

# absolute india

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## Jaishankar likely to hold discussions with Chinese counterpart at SCO summit

**India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is likely to hold discussions with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, being held at Tajikistan's Dushanbe from Thursday, the MEA spokesperson said.**



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Jaishankar, who has reached the Tajik capital, will be holding bilateral talks with his counterparts from Tajikistan and Iran, Sirojiddin Muhridin, and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, respectively.

At media briefing here, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said: "Our EAM will be there and hopefully we will be having number of bilateral meetings. I do not want to prejudge which one. I am not rule in or rule out any meetings. So let's wait for what meetings take place."

Responding to a question on the India-China standoff, he said India's position was the same.

"We reiterate our position that completion of disengagement in the remaining areas can pave the way forward for two sides to consider de-escalation of forces and ensure full restoration peace and tran-

quility and enable bilateral relations," he said.

Bagchi also said that the SCO is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its foundation, and India is participating for the fourth time as a full member.

The spokesman also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the first in-person Quad leaders' summit in Washington on September 24, and on the next day, will participate in the general debate at the UN General Assembly at its 76th session.

The theme for this year's general debate is "Building resilience through hope to recover from Covid-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalise the United Nations".

While the PM will be in Washington, he will also have a bilateral meeting with US President Joe Biden, he added.

"We also look forward to bilateral meetings with other Quad leaders as well as bilateral meetings with some other leaders while he is in New York on September 25," he said.

To a question on a missing Hindu in Afghanistan, Bagchi said: "We have seen a missing person's report of an Indian national - Bansuri Lal in Kabul. We are in touch with all concerned. We have seen reports about local authorities undertaking investigation. We will continue to monitor situation and will tell you of any developments."

On resumption of Operation Devi Shakti, the spokesperson said: "Until and unless operations resume at Kabul airport, it will be difficult to say how people will be evacuated. It will be easier once the operations resume. We are watching this, for the remaining Indians and Afghans willing to come."

## Inflation moderating from May's shock spike: RBI Dy Guv

**India's inflation level is moderating from the shock spike of May, said RBI's Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra on Thursday.**

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Speaking at CII's Financial Markets Summit, he said: "Inflation is moderating from the shock spike of May, but core inflation is sticky at still elevated levels." "In the financial markets, divergent behaviour is evident -- the exuberance of equities versus the cynicism of bonds. Monetary policy has been on a prolonged pause in terms of the policy rate after reducing it to its lowest level ever."

According to Patra, the monetary policy stance of 'as long as necessary' accommodation is reflected in ample liquidity in the system, with net surpluses of close to Rs 9 lakh crore being absorbed by the RBI on a daily basis.

"Markets are, however, constantly reassessing this stance with incoming data and seeking definitive reas-



urance on the future course of policy."

Besides, he pointed out MPC's assessment that inflationary pressures are largely driven by supply shocks.

"Although shocks of this type are typically transitory, the repetitive incidence of shocks is giving inflation a persistent character. Contributions to inflation are emanating from a narrow group of goods -- items constituting around 20 per cent of the CPI are responsible for more than 50 per

cent of inflation."

Furthermore, he cited that MPC remains committed to its primary mandate of price stability, numerically defined as 4 per cent with a tolerance band of plus or minus 2 per cent around it.

"Taking into account the outlook on growth and inflation and keeping in mind the inherent output costs of disinflation, it is pragmatic to envisage a glidepath along which the MPC can steer the path of inflation into the future."

## Maharashtra objects to GST Council meeting in Lucknow

**Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday raised objections and asked why the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting was being held in Lucknow instead of online. He said his request to attend the meeting online is yet to be accepted.**

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Pawar, who handles the finance portfolio in Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, also indicated that Maharashtra will oppose any attempt to encroach on the state's power while adding more provisions to GST. He was speaking in the context of the speculations over inclusion of petrol and diesel in GST.

The GST Council is meeting in Lucknow on Friday and is likely to discuss bringing petrol, diesel and other petroleum products under its ambit.

"There are reports that petrol and diesel are likely to be brought under GST and only one tax is levied, but we have yet to be officially informed about it (by the GST Council)," Pawar said.

"If they want to discuss bringing petrol and diesel under GST ambit then we all will express our opinions. We will take a clear stand if any attempt is made to reduce the state's power," he added.

"I have also submitted our opinion in writing which was sought by the GST Council, which I will not be able to disclose, but our opinion is clear that the states should not

be left to face (financial) losses. The commitment given on the floor of the House (Parliament) while implementing GST should be implemented in letter and spirit," the minister said.

Objecting to the meeting at Lucknow, Pawar said, "We have demanded that the meeting be held in Delhi but they refused to budge. Later, we demanded permission to attend it online, which we have been doing owing to Covid-19 pandemic. The request was made in the backdrop of Covid-19 and new rules for flights, but they have to give any permission."

## 'Khalistani-Kashmiri nexus in US could be detrimental for India'

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As many as 55 interlinked Kashmiri and Khalistani groups, currently operating hand-in-hand within the US, could be detrimental for both India and America, a US-based think tank warned.

In its report, the Hudson Institute also said that the activities of Khalistani groups located in North America should be investigated within the limits prescribed by US law to prevent a recurrence of the violence orchestrated by the Khalistan movement in the 1980s. It also apprehended the possibility of these groups receiving funding, support, and military training from Pakistan, which could have ties with terrorist groups operating in India.

Such diaspora-based efforts are worrisome because Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), may be assisting



pro-Khalistan groups financially and organisationally, it observed.

Noting that the US government has shown reluctance to act on intelligence from India concerning Pakistan-supported Khalistan militancy, the think tank also observed that the US administration now needs to investigate the increasing hobnobbing between the two separatist groups.

In addition, the report further said

that since Pakistan cannot take direct action against India, Indian intelligence agencies have warned that it will support militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir and Khalistan cadres to scale up their activities to carry out a proxy war through militancy.

Referring to the recent cooperation between Khalistani and Kashmiri groups that has become increasingly apparent in North America, the UK,

and Europe, with the extremist groups often operating in tandem, the report said: "For example, in August 2020, Khalistani and Kashmiri activists staged an indication in New York against India, and, in September 2019, activists appropriated imagery and slogans from the Black Lives Matter movement, whose aim is to redress systemic and structural white supremacy in the United States."

"Joint protests of Khalistani and Kashmiri separatists have occurred in Washington DC, Houston, Ottawa, London, Brussels, Geneva, and other European capitals," it noted.

Importantly, the recent increase in Khalistan-related anti-India activism within the US has been occurring as the United States and India are collaborating to confront the rise of China, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Pakistan is a critical Chinese ally and therefore has a vested interest in weakening this India-US collaboration, it said.

## COVID BOOSTER DOSE NOT CENTRAL THEME AT THE MOMENT: ICMR CHIEF

**New Delhi:** The Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Balram Bhargava, said on Thursday that a booster dose for Covid-19 is not the central theme of scientific and public health discussions at the moment. At a media briefing on the Covid situation in the country, Bhargava said that administering both doses of the vaccine is the major priority now. Talking about the ongoing vaccination drive in the country, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that 20 per cent of India's adult population have received both the doses of the vaccine, while 62 per cent have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Bhushan said that 34 districts in the country are still reporting a weekly positivity rate of over 10 per cent, while 32 districts are reporting between 5-10 per cent weekly positive rate. The Health Secretary said that Kerala and Mizoram continue to be the major concern areas with the southern state reporting 67.79 per cent of India's total Covid cases last week. Kerala is the only state which has over 1 lakh active cases at present, while five states have over 10,000 active cases, including Mizoram (13,000), Andhra Pradesh (14,000), Karnataka (15,700), Tamil Nadu (16,000) and Maharashtra (53,000). According to Bhushan, India presently has 3,42,000 active cases.



## Govt approves Rs 30,600 cr sovereign guarantee to operationise bad bank

**The government guarantee mechanism was approved by the Union cabinet on Wednesday, paving the way to operationalise the country's first bad bank in which majority 51 per cent stake is held by public sector banks.**



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government has approved providing Rs 30,600 crore as state guarantee for the security receipts issued by the bad bank, National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL).

The government guarantee will allow banks to transfer their non-performing assets (NPAs) to NARCL, which will buy the stressed assets on payment of 15 per cent of the amount in cash and the balance 85 per cent in security receipts.

The government guarantee will be available on the gap between the face

value and actual realised value of the assets to ensure that banks do not lose out on stressed asset sale while also helping to clean up their balance sheet.

The guarantee on SRs will be available for a period of five years to ensure that resolution of bad assets happen in a time-bound manner without any delay. The incentive of government guarantee would cease if asset resolution takes more than five years.

The government has identified Rs 2 lakh crore of stressed assets in the banking sector to be transferred to the NARCL. However, in the first phase, it would take up fully-provided bad assets worth Rs 90,000 crore.

Giving details of the latest reform initiative taken by the government to clean up the banking sector, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that in the last six financial years, banks have already recovered Rs 5,01,479 crore. Of this, Rs 3.1 lakh crore has been recovered since March 2018. Sitharaman added that the government guarantee will give more confidence to the lenders to sell their assets to NARCL.

Addressing a press conference on Thursday, the Finance Minister also said that apart from NARCL, the government is also setting up an India Debt Resolution Company Ltd to manage NPAs. In this company, PSBs and state-owned financial institutions will own 49 per cent stake.

She added that private sector banks will also hold stake in it. The Finance Minister in her 2021-22 Union Budget speech had announced the setting up of a 'bad bank', including an asset reconstruction company and asset management company to take over the existing stressed debt of banks.

A bad bank is a bank set up to buy the bad loans and other illiquid holdings of another financial institution.

## NYT ARTICLE ON INDIA'S COVID RESPONSE 'PROVOCATIVE', 'ATTENTION-SEEKING': HEALTH MINISTRY

New Delhi:

Addressing a media briefing on the prevailing Covid situation in the country, the Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Balram Bhargava, on Thursday termed the recent New York Times article on India's Covid response as "provocative" and "attention-seeking". The article published in New York Times had claimed that the "ICMR tailored its findings to fit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's optimistic narrative despite a looming crisis". Responding to a question, Bhargava said, "This is a provocative and attention-seeking article published at a time when India is doing good and our vaccination drive is also excellent. It is aimed at diverting attention. All the issues raised are dead ones and probably do not merit any attention." "We greatly value journalistic and editorial freedom. But at the same time we must also realise that all of us, including the Union government and the state governments, are fully engaged in fighting the pandemic and all our energy and time is devoted to that," said Union Health Secretary, Rajesh Bhushan. "We cannot afford to get diverted by things that can be addressed at a later date, or which are not a priority from the public health point of view," Bhushan added. Condemning the article, NITI Aayog Member (Health), V.K. Paul, said, "We condemn such distorted and out of context reporting. This is not desirable."





# CENTRE ALL SET TO APPOINT NEW INTERLOCUTOR FOR NAGA PEACE TALKS

With an aim to resume peace talks with Naga leaders, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is all set to appoint a new interlocutor very soon.

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi  
The present interlocutor R.N. Ravi, who was also the Governor of Nagaland, was shifted to Tamil Nadu last week. The Ministry has zeroed in on the name of the former Special Director of Intelligence Bureau Akshaya Kumar Mishra as a new interlocutor and soon the notification will be issued, sources said. Mishra, a retired IPS officer of 1987 batch of the Rajasthan cadre is said to be a pick of Union Home Minister Amit Shah for this important assignment, sources also said. He was made Advisor to the Home Minister after his superan-

uation in April this year. Mishra is said to have played a significant role in signing a peace accord with the militant groups based in Assam's Karbi-Anglong district and ceasefire agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)(K) Niki group, another source in the security set up said. The Naga peace talk has been virtually stalled as Ravi has not met any leader of any faction of the Naga rebel group since long and recently his comment on the Independence Day speech on August 15, 2021, was not appreciated by the political groups of the state, they added.

The huge trust deficit between Ravi and the Naga groups has led to his exit from the state as he was in cross swords with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) for the last two years. In fact the Naga Peace talks began to derail in early 2020 when the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-(Isak Muivah) (NSCN-IM) leader T. Muivah refused to hold any dialogue with interlocutor and Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi following a dispute on the framework of the agreement signed in 2015. Ravi, an IPS officer of 1976 batch from Kerala cadre, who had

retired as the Special Director in Intelligence Bureau in 2012, was appointed as the government interlocutor on the Naga peace talks in 2014. In 2015, he signed a framework agreement with the NSCN-IM on behalf of the Centre on August 3, 2015, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and later in 2019 he was made the Governor along with his interlocutor's responsibility. He, according to the source, was made Nagaland Governor in 2019 despite opposition from the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), the key rebel group that the government has been talking to.

# Bhupendra Patel expands cabinet, 24 new ministers sworn in

GANDHINAGAR | Agencies

The Bhupendra Patel cabinet in Gujarat was expanded on Thursday with 24 ministers -- all new faces -- inducted, out of which only three have held ministerial posts before. Ten cabinet ministers, five ministers of state with independent charges, and nine ministers of state were sworn in by Governor Acharya Devvrat at the Raj Bhavan. No minister from the previous Vijay Rupani government was retained. The new cabinet ministers are Rajendra Trivedi, Jitu Vaghani, Rushikesh Patel, Purnesh Modi, Raghavji Patel, Kanubhai Desai, Kirtisinh Rana, Naresh Patel, Pradip Parmar and Arjunsinh Chauhan. Out of the above, Trivedi, Rana and Raghavji Patel have been ministers earlier. Trivedi, who was the Assembly Speaker, had quit from his post earlier on Thursday. seven are from Saurashtra region, six from South Gujarat,



Harsh Sanghvi, Jagdish Panchal, Brijesh Merja, Jitu Chaudhari, and Manisha Vakil are the new ministers of state for independent charge. Mukesh Patel, Nimisha Suthar, Arvind Raiyani, Kuber Dindor, Kirtisinh Vaghela, Gajendrasinh Parmar, R.C. Makwana, Vinod Moradia and Deva Malam were sworn in as ministers of state. Out of the new ministers, seven are from Saurashtra region, six from South Gujarat,

three from Ahmedabad, three from north Gujarat and 5 from central Gujarat. There are 8 legislators from the Patidar community, 6 legislators representing the OBC community, three from the Scheduled Tribes, and two each from the Kshatriya community and the Schedule Castes. Bhupendra Patel was elected the new Chief Minister on Sunday, following the sudden resignation of Rupani a day earlier.

# Cong demands inquiry into allegations of data fudging by ICMR

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

The Congress on Thursday demanded that an inquiry should be conducted into the data fudging by ICMR as party alleged the medical body manipulated data to keep the political masters happy which led to the loss of human lives. Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Congress General Secretary Ajay Maken alleged that senior scientists, who worked with the ICMR, and other organisations, are now coming forward to point out serious irregularities in 'Covid management'. They have pointed out political interference and fudging of data by ICMR. Political interference resulted in preventable deaths of more than 50 lakh people in India, he said. "The Congress demands a criminal investigation against the Prime Minister, the then

Health Minister, and also against Management of ICMR. The inquiry should be conducted by sitting judge," Maken said. He said that the party will raise the issue in and outside parliament. "Now, as the time goes by, more and more scientists who worked with the Indian Council of Medical Research are coming forward with startling facts of political interference and arrogance which was not only against 'science and democracy', but also caused millions of preventable deaths. These scientists, to name a few, include Dr Anup Aggarwal, Dr Naman Shah, Dr Somdatta Sinha, Dr Shahid Jameel and some others are gradually opening up in social media and foreign publications." Maken alleged, "In June 2020, a study commissioned by the ICMR concluded that Modi's lockdown had slowed but would not stop the virus's spread. Within days, the

authors withdrew it. And ICMR tweeted the withdrawal. Some of the scientists now say that they were forced to withdraw the report. In July 2020, DG, ICMR, Dr Balram Bhargav forced ICMR scientists to withhold data, based on serological studies, which suggested that virus was spreading to 10 cities. This deliberate blunder led to loss of lakhs of lives." He said, "the second Covid wave hit India severely in April 2021. The Modi Government was caught unprepared, people of India were left to fend for themselves. Black Marketing of drugs like Hydroxychloroquine, Ivermectin, Fabiflu, Dexona, Tocilizumab, Remdesivir, Paracetamol was galore. A single injection of Remdesivir was selling between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh, Tocilizumab injection for up to Rs 10 lakh in black market".

# UP BJP to hold farmers' meet to felicitate Yogi

Lucknow | Agencies

The ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) will hold a farmers' meet in Lucknow on September 19 on the completion of four years of the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh. The Kisan Morcha of the party will felicitate the chief minister on the occasion. The programme is designed to establish a direct connect with farmers amid indications that the ongoing farmers' agitation will intensify ahead of the 2022 state assembly election. BJP Kisan Morcha president, Kameshwar Singh, said that an estimated 20,000 farmers are expected at the Lucknow meeting. "Fifty farmers from each assembly constituency will be present on the occasion to thank the chief minister for various pro-farmer measures," Singh said. The BJP programme comes ahead of the September 27 Bharat Bandh call given by all the farmers' union backing the agitation. The ruling BJP is now trying to present a division between 'real farmers' and ones agitating for political



reasons. "Theirs is not a farmers' agitation, it's a political agitation," said Kameshwar Singh. The BJP has already held farmers' meeting at 298 places in 95 assembly constituencies of the state. "We selected those assembly segments which had a substantial pres-

ence of sugarcane farmers. In these meetings, we interacted with nearly 60,000 farmers," Singh said. The Kisan Morcha also intends to felicitate 71 farmers at each district headquarter on September 17 which is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 71st birthday. "We have so many

achievements to talk about. As many as 2.50 crore farmers in UP are benefiting through the Kisan Samman Nidhi, soil health cards, crop insurance, kisan credit card, 50 per cent discount of farm equipment. These are some of the many achievements that we will talk about," Singh said.

# Hindu outfit gives deadline to K'taka CM for action on temple demolition

MYSURU | Agencies

Hindu Jagarana Vedike South India Convenor Jagadish Karanth on Thursday gave a 10-day deadline to the Chief Minister to initiate action against officers responsible for the demolition of the Huchagani Mahadevamma temple in Mysuru. "As the head of the state, the Chief Minister should take responsibility. If the action is not initiated, we will take a protest march to his residence," he said. Addressing a huge gathering gathered to protest the demolition of Hindu temples, Karanth attacked the Chief Secretary and said, "He is giving orders to demolish temples every day according to the media reports. If it is true, he must be really stupid." "You must read the Supreme Court order first. It is very clear, vacating the temple is the last option. If it is built before 2008, the temple has to be regularised. The court also emphasizes that the people's feelings must also be considered." "Though the villagers are ready to give land for the temple, the DC of Mysuru hastily went ahead with demolition without common sense," Karanth said. "No one can tolerate this. This should be the first and last case in the state. The present government is doing what



invaders Ghazni, Ghoris, Khasim and Tipu Sultan have done to the Hindu temples. This must be ended," he said. He also reacted angrily over the Bommai government's decision to decide the height of Ganesh idols during Vinayak Chaturthi. "What is the connection between the height of the Ganesh idol and coronavirus", he asked. "Some fellows sitting in Bengaluru air-conditioned offices take improper decisions on matters of religion," he commented. Thousands Hindu Jagarana Vedike members attended the protest organised in Mysuru to protest against the demolition of temples. They alleged that the government was only serving notices to Masjids and Christian reli-

gious centres while going ahead with demolishing the Hindu temples without talking to locals and giving any option to shift. Even Congress Opposition leader Siddaramaiah chided the ruling BJP government for demolishing Huchagani Mahadevamma temple in Mysuru district. After feeling the heat, Basavaraj Bommai, the Chief Minister has ordered to stop the demolitions until further orders. Meanwhile, Bajrang Dal and Hindu Jagarana Vedike supporters observed bandh in the Dakshina Kannada district. The BJP members are also carrying out an online campaign that they are Hindus first and then workers of the BJP.

## ROADMAP FOR CABINET EXPANSION IN RAJASTHAN READY, SAYS MAKEN

New Delhi: Congress General Secretary In charge of Rajasthan Ajay Maken on Thursday 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 said at a press conference in Delhi on Thursday. he 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 its 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. Maken on July 30 after finishing his one-on-one interaction with all the 115 Congress MLAs, and senior party leaders, had said that some ministers had expressed their willingness to resign and work for the party.

# Kerala BJP chief appears before Police in poll bribery case

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

Kerala BJP president K Surendran on Thursday appeared before the Kasargode Crime Branch police officials after he was summoned in an election bribery case filed against him. A local court had directed the Police to register a case under the Election Commission rules when a complaint was given against Surendran and two other local BJP leaders, after it surfaced that money was paid to the BSP candidate K Sundara to withdraw his nomination at the Manjeswaram assembly constituency in the April 6 assembly polls. Surendran in the April 6 assembly polls had contested from two constituencies - Konni and Manjeswaram. Surendran was closeted with the officials for over 75 minutes and according to sources in the know of things he denied knowing Sundara. He also pointed out that since he has the highest respect and regards for the law of the land, he came before the probe officials. The CPI-M candidate from the constituency VV Ramesan who finished third is the complainant and the Kasargode First Class Magistrate Court gave the nod to register a case against Surendran and two others. When votes were counted on May 2, the Congress led UDF candidate AKM Ashraff defeated Surendran with a margin of 745 votes. Incidentally, it was Sundara himself who made an open admission to the media that he was given Rs 2.5 lakh and a Smartphone to pull out from the election. He



said that he was also offered Rs 15 lakh, a home, and a wine parlour in Karnataka if Surendran wins. Since then the ruling CPI-M led left was up in arms against this disclosure, but this charge was then promptly denied by Surendran and his party that no such thing has happened. Incidentally in the 2016 assembly polls, Surendran lost by a meagre margin of 89 votes and in that election Sundara, who contested as an independent candidate secured 467 votes. So the BJP was determined to see that this time with Sundara coming up as a BSP candidate, his name would appear just before the name of Surendran in the electronic voting machine and it could play spoil sport to the fortunes of Surendran. And on the last day of withdrawal of nomination, Sundara withdrew his candidature.

# Maha ATS, Delhi Police jointly interrogate arrested terrorists

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

A team of Maharashtra Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and Special Cell of the Delhi Police is jointly interrogating the six terror suspects who were planning to carry out attacks in the forthcoming festival season, an official said here on Thursday. According to sources, the Maharashtra ATS team, after reaching the national capital held talks with the sleuths of the Special cell of Delhi Police. The cops are currently examining Osama, who was trained in Pakistan, and Jaan Mohammed who is suspected to be an operative of the D company. He was arrested in Kota when he was on his way to Delhi. Maharashtra ATS chief Vineet Agarwal, on Wednesday, said that the terror suspect Jaan Mohammed belongs to Dharavi, Mumbai. The cops are also looking for Osama's father Humaid-ur-Rehman, who is being suspected as the mastermind of the terror module. It is alleged that Humaid had sent Osama and Zeeshan Qamar, a resident of UP's



Allahabad, Muscat in Oman to join training in Pakistan. Once they reached Muscat, Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) took them to Gwadar port through sea routes to get them trained in making explosives and bombs. Osama and Zeeshan Qamar were imparted the training of making bombs and IEDs and committing arson with the help of daily use items at a farmhouse in Thatta in Sindh province. There were three Pakistani nationals in the farmhouse. Two of these, Jabbar and Hamza imparted training to them. Both of them were from Pakistan Army as they wore military uniforms, according to the information obtained.

# ISI trained terrorists were to blow bridges, railway tracks in India

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) trained the two terrorists, that were arrested by the special Cell of Delhi police, were to blow bridges and railway tracks to cause mass casualties in India, it was revealed during the interrogation on Thursday. According to official sources, the two suspected terrorists -- Osama and Zeeshan -- who were trained by the ISI in Thatta of Pakistan's Sindh province, were instructed to do a recce of railway tracks. The interrogation revealed that the duo was also asked to acquire the details of the timings and route of the trains with more passengers so that the blast results in a high number of casualties. Sources informed that 1.5 kg of RDX was found from their possession when they were caught by the Special Cell earlier this week. "This much amount of RDX is enough to cause large-scale destruction," the source said. As per



the latest reports, a team of Maharashtra Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and Special Cell of the Delhi Police is still jointly interrogating all the suspected terrorists. The cops are also specifically focussing on another suspected terrorist Jaan Mohammed who is suspected to be an operative of D company. He was arrested in Kota when he was on his way to Delhi. Maharashtra ATS chief Vineet Agarwal, on Wednesday, said that Jaan Mohammed belongs to



Dharavi, Mumbai. The cops are also looking for Osama's father Humaid-ur-Rehman, who is being suspected as the mastermind of the terror module. It is alleged that Humaid had sent Osama and Zeeshan Qamar, a resident of UP's Allahabad, to Muscat in Oman to join training in Pakistan. Once they reached Muscat, Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) took them to Gwadar port through sea routes to get them trained in making explosives and bombs. Osama and

Zeeshan Qamar were imparted the training of making bombs and IEDs and committing arson with the help of daily use items at a farmhouse in Thatta in Sindh province. There were three Pakistani nationals in the farmhouse.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I Shyam Pada Bera residing at Vill Chakdha Po Hansuri PS Usthe Ditt-24 Parganas South Pin - 743609 inform that my wife's date of birth in my service record book has been incorrectly marked 02.05.1983 so my wife correct date of birth should be recorded in my service record book 02.05.1983 so in future she should be known by this correct Dob by 02.05.1983



# EX-MUMBAI TOP COP JOLTED AS HC DISMISSES PLEA AGAINST PROBES

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a massive setback to former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, the Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed his plea challenging two probes launched against him by the Maharashtra government.

A division bench of Justice SS Shinde and Justice NJ Jamdar said that the plea was not maintainable, and he could approach the appropriate forums which can decide the matter.

Singh had questioned the two inquiries initiated against him by the state Home Department on April 1 and April 20, for allegedly violating service rules and another over allegations of corruption, terming them "mala fide" and intended to target and harass him.

Calling himself a "whistle-blower" who sought to highlight corruption in the highest public office, he said that the probes came a month after he had accused the then Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of graft, extorting Rs 100 crore per month from Mumbai hoteliers through now dismissed Mumbai cop Sachin Vaze.

Objecting to Singh's plea, the state,



through senior advocate Darius Khambata, said that the Central Administrative Tribunal was the appropriate forum for Singh's grievances as the enquiries were of administrative nature pertaining to his conduct as the Police Commissioner.

Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani representing Singh argued that these were criminal enquiries as there was a reference to

the CrPC's Section 32 and hence his only remedy was before the high court.

The probes pertain to violation of services rules in the sensational Antilia case and allegations of corruption levelled by policeman Anup Dange who accused Singh of shielding people with mafia links and that one of the top cop's relative demanded a Rs 2 crore bribe to reinstate him in the police force.

Khambata further argued that Singh's contentions on the maintainability contradicted his own plea in which he accepts that these are administrative enquiries and said writing letters would not "immunise" him from the same.

He also said that Singh's primary grievance was to the Director General of Police Sanjay Pandey heading the probes and pointed out that Pandey had recused himself from the enquiries which have been assigned to different officers now.

Jethmalani's contention, among other things, was that Pandey was an 'emissary' of the government trying to convince Singh to withdraw his complaint and offering to mediate on the issue.

After he was posted as Commandant General of Home Guards, Singh had alleged in his letter that Deshmukh had fixed the Rs 100 crore per month collection target for Vaze. Now dismissed, Vaze was nabbed in connection with the abandoning of a SUV with 20 gelatin sticks and a threat note near Antilia, the home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani in February, and the subsequent killing of the vehicle's owner Mansukh Hiran in March.

# I-T sleuths 'search' Sonu Sood's home for second day

For the second consecutive day, the Income Tax Department continued its 'survey' operations at the home of Bollywood actor Sonu Sood, official sources said here on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A team of IT sleuths swooped on the 48-year-old Sood's Juhu home to carry out search operations to detect certain alleged financial irregularities.

The IT department is examining bank statements, books of accounts, documents and details of financial or other business transactions during the 'survey', for suspected tax evasion, though no details are being shared officially.

In Wednesday's operations, the IT had searched around half-a-dozen premises linked to the actor, including offices and other properties in Mumbai and certain locations in Lucknow.

Sood shot into limelight



last year (2020) for arranging free flights or luxury buses for stranded migrants during the lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic and sent them to different parts

of India, besides organising liquid medical oxygen supplies to various hospitals during the second Covid wave this year (2021).

# BJP MLA begins sit-in protest over 'non-payment' of crop insurance

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra minister and BJP leader Sanjay Kute on Thursday launched an indefinite sit-in protest at the Mantralaya here to protest against the "non-payment" of crop insurance by companies to farmers.

Mantralaya is the administrative headquarters of the state in south Mumbai, where the offices of all ministers and secretaries are located. Speaking to reporters, Kute said, "For the last seven months, the crop insurance companies have not paid the sanctioned Rs 65 crore to the farmers, who have lost their crops due to natural calamities, and although its assessment was also completed properly."

"The insurance companies are not making payment to farmers, who have made several requests to the state gov-



ernment to issue directives to these firms. The state government has completely ignored the farmers' requests," he alleged.

Kute represents Jamod assembly constituency in district of North Maharashtra. He alleged that the state government and the insurance companies were pointing fingers at each other over the issue.

"We have been told by the insurance companies that the state government had not paid them some dues in the

past, which is why they cannot make payment to farmers for their crop losses. This is outrageous. Farmers should not suffer because of the clashes between the state and crop insurance companies," he said.

"We will not leave the Mantralaya till our demands are met. The assessment amount has been fixed by the state and the crop insurance companies at Rs 65 crore, but the amount has to be paid to farmers," said the legislator.

# Ajit Pawar welcomes top Marathi singer, folk-dancer into NCP

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday welcomed Marathi playback singer Devyani Bendre, prominent folk-dancer Surekha Punekar, and others into the Nationalist Congress Party fold.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Leader of Opposition in the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) Babanrao Gavas, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena women leader Manisha Khaire and others like Ashokrao Savne, Prabhakar Shetye, Sanjay



Tripathi, Suresh Bagwe, Nitin Patil and Omkar Gavas also joined the NCP.

Welcoming them in the presence of NCP Secretary Shivajirao Garje, Pawar said that the new

entrants would be joining various programmes and activities of the party, including related to their specialised fields like glamour, films, arts, culture, and literature.

Pawar also lauded the works of Puneekar - regarded as the 'Lavani Queen' (Marathi folk-dance) and Bendre, who has been a playback singer since her teens and worked with top singers of the Indian film industry. Both have performed in India and abroad for many years.

"Since the time of the late Chief Minister YB Chavan, and even later CMs, the state government has always promoted artistes from different fields irrespective of their religion or caste. With the guidance of Sharad Pawar Saheb, we are continuing the tradition," he said.

He added that all the newcomers should work to build the party and its different front organisations and strive to get maximum NCP candidates elected for the upcoming civic bodies and cooperative sector elections in the state.

# Maha govt to issue ordinance for OBC quota in local body by-polls

Maharashtra has taken cues from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to provide political quota through the ordinance route, said the Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra government on Wednesday decided to issue an ordinance to restore reservations for members of the Other Backward Class (OBC) in local body elections. The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting.

After the meeting, OBC leader and NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal addressed the media and said, "The restoration of 27 per cent reservations



of OBC will be done on the line of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where despite court orders, these states restored the OBC reservations." The OBCs get 27% reservation in electoral wards of municipal bodies and zilla parishads. This quota is politically important because Marathas and

OBCs are locked in a tussle for political dominance in the state. Since both communities have a large presence, so no one party can afford to lose the support of OBC. "We will not cross the 50 per cent cap of reservations. Keeping aside the ST and SC reservations, the remaining reservations

within a 50 per cent cap will be given to the OBC community. In some of the districts, the ST population is high therefore in such districts, they will get more reservations while OBC's reservations will be curtailed. The 90 per cent OBC reservations in local body polls will be restored," Bhujbal said. Bhujbal said that even though anyone goes against the ordinance of restoring OBC reservations, the court will not entertain them. "The reason the state government has right to issue the ordinance to restore the reservations. The OBCs are fighting for their rights since their birth. The fighting for our rights is new for us. The fight will continue," the NCP minister said. Earlier, the Supreme Court had struck down the OBC reservations, citing there was no data to extend the OBC reservations in local body polls. On Wednesday, the BJP staged a protest over the decision.

# Students union seeks nod for ITI students' travel by train

Since a large part of the vocational curriculum at the ITIs depends on practical sessions, in-person attendance is considered important, but many students are finding it difficult to travel to institutes due to lack of access to the local train network in Mumbai and suburbs

getting vaccinated against Covid-19, and their exclusion from the local train network was resulting in many missing in-person classes at Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), where a large number of class 10 pass outs study. Currently, only vaccinated commuters are allowed on Mumbai locals.

"Since the start of the new academic year, most ITIs have started calling their students for physical classes but repeated demands by students to allow them to travel by train have gone unheard. This has resulted in many students being unable to attend regular lectures due to lack of basic transport facilities," said Arun Chavan, secretary, MASU. At present, there are 976 ITIs across the state, both government-aided and private, offering 146,000 seats for vocational training in plumbing, welding, motor

vehicle repair, electrical repairs etc. Thousands of students opt for these courses every year after passing class 10 examinations.

In November last year, ITI students were asked to attend in-person classes at their respective institutes to appear for practical exams. Since a large part of the vocational curriculum at the ITIs depends on practical sessions, in-person attendance is considered important, but many students are finding it difficult to travel to institutes.

I stay in Palghar and my institute is in Parel. I change three buses and then walk 20 minutes to my institute, so I only manage to attend college once in two-three days. I'm missing important lectures but it is physically impossible to travel the distance every day, plus financially it is draining as well," said an ITI Parel student.

# Maharashtra govt mulls setting up special courts to deal with human trafficking cases

Speaking to reporters after a high-level review meeting, Yashomati Thakur said there have been complaints about human trafficking from other states

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government is contemplating to set up special courts to ensure justice to victims of immoral human trafficking, state

Women and Child Development Minister Yashomati Thakur said on Thursday.

Speaking to reporters after a high-level review meeting, Thakur said there have been complaints about human trafficking from other states.

"We have decided that we will coordinate with other states so that women who are rescued in Maharashtra are sent back to their home states with respect and dignity. Similarly, minor girls from other states rescued in Maharashtra will get the

benefit of the state government's Manodhairya Yojana," the minister said.

Police personnel from human trafficking cells will be counselled about how they must behave with rescued women, she said.

Thakur further said that the issue of setting up special courts under section 22(a) of the Immoral Human Trafficking Prevention Act was also discussed.

State Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil, state DGP and other officials were present for the meeting, she said.

# 8 districts continue to report higher positivity rate than state

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to be a cause of concern for Maharashtra as eight of its districts reported a weekly positivity rate greater than the state average. Maharashtra has an average weekly positivity rate of 2.63%, while Pune and Ahmednagar have more than 5% weekly positivity rate

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid the fear of a third Covid-19 wave in the backdrop of the ongoing Ganesh festival, Mumbai reported 515 new Covid-19

cases and four deaths on Wednesday. The city's case tally now stands at 736,282, while the death toll is 16,037. The daily test positivity rate is 1.72%. Earlier on September 8, the city had reported above 500 cases, but the positivity rate was lower, at around 1.09%.

Maharashtra on Wednesday recorded 3,783 new Covid-19 cases and 56 deaths caused by the infection. The state's Covid case tally now is 6,507,930. There are currently 49,034 active Covid-19 patients across the state and with 13,258 active patients, Pune has the maximum of these followed by Thane, which has 7,249 active patients and Ahmednagar with 6,586.

he death toll in state has now reached 138,277 with Pune again leading with 19,361 deaths followed by Mumbai with 16,037 deaths and Thane with 11,334. The Covid-19 pandemic



continues to be a cause of concern for Maharashtra as eight of its districts reported a weekly positivity rate greater than the state average. Maharashtra has an average weekly positivity rate of 2.63%, while Pune and Ahmednagar have more than 5% weekly positivity rate. Sangli (3.88%) Nashik (3.76%), Satara (3.56%), Osmanabad (3.24%), Palghar (3.13%) and Sindhudurg (3.24%) are other districts with higher test positivity rates. State surveillance

officer Dr Pradeep Awate said, "In Pune, climatic conditions are responsible for a surge in cases. In Ahmednagar, we are witnessing cases coming from rural parts." He cautioned that there was a likelihood of a surge due to the ongoing Ganesh festival.

In addition to positivity rates, in eight districts of Maharashtra, Covid-19 growth rate is higher than the state average of 0.05%. These include Ahmednagar (0.23%), Satara (0.12%), Solapur (0.12%), Sangli (0.11%), Ratnagiri (0.08%), Pune (0.07%), Beed (0.06%) and Osmanabad (0.06%). Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) officials said they were anticipating a surge in the number of infections owing to the ongoing Ganesh festival and the relaxations announced by the state government in the first week of August.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Abba jaan, Taliban are way ahead of Development

As the countdown to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections due early next year begins, issues like governance and development are expectedly taking a back seat and it is 'Abba Jaan' and Taliban that are emerging as the latest poll narrative in Uttar Pradesh. State Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that prior to 2017, "those who say 'Abba Jaan' used to devour the free ration." The speech had the desired impact and non-BJP political parties promptly objected to the use of 'Abba Jaan' -- an endearment for father -- for political gains. It was clear that he was referring to the Samajwadi Party since he had earlier referred to Samajwadi patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav as 'Abba Jaan' in a TV programme. Some directly related it to Muslims. The result of this developing situation is that key issues like development have been put on the backburner and almost all political leaders are now bending backwards to establish their Hindu credentials-much to the glee of the BJP leaders. Mayawati addressed her party meeting in Lucknow recently, she was greeted with chants of 'Jai Shri Ram'. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh, on Monday, offered prayers at various temples in Ayodhya while Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visited a Hanuman temple in Rae Bareilly during her recent visit. The BJP is clearly setting the tone for the next elections using the issue of national security on the Taliban issue and putting non-BJP parties in the dock over the Muslim appeasement. The content being shared on party-run social media handles and groups on WhatsApp, show that around one-fourth of the posts in the last two weeks were Taliban related referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "strong personality" and projecting Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as a strong Hindutva brand against these forces.

EXISTENTIAL CRISIS IN LEBANON

Asad Mirza

While the world it seems has been too occupied with the developments in Afghanistan, another tragedy in the making is currently on in Lebanon -- a country facing one crisis after another. ty to pay dues.

However, the crisis in Lebanon is not new, it's decades old but has worsened in the last two years due to sectarian politics and corrupt politicians, bankers and bureaucrats. The ongoing economic crisis has worsened as the coronavirus pandemic took hold in 2020, followed by the devastating August 2020 Port of Beirut blasts, which has been described by experts as "one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions in history".

Following the Beirut explosions, the crisis worsened exponentially. According to The New York Times, the price of consumer goods has "nearly quadrupled", leaving people with barely any access to necessities like food and medicine. Some healthcare companies have run out of medicines "needed to treat cancer and heart disease" as a result of the country being unable to procure products from foreign importers.

Fuel has become scarce in Lebanon due to the lack of foreign currency to pay energy suppliers, leading to the closure of power plants, hospitals, and water pumping stations. As a result, civilians have been left without electricity and clean water, as well as the ability to heat or air-condition their homes. And those who want to leave are stuck, as there's no fuel available to fill their vehicles.

The ongoing crisis has left almost half of Lebanon's population living in poverty, and has prompted more mass protests to remove the political elite "accused of corruption, mismanagement, and negligence", reports the BBC.

In a statement, the UNICEF said: "The needs are massive, and the urgent formation of a new government with clear commitments to reform, is critical to tackle the current crisis through determined and systematic action to protect children's lives and ensure access to water and all basic services."

Lebanon is at the onset of a serious collapse, Najat Rochdi, the UN deputy special coordinator for Lebanon, warned in an interview with the Efe news agency.

"I am not talking about a theoretical scenario that maybe in a few months if nothing gets done the situation is going to collapse.



No! We are talking about a serious beginning of a serious collapse and the people are paying a very high price today.

"The only solution, the only way to save Lebanon, to save the Lebanese and to save the country is with reforms," she added.

Lebanon's political scenario The crisis-battered country has been run by a caretaker government for more than a year due to a lack of political consensus, making it impossible to carry out necessary economic reforms the international community demands from Lebanon.

Lebanon is heading toward more "chaos and poverty" if a government is not formed immediately, a Lebanese lawmaker warned, with the end of this week marking 13 months since the resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Diab's administration.

Diab stepped down in the wake of the port blasts that devastated the capital, but he has stayed on in a caretaker capacity.

President Michel Aoun's term ends in October next year, while Parliament's term ends in May 2022.

On whether the President would seek to remain in power after the end of his term as he did in the 1980s, Vice President of the Future Movement, Mustafa Alloush, told Arab News newspaper that "Aoun will not repeat his experience of fleeing from the presidential palace. He is concerned with

passing on politics to Gebran Bassil, his son-in-law, and giving him a clear share in the next formulation of authority".

As new Lebanese secular political groups are struggling to organise before the 2022 elections, the sectarian parties are using populist discourse and aid politics to secure the support of their constituencies.

Criticism is quite rare among the Lebanese who still support the sectarian political factions that have been in power since the 1990s. According to the researchers and political analysts, despite the vocal social anti-corruption movement that has emerged after October 17, 2019 and the recent wins the "thawra groups" have scored in university student councils elections and syndicates, many Lebanese still support the establishment parties. Being sectarian in design, the political class has played on sectarian sentiment since the civil war. Amal Movement was the defendant of the "deprived Shias", while the Free Patriotic Movement's minister Gebran Bassil presents himself as the protector of "Christian Rights" in his political statements.

Members of new political movements born from the October 2019 protests say that the "Us vs Them" narrative helps distract attention from the real issues at hand corruption and impunity.

For example, politicians in Christian, Druze and Sunni parties claim Iran as their opponent and Western countries as friends. On the other hand, Hezbollah and its allies claim Israel as an opponent, look at Western states, especially the US, as friends of Israel and accuse them of imposing a blockade on Lebanon, as the fuel crisis in the country deepens. Meanwhile, Prime Minister-designate Najib Mikati has been able to cobble together a 24-member cabinet after negotiating with President Aoun last week, a line-up that is satisfactory for everyone, including an international community that wants sectarian factions to divide portfolios and name a technocratic government.

Hopes are high, but expectations are low. Sectarian political factions have been negotiating on who gets which portfolio, but Mikati admitted last month that the conversation has been less about plans for reforms and policies to recover from the economic crisis, and more focused on who gets what.

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

international

3 DEAD, 60 INJURED IN 6.0-MAGNITUDE CHINA EARTHQUAKE

Three people were killed and 60 others injured on Thursday after a powerful 6.0-magnitude earthquake jolted Luxian county in China's Sichuan province, authorities said. ty to pay dues.



Jiaming township in the epicentre area. Electricity in most of the houses in the town has been suspended. Amid heavy rain in Fuji township, rescue workers were going door to door searching for people in the damaged houses and moving them to temporary shelters.

More than 6,900 affected residents have been relocated, and over 10,000 people were shifted to temporary shelters as of early Thursday morning, according to the local government.

According to the China Earthquake Networks Centre, the earthquake occurred at 4.33 a.m. The epicentre was monitored at 29.2 degrees north latitude and 105.34 degrees east longitude. The quake struck at a depth of 10 km.

Approved by the provincial government, the earthquake relief headquarters of Sichuan has activated a level-II response, the second highest in China's four-tier earthquake emergency response system. Some telecommunication base stations and cables were damaged. The Luzhou high-speed railway station has been closed, according to railway authorities.

All coal mines have been ordered to halt underground operations and evacuate miners in shafts.

US, UK, Australia announce new security partnership

Washington | Agencies

The US, the UK, and Australia have announced the creation of a new trilateral security partnership.

US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison made the announcement during a virtual event, reports Xinhua news agency.

In a joint statement, the three governments said the partnership, called "AUKUS", will help "significantly deepen cooperation on a range of security and defence capabilities".

The first initiative under AUKUS will be delivering a nuclear-powered submarine fleet for Australia and the three countries will spend as many as 18 months discussing how this capability will be delivered, according to the statement.

Australia intends to build



the submarines in Adelaide, a coastal city in the country's south, in cooperation with the UK and the US, Morrison said in his remarks.

"Australia is not seeking to acquire nuclear weapons or establish a civil nuclear capability," he said, vowing to meet all of its nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

Biden and Johnson said the nuclear-powered submarines that Australia wants to acquire are conventionally

armed, noting that their countries will also be fully in line with their non-proliferation obligations.

A senior administration official told reporters that AUKUS "is not aimed or about any one country," claiming that "it's about advancing our strategic interests, upholding the international rules-based order, and promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific."

Imran Khan says Pak had to endure a 'terrible' relationship with US

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said that his country had to endure a "terrible" relationship with the US which turned out to be disastrous for Islamabad.

In an interview with CNN, Khan also called out the US for repeatedly accusing Pakistan of harbouring terrorists, Dawn news reported.

"What are these safe havens? The area of Pakistan along the border of Afghanistan had the heaviest surveillance by the US drones, surely they would have known if there were any safe havens?"

The premier said that Pakistan was unable to take military action against the Afghan Taliban because they were not attacking Pakistan. "Pakistan had its own



internal matters to look at, such as attacks from the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)."

He said that had he been in the government at that time, he would have taken a different course of action. "I cannot destroy my country to fight someone else's war," he said. "My responsibility would have been to the people of my country."

Khan also said that he did not speak to US President Joe Biden after the Taliban took over Afghanistan.

B'desh inks trade, investment framework with Aus

Dhaka | Agencies

Bangladeshi Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi and his counterpart Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Dan Tehan have signed a framework on trade and investment between the two countries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka said in a statement on Thursday.

The Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA), the first of this kind between Australia and Bangladesh in the last five decades, is expected to provide a platform for institutionalised economic interactions and to open newer opportunities for trade and investment between the two countries, Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying.

It said a joint working group is expected to offer a mechanism to take forward discussion to realize full potentials of trade and investment.



While speaking at a virtual signing ceremony on Wednesday, Minister Tipu Munshi said: "I am profoundly happy that TIFA has been signed in the year while Bangladesh is celebrating the golden jubilee of independence and the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

"We would expect the TIFA to address all relevant questions including retention of the Duty-Free Quota-Free (DFQF) treatment for Bangladesh in the post LDC graduation (least developed countries), trade liberalisation, creating a conducive atmosphere for greater trade in services and flow of investment."

He invited his Australian counterpart to visit Dhaka soon.

Tehan warmly accepted the invitation and promised to visit Bangladesh next year with a trade and investment delegation. He assured Bangladesh of the continuation of DFQF treatment pending the next review which is not scheduled in the foreseeable future.

"Australia has the potential to meet Bangladesh's increasing education, training and energy needs," he added. Bangladesh-Australia bilateral trade has grown six times over the past decade, reaching \$2.6 billion last year. Ready-made garment, agriculture, food and education services were key drivers of this growth.

Despite not being an elaborate and legally binding agreement, TIFA can help add new tradeable items from both sides and facilitate bilateral trade and investment.

Australia proposed to host the inaugural meeting of the joint working group in early 2022.

UNSC ENCOURAGES RESUMPTION OF TALKS ON NILE DAM

United Nations: The UN Security Council has encouraged Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to resume negotiations on the disputed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile River. In a presidential statement, the Council encouraged the three stakeholders to resume talks at the invitation of the chairperson of the African Union (AU) to finalize expeditiously the text of mutually acceptable and binding agreement on the filling and operation of the dam, "within a reasonable time frame", reports Xinhua news agency. The Security Council called on the three countries to take forward the AU-led negotiation process in a constructive and cooperative manner.



Chouhan interacts with women SHGs

INCOME OF WOMEN ASSOCIATED WITH SHG SHOULD INCREASE BY RS.10 THOUSAND PER MONTH: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the income of every woman belonging to self-help group should increase by Rs. 10,000 per month. You move ahead with hard work and authenticity, the government is with you at every step. The state government has set a target of providing Rs. 2550 crore bank loan this year to strengthen women self-help groups. The responsibility of running ration (PDS) shops will also now be given to self-help groups. Along with this, a reward of Rs one crore will be given to the cluster level federation for best performance in increasing the income level of self-help groups. Aajeevika Mart will be set up at Bhopal Haat in Bhopal for the sale of the products of the groups. Linkage with online commerce portal will also be done to increase business. A special project will be made for the trade of singhada and fish for the women's group. Ayushman cards will be provided to all eligible members of the groups. Chouhan was addressing the orientation and interaction programme of state level women self-help groups today. Chouhan visited the exhibition



focused on the role of self-help groups in fighting the worst pandemic of the century, Corona Virus. He also visited an exhibition focused on the role of SHGs in building an Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh. Chouhan said that an assistance of Rs.1050 crore would be given by the state government to self-help groups for various activities. Self-help groups will have to pay only 4 percent interest on bank loans. The remaining interest will be paid by the state government. Chouhan greeted all members of Women Self-Help Group who came to his residence. He said that it is necessary to treat women with

respect and equality. As the Chief Minister, I am working with the spirit on how to make progress, welfare and empowerment of women easily. Social, educational, economic and political empowerment of women is necessary. For this, 50 percent seats have been reserved for women in the elections to all the urban bodies and panchayats in the state. Women are making achievements in all directions, either in the field of education or in the field of sports. Their self-confidence and social consciousness has increased. The capacity to fight against injustice has also increased. The attitude of the family and society towards

women has also changed. Chouhan said that Livelihood Mission is a panacea for the economic empowerment of poor and lower middle class women of the state. There can be no bigger brand than Livelihood Mission, it is a guarantee of purity. Its products should be branded on the basis of '100 per cent purity.' Chouhan advised the members of self-help groups to beware of middlemen and not to fall prey to greed. Chouhan said that the more independent, transparent and empowered the process of decision making and buying and selling by women, the stronger the self-help groups will be. The training, support and guidance provided by the mission has helped to eradicate poverty of lakhs of families. By joining the groups, the women have opened their accounts in bank. Now they need not keep their savings in any box. The 13 sutras taught in groups have given women new dimensions of progress. Chouhan said that the state government is making all possible efforts to encourage the activities of Self-Help Groups. More than 6 thousand government buildings have been allotted in different districts to conduct meetings and activities.

Cent percent result of Class XII exam

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Minister of State for School Education (Independent Charge) and General Administration, Inder Singh Parmar released the Class XII Board of Secondary Education examination results through a single click. Parmar congratulated all the students and their parents for their success in the examination results. He wished the students all the best for a bright future and successful life. Parmar said that the result has been prepared on the basis of Best of Five evaluation method. All the students have been passed. The examination result has been Cent Percent, in which 52.28 percent candidates have passed in first division, 40.28 percent candidates passed in second division and 7.43 percent candidates have passed in third division. The Education Department has prepared the exam result keeping in mind the future and safety of the students. Parmar said that candidates who are dissatisfied with their examination results, can

appear in the examination of all subjects or a particular subject to be held in September, 2021. Such candidates can register on the MP Online portal to appear in the examination from August 1 to August 10, 2021. Only the result prepared on the basis of the examination of such candidates will be considered final. The Board of Secondary Education has declared examination results of 6 lakh 56 thousand 148 regular candidates. Of these, 3 lakh 43 thousand 64 (52.28 percent) candidates have passed in first Division, 2 lakh 64 thousand 295 (40.28 percent) candidates in second division and 48 thousand 787 (7.43 percent) candidates in third division. This way, the result of this year has been Cent Percent. The examination result of private candidates has also been prepared on the basis of high school examination. Out of total 71 thousand 996 private examinees, 19 thousand 925 (27.67 percent) candidates have passed in first division, 33 thousand 944 (47.14 percent) candidates in second division and 18 thousand 126 (25.17 percent) candidates have passed in third

division. For the examination results of a total of 6 thousand 348 candidates of other states or board, their Class Xth mark-sheet is being verified. After the verification of marks, the result of these candidates will also be declared. Special arrangements have been made to redress the grievances of the students regarding the examination results. If any student has any complaint regarding the marks, then he can enter his roll number and application number through a special software created on the MP Online portal, and get information about his subject wise marks in high school and the marks of the subjects of higher secondary examination mapped on its basis. There is a free of cost arrangement to rectify any kind of clerical errors in the mark-sheets being given to the candidates, for a period of three months from the date of declaration of results. Students who do not get any corrections made for three months will have to make an application along with fee for such corrections later.

Last date to apply for Class 10th and 12th is now August 15

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The date of online registration for appearing in the special examination of High School, Higher Secondary and Higher Secondary Professional Examination 2021 has been extended till August 15, 2021 by the Board of Secondary Education. Earlier this date was fixed as August 10. This decision has been taken due to excessive rainfall in the state and the flood situation in Gwalior and Chambal divisions. It is noteworthy that the students dissatisfied with the examination results of the High School, Higher Secondary and Higher

Secondary Professional Examination 2021 conducted by the Board of Secondary Education or those whose results were declared as absent, for such candidates special examination is being conducted from September 1 to September 25, 2021. To appear in the examination, the candidates were provided the facility to register on the MP Online Portal from August 1 to August 10, 2021. Students registering online to appear in the special examination, who do not want to appear in the special examination due to any reason, can cancel their registration through MP Online from 11 to 15 August 2021.

ROYAL KITTY HELD



Bhopal: Van Bandhu Parishad's Royal kitty was held in Arera club on 15th September, with GANESH UTSAV Celebrations. 80 Members participated and enjoyed the get together. President Sandhya Agarwal addressed the gathering and conveyed about the projects and future plans run by this noble organization. Secretary Sangeeta Palod and the executive committee explained about the new rules to all the new members. Ganesh Vandana was presented by Alpana Agarwal and Manisha Chhajed. Dance performance on Ganesh bhajans presented by Prachi, Ranjana Mamta and Rakhi. Sewaptra Prabhari Lalita Khabya announced about the highest collection in the month of August. Treasurer Alka Gupta presented the account details and donations received for schools. Everyone enjoyed the game of Housie and mouth watering high tea was served. All COVID protocols were followed.

Approval for works of Seep Amber irrigation project 116th meeting of the Major Project Control Board held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The 116th meeting of the Major Project Control Board was held at the Chief Minister's residence auditorium. Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat attended the meeting virtually. In the meeting, approval was given by the Board for the works of Seep Amber Complex project of Sehore district. Irrigation will begin from this project from November 2022. The project will irrigate a total of 9 thousand hectares. This project has been approved in place of the earlier proposed Sankota and Mograkhedha schemes in Sehore district. Out of the total proposed command



area of 9 thousand hectares from both the earlier schemes, 8 thousand hectares of land will be irrigated through Seep Amber Pressurized

Irrigation Project. The remaining 1000 hectares will be irrigated by the Chhipaner Lift Project under construction under the Narmada Valley Development Authority. The new project will save 526.09 hectares of affected forest land and displacement of 63 families under the submergence area of Sankota and Mograkhedha projects approved earlier. Apart from this, about 5 thousand farmers of 31 villages of Nasrullaganj tehsil will be benefited. The administrative approval for the project is Rs 174.94 crore. Chief Secretary Shri Iqbal Singh Bains, Additional Chief Secretary Shri SN Mishra and other senior officers were present in the meeting.

IMD Issues Orange Alert, Warns of Heavy Rain

Thunder accompanied by lightning was also likely at isolated places across ten divisions of the state.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday warned of "heavy to very heavy" rainfall accompanied by lightning and thunder in parts of Madhya Pradesh. An orange alert predicting likely "heavy to very rainfall" (between 64.5 mm to 204.4 mm in 24 hours) was issued for the districts of Datia, Bhand and Morena in north Madhya

Pradesh. The region had received heavy showers last month too. A yellow alert warning of heavy rainfall (between 64.5 mm to 115.5 mm) was issued for 28 districts including Rewa, Hoshangabad, Sehore and Mandasaur. Thunder accompanied by lightning was also likely at isolated places across ten divisions of the state including Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur, the Met department said.

The alerts were valid till Friday morning, said P K Saha, a senior meteorologist at the IMD's Bhopal office. Almost the entire state was receiving rains, he added. Udaipura in Raisen district received the highest 75 mm of rain in western Madhya Pradesh while Patan area in Jabalpur received the highest rainfall of 130.6 mm in eastern parts of the state in the 24 hours ending 8.30 am Thursday, Saha said.

75 THOUSAND SAPLINGS WILL BE PLANTED IN SCHOOLS ON AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV

Bhopal: On Friday, September 17, on the occasion of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, 75 thousand saplings will be planted in the schools of the state. Minister of State for School Education, Inder Singh Parmar informed that under the leadership of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, one sapling would be planted in every school of the state to reduce air pollution and for protection and conservation of environment. Every effort will be made to protect the plants. Along with this, the photo of the planted sapling will be uploaded in the 'Vayudoot Ankur' app. Principal Secretary School Education Rashmi Arun Shami informed that the plantation programme will be conducted in schools by the School Management and Development Committee or School Management Committee. Schools which have a boundary wall or a faced campus will be preferred for plantation. Plants of local varieties will be planted and every effort will be made to ensure the safety of the plants with tree guards etc. In this regard, instructions have been issued to the collectors of all the districts and the concerned department.

SBI offers home loan on concessional rates during festive season

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State Bank of India has come up with an attractive gift for the customers looking to buy their house in this festive season. From SBI, customers will now get home loans at attractive discounted rates. SBI Chief General Manager Umesh Kumar Pandey informed that this drive to provide home loans at concessional interest rates will be completed in two phases. The first phase will be operated from September 1 to October 31 and the second phase from November 1 to December 31, 2021. Customers wishing to take a home loan during this period can get it with a minimum floor rate of interest of 6.70 percent and they will not have to pay any processing fee. In this campaign, customers will also get many other benefits. The interest rates are linked with the CIBIL score. No distinction has been made between the interest rates of salaried and non-salaried customers and a genuine effort has been made to pass on the benefit of lowest interest rates to all.



Pandey informed that the main objective of this campaign of SBI is to help more and more people to get their own home at low interest rate and without processing fee, making the home loan business simpler and more attractive.

CM PLANTED SAPLINGS WITH MEMBERS OF WOMEN SHGS



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday planted saplings in Smart Garden along with the members of women self-help groups of Tikamgarh, Satna and Barwani. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan planted saplings of Badam, Karanj and Parijat. Members of Prerna Shakti, Jai Bhavani and Shradha Mahila Self-Help Group participated in the plantation. It is noteworthy that members of women's self-help groups from all the districts of the state have come to Bhopal to communicate with Chouhan. Chouhan plants saplings every day as part of his resolve. Chief Minister requested mothers, sisters and daughters of self-help groups present in Smart Park to encourage plantation in their respective areas.

Parmar presented the key of the scooter to Divyang

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Minister of State for School Education (Independent Charge) and General Administration Inder Singh Parmar said that the work of helping the helpless people is true humanity. We all should come forward to build positive thinking of helping in society. Parmar said this while presenting the key of the scooter to Divyang Jitendra Chauhan in association with Round Table India and Asnani Charitable Foundation. Jitendra told Parmar that this scooter would become a boon for his self-reliant life. He had lost his job due to the closure of the call center during the Corona period, but now with the help of this scooter, he will take care of his family by working as a food delivery boy. Parmar, while feeding sweets to Jitendra with his own hands, wished him good luck for his future successful life. Parmar thanked Round Table India and Asnani Charitable Foundation for taking the initiative to help. Parmar said that this initia-



tive taken by the organization in the odd circumstances of the Corona period will inspire society to help the weak and helpless people. Round Table Bhopal, an organization active in social service, was established 7 years ago. The organization has constructed 20

classrooms and toilets in various government schools in the field of education. Along with donating 65 beds in Jawaharlal Nehru Cancer Hospital during the Corona period, food and ration items worth Rs 20 lakh have also been distributed to needy people.

Parent-teacher meetings in all government schools

Bhopal: Minister of State for School Education (Independent Charge) and General Administration, Inder Singh Parmar informed that To maintain the continuity of education of the students of the state and establish an active dialogue between parents and teachers Parent-teacher meeting will be organized from September 15 to 17, in all government schools of the state. Parmar said that like last year, this year also due to Corona, the academic session has been delayed. The entire society along with the educational system of the students has been affected by Corona. In such times, the cooperation of teachers and parents is required in creating an environment of learning for the students. Parmar has urged the parents of all the students to be present in the parent-teacher meeting. Parmar said that during the parent-teacher meeting, parents would be made aware of the completion of the class syllabus in the stipulated time period, continuing the education of the students at home and the education system in the light of the new education policy. In this session, the role of parents in bringing better results of the students will also be discussed.

CM EXPRESSES GRIEF OVER THE ROAD ACCIDENT

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed grief over the road accident ahead of Bada Pul of river Newaj in Rajgarh district. Chouhan has said that all possible help will be provided to the families of the deceased. Chief Minister has directed the district administration to provide immediate relief to the injured and make necessary arrangements for the treatment. Chouhan has prayed to God to give place to the departed souls at his lotus feet and give strength to the family members to bear this deep sorrow and the early recovery of the injured.

# Cameron Diaz talks 'hardballing' on relationship expectations

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Cameron Diaz has talked of the virtues of "hardballing" during a sit-down chat with Drew Barrymore and Ross Matthews. During an appearance on 'The Drew Barrymore Show', Matthews said: "I have a girlfriend who kept saying, 'These guys keep leaving me, they keep leaving me,' (and), I go, 'Well, what are the first dates like?'"

"She said, 'Well I ask them if they want kids.' Girl, what are you doing on date one? You don't ask if you want kids, you ask if you like pizza or the colour blue."

Diaz replied by calling Matthews' friend a "natural hardballer", meaning someone who is clear about their expectations from the outset, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The actress added: "She is like, 'This is what I want, are you in?' So, she shouldn't be looking at it that they are leaving her, she should be going, 'You know what, you don't add up to me, you're not at my place,' but that's okay." "Then you at least know that we are not in the same place. And I think that's what dating is all about."

Matthews agreed with Diaz's dating advice, saying that it's important to "know what you want".

Discussing his approach to love, he said: "I think it's important to know what you want. And when you see it, hold onto it. And if you find something that's not for you, don't be afraid to move on."

Diaz, who married Benji Madden in 2015, then offered another piece of relationship advice. She said: "If the other person is not holding onto you, let go of them."



# My struggles are overlooked: Halle Berry

Los Angeles | Agencies

Berry told the New York Times newspaper: "This is another battle I fought my whole life. That because I look a certain way that I've been spared any hardship. I've had loss and pain and a lot of hurt in my life. I've had abuse in my life." "I get really frustrated when people think because I look a certain way that I haven't had any of those real-life experiences because I absolutely have," she added. Berry won Best Actress at the 2002 Oscars for 'Monster's Ball'. However, Berry didn't receive the job opportunities she expected even after being feted with the award, reports femalefirst.co.uk. She earlier shared: "It was surprising, because I thought they were going to just back up the truck and drop them off at my house, right?"

"When you have a historic win like that, you think, 'Oh, this is going to fundamentally change.' It did fundamentally change me, but it didn't change my place in the business overnight. I still had to go back to work. I still had to try to fight to make a way out of no way." Berry has also felt an economic pressure to take on certain roles at one stage in her career.



Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry has debunked the notion that she has had an easy life, suggesting people are quick to judge her on the basis of her good looks.

# Whitney Houston's 'The Bodyguard' gets a remake at Warner Bros

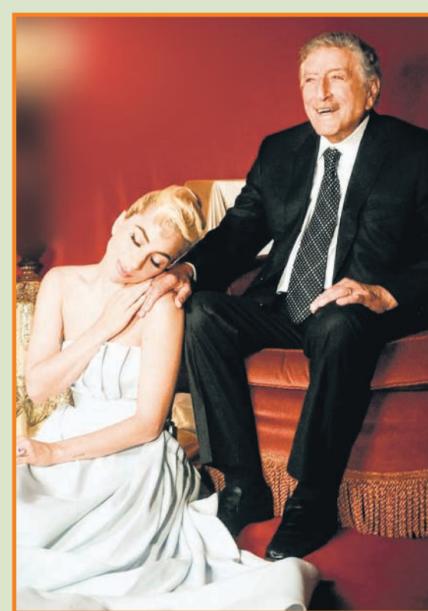
Los Angeles | Agencies

Matthew Lopez, the Tony-nominated playwright of "The Inheritance," has been roped in to pen the remake of the late pop icon Whitney Houston film "The Bodyguard" at Warner Bros.

The upcoming movie will be inspired by the 1992 romantic drama, which starred Houston and Kevin Costner, reports variety.com. Lawrence Kasdan of Kasdan Pictures, and Dan Lin and Jonathan Eirich of Rideback are producing the new film. Rideback's Nick Reynolds will serve as the executive producer. Kasdan was the writer-producer of the original. Lin has been attached to the property since 2011, which has seen delirious speculation over the potential lead cast for years. Names from Chris Hemsworth and Tessa Thompson to Channing Tatum and Cardi B have been floated. No cast has been set for Lopez's script at this stage.

"The Inheritance" premiered at London's Young Vic in 2018, where it was hailed as "the most important American play of the century." It transferred to the West End later that year, and opened on Broadway in the fall of 2019.

Lopez's show has received the Olivier Award, Drama Desk Award, Evening Standard Theatre Award, London Critics' Circle Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Drama League Award, GLAAD Media Award, WhatsOnStage Award and the South Bank Sky Arts Award.



# VENGABOYS RETURN WITH '1999 (I WANNA GO BACK)' SINGLE

London | Agencies

The 'Vengabus' is back with 'Boom' as the '90s party anthem band Vengaboys takes us back to the '90s with '1999 (I Wanna Go Back)' single released Thursday. Europe's dance party band of D-Nice, Captain Kim, Sailor Robin, and Cowboy Donny have returned and are taking us back to 1999. Announcing in a communique on their social media, Vengaboys reveal their disapproval of the new millennium, feeling that the 21st century has failed us and they want to bring back some fun and happiness. To reinforce their bold statement, Vengaboys have covered Charli XCX and Troye Sivan's '1999' and partnered with WOMBO to create a vibrant video. The video takes a trip down memory lane, to the party decade of the '90s with '1999 (I Wanna Go Back)'. Vengaboys worked with WOMBO on the first-ever artiste partnership by bringing the power of AI to the mainstream through a custom music video designed to bring well-known artistes and personalities to life. 1999 was the year the Vengaboys conquered the world with their famous summer anthems 'Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom!!' and 'We're Going To Ibiza!'. Both songs rocketed straight to the #1 chart position in countries all over the world including the UK and became two of the biggest songs of the summer of 1999.



# Ed Sheeran finds awards shows uncomfortable

Los Angeles | Agencies

Grammy winning-singer Ed Sheeran has said there is a lot of "side-eye" going on at major prize-giving ceremonies and that he can feel the "resentment and hatred" in the air.

Appearing on Audacy's 'The Julia Show', Sheeran said: "The room is filled with resentment and hatred towards everyone else and it's quite an uncomfortable atmosphere."

"All the artists are sweet people, but they're like, surrounded by entourages that want them to win too, so it's one artist surrounded by ten people and another artist surrounded by 10 people and everyone is kind of giving each other the side-eye."

The 'Perfect' hitmaker doesn't like seeing artistes not supporting other artistes and wanting their peers to "fail".

He added: "It's nothing to do with MTV or the award show, it's at all the other awards shows (too); Billboards, GRAMMYS ... AMAs, it's just lots of people wanting other people to fail and I don't like that."

The 'Shape Of You' hitmaker said England's awards show such as the BRIT Awards are more light-hearted as everyone is out for a good time, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

# Tony Bennett, Lady Gaga partner for specials with ViacomCBS

New York | Agencies

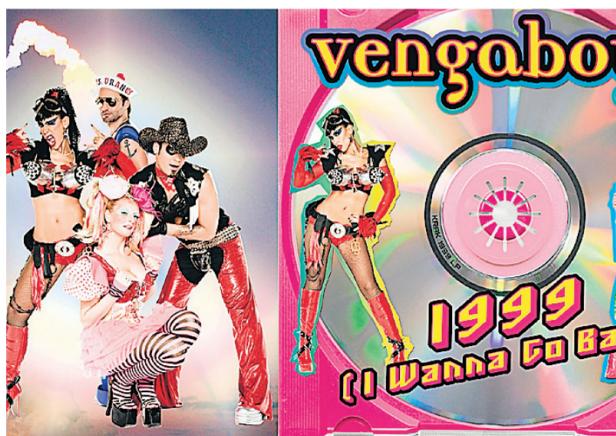
Ninety-five-year-old Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga's second and final collaborative album 'Love for Sale' will be broadcast in three different specials on CBS, MTV Entertainment Group, and Paramount+.

The three-special series were announced in lieu of Bennett and Gaga's partnership with ViacomCBS. Among them is Bennett's return to the 'MTV Unplugged' franchise that gave his career a major comeback boost, this time with Gaga, reports Variety.com.

The first special will be 'One Last Time: An Evening With Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga', to air on CBS the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend.

The hour-long show is the filmed rendering of the two concerts the pair did at Radio City Music Hall in August, as Bennett's final public performances, the first night of which coincided with his 95th birthday. The show will be available for streaming on Paramount+.

The second special is 'MTV Unplugged: Tony Bennett & Lady Gaga', pegged for winter with no confirmed air date yet. The show was filmed with an intimate studio audience in New York City around the time of August's Radio City Music Hall performances. That show played a major role in Bennett's career almost three decades ago when his first 'MTV Unplugged' special was turned into a surprise-hit 1994 album that went on to win the 1995 Grammy for album of the year.



# ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Irina Shayk



## VIRAT KOHLI TO QUIT AS T20I CAPTAIN AFTER T20 WORLD CUP

Dubai | Agencies

Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli announced on Thursday that he will be stepping down as the T20I captain after the completion of the men's T20 World Cup in Oman and the UAE in October.

Kohli has taken this decision to manage his workload, which has been quite high in the last 5-6 years as he has led India in all three formats. Though he has been playing in all three formats for "last 8-9 years", Kohli will continue to do so and said he will continue to contribute as a batsman in T20s.

Through his official Twitter account, Kohli has thanked everyone who have supported him in his journey as the captain of the Indian team in all formats. He also said that he has given everything to the team as the T20I captain and will continue to contribute to the team as a batsman in future.

"I have been fortunate enough to not only represent India but also lead the Indian Cricket Team to my utmost capability. I thank everyone who has supported me in my journey as the Captain of the Indian Cricket Team. I couldn't have done it without them - the boys, the support staff, the selection committee, my coaches and each and every Indian who prayed for us to win," said Kohli in his statement.

The development comes just three days after BCCI Treasurer had said to IANS that Kohli will



be the captain in all formats, quashing speculations on whether Kohli's deputy Rohit Sharma will take over as captain in white-ball cricket. "This is all rubbish. Nothing such is happening. This is all what you guys (media) are talking about. BCCI has not met or discussed anything on this issue (split captaincy). Virat will remain as the captain (of all formats)."

Kohli said that he will continue to serve as India's Test and ODI captain. "Understanding workload is a very important thing and consider-

ing my immense workload over the last 8-9 years playing all three formats and captaining regularly for last 5-6 years, I feel I need to give myself space to be fully ready to lead the Indian Team in Test and ODI Cricket. I have given everything to the Team during my time as T20 Captain and I will continue to do so for the T20 Team as a batsman moving forward."

Kohli made his T20I captaincy debut in the three-match T20I series against England in 2017, thereby becoming the captain of India in all formats. In 45 T20Is, Kohli led India to 27 wins and 14 losses with two matches tied and two matches yielding no result, becoming India's second most successful skipper in the format after MS Dhoni. Kohli also became the first India captain to register T20I bilateral series wins in South Africa (2-1) and England (2-1) in 2018 followed by New Zealand (5-0) and Australia (2-1) in 2020.

"Of course, arriving at this decision took a lot of time. After a lot of contemplation and discussions with my close people, Ravi bhai and also Rohit, who have been an essential part of the leadership group, I've decided to step down as the T20 Captain after this T20 World Cup in Dubai in October. I have also spoken to the secretary Mr Jay Shah and the President of BCCI Mr Sourav Ganguly along with all the selectors about the same. I will continue to serve Indian Cricket and the Indian Team to the best of my ability," concluded Kohli.

## National Open Athletics: Harmilan Kaur sets national record in 1500m

Warangal | Agencies

Punjab's Harmilan Kaur Bains stole the thunder from the sprinters by breaking Sunita Rani's long-standing national record in the 1500 metres on the second day of the 60th National Open Athletics Championships in the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Hanamkonda here on Thursday.

The 23-year-old start-to-finish specialist cruised home in 4:05.39 to erase the mark set by Sunita Rani at 4:06.03 in the Asian Games in Busan in 2002. She also shattered OP Jais's meet record of 4:11.83 set in Delhi in 2006. Delhi's KM Chanda gamely shadowed Harmilan until the Punjab runner sped away at the bell to win by a sizable margin.

Harmilan, undefeated in eight national-level 1500m races since January 2020, has shown rapid progress, improving from 4:14.68 in the Khelo India University Games in Bhubaneswar last year to 4:08.70 and 4:08.27 in the Federation Cup (March 16) and Indian Grand Prix 4 (June 21) respectively in Patiala. On Thursday, she capped it with a National mark, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said in a release on Thursday.

It needed such a strong effort to push a couple of good sprint events to the shade. Naresh Kumar (Andhra Pradesh) and Delhi's Tarandeep Kaur took the honours as the fastest male and female athlete of the meet by winning the 100m dash. Naresh Kumar's 10.30 seconds win came with the second-fastest time by an Indian in 100m this year behind Gurinder Singh's 10.27 seconds in Patiala on June 26. It also gave the 23-year-old from Guntur a place among the five fastest sprinters



in Indian history. Quite inevitably, it gave him the meet record, improving on Anil Kumar's 10.37 seconds set in 2001. The race produced personal bests for Assam's Amlan Borgohain and Harjit Singh (Services) with times of 10.34 seconds for both, a photo finish separating them by six-thousandths of a second to secure the silver medal for the former. To their credit, the trio was able to script great runs despite a couple of false starts by Services' KS Pranav and Satnam Singh.

Delhi teenager Taranjeet Kaur, who was knocked down by a car and broke a collar bone just over two years ago, claimed the title of the fastest woman of the meet with a blazing run in a personal best time of 11.50 seconds to leave the seasoned Archana Suseendran (Tamil Nadu) in her wake. Taranjeet Kaur knocked two-tenths of a second from her previous best of 11.70 clocked in winning the Federation Cup Junior (U20) title in Bhopal on January 25 this year. The men's 1500m race saw an upset of sorts as little-known Parvej Khan (Haryana) stunned the two-time Asian Athletics Championships medalist Ajay Kumar Saroj (Railways) tasted his first defeat at the National level since August 20, 2019.

## National boxing: Deepak in second round as SSCB dominate

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Led by Deepak's fluent show, Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) boxers produced an impressive all-win performance on the second day of the 5th Elite Mens National Boxing Championships at the Inspire Institute of Sports in Bellary, Karnataka, on Thursday.

Deepak, who had upstaged the world and Olympic Games champion Shakhobidin Zoirov of Uzbekistan during his silver medal show at the Strandja Memorial earlier this year, started the domination for SSCB with a flawless 5-0 win against Bihar's Aman Kumar in an opening-round match in 51kg. Barun Singh (48kg) and Akash (54kg) further extended SSCB's winning momentum as they managed unanimous victories against Telangana's Donald Janumala and Rocky of All India Police respectively.

Dalveer Singh Tomar (64kg) and Naveen Boora (71) were the other two boxers to progress into the second round as all the five SSCB boxers in action emerged victors on the second day of the prestigious event which has close to 400 boxers from 35 states/UT units and boards in the fray.

Meanwhile, in the 67kg, Karnataka's Rayyan MD also made his way into the second round as he defeated Delhi's Bhupesh Ruhai by a 4-0 margin.

Maharashtra pugilists Ajay Pendor (51kg)



and Yash Goud (64kg) too made winning starts to their campaigns as they outpunched Manipur's Irabot Heigrujam and Sailem Malik of Ladakh respectively in their opening round bouts. Among other pugilists who entered second rounds were Uttar Pradesh's Javed (51kg) and Chandigarh's Rohit Kumar (64kg). While Javed got the better of Assam's Manoj Thakur in a 4-1 win, Rohit's attack forced the referee to stop the contest and declare him the winner with an RSC verdict against Gujarat's Arvind Thakor. Playing in the 71kg, Rajasthan's Jaivardhn Kasnia also progressed into the second round after a 4-1 win over Gujarat's Mohammed Moin Shaikh as 75 bouts took place on the second day of the event.

## Berrington, Sharif power Scotland to win over Zimbabwe in first T20I

Edinburgh | Agencies

Scotland defeated Zimbabwe by seven runs in the first of the three T20 Internationals here.

Batsman Richie Berrington, batting at No. 4, shone with the bat with a brisk 82 not out while medium-pacer Safyaan Sharif starred with the ball for Scotland with figures of 4/24.

Chasing 142, Zimbabwe lost their first wicket on the first ball of their innings, as Wesley Madhevere was caught behind off Sharif for a golden duck. The pacer struck again in his next over as Madhevere's opening partner Tadiwanashe Marumani followed suit, becoming the quick's second victim.

Regis Chakabva (17) and skipper Craig Ervine (26) steadied the innings. They stitched a 48-run stand before the two batsmen were dismissed in quick succession by Mark Watt (1/17) and Ollie Hairs (1/19) respectively.

Sean Williams contributed with a run-a-ball 28, sharing a 54-run stand with Milton Shumba. Though wickets fell at regular intervals from one end,



Shumba (45 not out) remained unperturbed.

With 19 required from the last two overs, and Shumba looking set, Zimbabwe were edging closer to victory. But brilliant death bowling from Chris Sole (1/24) and Sharif sealed the deal for the host. Together they

gave away 11 runs and claimed three wickets in the last two overs.

Earlier, Scotland won the toss and elected to bat. They got off to a shaky start as they lost their top three batsmen -- George Munsey (1), Kyle Coetzer (2) and Hairs (5) -- inside three overs. In the sixth over, they lost

another wicket in Calum MacLeod (6), who became Tendai Chatara's (2/23) second victim. Despite a flurry of wickets, Berrington stayed firm at the crease.

He found support in Matthew Cross, with the duo sharing an important 45-run stand before Luke Jongwe (2/28) broke their partnership. He had Cross caught for 14 in the 13th over. Michael Leask also contributed with a 13-ball 11, while Sharif remained unbeaten on 9.

Berrington's solid contribution of 82\* from 61 balls, which featured seven fours and three sixes, helped revive Scotland's innings. From being 30/4 at one point, Scotland finished on a competitive 141/6.

### Brief scores:

Scotland 141/6 in 20 overs (Richie Berrington 82 not out, Tendai Chatara 2/23, Luke Jongwe 2/28) beat Zimbabwe 134/9 in 20 overs (Milton Shumba 45 not out, Safyaan Sharif 4/24).

## Davis Cup: Gunneswaran to start India's campaign against Finland

Espoo | Agencies

India's top-ranked player Prajnesh Gunneswaran will be taking on Otto Virtanen, Finland's No. 2 singles player who is ranked 419, in the first match of their Davis Cup World Group I 1st round match at Espoo Metro Arena here on Friday.

Ramkumar Ramanathan, India's No. 2 player ranked 187 in the world, will meet Finland's top player Emil Ruusuvuori, the World No. 74, in the second match on the opening day of the two-day encounter.

The Indian doubles pair of Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan will take on the Finnish pair of Harri Heliövaara and his partner Henri Kontinen in the first match on Saturday which will be followed by the reverse singles.

India's non-playing captain Rohit Rajpal was happy with the fact that his top singles player will be leading the campaign in the tie.

"The draw was as I was expecting. We are happy that our No 1 Prajnesh comes out first and if he performs to his potential then God willing, we should go up 1-0, and then the pressure will be on their No 1, who will play Ramkumar," Rajpal was quoted as saying in a video released by the



All-India Tennis Association (AITA). He said Ramkumar had good chances of putting it across Ruusuvuori, despite the disparity in rankings. "Ram is a very versatile player. We are preparing him well for this match and I have high hopes for him. I am hoping he will do the job for India," said Rajpal. Considering the way the draw has shaped up, Rajpal said

the doubles match on Saturday will be very crucial.

"Doubles will be very crucial for both teams. If you are 2-0 up, the feeling is different. But if you are 1-1, then both the teams will be focussed on the doubles," he said. If things go as per rankings, there is a good possibility that the score will be 1-1 at the end of the first day.

India coach Zeeshan Ali said the draw is in India's favour. "Draw worked in our favour, I was hoping that Prajnesh will play the first match and that's what happened," he said.

Though there were some worries for India as Gunneswaran has recently recovered from an injury. But Zeeshan said Gunneswaran has recovered from the injury and is hitting the ball well. "He has been hitting the ball very well and there is no sign of an injury so I am glad. It was a scare couple of weeks back when he had told me that his wrist was bothering him and he did go back to Chennai to get some rehab done.

"Coming over here, he is hitting the ball well, he is moving well. The court also is suiting him with the speed and everything. That's probably the best I have seen him play. So I am hoping that he is able to bring that game to the match when he plays tomorrow," he added.

## Durand Cup: 10-man Gokulam overcome Hyderabad FC 1-0

Kalyani | Agencies

Ghanian forward Rahim Osumanu scored the only goal as defending Champions Gokulam Kerala FC (GKFC) prevailed over Hyderabad FC 1-0 in Group D encounter of the 130th Durand Cup at the Kalyani stadium here on Thursday.

Osumanu scored within a minute on resumption after the half-time and Gokulam held onto the lead despite losing Emil Benny, who was given the marching orders for getting a second yellow card.

Gokulam played an attacking game from the word go and created quite a few

chances to score. Early on in the first half, GKFC had the first major chance when Rahim Osumanu had the ball right in front of the Hyderabad FC (HFC) goal but he could not put it past goalkeeper Lalbiakhlua Jongte. A few minutes later, GKFC had another golden opportunity, courtesy a beautiful cross by Osumanu but Emil Benny failed to score. Though Hyderabad had more of the ball, Gokulam had the better chances at goal. Jongte did well to keep it goalless at half time. In the second half, Gokulam picked up from where they left off, and made an impact immediately.

## New Zealand lose Blundell ahead of series opener in Pakistan

Lahore | Agencies

New Zealand have suffered a setback ahead of Friday's ODI series opener in Pakistan with wicket-keeper batsman Tom Blundell ruled out of the series because of an injury suffered during the preceding T20I series against Bangladesh.

All-rounder Daryl Mitchell, who was going to join the side for the T20Is, will take over his place and will be available for selection once he completes the mandatory isolation period.

Blundell sustained the injury in the fourth T20I against Bangladesh and the Blackcaps physio Nishil Shah explained the injury needed a concentrated period of rehabilitation.

"Tom's been working hard since the injury in Bangladesh," Shah told the Cricket New Zealand website. "The injury's not quite where we want it so we think it's best for him to concentrate on his rehab given the big summer of cricket ahead."

New Zealand coach Glenn Pocknall said the injury



comes as a blow ahead of the ODI series.

"Obviously everyone is gutted for Tom, he's a quality player with a diverse skill-set.

"He'll remain with the squad and we're hopeful he'll be available again for the T20I series."

Pocknall said after consultation with the regular coach, Gary Stead, it was agreed Mitchell was best suited as a replacement.

"We're fortunate to have someone of Daryl's quality to join us early for the ODIs," he said. "He's shown last summer what a destructive batsman he is, while also offering another useful bowling option.

"With Tom out, we do lose our first choice backup wicket-keeping option.

"However there are several guys in the squad with keeping experience and we'll ensure they do the necessary work at training to be up to speed if called upon."

New Zealand are on their first tour of Pakistan after a gap of 18 years and will be playing three ODI and five T20I matches.

# JACQUELINE TAKES SOCIAL MEDIA CRITICISM IN HER STRIDE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Jacqueline Fernandez, during a chat session with her 'Bhoot Police' co-actor Arjun Kapoor, said that some of the social media criticism makes sense to her as she takes it positively.

Arjun has started a social media chat session titled 'Bak Bak with Baba' that will see the actor talk to his industry friends and family to unearth things that people might not know about. He dropped a candid chat session with Jacqueline, where they spoke about everything from her first crush, her fitness journey and how she tackles trolls. The 'Gunday' actor asked Jacqueline: "The meanest thing that you have read about yourself on social media?"

She replied: "There are a lot of mean things. It's ok we all get it. I read things about myself how terrible I sound, how terrible my accent is and how I speak Hindi, bad criticism on how I look. I kind of take it like positively. I am like ok what do they mean."

She added: "Then, I feel may be there is some room for improvement. There is some criticism where you feel this person is being nasty. Some places actually makes sense to me." Talking about her first crush to Arjun, Jacqueline said: "There was somebody in school but I can't name him. I also had a huge crush on Leonardo DiCaprio after watching 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Titanic' and Ricardo from Backstreet Boys."

She further revealed to Arjun that she has "never been on a blind date."

The actor, who plays Chiraunji in the horror comedy, then asked the actress about how important food is to her?

Jacqueline shared that she definitely loves to celebrate with food.

She also added: "There was a phase in my 20s when I did turn to food and that was late at night. I lived alone so it was like cake, ice cream, anything crispy. I actually did have a terrible relationship with food and then I went like starving for a week which is like really bad for you." "So, now it's about knowing that I don't need to turn to it, tomorrow is another day and we will get through it."



## Honey Singh, Govinda, Chunky Pandey on 'Super Dancer 4' this week



Team Absolute | Mumbai

While singers Honey Singh, Neha Kakkar and Tony Kakkar will be special guests for one episode, the other episode will see the presence of Govinda and Chunky Pandey on the weekend episodes of 'Super Dancer: Chapter 4'. If one episode promises to be a musical treat, the other episode will ride on nostalgia and longstanding friendship.

From Honey Singh and Shilpa Shetty Kundra lighting up the stage with their dance moves, to Govinda and Chunky performing with Shilpa Shetty and Geeta Kapur on their song 'Lal Dupatte Wali' to the choreographers paying tribute to guest Neha Kakkar, the weekend episodes of 'Super Dancer: Chapter 4' will have a lot to enjoy for the audience. Additionally, this weekend marks the 'Race to Super 8' where two contestants will be sent back for revision. Who from among the 10 contestants will step ahead in the 'Race to Super 8'?

'Super Dancer: Chapter 4' will air this weekend on Sony Entertainment Television.

## Pratik Gandhi: The story of 'Shimmy' touched me deeply

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As his short film 'Shimmy' releases on September 17, actor Pratik Gandhi shares how deeply he is connected with the story in which he plays the father of a teenaged daughter. Talking about the film, Pratik said, "I feel blessed that 'Shimmy' found me. The story touched me deeply. As an actor I have always believed in experimenting and with Shimmy I got to play around a lot internally as an actor. Amol is a very relatable character going through an unknown curve as a parent of a teenaged daughter. Disha is a very talented writer and director who can add her magic in the simplest of moments." The film is directed by Disha Noyonika Rindani, produced by Guneet Monga of Sikhya Entertainment.

Disha said, "Shimmy is a special movie for me. It is the story of an aloof father and a daughter with a secret and how they embark on a journey to some uncomfortable destinations. I wrote it with Jai Mehta, never thinking that someone would let me direct it one day. I am grateful to get the right partners in Guneet and Achin with Sikhya backing this story super close to my heart."

"Shimmy is an ode to all the fathers who are trying to fathom the unexpected turns and milestones in their kids' life and build an intricate connection with them. I couldn't think of anyone more apt than Pratik for this role and can't wait for people to see Bhamini's role which pivots the film's narrative by miles. It was fascinating to see them play roles of strangers, with a spark. In a society where fathers are perceived to be less expressive, Shimmy is all about a journey of a man from being a father to a friend."



## RITEISH-GENELIA DESHMUKH TO BE STAR DRAWS OF 'BIGG BOSS OTT' FINALE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Even as 'Bigg Boss OTT' nears its finale, clearing the way for the television format to be hosted by Salman Khan, the latest news from the 'house' is that architect-actor Riteish Deshmukh, who was last seen in 'Baaghi 3' with Tiger Shroff and Shraddha Kapoor, and his wife Genelia will share the spotlight with the host Karan Johar on Saturday, September 18. And of course, after the eviction of Neha Bhasin, the five remaining contestants -- Pratik Sehjpal, Divya Agarwal, Nishant Bhat, Raqesh Bapat and Shamita Shetty (whose abrasive behaviour has attracted much attention) -- are all working hard to look glamorous and raise the show's oomph quotient.

If the show grapevine is to be believed, the Deshmukhs are likely to announce the winner (or winners), who will get the opportunity to move on to Salman Khan's 'Bigg Boss' house.



Bhumika Chawla elated at response to her Telugu film 'Seetimaarr'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Bhumika Chawla is happy with the response to her recently-released Telugu movie 'Seetimaarr'. The movie, directed by Sampath Nandi, is a sports action drama and also features Gopichand and Tamannaah Bhatia.

Talking about the film, the 'Tere Naam' actress said: "Sports backdrop films have their own charm and curiosity among audiences. Theatres have opened up and the entertainment industry is picking up. I play the role of Gopichand's sister who was a kabbadi player and inspires him to become a player and coach." Bhumika made her

Tollywood debut in 2000 with 'Yuvakudu'. She said her journey so far in the South film industry has been wonderful. "The landmark films of my career in the south would be 'Yuvakudu', 'Okkadu', 'Simhadari', 'Sillunu Oru Kaadhal' to name a few. Southern industry has its own way of functioning. The audience in the South worship their idols, it's their way of showing love. Each culture, industry and person are different," she added. The 'Dil Ne Jise Apna Kahaa' actress further said: "People have been very respectful and kind. I thank Great India Entertainment for launching me in the TFI and I thank Supriya, Nagarjuna and the production house. I learnt a lot from the industry."

But what about the language barrier? "I have acted in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada films. As an actor there is no preferred language - a good script, great powerful content, good team is what matters as an actor - language is no bar. Though Hindi comes easy in terms of language, it has never been a barrier," she said. The 'Run' actress revealed that she is now looking for roles which can give her more opportunity to explore. She said: "Acting gives me creative satisfaction."

## Vicky Kaushal leaves for shoot of 'Into the Wild With Bear Grylls'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Vicky Kaushal left for the Maldives on Thursday to shoot for an episode of adventure show 'Into The Wild With Bear Grylls'.

According to the Disney Channel, Vicky will be joining actor Ajay Devgn on the show, hosted by renowned survivalist Bear Grylls.

The audience gave a phenomenal response to the show when earlier actor Akshay Kumar and later superstar Rajinikanth appeared on the show.

In 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also appeared on the show, with skyrocketing interest from the audience.

While the date for the show going on-air hasn't been announced yet, it is confirmed that it will premiere on the discovery+ app first.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Anjali Tatrari