

absolute india

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BHARAT BIOTECH SUPPLYING COVAXIN TO 18 STATES DIRECTLY

SELF RELIANT STATES

Unflinching in our efforts, we will continue the steady supply of our vaccine. Requests have been received from other states, & will be processed for distribution based on availability of stocks 24x7.

Suchitra Ella, Joint MD, Bharat Biotech

- The states receiving vaccine directly from company are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- The company, however, has not come out with details of the supplies like the number of doses supplied to the states.
- The company earlier said it started the supplies based on the allocations received by the Government of India.



PRIORITISE BENEFICIARIES FOR 2ND DOSE: GOVT TO STATES

New Delhi: Aimed to keep to at least those who received the first dose of vaccine safe from Covid, the Centre on Tuesday directed all the states to ensure a second dose for such beneficiaries, instructing them to reserve at least 70 per cent of the vaccines supplied to them from the government of India channel free of cost. In a review meeting on the status of vaccination drive, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan highlighted the need to be followed by all states on "urgent" basis to address large number of beneficiaries waiting for the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine. In this regard, the Health Secretary advised "states can reserve at least 70 per cent of the vaccines supplied to them from Government of India channel (free of cost) for second dose vaccination and remaining 30 per cent for first dose."

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Bharat Biotech has been directly supplying its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin to 18 states since May 1, the company said on Tuesday. Bharat Biotech had on April 24 announced pricing for Covaxin. It fixed the price of Covaxin at Rs.600 per dose for state governments. However, it later slashed the price to

Rs.400. This came after Serum Institute of India (SII) cut the price of Covishield to Rs.300 from Rs.400 earlier. The two vaccine makers slashed the prices after the central government reportedly made a request to them amid the row over different pricing for the central and state governments. For private hospitals, Bharat Biotech fixed the price at Rs.1,200 per dose. This is twice the cost fixed

DELHI, TELANGANA GOVT TO FLOAT GLOBAL TENDER FOR VACCINES

New Delhi: In order to meet its target of vaccinating their people, the Delhi and Telangana governments will now float a global tender for procuring Covid vaccines. "The Delhi government will float a global tender for vaccines", said Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday who is also the nodal minister for Covid management in the national capital. "The BJP says that Delhi government should have floated a global tender to buy vaccines from the international market. Does this mean that all the state governments should go to the international market to buy vaccines? Then what is the role of the government of India," Sisodia asked. Meanwhile, the Telangana government also decided on Tuesday to invite global tenders to procure Covid-19 vaccine on a war-footing. The low vaccine supply has already forced the state authorities to stop vaccination except for those taking the second dose. The government has already announced that the entire population of the state will be vaccinated free of cost.

for Covishield. For exports, Bharat Biotech has priced India's first indigenous Covid vaccine at \$15-\$20 (Rs 1,125-1,500). Ever since the launch of Covid vaccination programme in India, Bharat Biotech and SII have been supplying their vaccines to the Centre at Rs.150 per dose. While Bharat Biotech is likely to continue the supplies to the Centre at the same price, SII is seeking to revise this to Rs.400. Both Bharat Biotech and SII have announced that they are reserving 50 per cent of their production capacities for supplies to the central government.

INDIA LOGS 3,29L COVID CASES, 3,876 DEATHS IN 24 HRS

New Delhi: Witnessing a sharp decline, India recorded 3,29,942 fresh Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours with 3,876 fatalities, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said here on Tuesday. India's total tally of Covid-19 cases now stands at 2,29,92,517 with 37,15,221 active cases and a total of 2,49,992 deaths so far. According to the Health Ministry, a total of 3,56,082 people have been discharged in the last 24 hours, while 1,90,27,304 people have been cured from Covid till date.

26 die of oxygen shortage at Goa hospital



Team Absolute | Panaji

Lack of expert drivers manning trucks ferrying oxygen has led to the oxygen shortage crisis in Goa's top hospital, Goa Medical College, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Tuesday, even as Health Minister Vishwajit Rane claimed that 26 persons died within four hours due to shortage of oxygen at the apex health facility.

Rane, who has been at log-heads with Sawant over control of the state's Covid management apparatus, has now urged the Bombay High Court to probe the oxygen shortage issue at the Goa

Medical College and take over the Covid management system at the health facility. Earlier on Tuesday, Rane said that 26 patients admitted to a Covid ward at the hospital, had died between 2 am and 6 am on Tuesday morning.

"I request the High Court to check if there is mismanagement or shortage and bring out a white paper using experts... High Court should take over Covid management of GMC," Rane said, adding that the key issue was not mismanagement, but shortage of oxygen which led to the deaths. "We need 1,200 (jumbo) cylinders, but yesterday we got only 400," Rane also said.

NOW, TWO DOZEN BODIES FOUND ON GANGA BANKS IN UP

Patna/Ghazipur: After Bihar's Buxar, around two dozen bodies were found on the banks of the Ganga at adjoining Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, an official said on Tuesday. A.K. Pandey, the SHO of Gahmar police station in Ghazipur, told reporter that the bodies were found in a decomposed stage on the bank of the Ganga river. "Preliminary investigation reveals that the dead bodies could be 18 to 20 days old. There were 23 dead bodies recovered from the river and some of the dead bodies were partially cremated and then thrown into the river. On Monday, around 45 dead bodies in a decomposed stage were found on the banks of the Ganga in Buxar district, and the district administration claimed the bodies were from the upstream districts of Ghazipur, Varanasi or Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh.

day we got only 400," Rane also said.

Kolkata crematoriums, families wait for over 24 hours

Kolkata: As the crematoriums in and around Kolkata are flooded with the bodies of mostly Covid victims, whose families are often made to wait for more than 24 hours to perform their last rites. Sources in the KMC said there are enough hearse vans to carry the dead but the delay happens because the crematoriums are not being able to burn the bodies and a backlog is building up. "Every day, no less than 175 Covid bodies are gathering at the crematorium. With our best efforts to utilise the four electric furnaces 24x7, we can cremate only 80 bodies a day," the official said. However, in recent times, this facility is considered grossly inadequate since going by official figures, KMC needs to arrange for cremation of around 90 bodies at the electric crematorium and 10 bodies at the wooden pyres every day.



Suspended, murder-accused Mumbai cop Sachin Vaze sacked



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday dismissed controversial suspended Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Vaze - involved in the twin cases of planting a car outside industrialist Mansukh Hiran - from the police force.

Currently in judicial custody, API Vaze, 49, who handled some of the biggest investigations in the city, was attached as the in-charge of the Crime Intelligence Unit of Mumbai Police Crime Branch.

The dismissal orders were issued by Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale later on Tuesday evening sacking Vaze who was transferred and later arrested by the National Investigation Agency in March 13 for the two sensitive cases. "The order was issued today under the provisions of Section 311 (2) (B) of Constitution of India by the Commissioner of Police, Greater Mumbai," a Mumbai Police statement said.



Nadda writes to Sonia, says Cong leaders misleading people

Team Absolute | New Delhi

BJP President Jagat Prakash Nadda in a letter to Congress interim President Sonia Gandhi lashed out at her party and said that in the fight against the pandemic the conduct of topmost Congress leaders, including their former President Rahul Gandhi will be remembered for its "duplicitous and pettiness". He also urged that the top echelons of the Congress would stop misleading people, creating false panic and even contradicting their stands just based on political considerations. In a four page letter, The BJP chief

pointed that even when the second wave was on the rise, Congress party leaders were happier being seen in super spreader political events in North India, where there was no regard for masks or social distancing. This is not the era when such information can be erased from public memory. The Congress immediately replied and accused the BJP of being "arrogant", soon after BJP President J.P. Nadda shot off a letter to interim party chief Sonia Gandhi, and said that raising issues and making suggestions to the government on the pandemic is the duty of the opposition parties.

ASSAM GETS FIRST WOMAN FINANCE MINISTER



Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday allocated the finance portfolio to Ajanta Neog, making her the first woman Finance Minister of the northeastern state. Neog, who was elected to the state Assembly from the Golaghat assembly constituency in eastern Assam, would also hold the social welfare portfolio. An influential minister in the previous Tarun Gogoi-led Congress government (2001-2016), Neog had left the party weeks before the March-April Assembly elections to join the ruling BJP.

WHO warns against use of ivermectin to treat Covid-19



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after Goa's Health Minister Vishwajit Rane recommended ivermectin to all above 18 to combat Covid in the state, the World Health Organisation on Tuesday has warned against its use.

Last week, a peer-reviewed research had claimed that global ivermectin use can end Covid-19 pandemic, as the medicine signif-

icantly reduces the risk of contracting the deadly respiratory disease when used regularly. The peer review, touted the common anti-parasitic ivermectin as a miracle cure for Covid-19 by doctors and campaigners the world over. The global health agency said that there was a "very low certainty of evidence" on ivermectin's effects on mortality, hospital admission and getting rid of the virus from the body.

Three LeT militants killed in Anantnag encounter identified

Srinagar | Agencies

Three terrorists belonging to the proscribed terror outfit LeT killed in an encounter in South Kashmir's Anantnag district on Tuesday have been identified, police said. Police in a statement said that Anantnag Police while acting on specific input regarding presence of three terrorists in a residential house at village Sheikhpora, Vailoo area of Kokernag, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by Police, Army's 19 RR and CRPF. During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given an opportunity to surrender, however they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter. The joint teams also rescued all the civilians trapped in the gunfire and halted the operation for the time to ensure safety and safe evacuation of people from the area of gunfire.



After ensuring all the civilians are safe, the operation was resumed and all the terrorists were eliminated in the ensuing encounter. Bodies of the killed terrorists were retrieved from the site of encounter and they have been identified as Ilyas Ahmad Dar alias Sameer, resident of Danwathpora Kokernag, Ubaid Shaif alias Abdullah, resident of Batamalo Srinagar and Aqib Ahmad Lone alias Sahil, resident of Khandaypora Kulgam. Police have registered a case under relevant sections of law and investigation has been initiated.

'Free jobs, rapid testing must to fight Covid in rural India'

Compared to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, this year has witnessed a rapid rise in the number of infections and deaths in rural India. An estimated 65 per cent of the country's 1.3 billion population lives in rural areas.

There is an urgent need for increasing surveillance and testing in rural areas to ensure early detection and diagnosis, she said. Moreover, in the long run, greater investment in public health infrastructure, capacity building of frontline health workers and prioritising universal health coverage is must to ensure that India's response to health emergencies is robust.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Free or subsidised testing, treatment and vaccination along with the provision of uninterrupted essential health services is essential to fight Covid-19 in rural India, public health expert Poonam Muttreja said on Tuesday.

Citing data repository website How India Lives, Muttreja said 714 districts in India have reported coronavirus cases, putting 94.76 per cent of the population at potential risk.

"The perception in some regions is that Covid-19 is a myth, perpetu-



ated by permissions by authorities for large gatherings for elections as well as religious congregations and religious and political leaders flouting Covid-19 protocols," said Muttreja, who is also executive director of national NGO Population Foundation of India, in a statement. "A lack of awareness and reluctance to submit to testing, treatment and vaccination makes the rural population more susceptible to Covid-19. The problem is compounded by the fact that medical infrastructure is concentrated in urban areas. Community Health Centers are not always easily accessible," she added.



'DISSENER' AZAD TO HEAD CONGRESS TASK FORCE ON COVID

Congress has set up a task force on Covid and one of the party's top dissenting voices, Ghulam Nabi Azad, has been appointed as its Chairman.

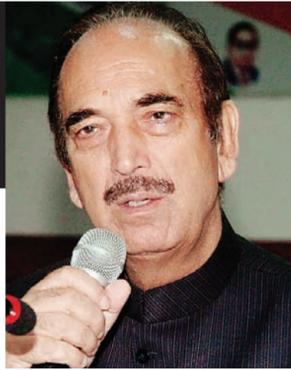
Team Absolute | New Delhi

Others on the 13-member committee include Ambika Soni, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Mukul Wasnik, Pawan Kumar Bansal, K.C. Venugopal, Randeep Surjewala, and Jairam Ramesh.

The task force will oversee relief operations run by the party as control rooms have been set at the central and state level, along with efforts by Youth

Congress workers.

In its meeting on Monday, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution, reading: "The Congress Party commits to fighting the Covid-19 pandemic with its entire might and will support every people-friendly initiative of the government in fighting the pandemic." "The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is nothing short of a grave calamity and a direct consequence of the Modi government's indifference, insensitivity and incompetence. It is the direct result of the Central government's willful disregard of scientific advice, its premature declaration of victory over



the pandemic (that turned out to be just the first wave), and its unwillingness and inability to plan in advance in spite of warnings sounded not only by public health experts but also by the Standing Committee of Parliament concerned," it said.

O2 PLANT ACCOUNTS FROZEN BY GUJ GOVT, JIGNESH MEVANI TO MOVE HC

Gandhinagar: Gujarat's Charity Commissioner has frozen the bank accounts of the NGO associated with independent legislator Jignesh Mevani's oxygen plant project. Mevani and the trust have decided to challenge the order in the high court. Charity Commissioner Y.M. Shukla had on Monday issued show cause notice to NGO 'We the People', seeking reply from the organisation on authorisation given to the Independent legislator from Vadgam to raise funds from the public in the name of the organisation for setting up of oxygen plants and concentrators for his constituency.

For the past some time, Mevani has been in his constituency, appealing to the people to raise funds for setting up of an oxygen plant in the area.

Raj announces free ambulance service for Covid patients

JAIPUR | Agencies

The Rajasthan government on Tuesday announced to provide free ambulance service to Covid patients for getting them admitted to the hospitals.

Also, the problems of Covid patients registered on Chief Minister's Helpline number 181 will have to be resolved within half-an-hour, officials of the Department of Medical, Health and Family Welfare said on Tuesday. As per the orders, 108 and 104 ambulance services will be provided free of cost at all the district-level war rooms as well as for the patients getting admitted to the Covid Consultation Centres and Covid Care Centres established at the subdivision level, or to those being referred to a dedicated Covid hospital. The above decisions were taken following an order issued by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot to look into these issues.

Gehlot had instructed that the concerned district collector can acquire a private ambulance or operate an ambulance service on rent if needed.

Further, it has been instructed that there will be only one telephone number to be used



across the state to register complaints related to the pandemic. The complaints shall be taken forward from this number and solved within a fixed time period. Also, Covid patients will be provided with necessary advice, medication, etc. The orders also said that real-time information on availability of beds, oxygen, ventilator etc. in the Covid dedicated hospitals will be provided to the patients.

Ambulance service will be provided to the patients for admission, referral to other hospitals as well as during their discharge. Also, patients requiring hospitalisation will not be prohibited from being admitted under any circumstances.

Assam govt initiates process to give 1L jobs to youth

GUWAHATI | Agencies

The Assam government headed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday initiated the process to provide one lakh jobs to the unemployed youth of the state and to evolve strategies to waive the loans given by the micro-finance institutions to the rural people.

Chaired by Sarma, the first Cabinet meeting in the second term of the BJP-led government was held on Tuesday, during which several decisions were taken, including providing one lakh government jobs and waiving micro-finance loans.

After the meeting, Health Minister Keshab Mahanta said that a committee head-



ed by Finance Minister Ajanta Neog has been constituted to prepare a roadmap for providing one lakh government jobs to the youth of the state.

The committee would prepare a report which would be

submitted to the government at the earliest. Other members of the committee include the Chief Secretary, the Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, and the Principal Secretary, Health, Education and Home.

17 die in 20 days in single UP village, Covid suspected

BABHANJOT | Agencies

It is suspected that the deaths were caused by Covid-19, even as the villagers are unwilling to get themselves tested.

Block Development Officer Pradeep Chaudhary, who visited the village after hearing the news, told IANS over phone, "I have visited the village and a medical team will be going there again on Wednesday. Most of the persons who died were elderly people."

He also said that it is a matter of concern that so many people have died in the same village. The medical team has started testing the people in the village, but many of them are unwilling to get themselves tested, he said.

Chaudhary also said that he has seen a few people in the village with Covid symptoms, as he put the death toll at 17.

The village is more than 160 km from state capital Lucknow and lack of health facility is believed to be the primary reason behind the latest

In a disturbing turn of events, Pipra Bara Khan, a small village in Babhanjot block in Gonda district in Uttar Pradesh, has witnessed 17 deaths in the last 20 days.



tragedy. The BDO said that if Covid cases are confirmed in the village, the standard operating procedures will be followed. However, ex-village head Mohammed Sarwar said the situation is pathetic in the village hamlet of Badka Deeha, as 19 people have died since April 20, including two in a span of three days in the family of one Abdul Mannan. Sarwar said that soon after the death of Mannan, his son also passed away after only a few days' of illness, while his mother is also reportedly unwell. The locals said that many people are ill in the village but they are afraid of getting themselves tested despite having Covid-like symptoms. The list sent by the villagers claim that 19 people have died, while the condition of eight others is stated to be serious. As per reports, the district on Monday reported 109 positive cases of which 78 cases were reported from different villages. The district presently has 1,533 active cases. The nodal officer for Covid management in the district put the death rate at 1.3 per cent.

Outrage, protests in Bihar over arrest of Pappu Yadav

Patna | Agencies

Outrage spread across Bihar after Patna police arrested four-time MP and Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) President Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav on Tuesday for allegedly violating lockdown norms, with leaders of ruling parties joining the opposition in slamming the move.

Former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, whose Hindustani Awam Morcha is part of the ruling NDA, said: "A public representative is working round the clock to help poor people of Bihar. Despite that, the state government arrested him. Cases of lockdown breach against him should be investigated judicially first before action, otherwise public outrage is inevitable."

Mukesh Sahani, President of Vikasheel Insaan Party (VIP), which is also a NDA constituent, also expressed anger against the state government.

"The state government should encourage public rep-



resentatives, and social activists to help people in the phase of pandemic. The arrest of Pappu Yadav who is helping people of Bihar is attributed to insensitivity," he said. Rashtriya Janata Dal Vice President Shyam Rajak also reacted sharply to Pappu Yadav's arrest.

CM'S KIN ARRESTED IN ANDHRA LIMESTONE QUARRY EXPLOSION CASE

Kadapa: The Andhra Pradesh police have made one more arrest in connection with their ongoing probe into the limestone quarry explosion in Kadapa district on Saturday that left 10 persons dead. Y.S. Pratap Reddy, kin of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, was arrested and produced in court on Tuesday. District Superintendent of Police, Anburajan, said that Pratap Reddy was arrested on charges of contravention of the laws on transportation of explosive substances, as no safety protocols were observed during transportation. The mishap had occurred on Saturday near Mamillapalle village in Kalasapadu mandal when the labourers were unloading gelatin sticks from a vehicle for using them at a limestone quarry. The gelatin sticks, which were allegedly transported from Pulivendula to the quarry, were traced back to Pratap Reddy who holds a magazine licence for explosives.



2 more Indian Navy ships bring oxygen to K'taka from Kuwait

Bengaluru | Agencies

Two more Indian Navy ships, INS Kochi and INS Tabar, reached Karnataka's New Mangaluru port with 100 MT of liquid medical oxygen from Kuwait, a defence official said on Tuesday.

"As part of operation Samudra Setu-2, the two naval ships brought 100 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen in 5 containers and 1,200 cylinders from Kuwait," the official said in a statement here. The ships sailed from Shuwaikh port in Kuwait on May 6.

The latest consignments were in addition to 30



tonnes of oxygen that were brought to the port city on Monday in INS Kolkata in 2 containers and 400 cylinders from Kuwait and

Qatar. The shipment has been delivered to Indian Oil Corporation for supplying the gas to the state, the statement added.

Robbing a bus to be with wife, driver held after covering 4 Kerala districts



Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

It was nothing daring, but certainly an enterprising way to be with his wife. Dinoop, 30, stole a private bus parked at the bus stand near Kozhikode on Saturday night. He went on to cover four districts in Kerala, but on Sunday morning failed to convince the police who stopped him at the

famed Kumarakom tourist destination.

On Tuesday, Dinoop was cooling his heels at a jail in Kozhikode after he was remanded to judicial custody, said a police official attached to the Kuttiyadi police station from where the bus was stolen.

The story that Dinoop gave to the police is that he wanted to be with his wife and child at Thiruvalla in Pathanamthitta dis-

trict.

Unable to travel from Kozhikode to Thiruvalla, a distance of around 270 kms, on account of the lockdown, seeing a private bus parked and with none around, he got into it and managed to start it and finding the fuel tank full, began to drive to his desired location.

At two places in the night he was stopped

by police and he told them that he was asked to fetch migrant labourers from Pathanamthitta and the police let him go.

Leaving Kozhikode, he drove through Malappuram, Thrissur, Ernakulam and entered Kottayam district.

But when he reached the famed tourist location on Sunday morning, he was stopped by the Kumarakom police and his game was up. Speaking to reporter, an official of the Kumarakom Police station said he was stopped and asked to show his licence.

"He said he does not have the licence with him. Then we decided to search the website of the Regional Transport Office with the registration number of the vehicle got the address and the contact number of the registered owner and we called him. When we asked him if the bus belongs to him, he said yes and added that it's parked here itself. Then we told him what happened and then only he realised that his bus had been stolen," said the police official.

"The police from Kuttiyadi came and took Dinoop into custody and drove the bus back. They will probe the case further," added the official. Meanwhile the Kuttiyadi police is not giving full credence to the story of Dinoop, as he has two similar cases against him and the coming days will reveal, what actually was his motive.

With record 108 Covid deaths on Tuesday, Andhra on the edge



Amaravati | Agencies

Andhra Pradesh continues to reel under the impact of covid, with the state reporting an all-time high death toll of 108 deaths on Tuesday. The covid tally also continues to hover above the 20,000 mark, with 20,345 new cases reported in the 24 hours ending 10 am, Tuesday.

Chittoor district reported the highest number of deaths (18) on Tuesday, followed by Visakhapatnam (12), and ten deaths each in East Godavari, Guntur, and Vizianagaram districts. Prakasam (9), Nellore (8), Krishna (7), Srikakulam (6) were followed by Anantapur,

Kurnool, and West Godavari districts with five deaths each. The lowest number (3) were reported from YSR Kadapa district.

For the past few days, the state has been consistently reporting daily covid tallies above 20,000.

Following the high number of deaths, the state's cumulative death toll jumped to 8,899 while the cumulative tally of covid cases in the state climbed to 13,22,934. On Tuesday, two districts reported covid numbers in excess of 2000, while eight districts reported above 1000 cases each, and the remaining three districts had three-digit tallies.



COVAXIN STOCK FOR 18-45 OF AGE FINISHED IN DELHI: AATISHI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The stock of Covaxin in Delhi for those aged between 18-45 years is completely finished, compelling the state administration to begin shutting down vaccination centres, senior AamAadmi Party (AAP) leader and MLA Atishi said on Tuesday.

Atishi said in a video address on Tuesday: "Covaxin stock is completely finished in Delhi for those between 18-45, and nearly 125 centres forced to shut down after today by the Delhi government."

She continued, "For Covishield, only three days stock is left for those between 18-45 years. For health care/frontline workers and those above 45 years, only 5 days stock left of Covaxin, and 4 days of Covishield."

Atishi told mediapersons that as many as 1,39,261 people got vaccinated in Delhi in the last 24 hours, the highest till date. "Sincere thanks



to all the health care/frontline workers and staff of government schools. The Delhi government demands the centre that since the national capital has faced the most covid induced hardships, vaccines should be made readily available in sufficient quantities for the people of Delhi. If we are not supplied sufficient vaccine doses by the centre, we will be forced, and will have no choice but to halt the vaccination programme," Atishi said.

"Happy to announce that we have been informed that 2,67,690 doses of Covishield will be supplied to us by today evening by the centre," she added. Citing the numbers, Atishi explained that as of today, in Delhi, the two categories in which immunisation is happening are health care/frontline workers and those above 45 years apart from the second category of those between 18-45 years of age. For the first category, "We have received a total of 43,20,490 until today, of these until today (Tuesday) morning, we have used nearly 39,22,000 of them. Hence, 3,98,000 doses are available for this category until the morning May 11.

"Now, for the second category, we have received nearly 5,50,000 doses (1,50,000: Covaxin, 4,00,000: Covishield). Of these, until yesterday (Monday) evening, we had already used 3,30,000 doses. And until today morning, we have 2,19,000 doses left with us for the second category," she added.

Delhi's positivity rate falls below 18%, reports 12,481 new cases

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Witnessing a decline, the national capital reported 12,481 new Covid cases in the last 24 hours, the lowest since April 12 and the daily positivity rate dipping below 18 per cent for the first time since April 14.

Drop in both number of daily cases and positivity rate in the last few days was an indication that the national capital, which witnessed over 28,000 new cases in a day and positivity rate over 36 per cent (April 22), may find some relief in coming days.

This is the third consecutive day when Delhi registered Covid cases below 15,000. On May 9, Delhi had reported 13,336 new cases in a day, and 12,651 new infections were reported on May 8. With 347 new fatalities being reported on Tuesday, Delhi's overall death toll



crossed 20,000 (20,010 till Tuesday). The national capital reported 83,809 active cases of which 51,480 patients are in home isolation. A total of 13,883 people were cured in the last 24 hours, taking the total recovery so far to 12,44,880.

It has been a week since Delhi's daily positivity rate started declining gradually. The national capital's Covid positivity rate was reported at 19.10 per cent on Sunday (May 9). On Saturday, it was

21.67 per cent, on Friday at 23.34 per cent, on Thursday at 24.92 per cent, on Wednesday at 24.29 per cent and on Tuesday it was 26.37 per cent.

The highest-ever daily Covid positivity rate -- 36.2 per cent was reported on April 22, which brought the entire health management system to its knees, with 25 Covid patients dying due to oxygen shortage at the leading private hospital Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

BJP lashes out at AAP govt over health infra in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The BJP claimed on Tuesday that the AamAadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi did not increase the number of ICU beds, nor did it purchase new ventilators in the last one year.

Addressing a press conference, BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi said, "The Delhi government has not increased its ICU bed capacity. Also, it did not buy any new ventilator in the last one year. Only the ventilators sent through the PM-CARES fund are being used in the city. Oxygen cylinders are being found at AAP leaders' houses."

Talking about the assistance being provided by the Union government to the national capital, the Lok Sabha MP from New Delhi said, "Oxygen, hospitals, special beds -- everything is being provided by the Central government and the DRDO. Even the medical staff is being provided by ITBP and other defence organisations." "So what is the AAP government's job? Why are they opposing the oxygen audit in Delhi," Lekhi asked. She claimed that while



the Arvind Kejriwal-led government did nothing to procure Covid vaccine to vaccinate people above the age of 18 years, it closed 60 centres which were functional at different municipal schools. She pointed out that despite promising to improve the health infrastructure in the city in its manifesto in 2015, the AAP government has done nothing to strengthen the same. "They promised to increase 30,000 hospital beds in the city but added just 354 beds, and that too under pressure from the Centre. Under the AAP government, the number of dispensaries in Delhi has come down from 265 to 230," Lekhi claimed.

Kejriwal urges Centre to allow more firms to manufacture vaccines

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic across India with a continuous increase in demand for vaccines, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has requested the Centre to allow more pharmaceutical firms to manufacture vaccines for India.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kejriwal on Tuesday urged the Centre to share Covid vaccine formulas and allow more companies to manufacture vaccine doses. "At present, there are only two companies -- Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech which are developing Covid vaccines. However, India is scrambling to get adequate vaccines. We should not be dependent on just two firms on vaccines as demand has increased at multiple folds in the country," said Kejriwal.

At present, India has two vaccines and only two companies making them -- Covishield (by the Serum Institute) and Covaxin (by Bharat Biotech) and both have struggled to raise output. A third vaccine -- Russia's Sputnik V -- has been cleared



but not yet rolled out.

"Only two companies are producing vaccines. They produce only six to seven crore vaccines per month. This way it will take more than two years to vaccinate everyone. Many waves of the pandemic will have passed by then. It is important to increase vaccine production and frame a national plan," Kejriwal added.

"Several companies should be deployed to produce vaccines. Centre should collect the formula from these two firms and give it to others so they can produce vaccines safely. The Centre has the power to do it in these difficult times," he stressed. "Every Indian should be vaccinated in the next few months and we are ready to play every role," the letter added.

At present, Delhi has been administering nearly 1.25 lakh vaccine doses every day which will be increased by three lakh per day in coming days.

"Delhi government will begin vaccinating more than three lakh people every day. We aim to vaccinate all residents within three months but we are facing a shortage, the Chief Minister said.

BJP MPs open 9 Covid care centres in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As part of the 'Sewa Hi Sangathan' campaign, two BJP MPs from the national capital have opened more than half-a-dozen Covid care centres across the city.

Lok Sabha MPs Parvesh Verma and Ramesh Bidhuri have started the facilities having more than 500 beds in their respective constituencies.

Verma has opened six Covid care centres in his constituency, and promises to open at least one in each Assembly constituency in the west Delhi area.

Verma has started facilities with 380 beds across his constituency with 200 beds at Ashok Nagar, 100 beds at DeenDayal Upadhyaya (DDU) College, 25 beds at Tilak Nagar, 20 beds each at Kakrola and Sagarpur, and 15 beds at Hari Nagar.

The latest Covid centre opened by Verma in Ashok Nagar in association with his organisation



RashtriyaSwabhiman (RS), Radha Swami Satsang Beas (RSSB) and the local district administration has 200

beds with oxygen facility. "Each bed is equipped with oxygen concentrators and adequate arrangements have

been made for doctors, nurses, medicines and other necessary items. The patients will also be provided free meals thrice a day," Verma said.

South Delhi MP Ramesh Bidhuri, in association with the Shiv Asra Trust (SAT), has started three Covid centres where 125 beds are available in Tughlaqabad Village, Sangam Vihar and Mahipalpur Village.

The Tughlaqabad Village has a 50-bed facility, Sangam Vihar has a 25-bed facility and a 50-bed facility has been set up at a South Delhi Municipal Corporation school in Mahipalpur Village. Doctors, nurses, sanitation workers are available round the clock at the Covid centres besides oxygen concentrators and medicine. The facilities started by Bidhuri are named "Modi Covid Care Centres".

"At all these centres, patients with oxygen level between 86 and 94 will be given free treatment. Food is being arranged by the Mata Jhandewali Mandir trust," Bidhuri said.

Test positivity rate drops to 24% in Gurugram

GURUGRAM | Agencies

The test positivity rate for Covid-19 in Gurugram district has come down to 24 per cent from 41.98 per cent in the past two weeks.

According to the health officials, the tally of daily new cases in the district has also come down, while that of recoveries has gone up.

Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg said that on April 29, the district had registered a positivity rate of 41.98 per cent.

"The recovery rate in the district is increasing rapidly and presently it is 77.18 per cent, which is commendable," Garg said.

Civil surgeon Virendra Yadav said that 12,000 to 15,000 people are being tested daily. An intensive testing campaign is being carried out by the health department in the areas with high-rises.

"To check the spread of the virus, it is necessary to identify the infected people in the district as soon as possible. We appeal to the general public that the only way to prevent



the infection is by following Covid appropriate behaviour and vaccination. Therefore, people should get their registrations done on the Arogya Setu App or the Cowin portal for vaccination so that the chain of the infection can be broken," Yadav said.

DAY AFTER RTI ACTIVIST'S ARREST, SCRIBE WITH FAKE STAMPS HELD IN GURUGRAM

GURUGRAM | Agencies

A day after the arrest of an RTI activist and his two sons for committing a property loan fraud of over Rs 15 crore, the police in Gurugram on Tuesday arrested a journalist in connection with the case for his alleged role in creating fake documents using fake stamps of a Tehsildar of Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA).

The accused has been identified as Shah Nawaz Alam, a native of Jharkhand presently residing in Laxman Vihar in Phase-2. The police have also recovered two fake stamps of HUDA from his possession.

Meanwhile, arrested RTI activist Harinder Dhingra and his two sons -- Tarun and Prashant -- were produced before a local court on Tuesday, which sent Harinder Dhingra to judicial custody, while his two sons were sent to six-day police remand. During questioning, Alam disclosed before the police that he was associated with the

RTI activist and had provided him a fake stamp of a Tehsildar of HUDA to prepare fake documents of the property, which were used by the Dhingra family in court cases. "During preliminary investigation it was also revealed by Alam that Dhingra used to provide him information of traders, builders and government officials, which he obtained via the RTI Act and the same information was published by the accused journalist in newspapers and magazines," Subhash Boken, spokesperson of the Gurugram police, told IANS. In return, Dhingra gave him money several times, both through online transfer and in cash, he said.

"The accused is being questioned in depth to ascertain more information about his accomplices and his involvement in any other matter," Boken said, adding that the Gurugram police have urged the public to inform them in case any person has any information or documents against Harinder Dhingra and his associates.

48 Gurugram RWAs keen to open small Covid care centres

GURUGRAM | Agencies

Following the guidelines given by the Gurugram district administration to open small Covid care centres in the residential society premises, around 48 Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) in Gurugram have expressed a desire to open a Covid centre in their residential societies.

Patients with pre-symptomatic, asymptomatic and very mild symptoms may be housed in these centres.

Amid spike in Covid-19 cases in Gurugram, the district administration had allowed upscale condominiums, gated housing societies and NGOs to set up small Covid care centres while using their own resources.

Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg, said "Requests had been received from gated housing societies to set up small Covid-19 care facilities run by the RWAs, housing societies and NGOs using their own resources."

"This will help reduce the burden on existing facilities for managing pre-symptomatic, asymptomatic and very



mild cases of Covid living in that particular society, and that such an order would be extremely crucial to check the exponential increase in Covid cases," Garg said.

However, these Covid care centres are not meant for critically ill elderly patients, children less than 10 years of age, pregnant or lactating women, and patients with co-morbidities.

According to the administration offi-

cials these Covid centres follow "strict infection prevention and control practices" by keeping confirmed and suspected cases in separate partitioned areas with "no intermixing" and "separate toilets". These centres will also need to be linked to the surveillance team of the district health department and an ambulance provider, and telephone numbers of the RWAs, NGOs, doctors should be displayed prominently.

Recoveries outnumber new cases in India after 61 days

Team Absolute | New Delhi

For the first time in 61 days, recoveries outnumbered new Covid cases in the last 24 hours, providing some relief to the country which is reeling under the raging second wave of the pandemic for some time now.

In the last 24 hours, India reported 3,29,942 fresh cases, while as many as 3,56,082 people recovered from the disease during the same time period.

India's cumulative recoveries stood at 1,90,27,304 on Tuesday, with a national recovery rate is 82.75 per cent. Ten states account for 72.28 per cent of the new recoveries, with Maharashtra leading the chart with 61,607 recoveries, followed by 32,188 in Karnataka, 31,209 in Kerala, 29,709 in Uttar Pradesh, 20,904 in Tamil Nadu, 18,675 in West Bengal, 16,192 in Haryana, 16,167 in

Andhra Pradesh, 15,800 in Bihar, and 14,931 in Gujarat.

Ten states also reported 69.88 per cent of the new cases in the last 24 hours. Karnataka reported the highest daily of new cases at 39,305, followed by Maharashtra (37,236), Tamil Nadu (28,978), Kerala (27,487), Uttar Pradesh (21,277), West Bengal (19,445), Rajasthan (16,487), Andhra Pradesh (14,986), Haryana (12,718), and Delhi (12,651).

Meanwhile, for the first time in 61 days, there was a net decline of 30,016 cases in the total active caseload in the last 24 hours.

India's total active caseload has dipped to 37,15,221, comprising 16.16 per cent of the country's total positive cases. As per the latest Union Health Ministry data, 13 states cumulatively account for 82.68 per cent of India's active cases.



CORONA IS CONSTANTLY COMING UNDER CONTROL IN THE STATE: CM

Total notified	Positive Patients on Ventilator	Isolation without Oxygen (Positive and Suspect)		Isolation with Oxygen (Positive and Suspect)	ICU/HDU (Positive and Suspect)					
		Capacity	Occupied (%)		Capacity	Occupied (%)	Capacity	Occupied (%)		
182	23	944	316	33%	338	296	87%	206	248	94%
62	1	106	104	98%	277	204	74%	58	54	93%

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the corona infection is continuously coming under control in the state. The corona positivity rate had reached 25% in the state, which has been steadily decreasing. Now it has come down to 14.78%. Today 9754 new cases of corona have found.

Chouhan said that most of the population (88%) of the state is being covered under Mukhyamantri Covid Kalyan Yojana. Only the upper class is

left out. It should be ensured that the benefit of this scheme reaches all the districts.

Chouhan was addressing through video conferencing before the cabinet meeting from his residence today. Ministers and officials concerned attended the meeting through video conferencing.

The cabinet meeting started with the recitation of Vande-Matram. After this, tributes were paid to late MLAs Jugal Kishore Bagri, Brijendra Singh Rathore and Kalavati Bhuria and two minutes' silence was observed.

Chouhan said that 5 months' free fair price ration is being given to every poor of every section of the state, out of which 3 months' ration is being provided by the state government and 2 months by the central government. There is no need of eligibility-slip, thumb impression, Aadhar linkage etc. for this. It should be ensured that every poor gets this ration.

Chouhan said that the state is also fully conscious of the third wave of corona and health infrastructure and health services are constantly being

strengthened for it. Arrangements have also been made for the treatment of black fungus as a side effect of corona treatment.

Chouhan said that so far 1 crore metric tonnes of wheat has been procured in the state during the corona crisis. For this, the Cooperatives and Food Departments deserve to be congratulated. The government is also purchasing wheat without shine. The expenditure of Rs 31 crore 19 lakh for the purchase of wheat without shine last year has been borne by the state government.

Will succeed in preventing corona infection with people's support: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has instructed to constantly take all measures on a war footing in the city and rural areas to prevent and check the corona epidemic with social participation. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that the positivity rate in the state is continuously decreasing. It declined to 20.2 percent on May 3 and today it has come down to 14.78 percent on May 11. This success is due to a three-tier strategy to prevent corona infection in the city and rural areas.

Instructions have been issued to constitute crisis management groups at block and village levels and at ward level in urban areas in addition to the district level crisis management group to prevent and control corona virus. Social participation will be ensured by these groups for the implementation of the guidelines issued by the state government for the prevention of epidemic and control of emergencies at the block, village and ward levels.

Chouhan has said that the state government is committed to provide free Covid treatment to all the economically weaker families of the state. In this sequence, the Mukhyamantri Covid Upchar Yojana has been implemented. In this scheme, important decisions have also been taken to provide free Covid treatment to Ayushman card-

holder families. Out of 603 private hospitals treating Covid-19, 188 private hospitals are already affiliated with Ayushman Yojana. Till May 10, 294 applications have been received from private hospitals for association with Ayushman, out of which 106 private hospitals have been attached. In some private hospitals related to treatment of Covid-19, strict action is also being taken against those hospitals for violation of the prescribed protocols and norms of Covid treatment. 28 lakh 11 thousand fine in 97 cases of action, notice in 36 cases, suspension of license in two cases and FIR has been registered in 36 cases.

Under the Kill-Corona campaign, on May 10, 26 thousand 611 persons suspected of corona infection were investigated by the supervisory team in the rural areas of the state, out of which 899 persons have been referred to the Covid Care Centres. Three thousand 273 corona suspects have been referred to the fever clinics. Also, 22 thousand 439 medical kits were distributed. On May 10, six thousand, 227 corona suspects have been identified and medical kits have been provided to 6,096 persons and 937 corona suspects have been referred to the fever clinics under the Kill Corona Campaign in the urban areas. 200 new Covid Ambulances have been deployed in rural areas on

the basis of Covid cases. Approval of 3476 technical staff has been granted for operation theater and ventilator operation.

Corona Volunteers are making significant contribution to public awareness work in Covid control, working shoulder to shoulder with the government. The number of Corona Volunteers across the state has now exceeded 1 lakh 12 thousand 506.

Chouhan said that the symptoms of the disease should not be concealed. Do not be confused if you have cold, cough and fever. Take medicine after consulting a doctor. He said that corona is a contagious disease. The government and society can fight against this together. Covid-19 can be avoided only by following the appropriate social behavior and taking prevention and control measures. Wear appropriate mask, keep sufficient distance between each other. Do not go in crowded places. Keep washing your hands with soap frequently.

Chouhan said that the possibility of a third wave of corona infection has been expressed by scientists. The team of officials is constantly in discussion with experts and doctors in the state. All possible measures will be taken in advance to check and curb this. Every effort will be made to keep children safe. Appropriate decisions will be taken after assessing the third wave.

Fake medicine, injections sellers should be imprisoned for life: Mishra

Mishra said that the government will take strict action against those who sell fake medicines. At present, action is being taken under the National Security Act for selling fake drugs, but soon it will also be brought under the Food Adulteration Act.



National Security Act for selling fake drugs, but soon it will also be brought under the Food Adulteration Act. The Food Adulteration Act provides for life imprisonment against those who commit such acts. He said that a draft is being sent to the Law Department for this. Once finalized from the department, it will be incorporated into law. Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan himself has indicated the harsh action against such people.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Home Minister Narottam Mishra has said that the government is considering that a provision of life imprisonment should be made for those who indulge in fraudulent use of fake medicines in the state. Mishra said that the law department is being consulted for amending the law to take legal action against the enemies of human beings who trade fake drug injections. Mishra said that the government will take strict action against those who sell fake medicines. At present, action is being taken under the

Mishra has said that not only will strict action be taken against such people, but their property will also be seized and destroyed. The Home Minister has clarified that selling fake medicines is an evil crime and the government is going to take severe action against those who do so. He said that so far action has been taken against more than a dozen people under the National Security Act and the licenses of hospitals have also been revoked.

VHP divisional president held for fake Remdesivir racket

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

The director of a hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur is among four persons arrested for procuring and administering fake Remdesivir, a drug used in the treatment of COVID-19. The accused, Sarabjeet Singh Mokha, is also the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) president of the Narmada division.

Mokha, the Director of Jabalpur's City Hospital, is accused of sourcing 500 Remdesivir injections from Indore, which the hospital administered to many COVID-19 patients. He has now been booked under Sections 274, 275,



308, and 420 of the Indian Penal Code. Of the other accused persons in the case, one Devendra Chaurasia works as Mokha's manager, and another, Sapan Jain, handles dealerships with pharmaceutical companies.

The incident came to light after a team of Gujarat Police busted a fake Remdesivir manufacturing unit and arrested Jain from Jabalpur on May 7.

VHP Prant Mantri, Rajesh Tiwari, has said Mokha is now relieved of his charges and that the police must take stringent actions against such people.

"We have recent days set up a nodal officer of the rank of Additional Superintendent of Police. Under his leadership, an SIT has been formed to track black marketing of Remdesivir and oxygen. We are trying to break that intricate network," Bhagwat Singh, Jabalpur Inspector General, told reporters.

Chief Minister Covid treatment scheme will be started in the state

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Chief Minister Covid Treatment Scheme was approved at a virtual meeting of the Council of Ministers on Tuesday presided by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. The cabinet decided to allot the government 20.95 hectare land of village Malanpur district Bhand for setting up Sainik School Sainik School Society, New Delhi, with zero interest and an annual land rent of Rs. 1.

The cabinet announced the Madhya Pradesh State Cooperative Marketing Association as the nodal agency of the state for the arrangement of DAP, Complex, Potash and

Urea fertilizers in the state from 2021-22 to 2023-24 and fixed quantity of fertilizers as per requirement in the state through Markfed. It was decided to store in advance for the arrangement of For this, every year from 2021-22 to 2023-24, the state government decided to approve a free government guarantee of Rs 600 crore as per the proposal of Markfed.

The cabinet decided to increase the minimum age limit for selection of Krishak Mitra to 25 years in place of 25 years in the state under the Sub-Mission on Agriculture Extension-Atma aided by the Government of India. The Council of Ministers has decided to extend the period of the previously implemented merger

scheme by June 30, 2021 to complete the proceedings of the services of the remaining servicemen for merger of State / District Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (Land Development Bank).

The cabinet endorsed the order issued by the Narmada Valley Development Department in connection with the issuance of equity shares of up to Rs 1500 crore allocated to the Narmada Basin Projects Company Limited in the second supplement in the financial year 2020-21.

After submission of 100 percent of the tender bid price amount by H-1 in the tender issued by the Council of Cooperation Department for scrapping of the plant and machinery

installed on the industrial asset of Soybean Pro-version Plant Pachama District Sehore as scraps. It was decided to take the execution of the contract by the Joint Commissioner Cooperative, liquidator of Madhya Pradesh State Oilseeds Growers' Cooperative Union. The cabinet found the highest amount of financial tender amount of tenderers and the amount put in e-auction for release of 5 land parcels located in Cosmo Anand, Sirol, District Gwalior of Revenue Department. H-1 Tender Bid Price Amount After approving the tender, the District Collector decided to proceed with the execution of the contract after depositing 100 percent of the tender bid price amount.

So far 99 lakh 38 thousand 29 metric tonnes of wheat have been purchased from 13 lakh 12 thousand 605 farmers, one lakh 10 thousand 480 metric tons of gram from 41 thousand 850 farmers, and 17 metric tons of lentils from 37 farmers. Thus far, one crore of 48 thousand 526 metric tonnes of produce has been purchased at the support price, which is worth 20 thousand 191 crores. Out of this, a payment of Rs. 15 thousand 476 crores have been made to the concerned farmers.

One crore metric tonnes of Rabi produce procured on support price

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The state government is procuring wheat, gram, lentils, and mustard on the support price from the farmers in the Rabi procurement. So far, over one crore metric tonnes of wheat, gram, and lentils have been procured from 13 lakh 54 thousand 497 farmers at 5171 procurement centers set up in the state.

This time 35 lakh 79 thousand 423 farmers got them-



elves registered in Rabi procurement. Out of this, registration of 35 lakh 64 thousand 569 farmers was verified. 5735 procurement centers were set up for purchase. Out of these 5171 centers are active. Out of these, procurement is being done at 4657 centers for wheat and 514 centers for gram, lentils, and mustard. SMS was sent to 32 lakh 74 thousand 625 farmers for purchasing the crop.

So far 99 lakh 38 thousand 29 metric tonnes of wheat have been purchased from 13 lakh 12 thousand 605 farmers, one lakh 10 thousand 480 metric tons of gram from 41 thousand 850 farmers, and 17 metric tons of lentils from 37 farmers. Thus far, one crore of 48 thousand 526 metric tonnes of produce has been purchased at the support price, which is worth 20 thousand 191 crores. Out of this, a payment of Rs. 15 thousand 476 crores have been made to the concerned farmers.

COVID-19 Isolation Centre To Be Built At Justice Tankha Memorial Special School

Madhya Pradesh has decided to build a COVID-19 hospital at its Justice Tankha Memorial Special School to incorporate the rising number of infected patients.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh has decided to build a COVID-19 hospital at its Justice Tankha Memorial Special School to incorporate the rising number of infected patients. The COVID-19 isolation hospital will have 40 beds which will admit the infected patients beyond the scope of home-isolation.

The Collector of Mandla district in the state Harsha Singh has issued the notification about the new COVID-19 isolation centre. She said that, "In view of the COVID-19 infection in

the district, now COVID-19 isolation hospital will be set up at Tankha Memorial School for Children. This COVID-19 isolation hospital will be of 40 beds."

She also informed about specialised facilities to be made available for infected children below 18 years.

"Necessary arrangements will be ensured for the children in the isolation ward. Arrangements will also be made for children's entertainment and their psychological support. The collector informed that the hospital being constructed for children will start soon", she added. The beds will be placed inside two separate halls. The patients will be provided with food and medicines. Further the health department will also appoint nurses and ward boys to assist the patients. A medical team will be formed under the supervision of Dr Vijay Dhuria.

The hospital will also incorporate a sitting area for the attendants.

Damoh by-poll loss sparks factionalism in BJP in Madhya Pradesh

Taking the defeat seriously, the BJP has initiated action against those involved in anti-party activities. Five divisional president and a former minister's son Siddharth Malaiya have been suspended from the party, while former minister Jayant Malaiya has been issued a show cause notice.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The BJP's defeat in the Damoh by-poll and the action taken against those involved in anti-party activities have increased factionalism in the party. As a result, social media has become a battleground for the warring factions.

BJP's Rahul Lodhi had to bite the dust against Congress candidate Ajay Tandon in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh by-election the result of which was declared on May 2.

Taking the defeat seriously, the BJP has initiated



ated action against those involved in anti-party activities. Five divisional president and a former minister's son Siddharth Malaiya have been suspended from the party, while former minister Jayant Malaiya has been issued a show cause notice.

Rahul Lodhi and Union Minister Prahlad Patel have directly targeted Jayant Malaiya for allegedly sabotaging the party's prospects in Damoh. As per the ground report received by the BJP, Malaiya who hails from the area and a former minister in Shivraj Singh cabinet did not actively support the party candi-

date and there was a lot of dissatisfaction among the ordinary voters against Rahul Lodhi.

On the action against him, Malaiya says that if any candidate loses by 17 thousand votes, it means that the public is angry with him. He said the public was not angry with the party but was angry with Rahul Lodhi.

Following the action against Malaiya, many leaders have attacked the party without naming anyone. These leaders include those who are currently not holding any position of power or are not in the good

book of the party leadership. Former ministers Himmatt Kothari, Kusum Mahdele and Ajay Vishnoi, apart from some MLAs have openly raised their voices on the social media against the show cause notice to Malaiya. The BJP's decision to field Lodhi instead of Malaiya had led to some heartburn though Malaiya was persuaded to work for the party. Despite that, immediately after the bypoll results, Lodhi accused Malaiya of sabotaging the election and demanded disciplinary action against him.

Political analysts believe that Damoh's by-election was between BJP's Rahul Lodhi vs Congress' Ajay Tandon. The public was more annoyed with Rahul Lodhi who had defected from the Congress to join the BJP. The Congress had alleged that Rahul Lodhi was paid in crores to join the BJP. Though the party organization worked hard but Rahul Lodhi could not register a win, though he did well in urban area. If the party organization had not put in all its efforts, he would have lost by a bigger margin. Political analyst Santosh Gautam says Malaiya has been an influential leader of the state, a minister many times. He has been a man of the masses. When the BJP in Damoh changed him as a candidate, the party was likely to face a reversal. When the party decided to take action against him for anti-party activities, it should also think if it is doing the right thing.



MAHARASHTRA SUSPENDS COVID-19 VACCINE DRIVE FOR 18-44 AGE GROUP DUE TO SHORTAGE

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said a decision on extending the lockdown in the state will be taken in the Cabinet meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Government of Maharashtra on Tuesday suspended the COVID-19 vaccination drive for the 18-44 age group due to a shortage of jabs. State Health Minister Rajesh Tope told the media that the government has decided to prioritise the second dose of the 45+ age group people with the remaining stock of vaccines.

The minister said the move, however, is temporary. "There is a dearth of vaccines, hence we're considering holding off vaccination drive temporarily for 18-44 age group. 2.75 lakh vaccine doses are left for this age group that'll be now used for 45 years and above group. Administering the second dose is a priority," the minister said.

He also informed that patients suffering from mucormycosis or black fungus disease will now be treated free-of-cost in the state under Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana. "Over 2,000 cases have been reported and 8 people have died due to this infection in the state so far. We



are making special wards for these patients," Tope informed.

He also said that a decision on extending the lockdown in the state will be taken in the Cabinet meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

Lockdown-like restrictions have been imposed in Maharashtra since

the start of April and these are due to end on May 14 unless extended further. Stricter restrictions were imposed in the western state following an unprecedented surge in coronavirus cases during the ongoing second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the lockdown measures,

the MVA government permitted the purchase of essential food items only for four hours every day.

Maharashtra has been reporting around 60,000 COVID-19 cases daily, though capital Mumbai has seen a dip in new cases over the past few days.

Taking No Risks: Maharashtra May Extend Lockdown Till May-End Even as Daily Cases Plateau

The current lockdown, which is expected to end on May 15, may see an extension to the end of the month despite demands from several districts to loosen restrictions.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Despite many districts slowly starting to show a decline in COVID-19 cases, the Maharashtra government may extend the lockdown until the month end, according to officials.

The current lockdown, which is expected to end on May 15, may see an extension to the end of the month despite demands from several districts to loosen restrictions. In fact, state government officials reported that daily cases have plateaued, but are yet to show a substantial decrease in most districts.

"Nearly 12 districts are showing a decline in cases, but that is just one-third of the state; the remaining two-thirds is either stable or is

reporting an increase.

Opening up would lead to a surge again," said the minister on condition of anonymity. According to earlier data, twelve states accounted for 80.68 per cent of India's over 37.23 lakh active coronavirus cases, with Maharashtra taking the lead. Maharashtra has the maximum number of active cases at 6.57 lakh, followed by Karnataka 5,36,661, Kerala 4,02,997, Uttar Pradesh 2,54,118, and Rajasthan 1,99,147 cases. The state also saw a record high of 54,022 daily cases and 898 fatalities. Meanwhile, state health minister Rajesh Tope said that Maharashtra's positivity rate for Covid-19 has not shown a significant decrease despite increased testing in the state.

Over three weeks have passed since the Maharashtra government imposed strict restrictions to check the spread of coronavirus but the daily average of cases is still over 50,000 which is a matter of concern, he said, in an earlier statement on Saturday. Citing the Union government, Tope said COVID-19 cases have dipped in 12 out of the total 36 districts in Maharashtra, but in some other districts, the cases are on a higher side.

Given the many concerning indicators, it is possible that the state might not see relief until conditions are 'stable' in a majority of districts in the state.

The final decision on the matter is set to be taken at the cabinet meeting.

Exploring possibilities of global procuring vaccines: Aditya Thackeray

"Like other states, we are scrambling and struggling for vaccines," Aditya Thackeray said while talking to media persons, adding that "We are looking at the possibility of globally procuring vaccines for Mumbai. If we can do that... we have a roadmap to vaccinate the people of Mumbai within three weeks."



citizens in Mumbai, state minister Aditya Thackeray said on Monday.

If that happens, they have a "roadmap" to vaccinate the country's financial capital in around three weeks. The cost, he said, is "not a factor" and the state government is looking at "procurement at the earliest". "Like other states, we are scrambling and struggling for vaccines," Thackeray said while talking to media persons. "We are looking at the possibility of globally procuring vaccines directly for the use of

we can do that... we have a roadmap to vaccinate the people of Mumbai within three weeks," he added.

Thackeray said they were all the more positive about this because the vaccine hesitancy which was prevalent in the days after vaccines were launched, is quite gone.

"The vaccine hesitancy has gone away and people are eager to get both shots and carry on with post-Covid life. I think that is crucial," he added.

MAHA SEES COVID DEATHS, CASES FALL; STATE TOLL CROSSES 76K

Mumbai: For the second day running, Maharashtra saw Covid-19 cases and fatalities drop even as the Mumbai situation visibly improved, health officials said on Monday.

Compared with 572 deaths on Sunday, fatalities went down to 549, taking the state's toll to 76,398.

The number of new infections remained below the 50,000 level, going down from 48,401 on Sunday to 37,236 now, taking the total tally to 51,38,973. The Mumbai position continued to be encouraging, with infections remaining below the 5,000 level, at 1,782, as the tally rose to 677,412. Daily deaths rose up from 68 on Sunday to 74 now, taking the total fatalities in the country's commercial capital to 13,855 now.

Pramod, who was known for his work ethic, had refused to heed his family's advice on avoiding contact tracing work.

PUNE | Agencies

52-year-old primary school teacher in Solapur district died of Covid, days after he returned home from his bye-election duty in the Pandharpur-Mangalvedha constituency. Pramod Mane's parents and aunt, who had come in contact with him, also tested positive and passed away the same week.

"My brother died first... Our parents and aunt were in the same ICU. But I didn't inform them about his death," said Dr Pravin Mane, who runs a hospi-

tal in Navi Mumbai area.

On April 17, Pramod was called for election duty in Pandharpur-Mangalvedha. Two days after returning to his home in Gherdi village in Sangola taluka of Solapur district, Pramod developed a fever and tested positive for Covid. He later got himself admitted in a hospital Sangola.

"My brother was admitted to Sangola hospital. I was not happy with the treatment he was getting. Therefore, I decided to take him along to Navi Mumbai where I run a hospital along with my relative," Dr Pravin said. After their parents and aunt also tested positive, Dr Mane shifted them to his Navi Mumbai hospital too. "Besides attending the election duty, my brother was also working on contact tracing in his area. I am not sure where he got infected during election duty or during contact tracing work," said Dr Mane. Pramod, who was

known for his work ethic, had refused to heed his family's advice on avoiding contact tracing work. "He was a dedicated government employee... Despite the fact that he was 50 plus and a diabetic, he religiously did his duty," said Dr Mane.

Dr Mane said all the four of his family members had comorbidities. "They either had heart ailment or were diabetic. Initially, they were doing fine but there was a sudden drop in their oxygen saturation level and therefore had to be put on a ventilator. Despite our best efforts we could not save them. On four consecutive days, I lost my four family members..." Dr Mane said.

Dr Mane, however, said he would not like to link his brother's death to the election duty. "I don't want to make it look political. My brother did his duty like a committed employee... But yes, because of him, our parents and aunt might have got infected," he said.

Maharashtra should not come in trouble by reducing oxygen quota: Nawab Malik tells Centre

Team Absolute | Mumbai

While battling with the second wave of COVID-19, Nawab Malik, National Spokesperson of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Minister for Minorities in Maharashtra, has warned that the Centre should not try to get Maharashtra in trouble by cutting the oxygen quota from Bellary in Karnataka. While the quota for the state has been fixed, now the Centre has reduced it by 50 tonnes. It could be used in the districts of Western Maharashtra and Marathwada, but the role of the Centre is unjust, said Nawab Malik.

He said that besides 50 tonnes deduction, the Centre has also asked to transport 11 to 12 tonnes from Kolhapur to Goa. The state government provides 1,200 tonnes and the central government provides an additional 300 tonnes. But now it will be deducted from Bellary. "The Centre should not do injustice by making these cuts," said Nawab Malik.



With BJP governments in Karnataka and Goa, it is not appropriate to pay too much attention and do injustice to Maharashtra. Nawab Malik also demanded that the role of

the Centre in taking over the BJP-ruled state is not right when we need it.

"Now Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has announced that vaccinations

will be given only to locals on Aadhaar card basis. But their people are spread all over the country for work purposes. So if other states take a stand of not vaccinating them, will it be humane? questioned Nawab Malik. He also asked what would happen if the decision creates a serious situation in the country.

Meanwhile, Nawab Malik has also asked about the decision taken by Yogi Adityanath and what decision will be taken by the central government regarding the vaccine.

Besides, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope on Tuesday informed that the decision on extending lockdown in the state will be taken in the CM Uddhav Thackeray's review meeting slated to be held tomorrow.

He informed that the decision on extending the lockdown beyond May 15 up to May 31 will be notified after the meeting.

Amid the second wave, the Maharashtra government had imposed a lockdown from April 22 to May 1. It was extended to May 15 to break the virus chain.

Over 2,000 cases, 8 deaths from Mucormycosis in Maharashtra so far

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope also said that an awareness campaign to educate people about the infection will also be organised.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

After announcing free treatment for patients suffering from the rare fungal infection of Mucormycosis, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope on Tuesday said more than 2,000 cases have been reported and eight people have succumbed to the infection in the state so far. He said that the state government is creating special wards for these patients.

"Mucormycosis patients will be treated for free under Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana. Over 2,000 cases have been reported and 8 people have died of this infection in the state so far. We are making special wards for these patients," Tope said. Tope on Monday announced the free treatment of patients of Mucormycosis under the Maharashtra government's flagship medical insurance scheme -- Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana.

Patients will get free treatment under the health scheme at 1,000 hospitals across the state. The minister announced about the free treatment citing that the cost of medicines for the treatment is expensive, hence the aid

will be provided to the patients.

Mucormycosis or 'black fungus' is a growing concern in Covid-19 patients in India. The disease that is strongly linked to diabetes can lead to blackening or discoloration over the nose, blurred or double vision, chest pain, breathing difficulties and coughing blood. The infection is found to be in Covid-19 patients with diabetes and compromised immune systems. Covid-19 and its treatment can have a severe impact on patients with diabetes as it can be exacerbated by steroids like dexamethasone during the treatment of the viral disease.

Tope also said that the symptoms of fungal infection are being reported in Covid-19 patients who are diabetic and whose diabetes is not under control. The state health minister also said that an awareness campaign to educate people about the infection will also be organised.

MAHARASHTRA GOVT PUTS OFF OFFICIAL TRANSFERS TILL JUNE 30 DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mumbai: Maharashtra government has decided to postpone all administrative transfers of officers till June 30 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. As per the general practice, deadline for transfers is May 31. A government resolution issued by the General Administration Department (GAD) headed by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that transfers will be done only under exceptional circumstances. As per the general practice, government officials who have completed three years of tenure at a particular posting are transferred in the months of April and May. Usually, 30% staff of the total strength of a particular department gets transferred. Rights to transfer employees in group C and D stand with local administration, while those of group A and B are with the minister of that particular department or the Chief Minister. The process needs to be completed before May 31 and requires approval from the Chief Minister. "Now in view of the pandemic, the CM has decided to halt all the transfers till June 30. No transfers will take place. The decision on whether the date will be extended or not will be taken after reviewing the situation in next month," said an officer from the GAD. The GR, however, has mentioned exceptions to the rule.

Amended central Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act yet to be implemented: Maharashtra govt to HC

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday told the Bombay high court that the recent amendments to the central Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act were yet to be implemented by the Union government due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These amendments propose, among other things, to raise the existing time period for legal termination of pregnancy to 22 weeks.

On March 25 this year, the MTP (Amendment) Bill received the President's assent and was notified by the Union government. "However, its implementation was

delayed due to the COVID 19 pandemic," government pleader Purnima Kantharia told a bench of Justices KK Tated and Abhay Ahuja.

The bench was hearing three separate petitions seeking permission to medically terminate pregnancies. Two of the three petitioners are 22-week pregnant and had sought termination on the ground of a risk to the survival of the child owing to health abnormalities while the third petitioner is a rape victim, pregnant with twins.

While prior to the 2021 amendment, the MTP act permitted termination of pregnancies up to 20 weeks if the same was okayed by at least two doctors, the amendment increases this period to 22 weeks. The bench pointed this out and

said that the two petitioners did not require the court's permission for carrying out the termination.

At this point, the state's counsel informed the HC about the delay in implementation. The bench took Kantharia's statement on record and allowed all the petitioners to approach any hospital of their choice to carry out the medical termination.

The bench also directed Kantharia to inform the local police about the case of the third petitioner, a rape victim, as mandated by the Act and to extend the provisions of the state government's 'Manodhairya Yojana' that provides for financial support, and rehabilitation to victims of rape, child sexual abuse, and acid attacks.



Konkona gets the vax, shares tips on how to get slot on CoWin site

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Konkona Sensharma shared on Tuesday that she has taken the first vaccine for Covid-19.

"After playing vaccine vaccine for a few days we finally got jabbed! Got my first shot of Covaxin today! It is, after all, possible to get a slot from the CoWin site," wrote Konkona, along with a string of pictures she shared on Instagram from the vaccine centre.

"If you know English, have a smart device and internet of course. Some tips that helped us: 1. Covialerts.in on the telegram app. 2. Using Chrome incognito mode when accessing the CoWin site," she wrote.

The actress added: "Thanks so much Thane Global Hub for a smooth experience, especially Jatin Tawde and Ashwini Gochade. Hats off to the medical community everywhere! for @amolparashar and @damini_styles for being my vaccine buddies."

Konkona, who was recently seen in the anthology "Ajeeb Daastaans", urged everyone to continue wearing double masks and follow all Covid protocols post vaccination.



Sona Mohapatra says kohl helps her deal with pain around her

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Sona Mohapatra on Monday took to social media to talk about the healing power of 'kajal' (kohl), which is worn as a part of makeup. Sona revealed that kohl helps her to deal with the pain around her in a special way.

"There was a time when I couldn't step out without Kajal. All through college & then forever after... my sisters @madhumitamohapatra @pracheemohapatra called me raccoon eyes cus I rubbed & spread the black in the course of the day. Was happy to be called anything cus deep inside I felt like a devil & smouldered in all my glory," Son wrote, along with a photograph of her wearing 'kajal' that she shared on Instagram.

"I stopped for a few years in between... why, I don't really know. Was in sync with my explorations in different aesthetic realms as an artist I think & the way I dress or adorn myself is always linked to that. Have gone back to the smoulder now. Helps me deal with the pain around me in some special way. #kajal #calm #darkisthenightcoldistheground #India #weshallovercome #powerful," she added.



SHAHID KAPOOR SHARES HIS 'PICTURE OF HAPPINESS'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Shahid Kapoor took to Instagram on Monday to share his vision of happiness with fans. The actor posted a picture of a large poor family sleeping together on one bed, with an umbrella over them. He wrote about how Turkish poet Nazim Hikmat had once asked his friend to draw a picture of happiness, and this is what he made.

"PICTURE OF HAPPINESS: NAZIM HIKMAT The great Turkish poet -- once asked his friend Abidin Dino (Turkish artist and well-known painter), to draw a

picture of HAPPINESS. He drew a picture of a whole family -- cramped up on a broken bed, under a leaky roof in a shabby room, but still with a smile on each member's face! Happiness is not absence of sufferings but acceptance of sufferings" he posted.

His brother, actor Ishaan Khatter, commented: "As long as you're together", with a heart emoji.

Shahid will be seen next in the film "Jersey", which also features his father Pankaj Kapur and Mrunal Thakur. He will also make his digital debut with a series directed by Raj and DK.

Twinkle Khanna shares what new normal is like

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Twinkle Khanna on Tuesday gave a glimpse of the new normal in her life, stating that the balcony was turning into a forest and the children were becoming masked superheroes.

Twinkle posted her comment with a pic-

ture of her daughter Nitara on Instagram. In the image, Nitara is seen wearing a mask and sunglasses.

"The new normal: The balcony is becoming a forest and all our kids are turning into masked Superheroes! I marvel at how they have adapted to just slipping on a mask as they leave the door, the lack of fuss over their

isolation," Twinkle wrote as caption. She added: "They give us hope and joy and help us through our toughest times. And also behave like crackpots to make us laugh, like this little one right here. #littleheroes". Twinkle is married to actor Akshay Kumar. The two tied the knot in 2001. The couple have two children, Aarav and Nitara.



Go waterless with personal care

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Hygiene is an important aspect of today's lives, especially with the ongoing pandemic. Inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices are the cause of death for lakhs of people every year, majority of them being children. Provision of clean water is one of the most effective methods of saving lives. However, clean water is a novelty in the current world, as we are using tons of water every day to drink, bathe and cook, but it is not available around the world on an equitable basis. Hence, we all should make sure that water is conserved.

Benefits associated with waterless formulations include reduction in plastic waste, reduction in costs and aiding the creation of effective products. Along with reduce-reuse-recycle processes, a sustainable life can be achieved with the use of waterless personal care products wherein technological advancements play a key role. Waterless technology can now be used in every aspect of personal hygiene in these ways:

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene could be easily managed with waterless soaps which require no or less water to rinse off the foam. Such waterless products can come handy on a long trip, and in distant places with less water availability.

Bodily hygiene

A daily shower is necessary to maintain personal hygiene and healthy living. A well-showered body reduces the



odour produced by perspiration, and get rid of most germs. In situations with no water availability or inability to take a shower, use a waterless body bath and shampoo to maintain a shower routine.

Oral hygiene

The use of a toothbrush for cleaning after all meals is essential for the prevention of oral cavities and infections. Food and drinks leave residue in the teeth that grow. Newer technology like waterless toothpastes could be a new addition to your personal care kit where you would require no water to rinse off the residue. A safe to swallow formulation makes it easy to use and effective for dental hygiene.

Intimate hygiene

Avoiding infections, fungus or itching is essential. Women should wash their

genitals more than twice a day to avoid bacterial infections such as by E.coli. This can be done by using waterless intimate hygiene products as personal care. For men, it is advised to keep hygienic with waterless products.

Head hygiene

Hair should be washed two or three times a week. Waterless shampoo is another addition to personal care for maintaining hygiene with no water. It is an easy to use spray formulation rinsed off with a towel or a tissue.

Another feature of waterless products is that they are free from parabens and preservatives. That concludes to them being extremely safe for all skin types. A transition to waterless products is a road taken by lesser people but once the move has been made it would lead to a lesser carbon footprint.

Are you consuming 'healthy honey'?

Team Absolute | New Delhi

There is no dearth of honey brands dotting the market shelves claiming to be pure, healthy and immunity boosting. Are all these products really as healthy as they claim to be? Is the honey you consume pure, unadulterated and unaltered from its natural state?

To ascertain the goodness of honey, one must know that honey is most beneficial and healthy when consumed in its most natural state. However, when the honey extracted from beehives is processed, heated and laden with additives, it not just loses its innate health benefits but may even become unhealthy to consume. So, if you want to consume honey for its myriad health benefits, it is raw, unprocessed honey you must look for.

Health benefits of raw honey

Honey has long known to be a superfood with near miraculous medicinal properties. Ancient medical literatures from across civilizations show how honey has always been used as a healing agent. Among his diverse observations, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle also referred to honey as "good as a salve for sore eyes and wounds". The benefits of "madhu" find mention in the Vedas, suggesting how our ancestors swore by its medicinal properties.

Modern research has attested to the fact that when consumed in its pure form, honey indeed has miraculous medicinal properties. Honey's antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties are well-known today. Pure honey also has immunomodulatory properties, implying that it helps modulate the body's immune system and boosts its immunity effectively. Growing evidence in recent years has indicated that honey when consumed in its purest form may also have potential anti-cancer benefits.

The pollen derived by bees from the nectar of vibrant and diverse flowers helps improve digestion, vitality and longevity. It is rich in amino acids and may help achieve a series of health goals including weight loss, fighting off allergies, improving respiratory health and even provide anti-ageing benefits.

Raw honey is also packed with phytonutrients



teurized. It is not processed in any form and does not contain any additives. Rather, it comes laden with the immense benefits of bee wax and bee pollen. However, not all honey available in the market is in its natural raw and unprocessed state.

The process of mechanical filtration, pasteurization and bottling does significantly improve the texture and appearance of honey but it also kills most of its benefits. Pasteurized honey can increase its own glycemic index which in turn has adverse effect on diabetics.

Heating honey not only deteriorates its quality but also results in a loss of essential enzymes and nutrients. Worse still, the principles of Ayurveda suggest that when cooked, the molecules of honey produce toxins which contribute to health problems such as congestion, obesity, indigestion, respiratory diseases and blood glucose imbalances.

Unfortunately, most of the mass-packaged honey we get in our local stores is preheated and severely processed. On the other hand, some producers also replace honey with sugarcane, corn or rice

solutions while many beekeepers replace the honey in the hive itself with sugar substitutes. A study conducted by a leading Indian environment watchdog recently threw up startling revelations. It concluded that a number of leading honey brands in the country were adulterated with sugar syrup.

What to look for while buying honey?

If you are out to buy honey for its health and immunity boosting benefits, it is raw and unprocessed honey that you should look for. At Conscious Food, we source honey from the Shivalik hills of the Himalayas using age-old eco-friendly honey-extraction methods that preserve its natural goodness and nutrients. It is then bottled and shipped to ensure every spoonful is as pure and fresh as can be.

Sameera Reddy's tips to tackle post-Covid weakness

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sameera Reddy on Tuesday took to Instagram to share a few tips on how to battle the weakness that follows after a person recovers from Covid-19. The actress recently tested negative after battling the virus over a few days last month. "Post COVID recovery tips that have helped me especially with the weakness. Please feel free to share anything that has helped you too. How to tackle post covid weakness?" she wrote on Instagram.

She also shared her list of essentials: "Coconut water,



Dates / Kala jamun, Soaked almonds / raisins overnight, Amla / lime juice, fresh fruit, Add Jaggery & ghee after meals, No refined / processed foods, Eat wholesome foods like pulses, khitchdi with veggies, Sleep sleepsleeep, Controlled screen time esp before sleep, Slow walks, no intense workout, Take sunlight for 15 mins, Pranayama, shavasana, deep breathing."

"It's ok to feel emotional. Share your feelings. Most imp take time to heal. This definitely helped me. Get well soon. Stay strong #healthiswealth #covid #recovery," she added.



TOM CRUISE RETURNS GOLDEN GLOBES TO JOIN PROTEST AGAINST HFPA

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise returned his three Golden Globes to join the protest against the Hollywood Free Press Association (HFPA), the organisers behind the awards.

Cruise's action comes at a time when HFPA has continued facing allegations of corruption and lack of diversity, following an expose by LA Times earlier this year, reports nme.com.

The committee that organises the awards has promised "transformational change" following the revelation that there has been no Black member in HFPA for decades, besides allegations of corruption.

According to Deadline, Cruise returned his three awards at the HFPA headquarters this week.

Cruise had won Best Actor awards at the Globes for his roles in "Jerry Maguire" and "Born On The Forth Of July", and Best Supporting Actor award for "Magnolia".

His decision came on the same day that NBC announced they won't broadcast the awards in 2022. The network has aired the awards since 1996.

Earlier this week, Scarlett Johansson, too, had criticised the HFPA, reportedly saying that she faced "sexist questions and remarks by certain HFPA members that bordered on sexual harassment". Her Avengers co-star Mark Ruffalo joined Johansson in saying he didn't feel "proud or happy" as a recent winner of a Golden Globe.



Zack Snyder's all praises for Huma Qureshi in Army of the Dead

Los Angeles | Agencies

Filmmaker Zack Snyder who has collaborated with actress Huma Qureshi in her Hollywood debut - Army of the Dead is all praises about her. In a recent interview, while promoting the film, he said, "Huma's character was always intended to be Indian. She was written as an Indian character, and Huma is a really amazing actress, no two ways about it. I watched some of her material, and I was like, 'this actress is amazing'"

He added, "I didn't think that she would do the film, but Huma agreed. I was so happy, and finally, having her on set. I want only Indian actors in my movies from now on."

Huma plays Geeta in the zombie film, which is all set to stream on Netflix on May 21.



Katy Perry unfazed by Luke Bryan's criticism of her leg hair

Los Angeles | Agencies0

Pop star Katy Perry is unfazed by Luke Bryan's jibe at her leg hair. The mother of one has shared a video on Instagram Story, of country music star Bryan trolling her about leg hair. In the video, Bryan is seen telling Perry what she looks like on the set of "American Idol".

"I know you're a mom and everything, but we gotta do something about this leg hair," Bryan tells Perry. Perry, who appears to be the one holding the camera, then showed her unshaven leg.

"No, I don't got time!" Perry yelled at her fellow "American Idol" judge, though her face remained unseen. Citing her busy schedule as a working mom, she said: "I'd rather cuddle with my daughter!"

Bryan tried to stress his point by saying: "It is literally..." but Perry cut him off by saying, "Yeah!" She even added a #MOMSKNOW hashtag to emphasise her case.

TOM FLETCHER'S SON REWRITES HIS MUSIC

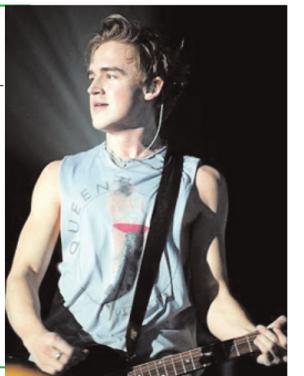
Los Angeles | Agencies

Musician Tom Fletcher said his son Buzz loves to rewrite his music. He added that the seven-year-old has always been interested in his career. "Buzz, my eldest, likes to rewrite my songs. Often, I'll show him a first draft or first idea. You get a good instinct because kids don't have a filter, which is brilliant yet terrifying," Fletcher said in an interview, according to a contactmusic report.

In fact, he added that Buzz makes changes to songs even if he likes them. "Even if he likes it, he still can't help himself. Often, it'll be the next day and he'll say, 'I've been thinking about the song you showed me. I think it should go like this...'," he said.

The musician said this often makes him wonder if the changed version is better than the original.

"He'll sing this whole new part. It's very sweet but it makes me question whether what he's written is actually better than what I've written," he said.



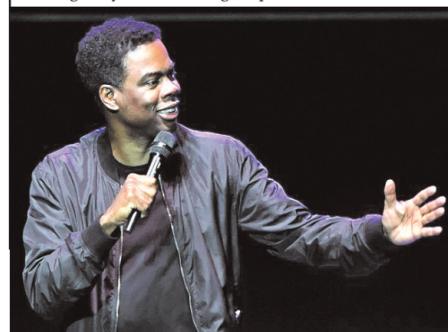
CHRIS ROCK: SUCCESS DOES NOT ERASE TRAUMA

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor and comedian Chris Rock says he used his time during the Covid-19 induced lockdown to have lots of therapy to tackle issues from his past, as success does not erase trauma. Asked if his experiences of childhood racism still have an impact, he said: "Yeah, it's weird. I've been doing therapy. That's what I did during Covid -- lots of therapy. Success does not erase trauma. It just doesn't. So, I definitely had to go back through therapy and really go through my childhood." Rock says has "forgiven" anyone who has done wrong in the past and doesn't see the benefit of calling people out now for things they did decades ago, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

"The key thing is, I forgive everybody that was involved. I don't want to criticise the culture of whatever, but what happened to me happened 30 years ago. I could out everybody that called me a n**** and everybody that hit me, and put their faces on Instagram, and say their names and all that stuff, right?" Rock told Telegraph magazine.

He added: "And they would never work again. Their lives would be absolutely destroyed. So I'm gonna pray that they learnt their lesson. I got kids going to college -- wouldn't that suck if some kid couldn't go to college because their dad called me a n**** in 1979? So I'm not gonna do that. I'm gonna take the very high road." Rock has two daughters, Lola, 19, and Zahra, 16, with former wife Malaak Compton-Rock.



Drew Barrymore urges all to give to Priyanka Chopra's Covid relief fund for India

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Drew Barrymore has urged everyone to contribute towards Priyanka Chopra and her husband Nick Jonas' Covid-19 relief fund for India. "I would like to start this show by giving our love and heart to India. We have all been reading about the Covid crisis there and they have been hit with 300 thousand new cases a day more than any country at its peak," Barrymore said.

"Entertainment tonight reports that Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Nick Jonas have teamed up with 'Give India' for an urgent fundraiser and they have also announced the news on Instagram," she added.

The actress said she is with India, which has been hit by the devastating second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, while speaking on her programme, "The Drew Barrymore Show".

She also recalled that her great grandfather was born in Agra.

"I actually love India so much. It's a country that I have travelled very thoughtfully throughout my adult life and my great-grandfather was actually born in Agra. I feel such a deep connection and I want to thank the Jonas's for giving us a direct and easy way to contribute," she said on the show that airs on Zee Cafe in India.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Demi Rose



EDITOR'S SPECS

Indian Variant of global concern

The Indian Coronavirus variant, known as B1617, has been declared as a "variant of global concern" by the World Health Organization (WHO), the media reported. The B1617 variant was, till now, deemed a 'variant of interest' by the WHO. The global health body, in a press conference held on Monday, said preliminary studies show the B1617 mutation spreads more easily than other variants and the original virus. The variant has already spread to more than 30 countries, according to the WHO. The WHO had already classified the UK (B117), South African (B1351) and Brazilian (P1) variants of Covid-19 as "variants of concern." A mutation is elevated from a "variant of interest" to a "variant of concern" (VOC) when it shows evidence of fulfilling at least one of several criteria, including easy transmission, more severe illness, reduced neutralisation by antibodies or reduced effectiveness of treatment and vaccines. "And as such we are classifying this as a variant of concern at the global level," Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's technical lead for Covid-19, said during a press conference. "Even though there is increased transmissibility demonstrated by some preliminary studies, we need much more information about this virus variant in this lineage in all of the sublineages, so we need more sequencing, targeted sequencing to be done." The WHO also said that there is some evidence that the B1617 variant may also be able to evade some of the protections provided by vaccines. However, it added that "Based on current data, the Covid-19 vaccines remain effective at preventing disease and death in people infected with this variant," it said in a statement. The WHO said last week it was closely following at least 10 coronavirus variants across the world, including the B1617. The variant was previously labeled a "variant of interest" as more studies were needed to completely understand its significance, Van Kerkhove said, the CNBC reported. "What it means for anybody at home is any of the SARS-CoV-2 viruses circulating can infect you and spread and everything in that sense is of concern," Van Kerkhove said. "So, all of us at home, no matter where we live, no matter what virus is circulating, we need to make sure that we take all of the measures at hand to prevent ourselves from getting sick," she added. The WHO Foundation on Monday also launched the "Together for India" initiative to raise funds to support WHO's work in India, including the purchase of oxygen, personal protective equipment and medicines.

KCR was waiting for right time to strike at Eatala

Mohammed Shafeeq

Minutes after polling came to an end in nine urban local bodies on April 30, there was 'breaking news' on some TV channels that a group of farmers from Medak district complained to the chief minister that their assigned lands were grabbed by Health Minister Eatala Rajender for his poultry business. Within a couple of hours, a statement was released from the chief minister's office that he has asked the chief secretary and also vigilance DGP to probe the allegations. This triggered a series of fast-paced developments and all this happened when the state was in the grip of Covid surge with the minister busy holding meetings with officials to review the situation and announce new measures to check the spread. The chief minister himself was recovering from Covid at his farmhouse. The next day saw teams of revenue and vigilance officials descending on Achampet and Hakimpet villages to conduct the investigation, survey the lands of Jamuna Hatcheries owned by the minister's family, lands of complainants and record their statements. Medak district collector, who conducted the preliminary investigation, declared that 66 acres of assigned lands were encroached. KCR, as the chief minister is popularly known, lost no time in stripping Eatala of health ministry. He took over the key portfolio. The next day, KCR dropped Eatala from council of ministers. Even as the investigations were on against Rajender over allegations of encroaching farmers' land, KCR formed a committee comprising four IAS officers to investigate encroachments and illegal transactions of Sri Sita Rama Swamy temple land at Devarayamjil village in Shamirpet near Hyderabad. Rajender and his followers allegedly encroached 1,521 acres in the village. The lands are estimated to be valued at Rs 1,000 crore as per the market price. For many leaders in Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) sacking of Eatala was not an unexpected move. A cold war between them was going on for last couple of years and

It was a development that took everybody by surprise but the subsequent happenings left no one in doubt that every move by Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao was well calculated to nip in the bud any possible rebellion or challenge to his authority.



KCR was waiting for the right time to strike. KCR, who has vice-like grip both over the government and the party, did not act against Rajender due to series of elections. Political analysts say he did not want to give an opportunity to opposition to slam the government over allegations of corrupt. As no elections were due in the state after April 30 polls to nine urban local bodies, KCR acted swiftly. Eatala, one of the founding members of TRS and backward class leader from Karimnagar district, was seen to be emerging as a challenge to KCR's authority in the party when he took potshots at him on few occasions. "The minister's post is not anybody's pittance. We are the owners of TRS who have carried the party flag," he had said at one party meeting. At another occasion, he remarked that he reached the position not because of his caste but by his sheer hard work. "I am not here because I am somebody's son," Eatala remarked in what was believed to be an attack on KCR's son and minister K. T. Rama Rao. Though considered a low-profile and soft-spoken leader, Eatala came to be seen as a challenge to KCR's leadership. There were speculations that Eatala may quit TRS and float a new regional party or

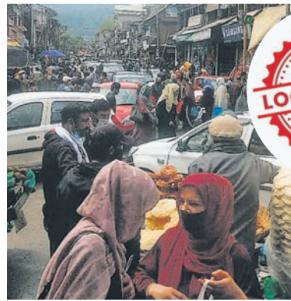
join Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has been trying to emerge as an alternative to TRS. He, however, had denied any such move. Political analysts say KCR anticipated problems for the party from Eatala. The TRS chief struck before Eatala could strengthen himself and wear away some dissenting leaders within the party. Though Eatala has not yet announced his future course of action, his counter attack on KCR left nobody in doubt that he is keen to take on the TRS chief. It is in this context that former MP Konda Vishveshwar Reddy's meeting with Eatala on Thursday assumed significance. Reddy, who recently hinted at floating a new regional party with an aim to defeat TRS in the 2023 Assembly elections, said he met Rajender to show solidarity with him. Reddy, who had quit the Congress in March, recently hinted at bringing together leaders of various smaller parties and even those TRS leaders who are unhappy with KCR to form an alternative. Reddy, who was with the TRS before switching loyalties to the Congress, has already stated that both the Congress and the BJP can't be an alternative to the TRS. An entrepreneur and one of the richest politicians in the country, Reddy has started

consultations with leaders from various political parties on his plans to float a new political outfit. He had also made efforts to reach out to Eatala. However, KCR apparently calculated all these risks and finally hit at him. "None would have expected KCR would order for action in a matter where such a senior leader of the party is involved. And if the step has been taken, it suggests KCR is prepared to tackle the side-effects of this head-on," said political analyst Palwai Raghavendra Reddy. The TRS chief weathered many a storms ever since he floated TRS in 2001 and every time he succeeded in isolating the dissidents and even showing them the door. The thinking in TRS leadership is that Eatala will not be able to pose any major challenge even if he joins hands with opposition parties or float a new party with the likes of Vishveshwar Reddy. Currently representing Huzurabad constituency in Assembly, Eatala is not considered to be a mass leader. TRS leaders believe that the given seriousness of the allegations against him, Eatala may not be able to mount any challenge to the party. However, Eatala is also waging a legal battle against KCR. He and his followers have already moved the court, challenging the government's action. Denying any wrong doing, Eatala said no post was important for him than his self-respect. "You can harass me, file cases and get me arrested but there are courts," he said. Rajender also got some relief when the Telangana high court directed the state government not to initiate any action based on the report of Medak district collector. It also asked the government to follow the due process of law. Eatala episode also triggered an attack by the opposition parties on the TRS government. Congress and BJP leaders alleged that KCR made the BC leader a scapegoat. They wanted to know why KCR took action only against Eatala and ignored other land-grabbing ministers, including his son K.T. Rama Rao and TRS MLAs. BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar demanded a high-level probe by a sitting judge into the land grabbing and corruption charges against every minister.

Kashmiris defy logic & lockdown, throng banks, markets

Sheikh Qayoom

How seriously have Kashmiris taken the fast spreading Covid-19 infection? Well, long queues of people outside banks and in markets have betrayed all public seriousness towards the officially announced curfew in the Valley. Banks started business on Tuesday after three days of remaining closed on account of holidays. And the people in almost all cities and towns of the Valley seemed to pounce on them in unending queues. Ironically, the official persuasion and fear of penal action have both fallen on deaf ears. "People need money and they cannot observe the holy Eid festival (likely to fall on Thursday or Friday) without funds," said a man waiting outside the bank branch in north Kashmir Ganderbal district. Asked why can't they withdraw money at leisure and without gathering in large numbers by going to ATM kiosks, the man said, "Most of the ATMs were without cash in the morning and besides that, the large number of people lined up to withdraw money from banks include the poor who get social security pensions like old age and destitute pension." "Banks do not give ATM cards to such depositors since there is hardly any standing balance in such accounts," said



another bystander outside the bank. Well, early morning buyer lines were seen at butcher shops, poultry outlets, vegetable and bakery shops in many places of Srinagar and elsewhere in the Valley. Police was seen stopping people at some places, but the way private transport moved on the roads in different districts, it seemed everybody was out on some kind of a picnic. Traffic jams at many places were seen in Srinagar city and other district headquarters. "I saw people carrying bagloads of almost everything they could buy. It is disgusting," said Nazir Ahmad, who had gone to buy medicine for his diabetic mother. "We persuade, argue and many times threaten people with penal action, but what can you do to so many of them who believe that the

lockdown has been imposed for some kind of a law and order situation," said a policeman in Srinagar who obviously did not want to be named. It is traditional for Kashmiris to throng banks, bakeries, mutton and poultry shops on Eid eve, but very few of them seem to realise that this year, the times are out of joint because of the unrelenting pandemic. Shocked to see the callousness of the common man, Dr. Parvaiz Koul, head of medicine department at the super speciality Sher-e-Kashmir institute of medical sciences (SKIMS) and a noted pulmonologist, told correspondent, "It is definitely a disaster in the making. I wonder how can people can ever behave so irresponsibly. Lockdown is the only way to break the fast spreading chain." The government decided to impose the lockdown throughout J&K after weighing all the options. "And here we are out to defy our own safety and that of others. Wearing a mask in such big crowds where people are in close proximity, becomes almost immaterial. God help us," Dr. Koul said. Had the advice of our senior most doctors like Koul not fallen on deaf ears, we would not see Tuesday's crowds in Kashmir during such calamitous times.

AGRA'S 'GOOD SAMARITANS' EXTEND HELP TO REDUCE COVID-19 AGONY



Brij Khandelwal

Not deterred by "sarkari" gaps and flaws in the Covid-19 containment strategy, a large number of volunteers and philanthropists in the Taj city have been extending a variety of services to comfort victims and their family members. From temple trusts to gurdwaras and NGOs, all have been doing commendable service in the last fortnight to ease the tensions and fill in the gaps in services. On Tuesday, shoe exporters association AFMEC opened its 250-bed hospital with adequate medi-infrastructure. Pooran Dawar, the chief inspiration behind the ambitious project, said: "We have managed to put together a full package of facilities backed up by trained staff of doctors and nurses, at our facility in village Seenghna, on the national highway. If there is need, we will add more beds. No one should go without medical help." A few days ago, the 130-year-old Kshetra Bajaa Samiti, that runs the Taj Ganj electric and the conventional crematoriums, opened a facility for Covid-19 patients at the Nemi Chand Homeopathy Hospital on the Agra-Firozabad road. Ashok Goyal, the Samiti's chief functionary, also organised a day-long Yagna at the Shamshan Ghat to appease Lord Shiva. The Samiti has a fleet of vehicles to transport dead bodies to the crematoriums. Arrangement for Ganga water is also made for the bodies, along with provision of wood at fair cost. Due to the pressure, the electric crematorium run by the organisation had recently to add one more furnace. The Help Agra pharmacy near the SN Medical College has been providing all kinds of medicines at fixed rates. Pharmacy's Gautam Seth said: "It is our constant endeavour to provide medicines and other related material at reasonable rates, much lower than the market rates. The Covid-19 kit of medicines is available for a very reasonable cost. Since alternatives are available, there is no shortage of medicines and people are taking advantage of the services." Several groups are running ambulances at government's fixed rates, while more than dozen societies and individuals are offering free food. Some people are providing home delivery of food to Covid-19 patients under home isolation. A number of WhatsApp groups have come up to keep tab on oxygen supply and arrange for cylinders, said social activist Naresh Paras. "Anybody who can do anything, according to his capacity, is coming forward and doing his bit. Of course, there is a lot of negativity all around, but we should not forget the commendable work being done by voluntary groups in the city," said another social activist Ranjan Sharma. Meanwhile, Pandit Jugal Kishore of the River Connect Campaign has appealed to the Agra Municipal Corporation to make arrangements for feeding monkeys, stray dogs, cows and birds. Due to the lockdown, people were not coming forward to feed birds and animals who are dying of starvation and also turning violent and aggressive.

Adult immunisation: Myth vs reality

While vaccinations remain the most effective prevention strategy to maintain immunity for a prolonged period, adult immunisation remains neglected. Adult immunisation myths prevail as a result of inadequate awareness, lack of an established body of official recommendations and vaccine hesitancy, which contribute to reduced vaccine coverage across India. For instance, there are rising incidences of typhoid cases in India, despite the availability of vaccines and being universally recommended. This suggests adults need to be aware of immunisation as a preventive solution to effectively make use of it. The first-ever adult immunisation recommendations by the Association of Physicians of India highlights the clear need for adult immunisation in India. Nirmal Kumar Ganguly, Former Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said, "There is potential to increase adult immunisation coverage in India. To develop these evidence-based recommendations, we convened a panel of healthcare experts across speciality practices, ranging from Cardiology, to Pulmonology, Gynaecology to Nephrology. The result is a comprehensive body of knowledge outlining best practices and reliable information on adult immunisation in India. Through these recommendations, we hope to drive a para-

digm shift to ensure adult vaccinations are increasingly suggested and adopted." While vaccinations prevent infectious diseases, prolong and improve quality of life, emphasis on adult immunisation is low. The recommendations by the API will help increase the awareness and equip healthcare practitioners with evidence-based information to guide vaccine recommendation and administration. At Abbott, we aim to continue raising awareness to protect people from vaccine-preventable diseases, so they can live fuller and healthier lives, says Srirupa Das, Medical Director, Abbott India. It is important to stay informed and clear up common misconceptions around vaccines, so you can make the most of your immunisation conversation with your doctor! Here are five common vaccine myths, and the facts to know to address them. Inputs from Abbott India. Myth 1: Vaccines are for children Fact: Vaccinations are recommended across various stages of life. As protective effects of childhood vaccines wear off over time, it is vital to remain up to date on booster shots. Rapid globalisation and increased frequency of international travel have raised the likelihood of adults contracting vaccine-preventable diseases, including influenza, Hepatitis A and B and more. These can lead to higher disease burden in adults, exacerbate comorbidities and are associated with higher

rates of mortality in adults. There are vaccines you should take as an adult even if you didn't take them as a child, like the Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTP) vaccine, which is a booster shot recommended once every ten years. Myth 2: Not all adults need vaccines Fact: Vaccinations are an important public health strategy across the population, including healthy adults, and many vaccines are universally recommended. These include vaccines for influenza, typhoid and Hepatitis A and B, which have resulted in seasonal epidemics across India. There is also an increased need for certain vaccines, such as the Hepatitis B one, especially among at-risk populations, which include people with comorbidities, healthcare providers, geriatrics and pregnant women. Myth 3: Vaccines cause unnecessary hassle and make me sick Fact: Vaccinations are beneficial and can help avoid disease burden and negative complications in the long run, thus leading to better health outcomes so you can live a fuller, hassle-free life. Moreover, vaccines don't cause illness but short-lived side effects, including low-grade fever, aches or soreness, which are nothing to worry about -- in fact, it is the result of the body building an immune response to the vaccine. Myth 4: It's better to get the flu naturally

instead of taking a vaccine, which will weaken my immune system. Fact: Being exposed to the flu naturally means exposing yourself to a potentially serious disease with moderate to severe symptoms including fever, joint pain and cough among others. This can prompt worrying complications or even progress to pneumonia, respiratory failure or even morbidity, particularly for those at high-risk. Vaccination is a far safer option to protect yourself against preventable diseases and in fact, strengthens your immune system. Myth 5: I took the influenza vaccine last year, so I don't need it again Fact: Influenza viruses are constantly changing and so, WHO identifies and provides latest strain recommendations annually. Getting vaccinated every year is thus important to ensure optimal, sustained protection against rapidly adapting influenza viruses. This is vital especially considering in India where we have had pandemic outbreaks of influenza in various states, including Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat, in 2012, 2015 and 2017. Get your flu shot annually to keep yourself protected. What next: Get your vaccine checklist in place. Consult your doctor for more myth-busting, in-depth information so you can set a vaccination schedule in place and keep your health in check!



ISRAEL, HAMAS EXCHANGE ATTACKS AMID SURGING TENSIONS

Jerusalem | Agencies

Israel launched new airstrikes against the Gaza Strip, and the Islamic Hamas movement, which controls the coastal enclave, unleashed fresh rocket attacks against the Jewish state overnight and on Tuesday, in one of the worst escalations between the two sides in recent years.

At least 24 people, including nine children, have been killed in the Gaza Strip since late Monday in this latest round of violence, Xinhua news agency quoted the Hamas-run Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said in a statement.

The violence was triggered by spiraling tensions in East Jerusalem over flashpoint holy site the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

According to Israel's emergency health services, at least six civilians were injured by rocket fire in the southern city of Ashkelon.

The Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, said the shelling of Ashkelon was retaliation for the Israeli army attacking a residential building in the western part of the



Gaza Strip.

Israel has fired around 130 rockets at targets in the Gaza Strip so far, and an estimated 15 members of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group have been killed, an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson said.

The IDF tweeted that groups in Gaza had been firing rockets "non-stop" for 10 hours. The sharp escalation began at 6 p.m. on Monday after Hamas set an ultimatum for Israel to

withdraw its forces from the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, where hundreds of Palestinians were injured in clashes earlier that day. Following the deadline, Hamas fired some 200 rockets towards Israel, dozens of which were intercepted by Israel's anti-rocket Iron Dome system, the military said.

Meanwhile, Israeli war jets, attack helicopters and aircraft struck 130 targets belonging to Hamas, and tar-

getted several other sites overnight, such as weapons manufacturing facilities; a military intelligence building; and two offensive tunnels, it said.

The military added that schools have been shut in communities located within 40 km of the Gaza Strip.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque compound also witnessed fresh clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians overnight.

Furthermore, Arab protesters burned tires and threw stones and fireworks at police forces in northern Israel, and at least 46 people were arrested, according to the Israeli police. In Lod, a city southeast of Tel Aviv, a 25-year-old Arab man was shot and killed during the riots, and a 34-year-old was later arrested, police said on Tuesday.

The suspect is a Jewish resident of the city, according to media reports.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has escalated in recent days.

At the weekend, hundreds were injured in serious clashes at the Jerusalem holy site, known as the Temple Mount to Jews and the Noble Sanctuary to Muslims.

11 killed in Russia school shooting

The incident took place at the school No. 175 in Kazan located in the country's Tatarstan Region. A source in the emergencies confirmed to the TASS News Agency that the victims comprised 10 children and a teacher.



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Two children fell to their death after jumping out of a window on the third floor, according to the news agency. The sources said that the first signal from a panic button at the school came in at 9.25 a.m. (local time), after the shooting had started five minutes earlier.

There were 714 children and about 70 employees at the school, including 52

teachers, present at the time of the incident.

It was not clear if there were more shooters but the 17-year-old attacker who was arrested had shot eight grade students and a teacher. The TASS News Agency said he told the police that he had placed a bomb at his home. Law enforcement agencies are working at the scene, and security measures have been strengthened at all educational institutions in Kazan.

Moscow | Agencies

At least 11 people were killed and 32 others injured on Tuesday in a shooting incident at a school in the Russian city of Kazan, authorities said, adding that a suspect has been arrested.

The incident took place at the school No. 175 in Kazan located in the country's Tatarstan Region. A source in

Footage emerges of woman being pushed onto Dublin train track

In its now withdrawn tax reform draft, the government had wanted to reduce tax allowances, increase income tax for certain groups and abolish value-added tax exemptions for a number of goods and services, to offset the deficits in the state budget caused by the pandemic.



Dublin, triggering widespread calls for bringing the perpetrators to justice, according to a media report.

In the report, the Irish Times said that incident took place at the Howth Junction last month. The woman luckily survived after being pushed by a teenager onto the railway line as she ran to catch a train. In the video, she can be seen falling underneath the waiting locomotive and onto the tracks below. Once she falls beneath the train, onlookers rush over before a rail worker, eventually pulling the woman up and back onto the

platform. The teenagers can be seen casually making an escape, the Irish Times reported. The video went viral on social media and it was also shared by Jennifer Cassidy, an Irish lecturer at the University of Oxford, who termed the incident as "absolutely disgusting, illegal behaviour." "This is no world where I want my beautiful young nieces and any other child to grow up in. RT as much as possible as faces can be seen," she tweeted.

Cassidy's tweet was retweeted more than 13,000 times.

Dublin | Agencies

Footage is doing the rounds on social media of a group of youths pushing a woman onto train tracks in the Irish capital city

44 ATTORNEYS URGE FACEBOOK TO DROP 'INSTA FOR KIDS'

San Francisco: A coalition of 44 US attorneys general signed a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg urging Facebook not to launch "Instagram for Kids", citing mental health and privacy concerns.



The "Instagram for Kids" app will allow children under the age of 13 to begin using the popular photo-sharing app. However, the attorneys general urge Facebook to abandon its plans to launch this new platform. The letter lists reasons and cites research to show that Facebook should not go forth with its plans to develop and market a kid-friendly version of the Instagram app, reports GSM Arena. Among the reasons listed in the letter are -- Facebook's poor history of protecting children's privacy and data on the platform, research showing that social media can be harmful to children on physical and psychological levels, children do not have a fully-developed understanding of privacy and can easily be targeted by anonymous predators.

In the release published by the coalition head Attorney General Maura Healey, she cited Zuckerberg's dismissal of the idea that social media is harmful to children.

The release points out there is much strong evidence and research that contradicts Zuckerberg's denial.

Currently, children under 13 are not allowed to have an Instagram account unless it is explicitly written in the profile's description that the account is being managed by a parent or guardian.

UK Parliament to reopen after local elections

London | Agencies

The UK Parliament is set to reopen on Tuesday after last week's local elections in England, Scotland and Wales.

The new session will be formally opened by Queen Elizabeth II, in line with British tradition, dpa news agency.

During the ceremony, she delivers what is known as "The Queen's Speech", an outline of all the legislation the government wishes to debate and pass during the next few months.

It is usually extravagant, with the Queen wearing full regal robes, a crown and arriving at Parliament in a carriage.

However, this year will be more pared-down, because coronavirus guidelines require the event be smaller and less grand.

That means she is expected to show up wearing a day dress, a hat and arrive in a car, rather than in a carriage.

The Queen will also be accompanied by her eldest son, Prince Charles.

It is the first major public event undertaken by Queen since the death of her husband, Prince Philip, last month.

Around 100 people will attend this year,



rather than the usual 600, due to social-distancing restrictions.

This year's speech is expected to focus on helping the nations recover following the pandemic. The government wants to introduce a new flexible loan for people aged 16 and over to help them retrain if they change jobs and do not want to go to university.

Other legislations include the environment bill, which will set legally binding environmental targets, and also the re-introduction of the controversial police, crime, sentencing and courts bill, which will give the police more powers to tackle protesters.

US fuel pipeline partially restored after cyber attack

Washington | Agencies

The operator of the US Colonial Pipeline, which is the largest refined-products pipeline in the country, said that one of its lines has been partially restored after it was forced to shut down due to a cybersecurity attack on May 7.

"We can now report that Line 4, which runs from Greensboro, North Carolina, to Woodbine, Maryland, is operating under manual control for a limited period of time while existing inventory is available," the Colonial Pipeline Company said on Monday night. The company said earlier that while its main lines continue to be offline, some smaller lateral



lines between terminals and delivery points were operational, reports Xinhua news agency. The company said in a statement earlier on Monday that it aimed to restore operational service by the end of the week and a phased approach has been executed to facilitate a return to service. The Colonial Pipeline Company temporarily halted all pipeline operations after the cyberattack involving ransomware was detected.

NZ TO MAKE IT ILLEGAL FOR HIGH-RISK PEOPLE TO OWN FIREARMS

Washington | Agencies

The New Zealand government will make it illegal for high-risk people to own firearms by introducing Firearms Prohibition Orders (FPOs) that will strengthen action already taken to combat the influence of gangs and organised crimes.

"It is no secret that gun crime is an increasing concern to our communities and we need to take further action to make sure New Zealanders and their families are kept safe," Police Minister Poto Williams said in a statement on Tuesday.

"It is a privilege, not a right, to own or use a gun in this country and we need to take that ability out of the hands



of people who pose a threat to our communities," Xinhua news agency quoted Williams as further saying.

FPOs will protect the public from harm by prohibiting high-risk people from accessing, being around, or using

firearms. Breaching the conditions of a FPO will be a criminal offence, she said.

Currently, 700 offences will be focused on organised crime, Williams said.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act will be amended to introduce a new power enabling seizure of assets of those associated with organised crime, where the person's known legitimate income is likely to have been insufficient to acquire the asset, the Police Minister said.

Both the FPO Bill, and the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Amendment Bill will be introduced into the House before the end of the year, and the public will have an opportunity to comment on the bills, she added.

Iran begins candidates' registration for presidential polls

Tehran | Agencies

Iran's Ministry of Interior Affairs on Tuesday has officially started the registration of candidates for the country's 13th presidential election.

The registration will last for five days and each candidate will be scrutinised by the country's highest legislative body, the Guardian Council of the Constitution (GCC), reports Xinhua news agency.

After the registration, the GCC will assess the qualification of the applicants and release the names of the qualified candidates on May 27. The nominees will have 20 days to campaign before election day on June 18.



A presidential candidate should be an Iranian national; prudent and capable of taking on leadership duties; and believe in the Islamic Republic's principles and official religion, according to the Constitution. Recently, the GCC updated the requirements for individuals planning to register as candidates. "All nominees must be between 40 and 70 years of age, hold at least a master's degree or its equivalent, have at least four years' experience in managerial posts, and have no criminal record," Hadi Tahan Nazif, a GCC jurist member, was quoted as saying.

'China's population to stay above 1.4bn for a certain period'

Beijing | Agencies

China's population will stay above 1.4 billion "for a certain period in future", Ning Jizhe, head of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), said on Tuesday.

"China's population will peak in future, but there remains uncertainty as to when specifically it will happen," Ning said.

Based on the demographical trend in recent years, China's population growth will continue to slow down, Xinhua news agency quoted the NBS chief as saying at a media briefing here.

He noted that the growth will also be affected by such factors as the age structure, people's ideas on having children, government's population policies, the cost of childbearing and parenting, medical service and health conditions of the people.



China's population on the mainland reached 1.4 billion, growing 0.53 per cent annually on average in the past decade, according to data from the latest national census, conducted in 2020, released by the NBS on Tuesday. The rate was slightly lower than the average annual growth of 0.57 per cent from 2000 to 2010, according to the NBS.

"Data shows that China's population has continued to maintain slow growth in the past decade," Ning said. The NBS data also revealed that people aged 60 or above account for 18.7 per cent of China's total population, 5.44 percentage points higher than the level in 2010 when the previous census was conducted.

The total population of Chinese

people on the mainland aged 60 or above has reached 264.02 million, including 190.64 million people aged 65 or above, or 13.5 per cent of the total population, it added.

"Data shows the aging of the Chinese population has further deepened, and we will continue to face the pressure to achieve long-term balanced population development," Ning said. The census also found 63.35 per cent of the country's population was aged 15-59, and the proportion of Chinese people aged 0-14 reaches 17.95 per cent, 1.35 percentage points higher than the 2010 level. China has conducted a national population census every 10 years since the 1990s. The figure does not include Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan residents and foreigners who live in the mainland's 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities, according to the NBS.

Biden prepared to take additional steps over pipeline cyber attack

Washington | Agencies

US President Joe Biden said that his administration is prepared to take additional steps in response to the cybersecurity attack on the Colonial Pipeline, which is the largest refined-products pipeline in the country.

"The Department of Energy is working directly with Colonial to get the pipelines back online and operating at full capacity as quickly and safely as possible," Xinhua news agency quoted Biden as saying at the White House on Monday.

"The Federal Bureau of Investigation has determined Colonial's network was infected by ransomware, and it's a criminal act, obviously," Biden said, adding the agencies across the government have acted quickly to mitigate any impact on the fuel supply.

"We're prepared to take additional steps, depending on how quickly the company is able to bring its pipeline back to full operational capacity." My administration will be pursuing a global effort of ransomware attacks by transnational criminals who often use global money-laundering networks to carry them out," he noted. Biden's remarks came days after the Colonial Pipeline Company, operator of



the pipeline carrying gasoline and diesel fuel to the eastern east and southeast parts of the country, temporarily halted all pipeline operations after the cybersecurity attack involving ransomware was detected on May 7.

The company, which transports more than 100 million gallons of fuel daily on the East Coast, said Monday in a statement that it aims to substantially restore operational service by the end of the week. At a separate White House briefing on Monday, Anne Neuberger, Biden's deputy national security adviser for cyber and emerging technology, said the administration is "taking a multi-pronged and whole-of-government response" to this incident and to ransomware overall.



DHAWAN COULD LEAD INDIA IN SRI LANKA WHITE-BALL SERIES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Opener Shikhar Dhawan could lead an India side for the limited-overs tour of Sri Lanka in July as the Indian cricket board looks to form a white-ball squad in the absence of top players who will be busy in England for Test matches at the time. Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Prithvi Shaw, Hardik Pandya and Ishan Kishan could be in the white-ball squad that is likely to play three One-day Internationals and three T20 Internationals at a single venue in the island nation from July 13.

While plans for the tour have not been thrashed out yet and there has been no official announcement, it is natural that some of the players who have performed in limited overs cricket for India and in the IPL recently will be picked.

Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav, who both did well for Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2020, and also in the white-ball

series against England at home, could be in the squad.

Among youngsters who have burst onto the scene through IPL, spinner Rahul Chahar and left-arm pace bowler Chetan Sakariya could find a place in the Indian team. Rahul's cousin Deepak Chahar could also make the cut.

Sakariya impressed for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL edition this time, picking seven wickets in seven matches. Royal Challengers Bangalore's Karnataka opener Devdutt Padikkal is likely to be one of the three openers India will travel with besides Dhawan and Shaw. While four of the five national selectors contacted by IANS haven't responded yet to queries on the team, Dhawan looks to be the best bet to



captain the India team in Sri Lanka due to his experience and also the fact that he has led his state side,

MATCHES TO BE PLAYED IN COLOMBO: REPORT

New Delhi: Colombo's R. Premadasa Stadium will host all the matches in India's upcoming limited overs series against Sri Lanka. Indian cricket board president Sourav Ganguly earlier said that India are set to travel to Sri Lanka in July for playing three ODIs and as many T20s. India are reportedly set to arrive in Sri Lanka for the series on July 5 and, after the team completes its week-long quarantine, will play the ODI series starting on July 13. The T20I series will begin on July 22.

Delhi, in domestic cricket, including Ranji Trophy.

The 35-year-old has played 34 Test matches, 142 ODIs and 65 T20 Internationals.

India pistol coach Smirnov grounded without visa

"He hasn't got a visa for Croatia [yet] so can't go with the team. But he will go next week when he gets the necessary travel documents," a national level coach told reporter.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's pistol coach Pavel Smirnov will not accompany the 28-member national shooting squad to Croatia on Tuesday due to delay in visa process.

As many as 13 shooters in the squad will attend an Olympic camp in the European country.



Due to the pandemic, the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has arranged a charter flight to Europe to minimise risk of contracting coronavirus.

In Smirnov's absence, assistant coach Ved Prakash will oversee training of the Tokyo Olympic-bound pistol team.

Both Samresh Jung, the high performance national pistol coach, and Jaspal Rana, junior national pistol

coach, had earlier expressed their inability to accompany the team due to family problems.

Rahi Sarnobat, the 2018 Asian Games champion in women's 25 metre pistol, said she is mature enough to work without a coach during Zagreb camp.

All five rifle coaches including foreign expert Oleg Mikhalov are going with the team, confirmed a rifle coach.

Windies may never return to dominate world cricket: Ambrose



Antigua | Agencies

West Indies' glory days of the past may never come back, said legendary former fast bowler Curtly Ambrose. He said that the West Indies may be able to be competitive and climb up the International Cricket Council's (ICC)

rankings again but the team may never be able to dominate world cricket the way they did during his playing days, and earlier.

"When we were the best team in the world, West Indians all over the globe could walk and boast about how good we were because we were the best,

so it's going to be difficult to see those glory days again. Yes, we can be competitive and climb up the ICC rankings and be a force to be reckoned with again, but those glory days, I don't think we will see them again," said Ambrose on the Talk Sports Live in Antigua.

Ambrose said that while he doesn't mean any disrespect to the current generation, most younger players don't quite know what cricket means to Caribbean people living in the islands and abroad.

Ambrose took 405 Test wickets in 98 matches and 225 ODI wickets in 176 matches between 1988 and 2000. He is West Indies' second highest wicket taker of all time in both formats, behind his famous former bowling partner Courtney Walsh.

England players to skip remainder of IPL: ECB

London | Agencies

Even as the Indian cricket board hopes to complete remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL), possibly at an overseas destination, the English board has put its foot down in favour of international cricket, ruling out the possibility of English cricketers playing in the league. "We're planning on the involvement of England players in England matches. We've got a full FTP schedule. So if those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh [in September and October] are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," England men's director of cricket Ashley Giles told British media here.

While the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is looking for a window in September -- between the home series



against India and the T20 World Cup - or after the T20 World Cup ends in November, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) wishes to follow the tight schedule as laid out in the Future Tours Programme (FTP).

England play New Zealand in two Tests on June 2-14 in a series that was hastily arranged and Giles said the IPL players were allowed to skip the Test series as an exception since their IPL contracts were already formalised.

MCC REJECTS BAMBOO BATS, SAYS WILL PONDER FURTHER

London: The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has rejected the idea of bats made from bamboo being used in professional cricket for now but said that it will discuss the topic at the next Laws sub-committee meeting. The MCC, who are the guardians of the laws of cricket, said that alternatives to the use of English willow for bats should be considered to make the game more sustainable but use of bamboo for making bats would require an alteration in the current laws of cricket. "Currently, Law 5.3.2 states that the blade of the bat must consist solely of wood, so for bamboo (which is a grass) to be considered as a realistic alternative to willow would require a Law change," said the MCC in a statement on Monday. "Importantly, the Law would need to be altered to allow bamboo specifically, as even if it were to be recognised as a wood, this would still be illegal under the current Law, which bans lamination of the blade, except in junior bats," it said. It further said that the fact that using bamboo bats is an ethical and cheaper alternative provides a pertinent angle.



Our fast bowlers enjoy each other's success: Shami



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Mohammed Shami says that the camaraderie that exists between him and the rest of the fast bowlers is key to the success of India's pace unit.

Shami, Ishant Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah are the leading figures in India's pace batter in Test cricket and it has also fea-

tured the likes of Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Umesh Yadav and more recently Shardul Thakur, Mohammad Siraj and T Natarajan.

"Our fast bowling unit is a great package where everyone works really hard while also understanding the other counterparts really well. The bonding and the fun you saw that day was because we enjoy each other's success a lot. We are happy when the other one is happy," Shami told Cricbuzz.

India's fast bowling unit has earned praise from commentators and experts over the past three years and have been crucial to their consecutive series wins in Australia.

"Even if someone's down and out, we make sure that we lift his spirits. We try to make them forget all the stresses and try to lighten the mood. I think all bonds should be like that because to play for your country is indeed a matter of pride. In this unit that we have built since 2013-14, you'll find that the guys enjoy each other's success a lot," added Shami.

Video analysis helped us: Hockey defender Rohidas

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

Indian national hockey team defender Amit Rohidas has credited India's recent success in Europe and Argentina to his side's dedicated training based on inputs from video analysis.

Rohidas, who is currently with the core group at Sports Authority of India's (SAI) centre in Bengaluru preparing for the Tokyo Olympics, said, "Video analysis has been playing a massive part for us in terms of our preparations; it helped us on both tours (Europe

and Argentina).

"We analysed our opponent's style of play, their every movement in the attack as well as defence, and we adapted to the situations accordingly. We didn't have much on-field experience, but I can say we did our homework pretty well through the video analysis and it benefited us," said Rohidas, who has played 97 matches for the national side.

India recently returned from the successful tour of Argentina where they defeated reigning Olympic champions in both the FIH Pro League matches and also won two of the four practice games.

The 28-year-old defender added, "At the camp also, with the help of video analysis, we are working on the areas where our team needs correcting or improvement. So, it's one of the major assets for us to cover our bases for the Olympics."

HUSSEY TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AGAIN

Chennai | Agencies

Chennai Super Kings' (CSK) batting coach Michael Hussey has tested positive for Covid-19 again.

The former Australia batsman, who was with the CSK in the postponed 2021 Indian Premier League (IPL) and was possibly infected during his stay in New Delhi, had earlier got a negative result in his second test but tested positive in the third round, according to The Australian. He is now set to undergo another test on Thursday. Hussey had tested positive the first time three days after it was revealed that three other staff members of CSK had tested positive. He is getting treated at a hospital here in Chennai. New Zealand wicket-keeper-batsman Tim Seifert, who too tested positive, is also receiving treatment at the same hospital. Seifert was in Ahmedabad with the Kolkata Knight Riders. The 2021 IPL, which was being held in India even as the country grappled with a deadly second wave of Covid-19, was postponed last week after multiple cases of the virus came up within the tournament's bio-bubbles in Ahmedabad and New Delhi.



IOC TO 'WORK WITH FULL ENGAGEMENT' TOWARDS SAFE OLYMPICS

Beijing | Agencies

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) will continue to "work with full engagement" towards a safe Olympics, an IOC spokesperson told Xinhua. Japan Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga had said on Monday that he had never put Olympics first when asked whether the Tokyo Olympics will go forward if the Covid-19 situation worsens, adding that the IOC has the final say on the matter.

"My priority has been to protect the lives and health of the Japanese population. We must first prevent the spread of the virus," said Suga, whose government is under fierce criticism over its handling of the pandemic.

When asked about Suga's comments, the IOC spokesperson responded: "The Olympic com-

munity from all over the world is thinking of the Japanese people who are affected by the pandemic and who are facing this crisis with solidarity and resilience. Together with our Japanese partners and friends, we continue to work with full engagement to ensure the safe organisation of the Olympic and Paralympic Games."

The spokesperson also highlighted the vaccination of delegations, which has been in place to ensure a safe Games.

"In addition to the already strict covid-19 countermeasures, the IOC has initiated an already very successful vaccination program for the national delegations coming to Japan. This will ensure that the vast majority of the residents of the Olympic Village will arrive in Japan vaccinated," the spokesperson said. "It is happening in soli-

arity with the Japanese people, and to protect the Japanese people as well as the participants of the Olympic and Paralympic Games," he added.

Thus far, Japan has only managed to vaccinate 240,000 of those aged 65 or older with the second of their two jabs, in stark contrast to the pace of other advanced countries.

The Japanese central government has reportedly begun to speed up the national vaccination drive from Monday. In the following two weeks, the government said it will deliver enough vaccines to the local municipalities to inoculate nine million seniors, with all 36 million of this demographic having the requisite amount of vaccine doses administered by the end of June.

The host city of Tokyo is currently under an extended state of



emergency until the end of May, and the Games organisers announced on Monday that IOC president Thomas Bach's scheduled visit to Japan on May 17 and 18 has been postponed. A recent opinion poll by the

Yomiuri Shimbun daily showed nearly 60 per cent of the people in Japan want the Games cancelled. Tokyo 2020, postponed by one year due to the pandemic, is scheduled to take place from July 23 to August 8.

GLOBAL CUES SUBDUE EQUITIES; IT STOCKS FALL



EQUITY MFS' NET INFLOWS AT OVER RS 3K CR IN APRIL: AMFI

Mumbai: Equity-linked mutual fund schemes saw a net inflows of over Rs 3,437 crore in April. As per the data furnished by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Tuesday, the net inflows stood at Rs 3,437.37 crore. In March, the equity-linked mutual fund schemes' net inflows stood at Rs 9,115.12 crore. Whereas, in February, the equity-linked mutual fund schemes' net outflow stood at Rs 4,534.36 crore. Similarly, there was an outflow in January of Rs 9,253.22 crore and of Rs 10,147.12 crore in November 2020, Rs 12,917.36 crore in October 2020, Rs 2,724.95 crore in September 2020 and Rs 734.40 crore in September 2020.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India's benchmark equity indices traded in the red during the mid-afternoon session on Tuesday on the back of weak global cues. However, the two indices had a gap down opening on account of weak global cues.

Accordingly, domestic sentiment was marred by negative signals from other Asian markets. Besides, investors were concerned after Fitch Ratings stated that there are increasing indications that India's latest wave of Covid-19 infections would increase risks among financial institutions (FIs) by weakening near-term momentum in the economic recovery.

Sector wise, Media, Auto, Realty and PSU Banks stocks traded in the green, whereas, Financial Services, IT, Pharma, Metal and FMCG stocks saw some weakness.

At around 2.10 p.m., the S&P BSE Sensex traded at 49,104.18, lower by 398.23 points, or 0.80 per cent, from its previous close.

Similarly, the Nifty50 of the National Stock Exchange traded at 14,836.90, down 105.45 points, or 0.71 per cent, from its previous close.

"At current juncture, support for Nifty is intact at 14700 and then 14600 zone; while on the upside hurdle is seen at 14950, then 15050 zones," said Jay Purohit, Technical and Derivatives Analyst, MOFSL.

According to Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at CapitalVia Global Research: "If the market breaches the level of 14900 we can expect the market till the level of 15050."

"On the sectoral front there is no clear direction in the market. IT and Metal are the top losing sectors. Coal India and IOC are the top gainers while HDFC and Hindalco are the top losers on Nifty."

Solar PLI scheme to benefit incremental demand till FY30: Ind-Ra

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Centre's solar modules manufacturing production linked incentive scheme will benefit incremental panels demand till FY30 said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

According to the ratings agency's estimates, the allocation of Rs 45 billion towards modules manufacturing by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) can benefit the sales of 20GW from the capacity developed under the PLI scheme.

"It also means sanction of the PLI facility which will benefit 4-6GW of sales annually over five years from commissioning of the beneficiary manufacturing facilities," the agency said in a report.

"The scheme can facilitate additional 8-12GW annual solar cell or module manufacturing capacity in India. Sales up to 50 per cent of the manufacturing capacity set up by the winning bidder will benefit from PLI. This estimate assumes the base PLI rate of Rs 2.25 per watt power and entirely greenfield



expansion."

Besides, the report said the capacity to benefit under the scheme may further reduce from the stated 20GW level in case of the plants achieve better module efficiency and temperature coefficient than the minimum requirement defined in the notification.

"India has set a target to install 280GW of solar power plants by FY30 out of which about 240GW is

under pipeline or yet to be implemented, which means just 8-13 per cent of this planned requirement is going to benefit directly from this PLI scheme till FY30, apart from improving the domestic manufacturing capacity."

Furthermore, the report cited that on the execution side, winning bidders may lose on the committed timelines in case they slip on the commissioning timelines of 1.5-3

years from the date of PLI sanction.

As per the agency, bidding players may choose to restrict the level of backward integration, given the stringent timelines.

Moreover, the PLI benefit will be available till five years from the scheduled date of commissioning only, meaning that winning bidders will be at risk of losing benefit of the scheme, if they overcommit on the level of integration.

"Backward integration may take some time, given the already established procurement contracts and supply chains internationally. Also, in case a selected manufacturer fails to meet the promised integration or capacity or minimum module performance after his selection, he will not get any PLI till he overcomes these deficiencies, and/or performance guarantees can also be liquidated by India Renewable Energy Development Agency in the meantime."

"If the manufacturer achieves the promised levels subsequently, he will be eligible for PLI from the next month after which the performance measures are met."

IDBI BANK BOARD TO CONSIDER RAISING EQUITY CAPITAL ON MAY 15

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The board of IDBI Bank will consider the proposal to raise equity capital through various modes in its meeting on May 15.

"The Board Meeting of IDBI Bank Ltd. to be held on Saturday, May 15, 2021 will consider the proposal for approval of Notice of the 17th Annual General Meeting of the Bank which includes the following as one of the items of business for the AGM: (i) To pass enabling Special Resolution in terms of Section 62(1)(c) of the Companies Act, 2013 for issue of equity capital through various modes," the bank said in a regulatory filing. IDBI Bank is the first state-run bank which



will be up for disinvestment. On May 5, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) gave its in-principle approval for strategic disinvestment along with transfer of management control in IDBI Bank Ltd.

The Government of India (GoI) and the LIC together own more than 94 per cent of equity of IDBI Bank, with the Centre holding 45.4 per cent and the LIC owning 49.24 per cent stake. LIC is currently the promoter of IDBI Bank with management control and the Centre is the co-promoter.

Around 2 p.m., shares of IDBI Bank on the BSE were trading at Rs 38.65, higher by 1.18 per cent from its previous close.

Livinguard AG donates COVID destroying masks for frontline heroes

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Livinguard AG, the Swiss hygiene company, stands with India during this cataclysmic time, and has donated antiviral masks worth INR 15 crores for the protection of these COVID warriors through NGOs, government organizations, civil society, hospitals, and numerous health-care centers. This will ensure that our brave frontline heroes are especially protected with the most superior patented antiviral and antibacterial technology on textile, rather than just being sufficiently protected.

Speaking on the initiative, Sanjeev Swamy, Founder, Inventor & CEO, Livinguard AG, stated, "We, at Livinguard, continue to prioritize the health and wellbeing of people as we work towards increasing access to our self-disinfecting technology in India."

One of the most respected science leaders of India, Padma Vibhushan, Dr Raghunath Mashelkar, added, "Livinguard's scientific breakthrough of deactivating SARS-CoV-2 virus on contact with the mask, is a global game changer, since it just does not prevent the entry of the virus due to its self-disinfecting technology but protect from the virus as well."



Under this initiative, Livinguard AG has donated masks to several NGOs and organizations like Child Relief and You (CRY), Magic Bus, Apnalaya, Mumbai Police, Tata Memorial, Punjab Police, ISB Students, Educate Girls, 108 Ambulance, Concern, India, Helping hands, Crematorium Workers, Freedom for You Foundation, Coro India, K Shamanta NGO, Sadhu Vaswani Mission, RadaswamiSatsung Beas, BharathyThahliani and Shri Dinkar Gupta, IPS, DGP, CHANDIGARH and others.

KreemaanRabadi, Regional Director - West, CRY, stated, "CRY is so grateful to Livinguard for donating to us 25,000 high quality face masks with Anti-microbial technology. The masks will be sent to frontline workers in our project areas."

Livinguard masks are available across leading e-commerce platforms like Amazon, Nykaa, Flipkart, PharmEasy and in leading pharmacies and chemists like Wellness forever, Health & Glow, and Noble Chemists.

Uncertainty looms over India phone market in Covid-hit Q2: IDC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After posting a healthy 18 per cent growth (year-on-year) in the first quarter this year, the April-June quarter is expected to face growth challenges amid the state-level lockdowns and subdued consumer demand, the International Data Corporation (IDC) said on Tuesday.

While the vaccine roll-out programme at the beginning of the year instilled positive sentiments, the onset of the second wave of Covid-19 infections towards the end of the quarter resulted in subdued consumer demand. Thus, the inventory cycle which had shrunk earlier in 2H20 started to get longer since mid-Q1, 2021, according to the IDC's 'Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker'.

"The April-June quarter is expected to face growth challenges under the weight of the second wave of infections. However, the high shipments from the first quarter should be able to suffice for the immediate demand," said Navkendar Singh, Research Director, Client Devices & IPDS, IDC India. "The recovery in 2021 might not be as smooth as expected earlier, with



uncertainty around the lasting impact of the second wave and a possible third wave in next few months," Singh said in a statement.

IDC expects a rebound in consumer sentiments in the second half of 2021, resulting in a single-digit growth annually.

"However, the degree of growth will be restricted due to reduced discretionary spending, supply constraints, and anticipated price hikes in components in upcoming quarters," Singh added.

The Indian smartphone market reached 38 million units in Q1 2021, but declined 14 per cent from a strong fourth quarter of 2020.

Online channels continued their growth momentum ahead of the overall market at 25 per cent (YoY), despite a slip in its share to 46 per cent quarter-over-quarter (QoQ), while offline channels grew at 13 per cent YoY.

MediaTek-based smartphone shipments continued to lead for three consecutive quarters with a share of 52 per cent, widening the gap with Qualcomm, which had a 35 per cent share.

"IDC expects a boost in 5G shipments with more affordable options, stickiness through financing/trade-in programmes, and steeper discounts/cashback offers," said Upasana Joshi, Associate Research Manager, Client Devices, IDC India.

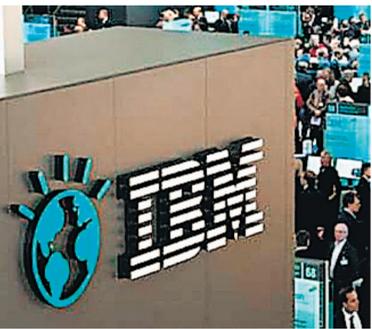
Xiaomi continued to lead the Indian smartphone market with 27.2 per cent share, despite only posting 3 per cent YoY growth.

Samsung retained its second spot with 19 per cent share, growing fastest among the top 5 vendors with 43 per cent YoY growth in Q1.

Vivo with 17.3 per cent share was at the third position, with shipments declining by 3 per cent YoY. OPPO and Realme rounded off the top 5 list.

Covid accelerates AI rollout at Indian firms: IBM

More than 1 in 2 (53 per cent) of Indian IT professionals say that their company has accelerated the rollout of artificial intelligence (AI) based technologies due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an IBM survey revealed on Tuesday.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

While 43 per cent of Indian IT professionals say that the pandemic has increased their focus on security and threats, more than 1 in 2 feel limited expertise or knowledge and increasing data complexity and data silos as barriers to AI adoption.

"Nearly all (95 per cent) IT professionals in India believe that it is critical or very important to their business that they can trust the AI's output is fair, safe and reliable," according to IBM's 'Global AI Adoption Index 2021' survey released during the company's IBM Think 2021 virtual conference.

"Trusted AI, the rise of virtual agents using NLP, automation, and anywhere Hybrid are the top areas that have emerged as key business enablers in the last year owing to the acceleration of technology adoption," said Viswanath Ramaswamy, Vice President,

Technology, IBM Technology Sales, India/South Asia. Over 3 in 4 (78 per cent) Indian IT professionals said it is very important to their company that they can build and run their AI projects wherever the data resides. During the virtual event, IBM unveiled new competencies, skills training, and benefits to ensure its partners succeed in an increasingly competitive market, as part of its \$1 billion investment to support its partner ecosystem. "We will look back on this year and last as the moment the world entered the digital century in full force," said IBM Chairman and CEO, Arvind Krishna.

"In the same way that we electrified factories and machines in the past century, we will use hybrid cloud to infuse AI into software and systems in the 21st century," he added.

IBM announced several advances in artificial intelligence (AI), hybrid cloud, and quantum computing at the Think conference.

Govt ready for another cut in import duty on steel to tame prices

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government has proposed to slash import duties on steel items further bringing it to zero or near zero levels to provide relief to MSMEs, which have been hit hard by the high cost of raw materials amidst the raging pandemic.

Top government sources said that a decision had been taken to reduce duties on steel products and reduce it or withdraw it completely on few items to help the user industry hit hard by rising price of the metal in the domestic market.

Also, lower import duties would help maintain supply lines that have been affected with several domestic steel companies reducing steel production to divert medical grade oxygen for Covid-19 relief measures.

In budget 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had revoked the anti-dumping duty (ADD) and countervailing duty (CVD) on certain steel products while reducing customs duty uniformly to 7.5 per cent on semis, flat, and long products of non-alloy, alloy, and stainless steels from 10-12.5 per cent levels earlier. She also brought down import duty to nil on steel scrap to support user industries hit hard by sharp rise in steel



prices.

These duties may now be withdrawn or slashed further.

"Steel prices continue to remain firm and have also risen further in recent months. It is making operation of several user industries difficult specially in a market disrupted by the pandemic. Cut in import duty will help tame steel prices as the global prices of steel in certain markets are still lower than domestic prices. The measure will also help supply lines of steel if there is any shortage in domestic steel production due to use of another input oxygen by steel makers for Covid relief," said the official source quoted earlier.

It is expected that duty cuts in steel will be announced shortly by the DGFT after getting formal nod from the finance ministry. A call has to be taken whether to bring down duty levels largely at 7.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent or withdraw it completely for the time being.

Domestic hot-rolled coil (HRC) prices rallied to a multi-year high of Rs 56,000 per tonne in February from Rs 39,200 per tonne in March 2020 as demand improved amid iron-ore supply constraints and high global prices. This has further improved to over Rs 58,000 in April, a jump of over 50 per cent in last 13

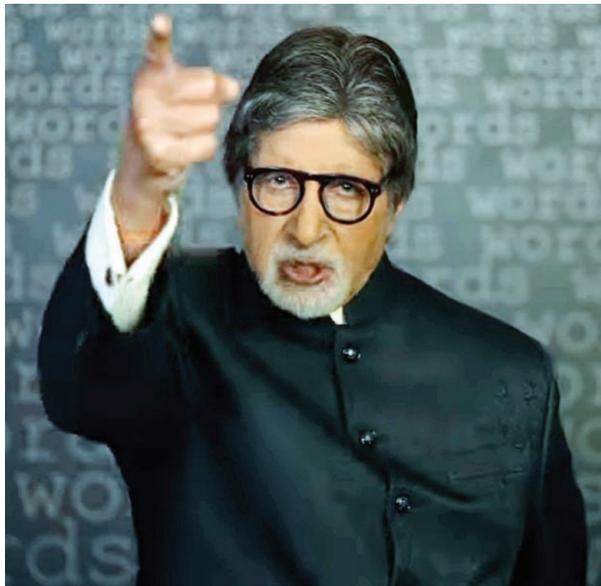
months.

With demand for steel remaining firm and China cutting export incentives to steel makers to support domestic needs, Indian steel prices are expected to move up further. The cut in duty is expected to tame prices in the domestic market while providing competition to domestic steelmakers from traders who secure cheaper metal from abroad.

Steel producers asking anonymity said that the move to cut import duty would be detrimental to the interest of domestic steelmakers as it could flood the market with cheap and substandard steel being dumped into the country. They said that the steel market is giving indications that domestic steel sector may turn profitable after a long interval. But duty cuts could change the cycle again.

In the current scenario of a moderation in demand in India due to the second wave of Covid-19 and consequent business lockdowns, Indian steel mills would be able to offload large steel volumes to export markets and still remain highly profitable, according to a recent report from ICRA.

But a cut in duty would squeeze margins and bring a lot of export destined products back into the domestic market.



BIG B RECITES FATHER'S POEM TO ENCOURAGE COVID WARRIORS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amitabh Bachchan on Tuesday took to social media to encourage Covid warriors at a time when India is fighting the deadly second wave of the virus. In a video he tweeted, Big B recites a Hindi poem penned by his father, the late poet Hariyansh Rai Bachchan.

The poem encourages a person to never give up during a battle, to

fight with all their strength and to never bow down or stop midway.

After reciting the poem, Bachchan says in the video: "These words, written by my father Dr Hariyansh Rai Bachchan, are a clarion call that reminds us to never give up. They were written at a time the country faced a different crisis and challenge, but even today, they resonate. I believe these words celebrate the spirit of the Covid warriors, our frontline

workers, who, as we all know, are sacrificing so much for all of us. It is time we support them and bolster the fight against Covid. This is our fight. We can all contribute in whatever way we can. We must all come together for India."

His message comes at a time when the nation is battling the second wave of the pandemic with increasing number of positive cases each day and several states experiencing lockdown.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

WHAT CHARACTERS DOES SHWETA TRIPATHI WANT TO PLAY?

Actress Shweta Tripathi loves characters that tell a story, more so if such a character is far removed from who she is in life. "Characters that tell a story, those that are far, far away from who I am, are the kind that I want to play. The reason being is when you play a character like that, you get a glimpse of what the character's life would be like, which is why I'd always love to play a variety of roles in my projects," she says. The actress has won accolades with her perform-

ances in films such as "Masaan", "Haramkhor" and "Gone Kesh", besides the web series "Mirzapur" among others. Her upcoming projects include "YehKaaliKaaliAnkhein" and "Escapce Live".

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Jackie Shroff has been working in Bollywood for around four decades. The actor, who will soon be seen in the Salman Khan-starrer "Radhe", is more than happy with the kind of roles he is getting now as he says makers are willing to experiment while casting him.

"I love it. They are all experimenting with me. Someone is doing OK Computer, Phone

Jackie Shroff: They are all experimenting with me, I am flowing with the tide

Bhoot, Hello Charlie, Criminal Justice, Sooryavanshi... I am just flowing with the tide," said the actor. "Then, I am lucky to work in a film like Radhe. It is a lot of fun," he added. "I am just keeping my health, my disciples, keeping the respect for people. Trying to spread good knowledge as much as I can about plants," said the veteran artiste. "Radhe", Jackie's latest outing is a Prabhu Deva-directed action drama that co-stars DishaPatani and RandeepHooda with the film's talismanic hero Salman. The film will release on May 13 on the occasion of Eid in India, on the pay-per-view platform Zeeplex.

MUNMUN DUTTA APOLOGISES FOR 'UNINTENTIONAL' CASTEIST REMARK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A hashtag demanding the arrest of television actress Munmun Dutta started trending on Twitter on Monday after she used what netizens said was a casteist slur in her latest YouTube video. Munmun, best known for her role of Babita in "Taarak Mehta KaOoltahChashmah", soon issued an apology.

However, her apology has not gone down well with many people including "Masaan" director NeerajGhaywan.

Earlier, in the video, Munmun was talking about make-up when she referred to a particular community. The comment created widespread furore and Munmun apologised saying she was "genuinely misinformed about the meaning of the word".

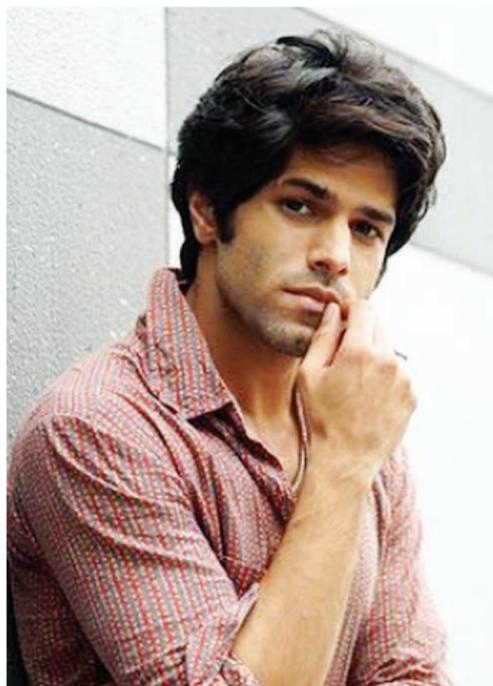
Her apology, issued on Twitter, reads: "This is in reference to a video that I posted yesterday where in one word used by me has been misinterpreted. It was never said with the intent of insult, intimidate, humiliate or hurt anyone's feelings."

"Because of my language barrier, I was genuinely misinformed about the meaning of the word. Once I was made aware of its meaning, I immediately took the part down. I have utmost respect for every single person from every caste, creed or gender and acknowledge their immense contribution to our society or nation," she added.

"I sincerely would like to apologise to every single person who have been an unintentionally hurt by the usage of the word and I sincerely regret for the same," she further wrote.

While the actress has deleted the particular portion from her video, the deleted clip has gone viral on social media. Upset netizens are now demanding the actress be arrested for her disrespectful remark.

Among those who tweeted their criticism is filmmaker NeerajGhaywan. "Has been misinterpreted? Never said it with intent to hurt? There is no other interpretation! You said the B word and there is no way to cover it up. Apologise and shut up," Ghaywan wrote.



Mrinal Dutt: Cannot wait to do another season of 'His Storyy'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor MrinalDutt, who is currently seen on the web series "His Storyy", says that he would love to be part of the next season of the show. "I cannot wait to do another season soon, hopefully, when everything goes well, and the pandemic is finally just a memory," he says.

"When we act, we give it everything we have, and it is our job. Just like with every other project of mine, I gave my heart and soul into the character of Preet (his role in the show), doing everything to justify this multi-layered character. When I see the kind of response that the show and the character have received and when people love it this much, it brings tears to my eyes," he says.

The show revolves around Kunal, played by SatyadeepMisra, and Sakshi, essayed by Priyamani Raj. Their marriage is on the rocks when Sakshi discovers that Kunal is cheating on her with another man, Preet.

The series also stars actors Nitin Bhatia, Parinitaa Seth, Rajiv Kumar, Charu Shankar, and Mikhail Gandhi. "His Storyy" is currently streaming on ALTBalaji.

COMEDIAN GAURAV GUPTA TO DROP STAND-UP SPECIAL 'MARKET DOWN HAI'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Comedian Gaurav Gupta is quite excited about his upcoming stand-up special "Market Down Hai", slated to release digitally.

"Market Down Hai" is special as it is my first stand-up special, and also because I used my life experiences that are hilarious in nature. I am a Baniya and cracking jokes on the Baniya community never gets old for me. I hope the audience will love my show as much as they loved my other work of stand-up," said Gaurav. OTT platforms have helped stand-up comedy as a concept take centre stage, he feels. "Thanks to them (OTT platforms), a host of comedians have entered the limelight and I too look forward to reaching a larger audience and garner new fans," said the comedian. The show releases on Amazon Prime Video on May 14.



Surbhi Chandna