

# absolute india

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## Centre fixes maximum charges for Covid jab at private hospitals

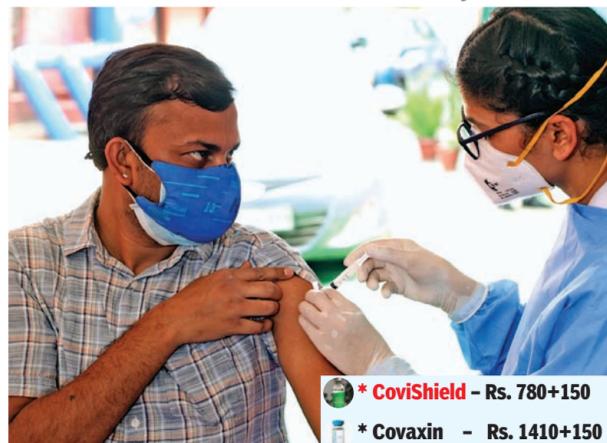
# NEW VAX ALLOCATION CRITERIA

From Tuesday onwards, Covid-19 vaccine doses provided free of cost by the Central government to states and the Union Territories (UTs) will be allocated based on criteria such as population, disease burden and the progress of vaccination. These elements were included in the fresh guidelines for implementation of National Covid vaccination programme. The revised guidelines will come into effect from June 21 this year and will be reviewed from time to time.

It is stressed that vaccination will be prioritized to Health Care Workers, Front Line Workers, citizens more than 45 years of age, citizens whose second dose has become due and citizens 18 years and above.

Within the population group of citizens more than 18 years of age, the guidelines mentioned, states and the UTs may decide their own prioritization factoring in the vaccine supply schedule.

The states may also optimally utilize the Common Service Centres and Call Centres to facilitate prior booking by the citizens



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The new guidelines came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared free vaccines to all aged above 18 years of age from June 21 with Centre providing free vaccine doses to all states and UTs. The vaccines procured will continue to be provided free of cost to states and the UTs as has been the case from the commencement of the national vaccination programme. These doses will be administered by the states and the UTs free of cost to all citizens as per priority through government vaccination centres. The Central government will provide states and UTs advance information of vaccine doses to be supplied to them, said the guideline, adding

* CoviShield	- Rs. 780+150
* Covaxin	- Rs. 1410+150
* SputnikV	- Rs. 1145+150

This includes taxes as well as a Rs 150 service charge for the hospitals.

"states or UTs should similarly, further allocate doses well in advance to districts and vaccination centres". The price of vaccine doses for private hospitals would be declared by each vaccine manufacturer, and any subsequent changes would be notified in advance, said the guidelines. As per the Central government, the revised programme provides states and UTs with additional Central government support across funding, procurement and logistics. It also facilitates scientific prioritization, wider access, harnessing of private sector capacity and flexibility at the state and local level.

### No data to show children will be seriously hit in next Covid waves: AIIMS chief

EFFICACY OF COVAXIN, COVISHIELD, SPUTNIK V MORE OR LESS EQUIVALENT

"We should not hence say take this vaccine or that vaccine, whichever vaccine is available in your area, please go ahead and get yourself vaccinated so that you and your family are safe."

New Delhi: There is no data, either from India or globally, to show that children will be seriously infected in any subsequent Covid-19 waves, AIIMS, Delhi, Director Dr Randeep Guleria said on Tuesday. Addressing a media briefing here, he said that "it is a piece of misinformation that subsequent waves of the Covid-19 pandemic are going to cause severe illness in children". Noting that 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the children who got infected and got admitted in hospitals during the second wave in India, had either comorbidities or low immunity

### 44 CRORE MORE VACCINE DOSES ORDERED BY HEALTH MINISTRY

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued a fresh order for 25 crore doses of Covishield and 19 crore doses of Covaxin. These 44 crore (25+19 cr) doses of COVID-19 vaccines will be available till December 2021, starting now. "Additionally, 30% of the advance for procurement of both the Covid vaccines has been released to Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech," said a statement from the ministry. In the immediate follow-up of the Prime Minister's announcement of these changes in the Guidelines of National COVID Vaccination programme on Monday, the Union Health Ministry has placed an order with Serum Institute of India for 25 crore doses of Covishield and with Bharat Biotech for 19 crore doses of Covaxin.

## Agra 'mock drill' tragedy 22 patients died!

Agra hospital in controversy to be sealed after video went viral, patients being shifted. On the other hand, the hospital management denied that any mock drill had been done to stop oxygen

Agra | Agencies

The Paras hospital in Agra is being sealed following the death of 22 patients reportedly due to a shortage of oxygen. The district administration has taken this decision after investigation on Tuesday afternoon. District Magistrate Prabhu N. Singh said that a case will be registered against the hospital under the Epidemic Act. There are 55 patients admitted in the hospital, who will be shifted to another medical facility by the team of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). The District Magistrate said that all the deaths in the hospital are being audited separately by the CMO's team. He said that comments in the viral video spread fear among the general public. This act is not good in a pandemic, he said. Meanwhile, in a statement released on Tuesday afternoon, Paras Healthcare has further clarified that 'Shree Paras Hospital' which is a local hospital in the city of Agra, has no association with the Paras Hospitals Group in any way. The statement said that media reports referred to the hospital as Paras Hospital instead of Shree Paras Hospital which is unnecessarily having a negative impact on the image of the reputed healthcare group. The matter highlighting the



hospital's lapse came to light after a video surfaced on Tuesday in which the hospital owner is heard saying that it was a "mock drill". The purported video shows a doctor admitting that 22 people died after he shut oxygen for five minutes during the mock drill.

### PROBE ORDERED

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh has ordered a probe into allegations that a private hospital in Agra turned off oxygen supply during an alleged mock drill, leading to the deaths of 22 patients. The minister said that the private hospital has been mired in controversy in the past too. "If any truth is found in the allegations, strict action will be taken against the hospital," he said. When asked if such mock drill were a part of the medical system, the minister said that such drills were held only to check the fire fighting system and not in patient care.

## Seven prisoners flee from police custody in Patna



Patna | Agencies

Seven persons escaped from police custody after an appearance in a court in Bihar's Patna district on Tuesday, police said. The accused were involved in firing and physical assault in Narauli village under Sigori

police station, and an FIR was registered in this connection on Sunday. According to the police, the accused persons surrendered before the Danapur district court on Tuesday and were sent to judicial custody. "When the accused were on the way to jail, they saw less security personnel in and around the prison van. They utilised the opportunity and escaped," an official of the Danapur police station, who did not want to be identified, said. Sources have said that the accused were expecting bail but it was not the case.

## 60% students against using internal marks for Class XII score

Team Absolute | New Delhi

While 80 per cent of Class XII students are relieved and pleased that the board examinations have been cancelled, nearly two-third of them are concerned about the use of internal school assessments to calculate results, a survey revealed on Tuesday. The online survey, led by the study abroad platform The WorldGrad, was conducted among more than 4,000 users who registered on the platform in the last two months. It showed that 60 per cent of the students do not think that it is a good idea to use pre-boards and internal school marks to calculate their Cals XII results. On June 1, the Centre had decided to

cancel the CBSE Class XII board exams for 2021. The Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has also scrapped the ISC (Class XII) exams for this year. Many state boards have also cancelled the Class XII board exams in their respective states.

Following the cancellation, speculation is rife on what would be the methodology to calculate the Class XII board scores. The survey also showed that 80 per cent of the students have given a pre-board exams, but only 55 per cent have received the results. However, regardless of whether they have received the results, 60 per cent of the students are not in favour of using these for their final scores.

### Assam to hold Class X, XII board exams with reduced subjects

Guwahati/Agartala: Unlike many other states in the country, the Assam government on Tuesday announced that it would hold the secondary (Class X) and higher secondary (Class XII) board examinations with reduced number of subjects in August. Around seven lakh students, who are scheduled to appear for the board exams this year, would be given the choice of papers and they would not have to appear for all the subjects. The exams are likely to be held between August 1 and August 15.

## Lucknow traders defy curfew, open shops

Lucknow: Upset over the 50-day closure in the coronavirus-induced curfew, traders in several markets have now started defying the restrictions and opening their shops. In

Rajajipuram, on Monday, traders opened their shops and when the police tried to force closure, they started protests by clanging on thalis. As the news spread that shops in Rajajipuram were opening, traders in Yahiyaganj, Pandeyganj, Fatehganj and Rakabganj also opened their shops. Traders in Chinhat and Dubagga said they would start opening their shops from Tuesday.



## 16 killed in UP road accident



Kanpur | Agencies

At least 16 people were killed and five others injured when a speeding bus collided with a passenger vehicle near Kanpur on Tuesday, police said. According to Inspector General of Police, Kanpur Range, Mohit Agarwal, the accident occurred in Sachendi police station area of outer Kanpur when the private bus, going from Lucknow to Delhi, collided head on with the other vehicle, in which employees of a local biscuit factory, were travelling. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has condoned the loss

of life and directed compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased. He also wished speedy recovery to the injured and directed officials to ensure they get proper treatment. He also asked the district administration to submit a report on the causes of the accident. According to eye-witnesses, there were heart-rending scenes at the accident site as the passenger vehicles had overturned following the collision. Local residents reached the spot to render help and extricate those trapped. They also informed the police following which ambulances and rescuers rushed to the area.

## Vaccine, free food could upset India's FY22 fiscal numbers by 0.5%

Rough calculations indicate the government's Covid relief measures, including distribution of 5 kg food grains free of cost to 80 crore people till November (in addition to May and June announced earlier) and procurement of an additional 25 per cent of Covid-19 quota available from domestic producers for onward free distribution to states could result in stretching Centre's FY22 expenditure by an additional over Rs 1 lakh crore, thereby resulting in fiscal slippage, to the tune of around 0.5 per cent from initially budgeted 6.8 per cent of the GDP.

The Rs 1 lakh crore estimate may actually grow higher or fall lower depending on the quality of lifting of free food grains by the states. If the current level of free foodgrain lifting, where wheat occupies over 60 per cent space, is maintained, the fiscal burden will be a bit less than Rs 1 lakh crore.

If rice is supplied under free food grain, where it's economic cost is almost 40 per cent more than wheat, Centre's fiscal burden may shoot up over Rs 1 lakh crore.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The first signs of rising stress in the country's fiscal position this year is becoming evident with the government further stretching its already stretched finances to provide for additional food and free vaccines to the masses hit by the second Covid-19 wave. Though officials refuse to give details of the fiscal numbers for FY22 as final calculations are yet to be worked out, they said that initial cost for the relief measures looks like standing at Rs 1 lakh crore subject to correction post November. The Rs 1 lakh crore figure for the initial two Covid-19 relief measures announced by the



Centre is based on the assumption that additional 25 per cent purchase of vaccine by the Centre would shoot up its vaccine procurement budgeted at Rs 35,000 crore in FY22 by an additional half of this amount at Rs 17,500 crore. This could increase Centre's vaccination tab to over

Rs 50,000 crore. Also, the free foodgrain announced by the Centre earlier for two months (for May and June) cost it around Rs 25-26,000 crore. Additional spending till November this year could this be another Rs 65,000 crore. However, if states seek to lift more of rice under the central

scheme, this Rs 65,000 crore for next 5 months could be Rs 80,000 crore or more. But, if states lift less than what is provided by Centre, there could be saving in additional expenditure. India has to stretch its finances even in FY21 as Covid pandemic and nationwide lockdown severely dented economic environment pushing up India's deficit with lower revenue and higher expenditure. The country budgeted a higher fiscal deficit of 9.5 per cent for FY21 but it fell down slightly to 9.3 per cent of GDP as per revised estimate. The hope for this year too is that rising expenditure needs does not derail the country from path of fiscal consolidation into another year of fiscal stress.



# TRINAMOOL TURNCOATS GIVING TOUGH TIME TO SAFFRON CAMP

On a day when BJPs leader of the opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party President J.P. Nadda in the national capital, and the party state leaders met to discuss the post-election strategy, the absence of Mukul Roy from the meeting increased the uneasiness in the saffron camp on Tuesday.



Team Absolute | Kolkata

What has added fuel to the fire is a post by Rajib Banerjee, a former Trinamool Congress minister who had jumped ship to the BJP just before the Assembly elections held in March-April this year. Banerjee, who flew to Delhi on a chartered flight and joined the BJP before the elections, said in a recent Facebook post in Bengali headlined "There has been enough criticism: To criticise a government which came to power with a massive public

mandate and to oppose its Chief Minister, the repeated reference to Delhi (Centre) and Article 356 will not go down well with the people of Bengal. It is our duty to rise above politics and fight together for the people of the state in the hard times of Covid and Yaas." The post has created ripples in the political circles, forcing the BJP disciplinary committee to take it seriously. Banerjee, who was defeated from the Domjur Assembly constituency in the recently concluded elections, said in his close circles that he had repeatedly warned the central party leadership against headline

'Hindutva' campaign in Bengal, but it didn't pay any heed. Trinamool Congress General Secretary Kunal Ghosh said, "It is nice to see that he has realised finally, but the realisation came too late. He should have realised this before going to Delhi and joining the BJP." However, state BJP President Dilip Ghosh is not ready to give too much importance to the post. "It is a personal opinion and we are looking into it," he said. While the state BJP leaders might choose to ignore Banerjee's post, the absence of another senior leader and former Trinamool man Mukul Roy

from the first meeting of the state BJP leaders on Tuesday might become a matter of concern for the saffron camp. When asked about it, Ghosh said, "His wife is not well, so he has skipped the meeting. But most of the other party leaders were present in the meeting." This is not the first time that Roy has skipped the meeting of the party's legislative committee. The situation became even more embarrassing when Trinamool's national General Secretary, Abhishek Banerjee, recently went to a private hospital where Roy's wife was undergoing treatment and met his son Subhranshu Roy and enquired about her health. The meeting was immediately followed by Ghosh's visit to the hospital and a phone call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Subhrangshu Roy was all-praise for Abhishek Banerjee, which left the BJP leadership even more red-faced. Though the Trinamool-turned-BJP leaders seem to be giving some embarrassment to the saffron brigade, Adhikari after his meeting with Shah put up a brave face. Speaking to the media after the meeting, Adhikari said, "Last time the Trinamool Congress did the same thing with 20/22 MLAs but they should remember that Suwendu Adhikari is there and there is something called anti-defection law. So nothing will be so easy."

# BJP leader files complaint against Instagram over Lord Shiva GIF



BJP leader Manish Singh filed the complaint at Parliament Street police station here against the CEO and other officials of Instagram.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader on Tuesday filed a complaint against Instagram for allegedly portraying Lord Shiva in a "bad taste". In his complaint, Singh, who unsuccessfully contested the Delhi Assembly election in 2020, said: "Accused above-named have portrayed Lord Shiva in a very bad taste, it would be pertinent to mention herein that Lord Shiva is venerated by millions and millions of Hindus as the Supreme God." "That the accused, in one of their Graphics Interchange Format (GIF), have shown the Supreme

God, Lord Shiva, as holding a glass of wine in one hand and a mobile phone in the other hand," Singh complained. Singh wrote in his complaint that though the GIF, the accused is deliberately and intentionally hurting the feelings and sentiments of Hindus, including him by portraying Lord Shiva in a bad taste. He claimed that GIF has been created with the sole intention of inciting the followers of Hindu community and in the process, promote disharmony, hatred and enmity, and further, the conduct of the accused persons may result in extreme provocation of the followers of Hindu community and this may result into breach

of peace. "In view of the above stated, it is therefore most respectfully submitted that a criminal case be registered against the CEO, and other officials of Instagram, who in conspiracy with other persons have committed offences falling within the parameters of the Indian Penal Code and also under the Information Technology Act," Singh said.

# Priyanka questions govt's Covid death figures

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday once again took a pot shot at the Central government over the deficit in the data of the people who died due to Covid during the second wave of the pandemic. Priyanka Gandhi in a tweet in Hindi said, "Why there is so much difference in the government's figures on deaths due to Covid and the figures of the crematoriums and cemeteries? Why did the (Narendra) Modi government make the data a tool of propaganda instead of spreading awareness to stop the pandemic?" She tweeted with the hash tag of #ZimmedarKaun (who is responsible). The Congress in-charge for Uttar Pradesh also attached a video of her targeting the government over the difference in



the data and said, "Why there is massive deficit between the official death data of Covid and official data gathered from crematoriums and graveyards and other sources? Why did the government use the data as propaganda rather than using it for what it's meant to be used to stop the spread of Covid?" Slamming the government, she said, "Experts around the world have said make data public and transparent that is the only way we can win the battle against Covid. Why has government not done so?" she questioned. Priyanka Gandhi has been firing salvos at the government under her "who is responsible" campaign. She is questioning the government everyday over its arrangements and claims to control the Covid pandemic, which hit India hard in April this year.

# FOREIGN-BOUND STUDENTS, OLYMPIC PARTICIPANTS TO BE VACCINATED IN GOA

Panaji: Students and job seekers heading abroad and Tokyo Olympic Games-bound sports persons in the 18-45 years age group will be allowed vaccination in Goa from Wednesday, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Tuesday. In a tweet, the Chief Minister said the fresh set of relaxation is in sync with the government of India guidelines. "From tomorrow, we are opening up the first dose of vaccination for the 18-45 age group who need to travel internationally for employment, education and sporting events as per Govt of India guidelines," Sawant tweeted. The Chief Minister said that persons who qualify for the three categories should make themselves available at the vaccination centres across the state with copies of their admission offers (students), interview call records or job offer letters (job seekers) and nomination documents for participation in the upcoming Tokyo Olympic Games.



# Stalin writes to 12 CMs to urge Centre for loan moratorium

Chennai | Agencies

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday urged his counterparts in 12 states to seek that the Central government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) provide a loan moratorium to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) due to the lockdown this year. In a letter to Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, and West Bengal, he said there is asymmetry in treatment of borrowers, particularly MSME units and small borrowers during the first and second waves of Covid-19. "In April/May, 2020 when the Government of India had announced the nationwide lockdown, a moratorium was offered on repayment of loans for such bor-



rowers. However, in April-June, 2021 when lockdowns are being imposed, based on local conditions, by the respective states, similar relief to borrowers is not being provided for," Stalin said. Stating that he has taken up the issue with the Central government, Stalin requested the 12 Chief Ministers to write to both the Union Finance Minister and the Governor, Reserve Bank of India to prevail on them to offer loan repayment for at least the first two quarters of 2021-

2022 to all small borrowers with outstanding up to Rs 5 crore in view of the lockdowns induced by the second wave of Covid-19. The absence of such relief measures would force many businesses to close and would lead to widespread economic distress. These MSMEs and small businesses are the mainstay of our economy and employment generation, Stalin added. Stalin also said several Chief Ministers had written to the Central government that it would be the appropriate purchaser of Covid-19 vaccine than the states. "I am happy that all our collective efforts have been instrumental in convincing the Union Government and the Hon'ble Prime Minister has reversed the earlier policy yesterday," he said. Several states including Tamil Nadu had floated global tender to purchase Covid-19 vaccines but did not get even a single bid.

# AMARINDER TO REMAIN PUNJAB CM WITH SIDHU LIKELY AS DEPUTY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the party panel for Punjab set to submit its reports on the political turmoil in the state, sources say that it may not recommend removal of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and he is likely to the party in the state to the next elections. The panel members are also tight-lipped about the change of guard in the organization but sources say that a non-Sikh member is likely to be recommended by the panel to lead the

state unit if Sunil Jhakar the incumbent state president is to be replaced. Fate of cricketer-turned-politician Sidhu is still not clear but he may be recommended for the Deputy Chief Minister's post in the Punjab cabinet despite Amarinder's reservations and he could be seen accommodating a deputy in the cabinet, sources said. Last week the panel headed by Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress' Punjab in-charge Harish Rawat and former



MP J.P. Aggarwal met all the stakeholders in the party. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh appeared

before the three-member Congress panel. After the meeting Captain Amarinder Singh said: "The meeting was to discuss the preparations for the Assembly elections scheduled early next year. These are our inner party discussions and I don't propose to share them with you." The rift in Punjab Congress had surfaced after former state Cabinet Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu along with Pargat Singh opened a front against the Chief Minister.

# Man arrested on charge of raping daughter

Gurugram | Agencies

A man was arrested here on Tuesday for allegedly raping his 22-year-old daughter, making obscene videos, blackmailing her to upload the clips on social media and sending them to her in-laws, the police said. The 22-year-old victim in her police complaint told the police that she lives in the Kapashera area of Delhi. "Her father took her to a hotel located in



DLF Phase-2 of Gurugram on the pretext of getting her a job on Monday and later raped her. He also shot obscene videos and threatened to send them to her in-laws and also make them viral on social video if she tells anyone about the incident," a police officer said. A case was registered on Monday following a complaint by the victim, at DLF Phase-2 police station in Gurugram. Police said the accused has been arrested and a probe was underway.



# Fire breaks out in Mata Vaishno Devi shrine complex

Team Absolute | Jammu

A fire broke out at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine complex in Katra on Tuesday in which one building of the complex was completely gutted, though no casualty occurred during the blaze. Police sources said the fire broke out

at the Kalika Bhavan building in the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine complex, which has been brought under control. "No casualty took place in this fire incident which happened most probably due to a short circuit. One building housing a counting centre was completely gutted," sources said.

# Class 5 student hails SC's steps against Covid-19, CJI says 'beautiful letter'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A Class 5 student from Kerala has written to the Chief Justice of India, Justice N. V. Ramana, saying she is happy that the Supreme Court has intervened effectively in the sufferings and death of ordinary people in the fight against Covid-19. The 10-year-old Lidwina Joseph from Kerala's Thrissur district, wrote in the letter, "I am happy and feel proud your honourable court has moved orders for supply of oxygen and saved many lives. I understood your honourable court has initiated effective steps in bringing down Covid-19 infection and death rate in our country, especially in Delhi. I thank your honour for this. Now I feel very proud and happy." Joseph in her hand-written letter said she was very worried about deaths in Delhi and other parts of the country due to coronavirus, and



felt happy to see the top court making vital interventions to alleviate

the suffering of the people in the unprecedented health crisis

unleashed by the pandemic. The letter was accompanied by a colourful illustration showing a bespectacled judge using his gavel to deliver a blow on the head of coronavirus. Joseph also drew a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, which was hung on the wall behind the judge. Chief Justice Ramana replied to Joseph, saying, "I have received your beautiful letter along with a heart-warming illustration of the judge at work." The Chief Justice said he was very impressed with the way Joseph kept track of the happenings in the country and also appreciated the concern she has displayed for the well-being of people in the wake of the pandemic. Chief Justice Ramana wrote, "I am sure you will grow up into an alert, informed and responsible citizen who will contribute immensely towards nation-building." He also sent her a signed copy of the Indian Constitution.



Unlock process must be closely monitored

# PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO COVID APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR AND VACCINATION: CHIEF MINISTER

Chouhan reviews Corona situation and arrangements

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Corona infection should be totally eradicated and it should not increase again. For this it is necessary that every person adopts Covid appropriate and gets vaccinated. Special attention should be given to this.

Chouhan said that the unlocking process in each district should be closely monitored. It should be ensured that there is no violation of Covid protocol anywhere. Along with making people aware, strictness should also be exercised.

Chouhan was reviewing the situa-



tion and arrangements of Corona in Mantralaya on Tuesday. Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, DGP Vivek Johri and Additional Chief Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman were present in the meeting.

As many as 535 new cases of Corona have been reported in the state, 1376 people have recovered and the number of active patients is 7 thousand 983. The state's average positivity rate for 7 days is 0.9 percent and today's positivity rate is 0.7 percent.

Out of the total active patients of the state, 4 thousand 521 are in home isolation and 3 thousand 462 in hospitals. Out of the hospitalized patients, one thousand 421 are in ICU patients, 1326 are on oxygen beds and 715 on normal beds.

More than 10 Corona cases have been reported in 7 districts in the state. 179 new cases have been reported in Indore, 124 in Bhopal, 46 in Jabalpur, 13 in Ratlam, 12 in Gwalior, 11 in Khargone and 11 in

Anuppur.

Five districts of the state, Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Ratlam and Betul districts have more than one percent weekly positivity rate. The remaining 47 districts have a weekly average positivity rate of less than one percent.

No case of Corona has been reported in 6 districts of the state including Alirajpur, Bhind, Chhatrapur, Katni, Singrauli and Tikamgarh. One new case each has been reported in four districts including Ashoknagar, Morena, Sehore and Sheopur. Alirajpur is Corona free.

Chouhan directed to generate awareness among the people regarding vaccination against Corona. All misconceptions related to this should be removed, every 18 plus person should be vaccinated and even a single dose of vaccine should not go waste.



## CM expresses gratitude to PM for the decisions regarding vaccination and distribution of free ration

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed gratitude towards the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the decisions by the Government of India to conduct Covid vaccination and free ration distribution to the poor till Diwali. Chouhan said that this is a historic decision. This will bring uniformity and speed in the vaccination campaign in the country under the leadership of PM Modi.

Chouhan was addressing the members of the Council of Ministers before the Cabinet meeting in Mantralaya. The meeting started with the recitation of Vande Mataram. Chouhan said that according to the decision of Prime Minister Shri Modi, the people in the age group of 18 to 44 years will be vaccinated free of cost by the Central Government. Also, the entire vaccination campaign will be conducted by the Government of India. The states will continue to get the vaccine on the basis of availability in proportion to their population and requirement. With this, the vaccination campaign will run systematically and the work will also get speed. Chief Minister said that Prime Minister Modi is also congratulated for the fact that till now when the vaccine for any new disease was manufactured then far from being made in the country it was not even available in the country, but

India got the swadeshi vaccine due to the continuous efforts of our scientists under the leadership of Modi.

Chouhan said that Prime Minister Modi has taken care of the poor. Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana by the Government of India, no free ration will be given till November. Chouhan on behalf of the Council of Ministers and the people of the state thanked Modi for these decisions.

Chouhan said that in view of the continuous decline in the prices of summer moong, it has been decided to procure moong at the support price. The registration work is also starting from today June 8. This is an important decision for the farmers. Agriculture Minister Shri Kamal Patel thanked Chief Minister on behalf of the farmers of the state.

Chouhan said that the impasse regarding the strike of junior doctors has also ended. In the midst of the crisis of Covid infection, they have returned to work as a result of conversations with junior doctors. This is a worthwhile step. Chouhan thanked the Crisis Management Committees, public representatives, MLAs, MPs for their continuous efforts to control Covid in the state. Chief Minister said that I am grateful to the people of the state for the patience and restraint with which the people of the state faced the situation of Covid.

## Tree Plantation held at IGRMS



Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the occasion of World Environment Day, tree plantation was done by the officers and staff of the museum in the Arishta Van premises of the Sangrahalaya. On this occasion, the director PK Mishra said that tree plantation is necessary for environmental balance and real progress of human beings. That is why trees and plants are worshiped in our country. Neem is also recognized in the scriptures Triveni is also complete with Bad and Peepal only when Neem is planted in it. Triveni has been planted in villages and cities

since time immemorial and the main reason for this is that neem is beneficial. In the scriptures and literature related to Ayurveda. The root of the neem tree to the bark, stem, nimboli and leaves, everything is useful. From fuel to medicine, neem has always been used. Research has been done in all countries including India regarding neem and these researches have told many miraculous properties of neem to the world. He is the destroyer of all kinds of diseases. Neem is used as a medicine in India. In today's time, many allopathic medicines are made from neem leaves and its bark.

## Up to 100 percent exemption will be given in the surcharge of various taxes of urban bodies

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh told that with the decline in employment and other sectors due to Corona pandemic, citizens are facing difficulty in paying taxes and consumer charges of urban bodies. He said that in view of these conditions, decision has been taken to give exemption in the surcharge of various taxes. Singh has said that such exemption was given to citizens even during the first wave of Corona.

Only 100 percent exemption in only surcharge will be given in the cases of property tax in which the remaining amount of tax and surcharge will be up to Rs 50 thousand. In the cases of property tax in which the remaining amount of tax and surcharge is up to Rs one lakh, 50 percent in only surcharge will be exempted and in those cases of property tax in which the remaining amount of tax and surcharge is more than Rs one lakh, 25 percent exemption in surcharge will be given.

In the cases of land rent / rent of assets disposed by urban bodies, in which the total amount due including

surcharge will be up to Rs 20 thousand, 100 percent exemption in surcharge only will be given, land rent / rent of assets disposed by urban bodies in such cases, in which the total amount due including surcharge will be between Rs 20 thousand and Rs 50 thousand, 50 percent in surcharge and in such cases of land rent / rent of assets disposed by urban bodies, in which the total due amount including surcharge is more than Rs 50 thousand, only 25 percent exemption will be given in only surcharge.

Cases of water consumer charges / water cess in which the amount of tax and surcharge will be up to Rs 10 thousand, 100 percent exemption will be given in

surcharge only, in cases of water consumer charges / water cess in which the amount of tax and surcharge is more than Rs 10 thousand up to Rs 50 thousand, only 75 percent exemption will be given in surcharge and in cases of water consumer charges / water cess, where the amount of tax and surcharge is more than Rs 50 thousand, only 50 percent exemption will be given in surcharge. Exemption will be given to such taxpayers/citizens who will pay the pending due amount till August 31st, 2021. This exemption will be applicable only on surcharge and will not be applicable on interest, stamp duty, basic tax, basic consumer charges or basic land rent/rent.

### No surcharge from April to June for depositing tax by July 31

In view of Covid-19 prevention, Corona curfew and various restrictions have been imposed in most of the districts of the state in April and May 2021. Due to this, the citizens residing in the cities of the state have been facing difficulty in making timely payment of various taxes and consumer charges etc. of the urban bodies due to which, surcharges etc. have become payable on the said taxes and consumer charges. Keeping in view the interests of the citizens, the state government has decided that citizens who will pay tax and consumer charges etc. to the urban bodies till July 31, 2021, they will not have to pay surcharge for the period of 3 months from April to June, 2021.

## ATTACKED BY RSS, BJP LEADERS FOR 'ANTI-HINDU' TWEETS, CM'S NEW OSD SAYS WON'T ACCEPT POST

■ BJP, RSS leaders, supporters had started a Twitter campaign asking CM Shivraj Chouhan to remove Tushar Panchal as OSD, citing Panchal's past 'anti-Hindu' & anti-Modi tweets.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A day after Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan appointed Tushar Panchal as his Officer on Special Duty (OSD), the latter has said he will not accept the responsibility. His decision came after a number of BJP, RSS leaders and supporters started a campaign on Twitter asking Chouhan to remove Panchal as his OSD, citing his old tweets that were allegedly "anti-Hindu" and critical of the Narendra Modi government.

They questioned if Chouhan needed "people like" Panchal, who they also called a "Modi hater."

"I have decided to not accept the responsibility offered to me by @chouhanshivrajji and have communicated my inability to the CM," he tweeted.

On Monday, Panchal had announced on Twitter that he was set to take up his role "inside the office of" CM Shivraj Chouhan.

"Friends: Many of you



have known me as a man behind the curtains. I have been working closely with many CMs and political leaders across the country since 2001," he tweeted, adding: "Today, my destiny has placed me inside the office of MP Chief Minister @ChouhanShivrajji as his communication advisor. Please wish me luck. More details later."

Panchal.

"@ChouhanShivrajji do you need people like this? (sic)"

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's Delhi state executive member Rajiv Tuli also hit out at Panchal and posted an old tweet of his. "Does @ChouhanShivrajji really need him? Madhya Pradesh has given rich culture of eminent journalists of our ideology. Why not one from them. ??? (sic)."

Others also posted about Panchal's tweets, questioning his appointment, though some spoke in support of him too.

However, Panchal while talking to over phone call refused to comment. Sources close to him, however, said Panchal has been working with Shivraj Singh Chouhan for quite some time and even managed his social media.

"This is nothing but a politically motivated campaign. His tweets have been posted without context. He has been working behind the scenes and has always put the party first," said a source.



## 'Not in Public Interest:' BHEL Denies Bhopal RTI Activist Info on Covid-19 Deaths

The section cited by BHEL for denial is often widely misused by PIOs, said MP Information Commissioner.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Harat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) Bhopal has reportedly denied sharing information on an RTI query on the numbers of death of company employees due to Covid-19.

Bhopal-based RTI activist Ajay Patidar had filed an RTI application with the public sector undertaking seeking to know how many employees it had lost due to the pandemic till May 25.

The Central Public Information Officer of the PSU has declined the details under section 8 (1) (j) calling it a query from a third party 'not in public interest'.

Patidar, who has now appealed the matter, said that the matter pertains to public interest as it deals with the wider issue of health. Opposing the denial of information, Patidar claimed that if remaining employees have this information, they can take measures for their safety on the campus and also 'it (casualty figures) will reflect the efficiency of the industrial unit in safeguarding the workers.'

Information Commissioner of the MP State Information Commission, Rahul Singh told News18.com that the denial of information in this matter is unjust. The PSU could have sought objections from the kin concerned under section 11 of the RTI Act before sharing the information 'which does not seem the case going by the reply'.

"How come the deaths due to a pandemic be called

in public or personal interest, it's a gross misuse of section 8 (1) (j), claimed the information commissioner adding schemes are linked to casualties so hiding this is not proper. The only information which can't be provided to parliament or assembly could be denied under the Act," said Singh, adding that the section concerned is widely misused by PIOs for denying information under the RTI act.

Queries like information on salary, transfer-posting, vehicle log book are often denied under section 8 (1) (j) ostensibly over privacy which is wrong, said the information commissioner. The officer cited an example of then Rewa Collector OP Shrivastava who had denied information under the RTI Act under section 8 (1) (j). The information commissioner had not only rejected the order of the collector but had issued him a show-cause notice. "I have reversed several orders of PIOs who had denied sharing information on mark sheets and caste certificates," said Singh.

Ashish Chaturvedi, an RTI activist known for his RTI act exploits in the Vyapam scam in Madhya Pradesh, too agreed that section 8 (1) (j) is widely misused by government officers to suppress information. Even if the information is drawn later through appeals, the initial denial delays the entire process unnecessarily, he claimed.

He alleged that Central Information Commission and SICs remain lenient and don't levy penalties in such cases.

## Moong procurement will start from June 15 - CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that registration for the purchase of Moong at Minimum Support Price is being started from today, June 8. The procurement of moong will start from June 15. In view of the decrease in the prices of Moong during the summer season, the minimum support price has been fixed at Rs 7 thousand 196 per quintal. The purchase will continue for 90 days. These decisions have been taken with the aim of protecting the interest and welfare of the farmers. Our government is the government of farmers. We are committed to make farming a profitable business and double the income of farmers. Chouhan was addressing farmers virtually from Mantralaya at the occasion of the launch of registration of Moong and Urad procurement. Farmers' Welfare and Agriculture Development Minister Kamal Patel was also present in the programme.

Chief Minister said that doubling the income of farmers is the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The state government is making all efforts in this direction. Work like increasing production, reducing the cost of production, providing fair price and assistance to the farmers in the event of



disaster is being done promptly by the state government.

Chouhan said that our effort is to ensure that farmers use new technology. There should be maximum expansion of irrigation area. Currently, irrigation facility is available in 42 lakh hectare area in the state, which has to be taken up to 65 lakh hectare. Availability of electricity is also adequate. These facilities have made it easy for the farmers to take three crops. Loan arrangement at low interest has also been made

with the aim of reducing the cost of production. In this sequence, the date of repayment of short-term crop loans distributed by cooperative societies has been extended to June 30 keeping in view the convenience of small and marginal farmers.

Chouhan said that the state government had decided to start the purchase of gram, lentil and mustard from March 15 even in Corona crisis which fetched fair price to the farmers. Now adequate arrangements are being made for purchase of moong crop in

the rainy season. Purchase will be made only in those centers where there is arrangement to keep Moong safe. Purchase centers will be opened at sufficient number of places in the state. Purchase process will continue up to 90 days. It is necessary to ensure that procurement centers are not overcrowded, masks should be worn and mutual distance should be maintained in view of the Corona infection.

Chouhan also interacted with the farmers of five districts.



## Delhi's active Covid cases below 5K, lowest since March 24



**The national capital in the same time span reported 41 new Covid deaths, taking the total death toll so far to 24,668, according to Delhi Government's health bulletin. A total of 521 Covid infected people have recovered in the last 24 hours in the capital city.**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The number of active Covid cases in the national capital has come down to below 5,000 mark for the first time since March 24. On Tuesday, it reported 4,962 active cases, health officials said. Amid continued reduction in daily new coronavirus infections in the last few weeks, the national capital on Tuesday

reported 316 new cases as the daily Covid positivity rate came down to 0.44 per cent. The national capital in the same time span reported 41 new Covid deaths, taking the total death toll so far to 24,668, according to Delhi Government's health bulletin. A total of 521 Covid infected people have recovered in the last 24 hours in the capital city.

The number of Covid patients who are under home isolation have also

declined to below 2,000 mark, as 1,795 patients are reported to be in home isolation on Tuesday.

The national capital had reported 231 new cases and 36 Covid deaths on Monday. According to the Delhi Corona App, ICU beds with ventilators are vacant in all government-run hospitals in Delhi. Out of 2,553 ICU beds with ventilators for critical Covid patients available in Delhi, 1,882 were vacant, till Tuesday evening.

## Arvind Kejriwal urges Modi to allow Delhi govt to provide free rations

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Centre has blocked the scheme launched by the Delhi government to help provide subsidised foodgrains at home.

Kejriwal, who is also the National Convener of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), wrote a fresh letter two days after he had requested Modi to allow his government to distribute subsidised foodgrains and items in packed bundles at the doorstep of people in Delhi. During a press conference on June 6, Kejriwal asked, "If pizza can be delivered at home, why not ration."

Kejriwal on Saturday reiterated that he has been fighting against the 'ration mafia' for the last 17 years and had faced difficulties. He had said the 'ration mafia' in Delhi has strong connections and they have again stopped door-to-door ration delivery scheme so he requested Modi to support his flagship scheme.

"Till today I have supported you in all your work in national interest. You should also support us in this. This is also a matter of national interest. We are ready to make any changes in the ration delivery plan that the Central government needs," Kejriwal urged Modi in his letter.

"It is important that this scheme be implemented -- not just in Delhi but the whole country -- during the coronavirus pandemic," the letter

**Amid the escalating political fight over the controversial 'ration at doorstep' scheme following the Centre's objections, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to draw his attention to the matter.**



added.

On Saturday, Kejriwal had accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government of blocking his flagship scheme again that would benefit 72 lakh people suffering economic hardships and loss of jobs and wages as a result of the lockdown.

The fresh controversy over this issue has emerged after Delhi Lieutenant Governor, Anil Bajjal, returned the Delhi government's file citing lack of the Central government's approval and an ongoing court case.

Kejriwal on Saturday had told the media that he has written five letters to the Central govern-

ment seeking its approval to run this scheme.

"The Delhi government did not require the Centre's approval for the implementation of the ration scheme but it sought permission five times to avoid any dispute. We have written as many as five letters to the Centre to seek approval. What kind of approval does the Delhi government need from the Centre?" Kejriwal said during a press conference.

The AAP government in Delhi had cleared the proposal to allow home delivery of ration in July last year. It was one of the promises made by the party in the run-up to the 2020 February Assembly polls.

## BJP DECLARES CANDIDATES FOR MAYORAL POLLS IN 3 DELHI CORPORATIONS

New Delhi: Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta on Tuesday announced the names of candidates for the mayor post on the last day of filing of nominations for the June 16 elections. BJP candidates Raja Iqbal Singh, Mukesh Suryan and Shyam Sunder Aggarwal are expected to be elected unopposed for the North, South, and East Delhi corporations respectively as the party enjoys a majority in all three corporations.

Gupta also announced names for the post of deputy mayor - Archana Dilip Singh for North Delhi, Pawan Sharma for South Delhi and Kiran Vaidh for East Delhi Municipal Corporation. The outgoing mayors are Jai Prakash (NDMC), Anamika (SDMC) and Nirmal Jain (EDMC). The five-year term for a mayor is rotated every year. The first year is reserved for women, the second open category, third scheduled castes, and the remaining two again for the open category. This is the last term of the mayors and other elected representatives, after which Delhi will go for polls next year.

Candidates for Chairman for North, South, and East Delhi are Jogi Ram Jain, Col (ret'd) BK Oberoi and Veersing Panwar respectively and for Vice-Chairman the candidates are Vijay Kumar Bhagat (NDMC), Poonam Bhati (SDMC) and Deepak Malhotra (EDMC). For Leader of the House, the names announced are Chhail Bihari Goswami (NDMC), Inderjeet Sehrawat (SDMC) and Satyapal Singh (EDMC).

**BJP candidates Raja Iqbal Singh, Mukesh Suryan and Shyam Sunder Aggarwal will contest the elections for the mayor post in the North, South, and East Delhi corporations, respectively.**

## Gurugram admin screens over 3.98 lakh people in rural areas

Team Absolute | Gurugram

During the second wave of Covid-19, the first phase of the door-to-door screening of 3,98,352 citizens has been completed across 165 villages in Gurugram district, administration officials said on Tuesday. "Under this screening campaign launched from May 15 to June 4, so far survey teams have visited 74,332 houses and examined the health of 3,98,352 citizens. During this campaign, symptoms like mild fever were found in a few villagers. Such villagers have been advised by the survey team to stay in home isolation," said Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg. The officials said in the rural areas of Gurugram, nearly 16 teams have been set up in each gram panchayat who are doing door-to-door screening to identify coronavirus patients and make people aware of Covid-19 prevention measures.

Under this campaign, the health check-up of the villagers of the district is being done. Members of the field survey team at the village level including Asha workers, Anganwadi workers, school teachers, village secretary and members are conducting Covid tests,



Garg added. District Development and Panchayat Officer (DDPO), Narendra Sarwan, who is looking after the screening work in rural areas, said during the survey rapid antigen tests of 3,331 people were done in which 25 persons were found positive, of which four patients were in critical condition. These patients are being treated under the supervision of Health Department doctors. "We appealed to the villagers that if they show any kind of symptoms related to Covid-19, they must imme-

diately inform the Health Department team so that the patient can be treated in time," Sarwan added.

The Gurugram Deputy Commissioner said the number of Covid-19 cases are fewer in the district.

"We appeal to all residents that even if the Covid-19 infection is in control but the danger of the pandemic is not over yet, so we all should be careful as before. Try to stay indoors and follow Covid-appropriate norms," Garg added.

## CBI BOOKS FCI OFFICIAL IN DISPROPORTIONATE ASSETS CASE

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday said that it has registered a case of disproportionate assets against Kishor Meena, Assistant Grade-I officer of FCI posted at Divisional Office in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal and carried out searches at 13 locations. A



CBI official said that the agency registered a case against Meena on the allegations of illicit enrichment to the tune of Rs 2.93 crore during December 2, 2016 to May 29, 2021. He said that the agency conducted searches at 13 locations in Bhopal, Vidisha, Khandwa, Jhabua, Narsingpur, Jabalpur, Nanded and Jalgaon including at the premises of contractors and private persons. The official said that the case has been registered on the basis of information collected during investigation of another case related to alleged bribery, wherein four Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials including the said Assistant Grade-I officer were arrested. "During the searches at the premises of accused in the said case of bribery, cash of Rs 3.01 crore was recovered," he said. The official said that in the earlier case registered on the allegations of bribery, the four arrested persons including Divisional Manager, Manager (Accounts), Manager (Security) and Meena were remanded to police custody. The Divisional Manager and the two Managers were sent to judicial custody, the official said. Meena was produced before the Special Judge, CBI cases, Bhopal on Tuesday and remanded to police custody till June 10, he added.

## DELHI POLICE ARRESTS SHARP SHOOTER OF ASHOK PRADHAN GANG

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Tuesday said that it has arrested a sharp shooter of the notorious gangster Ashok Pradhan gang wanted in the murder of a member of the Kala Jathedi gang.

He was having a reward of Rs 50,000 on his head.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Special Cell Pramod Kumar Kushwah said sharp shooter Prince involved in a sensational murder of Rohit was absconding. He said that Prince was arrested at about 10 p.m. on June 4 near Navodaya Vidyalaya in Qutab Garh Road of Delhi and one semi-automatic pistol of .32 with three live cartridges has been recovered from him.

Kushwah said that Prince is a



sharp shooter of Pradhan, a notorious gangster and was wanted in a number of cases including a sensational shootout which took place on December 26 last year in Delhi's Bawana in which Rohit died.

The DCP said that the police had got the information of Prince's movement and it learnt that he would come near Navodaya School on the night of June 4. Once he arrived, he

was surrounded by the team and eventually nabbed. One semi-automatic pistol with three live cartridges was recovered from him, he said.

Kushwah said, "During interrogation, Prince disclosed that he and his associates namely Abhishek and Rajesh belong to Ashok Pradhan gang and their gang has rivalry with members of Sandeep a.k.a. Jathedi gang in the area."

He further disclosed that Abhishek was having a fierce rivalry with Priyavart, an active associate of Sandeep. Abhishek, Rajesh of Pradhan gang and their associates had fired at the house of Priyavart in January 2020 to threaten him. Prince has further said that they had suspected that Rohit, a member of rival gang used to pass the information about movements of their gang to

Sandeep. He said that Prince further disclosed that he along with his three associates namely Abhishek, Sanjay and Andha, all fully armed went on two bikes, waylaid Rohit and shot him dead during the night of December 26 last year. Kushwah said that murder of Rohit provoked Priyavart and other members of Sandeep gang.

"To avenge the murder of Rohit, Priyavart along with members of his gang shot dead one Shashi Kadyan on March 6 this year. Kadyan was a close associate of Abhishek and Rajesh, both active members of Pradhan gang." "In another case, Priyavart with his associates had shot dead Dhole in Haryana's Sonapat last year on the directions of Sandeep and Lawrence Bishnoi in their gang rivalry," the DCP said.

## CBI books FCI official in disproportionate assets case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday said that it has registered a case of disproportionate assets against Kishor Meena, Assistant Grade-I officer of FCI posted at Divisional Office in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal and carried out searches at 13 locations. A CBI official said that the agency registered a case against Meena on the allegations of illicit enrichment to the tune of Rs 2.93 crore during December 2, 2016 to May 29, 2021. He said that the agency conducted searches at 13 locations in Bhopal, Vidisha, Khandwa, Jhabua, Narsingpur, Jabalpur, Nanded and Jalgaon including at the premises of contractors and private persons. The official said that the case has been

registered on the basis of information collected during investigation of another case related to alleged bribery, wherein four Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials including the said Assistant Grade-I officer were arrested. "During the searches at the premises of accused in the said case of bribery, cash of Rs 3.01 crore was recovered," he said. The official said that in the earlier case registered on the allegations of bribery, the four arrested persons including Divisional Manager, Manager (Accounts), Manager (Security) and Meena were remanded to police custody. The Divisional Manager and the two Managers were sent to judicial custody, the official said. Meena was produced before the Special Judge, CBI cases, Bhopal on Tuesday and remanded to police custody till June 10, he added.

## Gambhir sets up free Covid vaccination camps in East Delhi



**Gambhir had earlier said that his foundation was tying up with a few hospitals to provide free vaccination with proper guidelines to all adults.**

report on the action taken in the next six weeks. In another statement, the High Court has said that even though Gambhir's intentions might be good, his initiatives caused the a lot of drug

shortage for the society. The free camps will be put up as Delhi continues to grapple with an acute shortage of vaccines for people under the 18 to 44 age bracket, forcing the state government to shut vaccination centres. During the second wave, Gambhir, through his foundation, has distributed various Covid-related items, including oxygen cylinders, concentrators and Fabiflu.

Gambhir had earlier said that his foundation was tying up with a few hospitals to provide free vaccination with proper guidelines. This comes after the former cricketer's foundation was found guilty, by the Delhi High Court, of "unauthorised purchase, stocking and distribution" of the Covid-19 drug Favipiravir. The court has also directed the Drug Controller to file a status

Team Absolute | New Delhi

East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir started free Covid vaccination camps for all adults at the Geeta Colony on Tuesday.

These camps will be put in areas such as Mayur Vihar, Patparganj, Jagriti Enclave in the next few days, an aide of Gambhir said. The camps aim to vaccinated around 300 people each day.

## DELHI POLICE BUSTS INTERSTATE ARMS SYNDICATE, ARRESTS SUPPLIER WITH 12 PISTOLS

**The Delhi Police's Crime Branch on Tuesday said that it has busted an interstate illegal arms syndicate and arrested one arms supplier Sajid. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) crime branch Monika Bhardwaj said that the police also recovered 12 sophisticated semi-automatic pistols, which were being supplied to the Shahrugh and Hasim Baba Gang.**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Bhardwaj said that a team of STF Crime Branch arrested Sajid, a resident of Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. She said that a tip off was received through a secret informer on June 7 that delivery of a huge consignment of illegal arms will be done near Chattarpur Pahari Bus Stop, 100 'Foota' Road in South Delhi's Chattarpur where someone from the gang of Shahrugh or Hasim Baba would come to collect the consignment of illegal arms from Sajid.

She said that it was further learnt that Sajid supplied illegal weapons in Delhi and NCR. "After the arrival of the arms supplier,

the team waited for the receiver but nobody turned up. When the supplier started to move from the spot, he was nabbed by the members of the Police team. On searching his bag, 12 sophisticated semi-automatic pistols were recovered," the DCP said.

"During interrogation, Sajid disclosed that he belongs to a poor family. Many people from his village were in the business of arms supply and were earning good money. He came in touch with these people of his village, who used to buy the pistols from the remote areas of Madhya Pradesh and sold them in Delhi and NCR," she said.

Sajid started the work as a carrier and used to take the



pistols from Khargone and Sendhwa in Madhya Pradesh and supplied them to the gangsters or criminals on the direction of the main arms dealer of his village. The DCP said that in lieu of supplying weapons Sajid used to get Rs 15,000 and in the past he has supplied illegal arms several times.

"This time, he got the illegal consignment from Azad, a resident of Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district, and came to Delhi for fur-

ther supply. After receiving the consignment of illegal weapons, Sajid would not use mobile phones. If required, they would borrow the mobile from any passer-by and convey the message to the main dealer. The gang bought pistols from the remote areas -- Khargone, Dhulkot and Sendhwa of Madhya Pradesh -- at a low price and sold them at a higher price to the gangsters of Delhi and NCR," she added.



# DIDN'T MEET NAWAZ SHARIF : UDDHAV WHEN ASKED ABOUT SEPARATE MEETING WITH MODI

◆ The CM-led delegation raised certain key issues with the PM pertaining to the Maratha reservations, quotas for Other Backward Classes in Panchayat elections, reservations for Backwards Classes in promotions, making available space at Kanjurmarg for the Mumbai Metro Car-shed, the pending GST dues to the state.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday led a delegation of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi government to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi to discuss around a dozen important pending issues concerning the state, officials said here. To a question whether he met the PM separately, Thackeray shot back: "We may not be together politically... That doesn't mean we have severed our links. I didn't go to meet Nawaz Sharif. So there's nothing wrong if I met him (PM) privately."



He added that the delegation emerged satisfied with the outcome and are confident that the PM will take appropriate action on all the matters raised with him.

At the meeting, in which Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and PWD Minister Ashok Chavan were also present, Thackeray took up issues of Maratha quotas, the state's GST dues, Mumbai Metro carshed, damage due to the recent Cyclone Tauktae, crop insurance scheme for farmers, etc.

"We had a good discussion with the PM on various pending issues of the state. The PM has given us a patient hearing. We are hopeful he will take a positive decision in the matter. I thank the PM," Thackeray later told mediapersons at Maharashtra Sadan in the capital.

An official in Mumbai said that the CM-led delegation

raised certain key issues with the PM pertaining to the Maratha reservations, quotas for Other Backward Classes in Panchayat elections, reservations for Backwards Classes in promotions, making available space at Kanjurmarg for the Mumbai Metro Car-shed, the pending GST dues to the state.

The delegation also sought a Crop Insurance Scheme on the lines of the Beed Model, clearance for a Bulk Drugs Park, changing the cost norms of NDRF for disaster relief, reimbursement of pending dues from the 14th Finance Commission for Panchayat Raj Sanstha and Urban Local, according status of a classical language for Marathi and decision on the 12 nominations for MLAs from the Governor's quota.

On financials, the state has sought Rs.24,306-crores due by way of GST reimbursement, Rs.1000-crore for the Bulk Drugs Park for which 250-acres land has been allotted near Dighi Port (Raigad), a Rs.5000-crore one-time grant to strengthen the infrastructure like retaining walls, underground power lines, shelters, etc on the state's coastal areas which have been devastated by cyclones for the past three years, and a total of Rs. 2,653-crore from the Finance Ministry towards 14th Finance Commission dues.

This was Thackeray's second meeting after a year with the PM which was preceded by discussions with Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar on Monday to prepare the groundwork, especially on issues pertaining to the Maratha and OBC reservations currently in the limelight.

## Thunderstorm, heavy rainfall in Mumbai, other parts of state till 12 June, IMD warns.



Rains lashed Mumbai and its neighbouring areas Tuesday morning, bringing respite from the sweltering heat, and the MeT department termed it as pre-monsoon showers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra is expected to witness thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, gusty winds, and heavy to very heavy rainfall from Tuesday till 12 June, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said today.

Earlier today, rains lashed Mumbai and its neighbouring areas, bringing respite from the sweltering heat, and the MeT department termed it as pre-monsoon showers.

As per the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Mumbai, up to 30 mm rainfall was recorded in areas like Malvani, Borivali and Dahisar here till 11 am.

Earlier, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday confirmed the arrival of the south-west monsoon in Maharashtra, when it had reached up to Harmal port in coastal Ratnagiri district.

But, despite favourable conditions, the monsoon has still not progressed to Mumbai. When contacted,

Shubhangi Bhute, director at the RMC Mumbai, termed the present rainfall in the city as "convective precipitation".

"You can observe that there is thunder, lightning and a constant variation in the intensity of the showers. You can call it pre-monsoon showers, but certainly not the south-west monsoon," she said.

These are no indications of onset of the monsoon here as yet, the official said.

"There has to be less variation and rains have to be widespread (to be called as monsoon showers). Apart from Mumbai, there should be rains over central Maharashtra also. Then only we can identify it as the south-west (SW) monsoon, she said.

The official further said going by the present observations, the SW monsoon onset here could be declared after a couple of days - by June 10.

"There is also an offshore trough in the Arabian Sea, but it is weak. Had it been strong, it could have helped in the advancement of the monsoon," she said.

## RPF Jawan Rescues Man From Moving Train At Mumbai's Kurla Station

The spot-on reaction of RPF jawan has made him a social media celebrity after he saved the life of a man who slipped while trying to board a moving train.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) jawan has once again appeared as a messiah at Mumbai



Railway Station. A man fell down while trying to board a moving train. He was about to fall into the gap between the train and the track, when the RPF jawan, owing to his quick action, ran there at the right time and picked him up, averting the major incident.

The incident happened at the Kurla Railway Station in Mumbai,

Maharashtra. A CCTV footage has surfaced in which it can be clearly seen that the train has left the Lokmanya Tilak terminal station.

Since he reached late, he tried to board the moving train. But, instead of getting up on the train, he fell down. The person was about to get stuck between the train and the track when suddenly the RPF jawan ran as a messiah and reached there and pulled out the person. It was because of the young man that his life was saved.

This is not the first case of an RPF jawan saving someone's life at a railway station in Mumbai. Even before this, many such videos have come to light, in which people's lives were in danger due to haste and CISE, RPF and other forces saved lives.

## BOMBAY HC CANCELS EX-FILMSTAR, MP NAVNEET KAUR RANA'S CASTE CERTIFICATE

A division bench comprising Justice RD Dhanuka and Justice VG Bisht ordered her to surrender it within 6 weeks and imposed a fine of Rs 200,000 to be paid to the Maharashtra Legal Services Authority within a fortnight.



Team Absolute | Nagpur

In a huge jolt, the Bombay High Court, Nagpur Bench on Tuesday struck down the caste certificate issued to Amravati Lok Sabha MP and ex-filmstar Navneet Kaur Rana on the grounds that it was obtained fraudulently using fabricated documents.

A division bench comprising Justice RD Dhanuka and Justice VG

Bisht ordered her to surrender it within 6 weeks and imposed a fine of Rs 200,000 to be paid to the Maharashtra Legal Services Authority within a fortnight.

Rana is the wife of independent MLA from Badnera, Ravi Rana, the founder of the Yuva Swabhimani Party (YSP) and is a relative of yoga guru Baba Ramdev.

The judges noted that Rana's claims of belonging to the 'Mochi' caste for obtaining a Scheduled Caste certificate itself was fraudulent and made with the intention to obtain various benefits available to a candidate from such a category despite knowing that she does not belong to that caste. Navneet Kaur is a former model and actress who fought the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Amravati (SC-reserved) constituency defeating veteran Shiv Sena leader Anandraj Adsul.



## MUMBAI-AHMEDABAD BULLET TRAIN: SLUM DWELLERS MOVE GUJARAT HC AGAINST INDIA'S 1ST HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

On Monday, the petition came up before a division bench comprising of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Biren Vaishnav.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project: Recently, 318 people were evicted from a slum colony to make way for the country's first, Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project. Thus, to facilitate their rehabilitation, they moved to the Gujarat High Court seeking direction from authorities. On Monday, the petition came up before a division bench comprising of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Biren Vaishnav. According to a PTI report, the Gujarat High Court directed to serve advance copies of the plea to the Western Railway zone of Indian Railways, the National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) - the authority which is implementing the high-speed rail corridor project, and Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The High Court has posted the matter for hearing on Thursday.

In the plea, moved by Bandhkaam Mazdoor Sangathan, a union of labourers, the dwellers of the JP Ni Chali slum located in Sabarmati area, Gujarat who were affected said they lived in the slum for over 30 years,

but had been evicted by the authorities to make way for the upcoming Bullet Train project, without any provision for rehabilitation and rendered homeless.

The plea stated that despite a verbal assurance for rehabilitation of the people from the NHSRCL, a notice was issued to them by the railway administration on 22 February 2021, for eviction within a period of seven days. It further mentioned despite representations made before the AMC and the Western Railway zone, the administration of Indian Railways started demolishing their houses on March 15, leaving those people without any shelter. The affected ones are in urgent need of rehabilitation, the plea added.

The introduction of the upcoming Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train in India, which in Japan is known as the Shinkansen, is expected to mark the nation's shift to an era of high-speed trains that are capable of hitting speeds of up to 350 km per hour. Of the 508.17 kilometre long high-speed rail corridor, 348.04 kilometre will fall in the state of Gujarat, 155.76 kilometre in the state of Maharashtra, and 4.3 kilometre in Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

## MAN REACHES POLICE STATION WITH KNIFE STUCK IN STOMACH

- Police immediately admitted the victim to a government hospital where he is recuperating. A video of the incident, which occurred on Sunday latenight, shows a man bleeding from his stomach and clutching the handle of the knife.

Team Absolute | Nagpur

In an incident that looks like a reel-life sequence, a 20-year-old man stabbed during a brawl managed to save his life as he ran towards a police station with a knife stuck in his stomach and later offered a lift on a motorcycle, a Nagpur Police official said on Tuesday, adding nine persons have been arrested.

Police immediately admitted the victim to a government hospital where he is recuperating. A video of the incident, which occurred on Sunday late night, shows a

man bleeding from his stomach and clutching the handle of the knife.

Thankfully for him, the distance between the open ground where he was stabbed and the police station was hardly 500 metres. A senior police officer said the attack was the fallout of an old rivalry. "The victim first ran some distance with the knife stuck in his stomach before he was given a lift on a motorcycle by his friend," he said. A case has been registered against the accused under various sections of the Indian Penal Code.

## Maha's Covid cases dip, deaths soar, Mumbai toll crosses 15K

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra's daily Covid-19 death toll remained high and the Mumbai toll crossed the 15,000 mark though fresh infections stayed low, health officials said on Tuesday.

Compared to 340 deaths declared on Monday, the state revealed 702 fatalities on Tuesday, comprising 295 fresh and 407 previous deaths, taking the toll to 101,172 now.

The number of fresh cases remained below the 20,000 level for the ninth consecutive day but increased from 10,219 on Monday to 10,891, and the state tally climbed up to 58,52,891.

In Mumbai, for the 10th consecutive day, the new infections remained below the four figure level, dropping



from 730 on Monday to 682, while the city tally rose to 712,055. Deaths decreased from 28 a day earlier to seven, taking total fatalities in the country's commercial capital to 15,006.

The number of active cases dropped from 174,320 to 167,927, as another 16,577 fully cured patients returned home, taking the total to 55,80,925, while the recovery rate further improved from 95.25 per cent to 95.35 per

cent. The Mumbai circle - comprising Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, and Raigad districts - recorded a spurt in new cases, from 1,895 to 2,022, and its tally rose to 15,52,411 and with 48 more deaths, the toll now stood at 28,447, in view of the reconciliation of previous fatalities.

Meanwhile, the number of people in home isolation stood at 11,53,147 now, while those in institutional quarantine totalled 6,225.

## NEPALI WOMAN'S BODY FOUND IN CHEMBUR GODOWN, ONE HELD

Mumbai Police are yet to ascertain the motive of the murder of Nepali woman who worked as domestic help in Govandi area.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A body of a 52-year-old Nepali woman wrapped in a tarpaulin sheet was found from a godown in Chembur in Maharashtra capital Mumbai. The deceased has been identified as Durga Khadka.

The victim's body was found hidden in an unused container shed. The body was highly decomposed and led to foul smell.

Meanwhile, police have detained a person in connection with the woman's murder. The accused has been identified as 60-year-old Mansingh Mohta, who works as a security guard, according to a report in Indian Express.

The murder came to light following a post-mortem of the body. On Sunday, a case of murder and destruction of evidence has also been filed at Govandi police station.

The victim used to stay with her six children in Govandi. Khadka used to work in domestic help in the area. The accused reportedly confessed to his role in disposing woman's body. "The main accused is on the run. Once he is arrested, we will have clarity on the motive behind the murder," the report quoted a police officer as saying.

## No move on Maharashtra letters in Deshmukh FIR till June 11, CBI tells High Court

A division bench of Justices SS Shinde and NJ Jamadar said it would hear the petition filed by the Maharashtra government, seeking for two paragraphs from the CBI's FIR against former state home minister Anil Deshmukh to be set aside, on June 10 along with a petition filed by Deshmukh against the FIR.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The CBI on Tuesday extended till June 11 its earlier statement made to Bombay High Court that it would not act on the letters it sent to the Maharashtra government seeking documents pertaining to complaints lodged by senior IPS officer Rashmi Shukla about alleged corruption in police postings and transfers. A divi-

sion bench of Justices SS Shinde and NJ Jamadar said it would hear the petition filed by the Maharashtra government, seeking for two paragraphs from the CBI's FIR against former state home minister Anil Deshmukh to be set aside, on June 10 along with a petition filed by Deshmukh against the FIR.

The CBI had, on April 21, registered an FIR against Deshmukh on alleged charges of corruption and misuse of official position after the agency conducted a preliminary enquiry following an HC order on April 5.

Deshmukh had, last month, filed a petition in HC challenging the FIR and sought for it to be quashed, and this petition is listed for hearing on June 10.

Later, the state government filed a petition seeking a direction to CBI to set aside two paragraphs from the FIR which, as per the government, was not relevant to the case against Deshmukh.

While one paragraph is about allegations levelled against Deshmukh by Sachin Waze, who has been dismissed from the police force after his arrest in the Antilia bomb scare case, the second paragraph pertains to corruption in transfers and postings of police officials.

On Tuesday, advocate Jayshri Patil, on whose petition the HC on April 5 ordered the CBI to carry out an enquiry against Deshmukh, told the bench petitions of the state government and Deshmukh should be heard together as they arise out of the same FIR.

The bench then said it would hear the government's petition along with that of Deshmukh on June 10.

Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, then said the agency was extending its earlier statement, that it would not act upon the letters seeking information from the state government, till June 11.

Last month, Patil had written a complaint to Chief Justice Dipankar Datta against Justice Shinde alleging she was harassed and, hence, the matters should not be heard by this bench. "I was harassed, humiliated and insulted in open court when the bench headed by Justice Shinde heard my petition against Deshmukh in April," Patil said.

Justice Shinde on Tuesday said he had only asked questions while hearing the plea and added that he regretted it if Patil felt mentally harassed by the same. Patil then said that she would withdraw the complaint.

# POST-COVID HEALING YOGA ASANAS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the country reels under a severe Covid wave, nearly every family has had a brush with the debilitating virus, and many members are going through a slow recovery. To help with the recovery via yoga, Delhi-based The Pink Lotus Academia, an online and offline tutorial platform focused on Indian classical artforms and yoga, suggests asanas that go a long way in building immunity, relaxing the body and mind, leading to faster healing post-Covid.

The ancient practice of yoga is known to offer scientifically proven solutions to many everyday problems both physical and mental. From increasing immunity to improving the function of vital organs of the body, from reducing stress to minimizing depression, yoga plays a major role if you choose the right asanas and practice them with awareness. These select asanas



## ▶▶ Staff pose

This simple asana comes with many benefits for the body. It stretches the shoulders and chest, strengthens the back muscles and improves posture.

## ▶▶ Cat and Cow pose

This asana combines the Cat pose (Marjaryasana) and Cow pose (Bitilasana) to gently stretch the body and warm-up it up to relieve stress, and massage the spine and stomach organs.

## ▶▶ Butterfly pose

This asana stretches the inner thighs, groin and knees, and improves flexibility, removes fatigue from long hours of standing and walking.

## ▶▶ Pigeon pose

By stretching your thigh, groin and back, this asana works as an antidote to the strain of sitting for long hours, and calms your mind. It also stretches outer hips and prepares you for seated postures and backbends.

strengthen your body and mind, increase immunity, and take away fatigue.



## Shlokka Pandit's cat keeps her busy amid lockdown

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shlokka Pandit has been spending a lot of time with her pet cat Luna during lockdown. "Luna has brought a lot of changes in my life. I can understand things without being told. Unlike most, he is a very affectionate, calm and good-natured cat. The unconditional love he gives has enabled me to be a more compassionate and caring person," Shlokka says.

She calls her pet an "obedient kid", adding: "I literally can't imagine a day without him. We are two cool buddies in a way."

Shlokka makes a pitch for vaccination, saying: "Let's all follow guidelines and protocols. The pandemic is far from over. Let's get vaccinated whenever the opportunity arises." "We are facing an uphill task against the virus but I'm sure if we follow the protocols and take care of ourselves and others, we will definitely be able to overcome it," added the actress, who was recently seen in the film "Hello Charlie", co-starring Jackie Shroff, Elnaaz Norouzi and Aadar Jain.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

When it comes to packing an action punch and mouthing her lines all at once, Sunny Leone was literally left dangling midway at a shoot. In an Instagram video clip that she posted on Tuesday, Sunny is seen strapped to cable and attempting a stunt that requires her to fall vertically on a co-actor lying on the ground. The cable-aided drop just stops short of Sunny crashing into the man, at which point Sunny is supposed to say her lines. In the clip, she is seen suspended in the air rather indecisively, when the director prompts her to say her dialogue. She starts off mouthing her lines, only to forget them midway.

## WHEN SUNNY LEONE FORGOT HER LINES

"Aatamajhisatakl..." Sunny wrote as caption with the tags #SunnyLeone, #bts and #OnSets, though she did not share what project she was shooting for. Her other upcoming roster includes the psychological thriller "Shero" and the thriller series "Anamika". Sunny also has a role in the period drama "The Battle Of Bheema Koregaon".

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra celebrates her birthday on Tuesday. She was in for a surprise when the cast and crew of the dance reality show "Super Dancer: Chapter 4" organised a surprise bash for her. Shilpa is a judge on the show. "It felt so nice to see this sweet gesture from everyone present on the set. Super Dancer is my extended family, and there is this unseen bond that ties us. I am glad I could celebrate my birthday with the entire team," said Shilpa. "Little moments like these is what one treasures in life, and I count my blessing each day," she added, about her experience on the show that airs on Sony Entertainment Television.

WHEN SHILPA SHETTY WAS IN FOR A PRE-BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

## ADITYA CHOPRA INITIATES VAX DRIVE FOR HINDI FILM FRATERNITY



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A Covid vaccination drive for workers of the film industry has started at Yash Raj Films (YRF) studios, which aims to inoculate around 4000 workers in the first phase. The drive, initiated by filmmaker Aditya Chopra, looks to facilitate the resumption on day-to-day activity in Bollywood.

"After inoculating all the employees at YRF, we started vaccinating the crew members of our films and we are now delighted to have started the vaccination drive for the Hindi film industry. This will result in the daily wage earners of our industry to return to work and provide financial stability for themselves and their families," Akshaye Widhani, Senior Vice President, Yash Raj Films, said. "The drive will have to take place in phases, given the huge number of vaccines that are required to cover the industry. In the first phase, that starts today, we would be able to inoculate at least 3,500 to 4,000 people. YRF is committed to provide a helping hand in restarting the industry that has been hit hard by the pandemic," Widhani added. YRF aim to vaccinate 30,000 registered members of the FWICE (Federation of Western India Cine Employees). The company has already vaccinated its employees in an earlier drive that happened within the YRF Studios in Mumbai.

## Connecting children with nature in small ways

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Urban lifestyles and heavy dependence on digital technology means children are spending less time with nature, which can affect their mental and physical well being. Children flourish best when allowed to spend more time with nature. Ekta Ohri, founder, Litjoys, shares some life hacks on how to connect children to nature in simple ways:

**At Home:** Get younger children to help you to water plants, or feed birds. Let them observe the different plants in the house, or the birds that come to visit. We might be locked at home right now, but these simple tasks are possible and very enjoyable for young children.

**Outdoors:** Young children love to collect things and enjoy the tactile of different shapes and textures. Nature offers a rich treasure trove of discovery for them, which can be a wonderful way to begin to introduce them to nature. Let them collect flowers, pebbles, twigs, or even leaves from the ground, and observe the different shapes and textures of these. **Travel and Visits:** Travel is a great way to get to know nature, whether it's other cities, beaches or visits to Sanctuaries and Parks closer to your home. Encourage visits to the National Parks, as opposed to only the Zoo. The former lets children observe animals and nature in their natural environment as opposed to behind a cage.



## LAUREN GOTTLIEB: DIGITAL CREATION IS FUN EXPLORATIVE, CHALLENGING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Dancer and actress Lauren Gottlieb has been keeping her fans entertained with her social media content. She finds creating digital content explorative, fun and challenging. "Digital creation is super fun, explorative and challenging because you end up wearing lots of hats. Coming up with concepts, casting, producing, choreography, set and costume design, editing -- the list can

be endless," said Lauren.

"These are all parts of the filmmaking process that I love. Through creating digital content, I am becoming a better director, producer, and choreographer," the actress added.

Among Lauren's several collaborations, the leading ones include the Madhuri Dixit-Nene tribute with choreographer Joya Nandy Kazi, her "Kamariya Lachke Re" reel with digital creator Ruhee Dosani, and those with King Bach, Matt Steffanina, Phillip Chbeeb, Montana Tucker, Crissa Jackson, Tanishq Joshi and Yai Ariza.

Lauren added: "Being able to collaborate with established as well as new artistes in Bollywood and Hollywood has been creatively fulfilling," she signed off.





# Ricky Martin: Want to normalise families like mine

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actor Ricky Martin, who lives with his husband Jwan Yosef, and has four children Lucia, Valentino, Matteo, and Renn, has opened up about the family. "I just want to normalise families like mine. I know it's very interesting for a lot of people who tell me, "Thank you

Ricky for posting that picture with you and your husband and your kids. That made me feel better about myself," Martin said on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show".

The singer shared that his daughter Lucia can't stand his singing!

"I have one little girl that has two daddies and three brothers -- she's two years old -- and she knows it. She

knows it. She doesn't snap fingers yet, but she's about to," he said, according to a report in femalefirst.co.uk.

Martin added about Lucia: "She runs the house. The other day she loved 'Cocomelon', so I'm singing with her in 'Cocomelon'. And she goes, 'No, no, Daddy -- no, stop. Stop, stop, stop'. And I'm like, 'Let me sing, I want to sing!'"

## SIMON COWELL 'SET TO MAKE £10 MILLION A YEAR WITH AGT RESIDENCY IN LAS VEGAS'

Los Angeles | Agencies

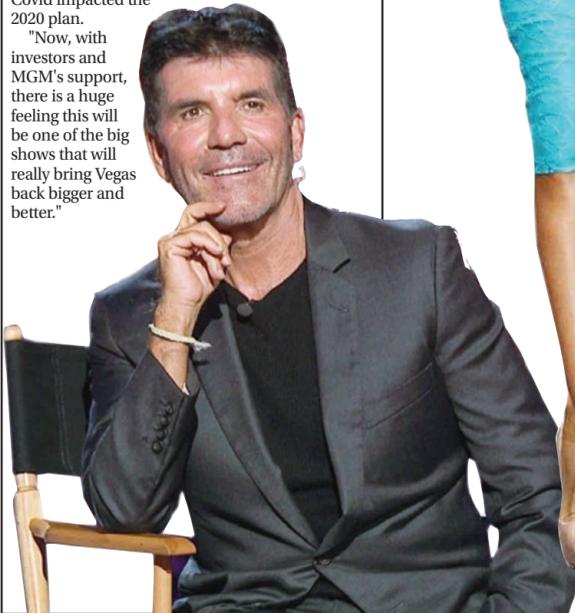
Cowell is set to cash in £10million with an America's Got Talent residency in Las Vegas, according to reports. The 61-year-old is said to have signed a lucrative deal with the city's Luxor Hotel which will see the show's winner and other performers take to the stage twice a week.

If it proves a hit with paying punters the partnership could run for many years and see performers from the British version of the show appear too.

A source told the Mirror, "We open America's Got Talent in Vegas at the Luxor this year. And Vegas and Got Talent is where they want to end up. We had a fantastic conversation with MGM who own the Luxor. And we agreed to do it, so it happens this year."

Another insider based in the city added: "This is one of his smartest business moves ever. He has been working on this deal for three years, but Covid impacted the 2020 plan.

"Now, with investors and MGM's support, there is a huge feeling this will be one of the big shows that will really bring Vegas back bigger and better."



## KEIRA KNIGHTLEY REVEALS SHE'S EXPERIENCED HARASSMENT AND SAYS 'LITERALLY' EVERY WOMAN HAS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Keira Knightley has revealed she has experienced harassment in the past - and believes that 'literally' everyone has experienced some form of misogyny in public. The 36-year-old said that she, like many other women, takes precautions when walking home alone due to the threat of negative attention.

Asked whether she has experienced harassment, she told Harper's Bazaar, "Yes! I mean, everybody has. Literally, I don't know anyone who hasn't been, in some way, whether it's being flashed at, or groped, or some guy saying they're going to slit your throat, or punching you in the face, or whatever it is, everybody has. She said, "We have a trampoline in our garden, and we decided we were only allowed to wear dresses on it. I put on red lipstick every day, and every bit of Chanel that I have in my cupboard, and my daughter Edie had Chanel ribbons plaited into her hair and fairy wings." "I thought 'What is the point of these lovely things sitting in the wardrobe, when it feels quite apocalyptic and scary outside?' It felt so important to be really happy for the kids," she further said. The actress has two children with her husband, Klaxons keyboardist James Righton - Edie, born in May 2015, and Delilah, born in September 2019.

## Denise Van Outen returns to TV presenting for the first time in 9 years

Los Angeles | Agencies

Denise Van Outen is "going back to her roots" as a TV presenter on Channel 4, The Sun Online can exclusively reveal. The former Big Breakfast host, 47, will join the team of daytime show Steph's Packed Lunch in the very near future.

A source was first to tell The Sun Online of the big name signing and said: "Denise is going back to her roots as a TV presenter and has been asked to join Steph's Packed Lunch.

The West End star hosted The Big Breakfast with Jonny Vaughan from 1997 to 1998 and again from 2000 till 2001 with the pair remembered as the show's best double-act.

Denise's new telly gig comes shortly after she revealed her 23-year feud with her former co-star was finally over.

The Dancing on Ice star previously said they fell out after she found out his agent was trying to get him more money in contract renegotiations. The Chicago star also hinted the rift was related to work pressure.

## Helen Mirren proud of everything she has earned

Los Angeles | Agencies

English actress Helen Mirren says she takes pride and pleasure in knowing she has earned everything she has in her life. "Everything I have I have earned. I come from not a working-class situation, but certainly a financially impoverished one. We didn't have a television when I was growing up or a washing machine or a car, but the one thing my parents taught me -- and it was very important for me as a woman -- was, 'you must become financially independent'," she said. Mirren added, "When I became an actress, it was very important to me to become financially secure, and I have always worked. And I am now financially independent, and I did it myself.

Nobody helped me. I take great pride and pleasure in that." Mirren is thankful to have a loyal and understanding husband in Hollywood filmmaker Taylor Hackford, reports femalefirst.co.uk. She says she "admires" her husband, and feels they have the "combination" of admiration and love that keeps their marriage strong. "I have the incredible advantage in my life of having a husband who is both loyal and understanding and in response I give him back my loyalty and understanding too. We couldn't be married without that. I admire my husband, too, which is essential. I'm not going to sit there saying, 'Oh, darling, you're so marvellous. You're so wonderful,'" Mirren told Yours magazine. She added, "How smart of you and blah blahblah", but I do think that admiration and love are a necessary combination for a marriage. And I admire my husband considerably."



## VIN DIESEL-STARRER 'F9' TO SCREEN AT CANNES FILM FEST IN JULY

Cannes | Agencies

The upcoming Vin Diesel-starrer "F9", latest release in the "Fast & Furious" franchise, is the Hollywood "blockbuster" that Cannes Film Festival authorities promised to screen at the gala, to be held from July 6 to 17 this year.

Ever since Cannes chief Thierry Fremaux told Variety that the forthcoming 73rd edition of the festival would screen a "planetary blockbuster", a guessing game started among the worldwide press over which film he meant. Fremaux had teased the media at a June 3 press conference while announcing the Official Selection at the festival this year, saying the blockbuster in question wasn't "No Time To Die" or "Dune" or "West Side Story", which have been among the most hyped Hollywood films slated to release later this year.

The premiere of "F9" at Cannes in the first week of July also makes sense because the film is scheduled to release on June 25 in the United States. "F9" stars Diesel with a powerhouse cast including John Cena, Michelle Rodriguez, Tyrese Gibson, Ludacris, Jordana Brewster, Nathalie Emmanuel, Sung Kang, Michael Rooker, Helen Mirren, Kurt Russell and Charlize Theron. The film has already had its international release on May 19 and has grossed over \$250 million worldwide so far, reports Variety. At Cannes, the film will have a public screening at the beach for delegates as well as locals and tourists. The cast is not scheduled to travel to the premiere owing to the ongoing pandemic.



## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Amanda Holden



## EDITOR'S SPECS

## Lockdown was not effective for atmosphere

**The Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the Earth's atmosphere has again peaked last month, reaching historic levels, according to a new report. Atmospheric carbon dioxide peaked for 2021 in May at a monthly average of 419 parts per million (ppm), the highest level since accurate measurements began 63 years ago, scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego announced on Monday. CO<sub>2</sub> is by far the most abundant human-caused greenhouse gas, and persists in the atmosphere and oceans for thousands of years after it is emitted, Pieter Tans, a senior scientist with NOAA's Global Monitoring Laboratory, in a statement. "We are adding roughly 40 billion metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> pollution to the atmosphere per year," said Tans. "That is a mountain of carbon that we dig up out of the Earth, burn, and release into the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub> -- year after year. If we want to avoid catastrophic climate change, the highest priority must be to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> pollution to zero at the earliest possible date," he noted. While the year-to-year increase of 1.8 ppm in the May CO<sub>2</sub> peak was slightly less than previous years, CO<sub>2</sub> measurements for the first five months of 2021 showed a 2.3 ppm increase over the same five months of 2020, close to the average annual increase from 2010 to 2019. Covid-induced lockdowns in 2020 led to a 5.8 per cent decline in global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the largest annual percentage decline since World War, revealed a March report by the International Energy Agency -- IEA. However, with the opening up of lockdowns and pandemic-induced restrictions loosened, global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will see a rise of 1.5 billion tonnes -- the second-largest annual increase ever -- in 2021, the IEA said in its latest report. While this would be the biggest annual increase in emissions since 2010, it would reverse most of last year's decline caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the IEA said. The NOAA report, however, stated that the effect of the pandemic had no discernible effect on the historic CO<sub>2</sub> record. The current atmospheric burden of CO<sub>2</sub> is comparable to where it was during the Pliocene Climatic Optimum, between 4.1 and 4.5 million years ago, when CO<sub>2</sub> was close to, or above 400 ppm. During that time, sea level was about 78 feet higher than today, the average temperature was 7 degrees Fahrenheit higher than in pre-industrial times, and studies indicate large forests occupied areas of the Arctic that are now tundra, the report said.**

# G-7 SUMMIT: REALITY AND EXPECTATIONS

Asad Mirza

The upcoming G7 Summit in Cornwall, UK from June 11 to 13 is perhaps the first international event, in the backdrop of the continuing Covid pandemic, when the leaders from the world's wealthiest countries -- the US, Japan, Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Canada -- will be meeting with leaders from India, Australia, South Africa and South Korea face to face for the first time in the last one-and-a-half year.

The leaders from the most advanced nations of the G7 meet regularly to try to determine the course the world will follow, with their own interests taking a backseat. Expectations from the summit

There is a lot of optimism ahead of the gathering in Cornwall. US and UK government sources have briefed that the G7 will demonstrate that "the West ain't over just yet". The optics are bound to be promising. For the US it'll give a chance to prove that 'America is back', while for the UK it'll help to give a boost to its 'Global Britain' strategy.

On the agenda are the autocratic challenge from Russia and China, climate change, the global vaccine rollout and trade. In addition Myanmar, Indian democracy and its minorities, instability in Sahel region, Israel-Palestinian conflict and change of guard in Israel are also expected to occupy the agenda.

A move, spearheaded by US President Joe Biden, to set a minimum global corporate tax rate to



help states reclaim resources lost to tax havens seems promising. Also the British proposal to transform the G7 into a "D10" of democracies of guests from India, Australia, South Korea and South Africa will reinforce a sense that the West is open to alliance-building again.

Meanwhile, the G7 finance ministers reached a "historic" deal on taxing multinational companies, last week in London. They agreed to counter tax

avoidance through measures to make companies pay in the countries where they do business, besides ratifying a global minimum corporate tax rate to counter the possibility of countries undercutting each other to attract investments. UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak described these as "seismic tax reforms" and said that it will help

create a fairer tax system fit for the 21st century.

Preparations for the summit

The foreign ministers from D-10 met face-to-face for the first time in two years in May earlier, following a coronavirus-extended pause, to prepare for the summit and in the communique issued after the meeting listed 82 points which will try to grab the attention of G7 or D10 leaders. In addition the issues discussed were NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan, Iran, China and the threat posed by Russia.

Meanwhile, Britain's Foreign Office has said a key part of the June summit will be plans to boost girls' education and women's employment after the Covid pandemic would be a key topic.

G7 nations are expected to sign up to new global targets that aim to get 40 million more girls into school

in low and lower-middle-income countries by 2026. The aims also include getting 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10. The countries are setting up a \$15-billion fund, to be administered by developing countries over the next two years. However, the trade unionists and the wider environment movement in the UK have sounded the bugle against G7's inability to take any concerted action on climate change. In a statement they asserted that the vaccine apartheid response to the Covid threat might be replicated in their approach to the climate crisis.

They further assert that if the world's wealthiest countries continue to move too slowly to curb their own carbon emissions, continue to invest in and boost fossil fuel energy and production, fail to make a just transition at home while denying the global South the resources it needs to deal with climate impacts, their pretensions to "global leadership" will fail the test.

A \$100 billion a year transfer to the developing world to make transition possible was pledged at Copenhagen and built into the Paris Agreement to be met by 2020. But it has not been done.

They further assert that this commitment is a tiny fraction of the \$3.8 trillion that global banks have invested in fossil fuels since the Paris Agreement, and less than a tenth of the combined G7 military budget of \$1,043bn last year.

Post-summit scenario  
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to use the G7 Summit to increase cooperation

between the world's democratic and technologically advanced nations. Between them, the 10 leaders represent more than 60 per cent of the people living in democracies around the world.

The UK will also host several meetings throughout the year between government ministers from the G7, both virtually and in different locations across Britain. These meetings will cover economic, environmental, health, trade, technology, development and foreign policy issues.

Observers are of the view that post-summit the western world may be transformed into one where it may lose its supremacy and China may pull ahead of the West technologically and economically, secondly the West could reassert itself by investing in green industries to renew its economies and societies in the backdrop of the lessons learnt from the Covid pandemic and thus China might be neutralised, thirdly a more Eurasian Europe may emerge, due to the eclipse of both the US and UK and it'll be drawn towards Asia's growing economic influence. For India, the summit offers a chance to further reinforce its relationship with the UK by signing a trade treaty and for Mr Modi to establish a rapport with Biden to ensure a fruitful bilateral relationship, and to some extent this seems possible.

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## Why is Congress high command silent on rising signs of discord in Rajasthan?

Archana Sharma

The Congress high command's stoic silence over the growing signs of discord within the Gehlot government has raised many questions; is this silence deliberate or else the high command is quiet aiming at certain goals? Whatever the truth, the reality is that it has not led to a resolution of differences between different factions simmering in the Congress camp and the fortunes of the party as well as the party workers hang in the balance.

Six-time MLA Hemaram Choudhary resigned from the Congress government on May 22 and he seems reluctant to withdraw his resignation. Another MLA, Ved Prakash Solanki, has threatened to resign. Both are aligned to former state Congress chief and ex deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot's group.

Meanwhile, the Gehlot camp is seen to be busy poaching MLAs from his arch-rival Pilot's camp. Inderaj Gujar and PR Meena are two such MLAs from the Pilot camp who recently praised Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's work at a time when other Pilot followers were questioning the government's work.

The story of discord doesn't end here as two ministers considered to be very close to Gehlot had also reportedly had an altercation during a recent cabinet meeting.

In a sense, differences are no longer between Gehlot and his former deputy. This is an internecine war -- a fight among the Gehlot camp followers who look like competitors, not colleagues.

The state unit of the Congress, the Pradesh Congress Committee, appears weak on the ground, working with a 39-

member team since July last year as all local Congress committees were dissolved following Pilot's open rebellion against the state leadership. Partymen, anxious on the phone tapping front, are aggrieved that they did not get their share as award for victory -- while what were deemed to be political appointments were going to retired former top bureaucrats. There are questions partymen are asking: Why has Kumar Vishwas's wife been given a political appointment in Rajasthan -- considering Vishwas had contested against Rahul Gandhi in Amethi? Why had he been rewarded? Why were retired bureaucrats being appointed to key political posts while party workers who had worked hard for the party were yet to be rewarded? A minister explained that political appointments are being delayed for fear of another rebellion. "If we give 10 workers a position, the remaining 90 will throw tantrums and there can be another rebellion which we can't handle now amid the pandemic," he said.

The rival camp in the Congress does not agree. "Post the rebellion in the party, we were asked to compromise on the leadership issue and we followed all rules of the game. We did not say anything against the party. But now, it has been 11 months since a committee was formed to look into our issues and this committee has failed to bring in results. Don't you think the committee should be dissolved? Why isn't the high command looking into the issue," said a Pilot camp follower.

In July last year, a three-member committee was formed with veteran leaders Ahmed Patel, K.C. Venugopal and Ajay Maken to look into the grievances of the



Pilot camp. Patel passed away, but the other two members of the committee have not been proactive in resolving workers' grievances, said another worker. "If any committee is formed with the aim of fulfilling certain exceptions and commitments and if nothing comes out of it even after 11 months and no one is ready to look into it, it is clear that you are asking for trouble," said the party worker.

Meanwhile, state PCC chief Govind Singh Datasara told correspondent that the party is committed to giving political appointments once matters settle down post the second wave of Covid.

Rajasthan in-charge Ajay Maken had confirmed announcing political appointments earlier in December last year and then in March, but it could not be implemented.

Pilot says there is no reason for delay in appointments and cabinet expansion as of now.

Meanwhile, all eyes are set to see if the High Command pitches in to address these issues or else new factions appearing in the party each year are ringing alarm bells for the Congress which is facing testing times in other states like Punjab too!



## Is Sasikala wooing Thevar community to take over AIADMK?

Leader of Opposition in the Tamil Nadu assembly and former Chief Minister of the state, E. Palaniswami (EPS) had on Saturday met his former Deputy in the AIADMK government, O Panneerselvam (OPS) in a bid to break the ice, at a city hotel. However other than ironing out the differences between the two, sources in the AIADMK pointed out that it was an attempt by OPS to convince OPS of the danger looming on the horizon with former interim general secretary VK Sasikala trying to make a takeover bid for the party.

While both Palaniswami and Panneerselvam had maintained that Sasikala was not a threat to the party, there is serious thinking within the AIADMK on the possibility of the former aide of J Jayalalithaa trying to take over the party using her goodwill in the powerful Thevar community of Tamil Nadu. Sasikala had entered Chennai in a convoy of 1000 vehicles to publicly announce her return to active politics but she was cold shouldered by both Palaniswami and Panneerselvam.

Former minister and AIADMK leader C Ve Shanmugham had on Monday in a press conference openly said that Sasikala does not have membership of the AIADMK and has no role in the party. He was referring to the political developments over some leaked voice clips in which Sasikala is heard telling AIADMK cadres that she would come back to active politics and take over the party.

Shanmugham scoffed at this and said that in the AIADMK it is the rank and file and not any single individual who decides about the party and added that Sasikala is a rank outsider and was just an aide to J Jayalalithaa in her heydays.

In the 2021 assembly elections, the AIADMK lost out mainly in Southern Tamil Nadu which has a dominant presence of the Thevar community to which both Sasikala and Panneerselvam belong.

Rumours were rife that Sasikala would use her clout in the Thevar community and win over Panneerselvam and thereby try to enter the AIADMK and take over the party with her nephew and AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran in tow. Sources in the AIADMK told correspondent that EPS has conveyed to OPS in their meeting at a Chennai hotel on Saturday that if he (OPS) aligns with the Sasikala camp, the NDA government at the Centre would not extend its support to him and that politically it would be curtains for him.

Sasikala on the other hand, according to political observers, will not be cowed down and is trying to reach out to the party middle level leaders including district presidents to try and take over the party. It is learnt that she had tried to open up channels with New Delhi, but with EPS firmly in the saddle the BJP government at the Centre seems in no mood to upset the present balance. It had, according to AIADMK sources, communicated to EPS not to break with Panneerselvam and to check mate Sasikala.

Political Observer and Director of Centre for Policy and Development Studies, C Rajeev while speaking to IANS said, "The only strength of Sasikala is her claim of influence in the Thevar community but with Panneerselvam, another Thevar, not backing Sasikala she may have difficulty in getting the support of the AIADMK middle-level leadership including district presidents. Palaniswami seems to have conveyed the danger of Panneerselvam being relegated once Sasikala is back in the party. Panneerselvam has himself emerged as a powerful leader of the Thevar community and without his support, Sasikala may not be able to wrest control of the party. Moreover, Sasikala's image is not good among the people of Tamil Nadu and the possibility of her taking over the AIADMK at this point in time is bleak."

## CLIMATE CRISIS WILL HAVE CATASTROPHIC IMPACT IN INDIA

The climate emergency will have a catastrophic human and economic impact in India. Different threats will interact to devastating effect, as exemplified by cyclones Tauktae and Yaas during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. A new review by the global think tank, ODI, The costs of climate change in India, released on Tuesday, laid out how rising temperatures will jeopardise India's economic development through different channels, including falling agriculture productivity, impact to public health, reduced labour productivity and sea level rise.

The study is a first-ever literature review on the economic costs of climate inaction in India. At one degree Celsius of global warming, the country is already experiencing damages. Flooding in India over the last decade caused \$3 billion in economic damage -- accounting for 10 per cent of global economic losses from flooding.

The evidence clearly demonstrates that the human and economic costs of climate change will only increase in the coming years, particularly without urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emis-



sions. One study finds that India's GDP in the year 2100 will be reduced by 90 per cent if the world reaches three degrees Celsius of warming. Angela Picciariello, Senior Research Officer at ODI, said, "India is already feeling the costs of climate change, with many cities reporting temperatures above 48 degrees in 2020 and a billion people facing severe water scarcity for at least a month of the year. "If action is not taken to cut emis-

sions enough to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the human and economic toll will rise even higher."

The total cost of heatwaves, flooding, water scarcity, cyclones, sea-level rise and other climate-related hazards will be determined by the direction and level of economic development; the choices made in spatial planning and infrastructure investment; and the way different hazards intersect.

Amir Bazaz, Senior Lead-Practice at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, said: "As we are seeing now with Cyclones Tauktae and Yaas, low-income and other marginalised groups are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. They often live in dense settlements that lack basic services and infrastructure that could reduce risk. "Many households also live on hazardous sites such as steep slopes and floodplains. It is therefore crucial to bring climate and development goals together."

The study found that India's GDP would be around 25 per cent higher today, were it not for the current costs of global warming. Looking forward, the numbers are even more grim.

Researchers have assessed different mechanisms through which climate change will affect India's economy, and predict that GDP in 2100 could be reduced by 10 per cent at three degrees Celsius of global warming due to declining agricultural productivity, sea-level rise and increased health expenditure. They say up to 13.4 per cent at over four degrees Celsius of global warming due to declining labour

productivity from temperature and precipitation changes.

Rathin Roy, Managing Director (Research and Policy) at ODI, said "Pursuing a cleaner, more resource-efficient path to development could stimulate a faster, fairer economic recovery for India and help secure India's prosperity and competitiveness in the long term.

"Lower-carbon options are more efficient and less polluting, producing immediate benefits such as cleaner air, greater energy security and rapid job creation."

Much depends on India's policy, investment and diplomatic choices over the next decade.

As the only country in the G20 that currently has a 'two degrees Celsius compatible' Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), India is already doing its fair share for climate mitigation.

However, pursuing a more carbon-efficient and resilient pathway would enable India to climate-proof its development gains.

Given India's low per capita emissions and lower-middle income country status, it may need international support to make it happen.



# BIDEN-PUTIN SUMMIT BOTH NECESSARY AND IMPORTANT: WH

Washington | Agencies

The White House considers the planned meeting between US President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on June 16 Geneva both necessary and important. Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in Washington on Monday that the US President was meeting his Russian counterpart not "despite" but precisely because of the two countries' differences, reports dpa news agency. "We do not regard a meeting with the Russian president as a reward. We regard it as a vital part of defending America's interests and America's values," Sullivan said. The meeting will be taking place after Biden will have consulted with the heads of state and gov-



ernment of the G7 countries, NATO and the EU in the days before. The timing of the summit with Putin could therefore hardly be better. "When President Biden returns to Washington next week, we believe that we will be in a materially stronger position to



manage the major threats and challenges this country faces," Sullivan said. The Adviser also stressed that nothing can replace a face-to-face meeting between heads of government. This is especially true for Putin, who has a "highly personalized style of

decision making". Therefore, he said, it was important for Biden "to sit down with (Putin) face to face" and be clear about US expectations. Talking directly to Putin is also "the most effective way to understand what Russia intends and plans". On June 16,

the US and Russian Presidents are scheduled to meet in Geneva. It is the first meeting since Biden took office in January and comes at a time of great tension between Washington and Moscow. Biden will begin his first foreign trip of his presidency later this week. He will visit the UK from Wednesday to June 13 to attend the G7 Summit and hold bilateral meetings with the group's leaders. The President will then travel to Brussels, Belgium to participate in the NATO Summit, and then to Geneva for his meeting with Putin. Relations between Washington and Moscow have been adversarial in recent years. The two sides have obvious differences on issues related to Ukraine, cybersecurity, human rights, and US election interference.



## Taliban captures another Afghan district for 3rd straight day

Kabul | Agencies

For a third consecutive day, Taliban insurgents have captured yet another district in Afghanistan on Tuesday, officials said. Government forces abandoned the Dawlat Abad district centre in Faryab province before dawn and fled to neighbouring Andkhoi district without engaging the militants, dpa news agency reported citing the local officials as saying. The fate of more than a dozen members of the security forces in the district remained unclear because the telecommunications system was down, provincial councillor Abdul Ahad Alibek said. Dawlat Abad was under siege for three years. Forces could only receive logistical support by air, ground support was impossible because the militants controlled all routes leading to the district, Alibek added. In Ghazni province, the militants overran two security checkpoints in Ab Band district. Officials said on

Monday that heavy clashes were ongoing in at least three districts of the province. The districts could collapse if the government fails to send air support, warned Arif Rahmani, an MP representing Ghazni. It is the third straight day of the insurgents overrunning districts. On Monday, government forces abandoned Qaysar district in Faryab after days of heavy fighting. In addition, the insurgents took control of Shahrak district in Ghor province. The militants have made a string of gains in the country. Since the beginning of the official withdrawal of the United States and other NATO troops in Afghanistan on May 1, at least 10 districts have fallen to the Taliban. Afghanistan has 34 provinces and around 400 districts. District centres serve as secondary-level administrative units, one level below the provinces. According to a UN report, in the past year the Taliban were able to capture five districts, four of which were recaptured by the government within several days.

## NATO summit to demonstrate trans-Atlantic unity: Secy Gen

Washington | Agencies

Next week's NATO summit will send a strong signal of trans-Atlantic unity, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said after meeting with US President Joe Biden at the White House. "This summit will be a strong demonstration of trans-Atlantic unity of Europe and North America, because we are stronger and safer together in the more unpredictable world," dpa news agency quoted Stoltenberg as saying on Monday. Among the range of different challenges and threats to prepare for, Stoltenberg cited Russia, with its growing aggression toward its neighbours, and China as it invests in new military capabilities. Biden is due to attend the June 14 meeting of leaders of NATO member states as part of his first foreign trip as President. Stoltenberg said he was pleased to receive Biden in Brussels. "A strong NATO is good for Europe, but it's also good for the US, no other major power has so many



friends and allies as the US has in NATO." White House Spokesperson Jen Psaki said that, during the meeting, Biden "expressed his strong commitment to working closely with Allies to build on NATO's seven decades of success safeguarding trans-Atlantic security and democratic values". "The two leaders agreed on the importance of the NATO 2030 initiative to adapt the Alliance to meet the challenges of strategic competi-

tion and transnational threats, including climate change and cyberattacks." Under former President Donald Trump, relations between the US and many of its allies became strained. Biden has pledged to address this. Stoltenberg also met US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Monday. The issues they discussed included Afghanistan, where the official withdrawal of international troops has been underway for just over a month.

## HAMAS WARNS ISRAEL NOT TO RENEW TENSION OVER JERUSALEM FLAG MARCH

Gaza: The Islamic Hamas movement has warned Israel not to renew tension in the Palestinian territories although a Jerusalem flag march scheduled for Thursday is reported to have been called off. "Hamas warns the occupier (Israel), the mediators and the entire world against the flag march through the Old City and al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem," Khalil al-Hayya, a senior leader in Gaza, told reporters on Monday. "Hamas' message is clear: we don't want the Thursday event to be like what happened after May 10," he added, referring to the latest round of the

11-day fierce fighting between Israel and Hamas in the besieged enclave. The fighting in and around Gaza broke out on May 10 following clashes between the Israeli police and Palestinian worshippers in East Jerusalem during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. An Israeli court's decision to evict Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem was also behind the clashes and ensuing fighting. "Jerusalem for us is a red line. We are not fond of wars, but our resistance is ready to defend the holy city," al-Hayya said.

## New Israeli coalition will be sworn in on Sunday

Members of the new coalition, which will initially be headed by far-right politician Naftali Bennett, had agreed on their partnership last week and had, at one point, been expected to be sworn in this week already.

Tel Aviv | Agencies

The new Israeli government is set to be sworn in on Sunday after days of negotiations on how to move ahead on forming an eight-way coalition that would unseat Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the first time in more than a decade. Knesset Speaker Yariv Levin announced the date for the ceremony on Tuesday, reports dpa news agency. Members of the new coalition, which will initially be headed by far-right politician Naftali Bennett, had agreed on their partnership last week and had, at one point, been expected to be sworn in this week already. Members of the coalition had reportedly been pushing for a Wednesday ceremony.



The Sunday session will also see the Knesset vote for a new speaker. The eight members of the new coalition only have the barest of a majority: 61 of 120 Knesset seats. Additionally, the members come from a variety of political walks that would not normally align with one another. However, the parties

are united in their dislike of Netanyahu. Should the formation of the new government go ahead, it would be the first Israeli government without Netanyahu in 12 years. However, Netanyahu is still doing his utmost to hold onto power and is trying to see if he can shake loose any coalition member, which would end the political experiment before it can start. Netanyahu has called the new coalition the "fraud of the century". Demonstrators supporting the long-time premier have lashed out at Bennett, who has served in past Netanyahu cabinets. There have been warnings that the protests could turn violent in the coming days.

## Death toll from Pakistan train collision reaches 62

The accident took place on Monday morning when a Sir Syed Express Train, which was en route from Lahore to Karachi, collided head on with the Sargodha-bound Millat Express train near Dharki city in Ghotki district.

Islamabad | Agencies

The death toll from the collision between two passenger trains in Pakistan's Sindh province has increased to 62, a government official said on Tuesday. The death toll rose after rescue teams pulled out more bodies from the damaged compartments of the trains, Commissioner of Sukkur Shafiq Ahmed Mahesar told Xinhua news agency. He said that over 100 people sustained injuries in the accident and they are being treated at various hospitals of Pano Aqil, Ghotki and Mirpur Mathelo in the province, adding that the condition of at least 15 people is critical. The accident took place on Monday morning when a Sir Syed Express Train, which was en route from Lahore to Karachi, collided head on with the Sargodha-bound Millat Express train near Dharki city in Ghotki district. At least 13 compartments of the two trains were derailed and overturned, and seven to eight were completely destroyed in the accident, sources from the Pakistan Railways told Xinhua. Police sources in the area told Xinhua that special teams are still in the process of investigating the exact cause of the accident, however, they believe that multiple problems in the railway track and signal systems are possibly behind the accident. Meanwhile, the authorities have also cleared the railway track and train service which was halted since early Monday morning resumed operations.

## 'Pentagon creates world's largest clandestine force for nefarious ops'

Washington | Agencies

Pentagon has created the world's largest clandestine force in the past 10 years, which has carried out the very "nefarious" operations the US itself repeatedly condemns, according to a media report. The Newsweek magazine's exclusive report, titled "Inside the Military's Secret Undercover Army", said that after a two-year investigation, it found "some 60,000 people now belong to this secret army, many working under masked identities and in low profile, all part of a broad program called 'signature reduction'". The clandestine force included special operations forces and military intelligence specialists, among others, who have carried out such "publicly unacknowledged operations" as wiretapping activities in certain regions and manipulating social media, Xinhua news agency quoted the report as saying. "What emerges is a window into not



just a little-known sector of the American military, but also a completely unregulated practice," it said. The report added the program's total size is unknown, and its influence on military policies and culture is uninspected.

"Congress has never held a hearing on the subject. And yet the military developing this gigantic clandestine force challenges US laws, the Geneva Conventions, the code of military conduct and basic accountability," it said.

## STATUE TOPPLED IN CANADA AMID CALLS TO RENAME VARSITY

Toronto | Agencies

Canada's Ryerson University said that it will not restore or replace the toppled statue of Egerton Ryerson outside the varsity that bears his name after students and professors demanded to rename it to "X University" instead of Ryerson. Ryerson, a Methodist minister, was believed to be one of the key designers of the notorious indigenous residential school system in Canada, reports Xinhua news agency. In a statement issued Monday, Ryerson University President Mohamed Lachemi said the statue "will not be restored or replaced". The statue was toppled on Sunday evening after hundreds of people rallied in



Toronto in honour of the 215 children buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential School site in Kamloops city, British Columbia province. A video posted on Twitter showed what appeared to be a rope tied to the statue and people cheering as it came tumbling down. Last week, the

remains of 215 Indigenous children, and acknowledge that further and ongoing reconciliation is of vital importance. "It's important this statue has come down so we can raise awareness to what has been going on since the 1800s and the incorporation of the residential school system,"

Craig St. Denis, a Cree whose grandfather was a survivor of the residential school system, told CBC News on Monday. Distance Fernando, a student at Sheridan College in Toronto, said the statue should have come down a long time ago. "The statue represents racism, the statue represents oppression. It should have been taken down a long time ago voluntarily by the Ryerson University." Some students, professors and university groups have already demanded to rename the university from Ryerson to X University and to stop using the name in their email signatures, correspondence and on their resumes. Last week, Ontario provincial legislature opted to move a painting and bust of Ryerson.

## CANADA CONDEMNS 'TARGETED' KILLING OF MUSLIM FAMILY

Toronto: The Canadian government has condemned the "targeted" killing of four members of a Muslim family by a pick-up driver in the city of London in Ontario province. Two women, one man and a teenager were killed when they were out for a walk when the pick-up truck hit them. A nine-year-old boy is in hospital with serious injuries. Police said the killings were premeditated as the 20-year-old driver, identified as Nathaniel Veltman, was wearing a vest that looked like body armour. Veltman could face terrorism charges even though he has already been charged with four counts of first-degree murder and one

attempted murder. "We believe this was an intentional act. The victims were targeted because of their Islamic faith," said the city's police chief. In a statement, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday: "I'm horrified by the news from London, Ontario. To the loved ones of those who were terrorised by yesterday's act of hatred, we are here for you. We are also here for the child who remains in hospital, our hearts go out to you, and you will be in our thoughts as you recover." Sympathising with the Muslim community of Canada, he said: "We stand with you. Islamophobia has no place in any of our communities."

## 'Unclear if Iran prepared to return to compliance with n-deal'

Washington | Agencies

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that it remained unclear if Iran is willing to take steps to return to compliance with the 2015 landmark nuclear deal. "We've been engaged in indirect conversations for the last couple of months, and it remains unclear whether Iran is willing and prepared to do what it needs to do to come back into compliance," Blinken told a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Monday. "We're not even at the stage of returning to compliance for compliance," he said. "We don't know if that's actually going to happen." Blinken made similar comments in an interview in late May, reports Xinhua news agency. The US and Iran have held five rounds of indirect negotiations in the Austrian capital of Vienna since April 6 aimed at reviving the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Blinken's words were met with an immediate



response from Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. In a tweet, Zarif said that "it remains unclear whether @POTUS (President Joe Biden) and @SecBlinken are ready to bury the failed 'maximum pressure' policy of Trump and cease using economic terrorism as bargaining 'leverage'". The US government under former President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and unilaterally re-imposed sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its JCPOA commitments from May 2019.



## INDIA'S CHHETRI NOW 3 SHORT OF PELE'S 77 INTERNATIONAL GOALS

Doha | Agencies

As forward Sunil Chhetri has become the world's second most prolific goal scorer amongst the active players -- his tally of 74 is second only to Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo's 103 -- but the India captain is not counting them as yet. In the all-time goal scorers' list, Chhetri is three goals short of Pele's 77 goals. "I do not count the number of goals. 10 years later, we will sit together, have a chat and then count. All of this is past. We play Afghanistan, and we have to be at our best. It will be a new day, a new canvas. And it is up to us to paint it the manner we want to," Chhetri said after scoring both goals in India's 2-0 win over Bangladesh in the FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifier match here on Monday evening. The brace took Chhetri past Argentine superstar Lionel Messi who has 72 goals and the United Arab Emirates' Ali Mabkhout who has 73 goals. Chhetri's 79th and 90th-minute strikes gave India their first win in Group E and kept them in contention to enter the third round of the 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers. Even FIFA, the game's world governing body, acknowledged Chhetri's feat. "He's now got more than Messi! Sunil Chhetri's double earns the Blue Tigers a 2-0 win in #WCQ and moves him on to 74 international goals -- above Lionel Messi and one off entering world football's all-time



top 10," FIFA tweeted on Monday. Chhetri is the only Indian player to have scored his international goals in three decades. He scored his first goal against Cambodia on August 17, 2007, in a Nehru Cup match at

the Ambedkar Stadium in New Delhi. In that match, too, Chhetri had scored a brace in India's 6-0 win. "You know what. All of this is past. We play Afghanistan [on June 15] and we have to be at our best. It

will be a new day, a new canvas. And it is up to us to paint it the manner we want to," said Chhetri after the win over Bangladesh. Chhetri's India teammate Sandesh Jhinghan has only praise for his captain.

## India have poor record vs New Zealand in ICC events

Team Absolute | New Delhi

When India take field in the World Test Championship (WTC) final from June 18, they will be up against a poor record versus New Zealand in major International Cricket Council (ICC) events stretching back to 18 years. India's seven-wicket win in the 2003 World Cup under Sourav Ganguly was the last time they beat the Kiwis in an ICC tournament. Left-arm pace bowler Zaheer Khan took four wickets while off-spinner Harbhajan Singh took two as India skittled out Kiwis for 146 and won by seven wickets in Centurion 18 years ago. Since then India have lost every match to the Black Caps at ICC events.



### Broad named as match referee

Dubai: ICC Elite Panel match referee Chris Broad will oversee the World Test Championship (WTC) final between India and New Zealand, scheduled to commence at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton from June 18. The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday announced the officials for the match. ICC Elite Panel's Richard Illingworth and Michael Gough will be the on-field umpires. Richard Kettleborough, also a member of the Elite Panel, will be the TV umpire while Alex Wharf of the ICC international panel of umpires will be the fourth official.



## ICC Player-of-Month: Hasan Ali, 2 others nominated for May

Dubai | Agencies

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday nominated Pakistan's Hasan Ali, Praveen Jayawickrama of Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim for the ICC Player of the Month for May award in recognition of their performance in all three formats of the game. In the women's section, Kathryn Bryce of Scotland, and Ireland's Gaby Lewis and Leah Paul were nominated for the honour. Based on the votes received from fans, who can choose their players on [www.icc-cricket.com/awards](http://www.icc-cricket.com/awards), the Player

of the Month in men's and women's sections will be announced. Ali took 14 wickets in two Tests against Zimbabwe recently while Jayawickrama bagged 11 wickets at 16.18 on his Test debut to bowl host Sri Lanka to victory in the second Test against Bangladesh in Pallekele. These were the best match figures by any Sri Lankan bowler on Test debut. Rahim played one Test (in Sri Lanka) and three ODIs (in Bangladesh) against Sri Lanka, helping the host win their first ODI series 2-1 against the Islanders by scoring 125 in the second ODI. In the women's sec-

tion, all-rounder Kathryn became the first cricketer from Scotland -- male or female -- to make it to the top 10 of the batting or bowling lists in the ICC Player Rankings released recently. She played four T20Is against Ireland, scoring 96 runs and taking five wickets with an economy rate of 4.76. Gaby of Ireland also played four T20Is against Scotland, scoring 116 runs. Her compatriot, Leah Paul, took nine wickets at an economy rate of 4.44 against Scotland and became the leading wicket-taker in the T20I series between Ireland and Scotland.

### French Open

## Swiatek enters quarters with win in straight sets

Paris | Agencies

Eighth seed Iga Swiatek beat Marta Kostyuk in straight sets, 6-3, 6-4, to enter quarter-finals of French Open late on Monday night. The 20-year-old Swiatek proved to be the superior player although her 18-year-old opponent stretched her. The Polish player was a break down early in the second set before she bounced back to beat the Ukrainian in 92 minutes. Swiatek won 74 percent first serve points as against 57 percent by her opponent. She also converted four out of the 12 break-points she got. Kostyuk could convert only two out of seven break-points. The Ukrainian was also guilty of committing four double faults as against one by Swiatek who will now face Greek Maria Sakkari in the quarter-finals on Wednesday. Sakkari, who became the first Greek woman to enter quarter-finals, had scalped world No.5 Sofia Kenin 6-1, 6-3 on Monday. In Tuesday's first women's singles quarter-final, Slovenian Tamara Zidansek will face Paula Badosa Gibert of Spain. In the second quarter-final on Tuesday, 21st seed Elena Rybakina will take on 31st seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia. Swiatek's match on Wednesday will be preceded by the third women's singles quarter-finals between American Coco Gauff and Czech Republic's Barbora Krejickova.



### NADAL IN QUARTERS, HEADED FOR SEMIS CLASH WITH

Paris: Thirteen-time French Open champion Spaniard Rafael Nadal kept 19-year-old Jannik Sinner's title aspirations in check by defeating the world No.19 Italian 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 to book a spot in the quarter-finals in Paris on Monday. Nadal, the four-time defending champion, will now clash with 10th seed Argentinian Diego Schwartzman, who hit sublime form as he overcame Germany's world No.42 Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6(9), 6-4, 7-5 to make the last-eight grade here for the third time. Nadal has now reached 15 quarter-finals at Roland Garros, and is tied alongside world No.1 Novak Djokovic. The win also means Nadal and Djokovic are on a collision course in the semi-final. Earlier in the day, Djokovic came back from a two-set deficit to overcome Italian teenager Lorenzo Musetti who retired in the fifth set and the Serbian moved into the quarter-finals. Djokovic prevailed 6-7(7), 6-7(2), 6-1, 6-0, 4-0 in three hours and 27 minutes as 19-year-old Musetti retired. For the 2016 French Open champion, it was the fifth time in his career to come back from two-sets-to-love down to win. Djokovic will take on Italy's ninth seed Matteo Berrettini, who got a walkover after Swiss ace Roger Federer withdrew from the tournament on Sunday, for a place in the semi-finals.

## Kiwis face challenge against India in peak form: Sodhi

London: New Zealand leg-spinner Ish Sodhi has said Kiwis face a challenge against India in peak form in the World Test Championship (WTC) final that begins in Southampton on June 18. Sodhi, who has become more of a T20 bowler in recent times and will participate in the T20 Blast in England while his teammates play the WTC final, said India are playing exceptional cricket and are at the peak of their powers. "It is great going to play WTC final at a neutral venue. The Indian side went to Australia and won the last two series. They played exceptional cricket. They are at the peak of their powers. So it will be a great challenge and if you go there and win, it will go down in New Zealand cricket history as the biggest achievement," said Sodhi, who has represented New Zealand in 17 Tests, 33 ODIs and 57 T20Is, in The Grade Cricketer show on Youtube. Sodhi, however, added that despite reaching the WTC final and winning so many series in recent times, the Test series defeat in Australia in 2019-20 season still rankles. He felt that a Test series win in Australia will distinguish this side from the previous New Zealand sides.



## After Robinson, another England player in racism row

London: A day after England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) suspended pace bowler Ollie Robinson for eight-year-old racist and sexist tweets, another current England player could find himself in trouble after an old, racist tweet of his was brought to light by media. The name of the player has been withheld by Wisden.com which exposed the tweet. The player was 16 when he wrote, "your going out with an Asian. -- < #asianthroughandthrough #hweelloo #chinky." An ECB spokesperson said, "It has been brought to our attention that an England player has posted historic offensive material on their social media account. We are looking into it and will make a further comment in due course. On Monday, England coach Chris Silverwood said that the England team was looking to get better in their fight against discrimination. "The big thing for us all is education. We are all striving to be better, none of us are perfect, and we all need to make sure we are learning all the time," said Silverwood. "We can make sure the world is a better place. Most importantly, we can work hard to ensure that this great game is inclusive for everybody and there is no



form of discrimination whatsoever. The England team did a 'Moment of Unity' gesture ahead of the first Test against New Zealand at Lord's last week after they were criticised for not taking the knee last year.

## Focus on Indian women recurve archers to bag Olympic quotas

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian women archers would look to secure the remaining two Tokyo Olympic Games berths when they compete in the final Olympic qualification tournament from June 17-20 in Paris. The Olympic qualification tournament will be followed by World Cup Stage-3 from June 21-27, at the same venue, where the Indians are expected to test their preparations for the Olympics. A three-member women's recurve team, comprising Deepika Kumari, Komalika Bari, Ankita Bhat, along with their coaches and support staff had left for Paris on June 5 to comply with the France's 10-day quarantine norms ahead of the final Olympic qualification tournament. "The women archers have settled down at the Vichy Sports Complex, about four hours'

drive from Paris," an Archery Association of India (AAI) statement said on Tuesday.

It said that the men's recurve and the compound teams in both the men's and women's section would board the flight to Paris in the early hours of Wednesday to compete in the World Cup Stage-3. The men's recurve team comprises Atanu Das, Tarundeep Rai and Pravin Ramesh Jadhav, has already secured three quota places by virtue of their team silver at the World Championships in the Netherlands. It's now the turn of the women's team to earn the Olympic quota. While Deepika has bagged the quota, Ankita and reigning under-18 world champion Komalika will attempt to augment India's women's quota for the Olympics from one to a full three in Paris. If they succeed, all three can head to Tokyo.

## IOC announces names of refugee athletes for Tokyo Olympics

Lausanne | Agencies

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Tuesday approved the list of 29 refugee athletes who will compete at the Tokyo Olympics under the Olympic flag. During the opening ceremony on July 23, the refugee athletes -- from 13 host National Olympic Committees (NOCs) competing in 12 sports -- will enter the stadium "in second position after Greece". Kenya's Tegla Loroupe, Olympian and former marathon world-record holder, will be the team's Chef de Mission. The selection of the refugee team for Tokyo was based on the athletes' sporting performance and their refugee status as confirmed by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Personal background and "balanced representativity in terms of sport, gender and

regions, were also considered". The full Refugee Olympic Team (EOR) delegation will meet for the first time in Doha on July 12 and 13, before flying to Tokyo on July 14. On Tuesday, the 29 athletes met for the first time in a virtual ceremony during which IOC president, Thomas Bach, officially announced their participation in the Games. "I speak on behalf of the entire Olympic Movement when I say that we cannot wait to meet you in person and to see you compete in Tokyo. When you, the IOC Refugee Olympic Team and the athletes from the NOCs from all over the globe, finally come together in Tokyo on July 23, it will send a powerful message of solidarity, resilience and hope to the world. You are an integral part of our Olympic community, and we welcome you with open arms," Bach said.



## 'Don't let taxpayers down:' FM tells Infosys over issues on ITR e-filing portal



The software major had also developed the government's GST Network (GSTN) portal, used for GST payment and return filing, which also had faced initial over glitches on the website.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday called out Infosys and its Co-Founder Nandan Nilekani for the problems faced by taxpayers while using the newly launched ITR e-filing portal. Citing complaints on her Twitter timeline the Finance Minister said that ease of compliance for the taxpayer should be of higher priority. "The much awaited e-filing portal 2.0 was launched last night 20:45hrs. I see in my TL grievances and glitches," she said in a tweet. "Hope @Infosys & @NandanNilekani will not let down our taxpayers in the quality of service being provided. Ease in compliance for the taxpayer should be our priority." Infosys has developed the next-generation income tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite refunds. The software major had also developed the government's GST Network (GSTN) portal, used for GST payment and return filing, which also had faced initial over glitches on the website.

## Central banks continue to remain positive on gold: WGC Survey

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Central banks continue to be positive on gold and around 21 per cent of the central banks around the globe intend to increase their gold reserves over the next 12 months, according to a survey jointly undertaken by the World Gold Council and YouGov. The '2021 Central Bank Gold Reserves (CBGR)' survey also noted that central banks are also increasingly valuing gold's performance during periods of crisis as this attribute now tops their rationale for holding gold. "These results come amid ongoing uncertainty stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, a situation which has added significant complexity to central bank reserve management," said the report. It noted that this year's CBGR survey indicates continuing central bank interest in gold. Potentially driving this interest is a growing recognition of gold's financial characteristics, particularly during periods of crisis, said the report. "At the same time, ongoing concerns about global market volatility and the path of the post-pandemic economic recovery continue to inform central banks' views of gold. These same factors may also be clouding respondents' opinions on the overall direction of central bank gold holdings despite

having more certainty on their own plans for gold," it added. Looking ahead, the World Gold Council report said that central banks will need to balance financial and geopolitical uncertainty with a potentially strong pickup in global growth. "We believe that central banks will continue to be net buyers of gold, although total purchase volumes may not be as large as in the previous decade."

The slightly stronger conviction towards gold amongst respondents in this year's survey may suggest that central banks have a clearer

picture of their plans for the coming year, and is supportive of continued gold purchases from the official sector, it added. Several of the survey's findings point to a growing complexity. Around 84 per cent of respondents report that uncertainty over the post-Covid economic recovery is relevant for their reserve management deci-

sions. The same proportion of respondents say that negative rates -- the most relevant factor in last year's

survey -- continues to inform their investment decisions. The continuation of expansive monetary and fiscal policies, now combined with the prospect of rising inflation, will likely be at the forefront of central bankers' concerns for the foreseeable future, said the report.



## HIRING OUTLOOK EXPECTED TO BE MORE OR LESS STABLE IN Q3 2021

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A survey of 1,303 employers across India indicates a more or less stable hiring plan for the upcoming three months, according to the ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey released on Tuesday. Sectors which are likely to lead the job market include transportation and utilities, followed by the services sector. The strongest hiring pace is recorded in the medium sized organisations, followed by the large organisations with a seasonally adjusted outlook of +8 per cent and +6 per cent, respectively. From a region specific perspective, North and South indicate similar outlook at +6 per cent. The ManpowerGroup further extended its survey to include the impact of Covid which showed a majority of them -- 46 per cent -- saying that they do not know when they are likely to resume regular hiring. Only 3 per cent reported

not expecting to go back to pre-pandemic levels of hiring. For those who expected an increase in hiring, 54 per cent stated they would hire by June 2021. A total of 40 per cent of the respondents expect to have their workforce work from home full-time, while 38 per cent want to have either flexible or condensed work hours for their employees. Some of the concerns for most organisations surveyed about remote working revolved around worker wellbeing, company culture, productivity and innovation. The biggest concern, at 51 per cent, is whether their employees will be able to collaborate efficiently. The strongest hiring prospects are reported in the North and South where the net employment outlook is +6 per cent. Hiring prospects weakened by 4 percentage points in the West when compared to the previous quarter, and decline by 2 percentage points in the North. The hiring sentiment remains relatively stable in both the East and the South.

## upGrad to hire 1,000 people in India in next 3 months

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Global online higher education provider upGrad on Tuesday said it will onboard 1,000 employees in the next three months in India from more than 100 campuses, including metros and tier 2 and 3 cities, as the pandemic hits the job market in the country. The opportunities are available across departments like learning experience, delivery, marketing and programme, along with sales which will remain predominant. The edtech leader said that it will also hire people from its own learners' talent pool through its subsidiary upGrad Rekrut, which is a recruitment and staffing solutions firm. "Our hiring plan is a result of the rapid growth that we have seen in the last 18 months. With global expansions taking shape, we are all set to ramp up our support and business teams to continue meeting the strong demand for LifeLong Learning that we are experiencing," said Arjun Mohan, CEO-India, upGrad. upGrad, which offers more than 100 courses in collaboration with top-notch global/local universities like Deakin Business School (Australia), Duke CE (US), Michigan State University (US), Liverpool Business School (UK), IIT Madras (India), IIM Kozhikode (India) and others, has empowered over 10 lakh registered learners



over 50 countries across the world. According to the company, the fresh sales recruits will work out of the specially-created 'Temporary Safe Workplace Bubbles' across five-star hotel properties in Mumbai and Bengaluru, and will soon expand to cities like Hyderabad, Delhi, and Kolkata. The bubbles have also helped upGrad overcome the monotony of working from home for employees. "The idea to have fresh recruits come from tier II and III cities is to accelerate employability not just in metros but remotest corners of the country," Mohan said. Co-founded by entrepreneur Ronnie Screwvala, Kumar and Phalgun Kompalli in 2015, upGrad has achieved an annual revenue run rate (ARR) of \$165 million and maintains a strong network of over 20 national and international universities. The company has announced to close March 2022 at \$500 million revenue run rate.

## STERLITE POWER WINS THE 'GOLDEN PEACOCK HR EXCELLENCE AWARD' 2020

New Delhi: Sterlite Power, has been awarded the Golden Peacock HR Excellence Award (GPHRE) 2020 in the power transmission sector. The award was conferred upon Sterlite Power for its constant efforts in building a purposeful and vibrant workplace by imbuing the key tenets of innovation, diversity, and high growth environment while ensuring the health and wellbeing of its people. The Golden Peacock Awards, instituted by the Institute of Directors (IOD), is regarded globally as a benchmark of corporate excellence. The Golden Peacock HR Excellence Award was introduced in 2011 and recognizes leading organizations and practitioners for overall excellence in HR and people management practices. The award framework is based on IOD's Business Excellence Model that is designed to help organizations explore the best management practices. Earlier this year, Sterlite Power was certified as a 'Great Place to Work' by the Great Place to Work Institute for emerging as one of the most employee-friendly companies in the Indian Power sector.

## Shopmatic announces fee relaxation for setting up online store by businesses

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a bid to support small and medium businesses and entrepreneurs, e-commerce enabler Shopmatic has announced zero hosting charges for anyone signing up between June 3 and August 31, 2021. As part of its 'Inspiring Entrepreneurship Programme' merchants will be able to use the entire Shopmatic platform for setting up their e-commerce presence without paying any sign-up charges. They will have to pay a nominal fee of 3 per cent per transaction whenever they make a sale. "This step is being taken to encourage aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners to take their business online, especially in these trying times," it said. For 90 days from the time, they sign up, business owners will be able to access Shopmatic's vast range of tech-led features to help them grow their business while paying 3 per cent on each successful transaction. Shopmatic offers four different ways for merchants to go online. During the promotional period, merchants can choose to set up



their online presence from any of the four options available -- Shopmatic Webstore, Shopmatic Chat, Shopmatic Social and Shopmatic Marketplaces. Speaking on the initiative, Anurag Avula, CEO & Co-Founder, Shopmatic, said, "In our continued effort to support businesses to start selling online in the current challenging environment, we're making it even easier for businesses to get online by removing the monthly

hosting fee for the next 90 days." "We encourage SMEs and individual entrepreneurs in our markets to sign-up on the platform with no hosting fees and leverage the Shopmatic platform to drive their online success," the CEO said. Through the 'Inspiring Entrepreneurship Programme', Shopmatic is extending its platform to a larger group of aspiring entrepreneurs during a decidedly challenging time, as per the company.

## Paytm expands Rent Payments service from home to shop rentals

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's leading digital financial services platform Paytm has expanded its rent payment service to include shop rentals, property deposit, token amount, brokerage & other related services. This service will bring convenience to our users, who will be able to track all their expenses at one place. The platform is also offering an assured cash-back of up-to Rs. 10,000 to users for paying their rent through their credit card. In addition to this, new and existing users can also earn



rewards from the credit card issuing bank as they pay their rent on Paytm via credit card. These rent payments can be made to the beneficiary's bank account or UPI address and paid through Paytm UPI, debit card & net banking. Paytm spokesperson

said, "Home & shop rent are some of the most important and financially substantial recurring expenses in almost every household in India. With our Rent Payment service, users can now pay their rent through Paytm using their credit or debit cards, UPI and net banking. It will also bring convenience to our users, who will be able to track all their expenses at one place. By using the option to pay rent using credit cards, we hope people are able to maintain liquidity which is especially important in these uncertain times.

## Neglecting inflation leaves global economies sitting on a time bomb

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Inflation will make a comeback if the Federal Reserve sticks to its current policy stance of unchanged interest rates even on the assumption that price increase will be transitory, Deutsche Bank said in a note on Monday, Business Insider reported. "We expect inflationary pressures to re-emerge as the Fed continues with its policy of patience," the economists, led by David Folkerts-Landau, chief economist and global head of research, said. "It may take a year longer until 2023 but inflation will re-emerge." Unlike other economists who believe inflationary pressures will recede over time, the Deutsche Bank analysts think otherwise. They said the

flush of stimulus will, in fact, lead to inflation in the near term. "Neglecting inflation leaves global economies sitting on a time bomb," the economists said, adding that the "painful lessons of an inflationary past are being ignored by central bankers."



The longer the central bankers sit on their hands, the more difficult it will be to address, the report said. "The effects could be devastating, particularly for the most vulnerable in society," the economists said. "Sadly, when central banks do act at this stage, they will be forced into abrupt policy change which will only make it harder for policymakers to achieve the social goals that our societies need."

## Car makers' worker unions welcome Madras HC order

Chennai | Agencies

The worker unions in two major foreign automobile makers have welcomed the Madras High Court's order to the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health to inspect auto units and arrive at a uniform guideline on maintenance of social distancing at the shop floors. "We welcome the High Court's order. There could be only two reasons for the Covid-19 infection to spread amongst factory workers viz the safety guideline of the state government is insufficient or the safety guidelines are not implemented by the companies," a union official in Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) told IANS preferring anonymity. "The inspection will also bring out the

unlawful labour practices followed by companies. Other automobile units may be upset with Renault Nissan Automotive for linking them in this case," Moorthy, General Secretary, Renault Nissan India Thozhilalar Sangam (RNITS) told IANS. The court made the order while hearing the case of Renault Nissan India Thozhilalar Sangam versus Renault Nissan Automotive India Private Ltd. The company had submitted to the court that it is being singled out to follow the 3:1 empty pitch at its assembly lines while none of the other automobile makers near here or in India follow that. "Simply put, after three cars in the conveyor belt, one slot will be empty so that a worker need not move to the next work-



station to complete his work," RNITS President K. Balaji Krishnan had told IANS. When the case came up for hearing on Tuesday, the counsel for Renault Nissan Automotive said none of the other automotive units --

Hyundai Motor, Ford India, BMW, Daimler and others -- located near here or in the country like Maruti are maintaining the 3:1 empty pitch. This resulted

in the court ordering the visit of a senior official of Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health to the automobile plants and come out with a uniform guideline for maintenance of social distance in factories. At Hyundai Motor, the night shift has been stopped and



to that extent about 4,000 workers will not be attending work that shift. Other than that, there

is no change in the production/conveyor line, the union official said. According to him, the Hyundai Motor factory near here rolls out about 55 cars per hour. Twelve Hyundai Motor workers have died due to Covid-19 and over 800 were infected with coronavirus, the official added. He hoped the inspection by the state government would result in maintenance of social distancing at the factory level. "If the production level per hour is reduced by 50 per cent, then social distancing could be maintained at the shop floor level," said. Worker union officials told IANS that it is only they who know how to manage the production by maintaining social distance and not the management. An active dialogue between

the two would result in smooth operations. The Ford India union official said many of the issues raised by RNITS were flagged at his company a year back and were sorted out. "May be one or two aspects that may be very difficult to address at the production line are pending," the official added. Further compared to Hyundai Motor production volumes, the number of cars rolled out by Ford India is far low. The per hour production at Ford India plant is about 30 units down from 36 units earlier. According to him, the company has provided goggles in addition to masks so that two workers can work safely in close proximity in some stations.

## ANUPAM KHER NARRATES DOCU-FILM 'BHUJ: THE DAY INDIA SHOOK'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Anupam Kher is all set to narrate the upcoming documentary film 'Bhuj: The Day India Shook', the trailer of which was released on Tuesday. The film is scheduled to release on June 11.

The documentary talks about the devastating earthquake of 2001 and captures first-person accounts of survivors, rescuers, journalists, photographers, and earth scientists.

"Every little aspect of the incident gave me goosebumps, I can only imagine the kind of impact it might have had on the individuals who experienced it first-hand. Narrating this premium documentary was an emotional journey for me and my heart goes out to every individual, every survivor, every family that was impacted by this unforeseen disaster," Kher said.

"It also fills me with pride being the face of this special documentary and take this story to every corner of this country because I truly believe, the strength of such heroes

must be celebrated," the actor added.

The film utilises archival footage like videos, photographs, newspaper headlines along with satellite images of Gujarat to demonstrate the mishap and the fallout. It will highlight stories of bravery, heroism, miracle rescuers, misfortune, tragedy, and hope, documenting survivors of the quake, eyewitness accounts and first-hand footage of the disaster that shook the nation 20 years ago.

"With every show launch, we at Discovery focus at exploring content that will have a lasting impact on the audience, and Bhuj: The Day India Shook is one such premium documentary that blends factual storytelling with authentic research, first-hand accounts with the dramatic reconstructions of survivors, combined with the storytelling of Mr Kher. We believe it will delight core discovery fans and also draw in the ones seeking to watch a story of human drama and survival," said Sai Abhishek, director, original content -- South Asia, Discovery Inc. The film premieres on discovery+.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Taapsee Pannu on Monday evening posted a teaser of her upcoming film "HaseenDillruba", co-starring Vikrant Massey and HarshvardhanRane.

The film is pitched as a mystery thriller, and the gritty trailer set against the backdrop of a small town runs a fast-moving collage of sequences highlighting "Lust", "Obsession" and "Deceit".

"Pyaarke teen rang, khoonkechheetonke sang (three colours of love, served with droplets of blood)," Taapsee wrote, hastagging #HaseenDillruba and #TheUltimateKaunspiracy with the post.

"HaseenDillruba" is directed by "HaseeTohPhase" maker Vinil Mathew and the film tells the story of a young woman who is a prime suspect in her husband's murder. As the investigation reveals details of her marital past, the truth starts getting even more baffling.

The film is scheduled to drop on July 2, and will stream on Netflix.

Taapsee Pannu posts 'Haseen Dillruba' teaser



## HIMANI SHIVPURI: ALWAYS GREAT TO BE BACK ON SET

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Himani Shivpuri, currently seen as KatoriAmma in the sitcom "Happu Ki UltanPaltan", is delighted to resume shooting after one and a half months. The show is currently being shot in Gujarat.

"It's always great to be back



on set. The set of

'Happu...' is always a family away from family. The shooting arrangements are extremely comfortable, we have been staying in a five-star hotel. The bio-bubble system is strictly being monitored and everything is available inside the hotel. The greenery outside and the Tapi river definitely gave us a great working atmosphere," said Himani.

Her character of KatoriAmma is very special to the actress. "Initially I was not keen on doing a daily soap but when I took up the role, I got to know the different layers of the role. The creative team of the show is doing a great job. Amma is a mother, a mother-in-law, a wife and grandmother -- so many shades. At times I have been given various looks, which is a great feeling for an artiste," she said.

On Covid, she added: "The situation is scary but all we can do is follow the guidelines and trying to be as normal as possible."

Himani, who has a career span of 37 years and has been part of innumerable hit Bollywood films, thinks that nothing is permanent. "Name, fame and money -- nothing is permanent. Make the most of it today. Especially in this Covid time, life is very unpredictable. So, celebrate every day," said the seasoned actress.

## Trailer of anthology 'Ray' unveiled

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The trailer of the upcoming OTT anthology "Ray", featuring four stories by the late maestro Satyajit Ray, dropped on Tuesday. The anthology is slated to release on June 25.

The stories are titled "Hungama Hai KyonBarpa", "Forget Me Not", "Bahrupiya" and "Spotlight". Two of the stories are directed by SrijitMukherji, with Abhishek Chaubey and VasanBala calling the shots on one each. The ensemble cast includes Manoj Bajpayee, Gajraj Rao, Shweta Basu Prasad, Ali Fazal, Anindita Bose, Kay Kay Menon, Bidita Bag, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Harshvardhan Kapoor, Radhika Madan and AkankshaRanjana Kapoor.

Talking about his segment "Hungama Hai KyonBarpa", Abhishek Chaubey said: "I'm drawn to stories that twist with whimsy and humour. Hardly anyone crafts those better than Satyajit Ray and a chance to tell this story is a great opportunity for me. With Manoj Bajpayee and Gajraj Rao playing off each other on screen, Hungama Hai KyonBarpa, I hope is as much of a joy to watch as it was to make. Super stoked about the show and can't wait for people to watch it!"

SrijitMukherji, who directed "FeludaPherot" based on Ray's Feluda adventures in Bangla recently, helms "Forget Me Not" and "Bahrupiya".

"Satyajit Ray has been a big inspiration in my life. After faithfully bringing two stories of Ray to life in FeludaPherot, it is an honour and fulfilling to reinterpret two more stories of Ray in a decidedly darker space," said Mukherji, adding that

he got the opportunity to work with a brilliant cast including Kay

Kay Menon, SwetaBasu Prasad and Ali Fazal.

VasanBala

directs

"Spotlight".

"It's an

opportunity

that led me to

collaborate with

wonderful talent.

It's a pulpy,

quirky, music-

filled tale of

very interest-

ing characters.

Harshvardhan

Kapoor,

Radhika

Madan,

AkankshaRanjana

Kapoor and

Chandan Roy

Sanyal are in

crackling

form. Can't

wait

for the

audience

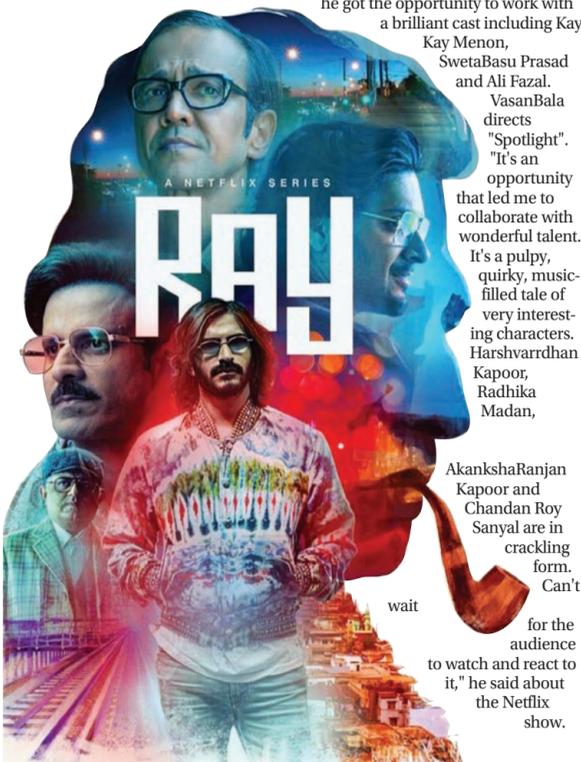
to watch and react to

it," he said about the Netflix show.

## 'Bedardi se pyaarka' blends soulful melody and hard-hitting lyrics: Jubin

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Musical duo Meet Bros say their new song "Bedardi se pyaarka" would take listeners to a different time and place. "The melody in this track just flows with the lyrics. It's very catchy and will transport you to a different time and place," Meet Bros said about the song, recorded in the voice of JubinNautiyal. Jubin feels the song has its soulful as well as hard-hitting elements, and is highlighted by an old-world charm. "Bedardi se pyaarka" is a beautiful blend of soulful melody and hard-hitting lyrics. At its core, it is innocent, pure and has an old-world charm to it," the singer said. The lyrics are by Manoj Muntashir, and the music video stars GurmeetChoudhary, Sherine Singh and Kaashish Vohra. The song has been shot across locales in Dehradun and Mussorie. The song is out on YouTube.



## MADHURI DIXIT, RADHIKA APTE INSPIRE BHAVIKA MOTWANI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

BhavikaMotwani, who makes her acting debut with the short film "Red Shirt", says Madhuri Dixit is her greatest inspiration. The young artist also enjoys watching actress Radhika Apte's work. "I've grown up watching and learning from Madhuri Dixit ma'am. The way she can say 1,000 words just by her expressions is unmatched," Bhavika tells IANS. She adds: "Currently, I love the films and series Radhika Apte ma'am is doing. The roles she has chosen are not so mainstream, yet raw and beautifully played by her. Every role leaves a mark," says Bhavika. "Red Shirt", a sci-fi thriller based on the impact of social media on people. The film is scheduled to release on June 11.



Jannat Zubair