For Generation Ace

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Sabalenka beats world No.1 Barty to clinch title ....

States, Union Territories to get 46L more vaccine doses in 3 days

TO INTENSIFY THE DRIVE

More than 72 lakh Covid vaccine doses (72,42,014) are still available with the States and UTs to be administered. States with negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than vaccine supplied as they have not reconciled the vaccine they have supplied to armed forces.

Of the doses available with the States include Bihar (3,12,713), Maharashtra (3,25,180), Delhi (3,41,202), Karnataka (4,50,787), Madhya Pradesh (4,57,114), Jharkhand (4,61,934), Haryana (4,78,795), Gujarat (5,01,396), Tamil Nadu (6,71,301) and Uttar Pradesh (8,78,330).

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central government has so far provided more than 17,56,20,810 vaccine doses to States and Union Territories (UTs) "free of cost", and has planned to provide additional over 46 lakh doses within next three days. A total of 46,61,960 Covid vaccine doses will be received in addition by the States and UTs within the next 3 days, Union Health Ministry said on Sunday. Of the over 17 crore vaccines so far delivered to the States and the UTs, the total consumption including wastages is 16,83,78,796 doses, according to the official data made available at 8 a.m. on Sunday.

PM dials CMs of Bihar, Karnataka, Punjab, U'Khand

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday held telephonic discussions with the Chief Ministers of Bihar, Karnataka, Punjab and Uttarakhand to take stock of the Covid-19 situation in their respective states, said sources.Modi took the details of availability of ICU beds in hospitals, oxygen supply as well as distribution of Covid vaccines in these four states. In the last four days, the Prime Minister has spoken with 14 Chief Ministers and two Lieutenant Governors to take stock of the efforst being made by the states and union territories to deal with the pandemic.

India got 3L Remdesivir vials, over 6K O2 concentrators from abroad

New Delhi: India has cumulatively has received three lakh Remdesivir vials, 6,738 oxygen concentrators, 3,856 oxygen cylinders and 16 oxygen generation plants from the global community in the last 13 days, an official statement said on Sunday. A total of 4,668 ventilators or Bi PAP were also sent to India from April 27 to May 8. The major items received on Saturday from Canada, Thailand, the Netherlands, Austria, Czech Republic, Israel, the US, Japan, Malaysia, US (GILEAD), US (salesforce) and Indian community in Thailand include 2,404 oxygen concentrators, 25,000 Remdesivir vials, 218 ventilators, and 6,92,208 testing kits.

4,092 Covid deaths in India as fresh cases go over 4L again

New Delhi: The coronavirus continues to pummel India as the country on Sunday recorded 4,03,738 fresh Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours with 4,092 fatalities, taking the total number of cases in the country to 2,22,96,414, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said. It is the fifth time after May 1 that India has crossed the four-lakh-mark of new Covid cases. On Friday, India recorded the highest ever 4,14,188 cases. In the past 17 days India's daily Covid tally has risen by over three lakh cases and over 3,000 casualties have been reported for the last 11 days. India's total tally of Covid-19 cases now stands at 2,22,96,414 with 37,36,648 active cases and a total of 2,42,362 deaths so far.

Global Covid-19 caseload tops 157.2 mn

Washington: The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 157.2 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.27 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 32,685,864 and 581,511, respectively, according to the CSSE. In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 21,892,676 cases.

226 gram panchayats report zero Covid case in MP

Team Absolute | Jabalpu

As many as 226 gram panchayats in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district have reported zero Covid case since the outbreak of the pandemic.

These villagers have even sealed their entrance and have been wearing face masks as well as maintaining social distancing norms. Those people found violating Covid protocols are also being penalised.

According to the district's panchayat office, the gram panchayats in Jabalpur without a single Covid positive case constitutes 42 from Jabalpur district, 18 from Panagar, 11 in Patan, 46 each in Shahpura and Kundam, 29 in Sehore, 34 gram panchayats of Majhauli.

"My Village: Corona-Free Village campaign is being actively run in the state", said Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Barricades have been placed at the entrance of the village and a record of people entering or leaving the village is also being maintained.

13 COVID-19 UNDERTRIALS ESCAPE FROM HARYANA JAIL

Chandigarh: Thirteen undertrials escaped from a Covid-19 special jail in Haryana after cutting iron grills of a barrack, police said on Sunday. While four belonged to a jail in Rewari, nine from Mahendragarh.

All escapees, lodged in under-construction jail in Rewari, were Covid positive and managed to escape late Saturday night, a police official said. Some of the escapees have been facing charges for rape, murder and dacoity. A total of 493 Covid positive prisoners from across the state have been lodged in the Rewari jail.

The incident came to light when jail officials counted the prisoners in the morning, sources added. Four teams of the police have launched a search operation to arrest the inmates.

VIDEO SHOWS BODY OF COVID VICTIM DUMPED IN RIVER IN KATIHAR

Patna: A video purportedly showing a Covid victim's body being dumped into the bank of Saura river in Bihar's Katihar district has gone viral on social media.

Katihar's District Magistrate Udayan Mishra has cross verified the video clip and found it to be true. The incident took place on May 7. "Soon after we have learnt about the incident, an inquiry panel headed by city's Magistrate, SDO and SDPO of the area, was constituted who later visited the Bheria Rahika village on Sunday.

"As per the statement of the deceased's brother, his kin did not have enough money to cremate the body. Moreover, the villagers told the family members that cremation of Covid victim could be a hazardous to health for others. Hence, they had dug an 8 feet deep pit in their own land to bury the body," Mishra said.

The complainant of the incident was the driver of the ambulance. We had cross checked about the incident with the victims' family members. During the process of burial, some onlookers filmed it and made it viral on social networking platforms," Mishra said.

Lakshadweep, Haryana, Assam top in Covid vax wastage

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Lakshadweep, Haryana and Assam for the second consecutive day on Sunday maintained their position among top 10 states for the maximum loss of Covid vaccines amid the crisis when the country is passing through a shortage of the medicine necessary to keep people safe from the deadly virus.

Amidst increasing Covid-19 vaccine demands in the country, wastage of the key injection has been a matter of concern for the government with reports of highest 22.74 per cent wastage reported in Lakshadweep till 8 a.m. on Sunday. The Union Territory reportedly wasted 22 per cent Covid vaccines till Saturday 8 a.m.After Lakshadweep, Haryana accounts for the second highest state with wastage of 6.65 per cent Covid vaccines followed by Assam (6.07 per cent), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's (MoHFW) latest data said.

Rajasthan has reported 5.50 per cent wastage of Covid vaccine, Punjab reports 5.05 per cent and Bihar recorded 4.96 per cent wastage of Covid vaccines.

Dadra and Nagar Haveli reported 4.93 per cent Covid vaccine wastage followed by Meghalaya (4.21 per cent), Tamil Nadu (3.94 per cent) and Manipur (3.56 per cent).

Himanta Biswa Sarma to take charge as 15th Assam CM

Team Absolute | Guwahati

The BJP's lead strategist in northeastern states and senior leader Himanta Biswa Sarma, who had played significant role in forming saffron party led governments in three other northeastern states - Tripura, Manipur and Arunachal -- will take charge as the 15th Chief Minister of Assam on Monday. Raj Bhavan officials said that Governor Jagdish Mukhi would administer the oath of office to the Chief Minister designate Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday noon at the famous Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati. Different official sources said that besides Sarma, nine other ministers are likely to take oath on Monday. In his announcement, Union Agriculture Minister Narednra Singh Tomar said that Sonowal proposed Sarma's name as the leader of the BJP's legislature party and others supported it.

In the 126-member Assembly, the BJP won 60 seats while its alliance partners Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) got nine seats and new ally United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) secured six.

Now villages also left to the mercy of God: Rahul Gandhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid surge of Covid cases in the rural areas, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday hit out at the Narendra Modi-led Central government for not tackling the situation."Shehron ke baad ab gaon bhi parmatma-nirbhar (After cities, villages also left to the mercy of God," he said in a tweet, attaching an image of an Hindi caption reading "Covid-19: Mahamari ki dusri lahar ab gaaon mein barpa rahi hai kehr (Covid-19: The second wave of the pandemic now overwhelming villages)".Gandhi had earlier tweeted the country doesn't need a new house for the PM but oxygen, attaching photos of people in line for the life-saving gas, and work on the Central Vista. In another tweet which displayed a graph on the Covid surge and falling vaccinations, he had termed the situation "The Movid pandemic."

Covid-19 infection is transmitted via air: US CDC

- People release respiratory fluids during exhalation -- quiet breathing, speaking, singing, exercise, coughing, sneezing in the form of droplets. While large droplets settle out of the air within seconds to minutes, very fine droplets can remain suspended in the air for minutes to hours. These droplets carry viruses and transmit infection, said the agency's latest science brief as part of its public guidelines on Covid-19.

Infections through inhalation at distances greater than six feet from an infectious source are less likely than at closer distances. But, when an infectious person exhales virus indoors for an extended time (more than 15 minutes and in some cases hours), it can lead to virus concentrations in the air space. It can be sufficient to transmit infections to people more than 6 feet away, and in some cases to people who have passed through that space soon after the infectious person left. The risk in this case is more in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation, the agency said.

WASHINGTON | Agencies

Exposure to respiratory fluids -- very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles -- present in air and which carry viruses are the main reasons for contracting Covid-19 infection, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said. "The risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection varies according to the amount of virus to which a person is exposed," the CDC said.

While there remains many knowledge gaps about Covid, the available evidence continues to demonstrate that existing recommendations to prevent SARS-CoV-2 transmission remain effective. This includes physical distancing, community use of well-fitting masks (e.g., barrier face coverings, procedure/surgical masks), adequate ventilation, and avoidance of crowded indoor spaces.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic last year, researchers have argued that Covid-19 was not airborne. However, the view has been changing.

The Lancet had, in April claimed in a new assessment that there is consistent, strong evidence to prove that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is predominantly transmitted through the air.

INDIA'S COVID SITUATION IS HEARTBREAKING: KAMALA HARRIS

Washington: In an address to the Indian diaspora in the US, Vice President Kamala Harris lamented over the deteriorating Covidd-19 situation India, saying it was "nothing short of heartbreaking"."Generations of my family come from India. My mother (Shyamala Gopalan) was born and raised in India. And I have family members who live in India today. The welfare of India is critically important to the US," Harris said in her pre-recorded message played at a diaspora event hosted by the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) on Friday.

"The surge of Covid-19 infections and deaths in India is nothing short of heartbreaking. To those of you who have lost loved ones, I send my deepest condolences. As soon as the dire nature of the situation became apparent, our administration took action.

MAMATA BANERJEE MINISTRY TO HAVE 43 MINISTERS, AMIT MITRA ALSO INCLUDED

Kolkata | Agencies

The Mamata Banerjee government ministry will be expanded on Monday morning, with the induction of 24 cabinet ministers, 10 ministers of state with independent charge and another 9 ministers of state, as per the list released on Sunday. The swearing-in ceremony is due to be held at 10.45 a.m.

The 24-member cabinet includes some old names like former ministers Subrata Mukherjee (Panchayati Raj), Partha Chatterjee (Education), Arup Biswas (Urban Development), Jyotipriyo Mullick (Food and Civil Supplies), Sovandeb Chattopadhyay (Power) and Bratya Basu (Science and Technology) and some new faces that include long-time MLA Bamkim Chandra Hazra, Madhyamgram MLA Rathin Ghosh, and newly-elected MLAs like Pulok Roy and Biplab Mitra.

The most surprising name is of perhaps former Finance Minister Amit Mitra, who had not contested this election due to ill-health.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was worried about the key portfolio as Mitra was unable to handle the ministry for the last few days because of his deteriorating health condition. He didn't even present the budget last time. Banerjee had to strike a balance between the old faces and the newly-elected MLAs and she successfully did it including some promising names in her ministry.

SC notice to Punjab on Prashant Kishor's appointment as CM's advisor

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has sought a response from the Punjab government on an appeal challenging the Punjab & Haryana High Court order, dismissing a petition challenging appointment of Prashant Kishor as Principal Advisor to Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta noted that counsel for the petitioners contended that Prashant Kishor is an expert in organising elections and is assisting parties in different states.

Advocate Baltej Singh Sidhu, representing Labh Singh and another petitioner, submitted that the appointment of Kishor as Principal Advisor to the Chief Minister, that too in the rank and status of a Cabinet minister at the cost of public money, is not permissible.

Counsel contended before the top court that the government may have any advisor with any particular expertise for governance purposes and questioned the validity of the order by the state government. The petitioners said the decision also smacked of mala fide as Kishore worked as strategist for the Congress in 2017. In their plea, Singh, a retired boxing coach and Satinder Singh, an advocate, contended Kishor is an expert in organising elections and is assisting parties in various states.

"Issue notice returnable after the summer recess," said the top court in its order.

Amarinder Singh had appointed Kishor in March this year. The petitioners claimed there was no advertisement or interview conducted for the appointment, which was clear violation of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution. Dismissing the petition, the High Court had noted that the Chief Minister, being an elected representative, has manifold constitutional duties to discharge, including good governance towards the citizens, and thus, he is at liberty to choose his advisors. Kishore was the political strategist for Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, where Mamata Banerjee won the Assembly elections with a landslide victory, to become Chief Minister for the third consecutive term.

EPS, OPS tussle continues in AIADMK over Opposition leader

CHENNAI | Agencies

The fight for the top slot as opposition leader in Tamil Nadu continues unabated between former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) and his Deputy, O. Panneerselvam (OPS) in the AIADMK.

While the supporters of EPS are pitching to make him the opposition leader as they argue that the party won maximum seats from his home turf of Salem where the party won 10 out of the 11 seats at stake. In western Tamil Nadu and northern Tamil Nadu also the writ of EPS ran across the constituencies. Moreover, EPS won his Edappadi seat with a margin of 93,802 votes over his DMK rival Sampath Kumar, which is the highest vote margin of an incumbent Chief minister in the history of Tamil Nadu elections.

While the AIADMK could win 32 of the 54 seats in Western Tamil Nadu, which is the bastion of EPS, in South Tamil Nadu which is considered the stronghold of OPS, the party could muster only 16 of the 60 seats. The AIADMK was strong in this area where the "Thevar" community of OPS was ruling the roost especially in Theni district- the home turf of OPS.

PROBE ORDERED INTO 23 COVID PATIENTS GOING MISSING FROM DELHI HOSPITAL

New Delhi: The Delhi government on Sunday ordered an inquiry into reports ofCovid-19 patients going missing from the Hindu Rao Hospital in north Delhi. The direction came a day after 23 Covid patients were reported missing from North MCD-run Hindu Rao hospital between April 19 to May 6. "Delhi government has ordered an inquiry into reports regarding 23 Covid-19 patients going missing from Hindu Rao Hospital and has instructed the Health Department to submit the report by Monday," the Chief Minister's office said in a statement. The North MCD had on Saturday informed that 23 Covid patients left the hospital without informing the hospital authority.

As vaccines exported for 'image building', India saw 1L deaths: Manish Sisodia

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday accused the Centre of seeking to "buid its image" on the international stage with vaccine exports, instead of saving those dying in the country due to Covid.

Claiming that since March, India has exported around 6.5 crore Indian-made vaccines to 93 nations, Sisodia, who is also nodal minister for Covid management in the national capital, said: "While the people of the country were dying, struggling for beds, oxygen and medicines across the country, especially during the second wave of Covid pandemic with more than one lakh people having died since March this year, the BJP-led Centre was busy in image development and exporting Indian-made vaccines to foreign countries."

"Was it (export of vaccines) done just to improve the image of the Central government and earn accolades from some other countries? I request the Central government to vaccinate everyone in the country before exporting vaccines," the senior AAP leader said at a press conference here. The mister stated that it is good to worry about the international community during the pandemic, but the countries like the US, Canada and in Europe are starting to arrange vaccines for their people first. Only France exported 1 lakh vaccines last month. "The Centre has donated 6.6 crore since March. On April 22, when India had the world's highest number of 3.32 lakh cases, the Central government had also exported two lakh vaccines to Paraguay," Sisodia claimed.

Stalin bats for strict lockdown in TN

Chennai | Agencies

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, in his first cabinet meeting on Sunday, called upon ministers and officials to implement a strict lockdown in the state to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Stalin advised his cabinet colleagues to camp in the districts allotted to them and to ensure execution of strict lockdown. The cabinet resolved that unless strict lockdown is not implemented in the state from May 10 to May 24, the spread of the virus cannot be contained.The Chief Minister also called upon the ministers to ensure that all patients arriving at district hospitals are treated without any delay. It was also decided to provide adequate food to healthcare workers and patients.

GIVE UP, GET TREATMENT, TELANGANA POLICE TELLS COVID-HIT MAOISTS

Hyderabad: In a bid to leave no flank exposed in the battle against coronavirus in the state, Telangana Police have reached out to covid-struck Maoists too.

Police in Bhadradri-Kothagudem district, have appealed to the ultras, who contracted the viurus, to return to the mainstream and seek treatment.

In a media statement, Superintendent of Police, Sunil Dutt advised those Maoists who are suffering from Covid, to surrender to the police, so that they can be provided suitable treatment in hospitals.

According to the statement, police has credible information that several of the Maoist cadres, and their leaders, are suffering from the virus. It also noted that many of the Covid-struck Maoists who wish to surrender and avail treatment, are being prevented by their leaders. Police warned that such a situation would lead to "severe repercussions".

Puducherry records its highest single-day Covid toll

Puducherry | Agencies

Puducherry on Sunday recorded 26 Covid-related deaths, which is the highest in a single day so far, taking its total toll to 965.

The Union Territory also recorded 1633 fresh cases in a single day, taking the total number of cases to 71,709, as per the Health Department. The test positivity rate is 18.10 per cent.

Puducherry region recorded the highest deaths, at 22, while there were two in Karaikal and one each in Mahe and Yanam. Of the deceased, 13 had comorbidities.

Health and Family Services Director Mohan Kumar, in a statement, said that a total of 9,022 samples were tested in the last 24 hours ending 10 a.m. on Sunday. There are 14,034 active cases, while 1,158 patients recovered from the disease.A total of 32,965 healthcare workers and 19,458 frontline workers were vaccinated so far in the Union Territory.

TATA MEMORIAL CENTRE TO GIVE 3,800 02 CONCENTRATORS TO CANCER GRID HOSPITALS

New Delhi/Mumbai: The Tata Memorial Centre, which provides life-saving service to cancer patients, is also sourcing and allocating medical equipment for over 200 hospitals across India that are part of the National Cancer Grid (NCG).

On Sunday, it received 81,000 kg of medical equipment including 3,800 portable oxygen concentrators along with 300,000 N95 masks for distribution to hospitals across India.

These are the third and fourth shipments that the Tata Memorial Centre has brought in over the past two weeks.

Centre's Director Rajendra Badwe said: "We have the singular focus of getting these units to the hospitals throughout India so that many can breathe well."

The Tata Memorial Centre is a tertiary cancer centre under the Department of Atomic Energy, and sees up to 100,000 new cancer cases each year. Two-thirds of its patients are treated at a highly subsidised rate or completely free of charge.

Throughout the pandemic, the Tata Memorial Centre has been responsible for protecting cancer patients who are far more susceptible to an adverse event from Covid-19 than others. Adding to the risks that Covid-19 presents, the risk of untreated cancer looms large as it can be more fatal than the virus.

National-level shooters lead fight against Covid-19 in Uttar Pradesh

Team Absolute | New Delhi

More than 100 national-level shooters are driving a campaign in Uttar Pradesh (UP) to ensure a seamless supply of oxygen to hospitals and medical facilities in a bid to augment India's efforts to combat Covid-19.

Among the prominent shooters who have joined the fight are Asutosh Dwiwedi, (UP), Pardeep Kumar Singh (Haryana), Tabish Ahmed (UP), Rahul Soni (Delhi), Monu Kumar (Delhi), Harpreet Sing (Delhi), and Shalender (UP).

"Such initiatives will go a long way in alleviating the miseries of coronavirus patients. I urge more people to come forward to join the cause and take all necessary precautions against Covid-19," said Deepak Dubey, coach of Tokyo Olympic Games-bound rifle shooter Divyansh Singh Panwar.

The initiative comes after Rodic Consultants CMD Raj Kumar, a national-level marksman, urged the shooting community to support the fight against the disease.

The company has developed a digital portal for oxygen monitoring in Uttar Pradesh whereby tankers' movement is monitored and tracked in real time so as to ensure they reach hospitals on time. Now the plan is to implement the strategy across the country.

The company's model requires intensive manpower to ensure a hassle-free supply and the shooters, with the help of GPS Web Application Monitoring, will track oxygen tanker locations and keep in touch with Regional Transport Offices and the medical department of Uttar Pradesh to ensure seamless supply.

The shooters will also be present at the oxygen-manufacturing facilities where the tracking devices are installed. These devices ensure minimum turnaround times and facilitate end-to-end coordination between multiple departments for seamless movement of tankers.

"We are witnessing a sharp surge in coronavirus cases across the country. Collaboration will be the key to winning the battle against Covid-19. At Rodic, we are contributing by setting up a command centre for oxygen movement across the country like we did successfully along with the UP Government," said Raj Kumar.

"In this endeavour we required volunteers to support us for efficient management of this entire process. I had appealed to my fellow shooters across India to come forward and support us as volunteers. We have received a very positive response from the shooter's community," he said.

The company has also implemented a "hub and spoke" mode, whereby a state is divided into five regions and depending upon the urgency, the supply of oxygen is maintained with the help of tankers and aircraft deployed with the help of the Uttar Pradesh government.

Rodic Consultants is mulling deploying the oxygen monitoring system in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi.

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BHOPAL, MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021
madhya pradesh 03

IN THE COMING TIME, MP WILL ALSO BE SELF-RELIANT IN OXYGEN: CM

- Central and Madhya Pradesh governments are continuously working together
- This hospital will prove to be a boon in times of crisis: Pradhan
- First temporary 1000 bedded hospital in the state, with direct oxygen supply to bed

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan inspected the newly constructed 1000 bed temporary Covid Hospital near BORL in Bina of Sagar district on Sunday and also held a meeting related to the construction of the hospital.

Chouhan said that this is the first oxygen supply based temporary hospital in the state, where there will be a direct oxygen pipe line up to the bed. This hospital is being made fully equipped. He said that our objective is that Madhya Pradesh should also become self-reliant in the matter of availability of oxygen in future. Chouhan said that we have to be ready for every competition against Corona. In this connection, large oxygen plants are being set up in the state. He said that talks are also going on with organizations like GAIL, INOX etc. in this connection.

Pradhan said that large-scale construction work of the hospital is going on here. The industrial oxygen of Bina refinery will be converted into medical oxygen and used for patients. This is a big project which will prove to be a big boon for Covid patients from the surrounding districts including Sagar, Vidisha, Ashoknagar and Guna.

Pradhan said that in the matter of availability of oxygen, the Central and Madhya Pradesh governments are constantly working together. Soon Madhya Pradesh will become self-reliant in oxygen.

Chouhan and Union Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan inspected the temporary hospital site on the occasion and also reviewed the entire roadmap. Chief Minister point-wise reviewed the agency appointed for various works and works related to the hospital. He sought information about the updated status of oxygen plant, oxygen testing, construction of compressor chamber, 800 meter long pipeline of oxygen supply, shifting of compressor from Durgapur, purchase of additional standby compressors bottling plant related works. He said that oxygen requirement of other districts will also be fulfilled by setting up bottling plant here.

Chouhan said that although temporary, the hospital will be fully equipped and safe in every way. Even in the event of bad weather, this hospital will be safe from wind, water, storm, etc.

Chouhan directed that arrangements should be made for scientific disposal and management of solid waste management, medical waste, liquid waste etc. related to the hospital. He expressed pleasure over the fact that the work of the power substation has been completed before the deadline. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that there should be better arrangements for food, security and housekeeping service in the temporary hospital.

Chouhan said that approach roads to the hospital, concrete floor in the Dome, parking and flooring in the administrative area, drain and other miscellaneous works, medical gas pipeline system, oxygen backup including fencing and septic / STP work of 150 KLD soon should be completed soon. Also, target should be set to complete the work related to the Dome, an additional Dome, electrical work and toilets in the Dome and outsourced staff within the time limit. It may be noted that Bina Refinery will start supply at 2 BAR pressure, so as to ensure that normal oxygen is sufficient for temporary hospital beds. The 7 BAR pressure compressor being brought from Durgapur will be kept as standby pressure. Emergency backup of the oxygen cylinder will also be maintained. Deepak Singh informed that, the work of Dome structure and electrification will be completed by May 25. Similarly, the work of water supply, road and concrete flooring will be completed by May 15 and the construction of oxygen pipeline at 200 points will be completed within the time-limit. He informed that all purchase orders related to furniture and other appliances have also been issued.

FULLY-EQUIPPED COVID CARE CENTERS WILL BE STARTED IN MANDLA, DINDORI, BALAGHAT, SEONI AND NARSINGHPUR: PRADHAN

- 11 PSA oxygen plants will be set up
- State will also get additional oxygen tankers
- CM Chouhan and Union Minister of Petroleum and Chemicals Pradhan conduct meeting in Mantralaya

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Union Minister for Steel, Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan has said that well-equipped Covid Care Centers will be set up in Mandla, Dindori, Balaghat, Seoni and Narsinghpur districts of Madhya Pradesh, with oxygen lines, oxygen concentrators and ventilators through MOIL Company. Also, 11 PSA oxygen plants will be set up soon in Madhya Pradesh. Additional cryogenic oxygen tankers will also be provided to the state. Pradhan and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan were holding talks with the concerned officials through video conferencing from Mantralayaon Sunday. Cooperatives Minister Arvind Singh Bhadauria was also present.

CCC's of 100 beds in Mandla district, 100-bed in Balaghat, 50-bed in Dindori, 60-bed in Seoni and 40-bed in Narsinghpur, are being set up with high capacity oxygen concentrators on every bed and oxygen facility. In addition, total 50 ventilators will also be installed.

Pradhan said that a bottling plant will also be started in Bina, which will fill 25 MT per day in oxygen cylinder. Two oxygen plants of 91 MT each have been tested and commissioned for oxygen availability in Bina.

Chouhan said that 11 PSA oxygen plants will get started in the state by the month of June. Union Minister Shri Pradhan said that some of these plants will be completed in May itself. These plants are being set up at Dewas, Dhar, Mandla, Hoshangabad, Panna, Damoh, Chhatarpur, Sidhi, Bhind, Rajgarh and Shajapur.

Chouhan said that Pradhan is providing big help to Madhya Pradesh during Covid crisis. A well-equipped Covid Care Center is coming up in Bina. Oxygen plants, bottling plants are being started and Covid Care Centers and other facilities are being provided in Madhya Pradesh through companies like MOIL and GAIL. Pradhan is a member of Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh.

MAN WALKS WITH DAUGHTER'S BODY ON COT FOR 35 KMS

- A video surfaced online which showed the man, along with a few villagers, mounting his 16-year-old daughter's body on a cot and making his way through the village on foot to the hospital for post-mortem.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A man was forced to carry his daughter's body on a cot for post-mortem for 35 km, walking for almost seven hours to reach the hospital in Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh.A video surfaced online which showed the man, along with a few villagers, mounting his 16-year-old daughter's body on a cot and making his way through the village on foot.

The teen had died by suicide on May 5 after which the police reached their house in Gadai village and ordered the family to bring the body for an autopsy, some 35 km away.

Due to financial constraints, the family was unable to hire a vehicle on their own and were denied any mode of transportation by the authorities.

The girl's father, Dhirapati Singh Gond, and some villagers then left on foot in the morning and reached the hospital after seven hours.

Gond said: "We started around 9 am, reached the hospital around 4 pm, carrying the cot on our shoulders... now we are feeling unwell... such a big problem but nobody offered a solution." He said there is a road around a kilometer away from his village and the authorities should have arranged a vehicle for them.

However, police official Arun Singh said that there is no budget allotted to the department for transporting bodies to the post-mortem centre so it was not possible to arrange the vehicle.

Bhopal crematorium gives refuge to kin of deceased patients

BhadbhadaVishram Ghat here has been providing beds and meals to relatives of COVID-19 patients, who perform the last rites of loved ones.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

At a time when images of relatives of deceased COVID-19 patients queuing up at crematoriums have become common, a crematorium in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal is giving temporary refuge to people who bring their loved ones to the city for treatment and lose them to the disease.

While people are usually scared to enter crematoriums and graveyards at night, BhadbhadaVishram Ghat here has been providing beds and meals to relatives of COVID-19 patients, who perform the last rites of loved ones.

More than half a dozen people spend their night at the facility daily after cremating their loves ones, thanks to the trust looking after the place and providing them food, water and bedding in these difficult times.

People from neighbouring districts, who bring their relatives to Bhopal for COVID-19 treatment and lose them, bring the bodies to Bhadbhada crematorium, as mortal remains are not allowed to be taken out of the district to contain the viral spread.

Bereaved relatives have to wait in serpentine queues for their turn to cremate deceased patients even late in the evenings due to the heavy rush of COVID-19 casualties.

"After the last rites, people wait for the embers to cool to collect ashes for immersion. They can't travel to their homes in other districts at night and then turn up in the morning to collect the urn of ashes," said Mamtesh Sharma, the secretary of Bhadbhada crematorium.

Moreover, since hotels and guesthouses are shut due to the coronavirus curfew, many find it difficult to get food and shelter for the night, he said.

"With the help of some good Samaritans, we have made arrangements to feed kin of the deceased and make their night halt comfortable in our crematorium," Sharma said.

A double-door refrigerator has been donated to the crematorium to store food stuffs and water bottles that are being sent to the facility, he added.

According to Sharma, 60 people were cremated at the facility on Friday, and of them, 54 were COVID-19 patients, including 38 locals and 16 from outside Bhopal.

MARRIAGE EVENTS BANNED TILL MAY 17 AMID SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES

- Madhya Pradesh Saturday reported 11,598 fresh coronavirus positive cases and 90 deaths, taking the tally of infections to 6,60,712 and the toll to 6,334, the state health department said.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has imposed a complete ban on holding marriage functions in Bhopal till May 17. This is one of the several measures taken by the state government to control the spread of coronavirus infections in the state. The district administration has urged the general public not to hold such events in May this year.

Bhopal District Magistrate, AvinashLavania, has issued orders to extend the 'Corona curfew' in the district till May 17 as well as prohibited permission for allowing marriage events. The state government has banned marriage ceremonies across Madhya Pradesh in May this year to control Covid-19 infections.

Lavania has appealed to people to postpone marriage ceremonies, including all social events, etc. and hold funerals in the presence of a limited number of people amid the surge in Covid-19 infections.

Madhya Pradesh Saturday reported 11,598 fresh coronavirus positive cases and 90 deaths, taking the tally of infections to 6,60,712 and the

toll to 6,334, the state health department said. For the first time, the count of active cases in Madhya Pradesh crossed the one lakh mark to reach 1,02,486.

A total of 4,445 patients were discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, taking the count of recoveries in Madhya Pradesh to 5,51,892, the department said.

With 1,706 new cases, Indore's caseload went up to 1,25,153 while that of Bhopal rose to 1,02,776 with the addition of 1,561 cases.

Indore and Bhopal each reported seven COVID-19 deaths, taking the toll to 1,176 and 788 respectively, officials said.

Indore is now left with 14,911 active cases while Bhopal has 13,192 such cases.

With 66,525 new tests, the total number of samples tested for coronavirus in Madhya Pradesh has crossed 82.58 lakh.

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE AND MAHARANA PRATAP

- Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a great freedom fighter, social worker, thinker, and reformer of India. Along with making a significant contribution to the freedom struggle, he also fought against casteism and untouchability prevailing in the country.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan saluted him on the birth anniversary of freedom fighter Gopal Krishna Gokhale and the great fearless warrior Maharana Pratap of the country. Chief Minister Chouhan paid floral tributes to the portraits of great men in the residence hall of the residence and remembered their works.

Chouhan said that Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a great freedom fighter, social worker, thinker, and reformer of India. Along with making a significant contribution to the freedom struggle, he also fought against casteism and untouchability prevailing in the country. He continued to work for social unity throughout his life. Gokhale's patriotic spirituality was memorable.

Chouhan said that the name of great warrior Maharana Pratap is immortal for his valour and determination in history. He never accepted the subjection of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Struggled continuously for many years. Maharana Pratap also defeated the Mughals many times in a battle.

CM PLANTS MAULSIRI SAPLING

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan planted Maulsiri at the Chief Minister's residence today. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan plants one plant every day. Maulsiri is a well-known tree. It is called Kesava in Sanskrit, Maulsiri, or Bakul in Hindi. Maulsiri is a medicinal tree. It has been used in Ayurveda for centuries. The seductive trees of Moulsiri, with panoramic vase flowers, which give pleasure to the mind, are found on the side of the roads and in the gardens.

Bikers Ride Through Morena, Firing Indiscriminately

- A woman suffered a head injury in the incident, said police. A case has been registered against unknown assailants on her complaint, it added.

Team Absolute | Morena

Dozens of men on motorbikes, their faces and head covered with a cloth, were seen firing guns while riding through Madhya Pradesh's Morena on Sunday, in shocking scenes of violence in the middle of the coronavirus lockdown in the state.

A woman suffered a head injury in the incident that took place at Bankhandi Road area under Kotwali police station, said the police. A case has been registered against unknown assailants on her complaint, they added.

"We have arrested few of them and we are taking action against those who are involved. Nobody is above the law, we will take appropriate action against whosoever is responsible," said Additional SP Dr RaisinghNarwaria.

The police said the incident was an act of retaliation to a similar incident a day ago by another community over an objectionable social media post. The injured woman's husband Pradip Sharma said, "My wife was on way to see a doctor, when she saw these masked men coming from opposite directions on motorcycles. Before she could look for safe shelter, she suffered a wound near the head as the masked men kept on firing indiscriminately and damaging small and big vehicles in the locality."

The violence comes amid a "strict Janata Curfew" till May 15, as announced by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan earlier this week. The Chief Minister also spotlighted the high positivity rate in the state that led him to make the decision.

"To break the chain of transmission of the coronavirus in the state, we have to completely shut everything till May 15 -- strict 'Janata Curfew'," said Chouhan.

"We can't shut things for too long, but with more than 18% positivity, we can't remain open," he added.

The country is battered by a deadly second wave of coronavirus which has overwhelmed the hospitals. Most states have taken to lockdowns, or night curfews to cut the transmission chain.

DELHI TO REMAIN SHUT TILL MAY 17, METRO SERVICES ALSO SUSPENDED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid crisis for medical services and oxygen supply in Delhi's hospitals for over last three weeks, the city will remain under lockdown till next Monday (May 17) as part of measures to break the chain of corornavirus infections.

Lockdown was imposed in the national capital on April 20 with some restrictions and the extended lockdown was supposed to end on Monday morning (May 10 a.m.), but the state government decided to extend it for further one more week.

Announcing 'lockdown extension' through a digital press conference on Sunday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "Delhi had imposed lockdown on April 20 and has been extended again. With the support from people of Delhi cases have started to come down in the last few days and the positivity rate is also down to 23 per cent. However, we are not in a situation to give any relaxation in restrictions. I will request people of Delhi to continue to follow lockdown rules, otherwise, we will lose what we have gained (medical facilities) in the last few days."

The Chief Minister said that the fresh round of lockdown will be more stringent than before. "To combat the spread of Covid we have decided to extend the lockdown," Kejriwal said.

While the positivity rate, which stood at 35 per cent in mid-April, has dropped to 23 per cent, doctors say even this is very high and there is a need to break the chain of transmission.

This would be the fourth week of the lockdown imposed as the Covid numbers in the national capital skyrocketed, bringing hospitals to their knees and pushing patients and doctors to look to social media for help amid a huge crisis of oxygen, beds and drugs. "During the lockdown we utilised the time to enhance our healthcare infrastructure. The main issue in Delhi was oxygen shortage. With Centre's help, the condition is better now," the Chief Minister said. take some more stringent measures including shutting down metro services from Monday morning," he added. The Chief Minister urged the people of Delhi not to let down their guard in the fight against Covid. "The positivity rate has gone down but still we can't afford leniency. We need to

Amid a bitter fight with the Centre over oxygen availability in the Delhi High Court, the Supreme Court, which had taken up the issue, ordered the formation of a 12-member National Task Force to assess availability and distribution of medical oxygen.

Marriage only at home or court, strict rules in Delhi from Monday

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi, gasping for oxygen with overloaded health management of the state administration for the last few weeks, will witness more stringent restrictions after a fresh round of lockdown will come into effect from Monday morning.

Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), in order to combat the spread of the second wave of Covid infections, has decided to put some more restrictions on movement of individuals and groups of people within the city.

Delhi's lifeline transport services - Delhi metro rail will remain shut till the DDMA assesses the outcome of the lockdown in the city and number of cases till next order. Marriage functions will not be permitted at gardens, halls, hotels or any other public places, except at homes with only 20 people. "There will be complete prohibition on organising any marriage ceremony at public places/ marriage hall/banquet hall/hotels and similar places. Marriages may however be organised in Court or at home, in which not more than 20 people will be allowed to participate," an order issued on on Sunday by Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Dev read.

Individuals moving in the city will have to produce a solid reason with production of soft copy of e-pass issued by the Delhi government. DJ sound, catering facilities will not be allowed at any marriage function across the city till May 17. The DDMA has directed Delhi police to ensure effective checking of movement of persons and vehicles by putting adequate number of checking points with objective to prevent unnecessary movement of people on roads during curfew," DDMA order stated.

Dismiss Imran Hussain from Delhi Cabinet for hoarding oxygen: BJP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The BJP on Sunday demanded that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal dismiss Food and Civil Supplies Minister Imran Hussain from his cabinet and order a CBI inquiry to find out how he managed to get the over 600 oxygen cylinders.

Addressing a press conference, BJP's West Delhi MP Parvesh Verma said: "It is shocking that Delhi government is seizing oxygen cylinders of socio-religious organisations doing free distribution while its Minister is found hoarding 650 oxygen cylinders....

Verma also claimed that despite the Centre advisory to upgrade medical infrastructure in December 2020, the Kejriwal government did-

n't do anything.

"When the crisis increased and the Centre increased the city's oxygen quota, the Delhi government started looking for oxygen tankers on April 26 but by then all such tankers were hired by other states. Situation was such that the national capital had increased oxygen quota but patients were dying for oxygen as Delhi government had made no arrangement to lift its allocated quota," he alleged. Verma held that the situation was so bad that the Union Home Secretary had written to the Chief Secretary and the High Court too reprimanded the Delhi Government.

Leader of Opposition in Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri claimed that the Kejriwal government has totally failed the city in the fight against Covid and urged Lt Governor Anil Baijal to intervene and form an expert committee to ensure proper distribution of oxygen.

Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta said: "A criminal case will be lodged against the Kejriwal government for failing Delhi in Covid-19 crisis despite having proper alerts from the Centre."

DELHI DEMANDS UNIFORM VACCINE PRICE, SEEKS 60 LAKH DOSES PER MONTH

Delhi would need 60 lakh doses of vaccine per month to vaccinate around 93 lakh people in the 18-45 age group during May to July, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a letter to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, he requested the Centre to direct the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to increase monthly supplies of Covid vaccines to Delhi to 60 lakh doses for the next three months.

"The Central government should make available to the state the requisite number of vaccines to enable vaccination of all citizens. The Centre should actively monitor and supervise the manufacture of vaccines by the private parties so that the supplies in adequate numbers are made to all state governments and this crucial aspect is not left to the direction of private manufacturers," he wrote in the letter.

Kejriwal also said that states should be allowed to develop separate apps or mechanism for vaccination.He also demanded that a uniform price should be fixed for the vaccines for supplies made to the governments and private hospitals.

"The inherent fallacy and danger in the current differential pricing mechanism is that there is an obvious incentive for private manufacturers to prioritise supply to private hospitals," he said.

"Delhi has a population of two crore, out of which 1.5 crore people are above the age of 18. Vaccinating all of them would mean 3 crore doses. We have received roughly 50 lakh doses so far. Therefore, we need additional 2.5 crore doses.

"As the third Covid wave is also anticipated soon, we want to complete vaccination of all people in Delhi within next three months. To complete it in three months, we would need 23 lakh doses per month from GOI channels during May to July.

"I urge you to direct Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to increase monthly supplies to Delhi to 60 lakh doses during May to July," Kejriwal added.

Meanwhile, Delhi vaccinated over 1.28 lakh people on Saturday, the state government said, adding that it currently has 4.65 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccines available for those above 45, and healthcare and frontline workers, while 2.74 lakh doses are available for the 18-44 age category. Delhi has so far received 5.5 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccines for the 18-44 category, and over 43 lakh doses for 45-plus, and healthcare and frontline workers.

CRPF DIG under probe for misbehaving with lady doctor

Team Absolute | New Delhi

An enquiry was initiated on Sunday against a Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for allegedly misbehaving with a lady doctor of the force deputed in Bihar's Muzaffarpur.

The enquiry was set up after the victim lodged a complaint against Surinder Prasad, the DIG Range Muzaffarpur in Bihar, on Sunday morning with concerned officials in the CRPF.

In her complaint, the lady doctor complained that the DIG "made repeated phone calls late in the night followed by inappropriate advances at her place of stay in drunken state". The complainant is posted at CRPF Composite Hospital Muzaffarpur.

"An inquiry has been ordered to establish the facts and appropriate action will be taken against the delinquent," the CRPF said in a statement.

The CRPF further made it clear that the force is committed to creating a safe and secure environment for its women personnel and has a zero-tolerance policy for misbehaviour.

The CRPF, a 3.25 lakh strong force, is mandated to provide internal security in the country especially in terrorist torn Jammu and Kashmir region and Maoist-affected states.

Real estate firm, IAF set up 150-bed Covid facility in Gurugram

Team Absolute | Gurugram

Amid a shortage of beds for Covid patients in Gurugram, real estate firm M3M Group has collaborated with the Indian Air Force (IAF) to set up a 150-bed Covid hospital in vacant flats at Sector 67.

Officials also said that under the initiative, both the M3M Group and IAF will provide food and medical as well as oxygen facilities to the Covid patients in Gurugram.

At the hospital, a mobile medical unit is also being made available for shifting any patient from the Covid-care centre to the facility.

The realty major also said that soon they will add an

additional 250 beds to create a 400-bed lifeline for covid patients within a month.

Appreciating the effort, Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg has appealed to other companies in the district to come forward and help the government in fighting the pandemic."As per the guidance of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and continuous support from Health Minister Anil Vij, this Centre has become functional now with 150 beds at our project OKR in sector 67 in Gurugram.

We thank the Indian Air Force for joining us with their expertise and necessary support for this initiative and I am grateful to Artemis hospital, Paras hospital and W-Pratiksha hospital for the required support. We thank all government departments in Gurugram for their support for making this functional", said Payal Kanodia, Trustee, M3M Foundation.

This Covid Care centre which will be run and managed by the IAF, is a part of M3M foundation's PAN India initiative "Kartavya" and where the foundation has already supported more than 1,00,000 people at the construction and migrant workers through their food security and other initiatives in the first phase.

CoviVan: Delhi Police's unique move to help senior citizens

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Taking a step ahead of its mandated area to maintain law and order in the city, Delhi Police has come up with a unique initiative to start CoviVan helpline to help senior citizens in the neighbourhood amid Covid-19 crisis.

The initiative, however, has been started by south district police in a particular designated area that comes under the jurisdiction of Greater Kailash-I police station, the people have appreciated the efforts of the force.

South district police force has adopted the way through the CoviVan helpline (012- 26241077) to help the senior citizens in the posh neighbourhood as they are facing problems for household things and other essential work due to lockdown imposed in the city to check Covid surge. After receiving any call for CoviVan through the helpline, deployed police officer in the van with beat officer of the concerned beat will visit to the house of the senior citizens and help them in getting essential item. The police officers visiting the house of senior citizens will also help the old-aged people in purchasing of household things, medicines and other items which are essential for them.The CoviVan also ensures vaccination to the senior citizens by taking them to nearby vaccination centres where they have booked through the CoWIN App or AarogyaSetu App.

ESIC INSTALLS OXYGEN PLANTS AT TWO HOSPITALS IN DELHI-NCR

New Delhi: The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), which comes under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, has installed oxygen generation plants at two hospitals in Delhi-NCR area.

A 440 LPM capacity plant has been installed at the ESIC Hospital and Medical College in Faridabad, while another plant of 220 LPM capacity was commissioned at ESIC Hospital in Jhilmil, New Delhi on Sunday. This will enable these hospitals to augment the availability of their ICU and ventilator beds, a release said.

"The Corporation is actively helping fight the battle against Covid-19 by quickly converting its 30 hospitals all over the country into Covid-dedicated facilities. These hospitals have around 4200 beds, including 300 ICU beds and 250 ventilator beds. The facility has been made available to all citizens of the country.

Delhi received 71% of SC-approved oxygen on Saturday, weekly average 76%, says oxygen bulletin

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi government on Sunday said that the national capital received 499 metric tonnes of oxygen on May 8, which is only 71 per cent of the medical oxygen to be delivered by the Centre to hospitals in the national capital daily.

The oxygen bulletin was posted on Twitter by Raghav Chadha, the vice chairman of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and MLA from Rajinder Nagar.

The bulletin also had a section about the weekly average, which said that the average oxygen to be supplied to the national capital as per direction of the Supreme Court in seven days was 700 MT, while the average oxygen supplied to Delhi in the last seven days stands at 533 MT.

The oxygen supplied as a percentage of quantity directed by the Supreme Court in the past seven days is 76%, it further added.

The oxygen bulletin also said that the Delhi government

received four SOS on Saturday. "Total SOS oxygen supplies on Saturday stands at 15.50 MT," the bulletin said.The Supreme Court had directed the Centre to ensure the availability of 700 MT of oxygen to Delhi on a daily basis. It said that the Centre is under an obligation to ensure a daily supply of the said quantity of oxygen to meet the existing requirements of the national capital and directed that there shall be no reduction in the allocation and availability of medical oxygen to Delhi.

"We direct the Union of India to remedy the situation forthwith and to ensure that the direction issued by this court for the availability of 700 MT is strictly observed on a daily basis, pending further orders," the bench said in its order passed on May 6 and uploaded on Saturday.

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said on Saturday that Delhi received the court approved amount of oxygen for just one day, and that the Centre has failed to supply even 600MT a day after that. He urged the Centre to streamline its processes and ensure that all states and union territories receive oxygen in better quantities so that states don't have to fight for oxygen supply.

Delhi witnessed a slight dip in Covid-19 cases with only 13,336 fresh infections were recorded in the last 24 hours, according to the health bulletin by the Delhi government released on Sunday.

The Covid-19 positivity rate also dropped to 21.67per cent, the lowest since April 17.

The Delhi government has extended the ongoing lockdown for another week till May 17. Delhi has been under a lockdown since April 19 in view of the record surge in Covid-19 cases.

Gurugram vaccinates 5.22L people, highest in Haryana

With Over 5.22 lakh people in Gurugram having been administered Covid-19 vaccine doses, the district registers the highest vaccination in Haryana.

GURUGRAM | Agencies

According to the health officials, so far over 4 lakh people in the district have been administered with the first dose of the vaccine while over 95 thousand have received their second dose.

Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg said that 5,22,992 doses of Corona vaccines have been administered in the district so far.

"The vaccination process is being carried out at 37 government centres and 60 private hospitals in the district smoothly. Also, around 8,173 people of 18 plus age group have received the Covid jabs," Garg said.

Apart from this, On Saturday 4,101 people got cured from Covid-19 while 3,441 new cases were reported in Gurugram.

According to the daily health bulletin, 1,14,7 53 people have recovered so far in Gurugram district.

Health officials said, testing is being done to curtail the Covid infections in Gurugram. In the last 24 hours the health department conducted 12,666 Covid tests.

On Saturday, 10,501 people were administered Covid jabs and a total of 5,22,992 doses have been given in the district, which is the highest in all the districts of Haryana.

According to the figures, the number of total active case in Gurugram district is 38,330, out of which 35,822 patients are in home isolation.

"We appeal to the people of Gurugram that they should be careful against coronavirus and try to stay inside their homes until it is very necessary to go out. People should use face mask and follow Covid norms," Garg said.

MAHARASHTRA PANEL TO STUDY MARATHA QUOTA ORDER BY SUPREME COURT

The committee will be set up in two days and submit its report within 15 days. The name of the judge will be decided by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government will set up a committee, likely to be headed by a retired judge, to study the Supreme Court judgment that struck down reservation for the Marathas on May 4. The SC had struck down the Maharashtra law granting quota to Marathas in educational admissions and government jobs, terming the legislation as "unconstitutional", and also refused to refer the 1992 Mandal judgment - setting a 50 per cent cap on reservation - to a larger bench for reconsideration.

The committee will be set up in two days and submit its report within 15 days. The name of the judge will be decided by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

PWD Minister Ashok Chavan, who heads the state's sub-committee on Maratha reservation, said the committee will study the SC judgement, which runs into over 500 pages, and submit a report, following which a decision would be taken on whether or not to move a review petition in court.

Senior officials had earlier advised that the government should not appeal against the order and instead appoint a new committee to document the backwardness of the community and send a report to the National Backward Classes Commission. Chavan said Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte would take stock of the pending recruitment process under the Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) in every department, adding that the SC had upheld the recruitments that had taken place until September 9, 2020.

"The entire process comprises selection and recruitment. The chief secretary will review this process. The state is positively considering giving justice to SEBC candidates affected by the court decision, and the future course of action will be based on the chief secretary's report," he added.

Chavan said that Thackeray is also likely to write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind on this issue, and ask the Centre to provide quota to the Maratha community.

Uranium recovery in Mumbai: NIA takes over case

The anti-terror agency took over the case on Saturday from Mumbai Police on the Union Home Ministry's order and re-registered the case under section 24(1)(a) of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962. The first case was lodged at Mumbai's Kalachowki Police Station on May 5.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday said that it has taken over the case related to the recovery of 7.1 kg "natural uranium" worth Rs 21.30 crore in Mumbai.

The anti-terror agency took over the case on Saturday from Mumbai Police on the Union Home Ministry's order and re-registered the case under section 24(1)(a) of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962. The first case was lodged at Mumbai's Kalachowki Police Station on May 5.

"The case relates to the seizure of 7.1 kg of 'Natural Uranium' having value of about Rs 21.30 crore from illegal possession of accused persons Jigar Jayesh Pandya and Abu Tahir Afzal Choudhary," the NIA said.

"Pursuant to registeration of the case, requisite actions as per law for expeditious investigation of case have been initiated."

The NIA on Thursday collected the FIR and other information about the seizure from Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad which arrested Pandya and Choudhary and seized the uranium from their possession on May 5.Thane resident Panday, 27, and Mankhurd (Mumbai) scrap dealer Choudhary, 31, were produced before a special NIA court which granted police custody for 12 days.

Soon after the recovery of uranium like-substance from Pandya, the Maharashtra ATS first sent it for scientific analysis to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). The report was received on May 5.

COVID RELIEF INITIATIVE:

Social Responsibility Forum extends helping hands for needy

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In times like these, where the second wave of Covid-19 has had a detrimental impact on the lives of the people and the medical fraternity, Social Responsibility Forum has taken up steps and pushed its limits to help the people in need invariably.

SRF's President, Anjali Garad, said "It is very important for organisations and students like us to come forward in such times of need. We urge everyone to help in any way they can" and they made this their mantra and helped in every way they could. SRF has created WhatsApp groups wherein the patients or attendants who require Covid resources such as beds, oxygen cylinders, plasma, medicines, injections, etc. put forward their requirements and the ones who have leads on such resources help them with contact numbers or websites. Three of such groups are currently functioning are divided based on regions: Mumbai, Delhi NCR, and the rest of the country. Every need is taken care of by each member on a 24/7 allocation basis until the requirement is fulfilled.SRF has also used its extensive outreach on Instagram by inviting people in need of Covid resources to put forward their requests. They are sharing them in their stories. SRF's followers with their leads and contacts have unstintingly helped those in need.

SRF has launched its Covid Resource Guide on Instagram which has the information and other relevant details about the pandemic. Besides, SRF is also in touch with doctors for an Instagram Live session in the coming week. They will have a talk about how the second wave is different, the vaccination drive and the possible steps every citizen can take when the country is in dire need of help. Furthermore, SRF is currently conducting a plasma donation drive where people who have recovered from Covid for at least four weeks or the people who haven't been affected by Covid yet can donate their plasma which will be used to treat the Covid patients.During the 2021 "Lockdown", SRF has also various done food distribution amongst the needy and underprivileged. They are trying their best to make sure this deadly wave does not affect the underprivileged miserably.

In these difficult times, Team SRF sees no boundaries. They have helped people as and when the need came and shall continue to do so until India wins this war.

Maharashtra NCP Chief Seeks Bharat Ratna For KarmaveerBhaurao Patil

In a letter to the Prime Minister, the NCP leader mentioned that Bhaurao Patil worked all his life to ensure education for the children from the deprived sections of society through his RayatShikshan Sanstha.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra minister and state NCP chief Jayant Patil on Sunday reiterated his party's demand that Bhaurao Patil, popularly addressed as "Karmaveer", be bestowed with the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour.

The NCP leader wrote to Prime Minister on Sunday with the demand, his letter mentioning that Patil worked all his life to ensure education for the children from the deprived sections of society through his RayatShikshan Sanstha.

The Sanstha celebrated its centenary in 2019 and the NCP minister said it would be a tribute to the legendary social reformer if he is conferred with the Bharat Ratna. He had written a letter on the same lines on May 9, 2018 as well.

In a tweet on Sunday, the NCP minister tagged the Prime Minister and said, "I had made the demand three years ago. I request the prime minister to take a decision."

MAHARASHTRA NCP CHIEF SEEKS BHARAT RATNA FOR KARMAVEERBHAURAO PATIL

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In a tweet on Sunday, the NCP minister tagged the Prime Minister and said, "I had made the demand three years ago. I request the prime minister to take a decision."

103-YEAR-OLD MAN FROM PALGHAR BEATS COVID-19

Palghar: A 103-year-old man from Palghar in Maharashtra has recovered from COVID-19 despite being in the vulnerable age group, officials said on Sunday.Shamrao Ingle, a native of Virendra Nagar area, was admitted to a rural COVID-19 hospital in Palghar after he contracted the infection.He was discharged on Saturday after recovering from the disease, a spokesperson of the district collectorate said in a release.According to doctors at the hospital, the elderly man responded well to the medical treatment provided to him and co-operated with the staff at the facility.He walked out of the hospital with a smile on Saturday. Palghar Collector Dr ManikGursal and the hospital staff greeted the centenarian with flowers at the time of his discharge.

Fully vaccinated Cop dies of Covid

Besides Tawade, 54-year-old sub-inspector Shivaji Nangare, who was a 2006 train blast victim, also succumbed to Covid-19.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 48-year-old head constable posted at Dahisar police station succumbed to Covid-19 on Saturday, after taking the second dose of vaccine over a month ago. The deceased has been identified as Sandeep Tawade.Besides Tawade, 54-year-old sub-inspector Shivaji Nangare, who was a 2006 train blast victim, also succumbed to Covid-19.

His colleagues said he did not take the vaccine, as he feared it will complicate his medical condition. Tawade, who was on duty at the magistrate court, stayed with his wife and son at his private residence at Dahisar.He took his first dose of vaccine on February 12 and the second dose on March 13, said police. He was on duty when he got infected and tested positive on April 21. He was admitted to the Dahisar Covid-19 care centre and was shifted to Seven Hills hospital in two or three days."He was initially in the ICU ward... After his health improved, he was shifted to the general ward. But his health deteriorated again and he was shifted to ICU," said senior Inspector Pravin Patil of Dahisar police station.Tawade, who according to the police was diabetic, passed away early Saturday.His wife and son have tested negative.

Nangare, meanwhile, was posted at Kandivali police station. He had suffered multiple internal injuries in the 2006 train blasts. "He also had high blood pressure. A few years ago, he went through a major surgery and was afraid that the vaccines would interfere with his medical condition," said an officer from Kandivali police station.

Nangare was infected while on duty. He was admitted to the Seven Hills hospital on April 16 and passed away on Saturday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations) and PRO for Mumbai Police, Chaitanya S, said: "With this, 112 Mumbai Police personnel have died due to Covid-19 till Saturday. At present. 382 personnel are infected."

The Maharashtra Police, meanwhile, had reported 432 deaths till Friday, with 10 dying in one week. The force has 3,388 infected personnel at present. On Friday, 160 had tested positive. Among them, while 18 had taken the first vaccine dose, 26 had taken the second dose.

FRUIT VENDOR POSES AS DOCTOR, TREATS COVID-19 PATIENTS; ARRESTED

Nagpur: Afruit vendor was arrested in the Nagpur district of Maharashtra, for allegedly treating coronavirus patients on the pretext of being a doctor. Chandan Naresh Chaudhary, who hails from Kamthi area of Nagpur, used to sell fruits and ice cream. He later started working as an electrician, police said. Chaudhary was also running a charitable dispensary named Om Narayana Multipurpose Society for the last five years where he provided Ayurveda naturopathic treatment to patients. Taking advantage of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic situation in the country, this fake doctor started treating Covid-19 patients at his dispensary in Nagpur district of Maharashtra. The matter came to light when someone acquainted with him complained about the matter to the district police.After receiving the information, police conducted raids at Chaudhary's dispensary and arrested him for posing as a fake doctor.

Black fungus cases up among Covid-19 survivors in Maharashtra, Gujarat

Cases of mucormycosis, commonly known as black fungus, are on the rise among the Covid-19 survivors, causing blindness or other serious issues, health officials in Maharashtra and Gujarat said on Saturday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Cases of mucormycosis, a serious but rare fungal infection, are on the rise among COVID-19 survivors, causing blindness or other serious issues, health officials in Maharashtra and Gujarat said on Saturday.

Mathur Savani, chairman of Surat-based Kiran Super Multispeciality Hospital, said mucormycosis patients are coming to his hospital from many parts of Gujarat.

"Fifty mucormycosis patients are being treated and 60 more are awaiting treatment," Savani told media persons.

Seven such patients lost their eyesight, he said. The civil hospital in Surat has set up a facility for such patients, said in-charge Resident Medical Officer Dr Ketan Naik.

In Ahmedabad, at least five mucormycosis patients are being operated upon every day at the Asarva civil hospital, a senior doctor said.

"We get five to 10 such cases daily, especially since the second wave of COVID-19 started," said Dr Devang Gupta, ENT specialist at the hospital.

"At least one in five cases is related to eyes. Many are suffering from blindness," he said.

In Maharashtra, at least eight COVID-19 survivors have lost vision in an eye due to mucormycosis and 200 others are being treated, said Dr TatyaraoLahane, who heads the state government's Directorate of Medical Education and Research.

"They survived COVID-19 but the fungal infection attacked their weakened immune system," he said.

Dr Lahane earlier said the eight COVID-19 survivors had died but later clarified that he said so inadvertently. This disease is not new but is on the rise among COVID-19 patients because the use of steroids elevates sugar level and some medicines suppress the patients' immunity, he said.

"In such a situation, the fungus infects the patient easily. In one such case, one of the eyes of a patient had to be removed permanently to save his life," Dr Lahane said.

Also called the black fungus, it is present in the environment, and those with suppressed immunity or co-morbidities are more vulnerable to infection, he said.

Symptoms of mucormycosis include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision, Dr Lahane said. The treatment involves injections for 21 days. The basic cost of the injections is around Rs 9,000 per day, he said. Dr HetalMarfatia, professor and head of the ENT department at the government-run KEM hospital in Mumbai, said a surge in mucormycosis cases is being witnessed in the last two weeks. "On average, two or three such patients are visiting the hospital every day," he said.Many of these patients come from outside Mumbai and cannot afford the treatment cost, he said. This fungal infection came to light during the first 'wave' of the pandemic, typically a couple of weeks after the patient was discharged, Dr Marfatia said.

"But now some patients are contracting this infection even while undergoing COVID-19 treatment," he said. Niti Aayog Member (Health) V K Paul on Friday had said that mucormycosis cases were being found in patients with COVID-19. "It is caused by a fungus named mucor, which is found on wet surfaces. It, to a large extent, is happening to people who have diabetes. It is very uncommon in those who are not diabetic. There is no big outbreak and we are monitoring it," he had said. "When a patient is on oxygen support, it should be ensured that water does not leak from the humidifier (to prevent the growth of the fungus)," he said, while also calling for "a rational usage" of steroids and medicines such as Tocilizumab to treat COVID-19 patients.

MAHARASHTRA COVID DEATHS CROSS 75K, CASE TALLY ABOVE 5 MILLION

Mumbai: Exactly 14 months after Maharashtra got its first two Covid-19 cases (March 9, 2020), the states overall case tally on Saturday crossed the 5 million-mark while fatalities shot past the 75,000-level, although the situation in Mumbai remained positive, health officials said here.

Compared to 898 deaths reported on Friday, the state's fatalities went down to 864 on Saturday, taking the state's overall death toll to 75,277, the worst in the country. The state on Saturday reported 53,605 new cases, much lower than the record high of 68,631 cases recorded on April 18, mounting the state's overall tally past the 50 lakh-mark to 50,53,336. The situation in Mumbai continued to be encouraging, with new infections remaining much below the 5,000-level at 2,664, taking the city's overall tally to 673,235 till date.

Mumbai's daily deaths went down from 71 on Friday to 62 Saturday, as the total number of fatalities in the country's commercial capital shot up to 13,713.

Randeep Hooda: Being overshadowed has never been part of my vocabulary

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor RandeepHooda plays the antagonist in Salman Khan's upcoming Eid biggie "Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai". Salman's superstardom towers over in the build-up to the film's release, but Randeep insists he has never felt overshadowed by anyone on screen. "You have to do your work in the film, to the best of your ability. Being overshadowed and such things have never been part of my vocabulary or thought process. I am doing my part and someone else is doing their part. We are not doing the same part that we can overshadow each other. I have never given in to these things. People say 'khagaya' and all (but I don't)," said Hooda.

Randeep acknowledges the film has primarily been hyped as a Salman Khan vehicle, but notes that it stars other actors, as well. "Yes, it is a Salman Khan film and his films are about that. I have worked with him twice before - in 'Kick' and 'Sultan" - and I have got reception for those roles. I stood out in those roles and there has been no insecurity. A lot of people have worked hard on the film," he says.

The actor hopes that the film helps people feel better during these gloomy times.

"I am excited. People will be privy to my work in these gloomy times. Every news, every minute is full of misery. I am glad that we will be able to provide a way to take people's mind off and enjoy a masala entertaining film. I am conflicted that at this time we have to promote (the film). But it is my job and it's not just actors who come together for a film, but 400 to 500 other people, too. The film is releasing for everyone's sake, and will hopefully put people's mind off the pandemic and help them stay at home," he says. The makers of the film have opted for a pay-per-view release in the digital space along with its theatrical release on May 13. Talking about the same, Randeep says: "It has been done in the West many times before. It is a model that exists in the cinematic consumption of movies. It's been done for the first time here and what better movie to test it out than a Salman Khan mass entertainer. I am sure it will work."

5 BREATHING EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

Team Absolute | New Delhi

While Covid-19 cases continue to surge, we need to be even more vigilant, while staying at home and keeping ourselves healthy and fit. While eating right and exercising ensures our bodies and minds stay fit, it is also important to strengthen our respiratory system - as that is also severely affected by the virus. Breathing exercises are a great way to develop the lungs as they improve lung muscles, clear out any secretion and increase the capacity by supplying an adequate amount of oxygen. There are several other benefits to these exercises as well! It also helps us stay calmer, and de-stress especially in these unprecedented times we are living in. To get started, here are five breathing exercises you can do at any time of the day and in any comfortable space.

Deep breathing with increasing counts: breath-in and breath-out.

This is one of the easiest and most important exercises. It helps in strengthening our lungs and improving blood flow, immunity and eliminating stress and anxiety.

Steps:

- ❑ Sit down in a relaxed position, take a deep breath and count your inhalation and exhalation. Ideally, your inhalation and exhalation counts should be the same.
- ❑ With each breath increase the count to inhale and exhale for as long as comfortable. Practise from 2 to 5 minutes duration.

Diaphragmatic breathing

Also known as belly breathing, or abdominal breathing, this particular exercise has various benefits such as managing irritable bowel syndrome, depression, anxiety and insomnia. Normally people get in the habit of breathing without fully utilising the lower part of their lungs. With this breathing technique, you consciously practise filling in lungs to their maximum capacity and increasing oxygen uptake.

Steps:

- ❑ Lie flat on the floor or sit in a comfortable position and relax your shoulders
- ❑ Put one hand below your chest and just above your stomach (this is where your diaphragm sits)
- ❑ Take a deep breath in by expanding your diaphragm or stomach and exhale slowly.

Cardiovascular exercise

The benefit of any cardiovascular exercises is that it increases your heart rate which forces the respiratory system to become more efficient and eventually increases the amount of oxygen you take with each breath. This allows for your lungs to improve capacity and function better. Here are some of the most common cardiovascular exercises that you can do from the comfort of your home: are brisk walking, spot jogging, jumping rope, jumping jacks and climbing staircase.

Anulom-vilom

More commonly known as alternate nostril breathing, it is a prevalent Pranayama and has been spoken about in the Hatha Yoga literature. This exercise helps clear out the nasal passage and improves respiratory muscle strength. It is advised that Anulom-vilom should be practiced on an empty stomach ideally in the morning or in the evening after a long meal gap.

Steps:

- ❑ Sit on a chair or on the ground cross legged, in a meditation position
- ❑ With your right thumb, close your right nostril and inhale through the left nostril. Release your right nostril and with your middle and ring finger, close your left nostril exhaling through the right nostril
- ❑ Inhale through the right nostril, then release the fingers, closing the right nostril and exhaling through the left nostril
- ❑ Continue the slow breathing through alternate nostrils and focus on the breath
- ❑ Practise this for 10 minutes for benefits to start accruing

Bhramari

Derived from Sanskrit, brahmari literally means a bee. It is a humming exercise, which increases nitric oxide in the body and acts as vasodilators; helps with easier blood flow through the vessels and prevents muscles from tightening.

Steps:

- ❑ Sit on a chair or on the ground cross legged, in a meditation position
- ❑ Close your ears using your thumb and place your middle and ring fingers lightly at the inner corner of your eyes.
- ❑ Rest your index finger above your eyebrows and little finger where it rests on your cheeks
- ❑ Take a deep breathe in and while exhaling make a soft humming sound similar to 'hmmmmm', throughout the entire exhalation. Inhale again and while exhaling make the humming sound
- ❑ Practise for 10 minutes for benefits to start accruing.

These exercises won't help prevent Covid, however, if performed daily, they will help in developing a stronger respiratory system which can help our body to fight any possible infection. Having said that, if you or your family members have any pre-existing health conditions or are feeling any discomfort, please do consult with your doctor.

PAYAL GHOSH PITCHES IN TO PROVIDE BEDS, MEDICINE FOR COVID AFFECTED

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Payal Ghosh, has been working with volunteers to help find beds and other emergency medicine for those who are suffering from Covid-19.

"The situation is dire and I have seen it with my own eyes. I needed to do something about this and hence I spoke to some people that I knew, and slow and steady we started getting people help," Payal said.

The actress added that she is happy that she can be of help, and hopes people follow protocols. "There have been cases when we arranged an ICU bed and the patient had passed away by then. It makes me sad, but then I pick myself up and work again. I hope everyone is staying indoors as much as possible. It's a time to save ourselves and our near ones," she added.

Anushka Sharma thanks healthcare, frontline workers for 'working tirelessly'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Anushka Sharma took to Instagram, on Sunday, to thank all the healthcare and frontline workers for their dedicated efforts as India fights the second wave of the deadly Covid-19.

She posted a video with pictures of doctors, policemen and ambulances and wrote: "Thank You, A huge shoutout to all the frontliners working tirelessly day and night putting their lives at risk to save ours. India stands by you."

She captioned the video as: "We'd like to say a big thank you to all our healthcare and frontline workers, their dedication is truly inspiring. You continue to risk your lives for the nation, and for that, we are eternally grateful to you. You are the real heroes, for Virat and I, and for the nation. Thank you once again."

The couple recently announced a fundraiser, #InThisTogether, to help people cope with the Covid crises in the country. They donated Rs 2 crore for this initiative.

ALY GONI GETS JAMMU HOUSE RENOVATED FOR MOM ON MOTHER'S DAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Aly Goni is getting his house in Jammu renovated as a gift for his mom this Mother's Day. The actor says that work has already begun.

"She wanted our old house in Jammu to be renovated so this Mother's Day that is the only gift I am giving her. I have already started with the renovation, and I am trying to give it a unique and new style. It is going to be the best gift for her," said Aly. Aly's mom recently tested positive for Covid-19 and is in quarantine, and the actor is devastated that he can't be with her even though he is in Jammu. "She tested positive a while back, but with the blessings of Allah, she is fine. I wish her a speedy recovery, and I am just waiting to see her, can't wait to hug her and kiss her," he adds. Aly says his mother has always taught him to be mentally prepared for any challenging situation. "I have learned a lot from my mom. The most important thing she has taught me is to always be ready for the worst. If good times are rolling, you should still be mentally prepared for the worst because you never know when and how it will come to shock you, so always keep yourself prepared for the worst," he says. "She has also taught me to give back to society in whatever way I can. She used to tell me whatever you have, you must share a part of it with others, and I will keep doing it for the rest of my life," he adds.

Kareena shares Taimur's picture with baby brother on Mother's Day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan treated her fans on Sunday with a picture of her two boys and wish them a Happy Mother's Day .

In the monochrome picture, her elder son Taimur can be seen holding the little one in his arms. However, the face of her younger son was not clearly visible.

She wrote: "And these two give me hope... for a better tomorrow. Happy Mother's Day to all you beautiful, strong mothers out there."

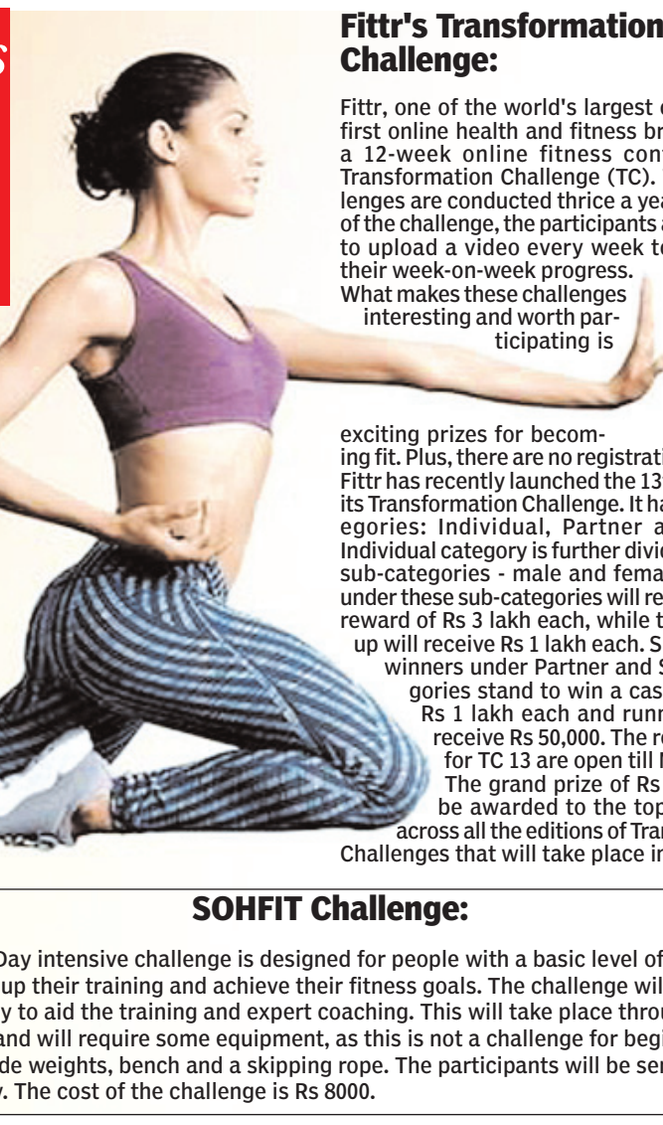
Kareena and her husband, actor Saif Ali Khan are yet to reveal the name of the baby. They were blessed with their second son on February 21.

The actress shared the first picture of her younger son on Women's Day.

Kareena and Saif tied the knot on October 16, 2012 and were blessed with their first child Taimur on December 20, 2016.

Kareena will be next seen with Aamir Khan in the film "Laal Singh Chaddha".

Fitness challenges to participate from home and win prizes



Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the pandemic continues to grip the country, it is becoming challenging for us to keep our spirits high. Fitness is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity more than ever. While we are stuck at home, the best way to focus on our health is by participating in some of the virtual fitness challenges. They not only help achieve our health goals but also bring some cheer to our everyday lives. And what's more, you may even win some great prizes.

Fittr's Transformation Challenge:

Fittr, one of the world's largest community-first online health and fitness brands, hosts a 12-week online fitness contest called Transformation Challenge (TC). These challenges are conducted thrice a year. As a part of the challenge, the participants are required to upload a video every week to showcase their week-on-week progress. What makes these challenges interesting and worth participating is the fact that you get to win exciting prizes for becoming fit. Plus, there are no registration charges. Fittr has recently launched the 13th edition of its Transformation Challenge. It has three categories: Individual, Partner and Senior. Individual category is further divided into two sub-categories - male and female. Winners under these sub-categories will receive a cash reward of Rs 3 lakh each, while the runners-up will receive Rs 1 lakh each. Similarly, the winners under Partner and Senior categories stand to win a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh each and runners-up will receive Rs 50,000. The registrations for TC 13 are open till May 9, 2021. The grand prize of Rs 1 crore will be awarded to the top performer across all the editions of Transformation Challenges that will take place in 2021.

SOHFIT Challenge:

SOHFIT 21-Day intensive challenge is designed for people with a basic level of fitness who aim to up their training and achieve their fitness goals. The challenge will include a diet strategy to aid the training and expert coaching. This will take place through WhatsApp and will require some equipment, as this is not a challenge for beginners. These include weights, bench and a skipping rope. The participants will be sent workout videos daily. The cost of the challenge is Rs 8000.

Fit Hoga India Challenge:

Fit Hoga India organises online challenges which can be completed at your own pace and place. Participants can choose from challenges on running, walking, cycling and duathlon and upload their progress. Virtually-run activities let you choose to run or walk outside or complete the race on a treadmill or elliptical at the gym - how you choose to complete your virtual run challenge is completely up to you. Once the challenge is completed, you have to submit the results to get your medal and e-certificate. The cost to participate in each challenge is Rs 400.

Fit with Faculty Challenge:

Institute of Nutrition and Fitness Sciences (INFS), the largest online fitness institute in the country, has launched a social media campaign 'Fit with Faculty Challenge', offering an exciting opportunity to fitness enthusiasts to showcase their love for working out at home. The challenge includes performing exercises such as burpees and push-ups within a stipulated amount of time every alternate day.

MUSK-PROMOTED DOGECOIN CRASHES AS HE APPEARS ON 'SNL' TV SHOW

San Francisco | Agencies

As Tesla CEO Elon Musk hosted the Saturday Night Live show on TV (US time), Dogecoin which is fourth-largest cryptocurrency by market value and promoted by Musk fell sharply early on Sunday.

When SNL first went live on NBC and was streamed in over 100 countries for the first time ever, the cryptocurrency hovered around 69 cents but as the show was on, the price dropped to 56 cents, a 12 per cent plunge.

Trading platform Robinhood also crashed for cryptocurrency users.

"We're currently experiencing issues with crypto trading. We're working to resolve this as soon as possible," the crypto platform said in a tweet on Sunday

After vouching for Bitcoin, Tesla CEO Elon Musk now supports Dogecoin cryptocurrency, even calling him "Dogefather".

Dogecoin is a cryptocurrency invented by software engineers Billy Markus and Jackson Palmer, who decided to create a payment system. Nearly 113 billion coins have already been mined.

Amid the surge in Bitcoin and Ether cryptocurrencies, Dogecoin has surged more than 659 per cent this year.

Tesla has already announced it has invested $1.5 billion in the Bitcoin cryptocurrency.

'MINARI' TO PREMIERE DIGITALLY ON MAY 11

Los Angeles | Agencies

Lee Isaac Chung's multiple Oscar-nominated Korean drama "Minari" premieres digitally on May 11. The bittersweet tale of a Korean-American family was in the race for six Academy Awards, and won in the Best Supporting Actress category for veteran Korean actress YounYuh-jung's performance. She became the first Korean to win an Oscar in an acting category. The film also won the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film earlier this year.

The Steven Yeun-starrer unravels the raw emotions that a family navigates while chasing the fabled American Dream.

Director Lee Isaac Chung draws from his own past to set up a tale he wanted to share with his young daughter -- about the journey of where he came from.

The film is brought to India by PVR Pictures and will stream on Amazon Prime Video.

ANNA KENDRICK FEELS SHE MAY HAVE SAVED LIVES BY STAYING HOME DURING PANDEMIC

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Anna Kendrick feels she may have saved lives by staying home and sticking to lockdown rules. "It's a question we've all been dealing with this year, what are we willing to sacrifice for the sake of our communities. I know we're all kind of going insane, but I think a lot of people are going to come out of this going, 'Damn, I didn't accomplish anything, a whole year just stolen from me. I didn't achieve anything.' You have to refrain that, I accomplished the most important thing there is which is I may have saved lives by sitting on my butt inside," Kendrick said, according to a report in femalefirst.co.uk.

The 35-year-old actress had a "sense" at the beginning of the pandemic that it was going to go on for a longer time than was being said.

"I feel like at the beginning of quarantine I was just one of the people that had the sense early on that it was going to be a lot longer than they were telling us. I think in the first two weeks I was like, 'I'm just going to put the five pounds on now.' What would I try and put it on slowly, let's just get there and sit at this level and then future me will have to deal with the consequences," she said on "The Jess Cagle Podcast".

The actress added that she felt like snacking was the only thing one could do, at the beginning of lockdown.

Angelina Jolie: I am very warm and gentle with my children

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Angelina Jolie said that she makes sure to always be very warm and gentle when it comes to her kids. She added that this is something that she has learnt from her late mother Marcheline Bertrand, reports femalefirst.co.uk. In an interview with Australia's Sydney Morning Herald newspaper, she said: "My mother was very gentle. I can be many things in my work and in my life, but I am very warm and gentle with my children. That kindness and warmth is a foundation that's unbelievably important."

She added that she hopes she has made her children comfortable.

"I hope that I've been able to be that (for my own children), that I'm that warm, safe place. Because - and it's maybe a funny thing to say - but considering what my different jobs are, or what people think they know of you, or what you feel you have to be in the world, in truth none of those things are what you really are. Who you are to your children is everything."

The actress shares Maddox, 19, Pax, 17, Zahara, 16, Shiloh, 14 and twins Knox and Vivienne, 12, with ex-husband Brad Pitt.

Noel Gallagher: Lockdown helped me make more music

Los Angeles | Agencies

Musician Noel Gallagher says lockdown has helped him churn out many new songs. "I've hated every single day of lockdown and what it's done to society and people and children, and all that, it's been dreadful," said Gallagher in an interview with BBC Radio 6 Music, according to contactmusic.com. However, he added that he wanted to spend more time with his family when he got back from his tour.

"I went away on tour, I had two little sons. I got back and one of them has got a tache and the other one is wearing jewellery and they're calling me 'bruv'. I was saying to Sarah, 'How long have I been away?' And she goes, 'Well, too long. 'So, I was kind of like, 'Right I need to be around for a bit,' so I'd given myself a couple years out anyway," he said.

The former Oasis bandmate said that the pandemic helped him finish his pending songs. "Then the pandemic came along and what that did for me creatively, was made me a finish off these songs that are on the Best Of, and have a look at everything that I had lying around, half songs that were finished and half-baked, new ideas, and I started to kick them into shape," he said.

He added that he has more songs than what he would have had usually.

"The biggest benefit was my own music. I've got more songs that I would ordinarily have now," he said.

Gwyneth Paltrow was drinking seven nights a week during quarantine!

Los Angeles | Agencies

Everyone found different ways to cope during the brunt of the pandemic lockdown, and Gwyneth Paltrow was no different. The Oscar-winning actress has revealed she indulged in 'multiple drinks seven nights a week' during the last year or so as she quarantined with her family, according to The Mirror. Gwyneth, 48, dubbed her drink of choice a 'Buster Paltrow,' which she named after her grandfather and contains 'great quinoa whiskey.' 'I drank alcohol during quarantine,' she said. 'I was drinking seven nights a week and making pasta and eating bread. I went totally off the rails. I mean, who drinks multiple drinks seven nights a week? Like that's not healthy. Meanwhile, the Great Expectations star's Netflix show The Goop Lab is currently prepping its second season, after being renewed by the streamer 'by the skin of its teeth,' according to a source at the publication. The show premiered last January and created somewhat of a sensation with episodes describing mushroom trips and the like.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Kylie Jenner

EDITOR'S SPECS

Why Covid Re-attacks

Some virus RNA can be reverse transcribed and inserted into the human genome, finds a new study, which may explain why some people who had already recovered from Covid-19 would sometimes inexplicably test positive on a PCR test weeks or even months later. Researchers from the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US, showed that genetic sequences from the RNA virus SARS-CoV-2 can integrate into the genome of the host cell through a process called reverse transcription. These sections of the genome can then be "read" into RNAs, which could potentially be picked up by a PCR test. The results are published online 6 in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. SARS-CoV-2 is not the only virus that integrates into the human genome. Around 8 per cent of our DNA consists of the remnants of ancient viruses. Some viruses, called retroviruses, rely on integration into human DNA in order to replicate themselves. "SARS-CoV-2 is not a retrovirus, which means it doesn't need reverse transcription for its replication," said first author Liguo Zhang, postdoctoral researcher at Whitehead Institute. "However, non-retroviral RNA virus sequences have been detected in the genomes of many vertebrate species, including humans." Zhang added. With this in mind, the team analysed published datasets of RNA transcripts from different types of samples, including Covid-19 patient samples, to test whether this viral integration could be happening with the novel coronavirus. They were able to calculate the fraction of genes that were transcribed in these patients' cells which contained viral sequences that could be derived from integrated viral copies. The percentage varied from sample to sample, but for some, a relatively large fraction of viral transcripts seem to have been transcribed from viral genetic material integrated into the genome.For SARS-CoV-2, the frequency of integration in humans is still unknown. "The fraction of cells which integrate could be very small," said Rudolf Jaenisch, professor of biology at MIT. "But even if it's rare, there are more than 140 million people who have been infected already, right?"Jaenisch said.

THESE SECTIONS OF THE GENOME CAN THEN BE "READ" INTO RNAS, WHICH COULD POTENTIALLY BE PICKED UP BY A PCR TEST.

COVID DIARY: HOPE FLOATS FROM INDIVIDUALS WHEN SYSTEMS STRESS

Sukant Deepak

There is no point writing my name. I am just doing what I can," says the 68-year-old, who makes it a point to bring food packets and soup for the 50 patients and volunteers at the Mini Covid Care Centre in Bal Bhavan in Chandigarh. Everyday. She says this is the least she can do.

So is the case with Shantanu Bhardwaj, who owns a shop in Sector-22. He makes a quick round to the Centre to ask if they need anything. "It is going to be a routine till the facility is operational."

Run by the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Sewa Society, an NGO, which also runs three hospitals in the region, the 50-bedded Mini Covid Centre which started on May 4 is already full. "Even before the Chandigarh Administration invited NGOs and individuals to set up these centres, we were already thinking of starting one. In this case, the administration has given us the building while we set up the facility from our own resources in 36 hours including the piped oxygen facility set up by a Delhi-based team," says Harjit Singh Sabharwal, executive member of the Society. From engaging an entire team of health professionals including doctors, 14 nurses, technicians, cleaners, the volunteers of the society set up eight dormitories (four beds in each one) complete with piped oxygen, curtains, coolers, exhaust fans and television sets.

Impressed by their work, the administration has asked the society to take up the 100-bedded Infosys sarai too in PGI which has also been designated as a Mini Covid Centre. "It will be ready very soon, our volunteers are working at a break-neck speed. Ten doctors and fifteen nurses besides other staff have been commissioned for that centre."

With contributions pouring in from across the country after a video about their effort went viral recently, he stresses that funding is not an issue. "When systems fail, it is the common man who steps forward to ensure that everything runs smoothly. Just today morning, I got a call from someone who said he would like to donate an ambulance. He kept insisting that I should tell him what else is required. People across age groups and economic strata are turning up to ask what we need. While leaving, many thrust an envelope in our hands," says the social worker.

Considering that 40 beds in the hospital are with oxygen, the executive member laments that it is not just Delhi, but even this region that is facing a lack of the same. "You cannot even imagine the kind of black marketing that is going on. Even oxygen regulators are in extremely short supply. These are the kind of things that keep us on our toes -- we are experienced enough when it comes to organisation, management and supervision."

No patient is expected to pay any fee -- be it for the hospital, medicines, tests or food. "Not even for the expensive CT scans. I am in constant touch with the DC for medicines quota etc. Frankly, even if an injection costs Rs 2000, we don't care. It will be given for free. Those who can't afford expensive treatment also have a right to life, right? Sometimes I wonder, if a small organisation can manage things, what is stopping the government from engaging their best minds out in the field for better management?" There is a fervor of activity at the Indira Holiday Home in Sector 24 where another 48-bed centre has been set up by the The Competent Foundation and Bharat Vikas Parishad. Coordination on walkie-talkies and mobile phones does not cease. Attached with Government Multi-Specialty Hospital, Sector 16, for the regulation of admission of patients, list of medicines required to be kept at the centre etc, Sanjay Tandon, State president of BJP from Chandigarh, who founded and runs the NGO, Competent Foundation says, "This is a completely digitalised centre. Vital information regarding the patients, which is collected thrice a day, is communicated to the kin directly via e-mail. For the purpose of surveillance, CCTV cameras have been installed inside the halls. We can monitor the screens from home. The attendants can also keep a tab on the patient, while at home. So, we are working to develop it into a state-of-art facility." Ensuring that besides free treatment, patients are provided with steamers, toiletries, napkins, television sets etc, Tandon says that right now his effort is to ensure get at least 40 beds with oxygen running. "Impressed by our efforts, Manoj Kumar Parida, the Chandigarh UT Advisor has suggested that we increase the capacity to 100 beds."

Adding that the foundation did not have to go in for a fund collection drive, the State President says, "My son uploaded a post on Facebook describing the initiative taken by the foundation and writing about the equipment and material required. You will be surprised to know that we ended up receiving thrice the amount of material we had asked for. When people find someone dependable, there is no dearth of support."

And it is not just established NGOs that are coming forward in these unprecedented times. A group of teenagers from Chandigarh under the foundation 'Humanity Has Hope' (HHH) have formed a group of 50 volunteers from across the country -- including Chandigarh, Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata -- to assist people with oxygen cylinders, hospital beds and ambulances. Using their phones and social media handles, these five youngsters -- Aanya Malik, Vaanya Gilhotra, Tara Khanna, Sanya Singal and Ishan Sindhwani (from Noida) who started the drive three weeks back spend hours verifying leads and sharing numbers with those in need. "We started with five helpline numbers, our personal mobile numbers. Now we have 50 volunteers with their numbers. Soon, we are also going to manage the ration part for Covid affected families," says Malik. Speaking to correspondent, Yashpal Garg, State Nodal Officer for Mini Covid Centres and Oxygen Supply says that in a pandemic situation, the assistance offered by NGOs and private individuals goes a long way in easing the stress on the overburdened government system. "They have reduced our workload considerably by taking care of all arrangements in these Mini Covid Centres -- from funding, managing to supervising. Also, for them, it is not a job but a service. Their level of commitment is commendable."

Why BJP is winning Assembly elections in Assam?

Aarti Tikoo Singh

The massive development work initiated under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's various central schemes combined with the politics of Hindu nationalism seem to have clinched victory for the BJP-led alliance in Assam.

On Sunday, the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) was leading in 79 seats while the Congress-AIUDF alliance was ahead only in 46 of the 126-seat legislative Assembly. Given these trends, it is clear that the BJP headed by chief minister Sarbanand Sonowal faced neither anti-incumbency nor rejection over the Citizenship Amendment Act (Act) from the electorate.

The reason for that is that the Modi government and the Sonowal administration in the last five years addressed the lack of development which Assam along with the northeast had faced under their predecessors for decades. The Centre made huge investments in infrastructure projects - roads, bridges, educational institutions, hospitals - as well as Prime Minister Modi's welfare schemes including cash transfers to the poor.

Along with constructing 4000 km national highways including 21 two-lane roads, the Centre expedited and completed several bridges. Of them, the most significant is the Bogibeel bridge, India's longest rail-cum-road bridge which connects the Brahmaputra river to Silapathar bordering Arunachal Pradesh. The establishment of medical colleges, judicial academy and national law school earned the BJP lot of votes among youth in Assam. Just before the elections, the government distributed free Scooties to young women, earning their votes as well.

As a result, the opposition, the Congress party which ruled the state for most part of its history in independent India, could not persuade voters on the development front. On the other hand, the Congress seems to have harmed its base in the Upper Assam, because of its alliance with a Muslim communal party, All Indian United Democratic Front (AIUDF) headed by Badruddin Ajmal.

Geographically, Assam is split into two distinct areas - Barak valley (15 assembly seats) and Brahmaputra valley (106 assembly seats). Barak valley, lower Assam, is Bengali-dominated with almost equal denomination of Hindus and Muslims. Brahmaputra valley is home to ethnic Assamese, indigenous tribes and other ethnic communities. But part of lower Assam in Brahmaputra valley has also provided shelter to considerable number of Bengali Muslims, mostly migrants from Bangladesh. With such a complex demography, Assam politics always revolves around ethnic and religious identities.Even as the BJP had been claiming that the CAA was not a factor in the assembly polls, but on the ground both the ruling party and the opposition ran intense campaigns about a 'culture war' anchored around the CAA. The CAA is a central law that expedites citizenship process for migrants religiously persecuted by the three Islamic neighbours of India. Guwahati witnessed massive protests including some violence against the CAA.Both sides accused each other of being a threat to Assam's composite society. But in addition, the BJP also portrayed the Congress-AIUDF alliance as a threat to Assam's Hindu civilization and inimical to Indian nationalism. Given the poll results on Sunday, it seems the pre-poll alliance between the Congress and the AIUDF, which was forged to oppose CAA and to consolidate Muslim voters, did not go well with the Assamese Hindu voters in Upper Assam. While Muslim votes consolidated in favour of the Congress-AIUDF alliance in lower Assam, Hindu votes consolidated in favour of the BJP and allies in Upper Assam voters, indicating polarization along religious lines.However, through the election campaign, what seems to have made a huge impact in Assam is Prime Minister Modi's several rallies attended by thousands of voters.Apart from Modi's popularity as an agent of change and progress, what worked for the BJP in Assam was the strong partnership between chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and his health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. A structured election campaign organised under BJP's national vice president Jay Panda, who had been appointed as party's in charge of the Assam assembly polls, delivered the state once again to the NEDA.

Exercise of discretion brings success

D.C. PATHAK

We live in an age where 'innocence is bliss' no more and the call for being discreet but decisive guides every step of the way. Discretion is a positive trait as it is meant to safeguard one's interest without hurting someone else's. It can be usefully exercised only by a person who was well informed, who had the ability to see things in a larger perspective, who could judge the relative importance of a thing or happening in a context, who understood the significance of a lawful silence and who tilted in favour of a humane course.

Let us examine these five traits. First, we are in the age of information whose mandate is that one had to be a well-informed person to make progress in any field. Being well informed means having the right information in time, having the information that made a difference between a 'decision' and a 'guess' and having a complete-looking information of relevance since 'knowledge comes in integral packages'. A teacher of children, for instance, has to have knowledge of child psychology and parental stress, besides the content of curriculum, to do well. He or she will then be able to discreetly handle a child -- discretion here will be a vital part of the judgemental call made by the teacher. Again, a person, more so a woman, who was aware of the law and order situation in an area would be able to exercise discretion about the mode and timing of movement. Discretion is the better part of valour in this setting.

Secondly, it is not uncommon to see people not being able to 'rise above the details' and look at a situation objectively 'from above' to appreciate what the given facts were leading to. Life is so much about whatever is happening in the immediate and the proximal that thoughts on its repercussions for the future were pushed back. Living life easy takes precedence over living it meaningfully and that puts discretion on a discount because the latter required nursing relationships with some sensitivity as a presage to discreet conduct. Further, working for material advancement has to be a major endeavour of human beings but tempering it with a spiritual understanding of life yielded an inner satisfaction that could only be felt not expressed in words so much -- the classical Hindu thought describing an honest effort to raise wealth as a 'dharma' of man says it all. Discretion gets built into the conduct and responses of a person of material success when the 'big picture' orientation of thought stays with him. The Bible's 'Man shall not live by bread alone' as opposed to Mary Antoniette famously saying, 'Let them eat cake if they have no bread' suggests, more than anything else, a complete spiritual disconnect of the French queen. Discretion is wisdom and wisdom comes from the awareness of the broader perspective of life.

Third, discretion is basically an outcome of the capacity of a person to judge the contextual importance of a happening or a piece of information -- and that too in an ongoing fashion because life does not stop at one event or a one-time revelation. The point is about grasping the relative significance of what was there in front of you. In my younger days in Intelligence Bureau, my senior who taught me what the profession was all about, would often counsel me 'to distinguish essentials from non-essentials' -- he was defining the basic meaning of Intelligence assessment and perhaps unknowingly rediscovering what Vilfredo Pareto, the Nineteenth century Italian social scientist had, laid down by way of Pareto's law. That law simply states that 'there are a significant few amongst the insignificant many' -- the ability to pick up the former from a mass of information is what was being emphasised by that senior. This, in turn, comes from the 'effectiveness of differentiation' that is achieved on the strength of work experience, knowledge of the world and familiarity with human psyche and behaviour -- all of this, in fact, becoming the hallmark of how discretion was built into a sound judgement. It is common to find people who can't distinguish macro from the micro, long range from the short term and at a finer level between the 'journey' and the 'destination'.Fourthly, 'discreet silence' has generally been regarded a virtue so long as it was not meant to give somebody an advantage over the other, was used as a legitimate course to keep you out of the trouble spot of others and was not in violation of a legal obligation. Being discreet does not mean one would not be frank -- there is no compromise insofar as the expression of an honest opinion was concerned for that was an aspect of personal integrity. Maintaining confidentiality is good and it is a binding factor in many circumstances where non-disclosure is not a discretion but a compulsion. Any cognizable offence committed in the presence of a police officer, for instance, casts a legal duty on the latter to report it to the authorities. A citizen, on the other hand, may sometimes maintain a discreet silence out of an anxiety not to get caught in the harassment of a legal process -- and not for the reason of not helping the law.

Here it may be mentioned that the set of fundamental duties laid down in the Indian Constitution also rest on the citizen's patriotic sense and are not legally enforceable. Of course, one has to be an honest witness if approached by law to testify in any matter. Sometimes a person avoids intervening in a social situation out of discretion that tells him or her that silence was in the best interest of all concerned. Discreet silence here becomes a socio-cultural option and even a positive course of action if it is prompted by an innate wisdom about nature's larger scheme of things. Discretion has to be exercised always in favour of morality and not for a lesser objective. At the workplace, delegation of discretionary power is a sign of enlightened management that trusted employees with decision-making at their level for better efficiency and quicker delivery. In government functioning there is a lot of buck-passing, both up and down the hierarchy because of lack of willingness to exercise discretion and make a decision. Decision-making entails responsibility and many in the cosiness of a government employment would like to shun it.

The final paradigm of being discreet concerns the handling of human relationships -- it can be said that an option used in the interest of a humane cause will never go wrong. Even in business, and all business is human activity ultimately, discretion guides how a leader treats the colleagues and the subordinates. A successful leader has to have an idea of what an employee is as a person and an awareness of the role of emotions in shaping a response. Emotional intelligence has emerged as a key to the successful handling of the human resource and good leadership makes use of it to make that handling discreet and productive. Right use of discretion is a leadership trait and this comes in handy for the head of the family as well -- because family can be considered as the smallest organisational unit requiring good management. Discretion is a positive ingredient of informed decision-making that combines the personal integrity of the individual with his or her understanding of the immediate context as well as its long-term impact and humane implications. It is ultimately an index of wisdom and hence a forerunner of success.

(The writer is a former Director Intelligence Bureau)

90 PALESTINIANS INJURED IN E.JERUSALEM CLASHES

Jerusalem | Agencies

Some 90 Palestinians were injured in the second night of the ongoing violent clashes with Israeli security forces in East Jerusalem, it was reported on Sunday.

Sixteen of them were taken to hospital, Israeli radio reported, citing Palestinian medics.An Israeli police spokesman said on Sunday morning that confrontations took place on Saturday night at the Damascus Gate, one of the entrances to the Old City, and around the holy site known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, reports dpanws agency.Several arrests were made, the spokesman added. Damascus Gate, Palestinian demonstrators threw stones, bottles and firecrackers at security forces, according to the police.

Police used rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades, media reports said. On Saturday, more than 90,000 devout Muslims had gathered in the Noble Sanctuary, where al-Aqsa Mosque is located, to pray on the last weekend before the fasting month of Ramadan ends. The situation around the Old City and the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood had already escalated the previous night. Afterwards, there was talk of more than 200 people being injured, and police spoke of almost 20 security forces who had been injured.

The situation in the West Bank and in the Arab-dominated eastern part of Jerusalem has been tense since the beginning of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Many Palestinians are angry because Israeli police had cordoned off areas of the Old City to prevent gatherings.In addition, some Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah are facing eviction from their homes by Israeli authorities, further heightening tensions.

Police presence has been stepped up amid concerns about renewed violence on Israel's Jerusalem Day, which begins on Sunday evening.

Israel celebrates the conquest of the eastern half of Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War on that day.

Covid jabs won't raise immunity in organ transplant patients: Study

- "Transplant recipients should not assume that two vaccine doses guarantee sufficient immunity against SARS-CoV-2 any more than it did after just one dose," said DorrySegev, Professor of Surgery and Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

New York | Agencies

Patients, who had organ transplants, remain vulnerable to Covid-19 infections even after a second vaccine dose, finds a study that urges people who are immunocompromised to strictly adhere to wearing masks, and maintain physical distancing, even after vaccination.

The study, led by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in the US, showed that after two doses of Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 -- the virus that causes Covid 19, just 54 per cent people who have received solid organ transplants produced sufficient antibodies. The findings are published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)."Transplant recipients should not assume that two vaccine doses guarantee sufficient immunity against SARS-CoV-2 any more than it did after just one dose," said DorrySegev, Professor of Surgery and Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. "Based on our findings, we recommend that transplant recipients and other immunocompromised patients continue to practice strict Covid-19 safety precautions, even after vaccination," added lead author Brian Boyarsky, surgeon at the varsity. People who receive solid organ transplants (such as hearts, lungs and kidneys) often must take drugs to suppress their immune systems and prevent rejection. Such regimens may interfere with a transplant recipient's ability to make antibodies to foreign substances, including the protective ones produced in response to vaccines, the researchers said. The study evaluated this immunogenic response following vaccination from either Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech in 658 transplant recipients, none of whom had a prior diagnosis of Covid-19, between December 16, 2020, and March 13, 2021. The team found that only 98 of the 658 study participants -- 15 per cent -- had detectable antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 at 21 days after the first vaccine dose. At 29 days following the second dose, the number of participants with detectable antibodies rose to 357 out of 658 -- 54 per cent. After both vaccine doses were administered, 301 out of 658 participants -- 46 per cent -- had no detectable antibody at all while 259 -- 39 per cent -- only produced antibodies after the second shot.

'US to join fight against extremist content online'

- The US Government's support recognises the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to an issue that increasingly transcends borders, ideologies and nationalities, and the ability of any one group or country to address on their own

Paris | Agencies

The US is joining the fight to eliminate terrorist and extremist content online, French President Emmanuel Macron and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern have announced.

The next so-called Christchurch Call Community for a leaders' summit, co-chaired by Macron and Ardern, will be held as a video conference on May 14 with the participation of the US, the two leaders said in a joint statement late Saturday. "The US Government's support recognises the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to an issue that increasingly transcends borders, ideologies and nationalities, and the ability of any one group or country to address on their own," dpa news agency quoted Ardern as saying in the statement."It also recognises the importance of protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms online."

"The pervasive threat of terrorist and hateful content online continues to contribute and fuel violent extremism and terrorist actions," Macron said. "We believe the Call remains a cornerstone of our collective efforts against the presence online of such content."Macron and Ardern first held the summit, which brought in tech companies including Facebook, YouTube and Google, two years ago after a man broadcast the killings of 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch.

FIRE ERUPTS IN SYRIAN REFINERY FACILITY

Damascus: The agency carried images of smoke billowing from the facility as firefighters were trying to put out the blaze. SANA, citing a local firefighting official, reported that the blaze was later brought under control without causing casualties.

A fire erupted in a major oil refinery in war-torn Syria due to a leak, the country's state news agency SANA reported on Sunday.

The blaze took place at a distillation unit as a result of a pump leak in the Homs oil refinery in central Syria, dpa news agency quoted the SANA report as saying.

The agency carried images of smoke billowing from the facility as firefighters were trying to put out the blaze.SANA, citing a local firefighting official, reported that the blaze was later brought under control without causing casualties.

"The cooling process is now under way. There are no casualties," chief of the Homs firefighting brigade, Hassan Amar, said.

Last month, a fire broke out on an oil tanker off the coastal city of Baniyas following a suspected drone attack.

Three Syrians died in that blaze, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor.

Toll from blasts near Kabul school reaches 50

- At least 100 more people were wounded in the bombing that took place on Saturday near a school in Dasht-e-Barchi, a Shia-Hazara-populated area of the Afghan capital, dpa news agency quoted Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian as saying.

Kabul | Agencies

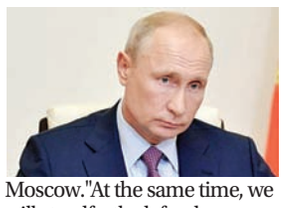
The death toll from a car bombing near a school in Kabul followed by two mine blasts has increased to 50, the Afghan Interior Ministry said on Sunday. At least 100 more people were wounded in the bombing that took place on Saturday near a school in Dasht-e-Barchi, a Shia-Hazara-populated area of the Afghan capital, dpa news agency quoted Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian as saying.Most of the victims were civilians, mainly students, who were leaving the school when the bombings took place.The number of victims might still increase as ambulances were transferring wounded and dead people until late Saturday night, Arian added.

The bombing targeting students was widely condemned domestically and internationally.No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet.The Taliban were quick to reject their involvement in the attack. However, the government has blamed the militant group.President Ashraf Ghani strongly condemned the attack and instructed the health officials to provide the best possible medical treatment for the wounded.

Russia protects its own interests, int'l law: Putin

- "Russia consistently defends international law," the President said during a large military parade with some 12,000 participants in Moscow. "At the same time, we will steadfastly defend our national interests and ensure the security of our people."

Moscow | Agencies



Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday stressed on the protection of country's national interests on the 76th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany.

"Russia consistently defends international law," the President said during a large military parade with some 12,000 participants in Moscow."At the same time, we will steadfastly defend our national interests and ensure the security of our people."

Putin once again warned against attempts to falsify history and attempts to relativise the actions of "traitors and criminals", Xinhua news agency. Thousands of soldiers marched across Red Square afterwards in icy winds and cloudy skies.Tanks and fighter planes were also presented.

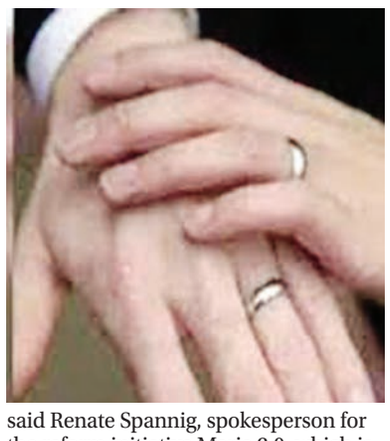
All participants in the parade had been vaccinated against the coronavirus, according to official reports.

Victory Day is one of the most important holidays in Russia.According to historians, the Soviet Union suffered around 27 million casualties during World War II.

German churches plan to bless same-sex couples

- Burkhard Hose, chaplain for the Catholic community of Wuerzburg Universities, began collecting signatures from people in the church shortly after the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a declaration in March that the Catholic Church does not have the authority to bless homosexual couples.

Berlin | Agencies



Churches across Germany are planning services to bless same-sex couples this week, in defiance of a Vatican decree clarifying that such blessings are banned in the Catholic Church.

The Church of St Benedict in Munich is holding one of just four planned blessing Masses in the majority-Catholic state of Bavaria on Sunday, reports dpa news agency.

"It was not so easy to find a church," said Renate Spannig, spokesperson for the reform initiative Maria 2.0, which is co-organising the service.

Maria 2.0 is a grass-roots reform initiative, which among other things campaigns for greater roles for women in the Catholic Church. The other three are set to take place in Wuerzburg.

Burkhard Hose, chaplain for the Catholic community of Wuerzburg Universities, began collecting signatures from people in the church shortly after the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a declaration in March that the Catholic Church does not have the authority to bless homosexual couples.

By signing, the roughly 2,600 signatories declared their willingness to continue blessing same-sex couples.

Under the motto 'liebegewinnt' (love wins), a number of events are now planned around the main day of action on Monday, one week before the International Day against Homophobia.

Blessings are expected to take place in many cities and towns, including Munich, Wuerzburg, Frankfurt, Cologne, Aachen and Berlin.

There is a clear focus on the north and west of the country.

Catholic priests in Germany have expressed their dissatisfaction with the Vatican ban and have said they want to bless all loving couples, whether gay or straight. Lay members of the church have also expressed their opposition to the Vatican's stance. President of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference, Georg Baetzing, criticized the action, saying it was not "a way forward".

"Blessing services have their own theological dignity and pastoral significance. They are not suitable as instruments for ecclesiastical political manifestations or protest actions," he said.

Sadiq Khan wins 2nd term as London Mayor

- He won 55.2 per cent of the popular vote, after entering a run-off with Bailey when neither managed to secure a majority in the first round of voting, the BBC report said.

London | Agencies

Incumbent London Mayor Sadiq Khan has won a second term in office, beating his Conservative rival Shaun Bailey, following the local elections held last week, the media reported on Sunday.

"I will always be a Mayor for all Londoners, working to improve the lives of every single person in this city," the BBC quoted the 51-year-old Labour Party member, first elected as Mayor in 2016, was quoted as saying after the results were declared on Saturday night.

"The results of the elections around the UK shows our country, and even our city, remains deeply divided.

"The scars of Brexit have yet to heal. A crude culture war is pushing us further apart," he added.

He won 55.2 per cent of the popular vote, after entering a run-off with Bailey when neither managed to secure a majority in the first round of voting, the BBC report said. "Economic inequality is getting worse both within London and in different parts of our country. "As we seek to confront the enormity of the challenge ahead, and as we endeavour to rebuild from this pandemic, we must use this moment of national recovery to heal those damaging divisions," Khan, also the first Muslim mayor of an European capital city, added.

Myanmar junta approves 15 investments, including huge Chinese project

- The military regime-controlled Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) this week approved 15 projects, including a Chinese $2.5-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) power project, easily the biggest single investment since the new military takeover.

Kolkata | Agencies

China has started reaping rewards for backing the February 1 military takeover in Myammar.

The military regime-controlled Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) this week approved 15 projects, including a Chinese $2.5-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) power project, easily the biggest single investment since the new military takeover.

The MIC, headed by Lt General Moe Myint Tun, did not specify details of the mega project but IANS reliably learned from Myanmarese Planning Department sources that the LNG project approved on Friday is likely to be the Chinese-backed Mee Lin Gyaing power project in the country's Irrawaddy Delta.

The nature and cost revealed by Lt Gen Tun's office matches the Mee Lin Gyaing project first discussed during Chinese President Xi Jinping's trip to Myanmar in 2020.

At that time, Beijing and the National League for Democracy (NLD) government ousted by the February 1 coup signed a letter of intent to speed up implementation of the project under the countries' Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) agreement.At the time of the coup, the Mee Lin Gyaing project was one of two LNG projects awaiting official approval. The other is worth $2 billion.

The 1,390 MW Mee Lin Gyaing project is to be developed jointly by Yunnan Provincial Energy Investment Group Co Ltd, the UREC, Zhefu Holding Group Co Ltd, and thee Supreme Group. The project is expected to be complete in 2023; 35 per cent of the power produced will be distributed to Ayeyarwady Region, with the rest going to Yangon via the national grid.

Myanmar's Supreme Group's Deputy CEO U HtuHtu Aung told IANS that the joint venture company has been awaiting approval for the Mee Lin Gyaing project and is yet to be formally intimated . However, the company has picked up information about the project clearance, Aung said.Asked about possible delays due to the aftershocks of the coup, Aung said: "It all depended on the foreign investor."

"As a local company, we will not say that. It would depend on the main foreign investors," he said.The MIC said 100 per cent power from these new approval LNG projects would be sold domestically, in pursuit of power self-reliance target set for 2030.

The MIC said that it has also approved new projects for livestock, manufacturing and other sectors, and increases in the capital of two existing projects.

The World Bank's latest forecast reveals that Myanmar's economy is on a nose dive projected to contract by 10 per cent this year due to the impact of the military takeover.

Recently, the United Nations Development Programme warned that all financial reports since the coup indicated Myanmar is approaching economic collapse.

The number of new registered companies declined nearly 87 per cent following the coup compared to the same period last year.

UK, INDIAN COVID VARIANTS DETECTED IN S AFRICA

Johannesburg: Fifteen cases of the Indian and British Covid-19 variants have been detected in South Africa, Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said. According to Mkhize, the Network for Genomic Surveillance in South Africa confirmed four cases of the B.1.617.2 variant, which was first detected in India, were registered in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal and all the infected persons had a recent history of travelling from the South Asian nation, reports Xinhua news agency.Of all the 11 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant which was first detected in the UK, eight were reported in the Western Cape, one in KwaZulu-Natal and two in Gauteng.

Mkhize said the British variant was spreading in the community. "The B.1.1.7 variant has been detected in community samples and this therefore suggests that community transitions has already set it," he said.The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) said that work focusing on the variants is being done."We would like to assure the public that the institute is focusing their resources and research efforts towards understanding the variants and what the potential implications are for South Africa," said Professor Adrian Puren, the NICD's Acting Executive Director.

MADRID OPEN

SABALENKA BEATS WORLD NO.1 BARTY TO CLINCH TITLE

Madrid | Agencies

Aryna Sabalenka turned the tables on world No.1 Ashleigh Barty to win the Madrid Open title.

Sabalenka, one of the biggest hitters on tour, powered her way through the final in three games for a 6-0 3-6 6-4 triumph and a 10th career title on Saturday, DPA reports.

Two weeks ago, Barty came from a set down to defeat Sabalenka in the final of the WTA event in Stuttgart, and it looked as if history would repeat itself on Saturday when the Australian assumed the momentum going into the deciding set here.

Barty had not lost a match on red clay for nearly two years since before she won her maiden grand slam title at Roland Garros in 2019.

She had no answer to the power of her 23-year-old Belarusian opponent in the first set here, though, as Sabalenka produced the shots that have seen her tipped as a future slam champion for several years.

Sabalenka appears closer to that than ever now and she will hit a new career-high ranking of four on Monday.

Just as impressive as her first-set dominance was the way she recomposed herself after her level dropped in the second set, refusing to let Barty engineer her way to another title.

Berrettini to face Zverev in final

Madrid: Matteo Berrettini will take on Alexander Zverev in the Madrid Open final on Sunday after overcoming Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 in the last four.

Eighth seed Berrettini, 25, has enjoyed a superb debut tournament in the Spanish capital, dropping just one set on his way to becoming the first Italian to make it to the Madrid Open final, DPA reports.

Berrettini, who won the Serbia Open last month, is just the third Italian ATP Masters 1000 finalist since the series was established in 1990, after Fabio Fognini and Jannik Sinner.

CITY LOSE 2-1 TO CHELSEA, MADE TO WAIT FOR PREMIER LEAGUE CROWN

London | Agencies

Manchester City will have to wait at least 24 hours before they are crowned Premier League champions for this season after they lost 2-1 at home to Chelsea on Saturday evening.

A win for Pep Guardiola's men would have assured the title, but now they need Manchester United to lose away to Aston Villa on Sunday to confirm their crown after losing to their fellow Champions League finalists at the Etihad Stadium Xinhua reports.

Liverpool kept their slim hopes of qualifying for the Champions League alive with a 2-0 win at home to Southampton. Sadio Mane's first goal in the league at Anfield in nine matches opened the scoring after 30 minutes and Thiago Alcantara assured the points with a powerful finish in the last minute.

Leeds United dealt a serious blow to Tottenham's hopes of playing in Europe next season as goals from Stuart Dallas, Patrick Bamford, and Rodrigo saw them home 3-1, with Heung Min Son netting for a totally outplayed Spurs.

Leicester City's top-four hopes also suffered a serious blow when they lost 4-2 at home to Newcastle United on Friday night.

Joe Willock, Paul Dummett, and two goals from Callum Wilson put Newcastle, who have banished any relegation fears with the result, 4-0 up before Marc Albrighton and Kelechi Iheanacho netted late consolation efforts for the home side, who have slipped to fourth after Chelsea's win.

Finally, Crystal Palace enjoyed a 2-0 win away to already-relegated Sheffield United thanks to a second-minute goal from Christian Dembele and in the 88th minute following a corner from Eberechi Eze.

BUMRAH CAN TAKE 400 TEST WICKETS IF HE STAYS FIT: AMBROSE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah can cross 400 Test wickets if he can maintain his fitness for a long period, said West Indies pace legend Curtly Ambrose. "India's got a few good fast bowlers. I'm a big fan of Jasprit Bumrah. He's so different than any bowler I have seen. He's so effective and I'm looking forward to him doing really well," Ambrose said on The Curtly & Karishma Show on YouTube "He is (going to take more than 400 Test wickets) as long as he can remain healthy, fit and play long enough. He can seam the ball, swing the ball and bowl great yorkers. He's got a lot in his arsenal. So as long as he can remain on the park for a long period of time, I'm sure he can get up there," Ambrose explained. Ambrose said that Bumrah's short bowling action may put more strain on him.

IPL's New Zealand contingent reaches home

Auckland | Agencies

Former New Zealand captains Brendon McCullum and Stephen Fleming were among the last to arrive in Auckland on Sunday from India after the postponement of the 2021 Indian Premier League (IPL). All New Zealand players, staff, officials and commentators, who were part of the league, have now arrived back in their home country.

McCullum, Fleming, fellow IPL coach Kyle Mills, Black Caps fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, commentators Simon Doull and Scott Styris, and umpire Chris Gaffaney landed at the Auckland Airport around 6 p.m. on Sunday, according to stuff.co.nz. Earlier, the first group of cricketers, who arrived in Auckland on Saturday, included Trent Boult, Finn Allen, Jimmy Neesham, Adam Milne and Scott Kuggeleijn.

MI's foreign members also reach destinations

Indian Premier League (IPL) team Mumbai Indians on Sunday said that the team's foreign players have all reached their respective home countries. Australian players Chris Lynn, Nathan Coulter-Nile, and Ashton Agar have been sent to the Maldives where they will quarantine due to Australia's ban on travellers from India due to the second wave of the Covid-19 in the country. The team's head coach and Sri Lanka batting great Mahela Jayawardene is also with the Australians after his home country placed a ban on travellers from India.

AFC CUP MATCHES POSTPONED AFTER BENGALURU BREACH COVID PROTOCOLS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Sunday announced to postpone the AFC Cup Group D matches in Maldives after three Bengaluru FC players allegedly breached Covid-19 protocols.

Bengaluru FC were scheduled to face local club Eagles FC in a playoff match after which the Group D matches were scheduled to start on May 14 with fellow Indian Super League (ISL) side ATK Mohun Bagan facing the winners of the playoff.

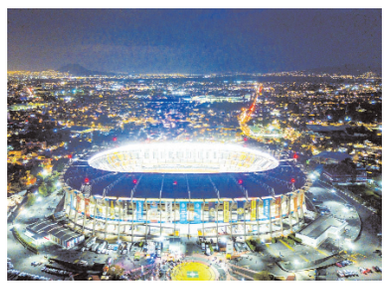
"Participating clubs which have travelled to Maldives will be required to arrange for their return home while adhering to the Covid-19 health and travel protocols put in place by the country. At the same time, the AFC is in contact with all other participating clubs and officials who have not entered Maldives to cancel their travel arrangements," said the AFC.

"The AFC Cup (South) group stage matches are now postponed until further notice with more information to be announced in due course," it added.

Earlier, Maldives' Sports Minister Ahmed Mahloof condemned Bengaluru FC for breaching the guidelines issued by the country's Health Protection Agency as well the AFC.

MEXICO'S AZTECA STADIUM TO REOPEN FOR FANS

Mexico City | Agencies



Mexico's Azteca Stadium, the stage for the 1970 and 1986 FIFA World Cup finals, is set to reopen to the public after a 14-month shutdown because of Covid-19. The 88,000-capacity venue will host the Liga MX quarter-finals featuring tenants Club America and Tijuana against yet-to-be-determined opponents on May 15 and 16.

"It is with great pleasure that we confirm that the government of Mexico City has changed the epidemiological traffic light to yellow," read a statement on the stadium's official website on Friday, reports Xinhua.

"This scenario will allow us to once again receive the great fans of Club America and Cruz Azul for their league games. We will meet next week with the authorities to decide upon the steps to follow for the reopening." Fans have not attended matches at the Azteca Stadium, which also hosted football at the 1968 Olympic Games, since March 7 last year.

Hamilton wins Spanish GP after intense pitstop strategy battle

Barcelona | Agencies

Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes secured victory at the Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday after an intense pitstop strategy battle with Red Bull's Max Verstappen. This was Hamilton's third win this season and 98th of his career.

Sitting on pole position for the 100th time in his F1 career, Hamilton was overtaken by Verstappen at turn 1. The Red Bull driver retained position after the first round of pitstops but the Briton was flying on his new set of tyres, cutting the gap to Verstappen down rapidly.

Mercedes opted for a two-stop tyre strategy and Hamilton dropped to third, behind team-mate Valtteri Bottas. But he managed to overtake the Finn and then reach Verstappen, using DRS to slot past the Dutchman.

Conceding defeat, Verstappen made a final pitstop for fresh tyres and secured the point for the fastest lap point. Hamilton now leads the drivers' championship with a 14-point advantage over Verstappen.

IPL postponement a pointer to cricket's vulnerability: Chappell

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The postponement of the Indian Premier League (IPL) due to Covid-19 was a reminder of the game's vulnerability, former Australia skipper Ian Chappell said on Sunday, pointing at the weak underbelly of the game.

Chappell said that given the current crisis India was passing through, it wouldn't be surprising if the T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in October-November in India, is either moved out of the country or postponed.

"The suspension of the 2021 IPL tournament because of surging Covid infections and deaths among the public, and a number of participants testing positive, was a reminder of the game's vulnerability," Chappell said in a column on espncricinfo website.

"In the current disastrous climate, the suspension of the IPL could also produce a precedent. It may lead to the World T20 event, programmed for India later in the year, either being postponed or moved," wrote the 77-year-old player who captained Australia between 1971 and 1975.

Citing examples when cricket tours had to be abandoned midway -- or postponed -- the cricket legend recalled that in 1969 "England toured a bitterly divided Pakistan where the series was haunted by protests from the beginning. When a riot brought the third Test in Karachi to a premature halt, the England team flew home immediately". Chappell said that nature too had played spoilsport on a number of occasions, leaving the spectators high and dry.

Belief of winning Olympic medal motivates us: Hockey captain Manpreet

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With 75 days to go for the Tokyo Olympic Games, India hockey captain Manpreet Singh has said that despite the setback of a postponed European tour due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the team believes it has a good chance to win a medal. "We are extremely disappointed at not being able to travel to Europe for the FIH Pro League Games against Germany and Spain. Those matches would have certainly helped in our preparations. But we understand these are unprecedented times," said Manpreet, who is training with the team at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre in Bengaluru.

"We strongly believe we have the best chance to win a medal at the Olympics and this belief is keeping everyone motivated and optimistic. Our training now has been planned in such a manner that we peak at the right time and also we are clocking long hours in the sun to get our bodies acclimatised to the hot conditions in Tokyo," he said.

The team will continue to remain in Bengaluru, where the coaches will device "systematic training", which will help the team peak at the right time.

Tragic time for India, hope things improve soon: Boult

Auckland | Agencies

New Zealand fast bowler Trent Boult said that he hopes the Covid-19 situation in India improves quickly. Boult was part of the New Zealand contingent which reached home safely after the Indian Premier League (IPL) was halted abruptly.

"My heart goes out to the people of the India, while I am sad to be leaving the @mumbaiindians family and see the IPL come to an end, none of that compares to the suffering many people are going through right now," said Boult in an Instagram post.

"India is a place that has given me so much as a cricketer and person. I have always deeply appreciated the support that I've received from my Indian fans. This is a tragic time and I hope things can improve soon. I look forward to returning to this beautiful country when I can," he further said. Boult thanked the Mumbai Indians for getting him and his fellow countrymen home safely.

"Thank you again to the @mumbaiindians for getting us all home and going above and beyond to ensure health and safety was the priority for all of the players and families," he said.The IPL was postponed last week after multiple Covid-19 cases were detected in the tournament bio-bubble that were set up in Ahmedabad and New Delhi.

GOVT ADVANCES GRANT OF RS 8923.8 CR TO PANCHAYATS FOR COVID RELIEF

In view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic situation and at the recommendation of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Ministry of Finance decided to release the grant in advance of the normal schedule, a finance ministry statement said.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Finance ministry has released an amount of Rs 8,923.8 crore to 25 States as grants to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs).The grants are meant for all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions - village, block and district.

The amount released on Saturday is the first instalment of the 'Untied Grants' for the year 2021-22. It is meant to be utilised by the RLBs, among other things, for various prevention and mitigation measures needed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it will augment resources to the three tiers of Panchayats for fighting the contagion.

As per the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission, the first instalment of untied grants was to be released to the States in the month of June, 2021. However, in view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic situation and at the recommendation of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Ministry of Finance decided to release the grant in advance of the normal schedule, a finance ministry statement said.

Moreover, the 15th Finance Commission had imposed certain conditions for release of untied grants. The conditions include online availability of accounts of a certain percentage of Rural Local Bodies in the public domain. But taking into consideration the prevailing circumstances, this condition has been waived for release of the first instalment of untied grants.

Conditional exemption for experimental drone delivery of vaccines

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre is providing conditional exemption for experimental drone flights for vaccine delivery as part of its endeavour to enhance the scope of drone usage in the country and assist the fight against Covid-19 pandemic, said an official statement. The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Directorate General of Civil Aviation have granted conditional exemption to the government of Telangana for conducting experimental Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) drone flights for delivery of vaccines. Exemption has been granted from Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2021.

This exemption shall be subject to complete adherence to the conditions and the directions or exemptions issued by the ministry. This exemption shall be valid for a period of one year from the date of approval of the SOP or until further orders, whichever is earlier, said the statement from the Civil Aviation Ministry.

Last month, the Government of Telangana was granted conditional exemption for conducting experimental delivery of Covid-19 vaccines within Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) Range using drones.

To accelerate the drone deployment process to formulate application-based models, the grant has been extended to Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS). The trials may commence by end of May 2021. Earlier, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was granted conditional exemption last month for conducting feasibility study of Covid-19 vaccine delivery using drones in collaboration with IIT Kanpur.

One of the conditions for conducting experimental BVLOS drone flights for delivery of vaccines by Government of Telangana is that the maximum permitted height for drone operations is 400 feet Above Ground Level (AGL). It further says that energy reserve of 15 per cent of flight time should be provisioned for. Another condition states that the Government of Telangana shall post a Single Point Coordinator (SPC) at Shamshabad ATC for the entire duration of the trial flights to ensure smooth coordination with ATC.

The conditions further mention that Drone operations shall be limited between local sunrise and local sunset. It is stated that Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) should prevail at take-off and landing sites. Further, the condition is that weather limitations stipulated by the drone manufacturer shall be complied with. The conditions specify some requirements to be satisfied for drones used for BVLOS trial flights.

IDFC First Bank's Q4 net profit up 79%

- The gross non-performing asset (GNPA) of IDFC First Bank as a percentage of gross advancements was 4.15 per cent during the period under review, up from 2.60 per cent in January-March quarter of the previous fiscal. The provision for Q4 FY21 was at Rs 603 crore as compared to Rs 679 crore for Q4 FY20 and as compared to Rs 595 crore in Q3 FY21.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

IDFC First Bank on Sunday reported a 78.6 per cent increase in its net profit for the quarter ended March at Rs 127.81 crore.

During the same period of FY20, the bank had reported a net profit of Rs 71.54 crore.

The bank's total income during the fourth quarter of FY21 came in at Rs 4,834 crore, against Rs 4,576.12 crore.

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The provision for Q4 FY21 was at Rs 603 crore as compared to Rs 679 crore for Q4 FY20 and as compared to Rs 595 crore in Q3 FY21.

V Vaidyanathan, Managing Director and CEO, IDFC First Bank said: "Including the equity capital of Rs 3,000 crore raised through QIP on April 6, 2021, our overall capital adequacy is strong at 16.32 per cent. We maintain high levels of liquidity with liquidity coverage ratio of 153 per cent." "We therefore approach FY 22 with strength and confidence. Strong inflows from retail customers based on our strong brand, our excellent service levels, and strong product proposition has resulted in surplus liquidity at the bank."

Petrol, diesel prices remain unchanged for 2nd straight day

- Petrol prices in some states including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh have breached the Rs 100 per litre mark while premium petrol has been hovering above that level for some time now.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Petrol and diesel prices in the country remained unchanged on Sunday as oil marketing companies (OMCs) decided to pause the daily revision process and closely study global oil price movement before effecting any change in the domestic market.

Accordingly, petrol price remained at previous day's level of Rs 91.27 a litre and diesel at Rs 81.73 a litre in the national Capital. This is the second day running when the pump price of auto fuels has not been revised.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel price remained static on Sunday but its price levels varied depending on the level of local levies in respective states.

Petrol prices in some states including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh have breached the Rs 100 per litre mark while premium petrol has been hovering above that level for some time now.Prior to holding back auto fuel prices, its pump rates had increased sharply on previous four days. Petrol and diesel prices rose by 15 paise and 18 paise per litre respectively on Tuesday, by 19 paise and 21 paise per litre respectively on Wednesday, by 25 and 30 paise respectively on Thursday and by 28 paise and 31 paise per litre respectively on Friday after 18 days break.

IANS had written earlier that OMCs may begin increasing the retail price of petrol and diesel post state elections as they were incurring losses to the tune of Rs 2-3 per litre by holding the price line despite higher global crude and product prices. The oil companies had already increased the ATF price by 6.7 per cent effective this month.

OMCs benchmark retail fuel prices to a 15-day rolling average of global refined products' prices and dollar exchange rate. In the last fortnight global oil prices have hovered in $66-67 a barrel range, higher than the levels when petrol and diesel prices were last revised. Crude prices have jumped around $69 a barrel now.

The price of the two auto fuels had fallen by 16 paise and 14 paise per litre respectively on April 15 after a 15 day break when OMCs kept its prices static. Thereafter revision of fuel prices was halted.The OMCs went on price cut for the first time this year on two consecutive days - March 24 and March 25 after keeping oil prices steady for 24 days. It again reduced the price on March 30. Thereafter, fuel prices remained unchanged for 15 days before falling again on April 15. In all petrol prices have fallen by 77 paise per litre while diesel by 74 paise per litre in 2021 so far. With global crude prices at around $69 a barrel mark, OMCs may have to revise fuel prices upwards again if there is any further firming up.

SnapBizz, REVIVE Alliance, Nielsen tie up to digitally empower small traders

- The initiative targets small and local merchants in the lower income bracket, having a net income of Rs 20,000-25,000 a month, and aims to ease their access to working capital and supply chain challenges.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Retail digitisation company SnapBizz, Samhita-CGF's REVIVE Alliance, and Nielsen have come together to enable the digitisation of small kirana shops and other retailers to improve business outcomes and profitability.

The collaboration has kicked off with a pilot roll-out poised for a scale up and is supported by philanthropic, development and corporate organisations, Nielsen, TRRAIN (Trust for Retailers & Retail Associates of India), the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), British High Commission, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said a statement. The initiative targets small and local merchants in the lower income bracket, having a net income of Rs 20,000-25,000 a month, and aims to ease their access to working capital and supply chain challenges.

"SnapBizz, with a goal of digitising a million small merchants, will provide the digital solution for local merchants. Samhita-CGF, through the REVIVE Alliance, a blended finance platform supported by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), MSDF, Omidyar Network India, British High Commission and UNDP, will provide financial assistance, through Returnable Grants and incentives, for small kirana merchants to access the digital solution & training," it said.

Further, TRRAIN will support the initiative through self-help videos for merchants on modern retail practices. Nielsen will provide store acquisition and data evaluation support in the programme. Further, banks and SnapBizz are collaborating in the roll-out and subsidising the digital solution for the programme.

The solution will give comprehensive support to the merchants to manage their stores efficiently and effectively, help the store go online with their own storefront, give them access to suppliers of goods and working capital finance.

SnapBizz founder and CEO Prem Kumar said: "Many kiranas have gone digital in recent months and their stores have gone online by accepting online payments, ordering supplies online, managing inventory, etc. However, there are still millions of kiranas that continue to work without any digitisation or technological help which puts them at a huge disadvantage and hinders their growth tremendously.""Our collaboration with Samhita-CGF and national banks is to ensure that every kirana has a fighting chance to face the growing world of e-commerce and online marketing.

Maruti Suzuki boosts manufacturing of O2 PSA generator plants

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) has said that realising the critical importance of rapidly installing Oxygen PSA plants, both to produce life-saving oxygen as well as reduce the immense logistical problems, it boosting the manufacturing of such plants.

In a statement, the company said that these plants are being made by small scale units with very limited resources or ability to scale-up production. We located two companies in the NCR area, AiroxNigenEquipments Pvt Ltd and SAM Gas Projects Pvt Ltd. They were flooded with orders but had a capacity to manufacture only 5-8 plants a month.

"We decided to use our resources to help scale-up their production. MSIL started talking to them from the 1st May and quickly reached an understanding with them. While technology, quality and performance, as well as all commercial matters, would remain the responsibility of the two companies, MSIL and its vendors would use their capabilities to rapidly scale up production."

MSIL's involvement would be on a no profit basis.

Airox has its factory in Ahmedabad and SKH Metals, a vendor, is working with them. MSIL has been able to arrange new sources for Zeolite, an imported material and critical for a PSA plant. This will be airfreighted, it said.Compressors are another important bought-out component. Airox has already reached an output of one PSA plant a day and this number will be rapidly scaled up to 4 per day within May itself. Output in May is expected to be 50-60 plants.

Financial markets heading for biggest inflation scare since early 1980s: Greed and Fear

Team Absolute | New Delhi

It is interesting that FAANG stocks still look like they have peaked out against the S&P500 despite the fantastic quarterly earnings reported by these companies last week, according to "Greed and Fear".

Jefferies analyst Christopher Wood, in his stock market commentary "Greed and Fear" said in a funny kind of way, the better the numbers these companies report, the more it is a sign of their control of the marketplace from an anti-trust and other regulatory standpoints. FAANG refers to leading tech stocks Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Alphabet (formerly known as Google).

"Action on the anti-trust front is surely coming sooner or later, just as it has now arrived in China. On top of this, there is the obvious risk of the law of large numbers as regards maintaining such growth rates. Meanwhile Greed & Fear continues to prefer cyclical stocks with the obvious pair trade, in the run up to the inflation scare, that of being long energy and short tech," Wood said. "For now, Greed & Fear's conviction remains that the financial markets are heading for the biggest inflation scare since the early 1980s, which is why equity fund managers need to remain razor focused on inflation expectations which are likely to be the lead indicator of the timing of any potential tapering scare. "For such a surge in inflation expectations will be the trigger for the markets to stress test the Fed's metal. The US 5-year 5-year forward inflation expectation rate rose to 2.28 per cent last Thursday, the highest level since October 2018, and is now 2.26 per cent," Wood said.

If loan growth has not picked up, bank deposits in the US have continued to surge as a result, in large part, of the increase in transfer payments. The four major banks' total deposits rose by 15.4 per cent YoY in 1Q21 and are up 28 per cent since the end of 2019. The Fed's flow of funds data shows that the increase in household deposits in 2020 accounted for 52 per cent of the increase in total deposits, the commentary said. "Still Greed & Fear's base case remains that a major inflation scare is coming in America triggered by pent up demand," Wood added.

Another reminder of the extent to which American households have been net financial beneficiaries of the pandemic, and therefore the related pent up demand potential, came with March data released at the end of last week. Nominal disposable personal income surged by a record 32 per cent YoY reflecting the arrival of more stimulus cheques while the personal savings rate soared to 27.6 per cent.

$210M daily output loss in India over April-June in severe scenario: S&P Global Ratings

Team Absolute | New Delhi

S&P Global Ratings estimates $210 million in lost output daily in India due to second Covid wave over April-June in a severe scenario model.

In a moderate scenario, pandemic peaks end May and mobility 25 to 30 per cent below normal before recovering by September.

In a severe scenario, pandemic peaks late June, declines slower and mobility 40 per cent below normal, normalizes only by year-end. In this scenario, initial shock relays through economy via various channels - labour markets weaker, household incomes lower. Growth number for FY 21/22 will be significantly influenced by GDP growth outcome for January-March 2021, S&P Global Ratings said.

The report said that limited vaccination coverage and exposure to more infectious COVID variants may mean this infection wave peaks as late as June.

The government is responding to the latest outbreak with localized lockdowns as opposed to nationwide.

More extensive restrictions would prolong the pain of badly hit sectors, including retail and tourism. Halts to domestic air traffic and subdued international travel may dismantle the fragile recovery for airports, the report said.

"Uncertainty very high, starting with evolution of the pandemic itself. Also, fluid relationship with household and firm behavior. Still, declining mobility may stall activity for at least one if not two quarters. Limited policy space. Downside risk to our 11 per cent growth forecast for FY 2021-22", S&P Global Ratings said.

The report said policy space is constrained by inflation near the top end of the central bank's target range. Core inflation is also sticky and high, with the latest reading for March at 6.0 per cent. As a result short and long real interest rates, which are nominal rates less expected inflation, are very low. Monetary policy easing likely to be targeted towards specific sectors such as SMEs and focusing more on quantity variables, it added. "We estimate the Indian government's fiscal deficit to be around 14 per cent of GDP in fiscal 2021, driving its net debt stock to just over 90% of GDP. India's nascent economic recovery through March solidified government revenue, but the rapidly developing health crisis could derail progress", S&P Global Ratings said.

"Our downside scenarios suggest a less robust recovery in government revenues, and the severe downside scenario may entail additional fiscal spending. Amid the second wave, officials have shown a preference for support measures from the central bank rather than additional fiscal interventions", the report said.

Rated Indian companies are entering the second wave with improved operating and liquidity conditions compared to last year. A temporary impact is likely, e.g. on domestic demand for automobiles, lower production volume for commodities, slower recovery for consumer retail. "We expect recovery to be fast when restrictions ease. Telecoms, IT, and pharma sectors to remain resilient as in the first wav," it added.

Big B returns to TV with 'KBC 13'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan will return to the small screen with Kaun Banega Crorepati season 13.

The promos of the upcoming season were released last week and the actor can be seen as saying: "Kabhi Socha Hai, ki aapki aur aapke sapno ke beech ka fasla kitna haia... teen aksharo kaa. Koshish." The announcements were posted from the official social media handles of the channel as well.

The participants will be selected digitally. Big B will ask one question every night on the channel and people can send their replies. Participants who answer correctly will be short-listed. This will be followed by an online audition and an interview.

Big B has been associated with the show for 11 seasons, while actor Shah Rukh Khan hosted season 3. The first episode of the show was telecast in 2000.

The show will air on Sony Entertainment Television.

Huma Qureshi's 'Maharani' to premiere on May 28

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Huma Qureshi took to social media to share the trailer of her upcoming web series Maharani. The series will start streaming from May 28.

The actress says that the character is special to her as it helped her explore herself as an artist.

"It's not often that one gets to play a character where you traverse in extremes as an artist.

Rani Bharti, has been one such role that got me to explore things that I have never done before and yet made her look extremely grounded and relatable," she says.

The actress is confident that the audience will like the series. "Her's is a journey of rarity and grit which will surely strike a chord with the audience. I'm super excited and can't wait for the show to launch soon."

The show's story revolves around how the current Chief Minister disrupts the state's political machinery.

It has been directed by Karan Sharma and also features features Sohum Shah, Amit Sial and Vineet Kumar.

The series will stream on SonyLIV.

TEASER LAUNCH OF VIJAY DEVERAKONDA STARRER 'LIGER' POSTPONED

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The teaser launch of 'Liger' starring Telugu star Vijay Deverakonda has been postponed amid the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic across the country.

Announcing the decision, the makers of the film said in a statement on Sunday, "During these testing times, we hope you all are staying indoors and taking care of yourself and your loved ones.

"We were all geared up to reveal a power-packed teaser for 'Liger' on 9th May. However, due to the current scenario and environment that our country is facing, we have decided to postpone the same in the hope to share it with the world at a better time for us all."Having said that, we assure and guarantee that you will witness Vijay Deverakonda in a never seen before avatar and you will not be disappointed."Sit tight and until then we request all of you to stay safe, take care of all your dear ones, help each other and get vaccinated at the earliest. Take all the precautionary measures as prescribed by the medical fraternity and be sure that we are all in this together."See you soon at the theatres when we are healthy and strong as a country." The film, also starring Ananya Panday, is set to release in five languages -- Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. It is expected to release on September 9. Vijay will be seen playing a boxer in the film directed by Puri Jagannadh.

Saahil Uppal: Grateful that my work is keeping me busy, distracted

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Saahil Uppal says that he is grateful to have work this year unlike last year's lockdown. The actor, who is part of the show "Pinjara Khubsurati Ka", says that his work is helping him not think about the pandemic all the time. "I stay informed to a point where I don't feel anxious. This year, my work is also keeping me busy and distracted for which I am extremely grateful, unlike last year when I was sitting at home much like many others... I am also doing meditation to keep myself calm, think positive and stay focused," said Saahil. The actor adds that he is also making sure to take good care of himself and his family in order to safeguard themselves from Covid. "I follow a healthy diet and exercise regime, and most importantly I am staying close to my family and staying in touch with all my loved ones," he says. He adds that there are some members of his family who are suffering from Covid. "Saying from personal experience, Covid is real. Some members of my family are infected and it is painful to see them in this state. Healthcare workers and police are paying a heavy price in this battle, so let's not make the scenario any more difficult for them. Please follow all the guidelines, stay connected with your loved ones and reach out to people in need. Help them in your best capacity. We are all in this together and we will combat Covid soon," he says.

SACHIN-JIGAR REMEMBER COMPOSING 'CHUNAR', THIS MOTHER'S DAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As they celebrate Mother's Day, composer duo Sachin Sanghvi and Jigar Saraiya are reminded of their song Chunar from the film ABCD 2, which was dedicated to mothers. Talking about the song, that released five years ago, they say that it all originated from their desire to make a Garba song.

"Chunar is a very special song because we had first made it for Navratri. We were performing in Navratri and we thought of composing an original Garba. We composed this song in Gujarati and when we took narration from Remo sir for ABCD 2, he told us about the mother and son in it. We told him that we have a song made for Navaratri Mataji and we should see if it works in this context," say Sachin-Jigar.

The duo adds: "When Remo sir heard it, he had tears. It clearly worked for the mother and son situation. It is even more special because towards the end of the movie it is about Mother India. The song has its own journey of having these diverse references to mothers." The song has been penned by Mayur Puri and sung by Arijit Singh. Sachin-Jigar are known for their songs in the films Badlapur, Meri Pyaari Bindu, ABCD 2, Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania Stree, Go Goa Gone and Roohi.

Doctor-turned-filmmaker Lakshmi Devy is winning laurels in US

Team Absolute | Chennai

Dr Lakshmi Devy, a doctor by profession has always been passionate about acting and filmmaking and her dreams have come true after she won the prestigious Gold Remy award for direction at the 54th World Houston International Film festival for her movie -- "When the Music Changes."

It is to be noted that other famous winners of the Gold Remy awards are the who's who of the global film industry including Spielberg, Lucas, Ang Lee, The Coen brothers, Ridley Scott and several famous directors of Hollywood.

Worldfest is one of the oldest and largest film and video competitions in the world.

Dr Lakshmi Devy while speaking to IANS said, "This has been a great honour for a filmmaker like me and I am proud to represent my Indian roots in this manner."

Lakshmi shuttles between US and Chennai and after the lockdown and mounting Covid cases she has preferred to stay back in India and is currently in discussions with several Hollywood production companies for her new venture.

She has a production house in New York, FiDi talkies which has produced "When the Music Changes" and Hollywood actor and director, John Turturro is the executive producer for this project. On her new ventures, the doctor turned filmmaker said, "I am speaking to several big names in the global film industry however, I am bound by certain contracts in not revealing the names of these companies. Once we sign the agreement, I will definitely inform you on the production companies."

Her movie, "When the Music Changes", which is scripted, directed and produced by her, has her playing the role of the protagonist. The movie is based on the Indian rape scenario as studies point out that in every 16 minutes a girl is raped in the country.

Lakshmi while speaking on the movie said, "The movie speaks on the rape in India and that it is not the woman who is raped loses the honour, instead it is the man who loses it because of the dastardly act."

The medical doctor also said that she is planning to do several charity shows across the globe including a movie on the current medical emergency after the emergence of Covid and how humanity has to stay together to overcome this pandemic which is taking away the precious lives of many in the most unfortunate of conditions.

She was the screenwriter for the national award winning actor Bobby Sinha, Mirchi Shiva movie "Masala Padam", which is the story of how tough it is to make a hot movie. The film has won major accolades across Tamil Nadu. Lakshmi also played the role of a protagonist in the movie.

This medical doctor also had done a short film, "Daro Mat" made in both Tamil and Hindi. It was critically acclaimed in many international film festivals across the world and is now released on YouTube with over 3.5 million views.

Tim Van Petten, Ten Time Emmy award nominated director, Edie Falco, Emmy award winning Hollywood actress, Aida Turturro, two time Emmy award nominated actress were all praises for the movie made by Dr Lakshmi Devy. Dr Lakshmi Devy while speaking to IANS said, "As I said earlier, I am now finalizing the scripts for a couple of movies which will definitely have renowned production houses and I have to keep my fingers crossed for now as I am not permitted to speak on them now."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Aamna Sharif

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