

absolute india

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After petrol, now diesel set to hit century mark

Elsewhere in Rajasthan, especially towns near the border areas, diesel is expected to touch Rs 100 mark soon. So, will be the case in a few places in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, where by virtue of higher VAT rates, fuel prices are always much higher than rest of the country. Premium fuels are already above the Rs 100 mark in several cities for past few months.

In the city of Mumbai, where petrol price crossed Rs 100 per litre mark for the first time ever on May 29, the fuel price reached new high of Rs 101.76 per litre on Wednesday. Diesel price also increased in the city to reach Rs 93.85 a litre, the highest among metros.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Sri Ganganagar, a small city in northernmost part of Rajasthan near the India-Pakistan border, is all set to get the dubious distinction of becoming the first in the country where retail prices of both auto fuels - petrol and diesel - will be hitting the century mark. The city already has the distinction of having the highest pump price of petrol across the country at Rs 106.65 a litre. With diesel prices now increasing there by another 27 paise per litre on Wednesday to reach Rs 99.51 a litre, the city is just couple of raises away to hit a century mark

for this fuel class as well. What had brought fuel prices closer to Rs 100 per litre mark is consistent increase in retail prices by oil marketing companies for last five to six weeks. Even on Wednesday, OMCs raised the price of petrol and diesel by 25-30 paise per litre after pausing the increase on the previous day. With the latest increase, the retail prices of petrol and diesel increased by 25 paise per litre to touch Rs 95.56 and Rs 86.47 per litre respectively in Delhi. Across the country as well petrol and diesel prices increased between 23-27 paise per litre on Wednesday but its retail prices varied depending on the level

of local taxes in different states. With Wednesday's price hike, fuel prices have now increased on 21 days and remained unchanged on 19 days since May 1. The 21 increases have taken up petrol prices by Rs 5.16 per litre in Delhi. Similarly, diesel price has increased by Rs 5.75 per litre in the national capital. With global crude prices also rising on a pick up demand and depleting inventories of world's largest fuel guzzler - the US, retail prices of fuel in India are expected to firm up further in coming days. The benchmark Brent crude is currently at \$72.60 on ICE or Intercontinental Exchange.



WARMER TEMPERATURES NOT ENOUGH TO PREVENT COVID SPREAD, SAYS STUDY

NEUTRAL IN ENVIRONMENT

The study, led by Imperial College London researchers, showed that temperature and population density are the most important factors determining how easily the virus spreads, but only in the absence of mobility-restricting measures, such as lockdowns.

Quantifying the effects of environmental factors including temperature, humidity, and UV radiation (sunshine) on SARS-CoV-2 transmission has been difficult during the pandemic, since human factors like population density and behaviour have been the main drivers of transmission. The differences in interventions and case-counting between countries and regions also makes comparing environmental factors on a global scale difficult, especially as some countries like Brazil, India and Iran, have high transmission despite having warmer climates.



Our results show that temperature changes have a much smaller effect on transmission than policy interventions, so while people remain unvaccinated, governments mustn't drop policies like lockdowns and social distancing just because a seasonal change means the weather is warming up.

Tom Smith, Department of Life Sciences at Imperial

work also suggests that lower autumn and winter temperatures may lead to the virus spreading more easily in the absence of policy interventions or behavioural changes," added Smith. The findings are published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Seasonal variation has been a source of uncertainty in transmission forecasts of SARS-

CoV-2, the virus behind Covid-19. Other viruses, like flu viruses and other coronaviruses, are known to be affected by environmental factors. While temperature and population density do influence SARS-CoV-2 transmission, the study re-confirms that the most important drivers are public policy and individual behaviour. For example, during lockdowns,

there was no meaningful signature of temperature influencing transmission. "This means, for example, that warmer regions should not expect to ease mobility restrictions before colder regions. This is especially true as warmer regions tend to have higher population densities," said Will Pearce, from the Department of Life Sciences at Imperial.

COVID MORE LIKELY TO SPREAD INDOORS THROUGH MASKLESS INTERACTION

New York: Speaking without masks in confined spaces poses the greatest risk of spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, to others, according to a study. The study published in the Journal of Internal Medicine describes how different sized respiratory droplets emitted while speaking span a continuum of sizes and can carry different amounts of virus. Most concerning are intermediate-sized droplets that remain suspended in air for minutes and can be transported over considerable distances by convective air currents. The Indian government also in an advisory stated that aerosol and droplets are key modes of transmission of the virus. It added that the aerosol can travel up to ten metres from the infected person, and that aerosol through the infected person can fall within two metres but can be carried to ten metres through the air.

Delhi sizzles above 42 degrees, Ganganagar hottest at 45.8

Meanwhile, the weather department said that the southwest monsoon is likely to advance into remaining parts of the Arabian Sea and Maharashtra, some more parts of Gujarat, remaining parts of Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, some parts of Madhya Pradesh and east Uttar Pradesh, entire Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Bihar during the next 2-3 days.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi sweated at 42.2 degree Celsius on Wednesday, while Rajasthan's Ganganagar recorded the highest temperature in the north region at 45.8 degree Celsius. Haryana's Hisar recorded 45 degree, UP's Jhansi 43 and Una (Himachal Pradesh), Patiala, Halwara (both Punjab) and Alwar (Rajasthan) recorded maximum temperatures above 43 degrees. Even Ladakh saw 40.5, while Jammu also sweltered at 42.7 degree Celsius. The maximum temperature above average was recorded in J&K's Qazigund, which was 7.1 degrees above the average. However, Delhi is likely to get respite from the hot weather from June 12 onwards when moderate rain and thundershowers are expected. It has advanced into the entire central and some parts of north Arabian Sea, entire Konkan including Mumbai and most parts of interior Maharashtra, some parts of south Gujarat region, some



Heat wave likely over northwest Rajasthan

Heat wave condition is expected over isolated pockets of northwest Rajasthan, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday. The weather office made the forecast based on maximum temperature in the region that was noted 45.1 degrees Celsius at Ganganagar (West Rajasthan). It issued a heat wave warning from 5.30 a.m. Wednesday to 5.30 a.m. till June 10. The MET department also warned about maximum temperatures more than 40 degrees Celsius that was also noticed on Tuesday at most places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, West Rajasthan, at many places over West Uttar Pradesh, at isolated places over East Uttar Pradesh, East Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Vidarbha, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal.

more parts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, most parts of central Bay of

Bengal and some more parts of North Bay of Bengal, as on Wednesday.

EFFORTS ON TO COMPLY WITH NEW NORMS, DETAILS IN A WEEK: TWITTER TO GOVT

New Delhi: Days after the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) sent its final notice to Twitter over the microblogging platform's compliance to the new IT norms, the US-headquartered company has told the government that it is making efforts to comply with the regulations and will share the details for the same in a week's time. In a letter to the ministry, the company has said that it remains committed to serving the people of India by providing a platform to facilitate

public conversation in the country. Twitter noted that as per the new guidelines, it has appointed a Nodal Contact Person and a Resident Grievance Officer on a contractual basis, and the company is making recruitments to fill the positions on a permanent basis. "In addition, we are in advance stages of finalising the appointment to the role of Chief Compliance Officer and we plan to provide additional details to you in the next several days and at the latest within a week," Twitter said.

New Delhi: Former Union Minister and senior Congress leader from Uttar Pradesh Jitin Prasad on Wednesday joined BJP in presence of union railway minister Piyush Goyal and Rajya Sabha member Anil Baluni at party headquarters, giving a big jolt to the Congress party. After joining BJP, Prasad said, "I feel there is no purpose of your doing pol-

itics or staying in a political party if a person is not able to serve or protect the interest of its people. I realized being in Congress and not being able to do the same. So, I joined BJP and my work will only speak for itself. His father Jitendra Prasad was a prominent 'Brahmin' face in Uttar Pradesh, who had challenged Sonia Gandhi's leadership in 1999 and

had contested against her for the post of party chief. He died in 2002. The saffron party believes that Prasad joining BJP will help it pacify Brahmins in Uttar Pradesh, where the Assembly poll will be held early next year. A party insider said that Prasad could be projected as the Brahmin face of the party which is completely missing in Uttar Pradesh.



The question is not why I'm leaving a party but why I'm joining another party. If there is a party in the real sense today, an institutional party, then it is the BJP. Other parties are either regional or person specific.

Jitin Prasad

RETIRED IAS ANUP CHANDRA APPOINTED ELECTION COMMISSIONER

Team Absolute | New Delhi

President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed retired IAS officer Anup Chandra Pandey as Election Commissioner. The appointment restores the three-member commission to its full strength, which will now oversee the next set of crucial assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Goa, Manipur and Uttarakhand next year. Pandey, a 1984-batch Uttar Pradesh cadre officer, has been



appointed to the post in the Election Commission with effect from the date he assumes the office. A notification in this regard was issued by Legislative Department, Ministry of Law and Justice on Tuesday. Pandey will now be in the three-member panel of the Election Commission which was vacant after former Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora's retirement on April 12. Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar are the other two members on the panel.

Congress giant Jitin Prasad joins BJP

Novel technique could detect tropical cyclones earlier than satellites

The method developed by the scientists' aims to identify initial traces of pre-cyclonic eddy vortices in the atmospheric column and track its Spatio-temporal evolution. They used coarser grid resolution of 27 km for identification and finer resolution of 9 km to evaluate the characteristics of eddy vortices.

The study made a comprehensive investigation on the behavior of eddies in an atmospheric column for non-developing cases and compared these findings with developing cases.

The technique has been found to have potential for early detection of tropical cyclogenesis in the atmospheric column prior to satellite detection over ocean surface.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian scientists have found a promising technique for early detection of development or strengthening of tropical cyclones in the atmospheric column prior to satellite detection over ocean surface in northern Indian Ocean region. So far, remote sensing techniques have detected them the earliest. However, this detection was possible only after system developed as a well-marked low-pressure system over the warm ocean surface. The study was conducted with cases of four post-monsoon severe cyclones -- Phailin (2013), Vardah (2013), Gaja (2018), Madi (2013), and two pre-monsoon cyclones Mora (2017) and Aila (2009) that



developed over northern Indian Ocean region. Early detection of

Tropical cyclones has wide socio-economic implications. A larger time gap

between the detection and the impact of the cyclone could help preparation activities.

Prior to the formation of cyclonic system over the warm oceanic environment, the initial atmospheric instability mechanism, as well as the vortex development, is triggered at higher atmospheric levels.

These cyclonic eddies are prominent features in the vertical atmospheric column encompassing the disturbance environment with a potential to induce and develop into a well-marked cyclonic depression over the warm ocean surface, said Ministry of Science and Technology on Wednesday. The research was published in the journal 'Atmospheric Research' recently.



12.12% MORE WHEAT PROCURED THIS YEAR SO FAR: CENTREA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The procurement of wheat this year has gone up by 12.12 percent so far in comparison to the corresponding period last year, at 418.47 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) against 373.22 LMT, an official statement said on Wednesday. About 46 lakh farmers benefited from the ongoing wheat procurement from the ongoing RMS procurement operations with MSP value of Rs 82,648.38 crore, a Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry statement said.

Also, over 816.65 LMTs of paddy was procured on MSP for ongoing KMS 2020-21 and RMS, it said. According to the statement, government agencies also procured 7,80,432.88 MT of pulses and oilseeds on MSP.

Procurement of wheat in ongoing RMS 2021-22 is continuing smoothly in the procuring states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir at MSP, as was done in previous seasons and till now (upto June 8), a quantity of over 418.47 LMT of wheat has been procured (which is all time high, as it has exceeded previous high 389.92 LMT of RMS 2020-21) against the last year's corresponding purchase of 373.22 LMT, it said. Paddy procurement in the ongoing Kharif 2020-21 season is continuing smoothly in the procuring states with purchase of over 816.65 LMTs of paddy (includes Kharif crop 706.96 LMT



and Rabi crop 109.69 LMT) upto June 8, against the last year's corresponding purchase of 736.50 LMT.

About 120.89 lakh farmers have already been benefitted from the ongoing KMS procurement

Operations with MSP value of Rs 1,54,184.14 crore. Paddy procurement has also reached at all time high level, surpassing previous high of 773.45 LMT in KMS 2019-20.

Kerala gold smuggling case: NIA arrests fugitive returning from UAE

In a breakthrough in the Kerala gold smuggling case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday said that it has arrested fugitive accused Muhammad Mansoor P.H. after his return from the UAE.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

An NIA spokesperson said that the agency arrested Mansoor, a resident of Kerala's Kozhikode district, following his arrival at Calicut International Airport from Dubai.

The case pertains to the seizure of 30 kg gold worth Rs 14.82 crore on July 5 last year at Air Cargo complex of the Trivandrum

International Airport by the Customs department from the baggage addressed to the Charge D' Affairs of the UAE Consulate, Thiruvananthapuram.

The NIA had registered a case on July 10 last year and had also filed charge sheet against 20 accused persons on January 1 this year.

The official said that during probe, it was revealed that Mansoor, while being in UAE, had conspired with

the charge sheeted accused Mohammed Shafi P. and others to facilitate smuggling of gold to India, through import cargo addressed to diplomats at the UAE Consulate.

The NIA Special Court at Ernakulam had issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against Mansoor.

The official said that Mansoor was produced before NIA Special Court at Kochi and sent to five days NIA custody.

NITISH KUMAR GOVERNMENT A FUNGUS, SAYS TEJASHWI

Team Absolute | Patna

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday slammed the Nitish Kumar government in Bihar for unable to provide treatment to patients infected with black fungus.

"The Election Commission has imposed a fungus government (Nitish Kumar government) on Bihar and now people of the state are paying price for it," he said.

"The Election Commission has elected Nitish Kumar government in November last year and imposed it on the people of state. The Election Commission had converted the decision of people in favour of Nitish Kumar. The BJP and RSS followers are



intruding into the Election Commission and they are acting against the democratic process of the country. Such officers are getting rewarded by BJP," he alleged.

Tejashwi Yadav has continuously raised questions over the working of the Election Commission, alleging that it had not worked transparently during poll days and counting of votes in Bihar Assembly election 2020.

Assam to have 7 National Parks now, most after Madhya Pradesh

Guwahati | Agencies

With the notification of two more National Parks in Assam on Wednesday, the northeastern state now has seven such parks, the second most after Madhya Pradesh, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which have nine each, state Environment and Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya said.

He said that Raimona and Dihing Patkai National Parks have been formally notified on Wednesday, taking Assam's total tally of National Parks to seven.

"Assam has become the second state in the country to have the highest number of National Parks after Madhya Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar. The newly created



National Parks would help to boost conservation efforts and provide fillip to tourism and agriculture sectors," he told the media at the 'Aranya Bhawan', headquarters of the Environment and Forest Department.

The 234.26 square km

Dihing Patkai National Park spans eastern Assam's Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts, while the 422 square km Raimona National Park is located in western Assam's Kokrajhar district, along West Bengal and Bhutan.

The existing five National

Parks in Assam are Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Orang and Dibru-Saikhowa. Kaziranga and Manas are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They are also tiger reserves, along with Nameri and Orang.

The Minister also said that the forest village areas diverted under the Forest Conservation Act has been excluded. Short stretches of the Dirak and Buri Dihing rivers have been included in the Dihing Patkai National Park. Dihing Patkai came to limelight a year ago for illegal coal mining in the surrounding areas.

Additional anti-poaching camps and manpower are being deployed for strengthening the security and patrolling besides conservation of the new National Park.

TWO WANTED PUNJAB GANGSTERS GUNNED DOWN IN KOLKATA SHOOTOUT

Kolkata | Agencies

Personnel of Kolkata Police's Special Task Force (STF) on Wednesday gunned down two Punjab gangsters believed to be involved in gun running and responsible for killing two policemen. The deceased duo has been identified as Jaspreet Jassi and Jaipal Bhullar.

The STF encircled a residential block in New Town's Shapoorji complex after a tip-off that the two gangsters were hiding there. Kolkata Police said the gangsters fired on the STF personnel and tried to escape, but both were killed in the encounter that lasted for around 35 minutes. The STF raided the residential block after receiving intelligence inputs that the two crimi-



nals involved in bringing weapons into West Bengal from Bihar via Birbhum had taken refuge at the New Town complex.

These weapons also find their way into Bangladesh and the northeastern states of India. According to Kolkata Police, Jaspreet Jassi and Jaipal Bhullar -- who were wanted in connection with the killing of two assistant sub-inspec-

tors in Jagraon in Punjab's Ludhiana district -- were killed in the encounter.

Both were wanted in Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh for over 40 cases related to robbery, murder, extortion and kidnapping, among others. However, details regarding a third gangster are not available yet. Senior STF officials are present on the spot.

4 CHILDREN DROWN IN BRICK KILN PIT IN BIHAR

Bettiah |

Four children died while bathing in a pit filled with water in Bihar's West Champaran district in the Mataria police station area. The children had gone to bathe in the water accumulated in the pit. A brick kiln located in Hardi Dalhwa village had dug a pit for brick manufacturing which was filled with water, a police official said on Wednesday. On Tuesday evening the four children went for a bath in the water of the pit and drowned while playing in it. It is alleged that the employees of the brick kiln kept the deaths hidden till late Tuesday night.

According to police officials, the pit was 8 to 10 feet deep in which rainwater had collected.

Sanjay Kumar, Mataria Station in-charge, told reporter that with the help of locals, all the bodies were pulled out of the pit. The victims have been identified as Kartik Kumar, Govind Kumar, Prince Kumar and Aditya Kumar, he said. They were aged between 8 to 12 years.

Following the incident, the villagers are angry with the brick kiln owner.



Won't quit Parliament, continue fight for people's rights: Farooq Abdullah

Srinagar | Agencies

Amid speculation about any possible changes to the status of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, former J&K Chief Minister and National Conference President Farooq Abdullah said on Wednesday that he won't resign as a member of the Parliament and will continue to fight for peoples rights.

He was talking to reporters after a meeting convened by the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) at the residence of former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti here. "I won't resign from the Parliament. We will continue to fight for the rights of the people in the Parliament till we are alive," Abdullah said.

To a question on the rumours about a further bifurcation of Jammu and



Kashmir and the creation of a separate Jammu state with parts of Kashmir Valley in it, he said such rumours keep floating in Kashmir and they have also been hearing the same. "Rumours always keep floating in Kashmir. Let them do what they want to do, we are holding the rope of Allah and we hope that he will keep our future secure," he said. The meeting convened by the PAGD, a conglomerate of Kashmir-based political

parties, on Wednesday was attended by PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, Farooq Abdullah, Awami National Conference leader Muzaffar Shah and CPI-M leader Yusuf Taragami, among others.

The PAGD was floated for the reversal of the constitutional changes made to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019.

Taragami has been appointed as the new spokesperson of PAGD.

Nilgiris admin seeks to make it India's first 100% Covid vaccinated

Chennai | Agencies

The administration of Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris is on an ambitious plan to make it the first totally Covid inoculated district of the country.

The district administration said that of the 5.28 lakh adult population above the age of 18 in the district, 2 lakh adults have been administered the first dose of the vaccine, amounting to 34 per cent of the population.

In a press statement, the administration said that its plan is to procure enough vaccines and to inoculate the entire adult population of the district to become the first district in the country



to vaccinate its entire adult resident population.

The administration is aiming at this milestone as the district has compara-

tively a smaller population and hence, the target is achievable.

State Health and Family Welfare Minister Ma

Subramanian was on a visit to the district and it was decided that steps to be taken to vaccinate the entire tribal population of the district before June end.

The district administration is planning to vaccinate the entire tribal community once enough vaccines arrive.

Tea workers of Nilgiris are another priority group which the administration is aiming to inoculate and according to the district health officials, almost 80 percent of them were given at least a single dose of the vaccine.

Talking to IANS, Nilgiris Collector Innocent Divya said: "Our first priority is to vaccinate the total tribal

population and we expect to achieve it by June end. Health Minister Thiru Ma Subramanian was in the district and he has promised to provide us the total vaccines required to inoculate the entire adult population of the district."

"Nilgiris is a small district and if we could achieve 100 percent vaccination of the adult population in this district, then it will be a major achievement and the state government will be considering this as a model for the state to be replicated. If a third wave comes up, we could monitor whether the virus is eradicated after 100 percent vaccination of the adult populace in the district," she added.



TELANGANA CANCELS CLASS 12 BOARD EXAMS

Hyderabad | Agencies

The Telangana government on Wednesday announced cancellation of the Intermediate second year (Class 12) annual exams in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

Nearly two months after cancelling the annual exams of Class 10 and Intermediate first year (Class 11), the government announced cancellation of Class 12 exams.

Education Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy said that

this decision was taken keeping in mind the surge in Covid-19 and the concern of the students and their parents. She said a committee of officials would be constituted to finalise the modalities for the marks to be awarded to the students. The government's decision will benefit over 4.56 lakh students.

The government on April 15 cancelled the annual exams of Classes 10 and 11 and promoted the students without exams in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Makwana Minaben Khodabhai is wife of Army No. 17027627H, Rank Sep Driver Mt Name Makwana Khodabhai Bhagabhai residing at: 362, Koli Patel vas, Ambareli, Ahmedabad, Ambareli, Gujrat 387810. I have changes my name Gohil Minaben to Makwana Minaben Khodabhai as per affidavit no. AY-936872 date 08.06.2021 before Bhopal Court.



EFFORTS SHOULD NOW BE MADE TO AVOID THIRD WAVE : CM

The basic mantra to prevent infection is 'Aggressive Testing', Shivraj Singh Chouhan reviews the situation and arrangements of Corona

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the corona infection in the state is now nearing its end. New cases of corona have come down below 500 in the state and weekly positivity rate has come down to below 2% in 50 districts. The state ranks 23rd in the country in terms of infection. The recovery rate of the state has gone up to 98%.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that such efforts should now be made so that the third wave of corona, even if it comes in the state, may not have any effect or be negligible. The basic mantra to prevent corona infection is more and more testing. Testing



Number of new cases less than 500

The number of new cases of corona in the state has come down to less than 500. On Wednesday 453 new cases have come and 1329 patients have become healthy. Active cases have become 7071. The seven-day positivity rate is 0.8% and today's positivity rate is 0.6%.

More than 10 cases in 6 districts

Now more than 10 new cases of corona have come in only 6 districts of the state. 144 new cases have come in Indore, 104 in Bhopal, 39 in Jabalpur, 13 in Ujjain, 12 in Betul and 11 in Ratlam.

should be done by going to the people and every patient of corona should be isolated and treated.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that vaccine is a protective shield of Corona. Intensive campaign of corona vaccination should be carried out in the state. Chouhan was reviewing

the situation and arrangements of Corona in Mantralaya. Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang, Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Additional Chief Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman and Health Commissioner Akash Tripathi were present in the meeting.

No new case in 10 districts

No new cases of corona have been reported in 10 districts of the state namely Alirajpur, Bhind, Datia, Dindori, Guna, Harda, Mandla, Sheopur, Singrauli and Tikamgarh. Alirajpur district is completely corona infection free. Active cases of corona are in single digit in Burhanpur and Chhatrapur districts.

More than 2% weekly positivity rate in two districts only

In only two districts of the state, Indore and Bhopal, the weekly positivity rate is more than 2%. The weekly positivity rate is 2.1% in Indore and 2.2% in Bhopal.

3135 patients in hospitals

In the state, 3135 patients of Corona are being treated in hospitals. Out of these, 1315 patients are in ICU, 1227 patients are on oxygen beds and 593 patients are on normal beds. There are 3936 patients in home isolation.



Units of higher capacity should be set up in the state for paddy milling : CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that there is a need to increase the capacity of paddy milling in the state. For this large milling units will be set up. Farmers will also be trained to plant profitable varieties of paddy and reduce breakage in paddy. Apart from paddy, farmers will also be motivated to grow other profitable crops. Chief Minister was addressing the meeting of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on paddy milling in Kharif Marketing Year 2020-21 today. Chouhan said that for the state government, the interest of farmers is paramount. The final decision regarding paddy milling rates will be taken by the Cabinet.

It was informed in the meeting that the production of paddy is increasing every year in the state. A total of 37.26 lakh metric tonnes of paddy was procured in the year 2020-21

whereas in the year 2017-18 this quantity was only 16.60 MT. Out of a total of 804 millers in the state, 396 mills have a milling capacity of 4 metric tonnes per hour and 392 millers have a milling capacity of 4 to 8 metric tons per hour. Only 16 units have a milling capacity of more than 8 MT per hour. The present milling capacity of the state is 35,000 metric tonnes per day. Chouhan directed that necessary action should be taken to set up rice mills with more capacity in the state.

Various alternatives were presented by the Cabinet Committee for milling of paddy. Discussions were also held on the proposals for rice delivery submitted by the miller unions, the policy and procedure for milling of other paddy producing states. Options were presented by the Cabinet sub-committee regarding the proposed ratio of rice delivery, incentive amount for milling and amount of up gradation.

DETTOL PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE UNSUNG PROTECTORS OF THE COVID PANDEMIC

Dettol Salutes Mohammad Waseem, a banker from Bhopal, who started an online campaign to raise funds for migrant labourers and people from low-income communities.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Dettol, India's most trusted germ protection brand, launched a one-of-its-kind campaign, #DettolSalutes. For the first time in its history Dettol, as a tribute to Covid-19 warriors replaced its iconic logo with an image of a Covid protector along with the 'protector's' inspiring story.

Dettol has curated 100 such stories from across India and carried them on its liquid handwash packs in honor of the protectors who have selflessly helped numerous people. In addition, Dettol has also launched a website- www.DettolSalutes.com. This platform is created especially for people from across India to share stories and acknowledge Covid protectors in their midst by creating customized virtual packs and sharing it on their social media channels.

One such story is that of Mohammad Waseem, a banker from Bhopal. When the lockdown began in



March 2020, he began putting together an online campaign to raise funds for migrant labourers and people from low-income communities. Since then, he has provided ration kits to 1200 families across Madhya Pradesh and has distributed more than 5000 cooked meals to migrant workers. He has also paid rent for over 13 families that were unable to meet their expenses during

the lockdown.

There is a diverse and inclusive mix of hand-picked stories of individuals from across India - ranging from metros to smaller cities, from seniors to the youth and covering all regions. The intent is to cover a wide spectrum, thereby striking a personal chord with people from across the country. With the change in brand packaging and replacing its logo, Dettol aims to reach out to its consumers and show its solidarity by instilling a sense of hope to get through this phase.

Dettol as a part of the #DettolSalutes campaign launched an anthem last week to spread the message of hope and resolve during these tough times. Keeping in line with reaching out to a diverse audience, Dettol has also launched its anthem in sign language to make it more inclusive. The 4 million #DettolSalute packs will be available on e-commerce channels and across 500,000 stores in India from the 3rd week of June.

Special vaccination camps organized in various market places of Bhopal



Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the initiative of Medical Education Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang, special vaccination camps were organized for shopkeepers and their workers in the market of new and old city of Bhopal on Wednesday. Minister Sarang started it from the camp in front of Khedapati Hanuman Mandir in New Market. He encouraged the people by visiting various campuses of the city and motivated people to get vaccinated.

Vaccination camps have been organized in various markets of

Bhopal, through which a large number of shopkeepers and employees are getting the vaccine. This will prevent corona infection. This work is being done in about 100 centers. Such camps will also be organized in the coming time.

Sarang said that it is an effort that the shopkeeper or his employee does not get infected by the customers and in the same way, such special camps have been set up to ensure that the shopkeeper or his staff does not get infected due to any customer. In the coming times, such initiatives are being taken to keep

Bhopal free from corona curfew again. Corona curfew should not be imposed again in Bhopal, this is the effort to ensure that people can get the goods of their needs through shops continuously.

Government has fulfilled the demand of opening shops of merchant organizations by doing a new experiment. He said that with the slogan 'Tika Lagwao-Bazar Khulwao', it will be necessary for all the shopkeepers and the workers working on them to get vaccinated. In view of this, 100 percent vaccination is being done on Wednesday to the traders and their employees by setting up camps.

Capital will be unlocked for six days per week

The entire market will open in the capital Bhopal from Thursday, for this shopkeepers will have to get 100% vaccination done. Along with this, permission has been given to open shops only after ensuring the compliance of the Covid guide-line. Sarang said that permission has been given to open the market on Saturday also. Traders will have to ensure that their as well as customers follow the COVID guide-line. Information about social distancing, applying of masks, vaccination etc. will be given through announcements in the market.

NGOs will work for awareness in the market place

On the call of Sarang, voluntary organizations of Bhopal will do awareness work for Corona awareness along with the opening of the market from Thursday. They will get the Covid protocol to be followed in the market.

Sarang said that the voluntary organizations of the society will make people aware about Covid in view of the situation of Bhopal being opened and then closed. Bhopal is taking a step forward towards unlocking. From Thursday, all the markets of the city will open for shopping. The appeal made by the voluntary organizations to follow the protocol till the general public will prove beneficial. He has also appealed to all the voluntary organizations to get themselves vaccinated and also to get 100 percent vaccination done for the people associated with their organization.

APPLICATION FOR FREE ADMISSION IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS STARTS FROM JUNE 10

Last date till June 30, lottery for online admission On July 6, 2021, children who were eligible in the last session will also get the opportunity of free admission, children orphaned during the Corona period will get priority in online lottery

Bhopal: Under the Right to Education Act, online applications can be made from June 10, 2021 for free admission in the first class of private schools in the session 2021-22. The last date for online application has been fixed as 30 June 2021. In this regard, the format of online application form has been made available on RTE portal www.educationportal.mp.gov.in/Rte Portal. The minimum age for admission in Nursery, KG-1 and KG-2 classes has been fixed from 3 to 5 years and for class-I admission from minimum 5 years to maximum 7 years. In case of non-match of age with original copy or in case of non-production of original, the applicant will be considered ineligible. For admission in the session 2021-22, the age of the applicant will be calculated as on June 16, 2021. The date mentioned in the birth certificate by the applicant should be entered in the online application.



For Fuel Prices

The Indian Youth Congress (IYC) on Wednesday staged a protest over the rising prices of petrol and diesel by lying on floor at petrol pump.

PEOPLE RETURNING AFTER CELEBRATING BIRTHDAY IN BETUL COLLIDED WITH TRUCK, 3 DIED

Betul: In Betul district, a motorcycle of people returning after attending a birthday party rammed into a truck parked in front. Three people including a girl were killed in this accident. Ratnakar Hingwe, in-charge of Saikheda police station, said, "Monu Uikay, Deepika Dhurve, Bablu Uikay and another youth were returning home after celebrating their birthday from Multai on the same bike. Heavy rain continued on Tuesday night. Despite this, the bike riders did not stop anywhere. During this, the bike rammed into a truck parked on the roadside near the Sasundara check post barrier located on the Betul-Multai road.

Two youths and a teenager died on the spot. Another seriously injured youth has been referred to the district hospital. His condition also remains worrying."

18 STUDENTS OF REWA SAINIK SCHOOL SELECTED IN DEFENSE AND NAVAL ACADEMY

Rewa: The students of Sainik School located in Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh have achieved great success. 18 students from here have been selected in the National Defense Academy and Naval Academy during the year 2020-21. Congratulating all the successful students, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh has wished them a bright future. Colonel Rajesh Banda, Principal of Sainik School Rewa has told that the students have been selected in National Defense Academy and Naval Academy. While the tireless hard work of the students proved helpful in the selection of these students, on the other hand, the meaningful cooperation of the Madhya Pradesh government also became a support.

Principal Banda informed that in the last years, along with the maintenance of hostel and school infrastructure, the amount of nutrition grant has been provided to the students by the Madhya Pradesh government. A clean and healthy environment was made available to the students with the help of Madhya Pradesh government.

Exercise for the appointment of corporation boards in state

Sandeep Puranic | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, the exercise of appointment of other office bearers including the chairman of the corporation boards has intensified. Discussions are also going on in the power and organization regarding possible appointments. By-elections are to be held in three Vidhan Sabha and one Lok Sabha constituency in the coming time in the state. Apart from this, elections to urban bodies and panchayats are also likely to held. It has been more than a quarter of a year since the BJP came to power, but appointments have not been made in the corporation boards. Apart from

this, many commission posts are also vacant.

The role of former Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia was instrumental in bringing about a change in the power of the state, as 22 then Congress MLAs left the Congress under his leadership and joined the BJP. Due to this, the BJP government came to power in the state.

Since the return of the BJP to power in the state, the discussions about appointments in corporations and commissions have been



gathering momentum. The matter of appointments remained in limbo due to the by-elections of the first 28 assembly constituencies and then the by-elections to the Damoh assembly. Not only this, many leaders want their supporters to be appointed in corpora-

tions and divisions, there was a tussle over this.

Party sources say that it has been discussed in detail in the corporation-mandals,

with which leader and how many people will be accommodated. The list is also almost ready and there is a possibility that the list may be finalized and released soon.

Political analysts believe that the BJP does not want to allow any kind of dissatisfaction to grow through the appointment of corporation boards. Jyotiraditya Scindia will get a place in the Union Cabinet, only after that the corporation-mandal presidents will be appointed in the state. There are many contenders in the party, whom it is necessary for the party to give place. The problem before the party is that the posts are less and the claimants are more. Due to this the announcement is getting delayed.



FREE VAX FOR 18-44 AGE GROUP IN DELHI FROM JUNE 21: KEJRIWAL

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Wednesday that people between 18-44 age group will also be included in 'Jahaan Vote, Wahaan Vaccine' from June 21 as the Centre has announced to provide Covid jabs for youth free of cost. Kejriwal's remarks came during a visit to inspect ongoing vaccination drives for people above 45 years at Sarvodaya Vidyalaya located at Lancer Road. The AAP-led Delhi government has started administering Covid jabs for those above 45 age groups at polling booths in each municipal ward. Delhiites in the 18-44 age group waiting to get an anti-Covid jab can now book their slot through 'CoWIN' app as the free



vaccination for youth will start again after suspension for the last two weeks. After the two week-long break with no vaccination, Delhi has received 1.25 lakh doses of Covishield and 20,000 doses of Covaxin, said Kalkaji MLA Atishi on Wednesday while presenting

the daily vaccine bulletin of the Delhi government.

"Free-of-cost vaccination for youth will kick start again after two weeks. We have also received 30,000 doses of Covaxin for 45 and above age groups which are being distributed to different centres.

Covaxin's stock for 18-44 age groups is available for the second dose. For 45+, we have two days of Covaxin and 27 days of Covishield available," Atishi added. A total of 48,411 doses of the vaccine were administered on Tuesday. Out of these 25,847 were first doses and 22,564 were second doses. Along with this, the total tally of vaccines administered in Delhi has reached 57,81,988 and 13,40,000 people have been administered both the doses. From tomorrow onwards, doses of Covaxin will be available for those above the age of 45 years. Whichever government centres where Covaxin was being administered to the 45+, there the second dose will be made available. Right now, we are administering Covaxin only to those who are to be given the second dose, amongst the 45+," she concluded.

Delhi reports 337 new Covid cases, 36 deaths

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi reported 337 new Covid cases and 36 deaths in the last 24 hours, according to the Delhi government's daily health bulletin. This is the second straight day that the national capital has witnessed a slight surge in daily cases. Delhi had reported 231 new cases on Monday, the lowest since March 2, which increased to 316 on Tuesday. The daily test positivity rate stood at 0.46 per cent on Wednesday. The national capital presently has 4,511 active cases, of which 1,555 are in home isolation. The active caseload dropped below the 5,000-



mark for the first time since March 24 on Tuesday when it stood at 4,962. As many as 752 Covid patients recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours, taking the total num-

ber of recoveries so far in the national capital to 14,00,913. Meanwhile, 36 new deaths in the past 24 hours took Delhi's overall Covid death toll to 24,704.

Shut down Telegram group for undue help during open book exams: DU

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi University (DU) has written a letter asking social media app Telegram to shut down a specific group on the app through which students were being allegedly told the answers to questions asked in the online open book examination held by the university. Open book examinations in Delhi University have started from Monday and have been conducted only for the final year students. These examinations have been conducted for all the three categories of students -- Regular, School of Open Learning (SOL) and Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board (NCWEB).

This time the varsity has decided that students will get three hours to complete the exam and 60 minutes to download the ques-



tion paper and upload the answer sheet. For all categories of students, this exam is being conducted through online mode only. The Delhi University administration has conveyed in an email to the students that a group created on the social media app Telegram was giving undue help to the students in the open book exams. Therefore, all students are advised not to be a part of this group.

The university administration says that many such students have

been identified who have been a part of this alleged Telegram group. Action will be taken against those students who behave inappropriately during the examination. According to the university administration, more than 100 such students have been identified so far who were part of this group on Telegram app. The administration has clarified that it is conducting online classes and open book exams in an effective and fair manner. This decision has been taken to save the academic year of the students. In view of the coronavirus pandemic, the results of the intermediate semester students of Regular, SOL and NCWEB of Delhi University will be decided through Assessment Based Evaluation (ABE). Through the ABE, the examination results of these students will be prepared and they will be promoted to the next class.

CBI JT DIRECTOR VINEET VINAYAK GETS 6-MONTH EXTENSION

New Delhi: CBI Joint Director Vineet Vinayak, who is handling the politically sensitive Roshni Scam case in Jammu and Kashmir and other cases, has been given six-month extension in his central deputation tenure in the agency. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACB) on Tuesday approved the proposal of Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) for extension in central deputation tenure of Vinayak,



a 1995-batch Sikkim cadre officer. Vinayak would now continue as Joint Director of the CBI, for a period of six months beyond March 9 this year. The decision was taken by the ACB, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in relaxation of the Indian Police Service (IPS) Tenure Policy, 2010. Vinayak was awarded the President's medal on the occasion of Republic Day this year for his distinguished service.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Covid resurgence accelerated the contraction rate of India's domestic air passenger traffic in April 2021. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the plunge in India's domestic air passenger volume -- measured in revenue passenger kilometres (RPKs) -- was one of the largest amongst major aviation markets such as Australia, Brazil, China, Japan, Russia and the US. In India, RPK growth plunged by 42 per cent in April when compared to the levels in the like period of 2019.

The country's domestic available passenger capacity -- measured in available seat kilometres (ASKs) -- was down by over 15 per cent. "Total domestic demand



was down 25.7 per cent versus pre-crisis levels (April 2019), much improved over March 2021, when domestic traffic was down 31.6 per cent versus the 2019 period," IATA said in its global passenger traffic results for April 2021. "As with March, all markets except Brazil and India showed improvement compared to March 2021, with both China and Russia

reporting traffic growth compared to pre-Covid-19 levels." According to the report, following an exponential rise of Covid-19 cases, new cases have started to come down in India, but daily cases are still elevated resulting in local restrictions. In addition, it said that concerns regarding transmission of new variants remains a concern.

DDA reduces prices of commercial shops



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has reduced the prices of commercial shops at prime locations across the national capital. In an official statement issued on Wednesday, Delhi's landowning agency DDA said, "The authority has reviewed the method of pricing of built-up shops and approved significant changes in the pricing policy which aim to keep the prices fair and competitive."

According to the DDA's existing policy, the cost of construction was enhanced every year by 10 per cent with respect to the year of construction while fixing the reserve price whereas generally structures are depreciated as they age. DDA said the new policy accounts

for depreciation which represents how much of an asset's value has been used up. The decision among many more developments has come during DDA's meeting chaired by Delhi Lt. Governor Anil Bajjal on Tuesday. DDA said, "It has come considering the general economic scenario, multiplication factor for the land has also been reduced. "Under the new policy, the reserve price of these built-up units is reduced by about 30% to 55%. This presents an excellent opportunity to the interested buyers as the shops are going to be offered at reduced rates," it added.

Most of these units are unsold inventory located in already functional markets in different parts of Delhi. The built up shops with revised rates will be part of the e auction scheduled in August 2021.

Delhi Govt to set up 57 oxygen plants



New Delhi: Having witnessed shortage of oxygen for Covid patients in and outside hospitals, during (mid-April to mid-May) the period when Delhi was registering over 20,000 new Coronavirus cases per day, the Delhi Government has planned to install 57 oxygen plants in the city. As per the Delhi government, out of the total oxygen plants to be installed in the city, eight would be pressure swing absorption (PSA) plants which have been approved by the Centre. It is part of the preparation of a possible third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has recently set up two separate committees of senior bureaucrats and doctors from different government hospitals, to ensure available stock of medical oxygen and other medical facilities, including Covid drugs if the city faces a third possible wave of Covid pandemic. The Delhi government informed that orders for five buffer tanks have already been placed and will be installed by June 10.

DU college wins 2021 Student Case Competition organised by IMA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India has won the 10th edition of the 'Challenging and Rewarding Student Case Competition' organised by the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) between colleges across India and the Middle East region. Two teams from the Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, Delhi University, won the first and second position in the final. A team from the University of Jordan has secured the third place. The finalist teams were shortlisted from 75+ entries received from more than 50 universities in the Middle East and India. The winning team has won all-expenses paid trip to Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The announcement of this competition was made in November last year. The last date for sending entries for this competition was January 31, 2021. The winners were announced on June 8 after the competition was completed.



Congratulating the winners, Hanadi Khalife, Senior Director, Ministry of External Affairs and India Operations at IMA, said, "I would like to congratulate the students for their hard work in this year's competition. We have seen the competition getting tougher with each passing year as students from all over the world seek to apply their technical and theoretical skills in real-

world and practical business settings. This year, the focus was on topical accounting and finance problems and the winning teams provided excellent solutions to solve all the problems given to them."

The winners were selected through a rigorous selection process by a jury which included Khalife, Maan Karadsheh, Hiba Daaboul - Regional Business

Controlled, Nestle, Switzerland, and Jay (Jaywardhan) Semwal -- Vice President, Finance, Hewlett Packard India. The competition announced last year provided an opportunity to the winning students to showcase their skills in the grand finals. The winning teams from around the world came face-to-face in this competition online to fight for the first place.

DDA approves MPD-2041, puts it in public domain for suggestions

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Wednesday put the approved draft of the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD)-2041 in the public domain for inviting objections and suggestions for the next 45 days. The MPD-2041 was given preliminary approval by the advisory council of the DDA chaired by Delhi Lt. Governor Anil Bajjal on April 13, which has been prepared putting more emphasis on a strategic and enabling framework for the future growth of the national capital. Under MPD-2041, the DDA has emphasised on policies such as transit-oriented development (TOD) and land pooling policy of MPD-2021.

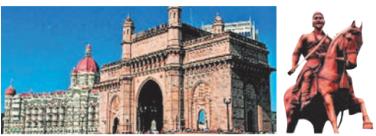
With a view to encourage eco-friendly development, the DDA has also formulated regulating infrastructure and other work in villages that are located in the green belt on Delhi's periphery as well as the low-density residential areas (LDRA). "Implementation of the Master Plan is the collective responsibility of all agencies involved in the development of Delhi, including the Central Government, concerned departments of the Government of the NCT of Delhi, service providers, landowning agencies, regulators, and local bodies among others," the DDA said in an statement on Wednesday. The MPD-2041 is divided into two volumes and comprises sector-wise policies in the key focus areas such as environ-

ment, economy, public space, heritage, mobility and social and physical infrastructure etc. Under MPD-2041, the development strategy and action plan has been divided into three sections. In the first section, it contains strategies and specific norms for guiding future spatial development of Delhi, covering both green field and brown field development in the city (land pooling, green development area, regeneration of planned and unplanned areas, transit-oriented development), the DDA's notification said.

The second section provides the monitoring and evaluation framework for the Master Plan. The salient features of the Draft Master Plan for Delhi-2041: "The draft Master Plan for

Delhi-2041 is prepared based on extensive citizen and stakeholder engagement and inputs garnered which form the basis of the vision for Delhi with vast outreach which includes schools, universities, RWAs, civil society groups and campaigns (related to child friendly cities, universal access, gender concerns, equity, migrants etc.), traders and market associations, environment experts, industry groups, professional bodies, etc." the DDA said in a statement. The DDA said the primary goal of MPD-2041 is to make Delhi an environmentally responsible, future-ready city focusing on ease of living, good quality, affordable, clean and safe living environments and efficient mobility options for all.





MONSOON STORMS INTO MAHA TRAINS, TRAFFIC HIT IN MUMBAI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The first monsoon rains hit Maharashtra and Mumbai with full fury on Wednesday, hitting local trains and road traffic, and flooding low-lying areas in the country's commercial capital, officials said here. Large parts of Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, Raigad witnessed heavy rain, inundating several low-lying areas, barely a fortnight after the city survived the Cyclone Tauktae devastation. In Mumbai and suburbs several roads were flooded, the Central Railway and Western Railway suburban services were hit on the mainline and harbor lines. CR Spokesperson Shivaji Sutar said that due to waterlogging near Chunabhatti station all services on the Harbour Line between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and Vashi (Navi Mumbai) were suspended.



Mumbai: Scenes from different parts of the city hit by heavy rains, flooding.



Sion Station: Rain water on track

Similarly, due to flooded tracks near Kurla, the mainline services between Thane-CSMT were suspended, though the CR operated shuttles between Thane-Karjat, Thane-Kasara and Vashi-Panvel sectors. The WR Spokesperson Sumit Thakur said that due to waterlogging at Wadala station, all Harbour Line trains on the Andheri-CSMT routes were suspended till further notice, and water pumps

were deployed to drain out the excess water from the railway tracks. Stretches of the Eastern Express Highway, Western Express Highway, major roads like SV Road in the west and LBS Marg in the east besides other roads and lanes were flooded hampering vehicular movement and resulting in traffic snarls. In some parts of Malad, Khar, Kurla water seeped into building compounds or

ground floor flats as rain accompanied by thunder, lightning and strong winds lashed the city. Subways at Andheri, Malad and Kandivali experienced waterlogging though traffic or pedestrian movements had not been hit, as the city will experience a major high-tide of 4.16 metre 11.43 am onwards. Till Wednesday morning, the BMC recorded around 50-mm rains in the city, 67-mm in eastern suburbs and 49-mm in the western suburbs, with a forecast of cloudy weather with more rains, thundershowers and very heavy rainfall in some areas during the day.

Dilip Kumar likely to be discharged on Thursday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood legend Dilip Kumar, who is admitted to Hinduja Hospital here, is likely to be discharged on Thursday. A statement issued on the veteran actor's behalf on his official Twitter account on Wednesday, said he might be discharged from hospital on Thursday. The statement, issued by a spokesperson of the actor, reads: "Thank you for your prayers. A successful pleural aspiration procedure was performed on Dilip Saab. I personally spoke to Dr. Jalil Parkar and Dr. Nitin Gokhale. They are optimistic that he will be discharged tomm (Thursday). Earlier this week, Dilip Kumar's wife, veteran actress Saira Banu had shared a note on his Twitter account updating about his health and requesting netizens to not pay heed to rumours. "Past few days my beloved husband, Yousuf Khan, has been unwell and recuperating at a hospital in Mumbai. Through this note, I want to thank all of you for keeping him in your prayers and for all the love and affection. My husband, my Kohinoor our Dilip Kumar Sahab's health is stable and doctors have assured me that he should be discharged soon," her statement read.



"Requesting netizens to not pay heed to rumours, the actress further wrote: "I urge you not to believe in rumours. While I ask you to pray for Sahab's health, I am praying that the almighty keep all of you safe and healthy during this pandemic." Dilip Kumar was admitted to hospital on Sunday after complaining of breathlessness.

Multiplex Association body meets revenue minister



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A delegation of Multiplex Association of India (MAI) and Single Screens of Maharashtra met this morning - Wednesday / June 09, 2021 the Balasaheb Thorat, Minister of Revenue and CLP through the good office of Ganesh Kumar Yadav, Sr. Vice President INC along with Kamal Gianchandani - CEO, PVR Pictures Ltd and Business Planning & Strategy - PVR Ltd., Devang Sampat - CEO - Cinepolis India, Alok Tandon - CEO - Inox Leisure Ltd., Nambi Rajan, Owner

Aurora Cinema, Matunga- Mumbai, Sharad Doshi, Theatre Owner, Exhibitor and Distributor, Rajesh and Jay Vasani, Paras Publicity Service to discuss the difficulties faced by the Multiplexes and Single Screens due to the Pandemic and provide them relief in Stamp Duty, Electricity, GST, Property Tax and wages of the workers to sustain and resume the Showbiz Industry. The Hon. Minister has assured to consider the demands in true spirits and will also take things forward and also talk with the CM and Dy. CM of Maharashtra to fast track the issues.

Reliance Power board meet on June 13 to consider fund raising

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Reliance Power Ltd will hold a board meeting on June 13 to consider and approve raising of long-term resources from domestic and global markets. In a notice to stock exchanges, Reliance Power said: "Pursuant to Regulation 29 and other applicable provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, we wish to inform you that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Sunday, June 13, 2021 to consider and approve raising of long term resources from domestic and/or global markets, inter alia, by issue of equity shares/equity linked securities/ warrants convertible into equity shares, by way of preferential issue and/or qualified institutional placement and/or rights issue or any other method including



determination of issue price, if any and seeking members' and other approval(s), as the Board may deem appropriate." Due to the board meeting, the trading window for trading in the securities of the company for designated persons shall remain closed from the close of business hours of June 9 till 48 hours after the outcome of the board meeting are made public. On June 6, the Board of Directors of Reliance Infrastructure Ltd (RInfra) at its meeting approved raising of funds upto Rs 550.56 crore by preferential allotment of upto 8.88 crore equity

shares and/or warrants convertible into equivalent number of equity shares of the Company to promoter group and VFSI Holdings Pte. Ltd, an affiliate of Varde Investment Partners, LP. The funds raised would be utilised for long term resources, for general corporate purposes, fund future growth and also to reduce debt. The Board approved seeking approval of the members of the Company for the above proposal through Postal Ballot. The above shall be subject to all requisite permissions, sanctions and approvals as may be necessary.

GOA TO LAUNCH TIKA UTSAV 3.0 SOON: CM

Panaji: The Goa government will soon launch Tika Utsav 3.0 in rural parts of the state, which will enable persons in the age group of 18-44 years to walk-in and vaccinate themselves. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Wednesday. The Chief Minister said that he was encouraged to start the third edition of the utsav, first launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a pan India scale in April this year. "We are thinking of starting Tika Utsav 3.0 for the age groups of 18 to 44 years at the gram panchayat level. If everyone co-operates, we will be able to vaccinate everyone," Sawant said. "We have reached a lot of people due to the Tika Utsavs and the response has been good. Panchas, sarpanchas and some MLAs have put in good work," Sawant said, adding that instead of fixing appointments online, eligible person can just walk into respective vaccination centres to get a jab. The Chief Minister also brushed aside criticism of the previous editions of the Tika Utsavs by the Opposition, who have alleged that the mass vaccination drive was a political exercise carried out by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the state assembly elections, which are scheduled to be held in early 2022.

Toyota dealer offers to convert 200 Innovas into ambulances

Gandhinagar: A Toyota vehicle distributor in Gujarat is ready to convert 200 Innova Multi-Purpose Vehicles (MPVs) into ambulance vans at a subsidised cost and provide them to MLAs, MPs and hospitals to use for benefit of rural residents. The Infinium Toyota will modify the interiors of the MPVs to convert them into ambulances, equipped with oxygen cylinders, stretcher and other devices. By bearing the cost between Rs 3 lakh to Rs 4.5 lakh per van, it will be subsidising each of these 200 ambulance vans, whose retail price is Rs 24.5 lakh but will come down to Rs 20.6 lakh, while the rest of the amount may come as a



dising each of these 200 ambulance vans, whose retail price is Rs 24.5 lakh but

donation either from MLAs, MPs or by individual/citizens who may voluntarily sponsor it, the agency said. "We found a high need for Covid-19 patients' transportation in rural areas, after having multiple consultations with doctors from district-level hospitals and experts from the medical fraternity... By contributing through these Ambulance Vans which are currently vital lifesaving connections for patients with hospitals, we are also putting up our

best efforts in this fight against the pandemic," Infinium Toyota Chairman Ajit Mehta said. Infinium Toyota has begun approaching MLAs and MPs, and some have shown their willingness to take advantage of this initiative. "There is a need for more ambulances in the rural areas. This initiative from Infinium Toyota would be a great help for the rural population in this fight against Covid-19," Ahmedabad West MP Kirit Solanki said.

Mumbai's Juma Masjid pond gets a makeover

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

As the city continues in spells of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, the management of the historic Juma Masjid in south Mumbai -- once graced by the late King Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia -- have embarked upon an unusual mission -- clean-up of the ancient pond inside the mosque. A team of workers got onto the task from Monday, descended in the 10-foot-deep pond, caught all the goldfish, silverfish and turtles and transferred them to a temporary fish tank, emptied up the misty greyish-green water, and launched a thorough weeklong cleaning operation, along with minor repairs on the floor. It was in 1954 that King Saud visited this mosque during an official tour to India, the Pakistani Cricket Team was given lodging and boarding during its first tour of India in 1960-61 at the

Mohammediya High School in its premises, while the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi maintained close contacts with the Juma Masjid trustees. Fed by natural underground fresh-water springs, the pond harbours an interesting tale in its depth -- it belonged to a wealthy Bombay landlord Momin Sahab who sold it to a group of citizens in 1775 for Rs 12,000, said Kazi. "Thereafter, the work on the sprawling mosque started around and above the same pond. After 27 years, the mosque opened for its first-ever 'Juma Namaaz' (Friday Prayers) in 1802," Kazi said. The quadrangular mosque created history as the first Juma Masjid of Bombay funded by the people, where Friday prayers and all other major festivals like Eid were celebrated for 220 years without a break -- barring 2020 and 2021 -- on its premises that can accommodate around 6,000 people for each namaaz. For buying the

pond, constructing the magnificent mosque with 2 minarets, and acquiring the adjoining property where there is a cemetery, the then 'sethjis' (wealthy businessmen) like Hamzabhai, two brothers Nathu Patel and Bhikhan Patel, contributed the lion's share, while ordinary folks gave even One Paise -- which had a significant value in those days -- to the cause, Kazi added. Later, a big businessman, Mohammed Ali Roghe-I donated a sum of money in memory of his young daughter who had died suddenly, to build the first floor of the Juma Masjid, while his son Mohammed Ali Roghe-II kept contributing till it was completed in 1835. The mosque also has a 150-year-old library with more than 16,000 Islamic books, including 1,500 texts which are rare manuscripts, several dating back to the 7th century which are now digitized and preserved with utmost care, Kazi said.





JUHI CHAWLA: ALL WE ARE ASKING FOR IS CLARITY ON 5G



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress and environmentalist Juhi Chawla took to social media on Wednesday to claim that she is not against 5G technology but just wants to learn whether it is safe for all.

Juhi shared a video on Instagram on Wednesday where, speaking in Hindi and English she said: "There has been so much noise in the past few days that I almost could not hear myself too! And I feel that a very important message probably got lost in the middle of all this noise, which is that we are not against 5G. In fact, we are welcoming of it. Please bring it."

"All we are asking is that the authorities certify that 5G is safe. Please certify it and publish your studies and research made on this on the public domain so that we get rid of this fear of ours. We just want to know that it is safe for children, for pregnant women, for unborn children, for people who are old, infirm, for flora fauna. That is all we are asking," the actress said in her video.

Juhi's video comes just a few days after the Delhi High Court dismissed the lawsuit filed by her against the setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country, and also imposed a fine of Rs 20 lakh for the abuse of the process of law.

The plea filed by Juhi Chawla, Veeresh Malik and Teena Vachani claimed that 5G wireless technology can be a potential threat to provoke irreversible and serious effects on humans and it could also permanently damage the earth's ecosystems.



RAJVEER SINGH HAD A HIDDEN COLLECTION OF 150 COMICS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Rajveer Singh says before he discovered his love for acting, he had already been consumed by the love for reading - especially comic books and novels.

"Comic books and novels have played a very vital role in my life. When I was in ninth standard, I got so attracted to comics that I used to spend my entire day reading them," shares the actor. He recalls how his love for comics would also get him into trouble.

"This went on for almost six months and when I got the results of my pre-boards, where I clearly didn't perform well, my mother got to know everything. At that point of time, I had almost 150 comics, which were hidden in my room at different places, so that my mother couldn't find them. She made sure I got rid of the comics, little did she know there were a hundred more hidden!" he says.

He emphasises on the need to read. "I'm not a collector today, but I'm an actor and she has a huge smile on her face. I really feel people should read more, especially during lockdown when we have time. It will surely broaden your perspective and help you grow," says Rajveer, who is seen as Neel in the Zee TV show "Qurban Hua".

Shweta Tripathi: Post Covid, I focused on regaining strength

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shweta Tripathi says after fully recovering from Covid-19 she felt motivated and fitter. She claims this is the fittest she has been in her life, adding that she has even gone ahead and shot for two projects post recovery. "Post Covid, it's important not to go all-out aggressively on yourself in terms of working out. However, the right mindset needs to be there and it should be strong to stay motivated and to keep oneself fit," Shweta said.

She added, "Personally, I focused very much on regaining my strength and increasing my immunity first. As the infection takes a toll on your immunity, I decided to first build that back and then begin to slowly work out again, and this is something I'd highly recommend to everyone who's just recovered from Covid-19." Shweta currently awaits the release of two projects - "Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein" and "Escapade Live". "Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein" also stars Tahir Raj Bhasin while "Escapade Live" features South star Siddharth.



RAASHII KHANNA: WANT PEOPLE TO OPEN THEIR HEARTS AND DONATE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Raashii Khanna is trying to help the poor, who are the worst affected by the pandemic and its ensuing lockdown, and she requests all to donate towards helping the needy.

"It's really bad out there for a lot of families, and some of them are literally on the brink of starvation. I would really want people to open their hearts and donate because literally, every bit counts. It doesn't have to be an exorbitant amount. We have to realise that we are all in this together and only together can we overcome these difficult times. And together we can be a miracle in someone's life," says Raashii, who runs an initiative called #BeTheMiracle that aims at helping the needy.

"The ground reality of people suffering through the pandemic is heartbreaking. #BeTheMiracle is my way of doing as much as I can for them," she says.

Raashii is associating with organisations like Roti Bank and other volunteers who are also helping old age homes, besides animals that have been left out with no food or water during lockdown.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With shoots mostly on hold amid the ongoing second wave of Covid, actor Amol Parashar is currently utilising his time trying to work on a script. "I was supposed to be shooting for a film in April that has been postponed because of the current scenario. I guess that will happen when it is safe to shoot again. Since there are no shoots, I am concentrating on finishing a script that I have been wanting to write. There are a couple of interesting conversations but timelines are uncertain given the fact that nobody's sure when it will be completely safe to shoot again," says Amol.

The actor got his first dose of the Covid vaccine last month. Sharing the experience, he says: "There was a sense of relief after managing to get a slot and a jab, but I am also aware this

Amol Parashar trying to write a script in free time at hand

is only the first dose for now. I am hoping to get the second dose on time, so I can feel more assured. It is advised to still wear a mask and take precautions post vaccination, so I will continue to do that."

A lot of people have complained of post-vaccine side effects. Did he experience anything?

"There was some zoning out for two to three days and an overall feeling of laziness. Some of my friends who got a jab reported body ache, nausea and fever. I got away with some mild fever on day two and three, but it took seven to 10 days to feel the normal level of energy and strength," the actor informed.

On the work front, Amol was recently seen in the web series "Aapkey Kamrey Mein Koi Rehta Hai", where he features alongside Swara Bhasker, Sumeet Vyas, Naveen Kasturia and Ashish Verma.

He is all set to essay the role of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh in Shoojit Sircar's upcoming period drama "Sardar Udham Singh" starring Vicky Kaushal in the lead.

Konkona's mid-week blues

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Konkona Sensharma on Wednesday shared having mid-week blues. Konkona posted a picture on Instagram in which she was seen dressed in a blue ensemble with white polka dots. She completed her look with silver jewellery and tied her hair into a braid. "Mid week blues?" Konkona captioned the image.

Actress Bhumi Pednekar took to the comment section to compliment Konkona.

She wrote, "Pretty koko."

Actress Tillotama Shome wrote, "Koko you just blew my blues away. Chummu many and heart full."

Speaking about her work, the actress was recently seen in the anthology "Ajeeb Daastaans", which released digitally. She was seen in the segment "Geeli Pucchi" along with Aditi Rao Hydari. It is directed by Neeraj Ghaywan.



Mass Plantation at CRPF Group Centre in Imphal

Team Absolute | Imphal

Two days ahead of World Environment Day, Group Centre, CRPF in Langjing, Imphal organized mass plantation inside the campus hill. Around 500 saplings of camphor, pomegranate, mango, orange, jackfruit, lemon, gooseberry, neem and others were planted inside the CRPF campus.

The mass plantation is headed by the CRPF Commandant, Mr. Dinesh. The chief guest of the event Randeep Datta, PMG, IG, Manipur and Nagaland sector extended his good wishes to all the officers. He expressed, "Everyone must know the importance of our nature consisting of all the living beings on earth are mutually dependent on each other."

"But due to various un-planned activities of human beings, many species are becoming extinct and the global climate is also changing at very fast rate. It's influencing our health and also going to



give a long term effect on our future. We know that millions of people depend on the forest for their livelihood. Only the tree can make their food itself. But, we people are degrading the forest and greenery very much," he added.

Co-Guest Ritu Datta, Chairman RCWA, also encouraged everyone for

planting saplings to make environment clean, green and healthy.

All senior officers, sub ordinate officers and jawans contributed to make local people aware of the importance of clean environment and advantages of greenery to sustain all living beings on earth.



TOM HIDDLESTON: HAVE ALWAYS FELT AN AFFECTION FOR LOKI

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Tom Hiddleston has opened up about what makes his character, Loki, the God of Mischief, the most fun character to portray. Hiddleston also shared that he always felt an affection for Loki and for his vulnerability.

"Having played Loki for such a long time and having had the privilege of inhabiting him at the outset, I've always felt an affection for him and for his vulnerability," Hiddleston said.

"But I've been aware through the course of my experience in the Marvel Studios' movies in the first ten years that Loki has a role to play and that as Loki I had to play the villain. Then I had to play the antihero," he added.

The actor says this is the first chance that he had to see if the mold can be broken and change Loki.

"And this time around is the first chance, perhaps for a while, that I've had to see if we

can really break the mold and change him, and retain all the best aspects of him. But, as I've said, try to get underneath all of his defenses: the defense of his charisma, the defense of his keeping people at arm's length. And I think that that is a really interesting kernel of an idea inside the story," Hiddleston said.

He added: "Can Loki ever change? Is Loki capable of change? If he does change, will other people allow him to change? Can Loki get out of his own way? Can Loki make different choices? And if he does make those choices, where does he go next?"

Hiddleston shared that it has been really exciting to find a way of striking the balance between respecting what's come before and inventing something new.

The actor is joined by Owen Wilson, GuguMbatia-Raw, Sophia Di Martino, WunmiMosaku and Richard E. Grant. Directed by Kate Herron and written by Michael Waldron, the series titled "Loki" will air on Disney+ Hotstar Premium.

GURLAINE KAUR GARCHA OPENS UP ON RACIST ATTACK

London | Agencies

Punjab-origin British actress Gurlaine Kaur Garcha, widely known for her role of Ash Panesar in the popular series "EastEnders", has opened up on feeling "angry, sad and embarrassed" on being the target of racism.

The 27-year-old actress, born in Luton, England, said the incident "came from nowhere" and left her in tears and feeling "ashamed" because she was unable to "brush off" the unnamed woman's tirade, reports dailymail.co.uk on Tuesday.

Garcha made the revelation in a long post she shared on Instagram the day before. In the post, she categorically talks of being a "victim to verbal racial abuse" that she described as "a completely unprovoked attack". Adding that she was proud of her British, Punjabi, Kenyan and Sikh roots, Garcha



questioned in her post: "When will racism end?"

She shared her post with a picture of a pink and a brown hand clasping each other. "Say no to racism", goes the slogan beneath the visual in the image.

Garcha wrote on Instagram: "Yesterday I was a victim to verbal racial abuse. It came from nowhere, I wasn't expecting it, and even though I know racism exists and I could always be victim to it, it was still deeply deeply shocking. In a completely unprovoked attack, I was told by a woman to go back home, to return to wherever I've come from, and to stay there."

"When will racism end?" Sshe further said. "I am proud to be British. I am proud that my grandparents were born in Punjab. I am proud that my parents were born in Kenya. And I am proud to be Sikh. I celebrate all these things. I wish others did too," she concluded.



LEIGH-ANNE PINNOCK BUYS BACK STOLEN ENGAGEMENT RING

Los Angeles | Agencies

Leigh-Anne Pinnock tracked down her stolen £40,000 engagement ring - and then bought it back. The sparkler went missing from the Little Mix star's bedroom while she was moving house.

Pals say Leigh-Anne was contacted by a pawnbroker who bought the emerald and diamond-encrusted ring unwittingly. He realised the gold band belonged to the DNA singer after The Sun

revealed the theft and published pictures of the unique ring.

Leigh-Anne and football star fiancé Andre Gray, both 29, acted on the tip-off and identified the bespoke bling as theirs - before paying to take it away from the shop.

The pair were then told the ring - which has featured in a string of Leigh-Anne's photoshoots - had changed hands SEVEN times before reaching the trader who sold it back to them. Police are continuing to investigate the theft but have yet to identify suspects or make any arrests.

HERYL RETURNS TO INSTAGRAM FOR FIRST TIME IN A YEAR

Los Angeles | Agencies

Cheryl Tweedy has posted on Instagram for the first time in a year, sharing a smiling selfie. The 37-year-old singer's post, captioned "we back", came one day after it was revealed that her ex liampayne was single. She also posed with her squad of hair and make-up artists in a selfie taken in a mirror. Cheryl sought to reassure people who claimed they were too close to one another adding, "All covid tested." The pictures are the mum-of-one's first post since sharing a 'Black Out Tuesday' square almost exactly a year ago. They came after Cheryl's ex Liam Payne, with whom she shares four-year-old son Bear, revealed he is single after splitting from Maya Henry. According to The Sun Liam has been making up for the last time he had to spend away from Bear when he was away touring. A source explained, "Liam just wants to spend more time with his son Bear since the split. That's his boy, he means the world to him."



Mark Ronson gets engaged to Meryl Streep's daughter Grace Gummer

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ronson has confirmed he's engaged to Meryl Streep's daughter Grace Gummer. The 45-year-old revealed he popped the question to the stunning 35-year-old, just months after The Sun first revealed they were dating. Grace was spotted wearing a huge rock in London recently and the DJ told The FADER Uncovered podcast: "I got engaged last weekend."

He also admitted their first kiss was "corny", saying, "There's a plaque for that somewhere. There's a first kiss, very corny Hallmark first kiss plaque."

"But no, it was forever, it will be etched. It's still my record."

In March we revealed that Mark was dating Grace, who is also an actress, and had been introduced to Mamma Mia! icon Meryl and her long-time husband, US sculptor Don Gummer.

A source close to Mark said at the time: "He is definitely dating Grace. Things have become romantic."

JASON DERULO: WHEN WILL SMITH SAYS SOMETHING, YOU MAKE SURE YOU'RE LISTENING

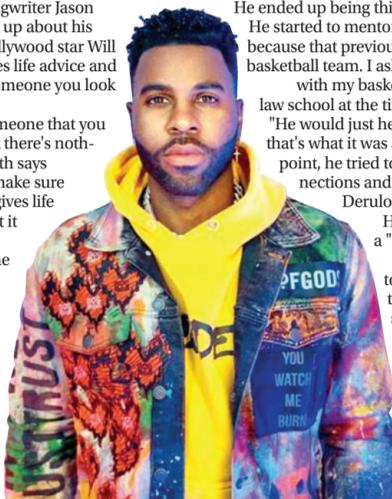
Los Angeles | Agencies

American singer-songwriter Jason Derulo has opened up about his friendship with Hollywood star Will Smith. He says Smith gives life advice and that being able to have someone you look up to is great.

"Being able to have someone that you look up to is great. I think there's nothing like it. When Will Smith says something, you want to make sure that you're listening. He gives life advice. I take that and put it right. I grew up watching him," said Derulo, on "The Drew Barrymore Show".

"He's been able to accomplish in different genres. It's really unbelievable to have a friend that I can learn from all the time. We met on the basketball court," the singer added.

Derulo reminisces about his time with Smith. "He had these lit-



tle shorts on his high socks. I remember, we needed one more player, and I was like, I'll take the old guy. He ended up being this crazy basketball player.

He started to mentor me as a basketball player because that previous year, I didn't make my basketball team. I asked if he would help me with my basketball and he was just in law school at the time," he said.

"He would just help me with my basketball, that's what it was at that time. Then, at one point, he tried to act. He had all these connections and he had little songs," Derulo recalled.

He said that today they have a "lustrous empire" together.

"We flew out to New York to meet all of his connections. Door after door were shutting off but we kept at it. We learned together and we continued to build. You know what we have today, 13 businesses and a lustrous empire," Derulo concluded on Barrymore' show, which airs on Zee Cafe in India.



Kendall Jenner



EDITOR'S SPECS

2nd wave and Indians

The last two months in the second wave of pandemic, which crippled an already overburdened health-care system, has gravely affected Indians suffering from non-Covid chronic ailments like cancer, heart and kidney diseases, health experts said on Tuesday. Essential health services were disrupted during the last two months because of the exponential rise in the number of Covid cases, which also led to the exhaustion of health care infrastructure, along with the diversion of health services to Covid care. Other major reasons include fear of contracting Covid, misinformation and limitations on movement due to lockdowns, according to experts. "Covid-19 pandemic affected non-Covid care at all levels of health care from community to tertiary level. Services of chronic diseases care such as cancer care, hypertension, and diabetes management got affected the most due to diversion of health services to Covid care and people were not able to seek health-care due to restrictions and fear due to pandemic," Dr Harshal R. Salve, Associate Professor at Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi, said. Last month, a plea was filed in the Supreme Court claiming that in the second wave, most of the state governments have put restrictions and protocols, which resulted into denial of regular treatment and check-up of patients with heart, kidney, liver and lung ailments. "Non-Covid-19 patients are facing a lot of difficulties. Major surgeries are postponed in all the hospitals as doctors are fully busy with Covid-19 patients... for heart patients or pregnant women, it is very difficult to get admission," the petitioner said. Due to Covid pandemic, many "treatable diseases" have shifted to the stage of being "untreatable", Dr Ashish Rai, Director, Department of Plastic, Aesthetic & Reconstructive Surgery, Jaypee Hospital, Noida, said. According to Rai, patients with cancer, particularly the elderly, have been the most affected. "Elderly cancer patients often delay their hospital visits, thinking that it may increase the risk of Covid infection to their children," he said. Cancer treatment can be successful during its early days but can become untreatable in the advanced stage of the disease. Covid also increased mortality among patients with an active cancer or who had a history of cancer in the past five years, the experts noted. Further, children suffering from congenital anomalies/deformities were also affected due to the pandemic.

THE PARTISAN TURK WHO IS UN PRESIDENT

Ananda Mazumdar

Volkan Bozkir is a former minister from Turkey who under a rotational system occupies the high chair of president of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) for the current year. His position requires him not to sound like a partisan Turkish politician but act independently. On a visit to Pakistan, he endorsed the contentions Pakistani view on Kashmir, urging it to raise the Kashmir issue 'more strongly' at UN platforms. He also linked the Kashmir and Palestine issues. He had nothing to say about Pakistan's illegal occupation of a part of Jammu and Kashmir, its attempts at incorporating Gilgit Baltistan as a Pakistani province, and the plight of Turkish origin Muslims in China. Bozkir has shown that Turkish nationals, no matter what position they occupy, have to echo the views of their president, Recep Erdogan, who has forsaken his country's liberal secular values to walk on narrow fundamental path. Erdogan's soul mate is the Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan, once a playboy cricketer; that makes it obligatory upon Turkish leaders to harp on Kashmir on foreign soils. Of course, Erdogan lives in an illusionary world, assuming for himself that under him Turkey has already become a great power.



He recently warned the US President Joe Biden that he stands to lose a precious friend' if he corners Turkey, especially on human rights issues. The long-time member of the UN-led military alliance is a virtual pariah within Nato and has been making desperate but vain bids to be accepted as a member of the European Union. Erdogan would not admit it but his abrasive ways have done no good to his country. Turkey and Pakistan are locked in a tight embrace which naturally means that the two countries have joined hands against India. They have established deep military and strategic relations that include offer of the Nato weapons with Turkey to Pakistan. According to Indian media reports published some time ago,

Indian intelligence agencies have found evidence of Turkey's interference in India's internal affairs, including support to fundamentalist youth, who are lured with scholarships to Turkey for onward travel to the Mecca of terrorism, Pakistan, where they are radicalised. Some reports even linked the son of Erdogan to these efforts. Till the extreme right-wing Erdogan became President, Turkey's relations with India were good even though as a Muslim nation Turkey never supported India on Kashmir. There were many other matters on which the two countries cooperated and worked to mutual advantage. Erdogan changed that quickly. And abandoned the avenue of liberalism and secularism. Turkey antagonized the US and almost the entire West.

Dissidence in Turkey is crushed with an iron hand. Anyone questioning Turkish leadership or its policies faces prosecution for 'insulting' Turkey. Prominent Turks who have incurred the wrath of Erdogan include Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk. A veteran dissenting journalist was assassinated. Turks, like Bozkir, have accepted the fancied world view of Erdogan where Turkey is assumed to have taken over the leadership role of the entire Muslim Ummah from Saudi Arabia. Over a year ago Erdogan had roped in prime ministers of Malaysia and Pakistan to outwit Riyadh by calling a conference of Islamic nations. The trio did not forget to sound the Kashmir bugle from the new forum. Unfortunately, his two Islamist guests - prime ministers of Malaysia and Pakistan - cowered under oblique threats from Saudi Arabia. The coup against Riyadh collapsed ingloriously! That the Turks' heart bleeds for Kashmiris and their rights is incongruous. Turkey has been accused of the act of 'genocide' in Armenia during the World War I. Between 1915 and 1916 about one million Christian Armenians were massacred by the Turkish Ottoman state. It was one of the first genocides or ethnic cleansings the world has witnessed. The holocaust of Germany took place nearly 30 years later. Nothing riles Turkey more than a reminder of its genocide in and around the Anatolia region. In fact,

Turkey does not want the world to use the term 'genocide', first used by a Polish lawyer, Ralph Lemkin, for the mass killings of Armenians, but 30 countries do. The number is likely to go up if Turkey pursues its aggressive, fundamentalist policies. Bozkir needs to be reminded that as far back as 1946 the UN had accepted that an act of genocide was committed by Turkey. Turkey explains the genocide as reaction to subversive activities against the Ottoman state. The Armenians are accused of starting a civil war with armed uprising. But most of the world rejects the Turkish explanation because the excessive and inhuman reaction of the Ottoman state has been quite clear. Turkey cannot talk of human rights of others when it has a horrible and indefensible precedent that has discredited it in the eyes of most of the world. Turkey has been denying rights of its Kurdish minority, using violence and torture to subjugate them. The Kurds are not allowed to speak their language; teaching and learning of their language in schools is banned. Their areas are frequently bombed. Meddlesome Turks like Bozkir would do well to first look inwards at the treatment of Kurdish minorities and the systematic stifling of dissent before gratuitously speaking on behalf of Kashmiris and advocating stronger presentation of the Kashmir issue at the United Nations.

Center to be Center-powerful or credible in a democracy?



Brijmohan Srivastava

On 10 June 1999, when Sharad Pawar, along with his political colleagues and lakhs of supporters, resigned from the Congress and founded a new political party, the Nationalist Congress Party. At that time, there was an uproar in politics in the country on the issue of "Whether a person of foreign origin should be made the Prime Minister or not". National love always flows in the blood of Marathas and this drenched Pawar, understanding the public sentiments, opposed it even though this protest was not against any particular person. The way he took a decision on this issue, his image was made in the country as a politician fighting for nationalism and country, which remains the same even after 23 years. Soon after formation, NCP procured big success in Maharashtra, NCP joined hands with the Congress to free the government. Since then, the two parties shared power in the state till 2014. We are happy to see that NCP with Congress and Shivsena are still sharing power in Maharashtra. Today again the need of the hour in the country is to raise voice once again keeping in mind the nationality because this time it is necessary to raise this voice for the health and life of 140 crore people of the country, their employment and to free them from economic pressure. Today, in a country as diverse as India, we need a central leadership in which everyone has faith and whose leadership ability and vision is convincing to everyone instead powerful person. Today, even after having a majority government at the Centre, the situation is such that the Chief Minister of West Bengal makes the head of the country wait for half an hour in the meeting. The issue is more of distrust than conceit, which proves that trust has diminished. If the Finance Minister of Tamil Nadu or the Chief Minister of Jharkhand and

Andhra Pradesh is also feeling the crisis of confidence, then it is clear that the trust in the Centre has decreased. This thing is not limited to our country only because the neighboring countries also seem to be affected by the feeling of mistrust because only then they find expansionist and exploitative countries better than India. In these circumstances of the country, now there is a need for such a tested politician at the center who can instill confidence. Sharad Pawar ji is the truest politician in today's political situation on the test of faith and foresight. In the political career of 50 years, who never lost any election, the experience of working in various posts of government in the country and the state and the best record of proving himself successfully in adversity definitely comes in the account of Sharad Pawar. Pawar sahib, whether in power or out of power, senior leaders, officials and ordinary workers of all political parties do not hesitate to communicate directly with him because they believe that he will listen to them and will also help generously. He also has the quality that he adapts to family belonging without realizing political relationships. The industrialists, traders and farmers of the country still place maximum trust on Sharad Pawar. The players and youth of the country also have deep faith in him. Many tales of his political acumen and vision and his advice given to deal successfully with the most difficult situations are heard in the political corridors of the country's capital Delhi from villages and cities. The officers and employees of the country or any state will meet saying that there is no other politician like Sharad Pawar who knows how to take work with respect and belongingness. Thousands of retired people who have worked with Pawar still believe his words as his experience shows that when the time comes after giving any orders, he also takes the responsibility on his shoulders to defend his subordinates. Thousands

of his fans will also be found in the security forces of the country saying that no one can match him in taking quick and accurate decisions. In this long journey of 50 years, Pawar has won his trust by influencing various leaders of the world with his methodology. Even today, his vision and credibility are discussed among foreign politicians even though he has never been a foreign minister. Be it media or foreign media, he considers Pawar as the most reliable politician and this is the reason why his every statement always gets importance in the media. Today the need of such credible politician in the center of the country is being felt at every level and this is the reason why many times comparisons are made on different occasions that if Sharad Pawar had been there in this difficult political or administrative situation of the country. What would they decide? This same quality of his is keeping Sharad Pawar relevant in the politics of the country and the state even after 23 years of the establishment of the Nationalist Congress Party. This is the reason that when the people of the country turn away from the BJP leadership and cast hopeful eyes on the leaders of other parties. If so, the first name of Sharad Pawar comes in front of him. Year 2022 in the month February-March the Legislative Assemblies of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Punjab after the election results, the United Progressive Alliance may prepare a strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. At that time it has to be seen that how all the alliance partners accept Sharad Pawar's capabilities by evaluating them in the interest of the alliance. It is undeniable that Pawar has the potential to make a real federal democracy at the Centre. Lakhs of Nationalist Congress Party workers are eager to put their lives at the behest of their leader all over India, just waiting for the drums of the call and the sound of the trumpet. (Author is National Spokesperson and National Secretary, Nationalist Congress Party.)

BJP gets ready for Assembly elections in UP

Countdown for Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections has begun at least for the Bharatiya Janata Party top brass which has cultivated a reputation of always being in the poll mode. Assembly elections are likely to be held in February-March, 2022 in UP where stakes for the BJP are very high. But for the BJP leaders having sleepless nights about UP Assembly elections do have some reason. Reports about resentment among a few sections in the state that has reached the BJP leadership has sent the alarm bell ringing for the party leadership. Amid speculation of change in the leadership, the BJP is actually in the fire fighting mode with not only BJP general secretary (Organisation) BL Santhosh and vice-president Radha Mohan Singh held a meeting with organizational leaders of the state. The two leaders also had a closed-door meeting with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. They were camping in the state capital last week. Some other leaders of the party have been asked to start reaching out to people even in the remote areas of the state. Actually situation in Lucknow is more or less similar to the situation at the Centre where opposition political parties are in disarray failing to pose any formidable challenge to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with his Hindu Hriday Samrat image that a wider section of people in the state acknowledge. Winning Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh is important for the third term victory of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2024 as it would be complementing him with state having 80 Lok Sabha seats. The only party that might pose some challenge to the BJP in the state is Samajwadi Party led by Akhilesh Yadav with his party's good performance in the recently held Local Body elections. But what is the strength of the SP is curse of it. Votes of Yadav community that go enmass to the party but if the message goes to peo-

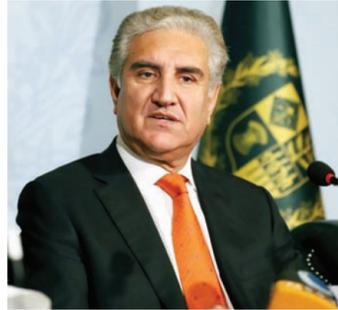


Vinod Kumar Shukla

ple, upper caste votes gets united against it. Bihar is the lesson to learn from where Tejaswi Yadav-led Rashtriya Janata Dal biten the dust for similar reasons. The BJP is working on the social engineering that has brought the party over 300 seats in the 2017 elections and besides that focus would be on women-centric scheme like Ujjwala launched the Centre and helps extended to poor and needy during the time of COVID-19 pandemic will definitely give advantage to the party. Sending Jayprakash Nishad, Sakaldeep Rajbhar, Sudhanshu Trivedi, Hardwar Dubey and Seema Dwivedi are an attempt to address cast equations. Former IAS officer Arvind Kumar Sharma joining the BJP and being nominated as MLC is being looked upon as the party's attempt to focus more in the poorvanchal region. Speculation is rife that Sharma may be inducted in the Yogi cabinet but the second wave of Coronavirus came on the way of cabinet expansion. Now, cabinet expansion when elections are coming close sends a wrong message that the party is not confident. Sharma is reportedly made in-charge of 22 districts in the state that includes Gorakhpur to begin with. The development came a day after BJP launched relief operations through its 'Sewa hi Sangathan' campaign to blunt the opposition's attack on handling of pandemic. Speculation of differences between Yogi and the Prime Minister is nothing more than pre-election routine propaganda of Opposition parties as it happened before many elections held in the recent past. The way Corona vaccine availability and vaccination drive is executed in Uttar Pradesh, it appears that there is rather better coordination than rift. Sometimes these talks too help as it sends the message among people at least they are doing something contrary to the opposition who is dubbed to be looking for some agenda.

A CONFERENCE THAT MIGHT NEVER TAKE PLACE

Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza



Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that Pakistan intends to call a conference of foreign ministers of Islamic countries in Islamabad to discuss the so-called Kashmir issue. This is a breach of the spirit and apparent willingness of peaceful relations between India and Pakistan that was initiated by the Pakistan army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa when on February 25 a cease fire on the Line of Control was agreed during the meeting of director generals of Military Operations of both countries. With Shah's announcement it seems that the Imran Khan government of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf and the military establishment are no more on the 'same page', a claim made by Imran Khan during his address to the nation on July 27, a day after he had won the controversial election of 2018. Ever since the abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A of the Indian constitution Imran Khan has been making suggesting that peace dialogue between India and Pakistan shall not resume unless the status of Jammu Kashmir is reversed. Khan has been flying across the Middle East to garner support against India and force the Muslim states to issue condemnation of the Modi government's decision to free

United Arab Emirates awarded 'Order of Zayed', her highest civilian award, to Prime minister Narendra Modi. Requests to the chairman of the OIC to hold an emergency session on Jammu Kashmir were turned down and Pakistan's threat to convene a conference of brotherly Islamic countries was taken as an attempt to split the OIC. Hence, Saudi Arabia cancelled the US \$3 billion credit line offered to Imran Khan in 2018 and not only that, the Royal Kingdom demanded that Pakistan repay US \$1 billion of oil credit money that Pakistan already owed her. Pakistan had to beg China to lend her the money in order to repay Saudi Arabia. The list of further humiliations that Pakistan has faced since are far too many to be included in this short piece, but you get the idea. Shah intends to call the aforesaid meeting of foreign ministers of the Islamic states in March 2022. However, it remains to be seen if this adventure succeeds in gaining the approval of two most important entities when it comes to taking decisions of such nature by Pakistan: Saudi Arabia and Pakistani military establishment; both of which do not seem to be on good terms with the pauper government of Imran Khan. Pakistan has nothing to offer to the Middle East in return for such a favour especially when it involves the risk of losing great business relations with a booming \$3 trillion

Indian economy. Besides, India is the one of the largest exporter of Basmati rice and meat to the Middle East. According to information available on the Indian Embassy website in Riyadh, during the Fiscal Year '2019-20, bilateral trade (between India and Saudi Arabia) was valued at \$33.09 billion. During this period, India's imports from Saudi Arabia reached \$26.84 billion'. And according to information available on Trading Economics, a resource that provides economic information for 196 countries and more than 20 million economic indicators and much more, revealed that 'Saudi Arabia's exports to Pakistan was US\$ 745.52 million during 2019'. I leave it to you to do your own research on search engines to examine the extent of monetary benefit the Middle East earns by trading with India. No sane mind would risk to lose the foreign exchange and hard cash that the Middle East earns by way of exports to India just for the sake of pleasing a conniving manoeuvre by the state of Pakistan that survives on borrowed money and perhaps borrowed time. Hence, in my opinion, it could prove be yet another of Pakistan's desired conferences that might never take place. (Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza is an author and human rights activist from Mirpur in PoJK. He currently lives in exile in the UK. The views expressed are personal)





US mounts pressure on Pak for access to military bases after Afghan withdrawal

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad

As the US gears up to end its longest fought war in Afghanistan and withdraw its troops from the country, the Joe Biden administration is in deliberations with Pakistan to provide the US access to its airspace and a drone base, which would be used to keep an eye on the situation in Afghanistan after the troops withdrawal and also to make sure that it does not turn into a terrorist base again.

However, Pakistan does not seem to be ready to facilitate the US to station itself in Pakistani bases to operate drones, like it did previously.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, along with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, has clearly refused to facilitate the US with any airbase to operate from Pakistani soil.

While Islamabad seems to be sticking to its position of not allowing the US to operate from any of its bases, US demand continues to assert the Pakistani military, intelligence and



diplomatic channels to give access to airspace and airbases, insisting that they would be used for surveillance purposes in Afghanistan only.

Pentagon was the first to announce that Pakistan had allowed the US troops to station there and use its air-

space to operate surveillance drones, a claim that has been categorically rejected by the Pakistani government. In a latest development, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has confirmed that he had detailed discussions with Pakistan in

the military, intelligence and diplomatic channels to make sure that Afghanistan never again becomes a base from which the terrorist groups could attack the US.

"We've had constructive discussions in military, intelligence and diplomatic channels with Pakistan about the future of America's capabilities to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a base from which al-Qaeda, ISIS or any other terrorist group can attack the United States. But in terms of the specifics, what that would look like will have to remain in those private channels as we work through them," Sullivan said.

"What I will say, we are talking to a wide range of countries about how we build effective over the horizon capacity both from intelligence and defense perspective to be able to suppress terrorism threat in Afghanistan," he added.

The US has been working on exploring options to maintain military and intelligence footprint in the region to tackle a possible terrorist resurgence in Afghanistan.

Microsoft, 5 other firms fined for personal data leaks

Seoul | Agencies

South Korea's data protection watchdog said on Wednesday that it has imposed monetary penalties on six companies and institutions, including technology giant Microsoft and an affiliate of local internet giant Kakao, for failing to protect personal information of their clients by negligence.

The Personal Information Protection Commission (PIPC) said that the six entities were ordered to pay 84.4 million won (US\$75,700) in penalties -- penalty surcharges of 53.4 million won and administrative fines of 31 million won -- over leaks of their clients' personal information.

The imposition of financial penalties came after the PIPC had received reports of personal information being leaked from the six entities due to hacking or employee mistakes.



Besides Microsoft, the five others are Ground X, a blockchain subsidiary of Kakao, software company Innovation Academy, the Korea Professional Football League, the Korea Mountainbike Federation and the World MathFusion Olympiad Korea.

All of the six were slapped with an administrative fine and three of them -- Microsoft, Ground X and Innovation Academy -- were additionally ordered to pay penalty surcharges, reports Yonhap news agency.

Microsoft is accused of failing to take protective measures, such as access control, for its personal information processing system administrator account. As a result, 119,432 Outlook email accounts were leaked worldwide, including 144 accounts of South Korean users.

Reports of personal information leaks and user notifications were also delayed, the PIPC said, adding it imposed a penalty surcharge of 3.4 million won and a fine of 13 million won on Microsoft.

brief

8 KILLED IN ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES ON SYRIA

Beirut: At least eight members of the Syrian government forces and their allied militiamen are



dead after Israeli airstrikes on central and southern Syria, a monitoring group said on Wednesday. The Britain-Based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the killed included members of the "National Defence" forces, DPA reported. It added that the Israeli strikes, which took place shortly before midnight (2100 GMT), hit posts east of the village of Khirbet al-Tin in the countryside of Homs. The monitoring group said that an ammunition depot thought to belong to the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah was also hit in the same area.

9 KILLED IN S. KOREA'S BUILDING COLLAPSE



Seoul: At least nine people were killed and eight others injured after a building collapsed in southwest South Korea, officials said. The five-storey building under demolition unexpectedly collapsed on Wednesday afternoon at the southwestern city of Gwangju, and it was reported to the firefighting authorities at about 4:22 pm (local time). A bus, which stopped at a station near the construction site, was buried with debris, killing nine people and leaving eight others wounded who were taken to a nearby hospital, Xinhua reported. Rescuers saved 17 people, mostly those from the buried bus, and were searching for any trapped pedestrian or construction worker. The police and the firefighting authorities were investigating the exact cause of the mishap.

THREE DEAD IN HOPITAL FIRE IN RUSSIA



Moscow: Three people died and at least eight injured after a fire broke out in the intensive care unit of a hospital in western Russia on Wednesday. The fire at the clinical hospital named after N.A. Semashko in the city of Ryazan, about 190 km southeast of Moscow, covered an area of 15 square meters and was later extinguished, according to the regional department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. According to preliminary information, 35 people were evacuated, at least three people died, while eight were rescued and are currently hospitalized, Xinhua reported. Governor of the Ryazan region Nikolai Lyubimov said an artificial lung-ventilation device could have caught fire, and the cause is being established, the TASS news agency reported.

Indonesia's volcano Mount Merapi emits hot clouds

Jakarta | Agencies

Indonesia's most active volcano Mount Merapi emitted hot clouds three times as far as 1,600 metres to the southwest, the Geological Disaster Technology Research and Development Center said on Wednesday.

"The first blast of the hot clouds occurred at 3:16 am (local time) with incandescent lava flowing as far as 1,500 meters to the southwest for 129 seconds," the center's head Hanik Humaida said.

Merapi blasted off the second hot clouds at 9:31 am (local time) as far as 1,000 metres to the southwest for 93 seconds while the third happened at 9:53 am (local time) flowing up to 1,600 metres for 121 seconds.

Located on the border between Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces, the volcano is now in the status of third



danger level.

The centre has urged people not to be in the danger zone within a radius of three km from the crater to keep away from ejections of volcanic materials.

Authorities also asked people to avoid lava flows and hot clouds flowing through rivers that stream down from Merapi such as Kuning, Boyong, Bedog, Krasak, Bebeng, and Puthih rivers.

Fighter jet disappears from radars during Bulgarian-US drill

Sofia | Agencies

A Bulgarian MiG-29 fighter jet has disappeared from radars during a Bulgarian-US drill over the Black Sea, while a search and rescue operation is underway, the government said on Wednesday. The MiG-29 aircraft lost radio communication and disappeared from radars at 00:45 (local time) on Wednesday when performing a training task during the tactical live fire exercise "Shabla 21," a statement said.

"A search and rescue operation was launched immediately and is ongoing," it said, adding that the exercise has been suspended. According to the website of the country's Defense Ministry, "Shabla 21" began Monday and was planned to end Friday, involving more than 2,000 members of the military staff from the Armed Forces of Bulgaria and the United States, Xinhua reported.



GLOBAL COVID-19 CASELOAD TOPS 173.8MN

Washington | Agencies

The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 173.8 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.74 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Wednesday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 173,887,864 and 3,744,378, respectively.

The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 33,390,694 and 598,323, respectively, according to the CSSE.

In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 28,996,473 cases. The other worst countries with over 3 million cases are Brazil (17,037,129), France (5,781,556), Turkey (5,300,236), Russia (5,086,386), the UK (4,544,367),



Italy (4,235,592), Argentina (4,008,771), Germany (3,712,595), Spain (3,711,027) and Colombia (3,611,602), the CSSE figures showed. In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 476,792 fatalities. Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (351,309), Mexico (229,100), the UK (128,118), Italy (126,690), Russia (122,409) and France (110,299).

El Salvador becomes 1st country to make Bitcoin a legal tender

San Salvador | Agencies

El Salvador President Nayib Bukele on Wednesday announced that the country has approved the bill to make Bitcoin cryptocurrency a legal tender in the Central American country.

The Central American country is now the first country in the world to make Bitcoin legal tender. "The Bitcoin Law has been approved by a supermajority in the Salvadoran Congress. 62 out of 84 votes! History!", tweeted Bukele.

Bukele on June 5 announced the move in a pre-recorded message played at the Bitcoin 2021 conference in Miami, Florida, during a presentation hosted by Jack Mallers, founder digital wallet company Strike.



"In the short term this will generate jobs and help provide financial inclusion to thousands outside the formal economy," the President had said.

Mallers said he has been working with Bukele to determine the logistics of the move. "Over 70 per cent of the

bitcoin plan to help these people."

According to Shivam Thakral, CEO of BuyUcoin. El Salvador's decision to make Bitcoin a legal tender will boost financial inclusion in their country as the majority of the population does not have access to formal banking channels.

"In India, our approach towards crypto is different. We don't see it as a legal tender but as an asset class. Indian investors have shown their faith in crypto even during the massive price fluctuations because they have an investment horizon of 2-3 years," Thakral said in a statement.

"We are eagerly waiting for CBDC (central bank digital currency) in India which will open up new avenues of growth for the digital asset industry," he added.

Indonesia mulls to inoculate 1 mn people per day

Jakarta | Agencies

Indonesia is planning to vaccinate 1 million people per day by July, President Joko Widodo said on Wednesday. Widodo made the remarks after observing a mass Covid-19 vaccination held at a university's hospital in West Java province, Xinhua reported.

Widodo urged authorities to accelerate the mass vaccinations across the country in order to hit the government's current target of 700,000 injections per day. "We hope that in June the target for vaccinations per day of 700,000 can really be achieved so that in July we will have entered the target of vaccinations per day of 1 million," he said at the event which the country's Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin and West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil also attended. The government aims to vaccinate 181.5 million people by next year and so far more than 11 million people in the country have received two shots of vaccine.

Indonesia currently has approximately 76.2 million doses of ready-to-use vaccines. The world's fourth most populous country has so far recorded 1.87 million coronavirus infections and 52,162 deaths.





ETHIOPIAN GIDEY BREAKS 10,000M WORLD RECORD

▶ Last year, Letesenbet set a world 5000m record of 14 minutes 06.62 seconds. The Ethiopian is the first woman to hold both the 5000m and 10,000m world records since Norway's Ingrid Kristiansen who held both the records from 1986 to 1993.

▶ The Ethiopian Athletics Federation is holding national selection trials in the Netherlands to select a team for the Tokyo Olympic Games starting July 23.

Hengelo (The Netherlands) | Agencies

Ethiopia's Letesenbet Gidey clocked 29 minutes 01.3 seconds to break the women's 10,000-metre world record by five seconds during the Ethiopian athletics trials here on Tuesday night.

On Sunday, Dutch distance star Sifan Hassan had clocked a world 10,000m record of 29:06.82 on the same track in Hengelo.

Trials were held in distances ranging from 800m to 10,000m, including the stee-

plechase.

But the women's 10,000m race was the highlight of the selection trials. Letesenbet set out at scorching pace passing the first 2000m in 5 minutes 54 seconds and 3000m in 8 minutes 50 seconds. She reached the half-way mark in about 14 minutes and 42 seconds.

She pushed the pace further in the next five laps to clock 20 minutes 32 seconds for 7000m. At the bell, she was a couple of seconds inside 28 minutes, and ran a final lap of about 68 seconds to set a world record of 29 minutes 01.03 seconds.

Tsigie Gebreselama, who clocked 30 minutes 06.01 seconds, was second while Tsehay Gemechu was third in 30 minutes 19.29 seconds.

The women's 5,000m was won by Gudaf Tsegay in 14 minutes 13.32 seconds.

Steeplechase specialist Getnet Wale won the men's 5,000m event in 12:53.28 while Selemon Barega won a close men's 10,000m, clocking 26 minutes 49.51 seconds against 26 minutes 49.73 seconds by Yomif Kejelcha. Freweyni Hailu won the women's 1500m in a world-leading time of 3 minutes 57.33 seconds

“I expected to run a world record. I would like to try to break the 29-minute [barrier] in 10,000m in future.”

IPL to be played between Sep 19-Oct 15: BCCI

The second half of the tournament, to be played in UAE, will however be too close to the start of the T20 World Cup that begins around mid-October.

- ▶ There are 16 teams in the 2021 T20 World Cup, including five non-Test playing nations.
- ▶ Papua New Guinea, the Netherlands, Namibia, Scotland and Oman are also participating besides the 11 Test playing nations that includes Afghanistan and Ireland too.
- ▶ The initial matches involving weaker teams could be hosted in Oman.

Khurram Habib | New Delhi

The remainder of the 2021 Indian Premier League will be played between September 19 and October 15 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Indian cricket board confirmed on Wednesday.

"IPL will be held between September 19 and October 15," Rajeev Shukla, vice-president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), told correspondent on Wednesday. There are 31 matches to be played, after the tournament was suspended on May 4 due to Covid-19 positive cases in the camps of four of the eight franchises. The cash-rich

Although the International Cricket Council (ICC) has not officially announced the dates for the T20 World Cup that immediately follows the IPL, October 18 is the date being banded in certain quarters. The T20 World Cup, which will be hosted by the BCCI, will likely be held in the UAE as well as another gulf nation, possibly Oman. The BCCI has until June 28 to tell the ICC whether it is in a position to host the tournament as the Covid-19 pandemic is still not over in India.



“We will release the dates and venue of T20 World Cup only in July. We cannot comment on it as of now. But there is no rule on the need of a gap ahead of an ICC event. The ICC needs 10 days to prepare the pitch and the ground ahead of an event. That too is a norm and not a rule.”

ICC official

“There should be no problem with the gap. The first phase of the T20 World Cup will comprise qualifiers [according to BCCI's knowledge]. So the main teams like India and others will get sufficient gap.”

Rajeev Shukla, Vice-president, BCCI

league was suspended midway, after the completion of 29 matches.

The October 15 finish leaves only three days between the end of IPL 2021 and the start of the T20 World Cup, if it begins on October 18.

The ICC told correspondent on Wednesday that there was no rule of a mandatory gap between a domestic

tournament and an ICC tournament. The ICC, however, said they couldn't confirm this since it is still being worked out.

The broadcasters Sony Sports India, however, have already come out with the schedule stating that the series will begin on July 13 and ending on July 25.

ICC Test rankings: 3 INDIANS IN TOP 10; CONWAY ENTERS AT 77TH



Duba | Agencies

New Zealand's double centration Test debutant Conway has entered the latest men's Test batting rankings at 77th position while three Indians -- skipper Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant and Rohit Sharma -- continue to be in the top 10. New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson leads the table with 895 rating points.

Kohli, who will lead India in the World Test Championship final against New Zealand from June 18 and the five-match Test series against England, is fifth with 814 points behind England skipper Joe Root.

Pant and Sharma are joint sixth with 747 rating points each. Sharma, who was placed eighth in the previous cycle, has moved one spot past New Zealand batsman Henry Nicholls, who is now in eighth spot.

Conway, is the latest to enter the ICC Test rankings after his double century against

England in the drawn first Test at Lord's that ended earlier this week. He is placed 77th with 447 rating points, the highest for a New Zealand batsman on debut and the third highest ever on debut.

In the Test bowling rankings, India spinner, R. Ashwin continues to hold the No. 2 position (850 rating points), behind Australian pace bowler Pat Cummins, who has 908 points. Ashwin is the only Indian in the top 10.

The top position in the Test all-rounder rankings continues to be held by West Indies' Jason Holder, who is part of the squad for the two-match Test series against South Africa beginning in St.Lucia on June 10.

Indian all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja (386 points) and Ashwin (353) are second and fourth, respectively. Jadeja has moved up one place, displacing England all-rounder Ben Stokes.

FRENCH OPEN

London | Agencies

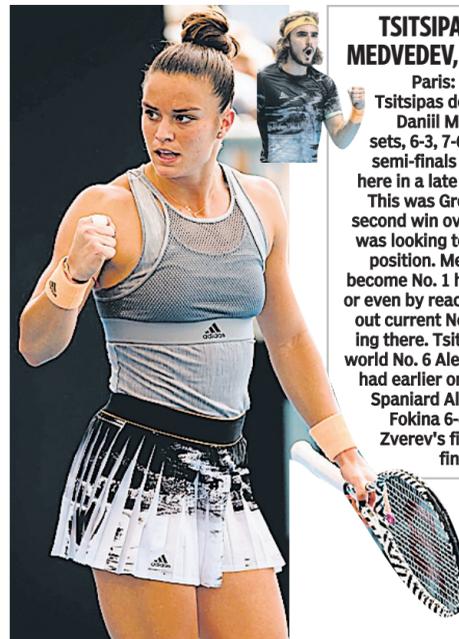
Defending champion Iga Swiatek was sent packing from the French Open by Greek world No.18 Maria Sakkari, who stunned the 20-year-old Polish star 6-4, 6-4 and set up a semi-final clash against Czech Republic's Barbora Krejickova.

World No.33 Barbora ended American teenager Coco Gauff's hopes of reaching her maiden Grand Slam semi-final with a 7-6 (8-6), 6-3 victory.

Maria, who is now the highest-ranked player in the field, is just two wins away from a historic maiden Grand Slam singles title for a Greek woman. A win at the end of the week could also propel her into the top 10. Iga was on a winning streak of 11 matches and 22 sets at the Roland Garros, but a right thigh strain seemed to be bothering her all through the match against Maria. Coco had been in great form on clay and cruised to her maiden Grand Slam quarter-final with ease but on Wednesday she was unable to take any of the five set points in the opening set and simply faded away. The 17-year-old led 3-0 and 5-3 in the opening set, as well as 6-4 in the tie-break, but each time Barbora clawed back.

Barbora, better known for her doubles exploits -- she was ranked world No. 1 in

Maria beats Iga, sets up semi-finals clash with Barbora



TSITSIPAS SHATTERS MEDVEDEV, ENTERS SEMIS

Paris: Fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated world No. 2 Daniil Medvedev in straight sets, 6-3, 7-6 (7-3), 7-5, to enter semi-finals of the French Open here in a late match on Tuesday. This was Greek Tsitsipas's only second win over the Russian who was looking to get to world No. 1 position. Medvedev could have become No. 1 had he won the title or even by reaching the final without current No. 1 Djokovic reaching there. Tsitsipas will now face world No. 6 Alexander Zverev who had earlier on Tuesday defeated Spaniard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-4, 6-1, 6-1. This was Zverev's first entry into semi-finals of French Open.

2018 and has won two women's doubles and three mixed doubles Grand Slam titles -- showed no sign of nerves as Coco self-destructed.

INDIAN FOOTBALL TEAM SHOULD FIGHT LIKE BEES DO: CHHETRI



Doha: India captain Sunil Chhetri says that "giving everything on the pitch" should be the motto of his team going forward.

India, who defeated Bangladesh 2-0 in the FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifier match here on Monday, will take on Afghanistan on June 15 in their last Group E assignment here.

"I tell the boys to just turn up and give everything on the pitch, and then you will take whatever result comes...you might not get as many moments of individual brilliance and technical play like through balls, but if we can fight like how bees fight by coming together, that's the foundation," said the 36-year-old striker. "The opponent should think that we will be annoying and fighting and defending as a team; and that is the first step. Slowly, other things will come from there."

India have six points from seven matches and are placed third in the group. They have lost three matches and three games have ended in draws. Qatar, as on Wednesday, lead Group E with 22 points from eight matches, thanks to their seven wins. Oman have 12 points from six matches and are second.

India are only fighting to qualify for the Asian Cup 2023, as they are out of contention for the 2022 World Cup.

Eyeing on WTC final NZ may rest frontline quicks from 2nd Test

Birmingham | Agencies

With an eye on World Test Championship (WTC) final against India that gets underway on June 18, the New Zealand team management is looking to rotate its pace bowlers and may rest Tim Southee, Kyle Jamieson and Neil Wagner from the second Test against England that begins here in Edgbaston on Thursday. New Zealand have already been bolstered by the arrival of left-arm pace bowler Trent Boult, who is likely to feature in the second Test.

Southee, Wagner and Jamieson all bowled over 40 overs across two innings in the first Test at Lord's.

"They (bowlers) have all scrubbed up pretty well, but it does not necessarily mean they will play in the next match. With an eye on the [WTC] final, we



want to make sure the key bowlers who we think will take part in that game are fresh, raring to go and ready for that first ball of the match versus India," said New Zealand coach Gary Stead ahead

of the second Test.

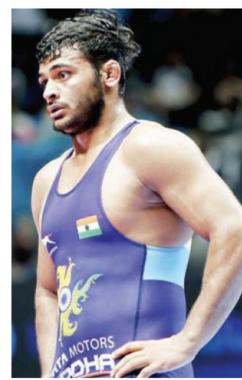
Pace bowlers Matt Henry, Doug Bracewell and Jacob Duffy are also in the squad and may replace the frontline bowlers who are to be rested.

MINOR INJURY FORCES WRESTLER PUNIA TO PULL OUT OF POLAND OPEN

Navneet Singh | New Delhi

Olympic Games bound freestyle wrestler Deepak Punia has pulled out of Poland Open Ranking Series in Warsaw due to minor injury that resurfaced prior to his bout, said a Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) official on Wednesday.

Punia was directly seeded into quarterfinals was scheduled to face Zahid Valencia of America. "Punia who was carrying a niggle in the left hand withdrew from the men's 86kg freestyle event at the eleventh hour as there was possibility of injury being aggravating during the bout," WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar told reporter. "Team coach Jagminder Singh was of the opinion that it wouldn't be wise to compete with injury in the ranking series as the Olympics are around the corner," he said. The Poland Ranking Series got underway on Monday and will conclude on Sunday.



Vinesh Phogat (53 kg) will compete in the women's freestyle event. After the ranking series, Indian team will also attend a coaching camp in Warsaw. The Indian team would return in the first week of July.

Equity MFs' net inflows at over Rs 10K cr in May: AMFI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Equity-linked mutual fund schemes saw a net inflows of over Rs 10,000 crore in May. As per the data furnished by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Wednesday, the net inflows stood at Rs 10,082.98 crore.

In April, the equity-linked mutual fund schemes' net inflows stood at Rs 3,437.37 crore. Similarly in March, the inflows stood at Rs 9,115.12 crore

However, in February, the equity-linked mutual fund schemes' net outflow stood at Rs 4,534.36 crore.

Besides, the data showed that Mutual Fund Industry's AUMs rose to a record high of Rs 33.05 lakh crore.

In addition, the contributions through



systematic investment increased on a sequential basis last month.

The SIP inflows had stood at Rs 8,818.90 crore in May from Rs 8,590.89 crore in April.

"Retail equity-oriented contribution continues to be on the upward trend driven by net flows predominantly in 'Arbitrage, Multicap, Midcap' schemes, as also smart diversification in 'Fund of Fund' schemes which invest in foreign equities," said AMFI's Chief Executive N.S. Venkatesh.

"Retail SIP Accounts, SIP AUMs and SIP Contribution which signifies retail activity in the Mutual Fund industry has seen continued upward trend for the second month this fiscal, leading to overall Industry AUMs moving to record high of Rs 33.05 lakh crore and 10 crore folios."

OYO, Airbnb, Yatra, EaseMyTrip join hands to form industry body

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Major players in the travel-tech segment including Airbnb, EaseMyTrip, OYO and Yatra have come together to form an industry body, named the Confederation of Hospitality, Technology and Tourism Industry (CHATT). A statement from the newly-formed body noted that the Covid-19 crisis presents a unique opportunity to collaborate on reviving the industry and only progress upwards from here on.

"To empower the voice of smaller operators in the ecosystem, travel and hospitality tech players - Airbnb, EaseMyTrip, OYO and Yatra - have come together to back and enable an industry association - Confederation of Hospitality, Technology and Tourism Industry (CHATT)," it said.

CHATT aims to promote domestic tourism, lead the digital transformation of tourism related business



and operating models, proactively engage via advocacy programmes to be a thought leader, impart educational training and beneficial programmes to all industry segments, as per the statement.

Every member will be able to access all CHATT resources and benefits, including participation in

year-round programmes, signature business events, access to the travel-tech ecosystem, including the experts and regional leads among others, it said.

The association comprises start-up founders and business leaders such as Airbnb General Manager, India, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong

and Taiwan, Amanpreet Bajaj, EaseMyTrip.com co-founder and CEO Nishant Pitti, OYO India & Southeast Asia CEO Rohit Kapoor, and Yatra.com. co-founder and CEO Dhruv Shringi.

In a digital launch event hosted by CHATT, Union Tourism Minister, Prahlad Singh Patel lauded the efforts of the new-age technology, travel and hospitality companies who have come together to promote the interest of the smallest and often under-represented operators and work together with the government on various fronts in this space.

Tourism Secretary Arvind Singh said: "The efforts of CHATT are highly inclusive and once the impact of second wave subsides - a group like CHATT will present greater economic impact. Technology is at the forefront of many initiatives at the Ministry of Tourism, and we look forward to closely working with CHATT to strengthen the sector."

brief

TATA MOTORS TO DISCONTINUE SELECT VARIANTS OF NEXON



New Delhi: Tata Motors has decided to discontinue select variants of compact SUV Nexon. "To simplify the choices for its customers, Tata Motors has opted to discontinue select variants and introduced updates in others," the automaker said in a statement. At present, Nexon is available in 20 variants offering product propositions at different price points and the most choice in the compact SUV segment. According to the company, currently, Nexon's range includes 12 variants in petrol and eight variants in diesel with automatic and manual transmissions options.

BAJAJ ALLIANZ LIFE DECLARES RS 1,156 CRORE BONUS



Pune: Private life insurer Bajaj Allianz Life has declared bonuses amounting to Rs 1,156 crore to its policyholders. This includes a special one-time bonus of Rs 315 crore, which is over and above the regular bonus. The company aims to ensure there is adequate support, in these unprecedented times, to its customers in achieving their life goals, the insurer said in a statement. These bonuses are funded from the profits generated by the company's participating policyholders' funds for the year FY 2020-21. This move is expected to benefit nearly 12 lakh (11,99,612) policyholders, who have stayed invested and entrusted their faith in the company.

This is the 20th consecutive year the Company has declared a bonus and delivered long term value to policyholders.

NOW BUY A CAR ONLINE FROM CARS24



New Delhi: As part of its latest offering triggered by the ongoing Covid pandemic, pre-owned vehicles e-commerce platform CARS24 is offering home delivery, six-month warranty and a 'no questions asked' seven-day return policy to the car buyers, making the experience of buying a vehicle much like buying any other product online. The company has built an assortment of over 10,000 cars, all of which will be available for online purchase. Additionally, transparent pricing and a technology enabled catalogue will allow the buyers to quickly browse through thousands of cars and choose the right one that suits them the best.

PNB MAY SEEK CLARITY ON HOUSING FINANCE ARM'S FUND RAISING DEAL INVOLVING PE INVESTORS

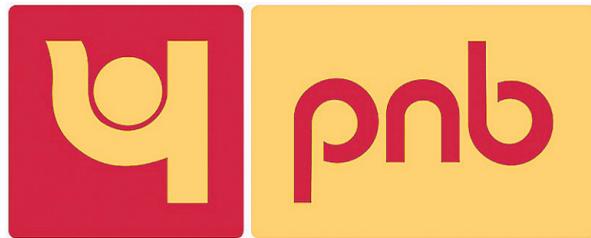
The board members of Punjab National Bank (PNB) including its independent directors may seek more clarity on the PNB Housing Finance fund raising deal.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Rs 4,000 crore transfer of control deal in PNB Housing Finance to a private equity led consortium led by Carlyle Group has faced opposition from proxy advisory firms and a section of PNB's minority shareholders feel that the entire deal was concluded in a non-transparent manner.

A senior executive of the public sector bank (PSB) confirmed that though there was no regulatory issues with the transaction, more clarity could be sought on the contours of the deal. PNB is expected to address some of the concerns raised on the deal at the shareholders meet scheduled next month.

"We don't see any serious issue involving the deal that followed the due process and proceeded after getting nod from both the market regulator SEBI and financial sector regular RBI. But more clarity could help to understand that the deal did not com-



punjab national bank
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promise the interests of PNB," said an official source. PNB had earlier decided not to participate in the capital raising plan of PNBHFL after the Reserve Bank of India did not give a green signal to the lender's application to infuse capital in the housing finance arm. However, with questions now being raised over the manner and pricing at which PNBHFL is completing its fund raising plan, the public sector lender is seeking clarity over the deal. Governance watchdog Stakeholders Empowerment Services (SeS) has reportedly said in one of its reports that PNBHFL's decision to preferentially allot Rs 3,200 crore worth of shares and Rs 800 crore

worth of warrants to Carlyle, Pluto Investment, former HDFC Bank CEO Aditya Puri's family investment vehicle Salisbury Investments, General Atlantic and Alpha Investments at Rs 390 a piece, much lower than the book value and prevailing share price of PNBHFL, is unfair to public shareholders of the housing finance entity as well as shareholders of PNB.

The investment in preferential shares and warrants will be followed by a mandatory open offer for 7.98 crore equity shares at a price of Rs 403.22 a piece. PNBHFL shares are currently trading at Rs 810 a piece on BSE, a decline of close to 5 per cent over the previous close.

Indian Bank offers health plans to staff and family members



Chennai | Agencies

Public sector Indian Bank on Wednesday said it has joined hands with integrated healthcare player Practo to offer its current and retired employees a health plan. In a statement issued here Indian Bank said this is first of its kind in the public sector bank sector. More than 74,000 present and retired staff members of the bank will benefit from these health plans that provide convenient, affordable and 24x7 access to healthcare.

Revenue Deficit Grant of Rs 9,871 cr released to 17 states

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Finance Ministry has released the third monthly instalment of Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant of Rs 9,871 crore for the year 2021-22 to 17 states. With the release of the instalment, a total amount of Rs 29,613 crore has been released in the first three months of the current financial year as Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to the states. The Centre provides the Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to the States under Article 275 of the Constitution. The grants are released as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission in monthly installments to meet the gap in Revenue Accounts of the States post devolution. The 15th Finance Commission has recommended Post Devolution Release Deficit



grants to 17 States.

The States recommended for Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant are: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The eligibility of States to receive this grant and the quantum of grant was decided by the Commission based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the State. Assessed devolution for the financial year 2021-22 was also taken into account by the Commission. The 15th Finance Commission has recommended a total Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant of Rs. 1,18,452 crore to 17 States in the financial year 2021-22. The grant is released to the States in 12 monthly installments.

INDIAN GAMERS NOW PREFER PCS OVER MOBILES IN REMOTE ERA: REPORT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

For nine in 10 Indians, gaming especially on personal computers (PCs) helps relieve work and study pressure while reducing stress and inducing positive feelings in the remote era, a new HP India report showed on Wednesday, clearing indicating that gaming on big screen is now being preferred over mobiles in the country.

Over 90 per cent of those surveyed also said that PC gaming fosters better peer-level socialising and helps make new friends.

While four in 10 (37) per cent mobile gamers want to shift to a PC, indicating strong potential growth for the industry, over 90 per cent respondents view gaming as a viable career option,



trend led by women, according to HP India's 'Gaming Landscape Report 2021'.

"The ongoing pandemic has changed the world as we know it. Amid this chaos, given the need of people to find themselves a stress buster and a tool to connect with friends and family, the

gaming sector has witnessed a strong boost," Vickram Bedi, Senior Director, Personal Systems-HP India Market, told reporter.

Women (58 per cent) lead men (52 per cent) in preferring PCs in their choice of gaming device.

"HP is committed to innovating its product offerings to cater

to the user require-

ments. Additionally, in HP's continued

endeavour to promote the young Indian gamers, a scholarship has recently been announced which will provide international expo-

sure to Indian gamers along with training and financial support to sharpen their skills," Bedi informed.

The preference for moving to PCs for gaming was led by Millennials and Gen Z respondents (70 per cent), as well as by casual and enthusiast gamers (75 per cent).

An overwhelming 94 per cent respondents across Tier 2 cities, 88 per cent across Tier 1, and 87 per cent in metro cities prefer PCs over mobile phones for gaming, the findings showed.

"Better processing speed, display and sound are among the top reasons for gamers to migrate to PC gaming," the report added.

Respondents from Tier 2 cities (84 per cent) appeared more likely to choose a career in the gaming industry than those from Metro cities (78 per cent).



SUNIL GROVER: SUNFLOWER IS 'HIGH DRAMA' WITH AN 'INSANE CAST'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-comedian Sunil Grover currently awaits the release of the crime comedy web series "Sunflower". He feels the show should keep viewers on

the edge and also guessing over what's going to happen next. "The genre is absolutely high drama. We all love a good psychological thriller. We love being on the edge and 'Sunflower' would keep you guessing over what's tak-

ing place next," he says.

"It should keep you hooked to the end and it's wholesome entertainment. It's about a (housing) society and a murder mystery with an insane cast," Grover adds.

He parts with a message of

safety amidst the pandemic:

"Let's get vaccinated and keep to the protocols. We have to keep safe and look after our near and dear ones." "Sunflower, created by VikasBahl, will be out on June 11.

KARMA TAKAPA FINDS ACTING 'MORE DAUNTING'



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actor-filmmaker Karma Takapa, who rose to popularity with his portrayal of the shaman 'Dev' in the new web series 'The Last Hour', finds acting a more daunting process than filmmaking.

Karma, who graduated from the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune, specialises in direction and screenplay writing. "The Last Hour" marked his debut in acting and on the digital platform.

"Acting is more daunting. I think it is a craft that I have studied and have learned and have practiced for a short period of time. It becomes more daunting when you are put in a position where you have to explore something that you are not really, let's say fully equipped.... That becomes more daunting," said Karma.

He said the dynamics change when coming in front of the camera.

"When I am a filmmaker, I know what I am getting at and what I am doing. When you are an actor on the set, the dynamics change in terms of how you look at a show or how see the process," he said. The show, which has been shot in Sikkim, revolves around an investigating officer probing a mysterious death. He takes the help of Dev, a man with supernatural power, to crack the case. It streams on Amazon Prime Video.

Sayani Gupta: 'Axone' has initiated a conversation about inclusion

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sayani Gupta starrer "Axone" was released a year ago on this day. The actress says the film is path breaking because it has actors from the Northeast who portray experiences that are theirs and that it has initiated a conversation about inclusion.

Directed by Nicholas Kharkongor, "Axone" is a comedy about a group of friends, all originally from the Northeast, who get together to prepare a special dish called Axone. While the movie captures the endeavours of cooking the dish in a typical South Delhi neighbourhood, it highlights the issue of racism in a humorous vein.

Sayani said, "There is so much that remains undiscovered and unexplored about the Northeast. I do believe that slowly we are emerging from a haze of ignorance to learn more about a region that is a beautiful part of our country."

She added, "Axone" is path breaking because it has actors from the Northeast who portray experiences that are uniquely theirs. The film has initiated a conversation about inclusion that I hope will lead to more such films."

Actress and model Lin Laishram, who plays a pivotal role in the film, said that "Axone" has proven that the Northeast doesn't just have amazing food, sporting stars, scenic beauty or great music but also fantastic cinematic and acting talent.

She added, "I feel so proud that Nicholas Kharkongor is now considered to be one of the most important pan-Indian directors."

Director Kharkongor ensured that the story of "Axone" showed its protagonists in all their complexity as they struggle to make a living, seek and find love, and fight to protect themselves and each other from the harshness of a metro that mostly treats them as "outsiders".

"I know that the film has changed perceptions and that gives me a lot of satisfaction. I hope to see more makers and actors from the Northeast in the mainstream," Kharkongor said.

Siddharth Anand Kumar, Vice President, Films and Events at Saregama India Ltd, said, "This was not a niche project for us but a story that deserved to go mainstream and I am glad that it did."

Arshi Khan: Funny to see how low people go to participate in 'Big Boss'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress and "Big Boss" star Arshi Khan feels celebrities create unnecessary controversies to be eligible for participation in the reality show. "There is always a misconception among celebrities that if they engage in cheap controversial acts, it qualifies them to enter the Big Boss house easily. And when the show is nearby, we get to read a lot of controversial news, about fights among happily-married couples, rape cases and stupid social media statements. It is funny to see how down people gets," said Arshi. Khan feels "Big Boss" is a big opportunity but the audience is smart enough to understand the personalities of individuals on the show. "There are many such contestants who have participated in the show but are nowhere today. There also some that the audience refers to as 'BB wale'. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and one needs to be very careful while participating. Fooling audience is not really easy," she says.

AASTHA GILL SAYS 'PAANIPAANI' VIDEO WILL BE A 'VISUAL TREAT'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Aastha Gill promises fans that the video of her upcoming song "Paanipaani" will be a big visual treat. Aastha has lent vocals with rapper Badshah for the song, which is set to release on Wednesday.

Shot in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer, the video features Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez alongside Badshah and Aastha.

"The song was shot in Jaisalmer during the pandemic last year, with all necessary protocols and regulations. It was quite a thing to shoot this video but I'm sure the audience is in for a big visual treat," Aastha said.

Aastha has collaborated with Badshah on several hits including "DJ waleybabu" and "Proper patola". She shared her experience of working with the rapper once again.

"We recorded the song a couple of months back. I was quite fascinated to see Badshah Bhai writing the lyrics on our flight together. Sitting right next to him, we decided to record few lines on the phone and then I remotely recorded the entire song. Honestly, I admire his way of working and it was super fun working on this track," Aastha said.

"The song is super sexy filled with high energy. I got to experiment a lot with the vocal range and different and new from kind of music I usually work on. I'm sure the audience will cheer up listening to this song as its very unique and new," she added.



Avika Gor: Confidence has to come from our work ethic, knowledge

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Television actress Avika Gor says the positioning that beauty creams have created over a period of time is that fairness is equivalent to beauty. However, she does not agree with it.

Avika, who is known for her work in shows such as "BalikaVadhu", "SasuralSimarKa" and "KhatronkeKhiladi", did not accept endorsement deals from three fairness cream brands. She says society cannot idolise one colour.

"The positioning that beauty creams have created over a period of time is that fairness is equivalent to beauty and success and that it gives us confidence. However, that is not true at all. Our confidence has to come from our work ethic and knowledge," Avika said.

She added: "We as a society cannot idolise one colour and make all the others feel lesser than."

There has to be some change in this trend. I'm

blessed to be in a position to not have to worry about losing out on money when it's serving the large need of the society of equality. So, I just couldn't do it."

Avika's latest work includes a music video "Dilko mere", which was dropped on May 17.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Surbhi Jyoti