documentary proof. Day after tomorrow, I will be in Delhi and meet Finance Ministry officials to register my complaint there too. I have the names of two other ministers with the detail of their corruption. One of them is from NCP and the other from Shiv Sena," he had said.

Notably, Somaiya was scheduled to visit the properties owned by Mushrif in Kolhapur, in which he claims corruption has taken place. However, he was detained at Karad Railway Station while en route to Kolhapur.

Earlier, Somaiya had levelled allegations of money laundering against Maharashtra Cabinet Ministers Chhagan Bhujbal and Anil Parab.

## Shawn Mendes announces 'Wonder: The World Tour'

New York | Agencies

Shawn Mendes announced his world tour in support of his latest album 'Wonder'. The pop-star took to social media and made the announcement about 'Wonder: The World Tour' on Monday night.

"TOUR Wonder: The World Tour. Announcing later this week!" he wrote on Instagram with a performance video.

The 23-year-old singer announced that he was ready to get back onstage by sharing a 52-second video of himself dancing solo underneath the spotlight to his global chart hit 'Summer of Love', which he and Tainy performed at the 2021 MTV VMAs, and 'Teach Me How to Love' from Wonder.

He wrote, "Can't wait to get out there and see you all again guys Sign up to be first to hear about tour dates & presale info at <http://wonderthetour.com>."

Shawn Peter Raul Mendes is a Canadian singer and songwriter. He gained a following in 2013, posting song covers on the video-sharing application Vine. The following year, he caught the attention of manager Andrew Gertler and Island Records A&R Ziggy Chareton, which led to him signing a deal with the record label.

Mendes's self-titled debut EP was released in 2014, followed by his debut studio album 'Handwritten' in 2015. 'Handwritten' debuted atop the US Billboard 200, making Mendes one of five artists ever to debut at number one before the age of 18. The single 'Stitches' reached number one in the UK and the top 10 in the US and Canada.



**RITA ORA SAYS NEXT PHASE OF HER LIFE IS ABOUT PROTECTING HERSELF**

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Rita Ora has shared that she was "burning the candles at both ends" and is very much a "yes" person, but is now making her health a priority. She told Vogue Australia magazine: "I wanted things to happen then and now. I've realised that's not how life works. I exhausted myself. This next phase of my life, I'm protecting myself. It's all really about making the right choices and focusing really hard on my work and my health." The 'Fifty Shades Freed' actress also talked about how she has made "a lot of sacrifices" for her career in music, but it has rewarded her in many ways, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Ora said: "This is one of the best jobs in the world. It's unbelievable, the appreciation you get from making music, it's incomparable to anything I've ever experienced. But at the same time, you have a lot of sacrifices, a lot of time on your own." Music has been that fulfilment for me in those moments." Ora, who is dating filmmaker Taika Waititi, said music has been there for her through "friendships, relationships, self-worth, self-discovering, confidence, independence, sorrow, loneliness".

## LADY GAGA'S 'LOVE FOR SALE' LIVE STREAM EVENT SCHEDULED FOR SEP 30

New York | Agencies

Lady Gaga has announced that her concert 'Love for Sale', a global livestream event will take place on September 30, reports Billboard.com. She made the announcement on Monday night.

The concert is to promote her upcoming Tony Bennett duets album 'Love for Sale'. The show will be livestreamed, but fans will also be able to attend a number of special fan zones in 21 different cities in the U.K., U.S., France, Prague and Barcelona, among others.

The event will take place online, as well as in fan zones at Westfield Century City in Los Angeles and Westfield

Garden State Plaza in New Jersey. According to a

release announcing the shows, the fan zones will "host fans in an intimate pop-up jazz theater inspired by the new album, 'Love for Sale'. Fans who attend in-person will also gain entry to an "exclusive experience that includes premium viewing of Lady Gaga's performance, food, beverages, and limited edition merchandise -- all free of charge."

The gig will support Gaga's non-profit Born This Way Foundation, and Bennett's arts education organization Exploring the Arts.

Gaga and Bennett recently released the Cole Porter-penned title track from their second jazz standards album due out on October 1 on Columbia

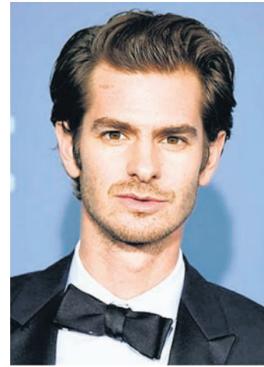
Records/Interscope along with the official video.

Bennett, 95, performed his final live shows in August with Gaga during a two-night residency at New York's Radio City Music Hall. 'Love for Sale' is the followup to 'Cheek to Cheek', which hit No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart following its release in 2014.



## Andrew Garfield on why Spider-Man is the most beloved superhero

Los Angeles | Agencies



Actor Andrew Garfield, who played superhero Spider-Man in the 2012 film 'The Amazing Spider-Man' and its 2014 sequel said that audiences will never get tired of the character, who is currently being played by Tom Holland. He added that everyone can project themselves into the suit, and that's why he's probably the most beloved superhero universally.

Garfield told SiriusXM: "It's like 'Hamlet', like you can never get enough 'Hamlets' or 'Macbeths'... I will vouch for the character for a second in the sense that it's the only superhero where he's covered head to toe." You don't see skin colour, you don't see sexual orientation, you don't see any of those things."

The star believes that the fact that "everyone" has the ability to imagine themselves as Spider-Man is key to the enduring popularity of the character, who first appeared in Marvel Comics in 1962. He said:

"Everyone can project themselves into the suit, and I think that's why he's probably the most beloved superhero universally, throughout every culture, throughout every race. Yeah, I think so. I really do think so."

"And there's also (an) ordinariness to Peter Parker that everyone can project themselves into as well."

Actor Tom Holland succeeded Garfield as Peter Parker or Spider-Man and is set to play the role once again in 'Spider-Man: No Way Home'.

Garfield is happy to watch the superhero from a distance, reports femalefirst.co.uk. Speaking on 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon' about the upcoming film, he said: "I think that Tom Holland is just the perfect Peter Parker and Spider-Man, so I'm just super stoked." And I get to just like, be a fan again, which is my preferred position - to be able to sit in the audience and kind of go, 'Yeah, you screwed up mate, you didn't do it as well as you could have done, eh?' I get to be that guy that's just like, 'Yeah, I don't really love the suit...' I get to be that person which is so much fun."

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Britney Spears

## Ellen Pompeo hints at 'Grey's Anatomy' end

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Ellen Pompeo has said that fans are not "far off" with their speculation that 'Grey's Anatomy' is close to the end following a nostalgic season 17. The 17th season of the medical drama saw a wave of past cast members, including Patrick Dempsey, Sarah Drew and Eric Dane, make a return to the show, prompting viewers to speculate the show may be reaching the end of its time, reports femalefirst.co.uk. Asked about the speculation at the Emmy Awards, she said: "They're not far off. I mean, I've been trying to get away for years. I have been trying. It's not because I haven't been trying. I have strong relationships at the network and they have been very, very good to me, and have incentivised me to stay." Pompeo did not say if there is a definite end date in mind. She said: "I'm not really supposed to say anything about it. I don't want to be disrespectful to people I've promised things to."

However, the actress acknowledged the show will continue "as long as there's something to do, creatively." She added: "Miraculously, we keep coming up with ways to have a reason to stay and if there's a reason, that warrants it."

Pompeo is not too excited by the idea of a 19th season. She told 'Entertainment Tonight': "Oh please! Oh my goodness, can we pray together?" Much of season 17 saw Ellen's character in a coma and dealing with the effects of coronavirus, and the actress felt it provided a safe way of working and a way to keep things relevant for the audience.

## Jeezy, Jeannie Mai expecting their first baby

New York | Agencies

Rapper Jeezy's wife Jeannie Mai Jenkins is pregnant with their first baby together.

The TV host Mai showed off her baby bump during the season eight premiere of 'The Real' on Monday, reports Complex.com.

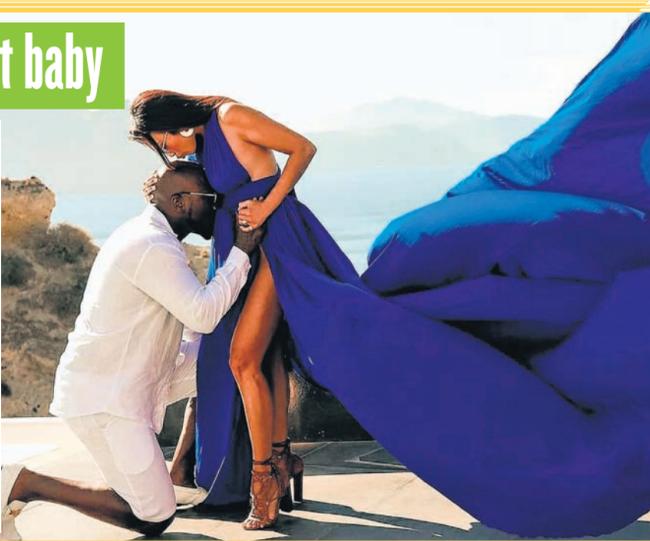
The co-host of 'The Real' shared the news both on the show and in an interview with Women's Health. The couple decided they wanted to start a family roughly a year ago.

"Jeezy and I have been kind of saving this and hiding this for five months," she said in the interview. "So, we're relieved to finally share the news." On TV, Mai explained that "our Real fam is growing," and revealed she never intended to be a mom until later in life. As she said on the show, "love can really change you." "And falling in love with Jeezy, meeting someone who also didn't feel safe in

their life, we began to really create a place where our happiness spelled out what safe looked like around us," she said. "So, as soon as you feel safe, in a healthy relationship, all of a sudden you start having visions and dreams and for both of us at the same time, it would be becoming parents, having kids."

Mai, 42, and Jeezy, 43, have been married since March. The rapper has three children from former relationships: Jadarius, Shyheim, and Amra. Mai told the magazine it "was not easy" to conceive, sharing that she discovered she was pregnant a month before the wedding, then had a miscarriage.

"I wondered if I was being punished. I wondered if I'd jinxed myself or cursed myself. My entire life, I never wanted children. When I say never, I'm talking a hard-stop never," she said, adding that Jeezy made her "see life differently for myself."





## KARTIK TYAGI HELPS RAJASTHAN ROYALS BEAT PUNJAB BY TWO RUNS



Dubai | Agencies

Kartik Tyagi claimed two wickets and denied Punjab Kings four runs in the final over as Rajasthan Royals won by two runs in the UAE leg of the IPL 2021 here on Tuesday.

Punjab, who raced to 120 without loss thanks to skipper KL Rahul (49) and Mayank Agarwal (67), needed 10 runs off the last 15 deliveries. They reduced the equation to four runs off the final over before Tyagi bowled brilliantly to snatch victory

from the jaws of defeat in a thrilling finish.

### Brief scores:

Rajasthan Royals 185 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 49, Evin Lewis 36, Mahipal Lmroror 43; Arshdeep 5/32, Mohd Shami 3/21) beat Punjab Kings 183/4 in 20 overs (Mayank Agarwal 67, KL Rahul 49, Nicholas Pooran 32; Kartik Tyagi 2/29) by 2 runs.

### IPL 2021:

## Under-pressure Kohli could be 'removed as RCB captain mid-way'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

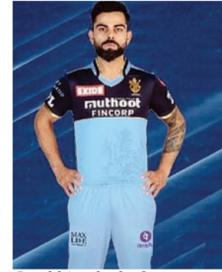
There's a possibility that Virat Kohli could be removed as the captain of Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) mid-way through the ongoing UAE leg of the Indian Premier League (IPL), a former India cricketer has said.

And the reason seems to be quite evident after witnessing RCB's, more so Virat's, meek surrender against the Kolkata Knight Riders in Abu Dhabi on Monday. RCB had a humiliating return to IPL when they were bundled out for just 92 by KKR in their first match of the Phase-2. It was RCB's sixth-lowest total in IPL, as they lost to the Eoin Morgan-led KKR by nine wickets.

After opting to bat, Kohli (5 runs off 4 balls) fell prey to pacer Prasidh Krishna in just the second over of the match. The 32-year-old batsman was trapped plum in front and a bad review call didn't help his case either.

Even the body language of Virat was not the same, as it used to be, throughout the match. He was actually emanating shades of a player who has just decided to step down as the captain of RCB after the IPL 2021.

His call further attracted the ire of the experts, including former cricketer Gautam



Gambhir, who had questioned the timing of his decision. He reckoned if Kohli had to do something like that, he could have done it after the IPL.

Some cricketers even suggested that the team looked "unsettled" by the untimely announcement. One former India cricketer, on condition of anonymity, told IANS that it seems that Kohli might be removed "mid-way".

"Look at the way he was playing against Kolkata Knight Riders. Just clueless! It seems he is struggling big time right now. There are chances that he could be removed mid-way through the season. It has happened earlier also with other teams -- like with Dinesh Karthik in KKR and David Warner in Sunrisers Hyderabad, among others. They were either removed or they stepped down mid-way. So it can

happen in RCB as well... I have this feeling after watching yesterday's match. One more bad game and you can see a change in RCB captaincy right away," said the former cricketer.

Virat was appointed the skipper of RCB ahead of the 2013 IPL season as a successor to outgoing captain Daniel Vettori. Since then, the side has unsatisfactory won 62 of the 132 matches under him, to go with 66 losses and 4 no-results.

Senior player AB de Villiers will probably be the apt candidate to replace Virat. He is greatly respected within the team. But there are also chances that he might not accept the offer.

Yuzvendra Chahal's name is also doing the rounds on the basis of seniority in the team. Chahal has also been the leading wicket-taker for RCB in the IPL, clinching 125 wickets in 106 games that he has played for the franchise so far. Youngster Devdutt Padikkal's name has been coined as well, following the trend seen in recent times of appointing young captains such as Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson. The Karnataka batsman has been the leading run-scorer for RCB in the last couple of seasons and is considered one of the favourites of Kohli.

## Mithali Raj reaches milestone, completes 20,000 career runs

Mackay | Agencies

India ODI captain Mithali Raj has become the first woman batter to reach the milestone of 20,000 career runs in all formats of the game.

Mithali, the highest runs scorer in women's cricket, reached the milestone while scoring 61 off 107 balls in the first ODI against Australia here on Tuesday. She has scored 7304 runs over 217 ODIs while in 11 Tests, she has made a total of 669 runs. In 89 T20Is, Mithali has scored 2364 runs. On Tuesday, the India skipper had dropped anchor to stabilize the innings after the Indian women lost some quick wickets. On the way to her 63, Mithali added 77 runs for the third wicket Yastika Bhatia (35). In the process, Mithali



also hit her 59th ODI half-century. Mithali helped India reach 225/8 in 50 overs but India lost the match by nine wickets. Tuesday's innings helped the India ODI skipper

continue to hold on to the number one spot in the ICC Women's ODI Rankings for batters. Mithali retained the top spot with 762 points.

## Durand Cup: Bengaluru, Delhi FC in quarters with contrasting wins

Kolkata | Agencies

Former Indian Super League (ISL) winner Bengaluru FC came back from two goals down for a 5-3 win while Delhi FC held on to a lone-goal victory against Kerala Blasters as both made it to the quarter-finals of the 130th Durand Cup here on Tuesday.

The Indian Navy footballers had a chance, Kerala Blasters FC had a glimmer of hope until the final minute in Group C, but it wasn't to be their day. Throughout the 90 minutes, all four teams had a mathematical chance to qualify.

Delhi were up against ISL side Kerala Blasters at the Kalyani Municipality Stadium. With the game deadlocked at half-time and Bengaluru down 0-2 to the Indian Navy at this point, the onus was on both teams to draw advantage by getting the first goal early on in the second half. It was Willis Deon Plaza who



gave Delhi the lead in the 53rd minute, and that meant the team from the Capital playing in the second division currently, only needed to hang on to their lead to qualify. Plaza is now the top scorer of the tournament with four goals to his name. Elsewhere at the Yuba Bharati Krirangan (YBK), matters had turned to chaos. By the end of the first-half, it was the Indian Navy team leading 2-0 against heavyweights

Bengaluru FC in a match that seemed to be heading towards an extraordinary upset. The Blues looked totally off colour for the first 45 minutes. They missed quite a number of chances to convert and the Indian Navy dominated the match for almost the entire half.

In the 19th minute, Jijo took a gorgeous shot from outside the box to take the Sailormen one goal up. A few minutes later, Bengaluru had a golden

opportunity to equalize when a Harmanpreet cross was well received by Siva Sakthi who took a cross footed shot at the goal but it went over the bar. In the 30th minute, Sreyas, who has had a very good tournament, scored the second for Navy.

Bengaluru looked a different side in the second half. Just a few minutes after half-time, a fumble in the Navy goal meant Bengaluru's Leon Augustine had an easy chance to score his team's first but failed to convert. However, things changed quickly as Bengaluru raised the tempo. A smart turn by Lyngdoh opened up the Navy defence and Augustine halved the deficit in the 53rd minute. Bengaluru sailed on their newfound momentum and were drawn on level terms by Harmanpreet Singh in the 61st minute. In the 75th minute, Bengaluru were awarded a penalty which Ajay Chhetri converted with no mistake and at this point, the game seemed to be slipping away from the Navy.

## 1st ODI: Rachael, Alyssa power Australia Women to 9-wicket win

Mackay | Agencies

Australian opening batswomen Rachael Haynes (93 not out) and Alyssa Healy (77) and No. 3 Meg Lanning (53 not out) pulverised the Indian bowlers as they took the host to a resounding nine-wicket win over the visitors and take a 1-0 lead in the bilateral ODI series.

India women had, earlier, crawled to 225/8 in 50 overs.

After a quick start by openers Shafali Verma (8) and Smriti Mandhana (16), who both added 31 for the first wicket in 3.2 overs, India lost two quick wickets as the openers fell. India were 38/2 after the first ball of the sixth over.

The sudden loss of wickets set the Indians back as No. 3 batswoman Yastika Bhatia (35 off 51) and No. 4 batswoman and captain Mithali Raj (63 off 107 balls) dropped anchor to stabilise the innings. The duo added 77 runs for the third wicket in 21 overs. Yastika and Deepti Sharma (9 off 19) fell quickly one after the other before top-scorer Mithali fell with the



score at 166.

The India ODI skipper seemed to be resurrecting the inning as she added 37 runs in 7.1 overs with Pooja Vastrakar (17 off 29) for the fifth wicket. However, after Mithali's wicket, Pooja and Sneha Rana (2) fell quickly as India were reduced to 178/7 in 42.5

overs. ut wicketkeeper-batswoman Richa Ghosh (32 off 29 balls) provided hard-hitting late in the innings to help the visiting side reach 225.

Pace bowler Darcie Brown took four for 33, including the wickets of the openers. She came back to remove Yastika and Deepti, picking

four of India's top five wickets.

But it proved to be a cakewalk as Rachael played the anchor's role as Alyssa went after the bowling. The openers had added 126 for the first wicket before Mitchell Starc's wife Alyssa was dismissed by Poonam Yadav. Alyssa made her 77 off 77 balls with eight fours and two sixes.

The Indians found no respite as Rachael, who remained unbeaten on 93 on exactly 100 balls and hit seven fours, continued to frustrate the Indian bowlers in the company of Meg, who took 69 balls for her unbeaten 53. Meg also hit seven fours. The second ODI will be played here on Friday (September 24).

### Brief scores

India Women 225/8 in 50 overs (Mithali Raj 63, Richa Ghosh 32 not out, Darcie Brown 4/33, Sophie Molineux 2/39, Hannah Darlington 2/29) lost to Australia Women 227/1 in 41 overs (Rachael Haynes 93 not out, Alyssa Healy 77, Poonam Yadav 1/58).

## ICC ODI rankings: Satterthwaite, Knight make significant gains

Dubai | Agencies

New Zealand's Amy Satterthwaite and England captain Heather Knight have made significant gains in ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings for batting, jumping five places to share the ninth spot with Natalie Sciver and Laura Wolvaardt. Her opponent, Satterthwaite, replied with an unbeaten 79 off 87 balls in the same match. However, her unbeaten efforts couldn't carry New



Zealand across the finish line as the wickets kept tumbling away at the other end. Lizelle Lee, who caught up with India's Mithali Raj last week in the ODI Rankings to share the mantle at the top, has slipped by a position at number 2 - one rating point behind - after missing the final two ODIs against West Indies. England's Danielle Wyatt (33rd) and Lauren Winfield-Hill (37th) have gained five slots while for the West Indies, Rashada Williams has rocketed up 53

places to the 53rd position after scores of 42 in the fourth match and 78 not out in the fifth, which the West Indies won in the one-over eliminator after a tie. In the women's ODI Rankings for bowling, the England pair Sophie Ecclestone and Katherine Brunt climbed up the ladder one position each at sixth and seventh respectively, shifting Ayabonga Khaka of South Africa down to number eight who missed the final two outings of the series against South Africa.

## Pak cricketing greats hit out at England, NZ for cancelling tours

Lahore | Agencies

Pakistan greats such as Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis and Shoaib Akhtar among others have castigated the England and New Zealand cricket boards for pulling out of their scheduled tours of the country citing "security issues" and "mental and physical well-being of our players".

After New Zealand Cricket (NZC) withdrew its side hours before the opening match at Rawalpindi a couple of days back due to 'security concerns', the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) too cancelled the men's and women's team tours saying that the "mental and physical well-being of our players and support staff remains our highest priority and this is even more critical given the times we are currently living in".

Legendary Pakistan bowler Wasim Akram tweeted, "It's better to be a lion for a day than a sheep all your life. Unfortunately we live in a world where terror threats haunt sports and entertainment in every single country. But I would much rather play cricket in a country that is prepared for anything than one that isn't."



Another Pakistan great, fast bowler Waqar Younis, wrote, "Integrity Comes First' Unfortunately we live in a very cynical World. So let's not cry over spilled milk. Let's show the World that we are alive. Time to shine Team Pakistan (Flag of Pakistan) #T20WorldCup Support required from every Pakistani around the World #PakistanZindabad." Pakistan batsman Shoaib Malik termed it a sad news for the country's cricket. "Sad news for Pakistan cricket, just stay strong... We will be back stronger, inshallah!" Even when the New Zealand team abandoned the tour a couple of days back and flew to Dubai on a chartered flight, Malik had tweeted, "Just landed & got the news of New Zealand tour cancellation, If Sri Lanka can visit Pakistan after what happened followed by countries like SA, WI, BD, ZIM in recent times with successful tours, why not NZ? Not only me, millions of cricket fans are gutted by this decision." Former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar, said it's time to have an arm-wrestling contest and show who is stronger. "So England also refuses. Its ok guys, see you all at the T20 World Cup. Specially @BLACKCAPS. Ab painja laganaay ka time aa gaya hai. Chorna nahi hai ab @babarazam. (It's time to arm-wrestle and defeat them. Don't spare them)," tweeted Akhtar.

## Kubbra Sait shares prosthetics video from sci-fi series 'Foundation'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kubbra Sait of 'Sacred Games' fame, who plays a pivotal part in the upcoming Apple TV+ sci-fi drama series 'Foundation' starring Jared Harris, took to social media to share a glimpse of how she underwent a prosthetic makeover to get the look of her character. The video shows her sitting motionless while the prosthetics team does its magic on her. Sait, who plays the character named Phara, also shared a picture with the young British actress Leah Harvey, who essays the character of Salvor Hardin in the series inspired by Isaac Asimov's novels. 'Foundation', according to a description given along with the series trailer on YouTube, "chronicles a band of

exiles on their monumental journey to save humanity and rebuild civilisation amid the fall of the Galactic Empire." The series releases on September 24.

Among the actors, another Indian name to pop up is Nikhil Parmar, who's British and plays the character Freestone. He was last seen in the Emma Appleton-led 019 TV series 'Traitors'.



## Bhumi Pednekar to speak at Climate Week in NY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress and climate activist Bhumi Pednekar has been invited to speak at the Climate Week in New York.

Divya Sharma, India Executive Director, Climate Group, said: "We are pleased to host Bhumi Pednekar at Climate Week NYC 2021 which is a critical moment to influence climate action across the world." Sharma added: "Along with being a talented artist, Bhumi has been a strong advocate for environment-friendly choices and green solutions. In line with this year's theme of 'Getting It Done', young voices like Bhumi's will truly inspire others to do more at Climate Week NYC." Bhumi will be speaking on September 23 during Climate Week NYC. She will speak about how India will play a vital role in the global response to the climate emergency, and how the Indian industry will play a critical role in this journey forward. Run by Climate Group in partnership with the UN, COP26 and the City of New York, Climate Week NYC is where the world gathers to showcase leading action and discuss how to do more. Climate Group is an international non-profit, publicly launched in 2004, with offices in London, New Delhi and New York with the mission to see a world of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

## COMEDY IS A DIFFICULT THING TO DO: SAMANTHA AKKINENI

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telugu actress Samantha Akkineni realised how difficult it is to make people laugh only after she completed her 2019 film "Oh Baby". She said this after receiving the Best Actress in Leading Role (Telugu) Award at the South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA). In the movie, Samantha plays the role of Baby, an aged woman, who magically becomes

younger overnight. She then relives all her dreams and aspirations that she could not realise earlier in life. Speaking about doing the film, Samantha said in a conversation with IANS: "I remember the reason why I wanted to do this film was that I wanted to break free from the heroine-oriented, social message-driven films. Comedy was very new to me but I always felt that I should give comedy a try and I am really glad that I did it because I had so

much fun and I also realised that comedy is very, very difficult." The actress, who has a series of hit Telugu films in her kitty, gained a new perspective on actors who are masters of the comedy genre. "Comedy is even more difficult than emotional scenes. It's difficult to achieve the timing, and the pauses. I appreciate comic actors all the more now after working in 'Oh Baby'," says the actress.



## Arjun Kapoor: My fitness journey has changed the way people look at me

Actor Arjun Kapoor, who has battled obesity and gone through a physical transformation, says his fitness journey has changed the way people look at him and that the film offers coming to him have also changed. Arjun said: "People have been kind enough to notice my transformation. My fitness journey has not only changed the way I look at food, nutrition and fitness but it has also changed the way people look at me. The opportunities and offers coming to me have also changed." Arjun will have some exciting new announcements as he ventures into the food and fitness space. The actor added: "I have definitely initiated multiple conversations to explore myself in the food and nutrition space and I'm excited for some of the things that will materialise soon. I will be in a position to share more concrete details in the days to come."



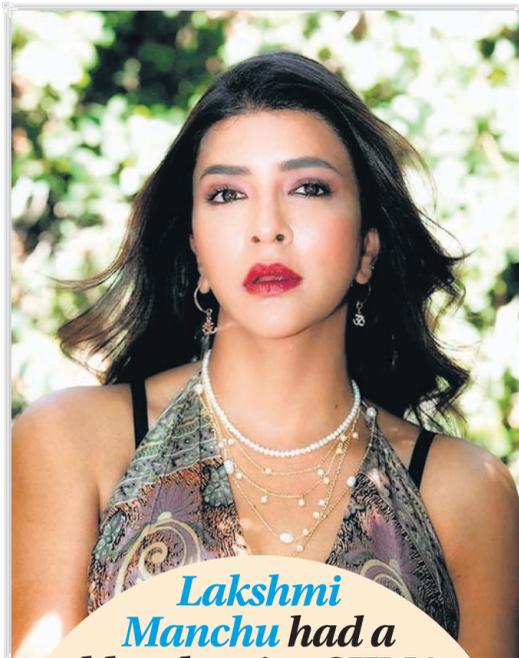
## Debut film of Shweta Tiwari's daughter Palak with Arbaaz Khan to release in October

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The debut film of Palak Tiwari, daughter of celebrated TV actress Shweta Tiwari - 'Rosie: The Saffron Chapter' - will be released in October, confirms the producer of the film Prerna V. Arora.

Speaking about the release of the film, producer Prerna said, "We are happy to announce that 'Rosie' will be releasing this October. The film is based on a real-life incident that happened in Noida and our main focus in this film is about 'Akal Mrityu' and the effects they have on the family and friends. The teasers released already gave the audience a peek into the story and the response to them was mind-blowing. We can't wait to see how the audience reacts to the film." The film is a spooky horror love story shot in various locations in India, including Pune, Lucknow and other cities.

The film also features Arbaaz Khan, Tanishaa Mukerji and the film is directed by Vishal Ranjan Mishra.



## Lakshmi Manchu had a blast hosting SIIMA awards

Actress Lakshmi Manchu hosted the South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA) here on Sunday. Clearly, her excitement on hosting the show was worth it. The actress looked glamorous in a peach gown as she took the centre stage for hosting the show. "I was super excited to be hosting SIIMA yet again. This is a great time for celebration as we all come together through the troubles that the film industry had to face the past two years but nonetheless the show must go on and here we are acknowledging, celebrating the greatest talent that our South India has to offer," Lakshmi says.

The 'Pitta Kathalu' actress was very happy to meet her friends from the fraternity again. "This was fun, I had not seen many of my friends in the past couple of years. With Zoom meetings and cancelled events and last minute dis-appointments and being dressed waist high all this felt changed and we were in our full form for SIIMA," she says.



Aalisha Panwar