

# absolute india

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## COVID 19 : PROHIBITORY ORDERS CLAMPED IN KANPUR

PROHIBITORY ORDERS UNDER SECTION 144 HAVE BEEN IMPOSED IN KANPUR DISTRICT OF UTTAR PRADESH IN VIEW OF A SLIGHT SURGE IN CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, VARIOUS UPCOMING EXAMINATIONS AND FESTIVALS, AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID.



upcoming examinations and festivals, an official government spokesman said. The restrictions, announced on Saturday evening, will be in place for a month. Section 144 of the CrPC restricts the gathering of more than four to five people, the spokesman added. Under the imposition, without the permission of the Police Commissioner, not more than five people will be able to gather in a public place or take out a procession. However, people violating Section 144 will be punished under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code. In June this year, Kanpur had witnessed violence during protests against objectionable statement made by former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma against the Prophet.

Kanpur | Agencies

Prohibitory orders under Section 144 have been imposed in Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh in view of a slight surge in coronavirus infections, various

## India-China relations going through very difficult phase: Jaishankar

Team Absolute | New Delhi

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Sunday said that it was no secret that the relationship between India and China was going through a very difficult phase. He said both the countries had border pacts going back to the 1990s which prohibited bringing massive troops into the prohibited areas but Beijing has disregarded those agreements. "Right now it is no secret, we are going through a very difficult phase mainly because we had agreements with China going back to the 1990s, which prohibit bringing massive troops into the prohibited areas, they have disregarded that," he said. India and China are locked in a years-long border dispute in eastern Ladakh. The dispute escalated in 2020 after the Chinese amassed massive troops along the LAC and entered the areas claimed by India. China has been maintaining a massive presence of troops and developing infrastructure along the border.



Earlier this week, Jaishankar in Bangkok said that India's relationship with China was going through an 'extremely difficult phase' because of what Beijing did at LAC.

India and China have signed several border agreements to maintain peace and tranquility along the LAC. In an agreement signed on 7 September 1993, New Delhi and Beijing agreed to resolve the border situation through peaceful and friendly consultations. "Neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other by any means...the two sides shall strictly respect and observe the line of actual control between the two sides. No activities of either side shall overstep the line of actual control," the pact said. "Each side will keep its military forces in the areas along the line of actual control to a minimum level compatible with the friendly and good neighbourly relations between the two countries. The two sides agree to reduce their military forces along the line of actual control in conformity with the requirements of the principle of mutual and equal security to ceilings to be mutually agreed," it added. However, Beijing disregarded this by amassing thousands of troops near LAC in April 2020.

## 'Tell me where to come', Sisodia on lookout notice

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Reacting over the lookout notice issued by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday said, "I am roaming freely in Delhi. Tell me where to come." "All your raids have failed. Nothing has been found. Misappropriation of even a single penny was not found. Now you have issued a look out notice that Manish Sisodia is not available. What is this gimmick, Modi ji? I am roaming freely in Delhi, tell me where to come? I can't find you?," Sisodia said in a tweet in Hindi. Earlier in the morning, the CBI issued look out circular (LOC) against 13 accused including Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. Sisodia is among the 13 people named as accused in an FIR registered by the CBI in connection with alleged irregularities in the implementation of the excise policy. The CBI has made Sisodia accused number one in its FIR. The CBI's FIR has been lodged under sections 120-B (Criminal Conspiracy) and 477-A (Falsification of accounts) of the



IPC. The allegations against Sisodia is that liquor businessmen were allegedly given exemption of Rs 30 crore.

## CBI SHARES LIQUOR SCAM FILES WITH ED TO LODGE PMLA CASE

New Delhi: In a latest development in connection with the liquor scam involving Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has handed over important documents regarding the case to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to look whether a case of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) can be made out or not. The CBI has given a copy of the FIR and a few more documents to the ED. Now, the ED will first initiate a preliminary inquiry to gather evidences of PMLA and then will decide the future course of action. The ED officials were not available to comment on the matter. The CBI has made Sisodia accused number one in its FIR. The CBI's FIR has been lodged under sections 120-B (Criminal Conspiracy) and 477-A (Falsification of accounts) of the IPC. The allegations against Sisodia is that liquor businessmen were allegedly given exemption of Rs 30 crore. The licence holders were allegedly given extension according to their own will. The policy rules were made by violating excise rules.

## Delhi excise policy probe: CBI confirms LOC against 8 persons, no clarity on Sisodia

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday confirmed that Look Out Circulars (LOC) were issued against eight private persons in connection with the alleged Delhi liquor scam case. However, there was no clarity from the agency whether they have issued a LOC against Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who is mentioned as accused in its FIR, and others. Questioned on the issue, officials only said that they didn't have any information in this respect. LOCs have been issued against Vijay Nair, former CEO of entertainment and event management company Only Much Louder, Amandeep Dhal, Director of Brindco Sales Pvt, Sameer Mahendru, Managing Director of Indospirit Group, Amit Arora, Director of Buddy Retail Private Limited, Sunny Marwah, authorised signatory of Mahadev Liquors, and three private persons Arun Ramchandra Pillai, Arjun Pandey, and Dinesh Arora. The CBI has made Sisodia as accused number one in its FIR, which charges the accused under Sections 120-B (Criminal Conspiracy) and 477-A (Falsification of accounts) of the IPC. The allegations against Sisodia is that liquor businessmen were allegedly given exemption of Rs 30 crore, and licence holders were allegedly given extensions, according to their own will, while the policy was made by violating excise rules.

## CBI arrests Lt Col, 3 others in Ambala Cantt bribery case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday arrested a Lieutenant Colonel and a Subedar Major, both attached to Military Engineering Service (MES), Ambala Cantt, along with two private contractors in alleged bribery case of Rs 22.48 lakh. The accused were identified as Lieutenant Colonel Rahul Pawar, MES, Ambala Cantt, Subedar Major Pardeep Kumar, private contractors Dinesh Kumar and

## Govt earning more from taxes on common people than on corporates: Rahul Gandhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the government of imposing high taxes on common people and reducing tax to its "friends." Taking to Twitter, he also shows a graph alleging that the government is earning more revenue from taxes on common people and less from corporates due to lower tax. "Raise taxes on people, cut taxes for Mitron - the 'natural course' of action for suit-boot-loom sarkar," Gandhi said in a tweet, while sharing the



The graph shared by him gave a comparison of "less tax on people versus more tax on people," which shows that corporate tax over the years is coming down and tax on people is going up. The graph also showed that the percentage of revenues collected by the government over the years is higher from people than from corporates. The graph showed that in 2010 the revenue collected through tax on

corporates was over 40% against 24% revenue from tax on people. The graph shows that in 2021, the revenue collected from tax on corporates has come down to around 24% against around 48% from that collected from tax on people. Meanwhile, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh also shared a letter from Rajasthan chief minister opposing the hike in GST on essential items and countered Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's claim that no state had opposed the GST on food

items at the GST Council meeting. "The finance minister has been claiming that in the meetings of the GST Council, the states did not oppose the imposition of GST on food items. This is a letter written to him by the chief minister of Rajasthan on 05.08.2022, which refutes her claims," Ramesh said while sharing the letter. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had on August 5 written to the finance minister opposing the decision to impose higher GST on food items and urging her to reconsider her decision.

## MEHBOOBA MUFTI PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST

Srinagar: Former chief minister and president of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mehbooba Mufti was placed under house arrest on Sunday in her official residence in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar city. Suhail Bukhari, spokesman of the PDP told IANS that she was scheduled to go to Chotigam village of Shopian district on Sunday where terrorists killed a local Kashmiri Pandit Sunil Kumar on August 16.

## KTR asks Amit Shah to speak on release of convicts in Bilkis Bano case

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) Working President KTR Rama Rao took potshots at Union Home Minister Amit Shah as the latter arrived in Telangana to address a public meeting. Rama Rao took to Twitter to remark that people of Telangana are keen to hear from Amit Shah on why the BJP government decided to release convicts in Bilkis Bano rape case. "The people of Telangana are very keen to hear from you on why your Govt decided to release 'Sanskari Rapists' of #BilkisBano. Balathkar Justification is against what Hon'ble PM preached from the ramparts of Red Fort Is Gujarat Govt not taking PM sir seriously?" he asked. The TRS leader who is also a key minister in the cabinet headed by his father K. Chandrasekhara Reddy was referring to term "Sanskari" used by a Gujarat MLA of BJP while defending the convicts. In another tweet, KTR taunted Shah on "parivarvad" (nepotism). "The father of an 'Ace cricketer' who rose through the ranks &

became BCCI Secretary (purely on merit) is visiting Telangana today," wrote the TRS leader referring to Amit Shah and his son Jay Shah. "He will campaign for a gentleman whose brother is an MP & whose wife was an MLC contestant And he will lecture & enlighten us on Parivarvad," added KTR in an obvious reference to Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy. Rajagopal Reddy, who recently quit as MLA from Munugode constituency and resigned from Congress, joined the BJP in the presence of Amit Shah at the public meeting in Munugode. Meanwhile, a banner was spotted in Hyderabad's Begumpet area on Sunday before the arrival of Amit Shah. It carried a question 'Tadipaara Kaun Hai' and with the slogan 'Bye Bye Modi'. The banner did not carry the name of the person or organisation which installed it. The banner was seen near Begumpet Airport where Amit Shah landed. Banners with the slogan aBye Bye Modi' and posing questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi were seen during the latter's public meeting in Hyderabad early last month.

## Contract hiring, outsourcing by Gujarat govt sets off alarm bells in state

Gandhinagar | Agencies

The Gujarat government seems to be in a mood to downsize financial responsibilities for which it is taking to contractual and ad-hoc employment, even outsourcing, which will have far-reaching socio-economic repercussions, fear economists and politicians. Last Wednesday, the state government decided to give fixed salary benefits to employees hired before 2006 on contractual terms and their services will be counted as continued services. Some 42,000 employees will benefit from this, said state Education Minister Jitu Vaghani. According to rough estimates, there are at least 5,00,000-6,00,000 employees who have been hired by the state government either through outsourcing, contractual service or ad-hoc recruitment. "I have asked the state government in the Assembly several times to give the exact figure of contractual employees and workers hired



through outsourcing, but the government has always avoided the question," alleged Kirit Patel, Congress MLA from Patan. According to Patel, at least 20,000 posts have been outsourced in the health sector, hired through contractors, who are charging Rs 28,000 to Rs 40,000 for each employee from the government, but hardly paying Rs 12,000 to Rs 20,000 to the workers. In the panchayat department, there are 16,000 vacancies, while 6,000 posts of Talatis are vacant, but the state government does not want to take any financial respon-

sibility and is worried about the future liability of pension and that is why it has selected the shortcut to hire on contractual basis or it is outsourcing jobs, alleged AAP leader Yuvrajshin Jadeja. "Since long, the state government has stopped hiring sweepers, peons and other class four employees on payroll -- it wants to hire lab technicians, paramedics and even doctors on contract or ad-hoc basis, the negative impact of which we experienced during the peak of the Covid pandemic," Jadeja said. The more contractual jobs, less social security, meaning more social stress and inequality in the society, which can lead the country to an unexpected path, feels economist Rohit Shukla. "I fail to understand why the government has started thinking that higher pay-scales and pensions will be a burden on the state treasury. In economics, it is said that more money in the hands of people means either consumption will increase or savings, and both will boost the GDP," said Shukla.

## KCR's downfall has begun, declares Amit Shah at Telangana rally

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The joining of Rajagopal Reddy in the is the beginning of the uprooting of the K Chandrasekhara Rao government in Telangana, said senior BJP leader Amit Shah during a rally in the state's Munugode assembly constituency on Sunday. Byelection is being held in Munugode after sitting Congress MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy resigned from his post in the party recently and joined the BJP. "Rajagopal Reddy joining the party means this is the beginning of the end for the KCR government. If Rajagopal Reddy wins, KCR's government will disappear," said Shah. The Union home minister also accused the KCR government of not reducing VAT on petrol as a result of which there has been a "spike in inflation in Telangana." Shah further alleged that KCR was not celebrating Telangana Liberation Day officially due to fear of Majlis (Muslim political party) and said that when the BJP comes to power in the state, it would organise it officially on September 17.





# GUJARAT: CONG DEMANDS DELETION OF 18-20 LAKH FAKE VOTERS FROM ELECTORAL LIST

Senior Congress leaders from Gujarat have alleged that there are at least 18 to 20 lakh duplicate voters found in the electoral list of the state.

**Gandhinagar** | Agencies  
Senior Congress leaders from Gujarat have alleged that there are at least 18 to 20 lakh duplicate voters found in the electoral list of the state.

These duplicate voters misuse the elections, they said.

Congress Legislative Party whip CJ Chavda addressing the mediapersons in Gandhinagar on Saturday cited few examples, "In Mehsana constituency alone there are 11,000 duplicate voters, in booth number one there are 22 duplicate voters, booth number 2 (15) and booth number 3 (30). In each constituency there are such duplicate voters."

Chavda added that it is not difficult



to identify duplicate voters.

"In one society or even in a house, how come such duplicate voters have not come to the notice of the Block Level Officer, who has to cover 250

voters' list and update the electoral list."

The Congress leader has alleged that if these duplicate voters are not removed from the voters list, it can

impact the outcome of the election results while citing 2017 Assembly election results.

He said that the Congress lost 20 seats with less than a margin of 1,000 votes and 35 to 40 seats with a margin of 1000 to 2000 votes during the 2017 state Assembly elections.

"If each constituency has 4,000 to 10,000 duplicate votes, just imagine how it impacts election results."

Chavda and other leaders sent a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer demanding that from August 21, electoral updation programme is taking place where the Election Commission should ensure that duplicate voters are deleted from the voters' list.

## Dravidar Kazhagam urges secular forces to take on the RSS in TN

**► DRAVIDAR KAZHAGAM (DK) PRESIDENT, K VEERAMANI SAID THAT THE SECULAR FORCES IN TAMIL NADU MUST UNITE TOGETHER AND PREVENT THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH (RSS) WHICH WAS TRYING TO GAIN A FOOHOLD IN THE STATE.**



**Chennai** | Agencies

Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) President, K. Veeramani said that the secular forces in Tamil Nadu must unite together and prevent the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which was trying to gain a foothold in the state.

He added that RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale in his recent visit to Chennai had spoken about liberating temples of the state from the Hindu Religious and Cultural Endowments Department and said that all secular forces must unite to prevent such moves by the RSS. Veeramani said that the Raj Bhavan in

Tamil Nadu was becoming a hub of a parallel government in Tamil Nadu and the Governor RN Ravi and state BJP President K. Annamalai were making unsubstantial allegations every day through the media.

The DK leader alleged that the BJP and RSS were trying to split the AIADMK into four factions and called upon all secular forces to be wary against the ulterior motives of the RSS.

He said that there were reports of the RSS holding 1,500 shakhas every day in Tamil Nadu and 400 meetings per month, adding that this was a matter of concern and the secular forces must rally together against such organisations.

## Shankersinh Vaghela launches party, will contest assembly polls

**Gandhinagar** | Agencies

Veteran politician and former Gujarat chief minister Shankersinh Vaghela on Sunday floated a new party, Praja Shakti Democratic Party. His party will contest the upcoming assembly elections in Gujarat.

Declaring his intent about his re-entry into electoral politics, Vaghela told the local media in Gandhinagar, "People are looking for BJP's alternative. For me doors of BJP, Congress and AAP are closed, so I decided to launch Praja Shakti Democratic



Party, the party was registered a year and half ago. Now we have a party."

Vaghela on his Facebook page has already made a plethora of promises to people of the state like - Rs 12 lakh health insurance protection for family earning Rs 12 lakh per annum, free education for children of such family till class XII, unemployment stipend for youth till they get employment,

exemption from water tax, free electricity up to 100 units of consumption, loan waiver for farmers, relief in electricity bills, new scientific liquor policy, etc. Vaghela had met BJP leader Subramanian Swamy and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal in Delhi on Saturday. He has requested them to extend support, if they feel Vaghela is doing the right thing by launching a regional party. In 2017 too, Vaghela had launched regional party Jan Vikalp and contested elections, but couldn't even get 1 per cent vote and neither win single seat in the state.

## ACT AGAINST CORRUPTION AT PANCHAYAT LEVEL: MAMATA TELLS DMS

**► DESPITE HIGH INTERNATIONAL PRICES, THE GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS AIDED BY INCREASED OIL SEEDS PRODUCTION HAS HELPED BRING DOWN EDIBLE OIL PRICES IN RECENT MONTHS, THE FOOD SECRETARY SAID ON THURSDAY.**

**Kolkata** | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday gave instructions to all district magistrates to act

strictly and on emergency basis on any complaint relating to the functioning of the three-tier panchayat system in the state.

In a communique to all the district magistrates, the chief minister has directed them to file FIRs against those found guilty of fund defalcation related to money allotted to the panchayat system under the different Central government schemes.

The polls for the three tiers of the panchayat system namely Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats are scheduled by the middle of the next year.

Sources said that the central teams during the course of survey detected massive irregularities in utilisation of funds under the centrally-sponsored schemes especial-

ly under the three centrally sponsored schemes namely the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). Thereafter, the Central government stopped further release of funds under the said schemes especially under MGNREGA and PMAY.

However, the opposition parties have ridiculed the chief minister's directive to the district magistrates on this count.

According to the BJP spokesman in West Bengal, "this is nothing but a political greasepaint attempt by the chief minister, understanding that the people of West Bengal have started showing revolts

against her as well as her party on different issues of corruption like teachers' recruitment irregularities and cattle smuggling scams."

"But such greasepaints cannot reform the internal corruption that had spread like termites within her own party," he said.

CPI-M central committee member Sujan Chakraborty questioned "why the chief minister felt the necessity to direct the district magistrates to make FIRs on proven cases of corruption in running the panchayat system after ruling the state for 11 years?"

"Was she not aware of such corruption before or is it just an eye-wash considering that she as well as her party are in a tight spot over various issues of corruption," he wondered.

## Mobile internet services suspended for 4 hours for Assam exam

**► MOBILE INTERNET SERVICES WERE SUSPENDED FOR FOUR HOURS ON SUNDAY IN 25 DISTRICTS OF ASSAM TO PREVENT CHEATING DURING RECRUITMENT EXAMS OF NEARLY 30,000 GRADE-III AND IV POSTS OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.**

**Guwahati** | Agencies

Mobile internet services were suspended for four hours on Sunday in 25 districts of Assam to prevent cheating during recruitment exams of nearly 30,000 Grade-III and IV posts of various government departments.

According to officials, besides the suspension of internet services, prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc were also been promulgated in and around the test centres, as



per government orders. The officials said that over 14.30 lakh candidates are expected to appear for nearly 30,000 Grade-III and IV posts, exam-

inations for which are being conducted by the Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA) on August 21, August 28, and September 11.

While the selection test for the Grade-IV posts were held in two shifts on Sunday, tests for Grade-III posts will be held on August 28, and September 11.

Senior officials said that besides state-owned BSNL, the private telecom service providers also temporarily suspended their mobile internet services from 10 am to 12 pm and from 2 pm to 4 pm.

Besides deploying huge contingent of security forces, the authorities had prohibited carrying of mobile phones (even in switched-off mode), electronic equipment or programmable devices or storage media devices such as smart watches, health bands, electronic pen, scanner, bluetooth devices, ear phones, microphones or any other devices either in working or switched off mode capable of being used as a communication device, calculator, pen drive etc., by the candidates.

## Did image makeover attempts hurt two ministers in Gujarat

**■ One of the main reasons for stripping two cabinet ministers of their portfolios just less than 100 days before the Assembly elections, is said to be their attempts to 'over market themselves instead of delivering.'**

**Gandhinagar** | Agencies

One of the main reasons for stripping two cabinet ministers of their portfolios just less than 100 days before the Assembly elections, is said to be their attempts to 'over market themselves instead of delivering.'

Recently, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel took away the revenue portfolio from Cabinet minister Rajendra Trivedi and the Roads and

Buildings ministry from Purnesh Modi.

Purnesh Modi subsequently updated his Twitter profile with remaining portfolios, but Trivedi is yet to do so.

Political analysts opine that attempts at image makeover or image building stunts by both the ministers have cost them heavily.

It is being said that two to three other ministers might have to pay for 'over marketing themselves instead of focusing on delivery'.

"It must have come to the notice of the BJP's central leadership that Trivedi and Modi were doing a lot of drama to showcase their work. It might have been unpalatable to someone in Delhi, who must have instructed state leaders for surgical operation," is the observation of political analyst Kanti Patel.

"The other reason behind the harsh action could be about fundraising. These ministers' activities could

have stalled projects of some interested parties, who may have been funding the party. Such parties having direct access to the Delhi corridor must have complained and so the ministers had to face ire," said Hari Desai, a political commentator.

Janak Purohit, a political analyst who has been closely following the party for more than three decades, sees two reasons for the action. "In the election year the Prime Minister must have planned to lay the foundation stone or dedicate various projects, Purnesh Modi must have failed to meet the targets, whereas Trivedi knowingly or unknowingly must have either stalled big projects citing rules or otherwise. This may have annoyed the central leadership."

All the three political analysts have doubts that before the election notification was out a few more ministers may have to face similar action.

## After Azad, Anand Sharma resigns from Himachal committee

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Upset for being ignored, Senior leader of the Congress, Anand Sharma has resigned from the Himachal Congress steering committee.

Sources close to Sharma said he has sent his letter to the Congress President after being sidelined from the working of the state Congress which goes to polls this year. Rajeev Shukla, the state in-charge for the Congress, has not commented on the issue, and Congress sources said they did not know about the development.

The resignation comes after Ghulam Nabi Azad put in his papers after being appointed as the J&K campaign committee head. Both the leaders are part of the G-23. Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Tuesday quit as the J&K campaign committee head after being named by the party. He has conveyed his decision to the party leadership, sources

close to him said. However, there has been no official word from either side.

Azad's resignation has come as a surprise to many in the party as it was considered that he was consulted while making key appointments and was active in the party forums. He even took part in the Congress 'Gaurav Yatra' and addressed a press conference when Sonia Gandhi was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate in the National Herald newspaper case. Azad has been upset since being ignored for the Rajya Sabha after he retired as the Leader of Opposition in the Upper House. Sharma too is one of the prominent leaders of the G-23 group, which has demanded sweeping reforms in the party.

The Congress President had on April 26 appointed Himachal Pradesh state Congress chief, CLP leader and Chairman of Campaign Committee. AICC had also announced eight other com-

mittees, including a Steering committee with Anand Sharma as Chairman and Asha Kumari as the convenor.

A brief note shared by sources close to Sharma's office said that the letter says, "The multiplicity of committees and overlapping of functions required clarity for functional purposes. I had requested GS (general secretary) organisation and AICC In-charge to clarify the mandate of the steering committee to delineate the mandate and role of the steering committee. Meetings of core group of HPCC and senior leaders on Election Strategy and Preparations have since been held both in Delhi and Shimla. On 20th June meetings of Senior leaders including PCC President, CLP leader and Chairman Campaign Committee and those of other committees were held for Election preparations." On 7th & 8th of August the In-charge and central AICC Observers visited Shimla.

## Eyeing 2024, small UP parties look around for 'big brother'

Smaller parties in Uttar Pradesh are now looking for the proverbial 'big brother', ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

**Lucknow** | Agencies

Smaller parties in Uttar Pradesh are now looking for the proverbial 'big brother', ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

With the Samajwadi-led alliance having almost crumbled, these parties want an option that will help them ride piggyback on to the centre stage of state politics.

The Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP), led by Om Prakash Rajbhar, had contested the 2022 Assembly election in alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP). The alliance snapped after the polls.

Rajbhar is now seen trying to mend fences with the BJP and he made a beginning by voting for the NDA candidate in the recent Presidential polls. However, the BJP does not seem too keen to take the SBSP back on board since Rajbhar is now perceived as an 'unreliable ally'.

Nevertheless, Rajbhar makes it a point to praise the Yogi Adityanath government from time to time. "If any party does something good, why should I not appreciate it? We are a political party and we take decisions that benefit the weaker sections of society," he said.

Rajbhar has also shown his keenness to ally with the BSP but Mayawati is apparently not

mood to have any truck with SBSP.

The Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party Lohia (PSPL), led by Shivpal Singh Yadav, meanwhile, has firmly severed its links with SP.

Relations between Akhilesh Yadav and his uncle Shivpal seem to have deteriorated to a point of no return and with Mulayam Singh Yadav almost out of active politics, there are very slim chances of any rapprochement between the uncle and nephew.

"I have been betrayed and have learnt my lesson after paying a heavy price. I will now focus all my energy in strengthening my party organisation before the Lok Sabha polls," said Shivpal.

Sources close to him said that he had been receiving feelers from the Congress and 'if the deal is respectable', PSPL may align with the Congress for Lok Sabha elections.

The problem with the Congress is that there is no one in the state to address the evolving political situation. The party remains headless even after six months of its poll debacle and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra remains inaccessible to leaders - both, outside and within her own party.

Shivpal Yadav, according to sources, is also toying with the idea of a broader front with senior SP leader Mohd Azam Khan leading it.

Azam Khan, sources say, is not too comfortable with the Akhilesh-led SP but he is also wary of burning bridges right now. "He will take a decision as the Lok Sabha elections draw closer," said a leader close to him. Two other former SP allies Mahan Dal and Janwadi Party (Socialist) are not exactly averse to returning to the SP fold after announcing their exit earlier this year.

Mahan Dal's chief Keshav Dev Maurya and Janwadi Party (Socialist) chief Sanjay Chauhan had parted ways with the SP even before the SBSP and PSPL. Both the parties have found no takers in the BJP. "We are small parties and we need a big political party as an ally to perform well in elections. The benefit in such a scenario is mutual," said a leader of a small party on condition of anonymity.

A SP leader said, "With Rajbhar and Shivpal out, these parties see more space to grow within the alliance. Among the alliance partners, Akhilesh visibly gave SBSP far more importance than it deserved." Udaiveer Singh, senior SP spokesman, said, "There are ways to discuss and sort out issues in an alliance. Constant bad-mouthing in public is detrimental to alliance spirit. We believe in upholding the alliance dharma."



# WE HAVE ONE CM AND ONE SUPER-CHIEF MINISTER: AADITYA THACKERAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

It took 41 days for the (two member Shinde-Fadnavis) government to undertake its first expansion Maharashtra now has a Chief Minister and a super-Chief Minister.

"They may make all attempts but they would not be able to save the government as it stands on the foundation of betrayal and is totally illegal from the Constitutional point of view," the former tourism, environment and protocol minister for the state said.

"It is for sure that this government will fall," Aaditya said in a reference to the bunch of petitions pending before the Supreme Court.

"See the condition of the government in Maharashtra...we have a Chief Minister (Shinde) and a super Chief Minister (Fadnavis)," he said on Fadnavis, the deputy chief minister, who holds over half a dozen portfolios.

"In fact, together they have kept most of the important portfolio it took 41 days for the (two member Shinde-Fadnavis) government to undertake its first expansion (during which 18 Cabinet ministers were sworn in) and then it took another



five days to get the portfolios allocated," said Aaditya.

"Look at the portfolios of the first batch of MLAs and ministers (who left with Shinde) what have they got what portfolios they had (in MVA government) and what they have got now (in new government) it's for all to understand look at their condition," he said amid thunderous

applause during the Shiv Samvad Yatra.

"This is a government which serves their own interests for (establishing) this (government), they had run away from Mumbai, go to Surat, Guwahati and then Goa they are cowards who stabbed us in our backs," said Aaditya. "Those who have run away will not

speak about burning issues like price rise, unemployment, and atrocities on women," he said.

Referring to Shinde's statement that 50 people (40 Shiv Sena MLAs and 10 Independent MLAs) have broken a Dahi Handi, Aaditya said that what they did was betrayal and nothing else. "Maharashtra had never liked such things," he said.

# Devendra Fadnavis flags off BMC poll campaign

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Devendra Fadnavis and Uddhav Thackeray took potshots at each other as the deputy chief minister on Saturday formally launched the BJP's campaign for the BMC election with the resolve of winning the mayoralty and fulfilling the dreams of the late Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray.

Lauding Mumbai BJP chief Ashish Shelar's role in the 2017 civic polls, Fadnavis said, "The BJP, which won a record 82 seats, could have won the mayoral election also. But we took two steps back for our ally [the Sena]."

He added that the 2022 election would be won by the BJP in alliance with the Eknath Shinde faction of the Sena, as the tie-up is based on the ideals of the Sena founder. "The alliance will make every effort to unfurl the saffron flag atop the BMC and end corruption in the civic body," he declared.

Boosting MLA Shelar, Fadnavis said the city BJP chief had been a cricketer and



Mumbai Cricket Association president. "You are going to win this match," he asserted. "We want to start a Mumbai Vikas League in the BMC."

Without naming the Uddhav-led Sena, Fadnavis said, "There may be road-blocks. You have developed several football grounds and if football comes in between you know how to kick it."

"Even I will go to Delhi whenever needed to get the Centre's approval for various projects," he said.

Later, Sena president Thackeray took a dig at Fadnavis, saying the BJP leader seeking votes in Balasaheb's name was an admission the Modi-era was over. By claiming that the BJP wants to win the BMC election to fulfil the dreams of the late Sena founder, Fadnavis had tacitly admitted that it would not be useful to seek votes in Modi's name, Thackeray said.

# Mentally challenged girls at care home excel in making Ganesh idols

Aurangabad | Agencies

Twelve mentally challenged girls and women living at a care home in Maharashtra's Osmanabad district have learnt the art of making beautiful Lord Ganesh idols which they intend to sell in the market for the upcoming Ganapati festival. This will definitely help improve their quality of life, an official from the zilla parishad said lauding the initiative taken by the 'Swadhar' care home, located in Alni village. Currently, the care centre has 110 girls and women, majority of them were brought in an ailing state and most of them were bed-ridden, the care home's head Shahaji Chavan told to a news agency. "They are orphans brought here from big cities like Pune and Mumbai. They are autistic and mentally challenged. They can't express their condition and 30 of them cannot even assess their urge to go to toilet," he said. But with time, they have started studying and 60 of them are now literate, he said.

"While trying to find out their area of interest and talent, we decided to engage them in different activities. We found 12 of them were good at moulding clay and mud and they started making the idols of Lord Ganesh,"



Chavan said. Working with mud, making body parts of an idol and attaching them properly are not easy tasks. But, these inmates are learning and they have now also started painting the idols on their own, he said. Two persons from the care centre work with the inmates and make them learn the art of making idols, he said. "We try to make around 400 idols every year, but only half of them reach the market," Chavan said. "Their idols are as beautiful as made by professional artists," he said. The care home is not only making these inmates learn art, but also helping them with different therapies to make them stand on their feet, he said. "This will surely help improve their quality of life," he added.

# 4 PERSONS RESCUED, 1 MISSING AS BOAT CAPSIZES OFF RATNAGIRI COAST;

Maharashtra | Agencies

Ratnagiri: A boat carrying five people capsized in the Arabian Sea in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district on Sunday, police said.

The police later rescued four people, while search was on for one missing person, an official said. The incident took place around 9.45 am off the Bhatye coast in Ratnagiri, located more than 300 km from Mumbai, he said.

Police received a distress call following which they rushed to the coast and started a rescue operation with the help of local disaster management authority, the official said. Four persons were rescued and efforts were on to trace one missing person, he added.

# 'Har Ghar Jal' campaign to reach over 1,500 Maharashtra villages

Maharashtra | Agencies

The department of water supply and sanitation has reached every household in 1,513 villages of the state as a part of the special campaign between July 25 and August 12. Dr Hrishikesh Yashod, Mission Director of Jal Jeevan Mission in Maharashtra said that the government is committed to supplying water to all rural households by 2024 and works are underway to provide tap drinking water through village-level water supply schemes. According to official data, tap connections were provided in 111 villages in Nashik district, 89 in Gadchiroli, 79 in Satara, 78 in Amravati, 76 in Chandrapur, 65 in Nagpur, 52 in Jalna, 42 in Aurangabad, and 17 in Palghar among other villages in Maharashtra. The department of water supply had set a target of providing at least 55 liters of quality-controlled and consistent water supply to every household in 1,553 vil-



lages, the official said as quoted website. These villages have been declared Har Ghar Jal-certified during special gram sabhas organized for the purpose. More than 52% of rural households get tap water. The Ministry of Jal Shakti on Friday said that Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) has achieved a new milestone by providing 10 crore rural households

with safe and clean drinking water through taps which contributes to over 52% of rural households with access to drinking through taps." Goa and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu became the first 'Har Ghar Jal' certified State and UT in the country respectively, where people in all villages confirmed availability of adequate, safe, and regular supply of water for all households in their villages, through Gram Sabhas," the ministry said. The relentless efforts of the Union and State governments have also resulted in ensuring the provision of tap water supply in 8.67 lakh (84.35%) schools and 8.96 lakh (80.34%) Anganwadi centers in the country.

In order to achieve long-term sustainability of the schemes, community participation has from the very beginning been at the heart of planning, implementation, operations, and maintenance of Rural Piped Water Supply schemes.

# Wildlife photographer to shoot Kanha tigers for debut directorial

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Priyanka Agarwal, a Mumbai-based photographer is busy in shooting at Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh, for her upcoming short film 'The Jungle Love Stories', which is about human-animal relationships.

Priya is excited to shoot real tigers for her directorial debut. She said: "Before wearing a director's hat, I was a photographer and enjoyed shooting still images of tigers. I'm looking forward to the challenge of shooting tigers in motion for a short film. It may seem difficult, but I'm excited about it."

Priya tells that the story of her upcoming short film is to create awareness about the importance of tigers and also highlight human-animal conflicts.

She continues: "We all are aware about the population of tigers which is decreasing with time. Government is taking best of measures to secure



them. I'm just trying to create awareness in my style. My film will not only just create awareness but will also explain how beautiful a bond we human share with those innocent animals."

The 36-year-old photographer also shared her interest in wildlife photography started.

She said: "As a kid I was very much interested in animals, having pets, helping strays and often visiting the zoo. When I grew up I started going for solo trips to jungles and wildlife sanctuaries. With a mobile I used to click different animals. And that use to get lots of appreciation that encouraged me to buy a professional camera and started clicking."

She added: "I wasn't professionally trained but now my pictures are used by magazines, school textbooks and in seminars. I have been into wildlife photography for a long time now. I have clicked tigers, leopards and a host of other wild animals."

# Rane apologises after aides mistreat villagers

Team Absolute | Maharashtra

Nilesh Rane visited Barsu village in Rajapur tehsil during the day to support an ongoing survey for the proposed oil refinery project in the area.

Maharashtra BJP leader and Union Minister Narayan Rane's son Nilesh Rane on Sunday apologised to people protesting against the proposed oil refinery in Ratnagiri for alleged mistreatment by his supporters.

Nilesh Rane visited Barsu village in Rajapur tehsil during the day to support an ongoing survey for the proposed oil refinery project in the area.

Ahead of the visit, villagers staged a protest against officials who came for the survey, while Rane's supporters gathered at the site and allegedly verbally abused the protestors, including women.

The BJP leader later apologised to the vil-



lagers for the misbehaviour of his supporters. Locals from Barsu and surrounding villages have been protesting against the \$60 billion project, which was earlier planned at Nanar village in the same district, but there was opposition from local groups and the Shiv Sena at the time.

# 23-YEAR-OLD ARRESTED IN DHARMAPURI BY MAHARASHTRA POLICE FOR MAOIST INVOLVEMENT

DHARMAPURI: A special team of Maharashtra police, with the help of A Pallipatti police, apprehended a 23-year-old man near Pappireddipatti in Dharmapuri for allegedly being involved with Maoists in terrorist activities under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act on Saturday.

According to police sources, Setta aka M Sinivasa Mulla Gevudu from Bangarapettai in Maharashtra, is a wanted criminal in Maharashtra, who was involved in many terrorist activities with the Maoists. Earlier this year, Dharmaraja Police in Maharashtra booked over 10 cases against the 23-year-old for supplying parts for bombs to Maoist outfits and he escaped from the area.

Earlier this month, a special team of police following his case received a tip-off that Setta was hiding in Tamil Nadu and after tracing his phone, they found that he was hiding in Pappambadi village. The special team immediately informed A Pallipatti police, who found him hiding in his relative's farm. The youth was immediately apprehended and detained. Later, the A Pallipatti police handed him over to the Maharashtra police, who will be transporting the 23-year-old to Maharashtra for further inquiry.

# Days after 'boycott' row, Hrithik in trouble again over Zomato's Mahakal ad

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan's recent online food delivery firm Zomato's advertisement sparked a religious controversy, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has accused the actor and the food delivery app for "misleading and cheating the people" through the advertisement.

CAIT has also written to Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to demand action against Hrithik and Zomato.

The actor is alleged to have hurt religious sentiments in the advertisement where he is seen saying that he felt like having a 'thali' in Ujjain and so he orders from Mahakal.

CAIT said in a statement: "The Prasad Thali of Mahakal is served free for centuries but within a specified place at the temple premises only. There is no question of giving Prasad Thali to anyone outside the temple."

The Mahakaleshwar or Mahakal temple of Shiva in Ujjain is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas and it attracts hundreds of thousands of devotees from across India. Earlier, the priests of the temple had said that Zomato should withdraw the advertisement immediately and tender an apology. Responding to the CAIT statement, Zomato said the ad, "which ran in certain pincodes of Ujjain referenced 'thalis' at 'Mahakal Restaurant', and not the revered Shree Mahakaleshwar Temple". Mahakal Restaurant, Zomato



pointed out, "is one of our high order-volume restaurant partners in Ujjain and the thali is a recommended item on its menu".

The company statement added: "The video is part of a pan-India campaign for which we identified top local restaurants and their top dishes based on popularity in each city.

"Mahakal Restaurant (simplified as 'Mahakal') was one of the restaurants chosen for the campaign in Ujjain.

"We deeply respect the sentiments of the people of Ujjain, and the ad in question is no longer running. We offer our sincerest apologies, for the intent here was never to hurt anyone's beliefs and sentiments."

In its statement, meanwhile, CAIT alleged that the incident shows "the manner in which companies backed by foreign direct investment (FDI) are making a mockery of law and the system".

Targeting Hrithik, CAIT National President B.C. Bhartiya and Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal pointed out that celebrities "take huge amounts of money and therefore become part of the sales force of the company".

They added: "They cannot deny their liability and therefore action should also be taken against Actor Hrithik Roshan who acted in the advertisement without verifying the content which shows that earning money is the sole criteria of brand ambassadors and celebrities." CAIT also demanded an investigation into the number of orders Zomato received after the release of the advertisement and from where the orders were fulfilled under the garb of Mahakal Prasad Thali. It is to be noted that the advertisement in question was shot long back, with the names and versions of the different eateries dubbed over the original by Zomato to increase the relatability of the food delivery app. This is the second instance where Hrithik has stepped on a minefield. Recently, Hrithik supported Aamir Khan's 'Laal Singh Chaddha' against the boycott trend on Twitter.



EDITOR'S SPECS

FREEBIES TO BE PRESCRIBED

While experts have acknowledged that a value judgement on what constitutes a welfare scheme or a freebie may not be possible, a suggestion that is being mooted is to fix a percentage of government spending or the GDP to put a ceiling on such schemes. The idea is to fix a ceiling on such kind of spending which requires providing subsidies for goods and services. Within this limit, state and Central governments can design and provide welfare schemes or freebies as they deem fit. This would require a proper audit of budgets and experts to certify the integrity of budget numbers but which schemes are providing goods and services below cost to the people will be left to the elected governments at the Centre and states. Experts say that deciding on what is a welfare scheme or a freebie cannot be a qualitative choice but only an economic cost calculation because welfare schemes cut across age groups and target constituencies. So to argue that free education or nutrition for children is a freebie as compared to subsidised rice or wheat for poor families is a difficult proposition. This approach recommends doing away with the classification of merit or non-merit subsidies. The constraint will be in the form of a FRBM Act of the budgets of Centre and states on how much they can spend under this head. Experts have pointed out that the Centre and states are both guilty as far as freebies are concerned. There is the need for institutional checks to ensure that populist spending does not run amok. The checks were there which have become ineffective over the years, experts contend. Economists say that a freebie should be decided on the basis of its economic cost. But the needs of populations differ across regions and geographies.

A LONELY PERIOD: CHHATTISGARH'S TRIBAL VILLAGES STILL ISOLATE MENSTRUATING WOMEN

Deepanwita Gita Niyogi

Sunita Purame (20) is a college-goer. Her life turns upside down for five days every month when she is not allowed to enter the kitchen or even fetch a pail of water as she is menstruating. She spends those nights on the floor of a hut, specifically made for isolating women on periods. If she does not feel well, she is confined to a room or the courtyard in her house, but that is a rare thing. If lucky, other menstruating girls would join Purame in this lonely, solitary hut and there is some company. In the newly created Mohla-Manpur-Chowki district of Chhattisgarh, the Gond tribals still follow menstrual isolation. Forget prohibition on cooking and entering kitchens, women are not even allowed to touch hand pumps. Water for drinking and bathing is fetched by family members. In many interior villages, girls skip schools and colleges and spend time away from their homes on those difficult days. In some families, women are not even allowed to take a bath. A few camps were organised by the government to bring about a change in attitude but they haven't been uniformly successful. However, social worker Harish Chhatraji said some behavioural changes were gradually creeping in. They now use sanitary pads and were willing to talk about periods, but not in front of men. Chhatraji is a resident of the adjoining Rajnandgaon district and works for non-profit Jan Kalyan Samajik Sansthan, which has 30 years of experience working with the Adivasis of Manpur on water-related issues. Clinging to outdated ideas Dhabba gram panchayat in Manpur has five villages under it. Here, Chhatraji has been educating



mostly Gonds residents on menstrual health and hygiene for the past six months. In Dhabba's Patelpara hamlet with a population of about 250, the topic cropped up at times during the meetings held at the Anganwadi centre manned by Lalita Tulabi. "I always urge women to maintain cleanliness during periods. 'Mitanins', who are female health workers, help me spread the word. We tell them not to practice isolation, but they do not listen. On my part, I also cannot say much, as I have to work in the village," said Tulabi, who also has not been allowed to touch hand pumps when she bled. "Even if the girls confide about the pain or other issues, it is only to their mothers. Most of them have been told not to eat sour food items, touch water sources and enter rooms and kitchens," Chhatraji said, while in the courtyard of a house where around 30 women had assembled for his educative session. Sukaro Ghaore, in her 60s, said women did not take bath for five days earlier, but they break the 'rules' nowadays. "Cooking is a definite no-no. If there is no one else to prepare food at home, women have to stay hungry," added Narmada Usare. Husbands have to take up the role sometimes, in the absence of women members. Sangeeta Yadav (30), a non-Adivasi woman, arrived in Patelpara after her marriage almost nine years ago. But like the tribal communities,



she also stays in isolation. "Rules have to be followed. When I bleed, my sister-in-law cooks for the family. I am confined to a room." Opting for sanitary pads Yadav said many girls nowadays know about pads and use them instead of cotton cloth pieces. Women who prefer the old ways, however, dry the cloth in a separate corner inside the house. "Cloth has to be washed properly and it is difficult to dry them in a household full of men," said Bhagyashree Yadav, a Class 11 student. According to Chhatraji, his organisation has been trying to inculcate behavioural changes a most difficult and time-consuming effort. "We have shown a couple of videos to school children in around five vil-

lages, including Belgaon village, about 18km from Dhabba. Anganwadi workers and mitanins promote the use of pads made by women's groups." A 2021-22 study by the Jan Kalyan Samajik Sansthan in 20 villages of Manpur with the help of mitanins has revealed that of the 3,504 teenagers, 1,387 used sanitary napkins and 2,117 used cloth. Admitting that period talk was still taboo, block coordinator for the mitanin programme, Admawati Vasnik said: "Cloth is definitely a good option, but many women use pieces of old jholas and jute sacks, which are very unhygienic. Also, they are not dried properly in sunlight." She was attending a meeting of mitanins in Kohka gram panchayat that has six villages under it. Vasnik said pads are distributed in vil-

lages occasionally. "Girls do not like washing cloth pieces. They are ready to shell out up to Rs 30 for a packet of sanitary napkin, but desist buying it from shops." Mitanins like Vasnik want to end the practice of isolation. "Even shelters made of dried leaves and twigs house menstruating women. But who pays heed?" she said worrying about the safety of women during these periods. An uneasy calm Most Adivasi girls now realise that menstrual taboo is a bane, but they dare not raise their voices. "The village is dominated by tribals, so what they want prevails," said Rashmi Katingal, who has finished college and is a friend of Purame's. Purame's mother Ankalo Bai explained why isolation was followed. "It has been in practice for generations and nobody wants to displease gods by breaking those rules. So, we send girls outside for a maximum of three to four days when they bleed. They take baths outside and spend nights on the bare floor." Manpur-based Anganwadi supervisor Bhubaneswari Yadav said a few awareness camps were organised in the area in 2019, but people reacted negatively. Chhatraji cited how a camp organised in Sitagaon village in Manpur went awry and people were very angry with the district administration. "After that, camps could not be organised. I try to talk to them during the Suposhan Abhiyan and other programmes held at Anganwadis, but they still carry on with age-old rules." "Women are not ready to change," Yadav vented her frustration. (The author is a Delhi-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters.)

international

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS IN UKRAINE HOSPITALISED WITH CHEMICAL POISONING

Moscow | Agencies Several Russian soldiers involved in the military operation in Ukraine have been hospitalized with severe chemical poisoning, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Saturday, media reported. Traces of Botulinum toxin Type B, which is an "organic poison of artificial origin," have been discovered in samples taken from the servicemen, the ministry said, accusing Kiev of "chemical terrorism", reported. The Russian troops were "hospitalized with signs of severe poisoning" after being stationed near the village of Vasilyevka in Zaporozhye Region on July



31, the statement said, reported. "The Zelensky regime has authorized terrorist attacks with the use of toxic substances against Russian personnel and civilians" following a string of military defeats in Donbass and other areas,

the ministry insisted. Moscow plans to send laboratory tests from the soldiers to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Botulinum toxin, often called the "miracle poison," is one of the most toxic biological substances known to science. Produced by the Clostridium botulinum bacteria, it blocks the release of the acetylcholine neurotransmitter, causing muscle paralysis. Botulinum toxin Type A has been used in medicine in small doses in recent decades, especially to treat disorders characterized by overactive muscle movement. It's also well known in cosmetology under its shortened name, Botox.

JAPAN WANTS MISSILES THAT CAN STRIKE CHINA

Tokyo: The Japanese government wants to extend the range of its Type 12 surface-to-ship missiles to at least 1,000km -- and modify them to be launched from vessels and aircraft and to strike ground targets -- in order to close the "missile gap" with China, local media reported. An improved ground-launched version of the missile is expected to enter service two years earlier than originally planned, sometime in 2024, Japanese newspaper reported on Sunday, citing several government officials. The newspaper claimed that Tokyo eventually wants "more than 1,000" such missiles deployed across the Nansei Islands. Last December, Japan's Self-Defence Forces (SDF) and the US military reportedly reached an agreement to establish an attack base on the Nansei Islands in the event of an "emergency", should conflict break out between Taiwan and Beijing reported. Tokyo officials cited by the country's Kyodo News at the time said that if enacted, the plan would see US Marines stationed on the Nansei Islands at a temporary attack base, with the SDF providing support in the form of extra troops if a military threat to Taiwan was imminent.

FIR LODGED AGAINST IMRAN KHAN

Islamabad | Agencies Former Pakistan Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan has been booked for openly hurling threats to senior most police officials, a female judge, the state institutions and bureaucracy during his public speech in Islamabad's F-9 park. Imran Khan has been booked under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) for challenging judicial and law enforcement authorities under offence, which falls under Sector 7 of the terrorism act. "The State of Pakistan has lodged the complaint against the former PM for his extreme step against the judiciary and law enforcers, creating hurdles in performing their duties," confirmed a source. During his public address in Islamabad rally, taken out to protest against arrest of his chief of staff Shahbaz Gill, Imran



Khan on Saturday night minced no words in giving out clear threats to police authorities, especially ID and DIG police, warning them of consequences over the alleged mistreatment of Shahbaz Gill.

BIDEN SAYS SLAVERY 'AMERICA'S ORIGINAL SIN'

Washington: Slavery is "America's original sin," U.S. President Joe Biden said in a statement. "More than 400 years ago, twenty enslaved Africans were forcibly brought to the shores of what would become the United States," Biden said in the statement on Saturday. "Millions more were stolen and sold in the centuries that followed, part of a system of slavery that is America's original sin." The White House issued the statement to recognise efforts to designate August 20 as Slavery Remembrance Day in the United States, Xinhua news agency reported. U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren and Congressman Al Green introduced a joint resolution last year to establish Slavery Remembrance Day. Though the Union victory freed millions of enslaved people across America, the negative legacy of slavery has continued to exist, including in the form of racism and discrimination, which remain severe today.

Pro-Russia authorities claim new Ukraine shelling at nuclear plant



Moscow | Agencies Russian-installed officials reported fresh shelling near the occupied Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine. Critical safety and control systems were not damaged, said the Russian military administration late Saturday evening in the city of Enerhodar, where Europe's largest nuclear power plant is located, dpa news agency reported. The NATO-supplied munitions were fired from the opposite bank of the Dnipro river and hit the site

LEGAL PUNDITS DIFFER ON FBI RAID ON TRUMP

Washington: The FBI raid on former US President Donald Trump's Florida residence leading to "seizure of classified documents" and the earlier investigation into former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's private emails containing official information are entirely two different issues with no comparison to each other, legal pundits offer different opinions. When the FBI executed a search warrant at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate last week, federal authorities recovered 11 sets of documents marked as confidential or secret, according to the property receipt from the search. While questions focussing on the investigation remain unanswered -- specifically whether Trump himself was the target of the probe -- legal pundits across the political spectrum were quick to highlight similarities, and differences, between the search of the former president's home and the FBI's investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails, media reports say.

Pakistan, India can't afford another war: Shehbaz Sharif

Islamabad | Agencies Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated his country's strong resolve to maintain peace in the region, but added that sustainable peace in South Asia was linked to the resolution of Jammu and Kashmir issue in line with the UN resolutions and the wishes of Kashmiris, and nothing short of it would work. "We want permanent peace with India through dialogue as war is not an option for either of the countries," The News quoted the premier as saying said while speaking to a group of students from the Harvard University. Sharif pointed out that Islamabad and New Delhi should have competition in trade, economy and improving the conditions of their people. Pakistan was not an aggressor, but its nuclear assets and the professionally trained army are deterrent, he said, adding: "We spend on our military to protect our frontiers and not for aggression." The News



reported. The delegation consisted of students from diverse origins and academic backgrounds. The Prime Minister welcomed students and held a candid discussion about contemporary challenges Pakistan was facing today. In response to a ques-

ANTI-TALIBAN PROTESTS ERUPT IN PAKISTAN BORDER AREAS

Islamabad: Protests against the strengthening of the Taliban erupted in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The protesters on Friday called on the Islamabad government to take stronger action against attempts by the Taliban who control Afghanistan to seize Pakistan's North Waziristan region, reports news agency. A Taliban spokesman called the protests "sabotage" and "financed by the West". Protesters blocked a main road connecting the region to the rest of the country, according to local police. They raised black flags against the Taliban on their rooftops. Protests have already taken place in the Swat region, near North Waziristan. Swat is home to Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, who narrowly survived an assassination attempt by the Taliban in 2012 after campaigning for education for women and girls.



# HOME MINISTER ASKS POLICE TO LOOK INTO ZOMATO ADVT

► PRIMA FACIE, THE ADVERTISEMENT VIDEO BEING CIRCULATED ON SOCIAL MEDIA SEEMS MORPHED, MISHRA TOLD REPORTERS HERE ON SUNDAY.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A day after priests of the Mahakaleshwar temple objected to online food delivery firm Zomato's advertisement featuring Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan, state Home Minister Narottam Mishra said he has directed police to look into the matter.

Prima facie, the advertisement video being circulated on social media seems morphed, Mishra told reporters here on Sunday.

Two priests of the famous temple had on Saturday demanded that Zomato withdraw the advertisement, claiming that it offends Hindu sentiments.

In the advertisement, Roshan says he felt like having a "thali" (food platter) in Ujjain so he ordered it from "Mahakal."



To a query, Mishra said, "Prima facie, the advertisement video being circulated on social media seems morphed. I have told Ujjain's Superintendent of Police to look into the reality of the video and report to me so that action can be initiated against the guilty."

The temple priests, Mahesh and Ashish, had said Zomato should withdraw the advertisement immediately and tender an apology.

Devotees are served 'prasad' on a thali and the advertisement hurts the feelings of Hindus, they claimed.

The priests said they had also approached Ujjain Collector Ashish Singh, who is the chairman of the Mahakal temple trust, and sought action against the company so that no one mocks the Hindu religion again.

Collector Singh on Saturday termed the advertisement as "misleading", saying the temple offers free meals as 'prasad' and it is not sold.

The Mahakaleshwar or Mahakal temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is one of the 12 'Jyotirlingas' in the country and attracts a large number of devotees.

# 'Was referring to Mahakal restaurant;' Zomato on controversial ad featuring Hrithik

■ An advertisement of online food delivery firm Zomato, featuring Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan, landed into a controversy due to the mention of 'Mahakal Thali.'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

An advertisement of online food delivery firm Zomato, featuring Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan, landed into a controversy due to the mention of 'Mahakal Thali.'

Responding to the controversy, Zomato said that the advertisement referenced 'thalis' at 'Mahakal Restaurant', and not Shree Mahakaleshwar Temple.

The advertisement did not go down well with priests of Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar temple (also referred as Mahakal temple) and they objected to it, arguing that the advertise-



ment hurts the Hindu sentiments. The Mahakal temple priests brought it to the state government's notice and sought withdrawal of the advertisement. They have also approached Ujjain Collector Ashish Singh, who is the chairman of the Mahakal temple trust, and sought action against the firm so that "no one mock the Hindu religion again", sources told IANS on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Sunday wrote to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and demanded action against the

temple is one of the 12 jyotirlingas and everyday thousands devotees are served free (prasad) food in the temple. The ad in question has attempted to monetise and capitalise the temple's prasad for a self-gain motive which can not be accepted and therefore immediate action is needed from the government and the concerned authorities."

Meanwhile, Zomato in its official statement said that "the advertisement that ran in certain pincodes of Ujjain referenced thalis at Mahakal Restaurant and not the Mahakaleshwar Temple. Mahakal Restaurant is one of our high order-volume restaurant partners in Ujjain, and thali is a recommended item on its menu." It further said that the video is part of a pan-India campaign for which Zomato has identified top local restaurants and their top dishes based on popularity in each city. Mahakal Restaurant (simplified as 'Mahakal') was one of the restaurants chosen for the campaign in Ujjain.

# Shah to chair Central Zonal Council meet in Bhopal on Aug 22

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair a Central Zonal Council meeting here on Monday wherein several key issues will be discussed, officials said on

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair a Central Zonal Council meeting here on Monday wherein several key issues will be discussed, officials said on Sunday.

He is expected to arrive in Bhopal's Raja Bhoj airport at around 11 p.m. on Sunday night. The BJP's Madhya Pradesh unit president along with other party leaders would receive him.

On Monday, Shah will chair a Central Zonal Council meeting in which issues such as connectivity, power, sharing of river water and other matters of common interests will be discussed, officials told IANS.

The Central Zonal Council comprises Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The meeting will be attended by the chief ministers, ministers, chief secretaries, principal secretaries and senior officials of the member states and the Central government, a Home Ministry official said.

As per the established procedure and practice, the zonal council meeting is preceded by a stand-



ing committee of the council in which the agenda items to be placed before the council are scrutinised and prioritised.

The Narendra Modi-led Central government has been regularly holding meetings of the zonal councils as a part of its overall strategy to strengthen and

promote cooperative and competitive federalism in the country, an official said.

The regional councils provide a forum for discussion in a structured manner on issues affecting one or more states or issues between the Centre and the states.

Regional councils help in developing a coordinated approach through discussion and exchange of views between states on important issues of social and economic development.

The meetings of the zonal councils are used by the states and union territories to share their best practices. The councils also discuss a broad range of issues which include boundary-related disputes, security, infrastructure-related matters like road, transport, industries, water, and power, matters pertaining to forests and environment, housing, education, food security, tourism and transport, etc. There are five zonal councils in the country.

The Union Home Minister is the chairman of each of these zonal councils and the chief ministers of the host state (to be chosen by rotation every year) is the vice-chairman.

Two more ministers from each state are nominated as members by the governor.

# Chief Minister plants saplings in Smart City Garden

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Banyan, Harsingar and Cassia saplings in the Smart City Garden at Shyamla Hills. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Rahul Kothari planted saplings on his birth birthday. Members of Bhopal's social organisation Swarnkar Samaj Kalyan Samiti also planted saplings.

The banyan planted today has religious and medicinal importance. According to Ayurveda, the treatment of many diseases is possible with the help of banyan leaves, bark etc. Consumption of its decoction boosts the immunity. Harsingar is an excellent medicinal plant. According to medical experts, it is used in



the treatment of many diseases. Cassia is also called wild cinnamon in India. The

bark and leaves of Cassia javanica are used in making Ayurvedic medicines.

# BJP minister raises questions on Kamal Nath's leadership

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Senior BJP leader and Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra, raising questions on the leadership of state Congress chief Kamal Nath, said that 54 MLAs have turned rebellion since Nath took the charge.

The BJP leader took a dig on veteran Congress leader saying "his (Nath) all films are flop, then why people watch his film's trailer".

Mishra made the remarks while reacting to Nath's statement after winning five mayoral posts recently that "this was just a trailer, the original film would be released after 2023 assembly elections".



"People of Madhya Pradesh are now fed up with BJP's fake propagandas and have decided to bring the Congress back into power," Nath had said. After receiving success in recent urban and rural panchayat polls, Nath had said that "it was just a trailer, the original film would come in 2023". The Congress leader reiterated the same on Saturday during a conclave organised by a national news channel in Bhopal.

Responding to Nath's assertion, the state Home Minister said, "At least 14 Congress MLAs have cross-voted in the presidential elections. Many MLAs are still in line to join the BJP. So far, a total 54 Congress MLAs have become rebels and Kamal Nath says he will release the real film in 2023." "Kamal Nath has already announced that after 2023 assembly polls, he will shift to Delhi," Mishra added.

The BJP leader also attacked Congress Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, saying both (Nath and Singh) the Congress leaders have become old now.

Meanwhile, the Home Minister also accused former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Nath of horse trading in the state.

# PRANPUR IN MP EMERGES AS MODEL RURAL TOURISM HUB

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Many areas of Madhya Pradesh are rich in art and culture but they have not been duly recognised. However, Pranpur in Ashoknagar district is a village which has become an example of rural tourism as its art and culture is reaching different parts of the country and the world, effecting a big change in the lives of the people there.

Situated on the road going from Lalitpur to Chanderi, Pranpur is surrounded by beautiful valleys. Apart from the people who are well versed in the art of handloom and clay, the locals who make stone carvings also fascinate the outsiders here. Despite all this, this village came to the fore only in 2005, after it was made a part of the tourism project and the Amraee Rural Heritage Resort was built near here.

There is an interesting story of Pranpur taking shape as a rural tourism hub. Anand Upadhyay of Bird Volunteer Organisation says that he was engaged in the campaign to strengthen self help groups for women empowerment in Guna district around 2002. During this, the tourism proj-

ect came to the fore, the purpose of this project was to contribute to rural livelihoods along with preserving rural handicrafts, ancient culture and historical heritage. A proposal was made and sent to the central government, which was approved. Pranpur is a village where stone carving is the expertise of the people here. Apart from this, pottery and toys, metal crafts and wooden art are the means of livelihood for the people. There is also a large number of weavers here, besides music experts.

Pranpur is an apt village for this project of the Central Government's Tourism Department. The plan of a resort was implemented so that the people come here and after their stay, they get acquainted with the art. Five acres of land was found near the village and mango trees were planted there. Rai dance is the folk dance here. After combining the two of them, the name 'Amraee' was coined for the Amraee Rural Heritage Resort. In this resort, local artisans have made stone rooms in which tourists from far and wide stay. When this was built, attention was paid to providing employment to the local artisans. There was also an emphasis on not cutting

a single tree, so it was built at a place which was lying vacant.

Now this resort is run by the tourism development committee of the village. A local resident Hemant Jain explains that tourists from different parts of the country and the world, as well as children and groups who need to study, come here because it is difficult to find such a serene and picturesque view anywhere else.

On the one hand, while a relaxing place for tourists has been developed, on the other hand local people have also got employment as apparel like chanderi saris, suits and other hand-made household items and furnishings are sold here. The picture of Pranpur village has changed a lot because the handicraft veterans here have got a new identity apart from an increase in their business. Along with this, tourists also buy herbs from here. Overall, an effort has been made to give Pranpur a new identity, and that too in rural tourism. The distance of Pranpur village from Bhopal, Gwalior and Khajuraho is about 230 km. The tourists coming here can easily visit many places, and can have a good time while keeping away from a hectic life.

# BJP, Cong begin strengthening local units to prepare for 2023 assembly polls

With around 15 months left for the Assembly elections, the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress have geared up to strengthen their district and block level party cadres.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With around 15 months left for the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress have geared up to strengthen their district and block level party cadres.

This week, both the national parties will hold meetings of their district level leaders and workers. While the BJP has decided to hold a three-day (August 24 to 26) training session at Hill station Pachmarhi, the Congress has called its district level party workers and their in-charges at party headquarters on August 25.

Sources told IANS that after the loss of nine mayoral posts in the recently concluded municipal elections, the state BJP leadership has decided to take its cadre out of Bhopal for a training session. During the session, district presidents and the leaders who were

in-charges of a particular district, will submit their reports with reasons for loss in the elections.

Sources also said that after the local body elections, the BJP's local workers have expressed their disappointment and alleged that the district in-charges and district presidents did not pay any heed to the grievances of the local workers. Many workers had approached party president VD Sharma in Bhopal and demanded an immediate action in the matter.

After the results of local body polls were announced last month, the state BJP leadership did celebrate its victory with full enthusiasm, but the loss in nine mayoral posts out of 16, including Gwalior, Morena and Rewa have alarmed the leadership.

It is pertinent to mention that BJP has sent two party leaders (Narendra Singh Tomar and Jyotiradiya Scindia) from Gwalior-Chambal region to the



Union Cabinet and has as many as nine ministers from the same regions in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinet. Despite this, the saffron party lost both Gwalior and Morena mayoral seats.

Similarly, in Rewa district, where the BJP has eight MLAs and also an MP, the party lost the mayoral post after 25 years. Sources said that the local party workers have expressed their disappointment, which is worrying the state leadership now. And this is the reason the party has decided to take all the district presidents and in-charges to Pachmarhi for a training session.

During a party meeting earlier, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and party's state chief VD Sharma had asked the MLAs and other leaders, who are in-charges of districts, to submit their progress reports by August 24. In the meeting, which was attended by all the BJP MLAs and ministers, Chouhan had said that those betrayed will be

punished.

"The party leadership is upset with those leaders and workers who betrayed during the local body elections and caused loss of BJP's candidates. Many who were upset due to ticket distribution, either had contested the elections independently or had supported the opposition. The party has prepared a list of such leaders and workers and they would be exposed during the training session in Pachmarhi," said a BJP spokesperson in condition of anonymity.

The Congress has asked its district presidents and district in-charges to be present in the meeting on August 25. Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) president Kamal Nath will chair the meeting at the party headquarters and they will be instructed to strengthen the party at the booth level.

"During the meeting, district presidents and in-charges will submit their



# 'Top Gun: Maverick', 6th top-grossing film in US

Los Angeles | Agencies

The action drama film "Top Gun: Maverick", piloted by Tom Cruise, seems to be cruising at a speed nobody can match up to. The film has flown past 'Avengers: Infinity War' as it has overtaken its collection of \$678 million collecting \$679 million in North America, reports a website. With this, the sequel to the 1986 film has become the sixth-highest grossing movie in US domestic box office history. According to website, it's an especially impressive benchmark because 2018's every-hero-but-the-kitchen-sink adventure 'Avengers: Infinity War' had a little help in building up anticipation.

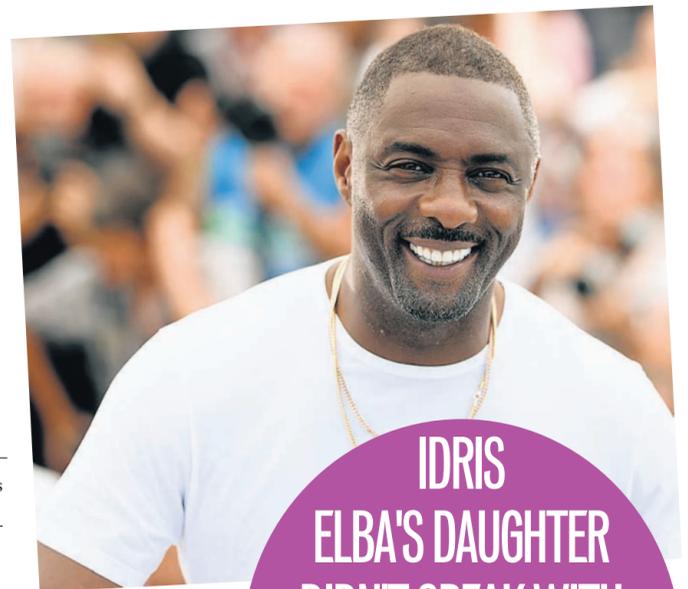
It served as part one (2019's 'Endgame' was part two) of Marvel's epic culmination of more than 20 movies -- most of which were box office juggernauts in their own right -- over 10 years.

Sure, 'Maverick' had Tom Cruise, a box office hero in his own right. But moviegoers hadn't felt the need for speed in more than 30 years; the sequel was far from a guaranteed hit. But, Tom Cruise has proven why he is one of the biggest movie stars on the planet. Thanks to stellar word-of-mouth and repeat customers, 'Maverick' continues to defy the odds. "Top Gun 2" is likely to continue selling tickets because the film does not have a ton of competition on the horizon.

website further states that it'll be fairly desolate at the box office until November, when 'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever' opens in theatres.

Internationally, 'Top Gun: Maverick' has generated more than \$700 million -- and that's without playing in China or Russia, two major overseas markets.

Outside of North America, top-earning territories include the United Kingdom (\$95 million), Japan (\$82 million), Korea (\$62 million), Australia (\$60 million) and France (\$52.8 million). Globally, it's the 13th-highest grossing movie ever with \$1.379 billion to date.



**IDRIS ELBA'S DAUGHTER DIDN'T SPEAK WITH HIM AFTER GETTING REJECTED FOR 'BEAST'**

Los Angeles | Agencies

English actor-producer Idris Elba lived through the tense environment after his daughter Isan didn't land a role in his latest movie 'Beast' for lack of chemistry on camera, reports a website. "Interestingly enough, my daughter auditioned for this role," Elba said on The Breakfast Club. "She wants to be an actress and she auditioned and it came down to chemistry in the end. The relationship in the film and the relationship between my daughter was, the chemistry wasn't right for film, weirdly enough."

After not getting the part, Elba said his daughter didn't talk to him "for about three weeks." According to Deadline, it was producer Will Packer who had to give Isan the news that she wouldn't be acting with her father as he sees her as his "little niece". Packer gave props to Elba for not going the route of nepotism and asking producers to put his daughter "through the ropes" in the audition process.

"He auditioned with her (and) he was very tough on her," Packer added. "(Elba) said, 'Listen, at the end of the day we're going to make the best decision for the movie. I trust you, Will, trust the director,' and she was very good, very close."

Packer noted that "some of the nuances of that real-life relationship sometimes don't translate on screen." Elba also gave props to his daughter for being "very gracious" about the process and for accompanying him to the film's premiere. Packer is hopeful that everyone will "definitely be seeing" Isan in a film soon.

# 'PREDATOR 2' ACTOR GARY BUSEY CHARGED WITH 'CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONTACT'

Hollywood actor Gary Busey, who is known for his work in 'A Star Is Born' and 'Predator 2', is facing four charges, including two counts of criminal sexual contact in the fourth degree, by the police department of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, reports website.

The actor was visiting the town during the weekend of August 12 to August 14 to attend the Monster-Mania Convention at a Hotel. According to website, during the time of the convention, Cherry Hill police responded to a report of a sex offense at a hotel.

After investigating the incident, detectives charged the 78-year-old actor on four offenses: two counts of criminal sexual contact in the fourth degree, one count of attempting criminal sexual contact in the fourth degree and one disorderly conduct count of harassment.

The Cherry Hill Police Department has declined to provide further details regarding the incident at this time.

The website adds that Busey was booked as a guest for Monster-Mania, a horror-themed, fan-fueled event that runs out of Cherry Hill semi-annually. The actor corresponded with attendees throughout the weekend, appearing in several photographs shared by fans on social media. According to the convention's resources, the actor was listed as an attendee of the Autograph Room, along with other actors such as Ralph Macchio, Tom Skerritt and Veronica Cartwright. Busey has appeared at Monster-Mania in prior editions of the convention.

It remains unclear whether Busey, a legal resident of Malibu, California, remains in New Jersey a week after the convention.



# Casey Affleck misses 'Bennifer' wedding bash, citing 'parental obligations'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ben Affleck's actor brother Casey, who played Matthew McConaughey's son in 'Interstellar', missed his brother's big wedding celebration weekend in Georgia, reports magazine. Casey couldn't attend the ceremony "unfortunately because of family, parental obligations at home", a source told. Casey was previously spotted stepping out with girlfriend Caylee Cowan after a visit to Affleck family favourite doughnut outlet in Los Angeles. According to People, the younger Affleck was photographed again Saturday in Los Angeles. He shares sons Indiana and Atticus with ex-wife Summer Phoenix. People adds that Saturday's ceremony (Pacific Standard Time) was still full of love with such stars in attendance as Ben's pal Matt Damon and wife Luciana Barroso, Clerks auteur Kevin Smith and wife Jennifer, as well as Clerks star Jason Mewes and wife Jordan Monsanto. According to the source, Lopez had earlier mentioned that she was "ecstatic" about the celebration plans, and their "kids will be part of the celebrations too. It will be a beautiful weekend." After they originally dated from 2002 to 2004, Affleck and Lopez rekindled their romance last year and announced their engagement in April. The couple tied the knot at A Little White Wedding Chapel in Vegas during intimate midnight nuptials last month. A source told website, "The Las Vegas ceremony was perfect. They both loved it. It was private and low-key. That's all they asked for."



# Romola Garai on playing 'Blood Mary' in historical drama

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-film director Romola Garai, who plays Mary Tudor, Queen of England and Ireland (July 1553 to November 1558) also known as 'Blood Mary', delved into the tragedy of her complex character in the historical drama 'Becoming Elizabeth'. The series features Alicia Von Rittberg as Queen Elizabeth I.

Talking about Mary I, Romola said: "She was forced into being a mix of different things by circumstances. She was very religious, obviously, but she was an intelligent, sophisticated, sensitive, admirable woman.

She could be really good fun." Romola continued: "People often spoke about her being funny and clever, but she was forced into this horrific situation where her mother was cast out by her father, King Henry VIII, when he met Anne Boleyn, his eventual second wife, and was excommunicated. Mary was whisked away from her mother, with whom she had a very close relationship, at the age of 12, and she never saw her again." Romola has been part of TV series such as 'Emma', British-American biographical drama film 'Amazing Grace' and TV serial 'The Crimson Petal and the White'. 'Becoming Elizabeth' portrays the

struggle of Elizabeth before she ascended the throne of England. Elaborating on her character, Romola added: "She basically spent the rest of her life being either terrorized or having to constantly flatter her father, who was an abusive man, and constantly in fear for her life. That somewhat affects your personality, and so she could also be paranoid and highly strung." She had a propensity towards violence in an effort to retain control of situations, and that paranoia and fear came through later in her life. "Held by Anya Reiss, the series is set to make its Indian debut on August 26 on Lionsgate Play.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Sophie Hermann

# Tasha Ghouri and Andrew Le Page enjoy's double date

Los Angeles | Agencies

Model Tasha, put on a leggy display in a pair of distressed denim shorts as she cosied up to her boyfriend, who wore a grey top and navy trousers. The gang appeared to be in high spirits at a box in Tottenham Hotspur FC's London stadium, as the team won 1-0 against Wolverhampton Wanderers FC. Gemma, cut a chic figure in ripped jeans and a black vest top which she layered beneath a cream jacket as Luca, sported a stone bomber jacket. The fishmonger also cut a white top and black joggers, while framing his face with round sunglasses, as he posed for a selfie with the group. Andrew posted the snap to Instagram along with the caption, 'The double date you all wanted,'

which was soon re-shared by the others. Only the night before, Gemma and Luca - who are yet to make things official - looked as smitten as ever as they arrived at Camden's Azura hand-in-hand alongside their fellow islanders. Tasha and Andrew packed on the PDA as they followed closely behind. It comes after Gemma revealed Luca got her football father Michael's blessing and that first meeting in Portugal 'couldn't have gone better.' Speaking on Wednesday morning's Capital Breakfast show, the international dressage rider explained how the duo got on like a house on fire during a recent family holiday in Portugal and the couples now plan on moving in together. Speaking to show hosts Rob Howard and Lauren Layfield, Gemma updated listeners on how their recent trip went. She

gushed: 'It couldn't have gone better, it was so nice! We got away for four days, it was a bit of like, got a bit of content, bit of chill time but yeah it was a really nice environment for him to meet everyone. They all get on really well and how he was with my brothers and sisters as well, like, so cute!' she said. However, the couple - who came second in this season's Love Island are yet to make things official. While Gemma had been adamant in the villa she needed her family's approval before moving on with the fishmonger - she admitted she's 'still waiting' for them to be boyfriend and girlfriend. The swimwear designer said: 'I mean I know I said in the villa let's wait till we get out, want you to meet the family, let's not rush it, but now I'm like, okay...'





## GOVERNANCE ISSUE RESOLVED, DECKS CLEARED FOR 2023 HOCKEY WORLD CUP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A positive response from the International Hockey Federation (FIH) to the draft Constitution for Hockey India and an election timeline has lifted the storm clouds and cleared the decks for the Men's FIH Hockey World Cup, which is scheduled to be held in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela in January 2023.

Hockey India was, just like the All India Football Federation (AIFF), facing the threat of suspension from FIH for alleged third-party intervention in the governance of the sport in the country.

While the AIFF has been suspended by FIFA, putting the U-17 Women's World Cup scheduled to be held in India in October in a limbo, Hockey India survived the threat as the FIH delegation accepted the principal changes in the draft



Constitution, gave the Committee of Administrators (CoA) 10 days to submit the approved Constitution,

and set a deadline of October 28 to complete the election process. Even while the Indian men's and

women's hockey teams were fighting for medals at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham few days back, many Indian fans were worried over the future of the teams, considering the governance mess in the sport in the country. The sport's administration has been in turmoil since May this year when the Delhi High Court appointed a three-member Committee of Administrators (CoA) to govern Hockey India, realign the organisation's Constitution with the National Sports Code, adopt the new Constitution, and conduct elections for the new governing body.

The CoA was appointed as the federation was judged to be in violation of the National Sports Code after the high court ruled as illegal the life membership with voting rights bestowed upon former FIH President Narinder Batra and Hockey India CEO Elina Norman.

Champions Chess Tour:

## Contrasting fortunes lead Pragg, Carlsen to final day

Miami | Agencies

India's Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa fought back from a deficit and took his sixth round match to the blitz tiebreaks but could not get the better of World Cup winner Jan-Krzysztof Duda of Poland in the FTX Crypto Cup, the second major event of Champions Chess Tour.

Norway's world champion Magnus Carlsen too had to fight all the way to the wire but managed to beat Alireza Firouzja in the tiebreaks. Their contrasting fortunes fetched Carlsen two points while Pragg bagged one, thus leaving them neck-and-neck, the Norwegian in the lead with 15 points and the Indian student in second position with 13. For losing to Carlsen in tiebreak, Firouzja got one point and was placed a close third with 12 points.

Carlsen is the strong favourite after overcoming a fierce challenge from the exciting Iranian-French teenager Alireza Firouzja, 19, in the sixth round. Firouzja took the world championship to tiebreaks but Carlsen won in the end to finish off the youngster's lingering hopes of cracking into the top two on



Sunday. Meanwhile, Carlsen's biggest rival Pragg was forced to battle back to take his match with the dangerous Pole Jan-Krzysztof Duda to tiebreaks. In a chaotic blitz play-off, the youngster from Chennai blundered badly and lost. But it didn't matter too much as the point gained from getting to that stage was enough to keep Pragg in contention for the title. Carlsen, however, is now two points ahead of his Indian rival and knows if he reaches the tiebreaks in the seventh and final round on Sunday he'll win the FTX trophy. That would take Carlsen to 16 points and beyond the reach of both Pragg and Firouzja, who can at best reach 15 points.

## Tsitsipas overcomes Medvedev to clinch spot in Cincinnati final

Cincinnati | Agencies

Stefanos Tsitsipas will face a rejuvenated Borna Coric in the Western & Southern Open final after the Greek defeated top seed Daniil Medvedev in the semifinals.

Medvedev boasted a 7-2 head-to-head record against world number seven Tsitsipas heading into the clash but the Greek got the edge with a 7-6 (8-6), 3-6, 6-3 win in two hours and 23 minutes, DPA reports. Tsitsipas' net play was a feature in the victory, winning 27 of 36 points at the net, while he won 82 per cent of his first serve points. He hit 33-28 winners while Medvedev gave up 35-27 unforced errors with the Russian also having 11 double faults, including a key break in the third set. The triumph on Saturday evening means Tsitsipas progresses to the final in Cincinnati for the first time, having lost in the semifinals in both 2020 and 2021. Medvedev had won the opening game of the match but Tsitsipas responded to square it up at 3-3, before surviving a set point to the Russian to clinch the tie-break with his first opportunity. The Russian claimed control back in the second frame, racing to a 5-0 lead aided by a run of double faults from Tsitsipas before he rallied



back to 5-3 with Medvedev down 0-40 on serve as both players endured periods of lost focus. But the world number one held his nerve to close out the second set to level up the match, although he had clearly lost some momentum. Fireworks interrupted the third set, which appeared to impact Medvedev more than Tsitsipas, with the Russian dishing up some costly double faults, including one to gift the Greek a 4-2 lead. Tsitsipas capitalized to close out the win. Coric had already secured his spot in the decider, marking his second Masters final of his career, with a strong 6-3, 6-4 win over ninth seed Cameron Norrie.

## Durand Cup 2022 ATK MOHUN BAGAN LOSE 2-3 TO RAJASTHAN UNITED

Kolkata | Agencies

ATK Mohun Bagan went down 2-3 to Rajasthan United in dramatic fashion in a Durand Cup 2022 match at the Salt Lake stadium, here on Saturday.

Kiyan Nassiri had fired his team in front in the 43rd minute only to see Rajasthan equalise in first-half stoppage time through Bektur Amangeldiev. New signing Ashique Kuruniyan then fired ATK Mohun Bagan back in front in the 46th minute but saw the lead wiped out again through Lalremsanga in the 61st minute. Rajasthan then struck in the sixth minute of stoppage time as Gyamar Nikum silenced the stadium with a game-clinching goal.

ATK Mohun Bagan, playing their first game of the season, got off to a flying start with chances aplenty in the opening exchanges. The biggest opportunity fell to Liston Colaco, who was played in on goal in the 11th minute by Joni Kauko, but he



fired wide of the target. Colaco then saw his free-kick tipped over the bar twenty minutes later as ATK Mohun Bagan continued to threaten. Nassiri then broke the Rajasthan resistance as he finished off a fine cross from Ashique Kuruniyan two minutes from the interval.

However, at the other end, Amangeldiev scored an almost identical goal to put the I-League side back on level terms going into the break. Ashique, who had a good first half in green and maroon, made a dream start to the second as he scored from a Hugo Boumous pass to put ATK Mohun Bagan in

Juan Ferrando's men remained on the front foot as Nassiri was denied by a good save by the goalkeeper. But on the hour mark, Amangeldiev turned provider as Lalremsanga equalised for Rajasthan to finish off a good move.

The Mariners are now back in action in an all-ISL affair against Mumbai City FC on Wednesday.

## Western & Southern Open: Kichenok, Ostapenko clinch women's doubles title

Cincinnati | Agencies

Continuing the stellar season, Lyudmyla Kichenok and Jelena Ostapenko clinched the women's doubles title at the Western & Southern Open after beating Nicole Melichar-Martinez and Ellen Perez 7-6(5), 6-3 in 1 hour and 24 minutes, here.

It is the second team title of the year for Kichenok and Ostapenko, having also taken the trophy at WTA 250 Birmingham on grass. "It's my biggest title and I'm very happy. It's hard to describe, it's amazing. I just can't find the words. I'm still a bit shaky after the match, it's very exciting," Kichenok said after the match on Saturday night.

Kichenok and Ostapenko were No 5 on the Race to the Finals Leaderboard coming into Cincinnati, and are projected to rise even further after posting another superb 2022 result.



Along with their Birmingham title,

they reached additional finals at Dubai and Eastbourne this year. The pair also made the semifinals at Roland Garros and Wimbledon this season, falling to the eventual champions at both of those majors. After finally getting on the court after numerous rain delays, it was Melichar-Martinez and Perez who initially held the upper hand, breaking Ostapenko in the opening game of the match and building a 4-2 lead. Kichenok and Ostapenko, though, got back on serve at 4-4. Ostapenko, who is also currently inside the Top 20 in singles, has won six career WTA doubles titles. Despite the loss, Melichar-Martinez of the United States and Australia's Perez have also had a strong summer, reaching back-to-back WTA 1000 finals last week in Toronto and this week in Cincinnati.

## 'Biggest Show on Earth' COULD BE THE LAST HURRAH OF SUPERSTARS MESSI, RONALDO

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Football stars are once again ready to showcase their talent in the World Cup 2022, which starts in less than 100 days in Qatar, but for the world's two biggest stars -- Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo -- it will probably be the last time they will be seen in the action in the football extravaganza. Argentina's Messi is now 35, and the Portuguese striker is 37, and this could probably be the last World Cup for them. So far, Messi and Ronaldo have not won the World Cup and this time around both would be determined to add the only trophy missing from their stellar careers.



Having inspired their respective national teams to continental glory both players know they're representing teams capable of winning in Qatar if they can overcome

traditional favourites like France, Brazil and Germany. Lionel Messi (Argentina): Talk of Messi's powers waning has been exaggerated this season, but the seven-time

'World Player of the Year' might have been saving his 35-year-old legs for one last push at a World Cup winner's medal. He is currently the leading assist maker for PSG in Ligue 1 and his enduring class will be crucial for Argentina in the World Cup.

Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal): He has won the European Championship but the leading scorer in men's international soccer hasn't played in a World Cup final. Expectations will be intense around Ronaldo in Qatar, as they beat North Macedonia to secure their place at the tournament and the 2016 European champions will look once again to Ronaldo's ability to lead their attack as a huge focal point.

## Chhagan, Kavitha win Mumbai Half Marathon 2022

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chhagan Bombale of Maharashtra and Kavitha Reddy from Andhra Pradesh clinched the coveted titles in the Ageas Federal Life Insurance Mumbai Half Marathon 2022 here on Sunday.

On a cloudy and slightly wet morning Bombale comfortably won the 21k event that started and ended at the Jio Gardens, in 1:16:11. He shook off his challengers one by one, leaving second place finisher Bhagatsingh Valvi trailing over a minute behind at 1:17:51. Anil Jindal settled for the third place in 1:18:20. The women's event was also a one-sided affair as Kavitha Reddy opened up a decent gap against the chasing pack and breasted the tape in 1:37:03, leaving her nearest rival Tanmaya Karmarkar over three minutes behind at 1:40:18. Ketaki Sathe came in third, a further four minutes down the clock in 1:44:55. Cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar, the brand ambassador of the Ageas Federal Life Insurance Mumbai Half Marathon, flagged off the races and also felicitated the winners later.

"It has been very challenging for everybody over the last two years



because of the pandemic but I am overwhelmed to see so many line up for the city's first biggest run since then," Tendulkar said, while interacting with the media.

The men's 10k saw a neck-and-neck battle all the way between the leading pack of runners before ending in a thrilling climax. Amit Mali crossed the finish line in 0:33:42, just a couple of seconds ahead of the tenacious Karan Sharma, who was timed at 0:33:44. Sanjay Zakane claimed the third spot in 0:33:50. In the keenly contested women's 10k event, Rohini Maya Patil clocked 0:41:32 to wrest top honours while Priyanka Paikarao took silver in 0:42:26 and Priyanka Kailash the bronze in 0:43:51. Organised by Sports, over 13,500 runners from all walks of life took part in the race in three different categories - the half marathon, Timed 10k and 5k.

## Chain Singh claims Rifle Prone T5 title at National Shooting Selection Trials

Seasoned Army marksman Chain Singh claimed the Men's 50m Rifle Prone T5 title at the ongoing National Shooting Selection Trials, at the M.P. Academy Shooting range here.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Seasoned Army marksman Chain Singh claimed the Men's 50m Rifle Prone T5 title at the ongoing National Shooting Selection Trials, at the M.P. Academy Shooting range here. Chain scored 623.6 in 60-shots to upstage the Navy's Niraj Kumar who shot 622.5 to come second. Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar of Madhya Pradesh came third with 622.2. On Saturday, at New Delhi's DrKarni Singh Shooting range (DKSSR) where the Pistol trials are going on, Ankur Goel of Uttarakhand beat third with 21.

Ankur had shot 577 in qualification to reach the top eight semi-final stage in fourth position. Sameer topped the stage with a score of 579. Both got through to the medal match



from the second semis where Ankur topped with 18-hits while Sameer got 14. Shivam Shukla and Vijay Kumar joined them from the first semi-final. Sameer however did win the Junior Men's Rapid Fire T5 gold, shooting 29 in the medal round to state-mate Adarsh Singh's 25.

## Boycott issues ominous warning to England after loss to SA

London | Agencies

Legendary England cricketer Geoffrey Boycott has issued an ominous warning to Ben Stokes' Test side following their innings defeat against South Africa, saying they won't stand a chance of winning the Ashes next year at home if they dish out a similar display against Australia.

In one of the most scathing attacks on the home team following their innings and 12-run debacle at Lord's in the opening Test against Dean Elgar's South Africa, the former opener indicated that the visitors had completely deflated England following their run of four consecutive Test wins against New Zealand and India.

England could not stand up to the fiery pace of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje as the duo picked and Boycott felt that with the Australian seam attack boasting of the likes of Pat Cummins,



Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, it would be difficult for the hosts to regain the Ashes.

"The way our batsmen dealt with the South Africa pace attack does not augur

well for the Ashes next year in England. In the past three Ashes series -- one home and two away -- Australia's quicks have blown us away," Boycott wrote in his column for the Telegraph.



## BFFs Sara, Janhvi excited about watching 'House of the Dragon' together

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**B**-town BFFs Sara Ali Khan and Janhvi Kapoor, who recently shared the couch on the popular talk show 'Koffee With Karan', are excited to watch the much-awaited series 'House of the Dragon'.

The actresses posted a video on their respective social media handles, where they were seen discussing the series. When Janhvi, who

is a 'Game of Thrones' fan, went quizzing Sara about the show, Sara replied: "House of the Dragon" is a new and different show for which watching Game of Thrones is not mandatory." Sara said she is excited to enter the universe of dragons: "I am really looking forward to 'House of the Dragon'; it is definitely on my bucket list to watch!"

"There's a lot of buzz around it, and I am totally excited. It turns out, one doesn't need to watch 'GOT'

before 'HOTD'! George R.R. Martin is a genius, and seeing his vision come to life will be a treat."

She added: "I am already fascinated by all the dragons in this period drama, and I have the perfect partner to watch it with! After going on treks together, sharing the Koffee couch, I am now all set to watch the turbulent battle of the Iron throne with Janhvi exclusively on August 22, 2022." Janhvi said she was thrilled at the prospect of watching the series

with Sara: "With the Targaryens at the height of their power with all their dragons, it'll surely be an interesting watch. I don't know if Winter is coming but I do know that Sara is in for a crazy ride," Janhvi said.

Based on George R.R. Martin's book 'Fire and Blood', the 10-episode series is the remarkable yet turbulent story of the House of Targaryen, set 200 years before the events that captivated global audiences in 'Game of Thrones'.

Suchitra Pillai loved playing multiple characters 'just sitting in a studio' for audiobook

New Delhi | Agencies

**A**ctress, model and VJ Suchitra Pillai says that she enjoys doing audio shows as people appreciate her voice. The actress has narrated multiple characters including the lead protagonist in the audiobook 'Naqaab'. She candidly speaks about being part of it and how she managed to play so many characters.

The audiobook is a psychological thriller written by J.P. Pomare and it revolves around a psychologist Margot Scott.

The 51-year-old actress briefs about her role saying: "This audiobook is about the psychologist, Margot Scott and her family and her clients. So to play her and all of her clients and family members, etc. was the challenging bit of it. But that's the interesting thing about audiobooks, where you get to play so many characters and it's all about voice."

"You don't have your expressions, you don't have your face, you only have vocal expressions that you can depend on and not anything to do with your facial expressions, to tell a story, which is what is the most interesting part of doing this audiobook."

She further adds on why she is interested in doing audio shows and says: "I've always appreciated the fact that people appreciate my voice and whatever I can do with it. To play so many characters, just sitting there in a studio and to just close your eyes and play so many characters is any actor's dream."

The story of 'Naqaab' is quite intriguing and is filled with suspense and thriller. Asked whether narrating this role difficult, she replies: "No special training for it. It was definitely difficult, I'm not

going to lie, especially because some books are more narrator-based and you have one or two characters in it. The biggest thing for this one was that there are so many characters on the same page."

"There were chapters where you would have Margot or husband or two kids, as well as the antagonist, all in one scene, and one had to switch between voices for all of these people. Even though one really doesn't, they were all distinct voices, without a doubt, you can still hear Suchi in all of them, but they were all distinct voices."

"So, but to switch from one - literally one line - to the next, especially when there're other emotions involved if Margot was upset and the antagonist had this smirky attitude. The husband was a supplicating person, the daughter was being irritated, all of that in one sentence, without getting a break, that's what really, really makes it interesting. And the process for this is when you get confused. You have a reference file when you go back and listen to the voice that you played for A,B,C and D, and then you get back to the chapter and you do it again. So yeah, that was the process that I followed," adds the actress on the challenges she faced and the procedure followed by her to play multiple characters.

The 'Dil Chahta Hai' actress shares how this project is different from previous ones and says: "This one is very different! The other project I have done for Audible is 'Adultery' by Paulo Coelho. That was mainly about the protagonist and her husband or lover etc. So you had like maybe three, maximum four major characters as opposed to here where there are a zillion characters literally."



## Sona Mohapatra sings 'Kuhu Kuhu' in impromptu tribute to Lata Mangeshkar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**P**opular singer Sona Mohapatra took a packed auditorium by surprise when she was called upon the stage at the ongoing Indian Film Festival of Melbourne to give away an award and judge the long-standing and popular dance competition of the festival.

The singer treated the auditorium packed with the Indian diaspora, government functionaries, including ministers and members of parliament, and the city's mayor with an impromptu act.

She crooned, a-cappella, the 'Kuhu Kuhu Bole Koyalika', a duet sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammad Rafi for the pan-India 1957 film, 'Suvarna Sundari', starring the legendary Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Anjali Devi. That was her tribute to the late Nightingale of India, Lata Mangeshkar.

Talking about the experience, Sona said: "When the festival organisers discovered that I had collaborated with the legendary Aussie band INXS in a single called 'Afterglow', they requested if I could sing a few lines to celebrate India-Australia friendship.

"I found that the in-house symphony had a conductor who was a jazz musician and requested him to join with a violin. It was magical singing 'Afterglow' in the land of INXS. I chose to end this with a tribute to the passing of the Nightingale of India, Lata ji."



## Composer Santhosh Narayanan launches Malayalam innings with period drama

Chennai | Agencies

**A**ce music director Santhosh Narayanan, who is one of the top most composers in the Tamil film industry, said that he is proud to make his debut as music composer in Malayalam with director Vinayan's much-awaited period drama, 'Pathonpatham Noottandu'.

Taking to Twitter, Santhosh Narayanan, who is known for his work in several critically acclaimed Tamil blockbusters including 'Pariyaerum Perumal', 'Vada Chennai' and 'Kaala', said, "Proud to start my first film in Malayalam as composer through the amazing 'Pathonpatham Noottandu'." Thanking the director and the producer for giving him the opportunity, he also shared the link of the trailer of the film. "Thanks Vinayan sir, Gokulam Gopalan sir and the special team for making this epic. Wishing a grand worldwide success. Here is the trailer," he said. 'Pathonpatham Noottandu', featuring Siju Wilson in the lead, is scheduled to hit screens on September 8. The trailer shows how people from certain castes were exploited back in 1900. In particular, it also highlights how women from the marginalised sections were



prevented from even covering their breasts and how a breast tax was levied on them. The trailer shows the uprising of those exploited and highlights the rise of an Ezhava Chieftain Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker, a firebrand leader who fought against casteism and slavery. Needless to say, the trailer has triggered huge expectations as it is based on a true story. Apart from Siju Wilson, the film also stars Anoop Menon, Chemban Vinod, Indrans, Gokulam Gopalan, Sudev Nair, Senthil Krishna, Suresh Krishna, Sudheer Karamana, Vishnu Vinay, Deepti Sati, Poonam Bajwa and Kayadu Lohar among others. Cinematography for the film is by Shaji Kumar and music is by M. Jayachandran.

## SHRADDHA DAS PLAYS A PSYCHIATRIST IN HER TAMIL DEBUT FILM

Chennai | Agencies

**A**ctress Shraddha Das, who is making her debut in Tamil cinema with the Tamil-Telugu bilingual film 'Artham', says that she found her role in the film easy to play.

The actress, speaking at a press conference called by the unit of director Manikanth Thallaguti's 'Artham', said: "I have never worked in Tamil cinema before today. I have done around 40 films in Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Hindi and Bengali, but this is my first time in Tamil. I cannot understand a single word in Tamil." She further said: "In Telugu, I have done a lot of glamorous roles but in this film, I got to do a performance-oriented role after a long time. I got to play a psychiatrist in this film. It was easy for me to do this role as I have a degree in psychology and journalism."

Heaping praise on co-star Mahendran, the actress said: "An actor like Mahendran, is so subtle and mature. In a horror film like this, I had to keep my expressions very controlled and subtle and play through the eyes." Thanking the director for giving her the opportunity, the actress said that she was happy to debut in Tamil through this film.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Uditi Singh