

absolute india

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Expenditure capacity will be declined due to Covid 2.0 wave

CONSUMER SENTIMENT

The sentiment about spending has been impacted. The latest round had 51 per cent consumers expecting their expenditure over the next 6 months to be lower compared to 40 per cent in the last round.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Fifty eight per cent of consumers think their income in the next six months will be lower than pre-Covid levels, according to BCG's latest round of consumer sentiment poll which shows that people with similar sentiment has increased in a year's time. In the last survey conducted in July 2020 at least 44 per cent felt the same. The survey was conducted over May 23-28, 2021 among 4,000 consumers. The survey, that covers all socio-economic groups across urban and rural India, is the 6th wave conducted by BCG. There has been a significant increase in the willingness to take vaccine post 2nd wave -- especially in small towns and rural areas which had shown high levels of hesitancy/indifference earlier. Seventy eight per cent of the eligible consumers in large towns said that they were very willing to take the vaccine now --



compared to 62 per cent earlier. While in rural areas the percentage willing to take the shots stands at 63 per cent as compared to 41 per cent earlier. Some categories have continued to show positive sentiment e.g. essentials, health, in home entertainment continue to be winners. "There is an impending sense of

uncertainty however we have observed certain positive messages too. The spending sentiment has not been impacted similarly across categories. Essentials, health, in home entertainment continue to be winners. Some of the discretionary categories, however, have been negatively impacted," said Nimisha Jain,

Now that we have been into the crisis for over a year, the shape of new normal for consumer behavior is also beginning to emerge. Many of the newly adopted behaviors ranging from social commerce, online shopping, digital content/payments -- have continued to stick. However, others like 'do it yourself' regimes, online doctor consultations have showed high sensitivity to the pandemic situation.

Kanika Sanghi, Lead, Centre for Customer Insight for BCG India.

Managing Director and Partner, BCG India. Many of the newly adopted behaviors ranging from social commerce, online shopping, digital content, digital payments have continued to stick even through the period when the situation was looking a bit better and the lockdowns were no longer in place.

Calf serum used in manufacturing of viral vaccines : Bharat Biotech



Hyderabad | Agencies

Bharat Biotech on Wednesday clarified that while new born calf serum is used in the manufacturing of viral vaccines, the final formulation of its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin is free from all impurities. New born calf serum is used in the manufacturing of viral vaccines. It is used for the growth of cells, but neither used in growth of SARS CoV2 virus nor in the final formulation," the company said in a statement. Covaxin is highly purified to contain only the inactivated virus components by removing all other impurities," it added. The Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer clarified that bovine serum is widely used in the manufacture of vaccines globally for several decades. It also stated that the usage of new born calf serum was transparently documented in various publications for the last 9 months.

NO CALF SERUM IN COVAXIN MANUFACTURING: GOVT

Refuting rumour spread by some social media posts, the Central government on Wednesday clarified that Covaxin, India's indigenous Covid-19 vaccine, does not contain newborn calf serum at all. Noting that different kinds of bovine and other animal serum are standard enrichment ingredient, and they are used globally for vero cell growth, the Ministry said vero cells are used to establish cell lines which help in production of vaccines. This technique has been used for decades in Polio, Rabies, and Influenza vaccines. These vero cells, after the growth, are washed with water, with chemicals (also technically known as buffer), many times to make it free from the newborn calf serum. Thereafter, these vero cells are infected with corona virus for viral growth. "The vero cells are completely destroyed in the process of viral growth. Thereafter this grown virus is also killed (inactivated) and purified. This killed virus is then used to make the final vaccine, and in the final vaccine formulation no calf serum is used."

Twitter loses status of intermediary platform in India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Social media platform Twitter has lost its status of intermediary platform in India over non-compliance to the new intermediary guidelines. As a result of the development, the company has lost its legal shield in the country from prosecution over posts. "Twitter has lost its status as intermediary platform in India as it has not complied with new guidelines," an official source said. Further, in a series of Tweets, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said that there are numerous queries arising as to whether Twitter is entitled to safe harbour provision. "However, the simple fact of the matter is

that Twitter has failed to comply with the Intermediary Guidelines that came into effect from the 26th of May," he added. On Tuesday, the micro-blogging platform said that it has appointed an interim Chief Compliance Officer, the details of which would be soon shared with the IT Ministry directly. On the row over an alleged fake video in Uttar Pradesh, the minister said: "What happened in UP was illustrative of Twitter's arbitrariness in fighting fake news. He was of the view that while Twitter has been over enthusiastic about its fact checking mechanism, it's failure to act in multiple cases like UP is perplexing and indicates its inconsistency in fighting misinformation.

6 Maoists gunned down in Andhra operation

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

A senior Maoist leader is among 6 naxals killed in an encounter that took place in Wednesday morning in Visakhapatnam district, while some more leaders are believed to have escaped from the spot, sources have said. Police are continuing search operations in the area where encounter took place. Six Maoists were gunned down by Andhra Pradesh Greyhounds police on Wednesday morning at Theegalametta forest area in Visakhapatnam district. "Today (Wednesday) in the morning hours, an exchange



of fire took place between CPI (Maoist) and Greyhounds parties at Theegalametta forest areas (Koyuru surrounding areas)," said an official statement. The encounter occurred under the police station limits of Mampa, surrounding the Koyuru area, even as a search operation is underway. Among the six

dead, police said there were female corpses as well. Andhra Pradesh DGP, Gautam Sawant said that police had launched combing operations in the area after receiving reliable inputs. The Greyhounds police recovered an AK-47 rifle, a self-loading rifle, one carbine and two more guns from the spot.

'Increase in gap between Covishield doses based on scientific evidence'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union health ministry on Wednesday dismissed media reports claiming there was dissent from technical experts about increasing the gap between two Covishield doses and said the decision was based on scientific reason about the behaviour of adenovector vaccines. Chairman of India's Covid-19 Working Group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI), N.K. Arora said. Citing the data released in the last week of April this year by Public Health England, UK's executive agency of the Department of Health, Arora explained that vaccine efficacy varied between 65 per cent to 88 per cent when interval is 12 weeks. "This



was the basis on which they overcame their epidemic outbreak due to the Alpha variant. The UK was able to come out of it because the interval they kept was 12 weeks. We also thought that this is a good idea, since there are fundamental scientific reasons to show that when interval is increased, adenovector vaccines give better response. Hence the decision was

taken on May 13, to increase the interval to 12-16 weeks." The Covid Working Group took that decision, with no dissenting voice, he clarified. Speaking about why the NTAGI did not increase the gap earlier to 12 weeks, he said, "We decided we should wait for ground-level data from the UK (the other biggest user of AstraZeneca vaccine)."

Court defers release of three activists accused in Delhi riots

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Wednesday deferred the order on release of February 2020 riots accused activists Devangana Kalita, Natasha Narwal and Asif Iqbal Tanha, who were granted bail by Delhi High Court on June 15, citing the "heavy board" of other bail applications listed before it. After the High Court granted bail to the three accused, they moved the lower court seeking their immediate release, as the 1 p.m. deadline was set by the High Court. They were also ordered to be released on personal bonds of Rs 50,000 each and two sureties of a similar amount. Additional Sessions Judge at Karkardooma Courts, Revinder



Bedi said the court will pass the order on Thursday at 11 a.m. The court on Tuesday had deferred the order on the immediate release of the accused, for

want of verification of their addresses and sureties. It had sought a verification report from Delhi Police while posting the case for Wednesday.

9 killed in a truck-car collision in

Gandhinagar | Agencies

In a tragic accident in Gujarat's Anand district, a car collided head on with a truck on Wednesday morning, killing nine members of a family, including 2 kids. "The accident took place on the state highway connecting Tarapur in Anand district to Vataman in Ahmedabad district at around 5 a.m. in the morning. Total nine persons including five men, two women and two children around 4-5 years of age were killed," said an official of the Tarapur police station. The EECO vehicle containing eight passengers was going from Surat to Bhavnagar, while an oncoming speeding truck driving on the wrong side smashed it near Duravat factory, Indranaj village in Gujarat's Anand district on



Wednesday morning, the police said. The official informed that both the driver and the cleaner of the truck fled from the spot after the accident. According to the police, the truck is having registra-

tion of neighbouring state, Madhya Pradesh. Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani has offered his condolences to the victims' families and assured appropriate compensation for the kin.

Bengal Gov meets Central ministers, Trinamool cries foul

Kolkata | Agencies

Soon after West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhanekar met two Central ministers in the national capital on Wednesday, the Trinamool Congress and the CPI(M) accused the Governor of overstepping the limits of his constitutional boundary. Dhanekar, who met Union ministers Prahlad Joshi and Prahlad Singh Patel on Wednesday, is also likely to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah during his two-day visit to Delhi. Taking to Twitter, Dhanekar said: "Had useful interaction with Union Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs of India, Prahlad Joshi and Union Minister for Culture, Tourism Prahlad Singh Patel on varied issues. Dhanekar, who is expected to brief them on the 'deteriorating' law and order situation in Bengal. He had already



written a letter to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday, urging her to refer to the law and order situation in the state. The state government, however, had reacted strongly to the letter, alleging that the Governor made the letter public even before it reached the secretariat. Dhanekar's meeting with the Union ministers on Wednesday drew strong criticism from the Trinamool Congress and the CPI(M), which accused the Governor of overstepping his constitutional limits.

CBSE to submit Class 12 assessment formula in SC today

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is likely to submit before the Supreme Court on Thursday the assessment system for class 12 students. Senior officials of the CBSE have expressed hope that the evaluation criteria, which has been prepared on the basis of the report of the 12-member committee of experts, may be released this week. The committee was formed to prepare the formula for giving results and marks for class 12 students. The committee consists of 12 persons, including Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Education and senior IAS officer Vipin Kumar. The CBSE had issued a notification in this regard on June 4. While issuing the notification, CBSE's controller of examinations Sanyam Bhardwaj said that there are 12 members in this com-



mittee. This committee will decide the basis for promoting the students and preparing their mark sheets. According to the notification issued by Sanyam Bhardwaj, the committee was to prepare its report within 10 days. Now this report was not submitted within 10 days i.e. till June 14, so the evaluation criteria have not been released so far. The government had cancelled the 12th board examinations on June 1 due to the surge in Covid cases.

Fuel price hiked again; petrol nearing 100 mark across country

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Fuel prices increased again across the country on Wednesday adding more misery for the common man already grappling with rising food prices amidst shrinking income. With this rise, petrol prices have reached very close to hitting the century-mark all across the country extending the scope of historic high prices that had already made the fuel rate cross the Rs 100 per litre mark in certain cities and towns of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh. On Wednesday, the oil marketing companies (OMCs) raised the price of petrol and diesel between 12-25 per litre across the four metros. Accordingly, the price of petrol increased by 25 paise per litre to Rs 96.66 per litre and diesel by 13 paise per litre to Rs 87.41 per litre in Delhi. In Mumbai, where petrol prices



crossed Rs 100 mark for the first time ever on May 29, the fuel price reached new high of Rs 102.82 per litre on Wednesday. Diesel prices also increased in the city by 14 paise per litre to reach Rs 94.84 a litre, the highest among metros. Across the country as well, petrol and diesel prices increased on Wednesday but its retail prices varied depending on the level of local taxes in different states.



EDITOR'S SPECS

UP BJP is not happy with Jitin's entry

While the BJP's central leadership is upbeat over former Union Minister Jitin Prasada ditching the Congress to join it, party leaders in Uttar Pradesh believe that his inclusion will not benefit the party too much in next year's Assembly polls. On June 9, Prasada joined the BJP in presence of Union Minister Piyush Goyal. Welcoming him to the party, Goyal had said: "He will have a major role in Uttar Pradesh politics in the future. He is someone who is connected to the ground realities and is a popular leader in the state." However, a senior BJP leader in Uttar Pradesh asked how can a man, who lost three elections in his family bastion, help the BJP to win elections. "His popularity can be judged on his electoral performance in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls and 2017 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, which he lost. We have to see how a leader who was not able to retain his family bastion will help us." A section in Uttar Pradesh BJP feels that inducting Prasada is more about perception than electoral benefits. They claim that Prasada is neither the face of the Brahmin community, as the Central leadership trying to establish, nor has mass appeal. Another senior party leader said that the BJP has lots of Brahmin leaders who are more popular than Prasada and they are in key positions in the government and organisation. A Lok Sabha member from Uttar Pradesh pointed out that there are over 50 MLAs and eight ministers in the state government from the Brahmin community and many are more popular and mass appeal than the former Union Minister. Some of the prominent Brahmin faces of the BJP are Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma, Brajesh Pathak, Ashutosh Tandon, Satish Dwivedi, Hriday Narayan, Laxmikant Bajpai, Mahendra Nath Pandey, and Ramapati Ram Tripathi. Another senior party leader pointed out that it will take years to establish Prasada as a Brahmin face or leader of the state when there are already so many in the party.

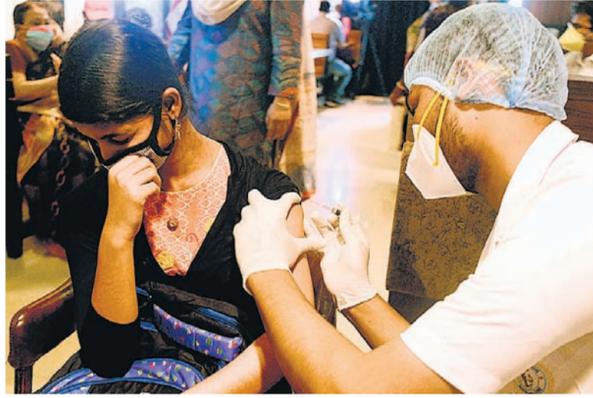
After furore, BMC, Mumbai Police probe 'fraud' in pvt society vaccination

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Following a furore, the Mumbai Police and the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation have launched independent investigations into an alleged fraud in a posh Kandivali housing complex where a private vaccination drive was undertaken two weeks ago, an official said. BMC Additional Commissioner Suresh Kakani directed Deputy Municipal Commissioner Vishwas Shankarwar to complete an enquiry and submit the report within 48 hours. "We are probing the matter after the society's complaint, but so far, there is no FIR lodged nor any detentions or arrests," a police official said, even as the incident made other housing complexes do a rethink of their plans for private inoculation efforts.

According to the residents of the Hiranandani Heritage Society (435 flats in three towers) in Kandivali west, a fraudster allegedly carried out the vaccination drive for 390 people comprising society members and their families, in-house staff like security guards, drivers or domestic helpers on May 30.

It was conducted through a couple of facilitators, Rajesh Pandey and Sanjay Gupta, who claimed to represent leading private institutions like the



Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH) and the Nanavati Hospital- and agreed to provide 400 vaccine doses for around Rs 1,260 each, for which the society paid around Rs 5 lakh.

However, top authorities of the KDAH and the Nanavati Hospital have stated that they had nothing to do with the entire drive as claimed by the agents, they were not approached by the society and they did not contemplate any further steps in the matter like lodging a police complaint.

The doubts started after the inoculation drive was over, as none of the beneficiaries were given the vaccination certificates, and many of the residents noticed that the vials bore a red stamp 'Not For Sale'.

Gupta assured that the certificates would be given after 3-4 days, and when many of them finally got them after June 8, they were found to be generated from different hospitals in the city, without the date of May 30, when the inoculation was carried out.

Digital technology helped us cope, connect, comfort and console in Covid: PM Modi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Premier Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that where convention fails, innovation helps, as he noted that during the Covid pandemic, digital technology helped people to "cope, connect, comfort and console". Addressing the 5th edition of VivaTech, one of the largest digital and start-up events in Europe, held in Paris every year since 2016, he said: "India's universal and unique bio-metric digital identity system - Aadhar - helped to provide timely financial support to the poor."



"We could supply free food to 800 million people, and deliver cooking fuel subsidies to many households. We, in India, were able to operationalise two public digital education programmes - Swayam and Diksha - in quick time to help students." The Prime Minister also praised the role of the start-up sector in meeting the challenge of the pandemic, citing how indigenous IT platform, Arogya Setu enabled contact tracing and the CoWin digital platform has already helped ensure vaccines to millions. "India is home to one of the world's largest start-up eco systems. Several unicorns have come up in the recent years. India offers what innovators and investors need," Modi said, invited the world to invest in India based "on the five pillars of Talent, Market, Capital, Eco-system and Culture of openness".

The Prime Minister also stressed the strengths like India's talent pool, mobile phone penetration, 775 million internet users, highest and cheap data consumption in the world, and the highest use of social media to invite investors to India.

3 CENTRAL BJP LEADERS RUSH TO TRIPURA AFTER DEFECTION SPECULATION

Agartala | Agencies

Speculation that some BJP MLAs and leaders in Tripura may follow the example of BJP national Vice President Mukul Roy who returned to the Trinamool Congress, three senior central leaders arrived in the state on Wednesday and were holding hectic meetings with state leaders. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, however, rubbished any fresh political development in the party in the northeastern state. BJP sources said that national General Secretary, Organisation, B.L. Santosh, General Secretary in-charge of northeast region Ajay Jamwal and central observer Fanindra Nath Sharma arrived in Agartala on Wednesday on a two-day visit for holding meetings with the state leaders, legislators, ministers and other party functionaries.



Another central observer Vinod Sonkar was scheduled to come on Wednesday but his tour was cancelled at the last minute. BJP's chief spokesman Subrata Chakraborty said that the Trinamool can revive in Tripura as part of the democratic process but the West Bengal-based party had earlier attempted twice to establish political base there and miserably failed as it has "zero acceptance" in the state.

On the other hand, Trinamool's Tripura state President Ashish Singha said that party supremo and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and national General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee are eager to revive the party in Tripura and they would soon send some leaders to the state to further strengthen the organisation.

Congress to reach out to 3 cr families to collect Covid data

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress is going to launch a massive outreach program to reach 12 crore persons in a month to collect data about Covid and Sonia Gandhi will write personal condolence messages to those who lost their kin during the pandemic. In a Statement issued by K.C. Venugopal, General Secretary, Organisation, on Wednesday, the party said, "This outreach program aims to cover approx 3 crore households in 30 days thereby indirectly



touching approximately 12 crore people (at an average of 4 members per family). Total expected feet on ground would be 1,51,340 at the peak of the campaign."

The Congress will push 10 workers per block and 10 workers per town area and designate them as "Covid Warriors" to collect data and relay the information thus collected through BCCs/DCCs/PCCs to the AICC Control Room/Data Department, thus covering 7,199 Blocks and 7,935 Towns in 736 Districts of the country.

Suspended Bihar BJP MLC takes part in virtual party meeting

Team Absolute | Patna

The virtual meeting was organized on Tuesday evening and Pandey himself uploaded the photograph of the meeting on social media platforms. Besides Sanjay Jaiswal, BJP state organization head Nagendra Ji and many other ministers in the Nitish



BJP MLC Tunna Ji Pandey who was suspended by the party in the first week of June for criticising Nitish Kumar, participated in a virtual meeting of the party chaired by state president Sanjay Jaiswal.

Kumar government, district presidents, district in-charges, assembly constituency in-charges participated in the meeting.

Tunna Ji Pandey uploaded the photographs tagging Sanjay Jaiswal and wrote: "Today I participated in BJP virtual meeting and interacted with state president Dr Sanjay Jaiswal."

The fight between the BJP MLC and the JDU started on June 1 after the former tweeted that Nitish Kumar is the circumstantial CM. The people of Bihar had given the mandate to Tejashwi Yadav. He had stolen the mandate using government machinery during the assembly election and became chief minister of Bihar, he had said.

MITHUN CHAKRABORTY QUESTIONED BY KOLKATA POLICE OVER 'INCITEFUL SPEECH'

Kolkata | Agencies

Kolkata Police virtually questioned BJP leader and Mithun Chakraborty on a complaint lodged against him alleging that the actor was responsible for inciting violence through one of his speeches made during a BJP campaign.

A complaint filed in Manikata police station against him, has accused the actor of inciting post-poll violence in West Bengal through his speeches. Chakraborty moved the Calcutta High Court for quashing the case against him.

But the court asked him to appear for questioning through video conferencing. In the complaint it has been mentioned that the popular actor has used phrases like "marbo ekhane lash porbe shoshane (Will hit you here and the body will land in the crematorium)" and "ek chobole



chobi (one snake bite and you will turn into a photograph)" at a rally in Kolkata after he joined the BJP on March 7. The complaint also mentioned that these dialogues were enough to incite violence. The national award-winning actor, however, told the court that he had just uttered popular dialogues from his films.

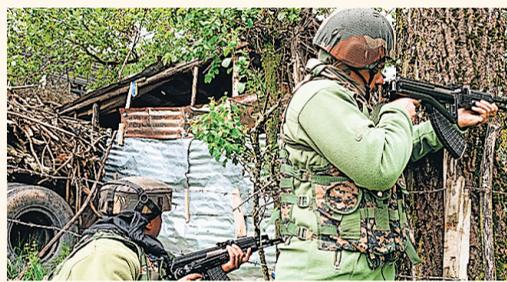
Terrorist killed in Kashmir encounter refused to surrender

Srinagar | Agencies

The Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist killed in an encounter in the Wagoor area of Nowgam in Srinagar on Wednesday had refused to surrender and fired indiscriminately at the security forces, drawing retaliation that led to the encounter, officials said.

The police said that on the intervening night of June 15-16, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the Srinagar police, the army and the CRPF after receiving specific information about the presence of a terrorist in the Wagoor area.

"After the presence of the terrorist got ascertained, he was



given an opportunity to surrender. However, he fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter," the police said. The police said that in the

ensuing encounter, one terrorist was killed and his body was retrieved from the site of encounter. He has been identified as Uzair Ashraf Dar, resident of Wandina Melhoora, Shopian.

Six arrested for stripping a woman naked in Bengal

Kolkata | Agencies

In a bizarre incident, six persons were arrested for stripping and parading a woman naked for having an extra-marital love relationship in Paschim Chengmar village in Alipurduar district on Tuesday. Five other persons were absconding and search is on for them, police said. According to the police, the incident took place on Thursday night at Paschim Chengmar village under Kumargram police station limits in West Bengal's Alipurduar district when a group of villagers belonging to the tribal community tortured a tribal woman, tore open her clothes and paraded her naked. It has been alleged that the woman left her husband and went away with another man but came back to her husband on Thursday after six months. The woman, after the incident left for her parental home and police had no clue about the whole incident. Police learnt about it on Sunday when a video of the incident was widely circulated on social media. Upon her return to the village, she was cornered by villagers, a police officer said. In a Kangaroo court, village elders decided stripping as a form of "punishment" for her alleged extramarital affair with a man from a neighbouring village.



CONGRESS NEEDS TO DO MORE TO REMAIN COUNTED BEFORE ASSEMBLY POLLS

Vinod Kumar Shukla | New Delhi

In the era of new media dominating the information dissemination scenario in the country, the indecisive leadership of the Congress is apparently failing to do anything good to the party whether it is taking a call on new full-time party president or issues raised by former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot or tussle between Punjab chief minister Amrinder Singh and cricketer turn politician

Navjot Singh Sidhu or many other issues raised by senior leaders of the Congress in the past over one year. But why to talk about these issues now? Because Assembly elections of four states - Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Goa are not too far. These issues will certainly have bearing on these states.

Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Goa are likely to be held in February-March 2022 where the

Congress has huge stakes except in Uttar Pradesh where it is marginalised. But the way the Congress is carrying out itself in these states, no headway is visible. Moreover, any goof-up in Rajasthan and Punjab might prove to be detrimental for the party where infightings are making things worst. However, the Congress still appears strong in Punjab with Shiromani Akali Dal's old alliance with the BJP not working. SAD's alliance with Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is

untested and Punjab voters don't vote on the basis of caste. They have a different voting pattern. The BJP contesting alone in the state will not have any impact moreover there is a wave of palpable anger against the party in the state due to ongoing farmer's protest. Former Congress general secretary and Union minister Jitin Prasada parting ways from the party is a big setback despite the fact that he does not have any mass base in the state. The

Congress that is already in disarray in Uttar Pradesh, his departure will send a wrong signal to the traditional Congress voters. Leaders like Jatin Prashada were considered to be the future of the party. Interestingly neither is there any attempt to stop these leaders nor is there any such attempt to revive the grand old party. The Congress is losing its one after another citadel. Political analysts say that the longest-serving president of the Congress Sonia Gandhi asking

for clarity on the issue of Galwan Valley incidence in which 20 Indian soldiers were martyred appears to be more of a routine exercise and a self-goal than a serious attempt to question the Government which is in worst ever situation as far as its public image is concerned due to mishandling of the COVID-19 crisis. Galwan will certainly have no impact on the voters of these states. With Ram Temple Trust planning to lodge cases against for-

mer Congress president Rahul Gandhi, General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadara on false charges of corruption and deepening crisis by the day in Rajasthan with Pilot putting pressure on the top brass of the Congress for his demand and a complete rout of the party in West Bengal in recent Assembly elections are some of the examples of face loss that the party needs to correct in view of several Assemble elections and to remain counted.



MAHARASHTRA REPORTED UNDER 10K CASES FOR THE SECOND DAY IN A ROW

The state added 9,350 new Covid cases, 388 deaths, and 1,070 'old' fatalities, taking the total caseload to 59.3 lakh and the cumulative toll to 1,14,154. Since May 17, the state has added 20,186 unreported deaths. Due to the data reconciliation, 1,698 duplicate cases have been deleted from the total tally.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

For the second day in a row, Maharashtra reported under 10,000 cases on Tuesday but fatalities surged over Monday's in the state. Also, over a thousand past deaths were added on Tuesday in the data reconciliation exercise, taking the total of such fatalities over 20,000 on Tuesday.

The state added 9,350 new Covid cases, 388 deaths, and 1,070 'old' fatalities, taking the total caseload to 59.3 lakh and the cumulative toll to 1,14,154. Since May 17, the state has added 20,186 unreported deaths. Due to the data reconciliation, 1,698 duplicate cases have been deleted from the total tally.

In the city, besides 572 cases, 14 deaths were recorded on Tuesday, taking the total case tally to 7.2 lakh and total toll to 152,16. The test positivity rate as stayed below 3% for over a week now. On Tuesday, with 23,681

tests conducted, the daily positivity rate was 2.4%.

The weekly growth rate of Covid cases in the city dropped below 0.1% to 0.09% in the June 8-14 week. The doubling rate has improved to 702 days.

"The Covid situation is under control. We are, however, not shutting down facilities and plan to keep them intact in case the third wave begins in the next few months," said BMC additional commissioner Suresh Kakani.

The BMC plans to begin a sensitisation drive among parents. "We have information about every child, thanks to the data collected during the 'My Family My Responsibility' campaign. As part of this drive, we will educate parents about symptoms in children and give details of the nearest BMC centre," said Kakani.

Relief and rehabilitation department principal secretary Aseem Gupta on Tuesday said that talks were on with senior decision makers of the



state whether to exempt vaccinated travellers from showing a negative RT-PCR report while entering Maharashtra or not. The number of hotspot villages in the rural parts of Pune district has gone down by 100 - from 186 last week to 86 now. The city's transport utility will resume its airport bus service from Wednesday.

On a day when new cases were less than 50 in eight districts of the region and none reported more than five fatalities, Amravati district administration on Tuesday announced fresh relaxations from the Covid curbs.

Though Amravati recorded 45 new cases on Tuesday, it was 50% less than reported a day before. With 63 cases, Akola district had day's highest number of cases in the region, followed by Chandrapur 58. Bhandara and Gondia did not report any Covid death for yet another day on Tuesday. Gadchiroli was the other district where no Covid fatality was reported. Yavatmal, Buldhana and Washim's Covid casualty numbers of the day were one each. Among all districts of the region, Chandrapur reported highest, 5, Covid casualties in the day.

Talks failed, ASHA workers' strike to continue in Maharashtra

The minister did not even offer any proposal to us and clearly refused our demands saying the state is facing a cash crunch amid Covid crisis. Hence, we will continue the strike till the demands get fulfilled

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The talks between ASHA health workers union and state government have failed on Wednesday and the workers action committee has decided to continue with the indefinite strike to meet their demands mainly to increase the honorarium.

The indefinite strike started on Tuesday continued for the second day. MA Patil, a leader from ASHA workers action committee, who was part of the talks said that the public health Rajesh Tope minister clearly refused to increase the honorarium of ASHA workers and did not offer any assurance on demands.

"The minister did not even offer any proposal to us and clearly refused our demands saying the state is facing a cash crunch amid Covid crisis. Hence, we will continue the strike till the demands get fulfilled," said Patil.

ASHA are accredited



social health activists recognised by the Union Health Ministry who have emerged as the backbone of Covid care in rural areas. ASHA workers in Maharashtra struck work because they want better wages, among other demands.

They get an honorarium of Rs 5,000 per month that they want revised to Rs

18,000 as they work 8-9 hours instead of 2-3 hours as was the original mandate.

On Tuesday evening, the five union action committee received a call from the health minister for talks. The meeting was held at the state secretariat on Wednesday morning however the talks failed.

MVA Will Continue Working Under Uddhav Thackeray: Ajit Pawar

Team Absolute | Pune

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will work under the leadership of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and that is the only "formula as of now" for the top post. He was asked about Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole's recent reported remarks of contesting polls alone and expressing his desire to be the party's face for the chief minister's post with the high command's consent. Asked if there is any "formula" over the post within the ruling MVA, Pawar said: "As of now there is only one type of formula - that everyone will work under the leadership of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray."

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader said majority in the assembly decides who will be the chief minister. "However, if Nana (Patole) has expressed his desire



(to occupy CM post), he has right to express it. He expressed it because he felt so. Ultimately, in a democracy, if anyone expresses a desire (to become CM) one has to attain the "magic figure" of 145 seats in the state (which has a 288-member assembly). Anyone who achieves it, can claim the CM post," Pawar said. Speaking about Patole's statement of going solo in the assembly polls, he said the Congress leader has the right to say so. "Though three parties are together in the MVA, all three have right to expand their base. So, as the state Congress presi-

dent, he (Nana Patole) can assert his party's stand," Pawar added.

The Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi has the NCP and the Congress as its constituents.

Asked about the opposition criticizing the government's decision to not allow foot march by devotees of Lord Vitthal this year also due to COVID-19, Pawar said the opposition was still having "stomach pain" over a three-party government coming to power in the state. He said the decision was taking after consulting all stakeholders. "They have been thinking for the last 15 months that this government will fall one day, but that has not happened," the NCP leader said. On alleged irregularities in a land deal for the Ram temple in Ayodhya, Pawar said people have donated generously for the project. "If there are allegations, facts need to be brought before people whose money and sentiments are attached to the project," he said.

MH-CET could be held by first week of August: Samant

The state government had already filled up around 1,200 of 4,084 college teachers' posts which a high-power committee had recommended but the process halted due to COVID-19.

Team Absolute | Nagpur

The CET or the common entrance test for professional courses after class 12 in Maharashtra could be held in the last week of July or first week of August, Higher & Technical Education Minister Uday Samant said here on Tuesday. Speaking to reporters, he also said that in-person classes in colleges will not start



as of now, considering the pandemic situation. "The CET can be held in July last week or the first week of August," he said. The state government had already filled up around 1,200 of 4,084 college teachers' posts which a high-power committee had recommended but the process halted due to COVID-19, he said. This recruitment will resume soon, Samant said.

A long-standing demand of con-

tractual teachers in government-aided colleges that they be paid at par with teachers in private universities will be fulfilled soon, he informed. As to when physical or in-person classes will start in colleges, Samant said colleges can not open in the present situation and online classes will continue. The state disaster management authority, headed by the chief minister, will review the situation, he added.

MAHARASHTRA SIGNS MOU WITH USA TO BOOST AGRO-INDUSTRY SECTOR

Mumbai: Agriculture Minister Dadasaheb Bhuse and US Consul General David Ranz signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) Wednesday to promote and strengthen the SMART (State of Maharashtra's Agri-business and Rural Transformation Programme) projects for the upliftment of small and marginal farmers. The collaboration between the state and USA agriculture department is aimed at seeking advanced technology to boost the agriculture sector in Maharashtra. "Under the Balasaheb Thackeray Agro-Industry and Rural Transformation SMART projects, the state government plans upliftment of small and marginal farmers. The focus is to make farming sustainable and income-oriented," Bhuse said. The state government is also emphasising 'Vikel Te Pikel' (sow that sells) under which it is working on a mechanism to select crops which has a market and then develop the value chain for their flawless disbursement. The state government is also vying to seek help from the World Bank to develop the SMART agro-sector projects. According to the state government, Ranz has assured support to Maharashtra's initiative in the agriculture sector. After signing the MoU, he said, "America has made a great contribution in the agriculture sector, especially food security globally. It would look forward to working in the sector with Maharashtra, especially in cotton which has a worldwide demand."

Obese dog undergoes 'weight-loss' surgery in Pune

Team Absolute | Pune

In what is probably a first of its kind case in India, an obese female dog 'Deepika', weighing 50 kgs, has undergone a laparoscopic weight-loss surgery to shed 5 kgs in just a week, top medicos said here on Wednesday.

The 8-year-6-month old Deepika, owned by Yasmin Daruwala underwent the laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy procedure which cost around Rs 1.20 lakh.

After discarding 5 kgs of excess fat in just a week post-surgery, the now-trim Deepika is able to walk and move around, which she had stopped since the past more than couple of years, and is set to weigh around 18-20 kgs after a few weeks.

The landmark surgery -- which opens up new avenues for treatment in animals especially pets or in zoos facing similar problems -- was performed by team led by well-known bariatric surgeon Dr Shashank Shah and veterinary surgeon Dr Narendra Pardeshi, who is founder of Small Animal Clinic, both from Pune.

"She was around 5-6 years old when she became totally inactive, she would just laze on the couch, salivate, pant for breath. Her food and medicines intake shot up and we ended up spending some Rs 10,000 per month," recalled the relieved owner Daruwala.

Much worried, she consulted various vets with no solutions, and finally came in touch with Dr Pardeshi who recommended the sur-

gery to resolve the dog's heavyweight issues.

"Like us humans, obesity is a silent killer even in animals. The dogs in India are fed more on carbohydrate-rich foods much like some foreign breeds. Pets become obese owing to lack of exercise or high food intake. This was the case even with Deepika," explained Dr Shah of Laparo Obeso Centre, Pune.

Among other issues, Deepika had obesity, high blood pressure, enlarged heart, hypothyroidism, higher BMI, panting, salivation from the mouth, joint problems and a bluish tongue, said Dr Shah, who is one of India's leading bariatric surgeons.

According to Dr Pardeshi, a normal dog life-span of 12-15 years reduces by nearly half if they are obese or fail to get timely treatment.

"This dog underwent various medical tests just like humans for fat percentage by measuring the ratio of her stomach and hind-legs, after which we prescribed a diet and medication. We made other attempts to bring down her weight, but it had little impact so we decided on the weight-loss surgery," Dr Pardeshi said.

On June 6, after a five-day liquid diet and a 12-hour fast, Deepika was admitted to Dr Pardeshi's clinic for the procedure to skim off the extra layers of fat on her body, with minimum invasion, blood loss and discharged after an hour.

For a week, Deepika was on a diet of clear chicken soup but with restricted

movements or exercises for a fortnight and she will soon shed down to around 18-20 kgs.

Buoyed by the successful surgery and since many pets also have obesity issues, both Dr Shah and Dr Pardeshi plan to team up for a Centre on Veterinary Laparoscopy, Endoscopy, Bariatric Surgery, Laparoscopic Hernia, thoracic and other procedures.

On her part, Deepika's owner Daruwala is feeling a load removed off her head too. "There is a tremendous change in her post-surgery. She performs all activities easily, moves around boldly and has brought huge relief to me," she said, proudly patting her glowing black beauty.

Teachers seek govt nod to board local trains, priority in vaccination for attending schools

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government's recent order directing teachers to attend schools has not gone down well with the teaching fraternity for the lack of any assurance on prioritising them for vaccination against COVID-19 and the permission to travel by suburban trains in Mumbai.

In a circular issued on Monday, the state government made it mandatory for 50 percent of teachers of class 1 to 9 to conduct online sessions for students from their schools.

A 100 percent attendance is made compulsory for teachers of class 10 and lecturers of junior colleges. The teachers have been directed to attend schools so that results of class 10 can be released by June-end.

This decision was implemented on June 15 barring the Vidarbha region where it will come into effect from June 26. Sanjay Daware, Mumbai unit president of the Maharashtra State Aided and



Non-aided School Action Committee, said on Wednesday, "the government has issued its circular half-heartedly. We had demanded giving teachers priority in the vaccination drive, but there is no communication from the state government." "Teachers in Mumbai had also demanded permission to travel by local trains but there is no clear instruction in

the circular about this demand. How teachers are expected to reach schools if they are not allowed to board the trains?" he questioned.

Daware said the government, on one hand, expects teachers to issue results on time so that students do not suffer but on the other hand it has not allowed them permission to travel in local trains.

GOI 'GREEN-FLAGGED' PM'S PIX ON COVID VAX CERTIFICATES: RTI

Team Absolute | Pune

The much-castigated decision to print the photos and a message of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on crores of Covid-19 Vaccination Certificates, was apparently taken by the 'Government of India, a RTI reply has revealed. A Pune-based activist Praful Sarada had filed a RTI query in May (last month) seeking details and circumstances that culminated in the PM's photo plus message figuring on all the privileged, but provisional, Covid Vaccination Certificates (CVC), issued in the name of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW).

"The due procedure has been



followed at Government of India level to use and affix the photograph and name of Prime Minister on the vaccination certificate to provide message on Covid-19 appropriate behavior," says the terse reply from Sarita Nair, FAA & Deputy Secretary, MOHFW.

Surprisingly, the officer has also clarified that she does not deal with matters pertaining to the Co-Win portal, nor was she in the hierarchy pertaining to the decision/process/system, and the RTI reply has been given by some other person. "Therefore, the RTI application was sent to the concerned office/officer/technical officer who deals with the Co-Win/Co-Win portal matter (but due to some technical/administrative reasons, he has not been nominated as CPIO yet), therefore the information/reply provided by them is as under," Nair said.

Sarada contended said that the MOHFW's reply seems to "hide more than revealing anything" about who actually authorized the

use of the PM's photo on the CVCs, as the term "Government of India" used is vague and confusing.

"Since India is the only country in the world currently known to print its PM's photos on the CVCs, there must have been a due procedure followed, a proposal by some authority, its approval by an authorized panel, and other subsequent norms, before it was cleared... Who were the individuals/authorities in the huge 'Government of India' behind this crucial decision remains in the dark," Sarada pointed out.

The MOHFW's CVCs have a printed strip with Modi's photo, along with slogans English and Hindi - "Together We Will Defeat

Covid-19" and "Medicines As Well As Rigour" (Davai Bhi Aur Kadai Bhi), with the National Emblem of the Lion Capital of India at the top left. Sarada said that as per the RTI reply, if the "due procedure" was indeed followed, then, were there any other alternatives suggested, "like the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhiji, Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan who is a renowned Otorhinolaryngologist and currently WHO Executive Board Chairman, or the two Vaccine developers, Bharat Biotech International Ltd Chairman Krishna Ella and Serum Institute of India CEO Adar C. Poonawalla, or a completely neutral one like the Indian Tricolour, etc".



SHIVRAJ SINGH MEETS MODI, DISCUSSES COVID MANAGEMENT

■ During the meeting, which lasted for around 80 minutes, Chouhan briefed the Prime Minister about the measures taken to control the second wave of Covid-19 in the state and the current situation of the virus infection.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday afternoon met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and apprised him about the Covid management in the state.

During the meeting, which lasted for around 80 minutes, Chouhan briefed the Prime Minister about the measures taken to control the second wave of Covid-19 in the state and the current situation of the virus infection.

"Today, I met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi and apprised him about the current situation in Covid in Madhya Pradesh. I told him about the efforts made by the state government to control Covid and discussed the preparations to deal with the third wave," Chouhan tweeted after meeting with the Prime Minister.

In another tweet, Chouhan said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance is always available for the development of Madhya Pradesh and welfare of people. The Prime Minister is the man of ideas and



under his guidance development works in Madhya Pradesh are being carried forward with great pace.

"Discussed several issues including development of state, public welfare, Covid control measures and vaccination with the prime Minister. Under the guidance of the Prime Minister, I will be able to take forward works at a faster pace," he said.

Chouhan also briefed the Prime Minister about a mega vaccination campaign starting from June 21 in the state. "On June 21, all the ministers including me, MPs, MLAs, Crisis Management Committees, eminent personalities from different walks of life will come together for mega vaccination drive. Received Prime Minister's guidance to complete the vaccination programme within the fixed time-frame," he said.

Chouhan said he also informed the Prime

Minister about decisions taken by the crisis management committee to control the Covid. "Today 160 positive cases were reported in Madhya Pradesh and the positivity rate 0.2 per cent," he said. He said that the state government is prepared with full strength to control the third wave of Covid. "Maximum testing, isolating persons found positive, contract tracing, continuing kill corona campaign, keeping the Covid care centres running, and getting the public to follow the Covid appropriate behaviour will continue," the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister said.

Chouhan is expected to meet Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and DV Sadananda Gowda.

The BJP sources said that Chouhan may also meet party Chief JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Indigo refrains travellers from boarding aircraft for not having RT-PCR

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Over a dozen passengers were turned away at the Bhopal airport after they did not have a mandatory negative RT-PCR report. The incident took place on Bhopal to Mumbai - 6E 983, scheduled to take off on Monday at 17:15.

Turned around passengers confronted the private airline for the confusion, claiming they were not aware of the norms for travelling to Mumbai.

Jitendra Karan, a businessman while talking to Absolute India said, "I was denied travel, after being issued a boarding pass. There was no communication from the airline pertaining to the requirement for a negative RT-PCR report."

"There was no mention for the need of a COVID-19 test report. A self-health declaration form filled by passengers, had nine points, but none referring to the need for an RT-PCR test. The ticket nor the boarding pass mentioned it," he added.

The shock for many came after entering the airport. The airline staff at the baggage counter informed the passengers of the Maharashtra government guideline -- "It is

mandatory for passengers arriving into Mumbai from other states/UT to carry a negative RT-PCR which will have to be issued from up to a maximum of 48 hours before the time of arrival into Mumbai. RT-PCR timeline starts from the report issuance time. Passenger not in possession of the same shall be denied boarded at the origin station'.

One of the passengers had arrived in Bhopal 48-hours ago. One was a family of three and another was a 28-year-old who feared losing his job as a result of not being able to report for a meeting in Mumbai.

On Tuesday, Karan got another shock about the ticket rescheduling option. "I was told at the airport that ticket can be rescheduled for another travel date. However, the option to cancel the ticket, came with a refund of about Rs 700 only," he said.

No Airline obligation in MP for inbound passengers

Airline has to provide a detailed list of arriving passengers with arrival flight, time, mobile number and residential address to be shared with Nodal officer. Also, ensure passengers without RT-PCR report are not boarded for Mumbai bound flights. In the instance of Indore airport guidelines states, 'felicitate the passengers arriving from Maharashtra for checking RT-PCR report and guide passengers arriving without RT-PCR report'. Bhopal airport makes it mandatory for passenger to carry negative RT-PCR report from an ICMR approved lab not earlier than 72 hours. One day more than what is accepted while travelling to Maharashtra.

Getting into Bhopal Airport:

Health Screening - Thermal screening and health profiling shall be done upon arrival. If passenger is found symptomatic, COVID test to be performed. For passengers arriving from Maharashtra into Bhopal, it is mandatory for passenger to carry negative RT-PCR report from an ICMR approved lab not earlier than 72 hours. RT-PCR timeline starts from the swab collection time.

IAS OFFICER GETS NOTICE AFTER CHAT ON CORRUPTION LEAKED

Lokesh Jangid sought three years' deputation to home state Maharashtra citing personal reasons. But in the leaked posts, he indicated that it was due to repeated transfers because of his inability to tolerate corruption.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

An IAS officer in the State has been sent a show cause notice by the government following his corruption allegations against the state's bureaucrats on a private social media group of IAS officers, which got leaked.

Lokesh Jangid sought three years' deputation to home state Maharashtra citing personal reasons. But in the leaked posts, he indicated that he was being repeatedly transferred because of his inability to tolerate corruption. In four-and-half years, he claimed he was transferred nine times.

The state government issued showcause notice to the officer for "indiscipline" and sought reply within a week. Confirming the notice, cabinet minister Vishvas Sarang said transfers and postings are routine administrative procedure.

"The same officer was transferred even during the Congress regime, so how has he become so dear to the Congress now? No officer is bigger than the system. Every officer has to abide by civil services conduct rules, which have been violated by the concerned officer," the minister said. The opposition Congress has attacked the BJP government, claiming that Jangid was transferred from Barwani over exposing corruption in purchase of medical equipment during the Covid pandemic. State Congress spokesperson



Narendra Saluja said the Chief Minister and the ministers and bureaucrats responsible come clean.

In one of his posts in the closed private group, Jangid wrote, "In Bihar they don't make anyone DM who mints money. In MP, the less said the better."

"Stability of tenure in Madhya Pradesh and the joke of an institution called Civil Service Board," read another post. "Interestingly, while those who mint money from all kinds of mafia, get transfer from field to field. And those with impeccable integrity get thrown to Secretariat on transfer," read a third.

He even announced his intention to write a book after retirement to "bring the facts before everyone".

Jangid's last transfer was from the post additional collector of Barwani district to additional mission director at Rajya Shiksha Kendra in Bhopal on May 31.

The 2014 batch IAS officer wrote that the transfer happened after the present Barwani district collector

Shivraj Singh Verma turned Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan against him as his interests were being hampered. The Chief Minister and the Collector, he pointed out, both belong to the Kirar community. Their wives were office bearers in the Kirar Mah Sabha.

The bureaucrat also had stinging criticism for his seniors. "Of course who's who in bureaucracy are mere Nero's Guests these days," he wrote.

The posts drew an irate response from a senior bureaucrat, who advised him to "have some decency" and delete all his posts. Mr Jangid refused and said they could remove him from the group. He was subsequently removed.

The young IAS officer while talking to Absolute India confirmed the posts but refused to elaborate on the contents and expressed ignorance about how the leak happened.

"I have requested for inter cadre deputation for three years to Maharashtra for pressing family concerns," he said. Asked whether his recent transfer was the reason for his request for a shift, Jangid said, "Transfers and postings are a prerogative of every government. I have nothing to complain about the government. My fields assignments since my first posting as SDM-Vijaypur in Sheopur district have given me immense satisfaction, particularly the satisfaction of working to my best ability in tribal areas."

Normalcy returning in MP as Covid wave recedes

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After the coronavirus situation in Madhya Pradesh improved in the last few weeks and cases started declining, normalcy is returning to the state with markets, malls open and people thronging to make purchases.

The day curfew has been completely lifted and now corona curfew remains in force only at night. While restaurants, clubs, gyms are open, footfalls in shopping malls, the markets have increased. The maximum number of people coming to religious places has been increased to six.

Coaching centres, schools, swimming pools and cinema halls however will remain closed for the time being. Only online studies can take place. With the opening of markets and other business outlets, the daily



wage earners have heaved a huge sigh of relief.

With more relaxations, the number of employees in government and private offices has increased and are ready to run with full capacity. The number of people attending a wed-

ding ceremony has also been increased to 50, but only 10 people can take part in a funeral.

The Madhya Pradesh government had two months ago stopped the buses coming from four states to contain the virus spread. According to

State Transport Minister Govind Rajput, out of the four restricted states the movement of buses has been started except to and from Maharashtra. Now the movement of buses can take place from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, but bus services to and from Maharashtra will remain suspended till June 22.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that corona infections in the state are now at the lowest. Madhya Pradesh has come in the 27th place in terms of infections among 28 states of the country. Only 224 new cases have been reported in the state in the last 24 hours.

Calling to keep the vaccination campaign moving, Chouhan said that vaccination is a protective shield against Covid. To get everyone vaccinated, a big campaign will be launched in the state from July 1.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF CORONA: MISHRA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Home Minister Narottam Mishra has said that along with public awareness, public participation is necessary for effective control of corona infection. Mishra was presiding over the meeting of the Group of Ministers on public awareness and publicity for effective control of Covid infection in Mantralaya. In the meeting, the members of the cabinet discussed in detail to formulate an effective strategy. Medical Education Minister Vishwas

Sarang was present in the meeting. Culture Minister Usha Thakur and School Education Minister Inder Singh Parmar joined the discussion online.

In the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on the prevention of the third wave of corona as well as the promotional measures to make the general public participative and aware for maximum vaccination. Principal Secretary, Public Relations Shiv Shekhar Shukla presented the campaign plan and the publicity work being done through Power Point

Presentation (PPT).

Mishra instructed to prepare PPT by incorporating the suggestions of the ministers received in the meeting. It was told in the meeting that the next presentation is likely to be made in front of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday.

In the meeting, Additional Director General of Police and Officer on Special Duty (Home) Ashok Awasthi, Commissioner Public Relations Sudam Khade and Additional Secretary Public Relations HL Chowdhary was present.

CM Plants Sapling of Maulshree in Madhyanchal Bhawan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday planted a sapling of Maulshree tree at Madhyanchal Bhawan Delhi in morning. In line with his resolve to plant one sapling each day, Chouhan planted this sapling during his Delhi visit. Resident Commissioner, Additional Resident Commissioner and other senior officers of Madhya Pradesh Government were present during the event.



The ayurvedic properties of Maulshree find mention in Ayurvedic texts like Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Dhanvantari Nighantu, Bhavaprakash Nighantu, etc. It is used to cure diseases like dental problems, constipation problem, stomach ulcer, cough and cold, and headache. It is also used for mitigation of Vastu Dosh and Mangal Dosh.

It may be noted that Chief Minister Chouhan had taken a pledge to plant one sapling each day during a program organized at Amarkantak on 19th February, 2021 on the occasion of Narmada Jayanti. In the past also, during his stay outside the state, the Chief Minister had planted saplings in Bharuch in Gujarat and Jagatvallahpur in West Bengal.

MPT collaborates with Vidya Balan-starrer Amazon Original Film 'Sherni'

Sherni, filmed extensively in Madhya Pradesh, to premiere worldwide on 18th June on Amazon Prime Video

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism today announced an extensive marketing collaboration with the makers of Sherni - Amazon Prime Video, T-Series and Abundantia Entertainment - for the upcoming and much-awaited, Vidya Balan-starrer 'Sherni'.

Sherni is a story set in the backdrop of man-animal conflict, where a forest officer (Vidya Balan) must work through the brutal beasts of social barriers set by a patriarchal society and the languid attitude within her department. She leads a team intending to capture an unsettled tigress as she battles obstacles and pressures, both natural and man-made.

Sherni has been extensively shot in real and picturesque forests and locales of Madhya Pradesh, providing a unique peek into the state that has been a go-to destination for those who enjoy the wild. Through their shoot schedules spread across Bhoopali and in and around the Kanha National Park that also included the district of Balaghat, the film showcases the diversity of the region that would invariably attract more tourists to Madhya Pradesh. With objectives of boosting



tourism in the state, Madhya Pradesh Tourism is working closely with the makers of the film to launch a symbiotic marketing and promotional campaign.

Speaking on this one-of-a-kind initiative for the MP Tourism, Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Dept. Of Tourism, Govt. Of Madhya Pradesh, said: "Right from the time we first heard the story of 'Sherni' we knew that it would be a suitable vehicle for us to showcase the beauty and heritage of Madhya Pradesh's jungles to the world. MP Tourism has been at the forefront of joining hands with our state's Forest Department to work on forest conservation and thrilling



wildlife tourism experiences. I am delighted that 'Sherni' will now not only put our state's beauty for the world to see but will also draw attention to various unique initiatives like wellness tourism, tribal art & culture, handicrafts and the friendliness of MP's people. MP Tourism is excited to partner with powerhouse talent like Vidya Balan and creators like Amit Masurkar, T-Series and Abundantia Entertainment to further our objectives of boosting tourism in our state. Look no further than MP for the experience of a lifetime".

Rajnish K Singh, IFS, Assistant Conservator of Forests at Dept. of Forests, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, added: "It's not

everyday that you get to be a part of stories like 'Sherni' that discuss and bring to the fore causes like maintaining balance between environment & development and man-animal conflict management. We are proud that the amazing work that is done on a daily basis by our Department is now going to be there for the world to see, especially with Vidya Balan playing a forest officer. We can't wait for the world to see our amazing forests and the experiences they offer".

Amazon India Head, Vijay Subramaniam said, "With our Amazon original titles, we always aim to leave something behind, it is not necessarily in terms of a message but it could be a call to action, to drive a higher order of emotional connections. The primary job of these stories is to entertain and we shouldn't shy away from that but at the same time, we're blessed with the opportunity of creating these wonderful spaces where, in addition to entertainment, we are actually able to deliver a message and motivate audiences for a cause or a movement." The marketing alliance between MP Tourism and Sherni will see the launch of a co-branded advertising campaign, engagements between MP Forest Department officials and the cast and crew of the film as well as several other ground level initiatives to boost tourism in the state.

Sherni releases across more than 240 countries and territories on 18th June 2021 exclusively on Amazon Prime Video.



BIDEN, PUTIN SET FOR HIGHLY ANTICIPATED SUMMIT IN GENEVA

Geneva | Agencies

US President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin are set to meet each other here in a highly anticipated summit. The talks come at a time when both sides describe the ties between the two countries as being at the rock bottom.

The summit is expected to cover a wide range of topics, including arms control, sanctions and US allegations of Russian cyber-attacks and election interference, the BBC reported. However, no major breakthroughs are expect-

ed, even as there are hopes of finding small areas of agreement.

The arrangements for the meeting have been carefully choreographed, with the Russian President due to arrive first at a grand villa overlooking Lake Geneva where the summit is taking place, followed by Biden, the BBC reported. The meeting comes on the tail-end of Biden's first foreign trip as US President, in which he has also attended meetings with G7 and NATO leaders.

Going into the summit, Biden has stressed that he has the backing of his Western partners.

Biden had said the meet-



ing an important step if they are to ultimately find "stability and predictability" in relations, while Putin

told state TV there were "issues where we can work together", the report said. However, Yuri

Ushakov, Putin's foreign affairs adviser, told journalists that there was "not much" ground for optimism.

There are hints of possible progress in talks on the fate of US prisoners in Russia, including the former US marine Paul Whelan, convicted of espionage: Moscow has long been pushing for a swap for its own high-profile detainees in America. Though the expectation in terms of concrete deliverables from the discussion but the White House had said that the meeting is better than the alternative, the BBC reported.

UK PM says it doesn't look like Covid leaked from Chinese lab

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said Britain's "best information" remained that Covid-19 "jumped" from animals to humans, Xinhua reported.

London | Agencies

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that it doesn't look like that Covid-19 originated from a lab in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

"At the moment the advice we've had is that it doesn't look like this particular disease of a zoonotic origin came from a lab," Johnson said in his closing press conference at the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Britain's south-western resort of Carbis Bay, a seaside resort and village in Cornwall.

"I do think there's a problem with zoonotic diseases and this is clearly something we need to focus on," he said. Meanwhile, British Foreign Secretary



Dominic Raab said Britain's "best information" remained that Covid-19 "jumped" from animals to humans, Xinhua reported.

Leaders from Britain, the United States, Canada, Japan, Germany, France and Italy, plus the European Union, wrapped up on Sunday their first in-person summit in almost two years.

Britain also invited Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa as guest countries to this year's meeting.

Rain, floods wreak havoc in Nepal; scores die and missing

Kathmandu | Agencies

Floods and landslides have wreaked havoc in Nepal following the incessant rains on Tuesday and Wednesday, leaving scores dead and missing.

More than 50 people are missing in a massive flood in Sindhupalchowk district which is located some 70 kilometers north from Capital, Kathmandu that has caused a huge loss of life and property. Chief District Officer of Sindhupalchowk district, Arun Pokharel said that seven people have died in the floods induced by incessant rains in Helambu rural municipality and six of them were workers in a local fish farm. Health Minister Sher Bahadur Tamang, who is elected to the House of Representatives (HoR) from Sindhupalchowk itself, has informed that over 50 people have gone missing and security agencies have started search and rescue operations in the district. The local Sindhupalchowk administration has not yet pinpointed the exact figure of the missing and has said that the details are being collected. Floods in Melamchi and

Indrawati rivers have wreaked havoc in the Sindhupalchowk district triggering landslides, sweeping away the human settlements and sweeping away the bridges and other development infrastructure. A rescue team of Nepal Army (NA) and police has reached the flood-hit Melamchi area of Sindhupalchowk in a helicopter. There are reports that floods and landslides have damaged some villages, highways and some projects where dozens of families are displaced. Several districts of the country are facing difficult situations due to floods and landslides and the government has decided to mobilise all the government agencies to cope up with the ongoing and looming disaster. A meeting at Nepal's Home Ministry on Wednesday afternoon decided to speed up search and rescue operations in flood and landslides hit area, effectively carry out rescue and relief operations by mobilizing all the state machinery. Chief of National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) Anil Pokharel said the meeting endorsed the work-plan to be executed in the period of 100 days from the day the monsoon started.

LOGISTICS, COORDINATION CHALLENGES HIT VAX SUPPLY IN PAKISTAN

Islamabad: Lack of coordination among government bodies, coupled with a disruption in supply from China, had hit the Covid vaccines supply in Pakistan.

Officials in the federal government said that the task of procuring the vaccines had been assigned to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) while the National Health Ministry was relieved of this duty. As a result, a lack of coordination was witnessed while there was a disruption in vaccine supplies from China which led to the crisis, Geotv reported. The NDMA, officials said, was not only dealing with Chinese vaccine manufacturers, including Sinopharm, Sinovac, and CansinoBIO, but it was also negotiating with Pfizer for the procurement of its mRNA vaccine for the country, a deal which could not be struck yet. The officials added that Pakistan was relying heavily on the National Institute of Health (NIH) in Islamabad for the preparation and filing of single-dose Chinese vaccine Cansino from the bulk concentrate, which is being distributed in the name of PakVac, but the NIH also failed to fulfil its commitment of sustained supply of the single-dose vaccine.

"NIH Islamabad had assured that they would be providing three million doses of PakVac (Cansino) vaccine per month but it failed to meet its commitment", officials added.

Nigerian expert says G7 'consistently' fails to keep promises

Abuja | Agencies

The Group of Seven (G7) leaders have made promises in a series of meetings, yet they "consistently" fail to keep their promises, a Nigerian expert has said. The G7 leaders have reaffirmed their commitments in a summit wrapped up on Sunday on vaccines sharing, recovery from the pandemic, climate change and security, and the question is the bloc's capability to execute those commitments, said Sheriff Ghali, a professor of political science with the University of Abuja.

The rich countries in the West know exactly what Africa expects of them in a world faced with challenges, such as climate change, terrorism and the recovery from



the Covid-19 pandemic, he told Xinhua after the summit. As a continent which is most vulnerable to global crises, Africa expects practical solutions to the crises through effective multilateral actions, instead of blame

games which undermine the global responses to those challenges, he added.

China and the West can actually collaborate through multilateral engagement in addressing global challenges, he said.

business

NET DIRECT TAX COLLECTIONS FOR FY22 GROWS OVER 100% TILL MID-JUNE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The net direct tax collections for the financial year 2021-22 have grown at a robust pace despite the disruptions caused by the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy.

According to the Finance Ministry, tax collections for FY22 up to June 15 have registered a growth of over 100 per cent at Rs 1,85,871 crore, compared to Rs 92,762 crore over the corresponding period of the preceding year.

The net direct tax collections include corporation tax (CIT) at Rs 74,356 crore (net of refund), and personal income tax (PIT), including security transaction tax (STT), at Rs 1,11,043 crore (net of refund).

The gross collection of direct taxes (before adjusting for refunds) for FY22 stands at Rs 2,16,602 crore compared to Rs 1,37,825 crore in same period of the previous year.

This includes corporation tax at Rs 96,923 crore and personal income tax, including security transaction tax, at Rs 1,19,197 crore.

Minor head-wise collection compris-



es advance tax of Rs 28,780 crore, tax deducted at source of Rs 1,56,824 crore, self-assessment tax of Rs 15,343 crore, regular assessment tax of Rs 14,079 crore, dividend distribution tax of Rs 1,086 crore, and tax under other minor heads of Rs 491 crore.

The Finance Ministry said that despite the extremely challenging initial months of the new fiscal, the advance tax collections for the first quarter of FY22 stands at Rs 28,780 crore against advance tax collections of Rs 11,714 crore for the corresponding period of the preceding fiscal, showing a growth of approximately

146 per cent. This comprises corporation tax at Rs 18,358 crore and personal income tax at Rs 10,422 crore.

This amount is expected to increase as further information is received from the banks, the Finance Ministry statement said.

What is encouraging is that the high tax collection numbers have come even though refunds amounting to Rs 30,731 crore have also been issued during the period under review.

The improved performance on direct tax should be encouraging for the government that is looking at various measures to bring the economy back on rails after the adverse impact of the second wave of the pandemic wanes.

For the government, indirect tax collections till May this year has already brought cheers as April numbers of GST reached record high levels since the introduction of the new tax system, while May numbers have not been that bad, remaining above the Rs 1 lakh crore mark.

Improved revenues are key for the government to maintain fiscal discipline and contain the country's fiscal deficit within manageable limits.

India to have 330M 5G smart phone subscriptions in 5 years

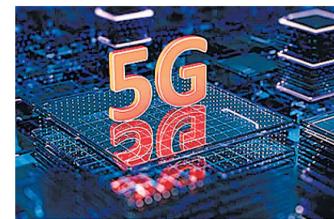
Team Absolute | New Delhi

There will be nearly 330 million 5G smartphone subscriptions in India in next five years, representing around 26 per cent of mobile subscriptions in the country, a report showed on Wednesday.

Globally, 5G mobile subscriptions will exceed 580 million by the end of 2021, driven by an estimated one million new 5G mobile subscriptions every day, according to a report by Swedish telecommunications giant Ericsson. The average traffic per smartphone user in India has increased from 13GB per month in 2019 to 14.6GB per month in 2020.

The average traffic per smartphone in the India region stands second highest globally and is projected to grow to around 40GB per month in 2026, according to Ericsson Mobility Report. "COVID-19 has accelerated India's digital transformation as more and more consumers rely on digital services -- be it digital payments, remote health consultations, online retail or video conferencing - to fulfil their business or personal needs," said Nitin Bansal, Head of Ericsson India.

"The average traffic per smartphone in the India region stands second highest globally and is projected to grow to around 40GB per month in 2026," added Bansal, also Head of Network Solutions for South east Asia, Oceania and India, Ericsson.



5G subscriptions with a 5G-capable device grew by 70 million during the first quarter of 2021. About 3.5 billion 5G subscriptions and 60 per cent 5G population coverage are forecast by the end of 2026.

However, the pace of adoption varies widely by region. Europe is off to a slower start and has continued to fall far behind China, the US, Korea, Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets in the pace of 5G deployments, the report noted.

5G is expected to surpass a billion subscriptions two years ahead of the 4G LTE timeline for the same milestone. "Key factors behind that include China's earlier commitment to 5G and the earlier availability and increasing affordability of commercial 5G devices. More than 300 5G smartphone models have already been announced or launched commercially," the report added.

TOP 3 PICKS FROM ACER TO CELEBRATE THIS FATHER'S DAY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The COVID-19 has become a blessing in disguise where we are showing appreciation and staying connected with our family has been more important and exciting than ever before. Father's Day is just around the corner and your number one guy is sure to appreciate a truly impressive gift this year. The favorite person, who has been there for you through thick and thin, gifting you a combination of a remarkable life and technical advice, and awful dad jokes. The best way to return the favor is with an unmatched Father's Day gift. But if you're not very sure what to get the special man in your life, relax and leave the work to us. Whether you'll be celebrating over Zoom or is lucky to spend the day with the big guy himself, we've got plenty of recommendations for some top tech gifts to choose from you'll be sure to wow him with one of these specially curated Father's Day gifts.



STERLITE POWER SECURES FUNDING FROM REC FOR UDUPI KASARGODE TRANSMISSION PROJECT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Sterlite Power, a global developer of power transmission infrastructure, announced the successful financial closure of the project set up by Udupi-Kasargode Transmission Project Ltd (UKTL). It has secured the entire debt funding of INR 580 crores from one of India's largest power sector lenders, REC Limited (REC). The project set up by UKTL is an Inter-State Transmission System project spanning across the southern states of Karnataka and Kerala. It is made up of two critical elements including a 1000MVA 400/220 kV Gas Insulated Substation (GIS), one of the first GIS substations to be built at Kasargode in Kerala. In accordance with the Letter of Award received from



RECTPCL (REC Transmission Projects Company Ltd.), the project involves construction of a 400kV (Quad) D/c transmission line, extending over ~240 km, from Udupi in Karnataka to Kasargode in Kerala. The project scope also includes supply and installation of two 400kV line bays and bus bar extension at Udupi switchyard.

Commenting on the development, Anuraag Srivastava, Group CFO, Sterlite Power said, "Sterlite Power has been successful in concluding a number of financial deals with global and national investors in the past. We are pleased to secure funding from REC - one of India's largest financial institutions in the power sector, for this project."

Anvidha Technologies launches EyeMyEye

New Delhi: Anvidha Technologies Private Limited has raised over \$1.5mn (10 crore) in seed funding from its founders & select HNIs to launch its highly anticipated Eyewear Platform - EyeMyEye in India. With a vision towards creating its niche in the eyewear market, EyeMyEye has been launched under the guidance of Ganesh Iyer, Founder & CEO, Anvidha Technologies Private Limited. The capital received will be utilized to expand the business and build a powerful and reliable Omni Channel platform in India.

Commenting on the launch, Ganesh Iyer, Founder & CEO, Anvidha Technologies Private Limited said, "The launch of EyeMyEye is a great execution milestone for us. The team has pulled-off the Pan-India launch amid the pandemic, which is even more commendable. We've received over 6300 sign-ups & 500+ orders on the day of the launch with minimum marketing efforts. Currently, we're hitting at 300+ orders every day which is exciting. The numbers are a testament to great teamwork and collaboration and we're really eager to see it scale. We're committed to bringing unmatched eyewear buying experience aligned with superior service to our customers."

The brand unveils a variety of trendy Eyeglasses, Sunglasses, Contact Lenses, Computer Glasses, Power Sunglasses along with special eyewear categories like Color Blind Glasses, Color Changing Frames, Reading Glasses, and many more with the launch of its e-commerce platform.

INDIAN CONSUMER CREDIT MARKET PROJECTED TO GROW AT HIGHER RATE THAN MOST MAJOR ECONOMIES WORLDWIDE

Mumbai: India's credit ecosystem remains resilient despite the pandemic, as revealed in the latest joint report, "A Review of India's Credit Ecosystem" by Experian, the world's leading global information Services Company, and Invest India, the national agency for investment and facilitation. The report "A Review of India's Credit Ecosystem" highlights several key trends in the lending sector, notably, a key trend where India's consumer credit market is projected to grow at a higher rate than most major economies globally." Neeraj Dhawan, Managing Director of Experian India, says: "The behavioural shift in Indian population has been tremendous just over the last five years. Consumerism has been growing in the previously untapped semi-urban and rural regions as millennials become the main driving force of the mass market. Technological adoption is steep which has, in turn, created acceptance for new financial tools. The biggest beneficiary of this change is the credit market, which is evolving into a self-generating and self-sustaining one." Deepak Bagla, Managing Director & CEO, Invest India, adds: "India is making giant strides in financial inclusion. The rise in the affluent middle class and growth in the rural economy is changing consumer spending patterns and driving the bulk of India's consumption growth. Additionally, rapid technological advancements have further expedited the growth of the credit lending ecosystem."



WOMEN TEST

SNEH, DEEPTI LEAVE ENGLAND 269/6; KNIGHT FALLS FOR 95

Bristol | Agencies

After winning the toss, England took a cautious start while batting and managed half centuries from Tammy Beaumont and Heather Knight, setting up for a big total with the Indian bowlers tiring out by tea. England got off to a very bright start thanks to Lauren Winfield-Hill, who belted a couple of sixes in a cheerful display. Tammy Beaumont kept going when Heather Knight came to the middle, with the former making 66 and the latter very nearly getting a century with 95. But from 230 for 2, that's when India started clawing back into the game. Nat Sciver fell after an aggressive 42, then Amy Jones followed quickly, creating enough disruption

that Knight joined the exodus. Georgia Elwiss didn't last long, and it was down to Dunkley on debut to join with the ever-so-experienced Katherine Brunt to see out the day. Dunkley has shown that she can do what's required in this format, and will resume tomorrow with the chance to take England on. The change in the game was all down to India's spinners, with Rana taking three wickets and Deepti two. They were sufficiently suffocating, and just kept asking questions of the batters for long enough to draw mistakes. Still, this is probably already a competitive score given the usual progression of women's Tests. England won't want to soak up too much time batting tomorrow, they would be better off going after faster runs even if it means being bowled out. I'm not confident we'll see that approach, as caution tends to overtake a lot of players in this format.

ENGLAND WOMEN HAD WON THE TOSS AND ELECTED TO BAT

HEATHER
95 OF
175
BALLS,
9X4S



India, who are playing their first Test in almost seven years, fielded five debutants -- batter Shafali, all-rounder Deepti Sharma, pacer Pooja and wicket-keeper Taniya Bhatia. Sneha, who is also making her debut, returned to India fold after five years. For England, all-rounder Sophia Dunkley made her debut. She became the first black player to represent the England women's Test team.



EURO CUP

Ramsey, Roberts seal 2-0 win for Wales over Turkey; Russia edges out Finland

Baku | Agencies

It was end-to-end football from the first minute in the first half. With chances and misses galore on both ends, it was eventually Gareth Bale assisting Aaron Ramsey for the opening goal at the brink of half-time to hand Wales the lead against Turkey. In the second half, Gareth Bale won and then missed a penalty. In the dying moments, Connor Roberts doubled the lead as Wales comfortably won. Earlier Russia wrapped up their first win in Group B of Euro 2020, beating Finland by a solitary goal from Aleksey Miranchuk in St. Petersburg on Wednesday. Finland started their second group game at a fast pace



with Joel Pohjanpalo almost scoring five minutes into the match but the striker was flagged offside. With this result, Belgium (3 points) continue to top the Group B standings, followed by Finland (3 points), Russia (3 points), Denmark are yet to open their account.

Test rankings: Smith new No.1 batsman, Kohli moves up to 4th

Dubai | Agencies

Ahead of the World Test Championship (WTC) final, India captain Virat Kohli on Wednesday moved up one spot, to fourth, in the ICC Test batting rankings while New Zealand captain Kane Williamson lost his top spot to Australian Steve Smith. With 891 points, former Australia skipper Smith is the world No.1 Test batsman while Williamson is now second with 886 points. Kohli, with 814 points displaced England captain Joe Root, who is now fifth with 797 points.



Two more Indians featuring in the top-10 - wicket-keeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and Rohit Sharma with 747 points each - are joint

sixth. Williamson lost his top spot in the rankings due to his omission from the playing XI in the second Test against England, while Root slipped

to fifth after a forgettable outing in the two-Test series against New Zealand, which the hosts lost 0-1.

In the Test bowling rankings, Ravichandran Ashwin is the lone Indian in the top-10 -- at No.2 with 850 points. Australia's Pat Cummins is leading the pack with 908 points.

In the Test all-rounders rankings, Ravindra Jadeja (386 points) and Ashwin (353 points) are holding on to their second and fourth positions respectively. West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder, with 412 points, is leading the rankings.



INDIAN WOMEN ARCHERS GEARED UP TO QUALIFY FOR OLYMPICS

Paris | Agencies

The Indian women recurve archers, including Olympian Deepika Kumari, are geared up to seal a team quota place at an Olympic qualification tournament starting here on Thursday. "We have completed our 10-day quarantine at Vichy Sports Complex on Tuesday. Our Covid-19 report is negative and we will shift to the official team hotel on Thursday," said team coach Purnima Mahato. Deepika had qualified for the Tokyo Olympic Games in the individual event in November 2019, but the Indian team was off the target in that event. In the Paris Olympic

Qualification Tournament, top three teams will be allotted quota places for the Olympics. The 2020 season was disrupted by the pandemic.

"Deepika, Komalika Bari and Ankita Bhakat will compete in the Olympic qualification tournament while Madhu Vedwan is a reserve player. The Paris competition is the last chance to achieve team quota places," said Purnima.

Thursday is the reporting time and official practice will take place on Friday. The women's team event is scheduled for Sunday.

The Olympic qualification tournament will be followed by the World Cup Stage 3 from June 21.

NZ have advantage but we are mentally prepared: Rahane



Southampton | Agencies

India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Wednesday admitted New Zealand would go into the World Test Championship (WTC) final with the advantage of having played two Tests in England, but said his teammates are prepared to face the challenge of playing a one-off Test without a competitive game.

"They are a quality team. We are not going to take them lightly. Yes they played two Test matches against England before the final, so they have this advantage. But as I said this final is all about whoever is going to give their best for the next five days -- in each and every session," said Rahane. He pointed out that the Kiwis have all

the bases covered.

India will head into the WTC final with a few practice sessions that Rahane described as being good. A poor start may not give them the chance to come back as it did in Australia where they played four Test matches and could bounce back from 36 all out and the crushing loss in the first Test by winning two of the next three Tests under Rahane. "I feel it is a mental thing, if you can switch mentally and adapt to it quickly. That is really important. Yes, it is a one-off game but as I said we want to take it as another game, not to think of it as a final. We don't put too pressure on ourselves," he added. "What is important for us is to start well. We have been playing well and consistent cricket."

Ronaldo knocks off \$4 billion from Coca-Cola's value

Budapest | Agencies

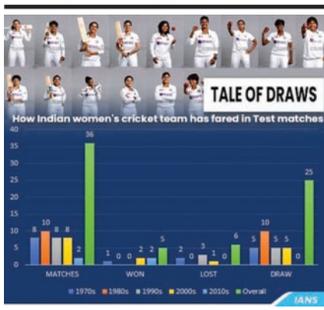
Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo inflicted a \$4-billion loss on soft drink major Coca-Cola with his gesture of putting aside two bottles of carbonated drinks and picking water instead during a press conference ahead of Portugal's match against Hungary.

The Portuguese star footballer, who plays for Juventus in Serie A and is acknowledged as one of the two best footballers of current era alongside Argentine Lionel Messi, sat down for the interaction with a teammate and moved the Coke bottles aside before picking a water bottle.

Coke is a sponsor of the ongoing Euro 2020 in which the former Real Madrid star is leading Portugal.

Spanish newspaper Marca has reported that Coca-Cola's shares took a dive and left the company with billions of dollars in losses.

"Coca-Cola shares dropped from 56.10 dollars to 55.22 dollars almost immediately after Ronaldo's gesture, meaning the company's value fell from \$242 billion to \$238 billion," said a report in the Marca. The dip in value happened within half an hour.

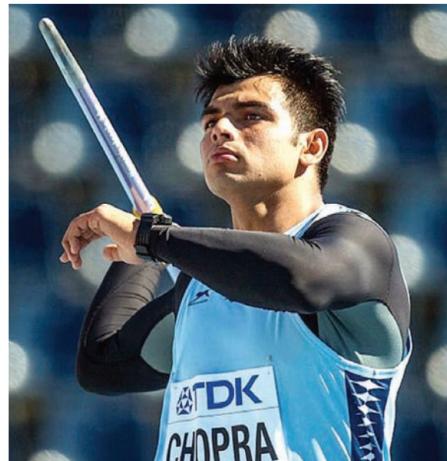


IMBALANCED: INDIA PLAYED JUST 36 WOMEN'S TESTS IN FIVE DECADES

Bristol: As the Mithali Raj-led Indian women's cricket team began its quest for a Test win against England here on Wednesday, statistics show that they have played just 36 Tests in all in the last five decades.

Of those 36 Tests -- with only two being played between 2010 and 2020 -- India have won just five, lost six and drawn 25. In comparison, their men counterparts have played many, many more over the same period. The Indian women played the most Tests in 1980s - 10 in all - and drew all of them.

India are scheduled to play another Test match this year, a one-off pink-ball Test against Australia.



Javelin ace Chopra set for Karlstad Grand Prix on June 22

Lisbon | Agencies

In his bid to regain form and confidence before the Olympic Games, Indian javelin exponent Neeraj Chopra's next stop will be Karlstad Grand Prix in Sweden on June 22 as part of his preparation.

After the Karlstad Grand Prix competition, 23-year-old Chopra will compete at the Kuortane Games in Finland on June 26, followed by another competition in Lausanne on June 29.

"This weekend he will fly from Portugal to Sweden to compete in the Karlstad Grand Prix. The event organisers have confirmed his entry. We hope there will be no issue at the border as Chopra is going from Portugal," said an official associated with Chopra's training. "These build-up events should be good enough to slip Chopra into a competitive mood for the Tokyo Olympic Games," said the coach. The Olympics start on July 23.

India strong contenders for Olympic hockey medal: Oltmans

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India will be one of the strongest contenders for a medal in men's hockey tournament of the Olympic Games if they display mental toughness in ample measure, says Roelant Oltmans, Dutch hockey tactician and former India men's coach.

"For me, the Indian men's hockey team is among the top five contenders to win a medal in Tokyo. The team has shown good consistency in competing with the best teams in the world over the last two years," said Oltmans, who was the chief coach of the Indian team that reached the 2016 Rio Olympics quar-

ter-finals.

"India has already shown they can beat teams like Australia, Belgium, and the Netherlands. However, doing it at the Olympics will be a different matter. The decisive factor when you are trying to win such a tournament is the mentality of the team. You cannot panic if you are behind in a game or get overexcited when you are ahead. You have to be in control of each situation," said Oltmans, 67. Oltmans, who has also coached the Pakistan hockey team twice, said that the weather conditions would also be a key factor at the Olympics, as Tokyo is expected to be high on humidity.



Ace sprinter Dutee hopes to qualify for Tokyo Olympics

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ace sprinter Dutee Chand said on Wednesday that she was well on track to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games because of her world ranking, currently 42nd.

"My world ranking is 42 which is within the stipulated number of 56 sprinters eligible to compete in the women's 100m dash at the Tokyo Olympics. There are two ways to qualify for the Olympics. One is through the world ranking system and the other to achieve qualification time set by the World Athletics," the 25-year-

old said during a virtual media interaction.



For the Tokyo Olympic Games, World Athletics has set stricter qualification standards in track and field events and June 29 is the deadline to achieve a qualification mark in the respective events.

The Olympic qualification standard in women's 100m is 11.15 seconds while Dutee's personal best is 11.22 seconds. The 100m national record holder is also one of the key members of the women's 4x100m relay squad.

It is hoped that the women's 4x100m relay team will make the cut for the Olympics Games before the deadline of June 29.

AMANDA HOLDEN CALLS FOR LOCKDOWN TO BE SCRAPPED AS SHE SLAMS GOVT

Los Angeles | Agencies

London: Amanda Holden has called for lockdown to be scrapped as she slammed the government for extending lockdown. The Britain's Got Talent judge, 50, told fans she had had enough after Boris Johnson extended the lockdown lift on her Instagram.

Amanda reposted a meme from The Handmaid's Tale which said, "Welcome to Gilead under Boris' eye."

In a statement of empowerment she posted a GIF of herself at work in a stunning multi-coloured dress and wrote, "I intend to survive."

She then posted a mock up of Ant and Dec from their hit show Saturday Night Takeaway giving Boris instructions from their headsets.

The comedy duo told him to "tell them it will only be another four weeks" as they appeared to burst out laughing.

Amanda went vocal about the delay in relaxing lockdown with a video post from former Prime Minister Theresa May.

In the video Theresa said new variants of covid would always be around, and encouraged the government to allow people to travel again and get on with everyday life.

Amanda wrote alongside the video, "Listen to this. Makes so much sense. I'm wondering why no one is hearing @theresamay."

Last February Amanda was devastated after breaching lockdown to see her parents in Cornwall.



CHERYL REVEALS YOGA, MEDITATION AND DELIVERY FOOD BOXES ARE THE SECRET TO HER YOUTHFUL LOOKS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Cheryl revealed yoga, meditation and delivery food boxes are the secret to her youthful looks. The singer, 37, went on a social media hiatus through the pandemic but this wasn't the only change she made to her lifestyle. Cheryl revealed she now does "life changing" meditation every day - as well scoffing on food delivery boxes. Speaking to Yahoo!, the Girls Aloud singer said: "If you just meditate for two minutes a week, it becomes five minutes. It's life changing. It makes you more peaceful and happy." The 5ft 3in star also dabbled in yoga, adding: "I've heard stretching adds an inch to your height." She also used Mindful Chef recipe boxes in order to pick what to eat, admitting: "I got so fed up during the pandemic of thinking what to eat." The singer returned to Instagram for the first time in a year last week with a smiling selfie. The 37-year-old singer's post, captioned "We back", came one day after it was revealed that her ex Liam Payne was single.



Kim Kardashian SHARES EMOTIONAL BIRTHDAY MESSAGE FOR DAUGHTER NORTH

Los Angeles | Agencies

Socialite Kim Kardashian shared an emotional birthday message for her daughter North, 8, after Kanye West moved on with Irina Shayk. The 40-year-old celebrated her North's eighth birthday with a sweet Instagram post.

In the photoshoot by Steven Klein, the Keeping Up With The Kardashians star was inspired by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis as she stylized her hair into a bob and wore '60s fashion attire.

In one of the behind-the-scenes snaps, Kim held her adorable daughter in her arms as they both wore a blue dress.

In the caption, Kim wrote, "North, one day you will see these messages all printed out for you in the books I am making for you and so hope you feel the love because you bring so much love and joy into all of our lives!"

"You are the silliest, most stylish, most creative person who knows exactly what they want in life! I've never met anyone like you!"

After six years of marriage, Kim filed for divorce from Kanye, 43, back in February.

The former couple agreed to split their \$2billion fortune evenly, which The Sun exclusively reported after their divorce was announced.



OWEN WILSON RECALLS HIS FIRST REACTION TO HIS CHARACTER MOBIUS IN 'LOKI'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor Owen Wilson has opened up on his first reaction to his role of Agent Mobius in the web series "Loki". "When the director Kate Herron and I first had a conversation, which was before I'd read the script, she was describing the character and describing the relationship between Loki and Mobius, and describing Mobius and his mission, and the way Loki ties into that," Wilson said, recalling the moment his curiosity was piqued about the character.

Wilson, who makes his entry into the superhero genre with the series, said

Mobius just sounded too complicated and interesting to gloss over.

He described the character and the show as "maybe not something you would expect from a comic book world, while still providing some of the excitement and thrills and sense of adventure that you do expect from these stories".

The show stars Tom Hiddleston as Loki, and also features GuguMbatia-Raw, Sophia Di Martino, WunmiMosaku and Richard E. Grant. Written by Michael Waldron, "Loki" airs on Disney+ Hotstar Premium and in Hindi on Disney+ Hotstar VIP.



Katy Perry and Orlando Bloom enjoy romantic gondola ride through Venice

Los Angeles | Agencies

Loved-up A-listers Katy Perry and Orlando Bloom enjoy a romantic gondola ride through Venice. Singer Katy, 36, and Orlando, 44, were spotted sipping cocktails, kissing and taking in the sights.

At least, Lord of the Rings star

Orlando kept his clothes on this time - in 2016, he was snapped naked on a paddle board.

Katy and Orlando welcomed daughter Daisy in August 2020, 18 months after announcing that they were engaged.

Katy, who was married to comedian

Russell Brand, previously gushed about Orlando: "I'm really, really grateful to have him. "And he really shows up in a huge emotional way, which is unique for me."

Kate Ferdinand reunites with ex Towie co-stars including Georgia Kousoulou as they introduce their babies to each other

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kate Ferdinand reunited with her former Towie co-stars so that they could all introduce their babies to each other. The 30-year-old star quit the ITVBe reality show to spend more time with husband Rio and his kids, before they welcomed baby son Cree in

December.

But she's still as close as ever to her fellow Essex ladies, with the group of new mums enjoying an outdoor get-together today.

Kate met-up with Georgia Kousoulou, who gave birth to son Brody last month, Danielle Armstrong, who welcomed daughter Orla in May 2020, and Lydia

Bright, who is mum to 15-month-old daughter Loretta.

Georgia shared an adorable group photo from the day to Instagram this evening, musing about the kids being the "next generation".

She wrote: "The next generation Such a lovely day catching up with the girls & babies.."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Paris Hilton



KARTIK AARYAN SPREADS AWARENESS ON IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING CPR

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Kartik Aaryan took to Instagram on Tuesday to discuss with his followers the importance of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, more commonly known as CPR. The actor has partnered with an initiative by cardiologists to spread awareness about CPR, which can help resuscitate a critical patient during sudden cardiac arrests.

In the video uploaded on the actor's Instagram account, Kartik says, "Life is

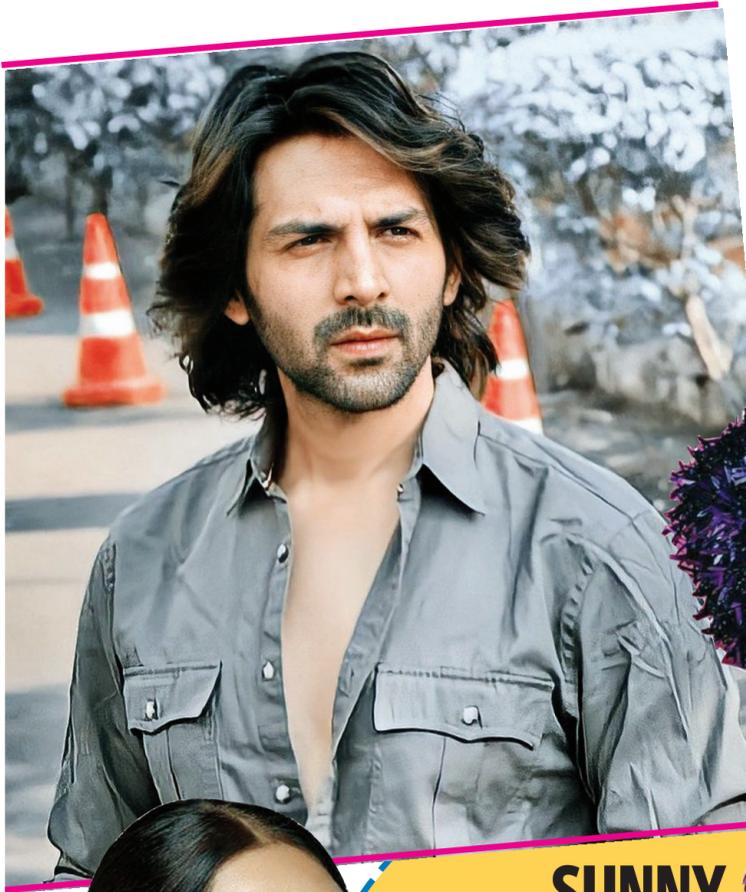
fragile and precious and cardiac arrest is the leading cause of sudden deaths across all age groups. If you are trained in CPR, or cardiopulmonary resuscitation, you can save a life if someone has a cardiac arrest in front of you. Learn this life saving skill with an hour-long online workshop conducted by iCare.

An initiative of cardiologists who have seen to many deaths that may have been prevented. It's time for us to step up and get active in our

own communities."

He adds, "We can and we will soon be at par with countries where almost everyone over the age of 15 knows CPR. Let's do this together, register for this workshop with iCare and become a responsible citizen."

On the work front, Kartik will be next seen in "Dhamaka" and "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2". He is also rumoured to be part of the Hindi remake of Telugu blockbuster "Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo".



SUNNY LEONE IS IN THE MOOD TO REFLECT ON CHANGE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sunny Leone had a few words of wisdom in her Wednesday post on social media. An Instagram photo she posted captures Sunny in close-up, sporting a no make-up look. She has a faraway look in the eyes. "Reflect !!!! Because it all changes so fast !!!!" Sunny wrote as caption. The actress is currently seen hosting the youth-based reality show "Splitsvilla" with Ranvijay Singha on television. It has been shot in Kerala. 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 Shefali Shah made her debut as a director in April with "Someday". The film will be screened at the 18th Indian Film Festival Stuttgart, Germany. "I can't even begin to tell how excited I am with the news of 'Someday' being screened at the 18th Indian Film Festival Stuttgart, making its reach across the globe. It's a great honour," says Shefali.

She adds that it

was a conscious decision to send the film to festivals across the globe, to see where she stands as a total newcomer in the area of direction. "The fact that it's been selected in a prestigious festival is such a big assurance," she says. "Someday" is a story of a mother and a daughter. Vidhi, a frontline warrior, comes home to a seven-day quarantine after 15 days on duty, and meets her mother, who suffers from Alzheimer's. The Indian Film Festival Stuttgart this year is scheduled to be held from July 21 to 25. Due to the pandemic, the festival will go online this year.

Jimmy Sheirgill, Namit Das to star in heist comedy series 'Choonaa'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actors Jimmy Sheirgill, Namit Das and Aashim Gulati will feature in the long-form series "Choonaa". The project was announced on Wednesday by the show's director Pushpendra Nath Misra. Others who will be seen in the show include Vikram Kochhar, Monika Panwar, Gyanendra Tripathi, Chandan Roy, Atul Srivastava and Niharika Lyra Dutt.

"What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'Choonaa'? For me, it is the quintessentially Indian



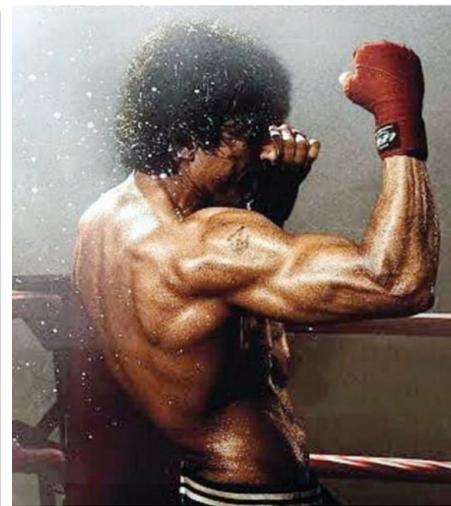
flavour of 'choona la gaana' (deceiving). The excitement of discovering who deceived whom and how they did it is incomparable, especially

when it's the weak pitted against the powerful.

There's no synonym that can do justice to this feeling, since we are all about the

drama and rooting for the underdogs," Misra shared. "Imagine the thrill of a heist combined with the lightness of a comedy. Put this together with amazing talented actors in a long-form series format, and you get 'Choonaa'," he added.

The director shared that work on "Choonaa" has commenced. The Netflix series, "Choonaa" is a heist comedy in which an unlikely group of people band together to take down a common enemy -- a corrupt politician who has wronged them -- using 'jugaad' as their only weapon.



Farhan Akhtar-starrer 'Toofaan' to release digitally on July 16

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Farhan Akhtar-starrer "Toofaan" is all set for a digital release on July 16, the actor tweeted on Wednesday. He wrote: "With humility, love and in dedication to the fighting spirit of the beautiful people of our nation, our film 'Toofaan' will be releasing on July 16th. #ToofaanOnPrime"

Directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, the film also features Paresh Rawal, Mrunal Thakur, Supriya Pathak Kapur, Hussain Dalal, Dr. Mohan Agashe, Darshan Kumar and Vijay Raaz. The film marks the second collaboration between Farhan and Mehra. The two had earlier worked together in the 2013 release "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag".

"Toofaan" revolves around the life of Aju, an orphan born in Mumbai's Dongri who grows up to be a local goon. His life changes when he meets a bright and a compassionate young woman Ananya, whose belief in him motivates him to find his passion as he embarks on his journey to becoming Aziz Ali, a boxing champion.

"Toofaan" will release on Amazon Prime Video.

Asha Negi wants to go on a road trip with Ranbir Kapoor

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Asha Negi says she would like to go on a road trip with Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor, just as he did with actress Deepika Padukone in the 2015 film "Tamasha". "I am a mountain-person. So, my next trip will be to a place where there's a lot of nature, mountains and a place that I'd be able to trek. I'd actually love to go on a road trip with Ranbir Kapoor, just like he did with Deepika in the film "Tamasha," Asha said.

"That vibe, banter and experience is something I want to feel, too. I am such a huge fan of him and I look up to his work. I am a true fangirl when it comes to Ranbir. Getting to explore new places and cities with him would be an experience of a lifetime. We'd rent a caravan just like we did in 'Khwabon Ke Parindey' and keep exploring places!"

Asha reveals her wishful thinking. "Khwabon Ke Parindey" is set in the scenic landscapes of Australia, and is about three friends and a stranger who embark on a road trip from Melbourne to Perth.

Portraying the character of Bindiya, Asha said: "Asha is 50-60 per cent Bindiya in real-life. This character has helped me break my stereotypical image. I play a girl of today who has realistic issues. She's not fake and that's why I relate to her a lot. My friends would agree to this because once they saw the trailer of 'Khwabon Ke Parindey', most of them said 'yeh toh tu hi hai (this is you)'."

The series also stars Mrinal Dutt, Manasi Moghe and Tushar Sharma. The six-episode series is directed by Tapasvi Mehta and it streams on Voot.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shama Sikander