

# absolute india

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## INDIAN LABOUR MARKET NOW IN WORST CONDITION SINCE APR-MAY 2020: CMIE

# UNEMPLOYMENT

The labour participation rate, that had fallen to 40 per cent, has fallen further to 39.7 per cent and the most important labour market indicator, the employment rate, which had fallen to 35.3 per cent in May, dropped to 34.6 per cent by June 6, 2021.

► Data published by CMIE showed that the unemployment rate, which reached 11.9 per cent in May 2021, continued to rise during early June.

► The 30-day moving average unemployment rate as of June 6, 2021, was 13 per cent.



labourers account for 23.1 million. Salaried employees account for 8.5 million and the rest are entrepreneurs, as per CMIE. It would take a strong recovery of the India economy to recover the remaining jobs or revert to the employment levels of 2019-20, he said. "The unlocking process can be expected to repair about two-thirds of the job losses associated with the lockdown of May 2021. That would be 17 million out of the 25 million non-farm jobs lost during the month," Vyas added.

“ The Indian labour market is in its worst condition since the nation-wide lockdown months of April and May 2020.

Mahesh Vyas, CEO, CMIE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As employment rate continues to worsen amid the second wave of Covid-19, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) has said that the Indian labour market is

in its worst condition since April-May last year, when the whole country was under lockdown. CMIE's CEO Mahesh Vyas noted that the last four weeks have seen a particularly sharp deterioration in labour market conditions. Vyas, however, said that a quick recovery of the informal

jobs that were lost in the unorganised sectors is expected because of the local lockdowns. But there is also a steady fall in the employment independent of the lockdowns, he added. The total non-farm jobs lost since January 2021 works out to 36.8 million. Of this, daily wage

## India's Covid toll sees sharp spike as Bihar revises data

India recorded 6,148 deaths in last 24 hours -- the highest since the pandemic hit last year -- according to data released by the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry on Thursday, as Bihar sharply revised its toll upwards.

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Patna

This spike in death comes as daily infections have been steadily showing a downward trend, with 94,052 fresh Covid infections reported -- less than one lakh for the third straight day. Bihar's previously unaccounted 3,951 deaths, which has sent its toll soaring above 9,000, is behind this spike. If the state's revised tally is reduced, then the death toll stands at 2,197 across the country in last 24 hours. The Bihar Health Department reported 9,429 deaths due to coronavirus on Wednesday evening, a jump of 3,951 more deaths compared to a day before. The total deaths in Bihar due to Covid were 5,458 as on Tuesday. The Health Department has given the breakup of deaths in all 38 districts of the state but it has not mentioned when these deaths occurred. Patna has registered 2,303 deaths which is the highest



in the state followed by Muzaffarpur (609) and Begusarai (316). After the mismatch, a senior state Health Department official said that the matter is under investigation. The detailed report

is expected to come later in the evening. The Health Department has also issued mismatched data about the numbers of patients recovered. On Tuesday, it showed 7,01,234 recoveries from Covid infection while it published 6,98,397 recoveries a day later. The recovery rate on Tuesday was shown at 98.7 per cent while on Wednesday it was 97.65 per cent. The Bihar government is facing flak from opposition leaders for presenting such data mismatch.

### BIHAR GOVT EXPLAINS

Patna: Facing criticism over revised Covid-19 deaths in Bihar, state's health minister Mangal Pandey on Thursday said that the delay in reporting deaths at village and district level is the main reason for spike in number in Bihar. He said, the government learnt from various sources that the number of deaths could be higher and then started working on it. He further said that the reasons for deaths in the last 15 days are also being investigated. "When we received final figures on Wednesday, we put it out in the public domain," Pandey said.



## First mega-monsoon tragedy as 11 killed in Mumbai house-crash



Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the first major monsoon-related tragedy, at least 11 persons were killed and 7 more injured when a two-storied residential building collapsed and crashed on an adjoining tenement in Malad west late on Wednesday, officials said here on Thursday. The tragedy struck at around 23.30 hrs inside the congested slum colony housed in the New Collectors Compound, Malvani area of Malad west suburb, said the BMC Disaster Control. So far, 11 persons have perished in the incident, comprising 9 from a single family, and after the locals raised an alarm that a few more may still be trapped under the huge mound of rubble, efforts were made to dig them out. A majority of

the victims killed are minors while another 17 were rescued by the locals, the Mumbai Fire Brigade, SDRF and others in the nightlong operations which continued at daybreak braving intermittent rains. Mumbai Guardian Minister Aslam Sheikh, who is the local MLA, visited the tragedy site and directed the rescue and relief operations, besides other top police and civic officials. Among the 7 admitted to the Dr BR Ambedkar Shatabdi Hospital, the condition of at least 3 is critical, while one was discharged after treatment for minor injuries this morning. The IMD has forecast heavy to very heavy rains in Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, Raigad, over the 3-4 days and the state has geared up all agencies to combat any situation.

## MAN GIVEN 2 VAX DOSES IN 5 MINUTES IN UP, PROBE ORDERED

Lalitpur: In a case of shocking negligence, a man in Lalitpur district was given both doses of the Covid vaccine within five minutes. This incident took place at a vaccination centre in Ravarpura locality. According to reports, the man who went there to take the jab on Wednesday has alleged that the nursing staff was so busy talking among themselves that they administered both the doses of vaccine to him within five minutes. He said he did not know that the second dose of the vaccine was to be injected after a certain time gap. He claimed that when he reached home after getting vaccinated, he felt uneasy and restless so he narrated the incident to his family members. After this, he approached the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and complained about the same. He was then sent to an emergency ward and the matter was reported to the district officer too. Meanwhile, CMO has ordered an inquiry into the matter. He said that the double vaccination will not cause any harm to the man.

## Missing posters of Raje, son appear in Jhalawad

Archana Sharma | Jaipur

A day after posters of former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje were removed from the state BJP headquarters, several posters of 'Searching for missing' have been seen in different parts of Jhalawad districts. The message in these posters claim that the Raje, the BJP MLA from Jhalwad along with her son Dushyant Singh, MP from Jhalwar-Baran have been "missing" amid the coronavirus pandemic outbreak and those finding the two shall be rewarded. The posters, as per the message, have been put on behalf of 'tormented people of Jhalwad'. The posters depict pictures and designations of Raje and Dushyant and question where have the two gone? "You should not be scared to come back, we the people shall forget everything in two to four days and you can then continue with your corrupt arrangements. No one shall say anything to you," read the message.



Although Raje has been running the Office of Vasundhara Twitter handle along with Vasundhara Jan Rasoi to mark her presence, her presence on the ground is missed by people amid the pandemic. The local administration is likely get the posters removed.

## YOGI DISCUSSES UP POLITICAL SITUATION WITH SHAH, APNA DAL CHIEF

New Delhi: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath met Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss the state's political situation and Covid management. Former Union Minister and Apna Dal chief, Anupriya Patel also joined the deliberations. Adityanath's meeting with Shah lasted for around 90 minutes. Sources said that their discussion revolved around preparations for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls next year and possible



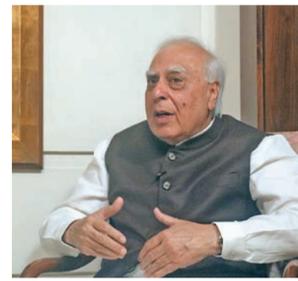
cabinet expansion or reshuffle in the state. The BJP's performance in recent

panchayat polls was also discussed. Patel, who was Minister of State in the first Narendra Modi government but failed to make the grade in its second term, has some strong demands. Shah also had a separate meeting with Patel after Adityanath left. Adityanath reached the national capital on Thursday. He is expected to meet Prime Minister Modi on Friday morning and BJP chief J.P. Nadda in the afternoon.

## CONGRESS NEEDS TO REFORM: SIBAL

New Delhi: A day after Jitin Prasada left the party, the Congress leaders of the G-23 group of which Jitin Prasada was a part of, attacked him and said that ideological commitment is more important in politics. Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal said, "The question is -- will he get 'prasada' from BJP or is he just a 'catch' for UP elections? In such deals if 'ideology' doesn't matter, changeover is easy." He, however, said that the Congress party needs reforms and he will contin-

ue to raise the issues within the party. Sibal said he will never join the BJP as he has opposed the party's ideology. Another leader who was signatory to the letter, M. Veerappa Moily said that Jitin Prasada did not have ideological commitment and party should look at this also before promoting such persons. The Congress leaders have termed him opportunist and said that the party gave him whatever it could, but he chose to walk away.



## Suspected Chinese spy held while illegally entering India from B'desh



Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a major catch, the Border Security Force (BSF) on Thursday arrested a suspected Chinese spy who was trying to illegally cross the India-Bangladesh border into Indian territory in West Bengal's Malda district. Identified as Han Junwe, 36, he belongs to China's Hubei. He entered Bangladesh on June 2. Han's capture is a big achievement for the BSF as he is a big wanted for working in India for a Chinese intelligence agency, accord-

ing to a statement issued by the paramilitary force. The Chinese man and his wife have a case against them in Uttar Pradesh. He also said he has a hotel in Gurugram named "Star Spring" and has visited India more than four times. All intelligence agencies are working together and interrogating the Chinese national as some electronic equipment found from his possession raised suspicion that he was working in India for a Chinese intelligence agency, the statement said.

## India's Covid vax policy leading to avertable deaths: Experts

The government's current approach to vaccination -- focusing on younger age groups -- "is causing huge numbers of avertable deaths and is deeply inequitable, both between age groups and within them", argue doctors and researchers in a commentary published in British medical journal from BMJ on Wednesday.

The researchers include from the University of East Anglia, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, King's College London, University of Aberdeen from the UK; Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, and Alagappa University in Tamil Nadu.

London | Agencies

The Indian government's Covid-19 vaccination approach has inappropriately prioritised people and is thus causing huge numbers of avertable deaths, warn a team of nine experts from research institutes in the UK and India. From May 3 to June 5, 2021, more first doses were administered to people under 45 than over 60, even though at least 77 million people aged 60 remain unvaccinated, they wrote. They urged the



government to take a more targeted approach and reallocate available doses to older people, especially in more deprived areas. Prime Minister Narendra announced that vaccines

“ In practice, access to Covid-19 vaccination is mainly determined by socioeconomic status, with very low coverage in rural areas and among disadvantaged urban populations. As a result, Indians of all ages are increasingly resorting to private purchases, and the country's minimal pension system makes this especially unaffordable for older people.”

would now also be free for people aged 18-45. But, authors suggest it is likely to increase the focus of vaccination on people in this young age group, rather than those aged 45 or

over. There is also no special provision to facilitate vaccine access for adults with impaired mobility, they said, adding that older people are less familiar with the digital technology that is required to make a booking for taking the jab. The concern was also voiced by World Health Organisation Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "There is a disturbing narrative in some countries that it's OK if older people die. It's not OK. It is important that everywhere older people are prioritised for vaccination. Those most at risk of severe disease and death from Covid-19, including health workers and older people, must come first. And they must come first everywhere," he added, in a recent statement. While some Indian states have reallocated available doses to older people, the researchers urged the Central government to do the same until all elderly people in India receive at least one dose.

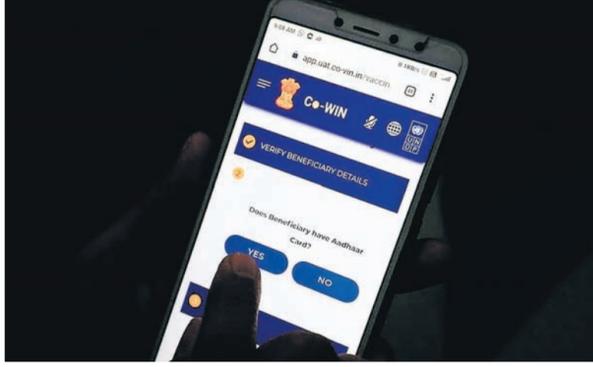


# COWIN NOT HACKED, 15 CRORE INDIANS' DATA SAFE: RESEARCHER

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After reports surfaced that India's vaccine registration portal CoWIN has been hacked and database of 15 crore people is up for sale, Indian cyber security researchers said that the website behind this is itself fake and is a Bitcoin scam. A hacker group that goes by the name of "Dark Leak Market" claimed, via a tweet, that they have the database of about 15 crore Indians who registered themselves on the CoWIN portal and are reselling it for \$800 since they are not the "original leakers" of the data.

Independent cyber security researcher Rajshekh Rajaharia told reporter that the hacking group is listing fake leaks. It is a Bitcoin scam and people should not fall victim to these hackers. The CoWIN data is safe," Rajaharia told reporter. Earlier, French security researcher Baptiste Robert aka Elliot Alderson also retweeted the post by the "Dark Leak Market" but later deleted it.



India has vaccinated over 23.7 crore people as of now.

With a view to facilitate access to vaccination for persons with disabilities, the Central government this week directed all states and Union Territories to include the Unique Disability Identification (UDID) card in the list of prescribed photo identity documents for Covid-19 vaccination registration.

As per the guidance note for CoWIN

2.0 issued on March 2 this year, seven prescribed photo IDs were specified and prescribed for verification of beneficiary prior to their vaccination.

In order to minimise errors and the subsequent inconvenience caused to the citizens for online appointments for vaccination, the government last month introduced a new feature of "four digit security code" in the CoWIN application.

## IT WAS A CRUDE BOMB BLAST IN BANKA DISTRICT MADARSA: POLICE

Patna: Facing criticism over the explosion in a madarsa, Banka Superintendent of Police Arvind Kumar Gupta said the explosion happened due to a crude bomb kept in a container.



The officer said no terror angle appeared during the investigation. "We have seized Rs 1.65 lakh from the cupboard of Maulana Abdul Momin who died in the blast on Tuesday. Besides that there was no evidence to prove a terror angle in this matter. There is no evidence of an IED in the debris as well," Gupta said. The officer added that the bomb was not so powerful. The claim of the officer was quite astonishing keeping in view that a huge portion of the madarsa building collapsed in the explosion. Suharsha Bhagat, district magistrate of Banka, said that the madarsa was not registered with the education department. It was built on private land. Meanwhile, sources said that the National Investigation Agency also made inquiries with the district administration and took a copy of the FIR filed in the case.

## CBI files fresh case against ex-Arunachal CM for alleged nepotism

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a fresh FIR against former Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Nabam Tuki for alleged nepotism, officials said here on Thursday.



Itanagar | Agencies

The CBI filed the fresh FIR for alleged nepotism and corruption related to a contract for construction of a Kendriya Vidyalaya boundary wall in Salt Lake area of Kolkata.

The CBI has alleged that officials of the Public Works Department, Arunachal Pradesh, awarded the tender to firms managed by the family members of Tuki, who was the then PWD Minister, without following the stipulated procedures.

Congress leader Tuki (57) was the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh from 2011 to 2016.

The FIR has been filed on the

findings of a preliminary probe that was conducted following the directions of the Guahati High Court into the allegation that in 2005-06, several work orders were awarded by the PWD to the agencies owned by the relatives of Tuki at his behest.

Officials said that the then assistant commissioner of the Kendriya Vidyalaya Regional Office had moved a proposal for the construction of a permanent building inside the Salt Lake premises and entrusted the work to the Arunachal Pradesh PWD despite the fact that it did not have the ability.

## Govt cheated farmers on Kharif MSP, says Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day after the government announced higher kharif MSP on paddy, pulses, cotton and other produce, the Congress on Thursday said that farmers have been cheated again as the MSP doesn't give the price equivalent to the input cost. In a statement, Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said: "Modi government's anti-farmers face has been exposed once again, as while deciding the MSP, the government has cheated the farmers who are giving their best to hold on the economy in this crisis through record production." Holding that the input cost has increased due to hike in diesel price, increase of cost of seeds and pesticide, and inflation, he demanded the Prime Minister should fulfil his promises of giving 50



per cent profit over input cost. The government Wednesday announced MSP for paddy of both grades which have been increased by Rs 72 per quintal, jowar by Rs 118, bajra by Rs 100, ragi by Rs 82, and arhar and urad by Rs 300 per quintal from previous

year. It said the increase in MSP for kharif crops for marketing season 2021-22 is in line with the Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of fixing the MSPs at a level of at least 1.5 times of the all-India weighted average Cost of Production (CoP).

## NE India's first DRDO supported Covid hospital in Assam

The DRDO supported first ever 300-bed Covid hospital in northeast India was inaugurated in Guwahati on Thursday by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Guwahati | Agencies

The modern Covid Care Hospital was set up by converting a portion of the Sarusajai Sports Complex in Guwahati and it will act as an annexe to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital. Sarma said the new hospital was built at a cost of Rs 21.46 crores and in association with DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation). The state owned Oil India Limited and ICICI Bank have extended financial support to the tune of Rs 2 crore and Rs 1.5 crore respectively for the project, which would give a renewed push to Assam's Covid-19 management capabilities.

The Chief Minister thanked DRDO for setting up the hospital within a record period of around 20 days and for having been a generous partner in this critical project. "This is an excellent example of centre-state collaboration and collective spirit to deal with the pandemic." Saying that the hospital would have a life span of five years, which can be extended with minimum infrastructure boost up, Sarma informed that there will be 100 ICU beds available in the hospital and oxygen facility could also be made available in another 200 beds.



## Heavy rains lash Lucknow, parts of UP



Lucknow | Agencies

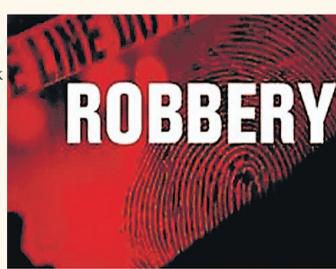
Lucknow and some other districts in Uttar Pradesh witnessed heavy rainfall on Thursday. In the state capital, several main roads, including the one leading to the Vidhan Sabha, were water logged. Power disruptions were

reported from parts of the state capital and trees were also uprooted. Telecom services were also disrupted and traffic jams were reported from parts of the state capital. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast thunderstorms with light to moderate intensity rain in

various parts of Uttar Pradesh for the next few hours. Light to moderate intensity rain will occur in parts of the state during the day, the Met office said. Other cities in Uttar Pradesh, including Kanpur also experienced weather changes which brought the mercury down.

## RS 1.19 CRORE LOOTED FROM A PVT BANK IN BIHAR'S HAJIPUR

Patna: The robbers struck at a private bank in Bihar's Hajipur and looted Rs 1.19 crore from the bank in broad day light on Thursday morning. The robbers were armed and their number is said to be five, police said.



A police official said that as soon as HDFC Bank (Jadua branch) opened, the robbers, who were five in number, took over the bank, threatened the employees and after opening the locker, looted Rs 1.19 crore and escaped on two bikes on which they had come, waving weapons.

Confirming the incident, Vaishali Superintendent of Police Manish said that after getting information about the incident, the police reached the spot. He said that all the vehicles are being searched by setting up blockades in the area. Senior police officers of the area have also reached the spot after the incident.

He said that the CCTVs installed in and around the bank are being scrutinized and the bank employees are being questioned.

## DOMINICA DECLARES MEHUL CHOKSI AS 'PROHIBITED IMMIGRANT'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a massive setback for the Indian fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi, wanted in India in Rs 13,500 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case, the Dominican government declared him as a "prohibited immigrant" in their country.

An order issued by the Ministry of National Security and Home Affairs on May 25 said, "in accordance to section 5(1)(f) of the Immigration and Passport Act Chapter 18:01 of the 2017 Revised laws of the Commonwealth of Dominica, you, Mehul Chinubhai Choksi, are hereby declared a prohibited immigrant."

"I further direct that the necessary action be taken to have the said prohibited immi-



grant removed from the Commonwealth of Dominica in keeping with the procedure laid out in the said Act," added the order, signed by Dominican minister Rayburn Blackmore.

Meanwhile, Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit termed Choksi as an "Indian citizen" and stated that the courts will decide what happens to the fugitive, Antigua News Room reported on Wednesday.

According to the Caribbean news outlet, Skerrit also added that the government will protect the rights of Choksi as he awaits trial. Currently, Choksi has got interim relief from immediate repatriation to India by the Dominican court, which adjourned the matter of his detention.

## Those without access to internet have right to life: Rahul Gandhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday demanded that every citizen of the country walking into the vaccination centre shout get inoculated and also those who do not have access to the internet have the right to life. "Online registration is not enough for the vaccine. Every person walking at the vaccination centre should get the jab. Those who do not have access to internet also have right to life," Rahul tweeted. The Congress leader has also been demanding vaccination of the poor for a couple of days.



## YOUTH CONG SENDS BICYCLES TO MODI, SHAH OVER FUEL PRICE RISE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the rise in the prices of petrol and diesel across the country, the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) on Thursday sent bicycles courier to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several others as a mark of protest.

The IYC activists under the leadership of National President Srinivas B.V. expressed outrage on the rising petrol and diesel prices.

The IYC members sent bicycles to the Prime Minister, Union Home Minister, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Women and Child Welfare Minister Smriti Irani over the rising price of petrol and diesel. The IYC members also showed the mirror to the central



government so that the government could wake up from its sleep and remember its promises which they had made to the people of the country before elections.

"The government is constantly

giving a blow to the people who have been stricken by the policies of the government. In such an odd situation, no government in the world would have committed so many atrocities on its people as the

Modi government is doing. Petrol and diesel prices have been increased 43 times in the last five months," Srinivas said.

He said that when BJP was in opposition, it was seen demonstrating on the streets on the increase of Rs 5 on petrol and diesel, but today when there is all-round inflation, everyone is silent.

He said that today IYC has tried to wake them up from sleep, in many parts of the country, petrol has crossed Rs 100, diesel has crossed Rs 90, the shameful thing is that despite doing such open loot, the BJP government is again blaming the Congress for this price rise. "The Modi government has made a big dent in the budget of the common man, which they are unable to cope with, in the last 13

months the price of petrol has been increased by Rs 25.72 and the price of diesel by Rs 23.93 and in the last five months the fuel prices have been increased 43 times," he said, adding that it is the effect of the policies of the Modi government that a new record is being set in the prices of petrol and diesel.

Srinivas also said that farmers, youth, labourers, traders, women are suffering due to rising inflation. Targeting the government, he said that the anti-people face of the RSS and BJP has been revealed to the people.

He also said that the people of the country had chosen Modi and his ministers on the promise of 'Achhe Din', now he and his government have broken the trust of the people.



# 'Posthumous privacy not permissible': HC quashes plea against films on Sushant

The Delhi High Court on Thursday declined to stay the release of movie "Nyay: The Justice", purportedly based on the life of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, and scheduled for release on Friday.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A bench of Justice Sanjeev Narula dismissed an application filed by Sushant's father, Krishna Kishore Singh, against the movie and other ventures using his son's name or likeness in the form of a biopic or story.

The court noted the right to privacy has also been invoked not just of the deceased but also of his family. Rajput's father had claimed the deceased celebrity has a posthumous publicity right. It said that there was no doubt that a limited class of

celebrity rights are protected as intellectual property rights under applicable laws, are assignable and licensable under such statutes, and could survive the death of the celebrity, but privacy was not among them. "Since it is inextricably interlinked to and birthed from the right of privacy, the court prima facie finds merit in the submission of the defendants that the posthumous privacy right is not permissible," said the court. It held that the right of privacy of an individual cannot be inherited after his death by his legal heirs and that personality right, reputation or privacy enjoyed by a person during

his lifetime, come to an end after his lifetime

The court observed the events that form the subject matter of the film are in the public sphere, and it does not find any justification to restrain publication of work claiming to be fictional, which draws inspiration from such events.

"Since the defendants' films are neither portrayed as a biopic, nor a factual narration of what transpired in the life of SSR and are depicted to be complete fictional and inspired from certain events which have occurred in the past and have been widely discussed and are available in

public domain, the Court finds no reason to grant a restraining order," said the court.

According to Singh's plea, some of the upcoming or proposed movie projects based on his son's life are -- "Nyay: The Justice", "Suicide or Murder", "A star was lost", "Shashank" and an unnamed crowd-funded film, and expressed apprehension that various plays, movies, web-series, books, interviews or other material may be published which would harm the reputation of his son and his family.

The court noted that the suit was filed close to the release of the film, after substantial time, money and effort have been expended by movie makers on production and promotion. "For this reason, the balance of convenience lies entirely in favour of the defendants," it said.

The court, however, observed the fictional rendition for dramatic representation based on certain events falls within the scope of artistic freedom of expression and speech.

As long as the name was not used and a disclaimer was published along with the movie, the filmmakers cannot be disallowed from making a movie based on such events it said.

# POLICE ARRESTS SECURITY STAFFER FOR STEALING RS 21 LAKH FROM ATM

The Delhi Police on Thursday said that it has arrested one person, associated with a security firm, for stealing Rs 21 lakh from a HDFC Bank ATM in Central Delhi on the pretext of auditing the cash.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Central Delhi Deepak Yadav said, "Police arrested Pappu Bharti, a resident of Bihar's Darbhanga within hours after a complaint of theft was lodged." Yadav said that the police received a complaint on June 8 that Bharti, who came to load money in the HDFC Bank ATM at HT

building on Kasturba Gandhi Marg in the national capital had taken away Rs 21.02 lakh. "On enquiry, it was revealed that the accused was working with security agency SIS Cash Services Pvt. Ltd. since the last two years. He came for audit of the money with teams. At that time, the available amount in the ATM machine was Rs 28.70 lakh," he said, adding that Bharti was in possession of the keys to open and operate the ATM machine. "On June 8, he did not report for

duty and visited the ATM alone at around 2.15 p.m. and stole Rs 21.02 lakh from the ATM," the officer said. Yadav said that police teams conducted raids in search of Bharti at all his known hangouts. "And with the help of electronic surveillance and local input, Bharti was apprehended from his rented accommodation at Najafgarh in Delhi within hours of the incident," he said. The DCP said that police recovered Rs 19.65 lakh at Bharti's instance.

# May get killed if Asaram freed on bail, rape victim's father in SC



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The father of the child rape victim has moved the Supreme Court, opposing bail of jailed godman Asaram Bapu, apprehending that his daughter and his

family could be killed by followers/henchmen of the powerful godman. The plea, filed through advocate Utsav Bains, claims that Asaram is highly influential and politically connected and has a force of millions of blind followers around the country. It also said there was hired killer Kartik Haldar who attacked and murdered eyewitnesses and confessed to the police that Asaram ordered the killings. The victim's father, in the plea, contended that during the course of the trial, he and his family members were threatened with dire consequences.

"Recently also, the applicant herein has been threatened by the followers/henchmen of the petitioner and shockingly the State of Uttar Pradesh has reduced security of the applicant and his family, and they are again very vulnerable to murderous attacks by the followers/henchmen of the petitioner," he said in the plea.

# Sweltering in Delhi as mercury remains above 40

Team Absolute | New Delhi

For the second consecutive day, the mercury went past 40 degrees in the national capital on Thursday settling at 41 degrees Celsius, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The minimum temperature will remain one notch above the season's average at 29 degrees Celsius. The haze, the UV index has made it feel more like 46 degrees Celsius though, with the IMD saying that dry weather in the city is a major contributor to the rise in temperature which is expected to further go up in coming days. The national



capital on Wednesday settled at 42.2 degrees Celsius maximum, three notches above the season's average, while the minimum temperature was 31.4 degrees Celsius, four notches above the season's average. The

IMD has forecast partly cloudy sky and strong surface wind blowing at a speed of upto 20-30 kmph during the day. Delhi's air quality index (AQI) on Thursday morning was moderate with a reading of 165.

# FUEL PRICE HIKES PRESS MOMENTARY PAUSE

New Delhi: Oil marketing companies (OMC) kept petrol and diesel unchanged on Thursday across the four metros.



Accordingly, in the national capital, petrol price remains at Rs 95.56 per litre while diesel at Rs 86.47 per litre. Similarly, in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, petrol continues to be priced at Wednesday's level of Rs 101.76, Rs 96.94 and Rs 95.52 per litre respectively, and diesel at Rs 93.85, Rs 91.15 and Rs 89.32 per litre, respectively. With crude once again touching a high of around \$72 a barrel, oil companies want to wait or pause in between before revising fuel prices.

# India's higher education enrollment stands at 3.85cr

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's enrollment in higher education stands at 3.85 crore in 2019-20, as compared to 3.74 crore in 2018-19, registering a growth of 11.36 lakh (3.04 per cent).

The findings came after the release of All India Survey on Higher Education 2019-20. The report provides key performance indicators on the current status of higher education in the country.

The total enrollment was 3.42 crore in 2014-15, mentioned the report released by Education Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'. Pokhriyal noted that in the last five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20, there has been a growth of



11.4 per cent in the student enrollment. "The rise in female enrollment in higher education during the period is 18.2 per cent," the Minister further said, emphasizing that it was

due to the continuous focus given by the central government on education of girls, women empowerment and empowerment of socially backward classes. As per Gross

Enrollment Ratio (GER) of the report, the percentage of students belonging to the eligible age group enrolled in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 27.1 per cent against 26.3 per cent in 2018-19 and 24.3 per cent in 2014-2015.

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 1.01 against 1 in 2018-19 indicating an improvement in the relative access to higher education for females of eligible age group compared to males. However, Pupil Teacher Ratio in higher education in 2019-20 is 26. In 2019-20, the number of universities was 1,043 (2 per cent); in colleges: 42,343 (77 per cent) and stand-alone institutions: 11,779 (21 per cent).

# CPWD executive engineer, two others held in graft case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday said that it has arrested an executive engineer of the CPWD and two private persons in an alleged graft case. The arrested accused have been identified as executive engineer V.L. Bhaskar, at the CPWD, Zonal Office in Tamil Nadu's Madurai, P.N. Sivasankar Raja, proprietor of Brahma Developers, and P.Narayanan, representing S.K. Electricals, Chennai. A CBI spokesperson said that the agency registered a case against the engineer and others including two private persons on the allegations that Bhaskar conspired with the said contractors for receipt of



illegal gratification of Rs 50,000 for clearing the bills of a private company and another Rs 1 lakh for the purpose of refunding GST. "During the trap proceedings, an amount of Rs 70,000 was recovered from the public servant, which he had demanded and accepted from the said contractors," he said. The official said that searches were conducted at the premises of Bhaskar at Madurai which led to recovery of cash of Rs 1.85 lakh said to be kept in different covers and allegedly received by him from various other contractors. All three were produced before the Special Judge for CBI Cases at Madurai and sent to judicial custody for 14 days.

# FLOOD CONTROL ROOM TO BE SET UP TO DEAL WITH MONSOON

Gurugram | Agencies

Ahead of the monsoon season, several steps are being taken by the district administration, Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) and the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) to deal with the discharge of rain water in the millennium city.

GMDA officials said, in 2018-19 they had identified 79 places which faced water-logging problems and after working on that it has been reduced to 35 now. Only 7 such places have been identified where the rain water discharge took more than two hours.

The officials said they will install water pumps and deploy a dedicated team to discharge rain water at major points. The agency officials informed that the drainage in Gurugram flows towards the west from the east. There are three main drains, which emerge in Badshahpur Drain. These three drains go to Najafgarh. The officials said ponds and check dams are being repaired in Aravali region. Also natural drains are being cleaned so that water of the Aravali area can be stopped from coming on to the city roads.



# Gurugram more livable than Mumbai, B'luru from Covid perspective: Study

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As per a study, Gurugram is a more suitable city to live in from a Covid perspective as compared to Mumbai and Bengaluru. "We believe that considering factors such as population density, open area ratio and hospital infrastructure could be of far more importance than distance from work or affordability to decide where you live under the current scenario.

The report uses these factors and the Covid status in three top cities -- Mumbai, Bengaluru and Gurugram -- to ascertain the suitability of these cities on the basis of livability which in turn would help an end-user make an informed decision on where to live," the Square Yards COVID Suitability Index Report said.

The East zone in Gurugram, the Western and Central suburbs in Mumbai (wards N and PN) and the Mahadevapura zone in Bengaluru were found to be the most suitable to live in from a Covid perspective.

The pandemic exposed the shortcomings in our medical infrastruc-



ture like never before. Both Mumbai and Bengaluru were poorly placed in this regard with just 1.3 and 0.30 Covid hospitals available, respectively, per 10,000 people in the cities. Gurugram outshone both with 2.5 hospitals per 10,000 people, as per the report.

Contrary to the common notion, the report suggests that Mumbai has the highest open area ratio among the three cities at nearly 45 per cent.

Mumbai is also the most densely populated with nearly 60,000 people/sq km, while Gurugram has the lowest population density at approximately 4,200 people/sq km.

Suitability in Gurugram, on the other hand, is defined more by the population density, open area ratio and the number of hospitals.

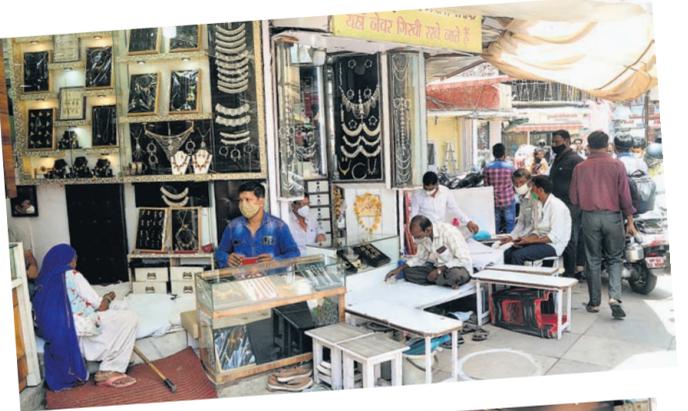
As per this, localities in the East zone such as Sectors 52-56, 58, 40-44, 30, 24-27 etc. have been found to

be the most suitable for living, as per the index.

Even though the density of Covid cases in this zone is second only to the North, presence of maximum number of hospitals/10,000 people, more than 40 per cent open area and lowest population density makes this zone the most suitable and hence livable from a Covid perspective. Mumbai had 13 of the total 24 wards severely affected with more than 50 cases per 10,000 people. In Gurugram, the North and East zones averaged 55 cases per sq km, while in Bengaluru, four zones of the total eight zones recorded more than 200 cases per sq km.

The Covid-suitability heat map for each city suggests that across all the cities, suitability increased as people moved away from the city centres and older parts of the city towards more peripheral locations.

Not only are these cities the top real estate destinations in the country, but they are also among the top cities to be severely hit by the pandemic. This is where the relevance of a Suitability Index kicks in.



## Shops reopen in Bhopal as unlock comes into effect

**Bhopal.** State capital Bhopal reopened from Thursday after easing of coronavirus-induced curfew. This was announced by state minister for medical education Vishvas Sarang on Monday. Bhopal was put under 'corona curfew' on April 1 to check the spread of Covid-19 cases during the deadly second wave. The unlocking began from June 1. The shopkeepers and their employees have been asked to get themselves vaccinated against the coronavirus disease. Night curfew and weekend curfew (Sunday Only) will remain in place.

# DIALOGUE USED AS MAIN WEAPON TO BREAK THE CHAIN OF CORONA INFECTION

## CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan played the role of counsellor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

During the times of pandemic, physical distancing was the main basis for breaking the chain of infection not only in the state but also in the country, and then the work of breaking the chain of infection of corona epidemic was successfully accomplished through dialogue in Madhya Pradesh. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made communication with all sections of people a major weapon to break the chain of corona infection with effective messages like Do Gaj ki Doori - Mask hai Zaroori, Mask Nahai to Samaan Nahai, Mera Mask Meri Suraksha. It is also true that whether it is the head of the family or the head of the state, he can inspire others through his conduct. Chief Minister Chouhan has proved himself on this criterion as well. There is hardly any section of the society that was left untouched by Chief Minister Chouhan. First of all, he gave this message to the people of the state through Swasthya Aagrah that, along with the



administration, the role of the general public is also important to prevent corona infection. In this sequence, he went to different areas of the city to make the public aware and told them about the measures to prevent corona infection by holding direct dialogue. Using modern technology of communication, he organised virtual programmes through video conferencing and social media and maintained the sequence of communication with most of the sections. The merit of this campaign of Chief Minister was also that he not only made people aware of the dangers

of the second wave of corona during the dialogue, but as a vigilant guardian and an elder of the family he also inspired them to prevent the epidemic. In this way he did not scare people with the epidemic. He not only prepared the people for protecting them but also explained the methods of protection to them in their own language. The result of this was that the government was successful in controlling the second wave of corona in Madhya Pradesh much earlier than expected. Chief Minister Chouhan not only postponed his political programmes but also did most of

### CM visited ancient banyan tree in Pachmarhi

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said, on the auspicious day of Bara Barasat Puja, I got the privilege of having darshan of the famous banyan tree of Badakchhar in Pachmarhi and spending time in its shadow. He said that it is believed that the huge aerial roots of banyan tree protect the citizens by making a wall. May this auspicious and propitious wall always stand like this, it is the wish. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan urged everyone that saplings must be planted on the holy day of Bara Barsat. You will feel immense joy and happiness by planting saplings on any special occasion. Planting trees will not only bring happiness, but will also provide a better world for future generations to live in.

the administrative exercises virtually. In this way, Chouhan has been successful in motivating the people of the state, especially the people of government-administration and different sections of the society, to follow the covid appropriate behaviour by giving prominence to working virtually.

## The involvement of other departments with the police will increase to prevent road accidents - ADG Sagar

**Bhopal:** Additional Director General of Police, Police Training and Research Institute D.C. Sagar has said that the participation of the police department as well as transport, health and other road owned departments will be increased in preventing road accidents in the state. Through webinar, 328 trainees of Sagar Police Zone received necessary training to prevent road accidents. ADG Sagar informed that in the webinar, training was given related to the utility of IRAD system, responsibilities of district nodal officers, rights of station in-charge, process of discharging the duties of ground level officers and calibrating techniques to record the exact location of the accident etc. Gone. He said that accident related data is being recorded in IRAD app in all the districts of Madhya Pradesh. Presently the state is at the first place in the country in terms of entries in this app. Sagar informed that Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS) will be linked with Application Programming Interface (API) with IRAD app. This will eliminate any discrepancy in the entries of road accidents. Shri Sagar also reviewed the implementation of the app in Panna, Damoh, Chhatrapur, Tikamgarh and Niwari including Divisional Headquarters Sagar.

## Woman forest officer attacked in Morena by sand mafia

**Morena:** A woman forest officer was attacked by the mining mafia here when she was on patrolling duty. However, the forest officer Shradha Pandre escaped unhurt. This is the ninth attack on her in the last two months. According to information, Shradha Pandre, a sub-divisional officer of the forest department, was on patrol with the forest department staff on Wednesday night, when she found some illegal sand-laden vehicles on the road. She and her staff confiscated the vehicles and informed the police of Deogarh police station but no help arrived. After this, the forest staff who were with Pandre started taking the seized vehicles to the police station. However, some people blocked the way by putting barbed wire in Pathanpura village and attacked Pandre and

her staff. The attackers had weapons like guns, axes, sticks etc. When the forest officer was attacked by the mob, a forest staff member tried to protect her and in the process got hurt. Pandre later told the media that police do not stop the sand mafia because they pay entry fee to the police. The forest officer alleged that the police is not cooperating with them at all. Even on Wednesday night the police did not come.

Sources say that this is the ninth attack on Pandre by the mafia in the last two months. It was in Morena a few years back that IPS officer Narendra Kumar was murdered by the sand mafia. Mining activities are banned in Chambal area in Morena district. But the mafia continues to mine sand and stones with impunity.

## Scindia's Bhopal stay stirred up

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The politics of Madhya Pradesh has once again heated up and speculation has also intensified. The reason for this is the stay of Rajya Sabha member and senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia in Bhopal. Scindia, a Rajya Sabha member, was in Bhopal on a one-day visit on Wednesday. During this stay, Scindia had a long conversation with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while there were discussions with State President Vishnu Dutt Sharma and other leaders of the organization. Scindia also visited the residence of Urban Administration Minister Bhupendra Singh and Public Works Minister Gopal Bhargava during this period. Had lunch at party's state president Sharma's residence and dinner at minister Bhargava's residence.

On Thursday, he said to media that Shivraj is our leader. He is doing very well



and MP govt will complete the tenure in his leadership. Answering a question about his meetings, he questioned to reporter "when I meet party leaders, you question why, when I don't, you ask why? Now, you people tell me, what to do?" It is believed that the issue of appointments of corporation boards was the most important in Scindia's visit. Apart from Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Scindia has also

held talks with the people of the organization in this regard. Scindia is describing his Bhopal stay as a normal tour. Also, do not consider mail meeting as a part of politics. At the same time, the party's state president Vishnu Dutt Sharma is also terming the meeting as normal. At the same time, Congress is constantly attacking Scindia and making various allegations. Political analysts believe that Scindia is going to be entered in the Union Cabinet soon, while on the other hand, the presidents of divisions and corporations are also to be appointed in the state. More recently, the State Working Committee has been formed in which a large number of Scindia supporters have got their place and now Scindia is trying to ensure that his supporters have a large share in the corporation boards as well.

## GANG OF ROBBER BRIDES CAUGHT IN GUNA

Team Absolute | Guna

Gang of robber bride has been caught in Guna district. The women of this gang used to fall in their trap of such youths who had trouble getting married and after marrying them, they used to get elope by taking jewelry and cash. According to the information received from the police, the matter is of Madhusudangarh police station area. Lakhan Lodhi, a resident of Rupahedi here, told the incident to the Superintendent of Police, Rajiv Kumar. According to Lakhan, she was not getting married. When her father Vikram Bapcha discussed with Kala Bai Meena, a woman from her area, on May 8, she reached with robber bride Mamta with Govind Meena, Lakhan and her father Naval Lodhi, resident of Virpur, and made them meet other people including Mazboot Singh Yadav. All of them demanded 70 thousand in lieu of getting married. After this Lakhan was married in a temple. Lakhan tells that after getting married, Mamta told about her mother's health and went to her maternal home. She returned when



she took 15 thousand rupees. After two days she started running again. When he did not succeed, he called his companions and they forcefully took him away with them. Superintendent of Police Rajiv Kumar took Lakhan's complaint seriously and after investigation, it was found to be true. A trap was laid for this and was successful in arresting six people including four women of this gang. Five accused of the gang are still absconding. To reach the accused, the police sent a constable as a customer to these people. The constable told that the marriage is not happening and he wants to get married, the accused demanded one lakh twenty thousand rupees from him. At the same time, gang members have come from a car, who were caught by the police.

## Corona awareness campaign run through children's popular character Motu-Patlu

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS MADE PEOPLE AWARE IN THE MARKETS ON THE INITIATIVE OF MINISTER SARANG

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang launched a unique campaign on Thursday in front of Khedapati Hanuman Mandir, New Market, amidst powerful messages. Keeping in mind the possible third wave of Corona, in this campaign, through the popular character "Motu and Patlu" among children, the general public was motivated to get the vaccine. Corona awareness campaign has been started through voluntary organizations on the initiative of Minister Shri Sarang. The campaign is being jointly organized by NSS, Awaaz, UNICEF and district administration. Minister Sarang said that in view of the possibility of third wave of corona in Madhya Pradesh, this campaign has been started with special reference to children. The campaign includes precautions to be taken for children and touching appeals made by children to their parents. He said that such efforts



are very much needed and hoped that this initiative will be fruitful. He also wore masks to the characters of "Motu and Patlu" on this occasion and started the campaign vehicle by cutting the ribbon. Also, messages

were given that 'Whoever loves his children, how should he refuse the corona vaccine' and 'Papa-Mummy, first the mask, then only the second task'. Collector Avinash Lavania said that the district administration

is active all the time to defeat Corona and efforts are being made to ensure that children are not harmed in any way due to the third wave, so a focused effort is being made.



MUMBAI HORROR

TWO WOMEN FALL IN OPEN MANHOLE, SURVIVE; BMC FACES FLAK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a shocking incident, two women walking along a flooded footpath in Mumbai's Bhandup suddenly fell into an open manhole...

The incident happened on Wednesday evening when Mumbai was lashed by record heavy rains and many parts were inundated...

A CCTV grab showed the two unidentified women, walking along the pavement while shielding themselves with an umbrella...

Fortunately, they could be seen again getting up, apparently unhurt, and slowly moving away from there...



BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation was whacked on social media for its negligence. As the CCTV footage went viral,

Mayor Kishori Pednekar rushed to the spot for an assessment. Similarly, Municipal Commissioner

I.S. Chahal cracked the whip, ordering an urgent survey of all the drainage manholes across the city and repair or replacement of any broken, damaged or missing covers.

A team of civic workers this morning went and replaced the Bhandup manhole cover which had apparently been washed aside by the floodwaters...

On August 29, 2017, the city was shocked after a leading gastroenterologist of Bombay Hospital fell into an open manhole and his body was recovered in the Arabian Sea off Worli after several days.

Mumbai roads have an estimated 350,000 plus manhole or drain hole or gutter covers of which barely 1 per cent have been fitted with an extra safety grill below to prevent humans or small animals from being trapped or sucked inside.

MUMBAI HOUSE COLLAPSE

PM, CM announce compensation to kin of deceased



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday afternoon visited the injured victims of Wednesday night's house crash in Malad - which claimed 11 lives - undergoing treatment at the Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Shatabdi Hospital in Kandivali here.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday afternoon announced an ex-gratia of Rs 200,000 to the kin of each deceased from the PMNRF besides Rs 50,000 to those injured in the tragedy.

Earlier on Thursday, accompanied by Ministers Aslam Sheikh and Aditya Thackeray, Mayor Kishori Pednekar and Municipal Commissioner I. S. Chahal and other officials, the CM enquired after the health of the victims, the course of their treatment and other details from the attending medics.

Thackeray also announced a compensation of Rs 500,000 to the families of each of the 11 deceased persons, mostly minors, who perished in the house collapse - the first major monsoon-related tragedy this year.

He added that the government would bear the entire treatment cost of the injured persons.

Bharatiya Janata Party's Leader of Opposition (Council) Pravin Darekar visited the crash site and slammed the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for laxity in the matter.

"The local MP Gopal Shetty had warned in writing to the BMC highlighting the dangers of many of these illegal multi-storied tenements, which posed a huge risk in monsoon. But nothing was done about it," Darekar said.

Around 11.30 p.m. on Wednesday, a ground-plus-two storeyed house crashed and fell on an adjoining tenement in the New Collector's Colony at Malvani, Malad West as the city was clobbered by heavy rain.

The tragedy has claimed 11 lives so far, including 9 members of a family with 3 adults. The victims include 8 minors of which one was an 18-month-old female toddler and the oldest a 15-year-old boy.

Officials claimed that in many slum pockets across the city residents construct multi-storied tenements without authorization, some as tall as four or five floors, in places like Bandra, Dharavi, Jogeshwari, Malad, Dahisar and other slums, and ignore the demolition notices of the BMC.



India slips to 55th rank globally in home price movement

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As property price in the country declined amid the pandemic, India moved down 12 spots in the global home price index to 55th rank in Q1 2021, according to Knight Frank's Global House Price Index - Q1 2021.

During Q1 2020, India was in the 43rd rank in terms of property prices.

Home prices in India declined 1.6 per cent on a year-on-year basis, said a Knight Frank statement.

However, in terms of 6-month (Q3 2020-Q1 2021) and 3-month (Q4 2020-Q1 2021) changes, residential prices in India witnessed a growth of 0.6 per cent and 1.4 per cent, respectively. The report showed that the US witnessed the highest annual price growth rate since 2005, with a 13.2 per cent increase YoY.

On a year-on-year basis, Turkey continues to lead the annual rankings with prices

up by 32 per cent YoY, followed by New Zealand at 22.1 per cent YoY growth and Luxembourg with 16.6 per cent rise in prices.

Spain was the weakest-performing territory in Q1 2021, where home prices fell by 1.8 per cent YoY, followed by India with 1.6 per cent decline.

Shishir Bajjal, Chairman & Managing Director, Knight Frank India said: "In Q1 2021, India witnessed meaningful recovery in sales volumes, helping housing prices remain stable. In the preceding quarters the residential markets had been on a path of rebound with markets such as Mumbai and Pune achieve pre-covid levels of activities."

"However, with the onset of the second wave and the threat of new variants of the virus along with the fluctuation in vaccine roll out there could be a pressure on sales volumes as well as on price growth," he added.

CBI nabs Maha bank agent taking bribe in cheques!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a Recovery Agent of the Union Bank of India working at its Main Branch in Aurangabad in connection with a bribery case vide bearer cheques, an official said here on Thursday.

Following a complaint, the CBI had lodged a case against the Recovery Agent, Suresh Bhalerao and another unknown public servant. As per the complaint, Bhalerao was allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs.100,000 for getting sanction and disbursement of a loan of Rs 10 lakh under the Prime Minister Employment Guarantee Scheme (PMEGS).

During investigation, the CBI



managed to trap and catch him at Aurangabad while demanding and accepting the bribe from the complainant in the form of two bearer cheques of Rs 50,000 and Rs 30,000. The CBI also raided Bhalerao's Aurangabad residence

and seized certain incriminating documents. He is currently in judicial custody. The CBI sleuths are now probing further to find out the role of officials of the Union Bank of India who may be involved along with Bhalerao.

Awed Delhi govt team plans to replicate BMC's Covid model

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Impressed by the Covid-19 pandemic work of the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), a Delhi government team said they plan to implement the 'Mumbai Model' in the national capital, a top official said.

The study team included Delhi Health Department's Dr Sanjay Agarwal, Dr Dharmendra Kumar and others who were taken around the major Covid-19 facilities across Mumbai and explained the entire setup of the BMC which has earned global laurels, said BMC Commissioner I.S. Chahal.

"They learned about the decentralisation achieved through ward war rooms, successful management of



oxygen supply, jumbo hospitals set up in a short span of time. They visited the jumbo hospital at NSE Grounds in Goregaon, the Seven Hills Covid hospital and other locations," he said.

The Delhi team lauded the work of the BMC as "exemplary" and said they would soon implement it in the national capital. They also held special meetings with

Additional Municipal Commissioner Suresh Kakani and also attended a computer presentation.

They learned details about the ward war rooms in two different wards to understand Covid-19 patients management and how they were allotted beds, how Covid-positive patients were counselled, and BMC team visited them for necessary medical

examination, or hospitalisation.

The visitors learned how, with proper use, the 1,800-bed Seven Hills Hospital managed with 18 tonnes oxygen daily, while a similar hospital in Delhi with 1,800 beds used 32 tonnes medical oxygen per day.

The BMC explained how it had set up six temporary jumbo Covid field hospitals in a shot span with a total 8,915 beds and over 4,000 people working round the clock there managing Covid-19 patients, said Chahal.

The BMC's various models to grapple with the Covid-19 pandemic in the past one year, including the 'Dharavi Model', have earned accolades globally and are being replicated in other Indian cities and countries.

More Covid deaths in Maharashtra than in Goa: C.T. Ravi

Team Absolute | Panaji

Maharashtra has more Covid deaths and infections than Goa, BJP national general secretary C.T. Ravi, who is the party's in-charge of the two states, said on Thursday, brushing aside the fact that Maharashtra is a much bigger state than Goa.

Ravi said that in comparison to Maharashtra, the Goa government has handled the pandemic crisis better. Ravi is in Goa along with B.L. Santhosh, national general secretary in-charge of organisation, to meet party leaders and legislators in order to chalk out plans for the upcoming state assembly polls which are scheduled to be held in 2022.

"There are more deaths and positive cases in Maharashtra, which is headed by three parties. There are more positive cases and deaths than in Goa. It (pandemic) has been handled well (in Goa). A new hospital has also been opened and facilities are provided to people. Slowly it is coming under control," Ravi told reporters in Panaji.

The senior party official also refuted reports about differences between Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Health Minister Vishwajit Rane which had spilled out in the open regularly for several months over control of the state's Covid management apparatus. "Everybody is one. Is there a doubt in your mind? There is no doubt in their minds. All are working together. You have doubt that is why you think like this," Ravi cryptically said, adding that there were no differences between the two leaders.



Maha's vehicle registration process goes online, faceless, paperless

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major initiative, the Maharashtra government has made the cumbersome process of vehicle registration process totally online - faceless and paperless - in view of the Covid-19 second wave's compulsions and as part of the Ease of Doing Business policy, officials said on Wednesday.

Transport Commissioner Dr Avinash Dhakane late on Tuesday issued the orders for this end, as per the rules notified by the Union Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.

Now, the applicant can submit all documents for vehicle registration online, no physical verification for the first registration of the new two or four wheelers is required, all docu-

ments can be e-signed by the dealers using digital signature, and the vehicle numbers shall be auto-generated at the dealerships.

Welcoming the development, Federation of Automobile Dealers' Association (FADA) President Vinkesh Gulati said it will save time of the customers as it eliminates the need for making physical trips to the RTOs.

FADA Maharashtra Chairperson Amar Jatin Sheth said that the organisation has been advocating this system since long and finally the time has come when a customer "can walk into a showroom and drive out with a vehicle and a registration number", doing away with many of the hassles linked with vehicle registration and documentation.



NCLT adjourns Rel Infratel matter to July 5

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Thursday adjourned the much-awaited Reliance Infratel Ltd 'fraud tag' matter to July 5, asking the State Bank of India (SBI) to gather and produce more pleadings, submissions and evidences on that day.

This comes after the SBI curiously chose to withdraw the fraud tag against RCom's tower and fibre company Reliance Infratel Ltd.

Reliance Projects and Property Management Services, a part of Reliance Industries Group, was the successful resolution partner in the CIRP (Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process) of Reliance Infratel Ltd. It won the right to acquire 100 per cent shareholding of Reliance Infratel Ltd. In its resolution order



dated December 3, 2020, the NCLT had awarded the company to RIL Group. However, SBI classified the Reliance Infratel Ltd account as fraud on November 10, 2020, but curiously withheld this vital piece of information before the NCLT when it gave its order.

Further, the material event of information being withheld from the NCLT process was a grave error and the same SBI fraud classification wasn't uploaded on the CRILIC website for 45 days till December 21, 2020. The SBI thus violated the

disclosure norms by updating CRILIC much later. On January 5, 2021, SBI chose to file a complaint with CBI Delhi against Reliance Infratel Ltd's erstwhile directors. Reliance Infratel Ltd then moved the Delhi High Court on January 6, 2021 and got a stay against SBI actions, and the court ordered a status quo to be maintained on the CBI complaint.

Banking sources have revealed that a top SBI CGM, who has since been promoted to a top job in the financial sector, was responsible for this judgmental error.

Concerns over digital payments fraud grows in India: Survey

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Consumers in India are increasingly concerned about digital payments fraud and are exercising greater caution when using digital payments compared to a year ago, according to a new study conducted by YouGov and ACI Worldwide.

Around 71 per cent consumers said they are more concerned about scams and fraud because of Covid-19, compared to 47 per cent consumers last year at the onset of the pandemic, said a statement by ACI Worldwide.

The survey showed that net banking is perceived to be the most secure method of payment and, UPI and eWallet transactions scored



higher than card payments, for both for online and offline usage.

It revealed that around 60 per cent respondents would first call their bank to block their account or

visit the bank branch to file a written complaint in the event of fraud, indicating that banks continue to be the first point of contact.

When it comes to the potential

fraud risks while transacting through UPI or eWallets, almost half of the consumers are most concerned about fake UPI payment links that ask for money transfers through text or e-mail.

On a positive note, the efforts of the government to encourage digital payments have been lauded, with nearly 8 in 10 (78 per cent) consumers agreeing that the government should continue to promote them to maintain safety and social distancing measures during the pandemic.

Usage continues to rise, with digital payments by means of eWallets and UPI being used at least once per day by 37 per cent of consumers, second only to cash (52 per cent).

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kiara Advani on Thursday shared a throw-back picture from her Maldivian holiday and said that she misses the sunshine and the tan. Kiara posted a video collage on Instagram

## KIARA ADVANI MISSES THE SUNSHINE AND TAN

featuring her in a bikini, holidaying in the picturesque tourist locale. "Missing the sunshine & tan," she wrote as caption, with a sun emoji. Kiara, who was last seen in "Indoo Ki Jawaani", will be next seen in "Shershaah" opposite Sidharth Malhotra, and in the Kartik Aaryan-starrer "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2", besides "Jug Jugg Jeeyo" co-starring Anil Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor and Varun Dhawan.



## Katrina Kaif-Vicky Kaushal memes flood internet

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Meme makers had a field day throughout Wednesday as they flooded social media with memes featuring B-Town's rumoured couple Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal.

The hashtags #KatrinaKaif and #VickyKaushal started trending on Twitter on Wednesday after memes featuring the two actors started doing the rounds, with fans talking about their rumoured relationship. While some of the memes are hilarious, some are

romantic. Even though the two actors are rumoured to be dating for quite a while now, they have chosen to keep mum on their relationship status and refrain from making public appearances together.

While sharing memes featuring the two actors, fans shared their love for Vicky and Katrina and even said the two look nice together. Some fans even tweeted suggesting that the two of them should feature in a film together.

The memes started flowing on Wednesday after reports emerged claiming that actor Harsh Vardhan Kapoor has confirmed in a recent

interview that Vicky and Katrina are dating.

In an appearance on Zoom's 'By Invite Only', Harsh Vardhan was reportedly quizzed which Bollywood relationship rumour he believes to be true, to which the actor allegedly replied, "Vicky and Katrina are together, that's true... Am I going to get in trouble for saying this? I don't know. I think they're quite open about it."

## RUBINA DILAIK: LIFE IS A BEAUTIFUL DANCE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

"Bigg Boss 14" winner and television star Rubina DilaiK engages in random dance therapy in new Instagram photographs she posted on Thursday. In the set of images, she sports an embellished pastel blouse with a zardozi lehenga. She completes her look with maroon velvet boots. "Life is a beautiful dance," Rubina captioned the image, which currently has over 157K likes on the photo-sharing website. Rubina had tested positive for Covid a few weeks back. She was in Shimla and had quarantined herself there. The actress kept her fans updated about her health. Her husband Abhinav Shukla is currently in Cape Town, shooting for the stunt-based reality show "Khatron Ke Khiladi" season 11.



## RASHMIKA MANDANNA SHARES PEARLS OF WISDOM FOR FANS

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Actress Rashmika Mandanna, who rose to fame with her work in Telugu films and will soon make her Bollywood debut with Mission Majnu, shared a beautiful thought on Twitter on Wednesday to cheer up her followers.

The actress has lately been posting positive messages to cheer up her fans in the tough times of the pandemic.

Rashmika, who will also be seen with Amitabh Bachchan in the Hindi film 'Goodbye', wrote on Twitter: "Something a friend of mine told me.. and I think I need to tell you all too. Spend your time on something that gives you either pleasure (happiness- something that makes you smile and feel happy) or money or knowledge.. nothing else! Period!"

The actress has given hit films in Telugu such as 'Dear Comrade' and 'Geetha Govindam'.

Recently, she also launched an initiative called 'Spreading Hopes' to celebrate the Good Samaritans from all across the country, who have gone out of their way to help others during the devastating second wave of the pandemic.

She aims to encourage people to value these superheroes, and get inspired by their work..

## Bhumi Pednekar: Climate conservation has become focal point of conversation

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress and environmentalist Bhumi Pednekar is happy that climate conservation has become a focal point of conversation.

Bhumi said, "I have to thank the youth of the world for uniting on this. They have made this happen and inspired so many others to come forward and speak up -- climate conservation has become the most important focal point of conversation in the world."

Bhumi is present on Giphy, a popular American online database and search engine known for making and sharing animated images, or GIFs, and her climate skewed content has crossed 1 billion views.

The climate action GIFs have been featured amongst the top World Organisations: UNICEF, Greenpeace, Future Earth and United Nations who are creating awareness on climate action.

She added, "The fact that Climate Warrior GIF's have crossed 1 billion views means the youth of the world have found them useful to raise their voice for climate justice."

Bhumi calls it a "huge moment of happiness" for her because her social media advocacy platform Climate Warrior has resonated with so many people across the globe. She added, "It is really amazing to know how



these assets have become tools in the hands of the youth to tell the world how urgently we need to save our planet and all animals who have an equal right to live on earth."

## Choose the right cooking oil to stay healthy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In the midst of the pandemic, a healthy diet can help to boost your immunity, aiding protection from various diseases.

However, making healthy food a part of your diet can be difficult, due to several reasons. For instance, snacking has increased considerably during the present lockdown, not only at evening chai breaks, but also in between meals to power through the day. Given the paucity of time, we end up looking for options that need less effort. While we all know that it is necessary for us to make mindful choices in current times, juggling between work-from-home and family duties makes it difficult to put health first.

Making small changes in daily cooking can go a long way in making your diet healthy, without adding any extra burden on you. An easy step is to use the right cooking oil. You may ask, why cooking oil? If you think about it, cooking oil is one of the ingredients, which we probably use while cooking almost every meal, and among all options, it carries highest calorie per gram. In effect, using the right cooking oil can make every meal a bit healthier. Now when we think of cooking oil, the first thing that comes to our mind is to reduce the usage of oil, however just that might not be sufficient.

Nutritionist Nmami Agarwal breaks it down. Cooking oils are fats, and just like protein, carbohydrates, and vitamins, are very important macronutrients. Cooking oil typically consists of 3 types of Fatty Acids: Monounsaturated Fatty Acid (MUFA), Polyunsaturated Fatty Acid (PUFA) and



Saturated Fatty Acid (SFA). As per guidelines from National Institute of Nutrition, healthy oils should have a good balance of all three fatty acids. Most single seed cooking oils available in India which we normally use, are unfortunately rich in either MUFA or PUFA.

This is the reason doctors and nutritionists ask you to keep changing your oil. But unfortunately, just alternating between different oils without understanding the fatty acid ratios of individual oil will not help you get the benefit you seek.

A great way to get the right balance of MUFA and PUFA easily, is to use blended oils. Blending is a scientific process that cannot be achieved at home by just mixing oils; the oils are carefully chosen in

ratios that are scientifically tested, so that we get the benefits of individual oils as well as the right fatty acid profile. These oils offer a lot of health benefits. Blended oils combine the benefits of two oils, to provide a synergistic effect, which helps to build immunity. It is also great for your heart health, as it helps reduce bad cholesterol (LDL) and increase good cholesterol (HDL). They also have a high smoke point making it ideal for all types of cooking (frying, sauteing, etc.). Some of them also come with LoSorb Technology that help food absorb lesser oil, keeping it light on your stomach. There are many options of blended oils available in the market like Saffola, helping with heart health and overall health.



# OWEN WILSON EXPLAINS THE TIMELINE OF 'LOKI'



Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Owen Wilson explains the timeline of the new series "Loki", saying it started from where "Avengers: Endgame" ends. The Kate Herron directorial based on Marvel Comics stars Tom Hiddleston, Owen Wilson, GuguMbatia-Raw, Sophia Di Martino among others. Explaining the timeline, Wilson said: "We're right where it ends off in 'Avengers: Endgame'. That is where we're taking Loki out. And now, he's going to be sort of a fish out of water, but much more than that. It would almost be like waking from a dream or a nightmare. All of a sudden you find yourself in this reality that you have no context for. And so, part of Mobius' job is explaining to him what exactly is happening and what this new reality is." "Loki" streams in English on Disney+ Hotstar Premium and in Hindi on Disney+ Hotstar VIP where it will also release in Tamil and Telugu.

# BLAKE LIVELY'S FATHER, ACTOR ERNIE LIVELY, PASSES AWAY



Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress Blake Lively's father and actor Ernie Lively, who worked in films such as "The Sisterhood Of The Traveling Pants" and "Turner & Hooch", passed away aged 74. A representative for Ernie Lively confirmed his death to variety.com.

In the two instalments of "The Sisterhood Of The Traveling Pants", released in 2005 and 2008, Ernie played the father of Bridget, a character essayed by his daughter Blake.

Besides Blake, Ernie's other children including Jason, Eric, Robyn and Lori Lively have pursued careers in film and television, too.

Ernie was born in Maryland, Baltimore, in January 1947. He earned his first acting credit at age 28 with an appearance on "The Waltons". Four years later, he was cast in "The Dukes Of Hazzard".

His other show credits include "Fame", "Hill Street Blues", "Baywatch", "The X-Files", "Murder She Wrote", "Seinfeld", "That '70s Show" and "The West Wing". Ernie also featured in films such as "Shocker", "Air America", "Showdown In Little Tokyo", "Passenger 57", "The Beverly Hillbillies", "Mulholland Falls", "American Pie 2" and "The Perfect Game". His last big screen outing was in 2020, in the horror film "Phobic".

Ernie is survived by his wife Elaine and their children, as well as his sister Judith and nine grandchildren.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Selena Gomez has revealed that she finds touring hard because it leaves her lacking in self-love. Talking about the crystal-embellished bodysuit she wore to open her 2016 'Revival' gigs, Gomez said: "I'm not going to lie, Britney Spears inspired it from 'Toxic'. I wanted to find a moment where that could kind of have its place. Still have the outfit! Do I put it on and try to sing? Sometimes."

She stressed as a female it is harder to tour because of the pressure of multiple looks, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

"It's so hard to tour, and when you're a female, because you have all of this pressure to add multiple looks throughout the show. You want it to pop but you have to make it comfortable for yourself and realistic to dance in or to perform in," the singer added.

She said, "Tour is hard and it's very difficult for me because I tend to just get into a place where I'm not filling myself up with self-love, so how am I going to give it to all these people? But every moment of it, if you put me on a stage right now, it is the best feeling in the whole world." The 28-year-old star has looked back over a number of her most famous looks, and recalled how she "didn't feel good" about herself at the 2015 Met Gala, to which she wore Vera Wang. In a 'Life in Looks' video for Vogue, Gomez said: "I fluctuate a lot with my weight, and I remember this night specifically I didn't feel good about my body."

Selena Gomez: It's so hard to tour

# Little Mix's collaboration with Anne-Marie on hold after crew member tests Covid positive

Los Angeles | Agencies

Little Mix and Anne-Marie's collaboration has been thrown into jeopardy - after being in the works for years. And with Leigh-Anne Pinnoch and Perrie Edwards both several months pregnant, they are being extra-vigilant.

Their teams are now scrambling to find a new date for the video, but given their hectic schedules, that won't be an easy task.

A music insider said: "Little Mix and Anne-Marie were supposed to be shooting the video for their new single on Monday. But just hours before, one of the crew tested positive for Covid, meaning everything had to be cancelled."

Anne-Marie has been good friends with the Little Mix ladies for years.

She recorded a podcast with Jade Thirlwall last summer, and Leigh-Anne joined her as a guest mentor on The Voice earlier this year.

She teased a link-up with the band in November and said of the trio: "I love harmonies."

# BINKY FELSTEAD REVEALS HER WILD BABY NAME FOR HER NEWBORN SON

Los Angeles | Agencies



Binky Felstead has revealed her rather unusual name for her son - Wolfie. The 30-year-old reality star welcomed her first child with her fiancé Max Darnton on Friday and has now shared his grand full name - Wulfric Alexander Fredrik Darnton. Explaining the meaning of the name today, Binky wrote: "The newest member of our very happy family. He will be known as Wolfie (unless he's naughty then it's definitely "Wulfric!" again) "We love the name as it touches on his Scandinavian heritage as well as having other meaningful links, that are very close to us." She added: "His big sister already adores him and yes - he's most definitely a keeper." The Made In Chelsea star continued: "Massive thank you for all your gorgeous messages. This Friday I will be uploading a series of videos documenting the build up to Wolfie's birth (including labour!) x." Earlier this week, Binky revealed that her son was born on Friday 4th June at 10.38pm weighing 8.8lbs.

# Kim Kardashian 'hurt' after Kanye West takes Irina Shayk to their 'special place'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kim Kardashian has been left feeling "blindsided and hurt" after ex Kanye West took Irina Shayk to their "special place" in France, The Sun can reveal. Yesterday, the rapper was pictured with the 35-year-old model after whisking her away for a "romantic getaway" in Provence, south of France, for his 44th birthday. Noel Gallagher says he's 'boozing as hard as the nineties' thanks to lockdown

Yesterday, the rapper was pictured with the 35-year-old model after whisking her away for a "romantic getaway" in Provence, south of France, for his 44th birthday. Kim has been left feeling 'blindsided and hurt' by Kanye's actions. They were spotted arriving on a private jet back to New Jersey following the trip, which came after Kim filed for divorce from Kanye in February. It confirms The Sun's story from last month that Kanye had moved on with Irina - but 40-year-old Kim has been left shocked and hurt by the hook-up, especially as it took place at her and her ex's "special place". A source said, "Kim's been totally blindsided by this. It was in France where Kanye and Kim first got together, when he sent a private jet to bring her to his fashion show in Paris - which was the same one that Irina walked in years ago."



# ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Holly Ramsay





EDITOR'S SPECS

## Ganga has become dirty?

**With the Ganga river in Varanasi turning green due to algae bloom, the district administration has started an extensive survey to find out its origin. District administration has set up a five-member team to look into the matter and submit a detailed report after environmentalists expressed concern over the appearance of algae in abundance in the Ganga water, which may harm the aquatic life in the river. District magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma said, "The team will go on a boat of the Jal Police in search of the source of the algae. The team will also examine how algae bloom covered the stretch of Ganga along the ghats. The algae first appeared around 15-20 days ago, which was examined by the officials of the Pollution Control Board." It became visible again in the Ganga water in the last three-four days. The district magistrate has asked the team to submit its report with all details along with photographs and videos. According to environmental scientists, it might have come from some side drains or stagnant sources during the recent rainfall. It will disappear with the increasing flow of water. The UP Pollution Control Board officials also claimed that the algae bloom is coming to Varanasi from the upstream of the river. A scientist of the Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development, BHU, Dr Kripa Ram said, "The algae grow due to increased nutrients in the water. During rain, these algae flow to the river from fertile lands. After getting adequate nutrients, they start the process of photosynthesis. Phosphate, sulphur and nitrate are the nutrients that help the algae grow." Environmental scientist Prof Vishwambharnath Mishra said that the ecology of the Ganga is being disturbed for commercial gains, which will create serious problems in the future. "The construction of a platform in the Ganga near Lalita Ghat has obstructed the flow of water. Due to the growth of algae in the upstream of Lalita Ghat, the colour of water has turned green. The presence of abundant algae in Ganga's water is not good for people's health," he added. A local lawyer, Saurabh Tiwari, has filed a petition before the National Green Tribunal seeking its intervention in the matter.**

## Covid kills:

Shilpi Verma

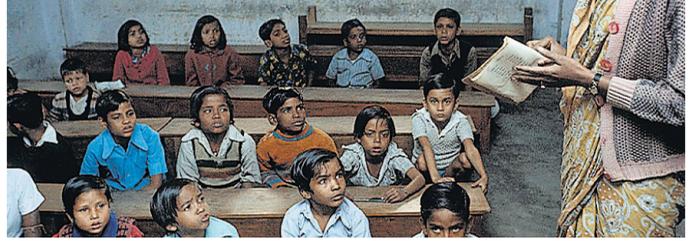
**I**t hasn't even been two years since they got married and he leaves behind a one-year-old child. He is among the 54 government teachers claimed by the virus in East and West Champaran districts since the start of the second wave in April. The state education department has initiated an exercise to determine the state-wide toll. "The compilation of data from other districts is being done. It is still at an introductory level," said a senior government functionary, refusing to be identified. "In April and May 2021 alone, 29 of our teachers died," informed Awdesh Kumar Singh, District Education Officer (DEO) of East Champaran. West Champaran has witnessed 25 deaths, according to DEO Binod Kumar Vimal. The districts are now staring at a huge loss to their basic education workforce when schools eventually reopen. While online classes were happening in an erratic manner, teachers had been struggling with finances either due to delayed salaries or increasing expenditures. As a result, they were often unable to pay for the treatments. Bihar Panchayat Nagar Prarambhik Shikshak Sangh (BNPSS), a teacher's association in East Champaran, believes that timely salaries could have prevented some deaths. The delay in salaries is typical and a delay of two months is quite common for both regular and contractual teachers. The association's president, Amardeep Kumar, told 101Reporters, "Most of them are contractual teachers who died owing to a financial crunch. They were deprived of their salaries for four months, and hence they did not opt for the best medical services. "As per the allotment received, the salary was paid for November, December (2020) and January (2021) -- about 80 per cent of salary was received for the latter. Teachers were without payments between February and May 2021."

# 54 GOVT TEACHERS DIE IN CHAMPARAN, NO SALARIES, NO EX-GRATIA

• Stranded in the middle of a crisis

Praful Kumar Mishra, District Programme Officer (Establishment) of the education department in East Champaran, confirmed the delay in salaries. "We process the payment as soon as the allotment arrives. The pending salaries have been paid towards the end of May," he said. Teachers have confirmed that they have now received their salaries but for many families, it is too late. "Due to lack of money, my husband ignored going to the doctor and preferred to take medicines prescribed by the chemist," said Savita Kumari, 42, about Ramesh Sah, a government teacher in West Champaran. "But his health deteriorated suddenly and he had to be admitted to GMCH on May 1. He passed away the following day before he could even be tested," she says. The mounting death toll has expedited the demand for relief. Premchand (he goes by one name only), State Spokesperson and Media In-Charge of Bihar Rajiya Prathamik Shikshak Sangh, said, "The number of deaths due to Covid-19 is high. We are compiling a list from all the districts. A demand for immediate compensation and jobs for dependents of each of the deceased has been made." Sanjay Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary of the State Education Department, had announced in May that dependents of all the teachers who died due to Covid-19 are entitled to claim an ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakh. However, when asked how many people have received the amount so far, the district officials chose to remain tight-lipped. BNPSS president Kumar, said families from East Champaran are still knocking at the doors of government offices to claim the promised ex-gratia relief and compassionate appointment. "Paperwork is progressing at a snail's pace," he added.

**"Happiness is no longer part of my life," said Kumari Neha. The 30-year-old was tragically widowed when her husband Deepak Anand, a government school teacher succumbed to Covid-19 while being treated at Government Medical College and Hospital at Bettiah, the headquarters of Bihar's West Champaran district.**



• Death and confusion

The grieving families have to jump through bureaucratic hoops for the ex-gratia and it has been especially hard to get proper death certificates. "An RT-PCR or antigen report is mandatory for declaration of a COVID-related death," according to Dr Srikant Dubey, Deputy Superintendent of GMCH in Bettiah. But in many cases, these tests were not conducted. The family of Ajay Gupta, a contract teacher posted at Englishiya in West Champaran, is yet to come to terms with his death on May 13. His wife, Vibha Gupta -- a mother to two -- is too deep in mourning to deal with paperwork. The responsibility has fallen on Gupta's father, Rameshwar Prasad, who said that they are yet to receive his son's death certificate. The family has not been able to procure one since the RT-PCR or antigen test, required for the document, was not done. This death too occurred at the GMCH at Bettiah. At that time, the family was in a panic over his deteriorating

health and didn't have the time to get an RT-PCR test done. "We left everything for the doctors to decide. For now, we have submitted all the documents to the government, but cannot guess what the investigation report will say." Rajesh\* (name changed) was a teacher who was being treated at GMCH before his death. A family member, who wished to remain anonymous, told 101Reporters that the CT scan results are available and Remdesivir was administered to the patient. "Why is the death certificate being denied when all the treatments were provided to the patient as per Covid-19 protocol?" they ask. Many families have not been able to apply for the ex-gratia announced by the government because of the trouble involved in getting the appropriate death certificate.

*(The author is a Bettiah-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters.com, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters.)*

## IS CENTRE PLANNING 'SOMETHING BIG' IN J&K?

**W**ith rumours becoming rife over New Delhi planning 'something big' in J&K, top sources told IANS on Wednesday that the focus of the central government is on two important issues: whether the suspended Amarnath Yatra can be resumed and whether assembly elections can be held before the year end. "Much depends upon the COVID situation which has shown a steady improvement during the last one week. If the situation permits, you can have assembly elections before the year end", a top source in New Delhi told correspondent. Asked whether these elections can be held till the delimitation commission completes its work, the source said, "Why do you think the delimitation commission cannot complete its work during this year?" "The commission has started its ground level process of collecting data and population break-up etc from various district development commissioners. "Once the statistical back-up is ready, the commission will start its final duty of delimitation of new assembly segments depending upon the guiding principle that both the regions and various races, tribes and communities get an equitable deal", the source asserted. The developments on the ground also indicate that various political parties have started coming out of hibernation. Leaders of the



National Conference (NC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Conference (PC), Apni Party and others have started activating their ground level cadre. NC patron and former chief minister Feroz Khan Noon is scheduled to meet PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti later on Wednesday. Sources in these two parties suggest the meeting is likely to decide on the partici-

ation of these parties in the meetings of the delimitation commission to put forth their viewpoint on the new delimitation and increased representation to some tribes, races and communities. The sources added that the NC patron is underlining the importance for the regional parties to take part in delimitation deliberations.

The extended term of the delimitation commission ends in March 2022, but those connected with the working of the commission suggest it would give its final report before the end of its extended term. Tribals like Gujjars, Bakarwals, races like the Paharis, Dogras etc and communities like the Kashmiri Pandits expect that the delimitation commission would end their under-representation in the J&K assembly. Given the present political scenario in J&K it is logical to assume that no political party would choose to remain out of the electoral process. "Out of hustings would mean out of politics", said a senior NC leader requesting not to be named. On the other priority, the resumption of the suspended Amarnath Yatra, authorities are of the opinion that while the normal Yatra with thousands of pilgrims might not be possible, yet the Amarnath Yatra must be held with all religious formalities and with minimum participation this year. While Kashmiris are besieged with rumours of statehood for Jammu, declaration of safe areas for Kashmir migrant Pandits and the further truncating of the districts of Kashmir division, the real 'big development' could be restoration of democracy with equitable representation to every community, tribe and race and the holding of a subdued Amarnath Yatra this year.



## Smokeless 'chulhas' help Bijapur villagers save their forests

tora, tamarind etc. "The locals of Bijapur cut timber from the forests and use it as firewood in chulhas. This is used to cook food, boil water and meet other household needs. But as more and more timber was used for firewood, the depleting trees began to concern villagers and a few officials. "The amount of firewood consumption has increased over the years, which is a worrying trend," said a district official who wished to remain anonymous.

The PM Ujjwala Yojana, which was set up to distribute LPG cylinders to Below Poverty Line families, has been slow to pick up in Bijapur. Out of the 48,000 eligible households, only 25 per cent have been covered under this scheme. However, the lack of motorable roads makes it logistically challenging to bring the rest of the deserving households under the scheme. Refuelling of the cylinders is a huge problem when people have to travel dozens of kilometres on bad or no roads to reach ration shops and cylinder distributors. Anil Kawre, a local who has been a part of several programmes with the

Department of Health, recalls how the idea of smokeless chulhas came about. "When we saw the depleting forests, we thought of starting something so that the load on the forests is reduced. We know the locals heavily rely on forest wood to be used as firewood in chulhas, but we thought we have to find a way to minimise the input of firewood and maximise the output," he told 101Reporters. Kawre learnt about the smokeless chulha a few years back, through the Phulwari scheme launched by the Chhattisgarh Health Department to battle malnutrition in children and reduce indoor air pollution. The smoke released in traditional stoves was causing many ailments like asthma, pneumonia, cancer, chronic restrictive lung disease and other respiratory health issues. In fact, indoor air pollution has been termed as the silent killer of the rural kitchen. While the Phulwari scheme is inactive now, the memory of the smokeless chulha stayed with Kawre, who had also been part of the project. He began talking to the women in his village, telling them about the smokeless chulha and its many benefits. Many women were keen to make the shift from traditional chulhas and readily agreed. Smokeless chulhas were introduced

in their homes and as the word spread, more and more women came forward to make the shift. The smokeless chulha and its benefits The smokeless chulha is built using bricks, an iron rod and a pipe for the outflow of smoke. According to a report by Sri Sri Institute of Agricultural Sciences & Technology Trust, the smokeless chulha uses up to 50 per cent less firewood than the traditional chulha. It is designed to continuously supply adequate oxygen, thus enabling efficient combustion. This results in up to 80 per cent less smoke production. In addition, since the smokeless chulha has a double mouth, you can cook two items at once. Kawre explained, "It costs around Rs 300 to set up a smokeless chulha. It reduces cooking time by 50 per cent. It will take you 45 minutes to cook on a smokeless chulha while on a traditional chulha (an open-air structure of mud or stones with a single mouth), the same meal can take one and a half hours to cook." But the most important benefit is the reduction in firewood requirement, feel the villagers. "A person doesn't need to go to the forest every other day to collect firewood. The amount of wood needed has reduced,"

said Surti Netam, a local. Kawre added that the felling of trees has reduced. "The tribals cut down forests trees mainly to use as firewood. They don't use it for commercial purposes. So this has definitely come down," he said. According to a report by Ramkrishna Muley, Chairman of Sri Sri Institute of Agricultural Sciences & Technology Trust, Bengaluru, "A rural household uses up to 3,000 kg of firewood per annum. The average cost of firewood is Rs 2 per kg. Since the improved smokeless chulha uses 50 per cent less firewood, a rural household using this chulha will save 1,500 kg of firewood in a year." Muley in his report further states that a pilot exercise demonstrated that saving 1,500 kg of firewood meant the saving of at least three full-grown trees. "If an entire village of say 200 firewood-burning households adopts the improved chulha, then this village will be saving 600 trees per annum. This is equal to about 1.5 acres of forest area," he wrote. Kawre and his team aim to set up these smokeless chulhas in every household in the district. *(The author is a Bijapur-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters.com, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters.)*

**Sameer Showkin Lone** In this Chhattisgarh district known for its dense forests, tribal villagers are embracing an innovative and cost-effective technique to burn less firewood while cooking. In Bijapur, a severely Naxal-affected district in Chhattisgarh's Bastar division, a silent revolution is taking place, entirely driven by the villagers. Locals in the area have decided to move from traditional chulhas (stoves) to smokeless ones in a bid to save their green cover. The movement, started by a single villager, gained the sanction of residents in a dozen villages, and today, over 1,980 smokeless chulhas (clay stoves) have been successfully set up

in households, and 166 smokeless chulhas function in schools and anganwadis (rural child care centres). The initiative not only cuts down the need for firewood but also reduces indoor air pollution, thus improving the health of the women using these stoves. The beginning of a transition The Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh is spread over more than 6,500 square kilometres, a majority of which is either dense or open forest. Of the 2.5 lakh people who live in the district, 85 per cent comprise indigenous tribal, forest-dwellers whose survival is solely dependent on the forests. The tribes earn their livelihood by collecting and selling minor forest produce like chironji, tendu patta, mahua,



# BIDEN REVOKES EXECUTIVE ORDERS TARGETING TIKTOK, WECHAT

Washington | Agencies

US President Joe Biden has revoked and replaced executive orders targeting TikTok, WeChat and eight other software applications signed by his predecessor President Donald Trump.

President Biden revoked and replaced three E.O.s (executive orders) that aimed to prohibit transactions with TikTok, WeChat, and eight other communications and financial technology software applications; two of these E.O.s are subject to litigation, the White House said in a fact sheet released on Wednesday.

The new order signed by Biden on Wednesday directed the US Commerce Department to instead evaluate software applications connected with "foreign adversaries"



under recent US supply-chain security rules "and take action, as appropriate", according to the

White House. The order also instructs the Department to draft a report with

recommendations on how to safeguard Americans' personal data, as well as a second report containing additional policy proposals.

Citing national security concerns, Trump had sought to block new users from downloading TikTok and WeChat in the US, but his orders were blocked in federal district courts and never took effect.

The American Civil Liberties Union welcomed the move, saying: "President Biden is right to revoke these Trump administration executive orders, which blatantly violated the First Amendment rights of TikTok and WeChat users in the US. "The Commerce Department's review of these and other apps must not take us down the same misguided path, by serving as a smokescreen for future bans or other unlawful actions."

# UK REPORTS HIGHEST DAILY CORONA VIRUS CASES SINCE FEBRUARY

Britain has reported another 7,540 coronavirus cases in the latest 24-hour period, the highest number since late February, according to official figures released on Wednesday.



ple who died within 28 days of their first positive test, Xinhua news agency reported.

To date, Britain has recorded a total of 4,535,754 coronavirus cases.

More than 40.7 million people, or over three-quarters of adults in Britain, have been given the coronavirus vaccine jab, while more than 28.5 million

people have been fully vaccinated, according to the latest official figures.

The latest data were revealed as more than one million people booked a COVID-19 vaccine through the National Health Service (NHS) website on Tuesday, a record high.

The landmark result came on the day that bookings were opened up to those aged 25 to 29.

London | Agencies

The country also recorded another six coronavirus-related deaths, bringing the national death toll to 127,860. These figures only include the deaths of peo-

## brief

### 12 DEAD IN MYANMAR MILITARY PLANE CRASH

Nay Pyi Taw: At least 12 people have died after a military aircraft crashed in Myanmar, according to a fire brigade spokesperson on Thursday. The accident occurred near the central city of Mandalay, the spokesperson told dpa news agency. The weather conditions were very bad, according to local news reports. Soldiers and Buddhist monks were on board. The monks had been due to take part in a religious ceremony, the reports said. The plane was en route from the capital, Nay Pyi Taw, to the city of Pinyin Oo Lwin and crashed shortly before landing, according to Myawaddy TV, a station run by the military junta. Images were posted in social media showing the crashed plane.



### SUICIDE CAR BOMBING KILLS 3 AFGHAN SOLDIERS

Kabul: Three Afghan soldiers and an assailant were killed on Thursday in a suicide car bombing in Baghlan province, a local army source confirmed. The assailant tried to carry out a car bombing against an army base in Baghlan province. The explosion occurred in the e-Shamal locality of provincial capital Pul-e-Khumri city early Thursday, Abdul Hadi Nazari from the army's 217th Pamir Corps told Xinhua news agency. The militants failed to cause massive damage to the base after the soldiers in the first gate of the camp responded to the attacker, he said.

### 12 KILLED IN PERU BUS ACCIDENT

Lima: At least 12 people were killed after a bus skidded off the road and plunged into a ravine on a highway in Peru's Pataz province. The accident occurred in an area known as the "Devil's Balcony", as the vehicle, owned by the Turismo Rosita company, was covering the Trujillo-Pataz route in the highlands of the region, reports Xinhua news agency. The bus was carrying about 30 passengers, of which four were injured and 11 are missing, sub-prefect of Parco Eleodoro Castaneda told local media on Wednesday. Those injured were taken to health centres in the towns of Vijus and Chagual.



### BRITISH AIRWAYS, RYANAIR PROBED OVER REFUNDS

London: The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has launched an investigation into flag carrier, British Airways (BA) and the Irish airline Ryanair over whether they have broken consumer law by failing to offer refunds for customers who couldn't legally take flights due to Covid-19 lockdowns. During the lockdowns, the two airlines refused to give refunds to passengers that were lawfully unable to fly, with British Airways offering vouchers or rebooking and Ryanair providing the option to rebook, Xinhua news agency quoted the CMA, an independent non-ministerial department, as saying in a statement on Wednesday. Both firms may have breached consumer law and left people unfairly out of pocket by failing to offer their money back, it added.

### UK TEEN KILLS 2 SISTERS IN 'SACRIFICIAL DEAL'

London: A UK teenager has been accused of killing his two sisters in a "sacrificial deal with the devil" to win the lottery, a court has heard. On June 6, 2020, the 19-year-old accused Danyal Hussein stabbed Nicole Smallman (27) 28 times and Bibaa Henry (46) eight times at the Fryent Country Park in Wembley town, the BBC reported. The incident took place during Henry's birthday party at the park. During the opening of the trial on Wednesday, the prosecution said that the police found a note purporting to be an agreement between the teenager and a demon from Hussein's room, the prosecution said.



# 1,000 US sanctions on Iran agreed to be lifted, 500 remain

Jakarta | Agencies

Tehran: The figure was offered by the head of the Iranian negotiating team, Abbas Araçchi, during a meeting on Wednesday with Parliament's Foreign Policy Committee, Xinhua news agency quoted Ebrahim Azizi, a member of the committee, as saying.

The next round of talks between delegations from Iran and the P4+1, namely the UK, China, France, Russia plus Germany, is scheduled to begin later this week.

According to Araçchi, the lawmaker noted, the delegations have not yet defined a verification process by Iran of the lifting of the sanctions.

On Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that "hundreds of sanctions" against Iran will remain in place even if Washington re-enters the 2015 nuclear agreement and Tehran returns to full compliance with the deal, formally known as Joint Comprehensive



The five rounds of the negotiations in Vienna to revive the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal have led to an agreement over the removal of some 1,000 US sanctions on Tehran, but about 500 others were still disputed, parliamentary sources said.

Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On June 3, Araçchi, who is also the country's Deputy Foreign Minister, expressed hope that the next round of talks in Vienna may be conclusive and lead to a final agreement.

The US government under former President Donald Trump withdrew in May 2018 from the JCPOA and unilaterally re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

In response, Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its JCPOA commitments from May 2019.

The JCPOA Joint Commission began the negotiations on April 6 in the Austrian capital aimed at a possible return of the US to the JCPOA and how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the 2015 landmark agreement.

### Israeli strikes kill 11 military personnel in Syria

Damascus | Agencies

Israeli strikes targeting areas in central and southern Syria overnight killed 11 military personnel, a war monitor reported. An officer was among the victims as the strikes on Wednesday targeted a scientific research centre and other military positions in Homs province and the countryside of the capital Damascus, reports Xinhua news agency. There were no details about the casualties, but the war monitor said the air defenses responded to the attack. The Israeli strikes are the latest in a string of actions targeting Syrian military positions across the country.

According to a report in The Times of Israel newspaper, The Israeli Defense Force has launched hundreds of strikes in Syria since the start of the civil war in 2011. The pace of attacks has slowed considerably in recent months, with the last reported strikes taking place May 5 and 6 on sites in Latakia and near Quneitra. One civilian was reported killed in the May 5 strike, the report added.



### SUDAN, EGYPT REJECT UNILATERAL FILLING OF NILE DAM



Khartoum: Sudan and Egypt have reiterated rejection to unilateral filling of the disputed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile River. The two countries held closed-door talks here on Wednesday to review the latest developments regarding the GERD with the participation of their Foreign and Irrigation Ministers, reports Xinhua news agency. At the conclusion of the talks, the two sides issued a joint communique in which they stressed on the risks of the unilateral filling of the GERD.

# Suu Kyi charged with corruption: State media

Nay Pyi Taw | Agencies

Myanmar's ousted de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been charged with corruption, the state media reported on Thursday.

The Anti-Corruption Commission in Myanmar found evidence that the 75-year-old committed "corruption using her rank", dpa news agency quoted the state-affiliated daily, Global New Light of Myanmar as saying in a report.

The accusations



include illegally accepting \$600,000 and several kilograms of gold, as well as misusing land. Suu Kyi's lawyer described the accusations as "absurd" and "groundless".

"I've never met any statesman more honest and incorruptible as Aung San Suu Kyi," Khin Maung Zaw, the head of her defence team, told dpa news agency.

Corruption is punishable by up to 15 years in prison in Myanmar, which has seen widespread unrest since a military coup in February.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate has been under house arrest since the coup on February 1 - as she was for years under the previous military dictatorship.

# US, Russia send tough messages ahead of Biden-Putin summit

Washington/Moscow | Agencies

As US President Joe Biden began his visit to Europe, where he will meet with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin next week, Washington and Moscow have sent tough messages ahead of the much-awaited summit. Biden arrived in the UK on Wednesday, kicking off his first foreign trip since coming to power in January, reports Xinhua news agency.

Addressing US troops and their families at Royal Air Force Mildenhall base there, Biden said he would deliver a clear message to Putin. "We're not seeking conflict with Russia," Biden said. "We want a stable and predictable relationship." "But I've been clear: The US will respond in a robust and meaningful way if the Russian government engages in harmful activities," he warned. Meanwhile, a Russian court on Wednesday night outlawed Kremlin critic Alexei



Navalny's political organisation and labelled it as "extremist". The ruling prevents those associated with Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation and his regional network from seeking public office. Condemning the court's decision, the US Department of State said in a statement that with this action,



"Russia has effectively criminalized one of the country's few remaining independent political movements". In March, Washington announced sanctions and restrictions against Russian individuals and entities over the alleged poisoning of Navalny. The US intelligence community assessed that officers

of Russia's Federal Security Service used a nerve agent known as Novichok to poison Navalny on August 20, 2020, according to a senior Biden administration official. Russia has repeatedly denied such accusations, saying the Navalny case is a purely domestic affair and foreign intervention is not allowed. Biden's first in-per-

son meeting with Putin is scheduled to take place in Geneva, Switzerland on June 16, at the end of his eight-day trip to Europe.

During his trip, Biden will be in the UK till June 13 during which he will attend the G7 Summit and hold bilateral meetings with leaders of member countries.

He will then travel to Brussels, Belgium to participate in the NATO Summit, before meeting Putin. Ahead of the US-Russia summit, Biden on Monday reaffirmed his support to Kiev in a call with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, in a bid to reassure Ukraine ahead of the summit. Following the call, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Tuesday that "irresponsible" US policy will lead to continued tensions in Ukraine. There may be a chance at productive talks if the US rises above its own interests and focuses on what is best for solving the Ukrainian crisis, Ryabkov said.



## IOA SCRAMBLES FOR ATHLETES' OLYMPIC KIT WITHOUT CHINESE CONNECTION

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With less than 50 days to go for the Tokyo Olympic Games to begin, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is starting at a challenging task of making arrangements for a new sports kit for the Indian contingent -- without the China imprint. On June 3, the IOA had unveiled the ceremonial and competition kits in the presence of sports minister Kiren Rijiju, the chief guest. The occasion also marked the 50-day countdown for the July 23-August 8 Tokyo Olympic Games. Six days later, the sports kits sporting the logos of a Chinese company, which is an IOA sponsor, has become a controversial issue, considering the relations between India and China. So, how did the IOA wake up to the Chinese connection on the athletes' apparel? "Someone from the Prime Minister Office (PMO) raised the issue to



avoid having Chinese company logo," said a source. Following directions from the sports ministry, the IOA issued a

statement, saying that keeping in mind the sentiments of the fans, Indian athletes' kit would be without the Chinese company's logo.

This last minute change of kits seems to have created a challenge to get new kits prepared quickly. "We are anticipating a crisis

close to the Olympics as several athletes might not get proper sports kits. The process of qualification in some disciplines like athletics and swimming is still on," an official of a National Sports Federation (NSF) told reporter. On June 8, the IOA said in a statement: "We are thankful for guidance by the ministry of youth affairs and sports in making this decision. We would like our athletes to be able to train and compete without having to answer questions about the apparel brand."

Rajiv Mehta, secretary general of IOA wasn't available for comments. Another IOA official said that in the recent past there wasn't any border skirmish with the neighbouring China on the border that could have hurt the sentiments of the Indian sports fans. In August last year, following a standoff between India and China at Ladakh border resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers.

## Tokyo Games Village may have no alcohol in public areas



Tokyo | Agencies

Tokyo Olympic Games could see a ban on alcohol in dining and public areas of the Games Village although athletes will be allowed to consume it inside their rooms. "In case they were to drink inside their own rooms -- this is equivalent to cases where we are drinking in our own home," Toshiro Muto, CEO of Tokyo Olympic Games Organising Committee, told Japanese media. "Can we prohibit that (drinking inside own rooms)? That's not conceivable. It would be very difficult to do so." However, Muto said that alcohol might be banned from dining and

public areas in the Games Village. Tokyo is under a state of emergency till June 20 as a result of which alcohol sales in restaurants and bars are banned as the administration looks to curb Covid-19 cases by discouraging locals from partying. If emergency is extended, then the local population may get local seeing or hearing of athletes drinking in public areas of the Games Village while they remain under restriction. "We have not yet clearly decided on the [alcohol] policy. We hope to do so by the end of this month," said Muto. The Games, which is facing a lot of opposition from locals, are scheduled to begin on July 23.

## 5 Indian women cricketers to play in The Hundred



London | Agencies

Five Indians cricketers -- Shafali Verma, Harmanpreet Kaur, Jemimah Rodrigues, Smriti Mandhana, and Deepti Sharma -- have joined The Hundred women's competition, the official website of the tournament said on Thursday. Shafali Verma has joined Birmingham Phoenix as a replacement for Sophie Devine while Harmanpreet Kaur, who will star in the opening match at the Kia Oval on July 21, has joined Manchester Originals. Jemimah Rodrigues will feature for Northern Superchargers while Smriti Mandhana will represent Southern Brave. Deepti Sharma has joined England captain Heather Knight at London Spirit. The tournament, to be organised by the England

and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and played in a 100-ball format, will see some of the best women cricketers from around the world compete for different franchises. "It's very exciting that I am going to get to play in the first ever game of The Hundred," Harmanpreet was quoted as saying by the tournament website. "It will be special to make history, especially with a women's match at such a big ground. We've played in front of some large crowds in India and it's always a great experience for the players," she added. Beth Barrett-Wild, who heads The Hundred Women's Competition said, "It's so good to finally be able to confirm the involvement of some of the superstars from the India team. They are a hugely exciting group of players and they'll bring a lot to the competition."

## ICC to induct 10 former cricketers into Hall of Fame



Dubai | Agencies

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will induct 10 former players from five different eras in its Hall of Fame ahead of the World Test Championship final. "Ten legends of the game who have made a significant contribution to the history of Test cricket will be inducted to join 93 players who are already in

the illustrious list of ICC Hall of Famers making the total now to 103," the ICC said in a statement on Thursday. "The special intake will see two players from each of the following five eras join the ranks of the world's greatest players: Early Cricket Era (pre-1918), Inter-War Cricket Era (1918 -- 1945), Post-War Cricket Era (1946 -- 1970), ODI Era (1971 -- 1995), Modern Cricket Era (1996 --

2016)," added the statement. The special edition will be telecast live on June 13 (Sunday) on all ICC digital channels. The 10 icons who will be inducted were chosen by the ICC Hall of Fame Voting Academy which comprises of living Hall of Fame members, a FICA (Federation of International Cricketers' Association) representative, prominent cricket journalists and senior ICC figures.

## ASIAN GAMES CHAMPION BOXER DINGKO SINGH NO MORE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ningko Singh, an Asian Games gold-medallist in boxing, passed away on Thursday in Imphal after losing his battle with liver cancer. He was 42. The Manipur boxer had won gold in bantamweight at the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games. Last year, he had tested positive for coronavirus. Though he recovered from Covid-19, he had to undergo radiation ther-



apy for liver treatment in January 2020. He even had to sell his house for his treatment. An Arjuna awardee in 1998, he had been fighting liver cancer since 2018. He was also honoured with Padma Shri in 2013. Boxer Vijender Singh, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games bronze-medallist, tweeted, "My sincerest condolences on this loss. May his life's journey & struggle forever remain a source [of] inspiration for the upcoming generations. I pray that the bereaved family finds the strength to overcome this period of grief & mourning [emoticon: folded hands] #dinkosingh."

## 2ND TEST: ENGLAND MAKE STEADY START, MOVE TO 67/0 AT LUNCH



Birmingham | Agencies

England opens Rory Burns (batting 32) and Dominic Sibley (batting 31) saw off the new-ball challenge and took their team to 67 without loss at lunch on the first day of the second Test against New Zealand here at Edgbaston on Thursday. New Zealand, who made six changes to the playing XI, resting key bowlers Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson to keep them fresh for the World Test Championship final against India that begins on June 18, struggled to make breakthroughs even as they tried all their five bowlers in the first session. Left-arm seamer Trent Boult, who made a comeback to the side after missing the first Test, bowled nine overs for 18 runs without any success. Matt Henry and Daryl Mitchell, who were brought in as replacements, shared 10 overs between them but failed to create an impact. Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel, who replaced the injured Mitchell Santner, was miserly in his five overs but also failed to make a breakthrough. England brought in Ollie Stone to replace Ollie Robinson, who has been suspended from Test cricket after some of his old racist and sexist tweets went viral on social media during the first Test.

**Brief scores (Lunch, Day 1):** England 67/0 in 29 overs (R Burns 32 batting, D Sibley 31 batting) vs New Zealand.

## NEW ZEALAND MAKE SIX CHANGES

England won the toss and elected to bat in the second Test here at Edgbaston against a New Zealand side that made six changes to the side that played the first Test at Lord's last week. "Kane Williamson (elbow), BJ Watling (back) and Mitchell Santner (finger) were ruled out before the toss through injury and replaced by Will Young, Tom Blundell and Ajaz Patel," said a statement from New Zealand Cricket. "Trent Boult and Matt Henry will take the new ball in place of Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson, while Daryl Mitchell replaces Colin de Grandhomme at number seven," added the statement. Southee, Jamieson and de Grandhomme have been rested for this Test as New Zealand also prepare for the World Test Championship final against India from June 18 at Southampton.

## I have learned to be calm from Chhetri: Forward Manvir

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Football forward Manvir Singh says playing with Sunil Chhetri has helped him learn how to stay in crunch moments. Manvir was part of the India team that lost 0-1 to Qatar in a FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifier match. India now play Afghanistan in the next match on June 15. "My job becomes easier when I play alongside top strikers. I just watch Sunil bhai and try to imitate his calm in front of the goal. At the end of the day, that ice-cool head makes all the difference. That is education for me. In a match a striker won't get a million chances," said Manvir. The 25-year-old who represents ATK Mohun Bagan said that his father always told him to look up to Chhetri and learn from him.



## WTC final: India team begins group training, practice in Southampton

Southampton | Agencies

The Indian cricket team had its first group training and nets session at the Hampshire Bowl ahead of the World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand, the Indian cricket board informed through a video on social media on Thursday. "We have had our first group training session and the intensity was high [emoticon: fire]. #TeamIndia's [emoticon: flag of India] preparations are on in full swing for the #WTC21 Final [emoticon: raised hands]," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) tweeted on Thursday. The video showed India skipper Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant



among others batting in the nets while R Ashwin, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Siraj bowled to them. The players are also shown practicing slip catching

in a video that is over a minute long. The International Cricket Council (ICC) had allowed a gradual increase in training to the Indian team that reached Southampton on June 3 and is

servicing quarantine at the Hilton hotel in the stadium premises. Virat Kohli's side plays New Zealand in the WTC final from June 18 at the venue after having qualified for it with series wins over Australia and England this year. The Kiwis are currently busy in Birmingham with the second of the two-Test series against England. "Regular tests will be conducted during the period of isolation. Players' activity will be allowed in a gradually increasing manner after each round of negative testing, moving from exercise in isolation to small group and then larger squad activity, whilst always remaining within the bio-secure venue," the ICC said in a statement last month about India's stay in Southampton.

# Sensex, Nifty end near record closing highs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The key Indian equity indices rose on Thursday to settle near record closing highs. Healthy buying was witnessed in metal, finance and healthcare stocks. The BSE Sensex closed at 52,300.47, higher by 358.83 points, or 0.69 per cent, from its previous close of 51,941.64. It had opened at 52,143.90 and touched an intra-day high of 52,346.35 and a low of 51,957.92 points.

The Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange closed at 15,737.75, higher by 102.40 points, or 0.65 per cent, from its previous close.

Both Nifty and Sensex had settled at their record closing levels on Monday at 15,751.65 and 52,328.51 points, respectively.



On Thursday, the top gainers on the Sensex were Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, and IndusInd Bank, while the major losers during the day were Bajaj Auto, Maruti Suzuki, and HCL Technologies.

# India's agriculture exports jump to \$ 41 billion despite pandemic

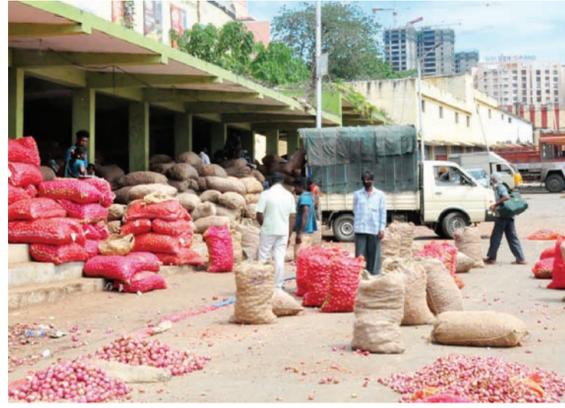
Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's agriculture exports (including marine and plantation products) have beaten the pandemic registering a growth of 17.34 per cent to \$ 41.25 billion in 2020-21, a top commerce ministry official said on Thursday.

Speaking to the media, commerce secretary Anup Wadhawan said that excellent growth of Agri exports in FY21 has come after it remained stagnant for the past three years (USD 38.43 billion in 2017-18, USD 38.74 billion in 2018-19 and USD 35.16 billion 2019-20).

In rupee terms, the increase is 22.62 per cent with exports during 2020-21 amounting to Rs 3.05 lakh crore as compared to Rs 2.49 lakh crore during 2019-20.

India's agricultural and allied imports during 2019-20 were USD 20.64 billion, and the corresponding figures for 2020-21 are USD 20.67 billion. Despite COVID-19, the balance



of trade in agriculture has improved by 42.16% from USD 14.51 billion to USD 20.58 billion.

For agriculture products (excluding marine and plantation products), the growth is 28.36% with exports of USD

29.81 billion in 2020-21 as compared to USD 23.23 billion in 2019-20. India has been able to take advantage of the increased demand for staples during the COVID-19 period. Huge growth has been seen in

export of cereals with export of non-basmati rice growing by 136.04% to USD 4794.54 million; wheat by 774.17% to USD 549.16 million; and other cereals (millets, maize and other coarse grains) by 238.28% to USD 694.14 million.

Other agricultural products, which registered a significant increase in exports as compared to 2019-20, were oil meals (USD 1575.34 million - growth of 90.28%), sugar (USD 2789.97 million - growth 41.88%), raw cotton (USD 1897.20 million - growth 79.43%), fresh vegetables (USD 721.47 million - growth 10.71%) and vegetable oils (USD 602.77 million - growth 254.39%) etc. The largest markets for India's agriculture products are the USA, China, Bangladesh, UAE, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Nepal, Iran and Malaysia. Exports to most of these destinations have registered growth, with the highest growth being recorded for Indonesia (102.42%), Bangladesh (95.93%) and Nepal (50.49%).

## brief

### ITC HOTELS LAUNCH WELCOMHOTEL TAVLEEN CHAIL



**New Delhi:** Welcomhotel, one of India's fastest growing hospitality brands from the ITC Hotels group has launched its second property in Himachal Pradesh -- Welcomhotel Tavleen Chail -- with 65 well-appointed guest rooms, including 18 fairytale cottages and a luxury suite. Nestled amidst lush green forests, each of the property's lodgings come with a private sit-out with breathtaking, panoramic views of the pristine mountains. This launch follows the inauguration of Welcomhotel Shimla about six months ago. With the addition of the premier mountain resort at Chail, the Welcomhotel brand currently boasts a portfolio of around 19 properties across India.

### SOUTHERN HEALTH FOODS TARGETS 'AGGRESSIVE' GROWTH IN FY22

**New Delhi:** Southern Health Foods aims aggressive growth in the ongoing financial year backed by demand for immunity boosting products. With its recently launched women health drink 'Manna iStrong', it expects business growth in the next six months. "We normally expect every innovation to add 1 to 2 per cent to the business within the first 6 months of launch. With Manna iStrong, we expect a similar contribution," said Murugan Narayanaswamy, CEO, Southern Health Foods. Manna iStrong is a specially formulated blend of multigrain base with key vitamins and minerals and is a rich source of antioxidants, iron, calcium, protein, dietary fiber along with goodness of milk protein, the company said in a statement.



### AMUL LAUNCHES MICRO ATM FOR DAIRY FARMERS

**Gandhinagar:** Anandpar, a small village in Gujarat's Rajkot district, on Wednesday became the first village in the country to have an Aadhaar-based Amul Micro ATM payment centre for the dairy farmers. The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Limited (GCMMF), popularly known as Amul, will be replicating this pilot project all across the state as well as in other parts of the country in the coming days. A small village with a population of around 4,000 people, Anandpar procures around 2,000 litres of milk per day.



### CREDAI OFFICIALS WANT REGULATORS FOR CEMENT/STEEL SECTORS

**Chennai:** Citing the runaway prices of steel and cement, real estate developers are hoping that the central government set up a regulator for these two sectors, said top officials of Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India (CREDAI). They also said the possibility of importing cement should be looked at as the rise in the prices of construction inputs is squeezing out their margins and may have to be passed on to the customers. Speaking to media after releasing the national survey of Covid-19 impact on real estate sector Pankaj Goel, Secretary said the price hike in steel may be due to shortage in supplies as the plants are focused on producing oxygen for Covid-19 patients.



# Phased unlock: FY22 GDP growth projected at 8.5%: ICRA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's GDP growth has been projected at 8.5 per cent in FY22, said ratings agency ICRA.

As per the ratings agency, the year-on-year (YoY) growth of GDP and gross value added (GVA) at basic prices (at constant 2011-12 prices) is expected to reach 8.5 per cent and 7.3 per cent respectively, in FY2022.

"If vaccine coverage is accelerated following the re-centralised procurement policy, the GDP expansion in FY2022 may be as high as 9.5 per cent, with a widening upside in Q3 FY2022 and Q4 FY2022," the rating agency said.

For the full year, ICRA expects the GDP growth to exceed the GVA growth by 120 basis points, based on the expectations related to the value of taxes on products and subsidies on products in FY2022.

"ICRA has taken into account the likely higher outgo towards food subsidies by the Government of India (GoI) in FY2022, relative to the budgeted level, following the decision to provide free food grains in May-November 2021."



Besides, it has excluded the impact of the release of food subsidy arrears in FY2021, based on the clarification provided by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

Furthermore, ICRA continues to

expect a prolonged negative impact of the second wave on consumer sentiment and demand with healthcare and fuel expenses eating into disposable income, and less pent-up replacement demand in FY2022 relative to FY2021.

# May auto retail sale plunges sequentially

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's overall vehicle registrations declined by 54.79 per cent on a sequential basis in May 2021.

Similarly, the data released by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) showed a decline of 70.60 per cent during the month under review from the level of May 2019.

Accordingly, vehicle registration stood at 5,35,855 units in May 2021, compared to 18,22,566 units reported for the corresponding period of 2019 and 11,85,374 units in April 2021.

Segment wise, registration of personal vehicles declined by 63.70 per cent on a



sequential basis and 58.96 per cent from May 2019 levels to 85,733 units. Similarly, two-wheeler registration

fell by 52.52 per cent on a sequential basis and 71.08 per cent from May 2019 levels to 4,10,757 units.

Notably, tractor retail sales declined. The segment's off-take fell by 57.85 per cent on a sequential basis and 56.60 per cent from May 2019 levels to 16,616 units.

"The second wave of Covid has left the entire country devastated as there may not be a single household which did not get affected. Apart from urban markets, this time, even rural areas were badly hit. May saw continued lockdown in most of the states," said FADA President Vinkesh Gulati.

"Not surprisingly, auto retail for the month witnessed bloodbath as sales fell by (-) 55 per cent on MoM basis. Similarly, all categories of vehicles fell by a huge degree...."

# Redmi Note 10 series clocks over Rs 3,000 cr in sales in India



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Redmi India, a sub-brand of Mi India, on Thursday said it has sold 20 lakh units of Redmi Note 10 Series, clocking more than Rs 3,000 crore in sales in the country which is an all-time record for the company.

The company achieved this feat across all platforms ever since the launch of Redmi Note 10 Series.

Launched in March this year, Redmi Note 10 Pro Max, Redmi Note 10 Pro, Redmi Note 10S and Redmi Note 10 offer a premium and enriching experience to the consumers.

"With this quantum leap, the Rs 3,000+ crore sales figure is an achievement that testifies our commitment as well as customer satisfaction with the brand. As we continue to strengthen our footprint, we hope that we continue to deliver a seamless and unique experience to our consumers even during this unprecedented time," said Sneha Tainwala, Business Head, Redmi India.

Redmi Note 10 series pack high-end features such as 120Hz Super AMOLED Display, 108MP camera, Qualcomm Snapdragon 732G, and a lot more.

The regular Redmi Note 10 price in India starts at Rs 11,999 for the base 4GB + 64GB model and the 6GB + 128GB option costs Rs 13,999. The Redmi Note 10 Pro comes in three storage options and its price starts at Rs 15,999 for the base 6GB + 64GB model. The 6GB + 128GB and 8GB + 128GB options carry a price tag of Rs 16,999 and 18,999 respectively.

The Redmi Note 10 Pro Max also comes with the same storage option as the Redmi Note 10 Pro. Its price starts at Rs 18,999 for the base 6GB + 64GB model and goes up to Rs 19,999 for the 6GB + 128GB option. The top model of 8GB RAM and 128GB carries a price tag of Rs 21,999.

# TATA DIGITAL TO ACQUIRE MAJORITY STAKE IN IMG

**Mumbai:** Tata Digital Limited, a subsidiary of Tata Sons Private Ltd will acquire majority stake in digital health company IMG Technologies Private Ltd (IMG). Incorporated in 2015, IMG is a leading player in the eHealth space and enables easy and affordable access to a wide range of products like medicines, health & wellness products, diagnostics services and tele-consultation to customers. The company operates three state-of-the-art diagnostics labs, has a supply chain covering over 20,000 pin codes across the country and through its subsidiaries is also engaged in the business of B2B distribution of medicines and other healthcare products.



# INDIAN ONLINE FASHION INDUSTRY GROWS 51% IN FY21: REPORT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Setting new benchmarks in the e-commerce industry amid the pandemic, the online fashion industry in India continued to demonstrate overall 51 per cent growth in FY21 and 66 per cent growth on various brand websites, a new report showed on Thursday.

Tier 3 cities and beyond reported the highest order volume growth of 192 per cent, while kids' wear has been the biggest gainer with over 200 per cent order volume growth online, according to the 'Fashion e-commerce Report' by Unicommerce, an e-commerce focused supply-chain platform.

The rising adoption of D2C (direct-to-consumer) among fashion brands has helped them build



a strong connect with the consumer leading to higher growth.

"Fashion segment is one of the biggest contributors to the e-commerce industry of India with the highest order volume. We are confident that this report will help fashion e-tailers in understanding the changing dynamics of the fashion e-commerce industry," said Kapil Makhija, CEO of Unicommerce.

The brand websites have reported 66 per cent order volume growth and 77 per cent GMV growth in FY-2021 as compared to the previous financial year, the report said.

The strong order volume growth supported with higher GMV growth has led to a 6 per cent increase in average order value.

As compared to websites, marketplaces have reported 45 per cent order volume growth and 33 per cent GMV growth, with an 8 per cent decline in the average order value for FY-2021.

"This strongly reinforces that the fashion brands are investing aggressively to build a stronger D2C presence," the findings showed.

The trend of shopping fashion online is getting prominent in Tier 2 and 3 cities and beyond.

Companies are now fulfilling 20-25 per cent of their omnichannel orders from the store, indicating increased adoption of omnichannel across the majority of brand stores.

Women wear holds the majority share of the e-commerce fashion market with a 50 per cent market share in FY-21 and reported 30 per cent order volume growth as compared to the previous financial year.

On the other hand, the kids wear segment took the industry by surprise with over 200 per cent order volume growth and the market share significantly increased from 3 per cent in FY-2020 to 17 per cent in FY-2021.

The menswear segment maintained consistent growth with 37 per cent order volume growth and 33 per cent market share in FY-21.

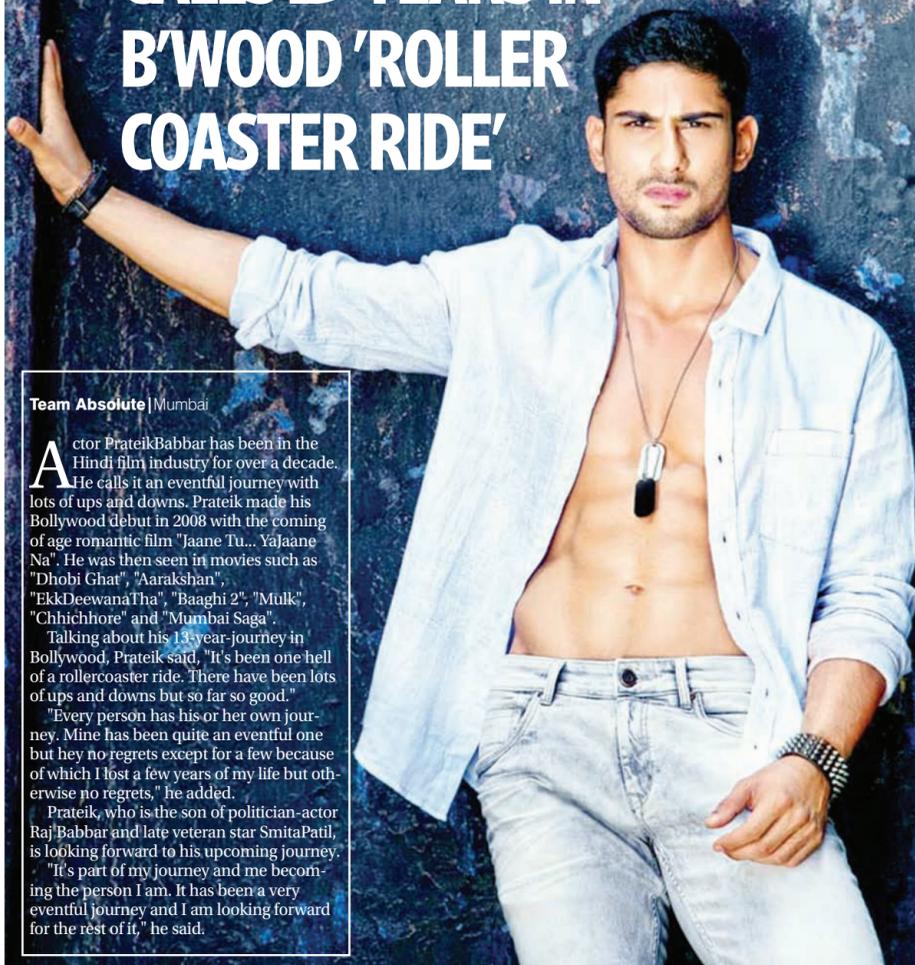
"Western wear segment is growing rapidly 57 per cent order volume growth in FY-21 compared to the previous financial year, and it accounted for 65 per cent market share, the report said.



## PRATEIK BABBAR CALLS 13-YEARS IN B'WOOD 'ROLLER COASTER RIDE'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Prateik Babbar has been in the Hindi film industry for over a decade. He calls it an eventful journey with lots of ups and downs. Prateik made his Bollywood debut in 2008 with the coming of age romantic film "Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na". He was then seen in movies such as "Dhobi Ghat", "Aarakshan", "EkkDeewanaTha", "Baaghi 2", "Mulk", "Chhichhore" and "Mumbai Saga". Talking about his 13-year journey in Bollywood, Prateik said, "It's been one hell of a rollercoaster ride. There have been lots of ups and downs but so far so good." "Every person has his or her own journey. Mine has been quite an eventful one but hey no regrets except for a few because of which I lost a few years of my life but otherwise no regrets," he added. Prateik, who is the son of politician-actor Raj Babbar and late veteran star Smita Patil, is looking forward to his upcoming journey. "It's part of my journey and me becoming the person I am. It has been a very eventful journey and I am looking forward for the rest of it," he said.



## MALVIKA RAAJ TAKES TO DANCING AMID LOCKDOWN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Malvika Raaj, who played the young Poo in "KabhiKhusiKabhiGham", is all set to make her Bollywood debut with the action film "Squad". As shoots remain stalled owing to lockdown, she is utilising the time to hone her dancing skills.

"Dancing has made me happy ever since I was a kid. It's been a long lockdown in different parts. I switch on YouTube and take to any of the dance sessions there. It's a goldmine of content there. Dance helps build rhythm and synchronises our body other than being a great form of working out as well," Malvika said. She added, "I think it's a great time to experiment with a dance routine and everyone should give it a try. The pandemic is not over yet. We should try and stay within the guidelines. Get vaccinated whenever the opportunity arises." Malvika's upcoming debut film "Squad" marks the debut of veteran actor Danny Denzongpa's son Rinzing. Seventy per cent of the film has been shot in Belarus. The action film boasts of stunt co-ordinator Keir Beck of "Mad Max: Fury Road" fame. Beck is working on the film's action sequences along with stunt crew from six countries and with 400 stuntmen.



## TAAPSEE FEARS SUJOY GHOSH WILL GET INSPIRED BY DINESH PANDIT'S 'BHAYANAK' BOOK!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Taapsee Pannu, who loves binge-reading books penned by Dinesh Pandit, has got Sujoy Ghosh hooked to the author's stories. She now hopes the filmmaker doesn't get inspired by the thriller. Taapsee posted a picture on her Instagram story on Thursday. In the picture, Ghosh is seen reading the Hindi book "Dakaiti 60 Lakh Ki". She wrote: "I hope he doesn't get inspired by this thriller now! #DineshPandit." Ghosh too shared his reaction after reading the book on Twitter. He said, "Yo @taapsee yehkyabhyaynakitaabhaiyaar!!! heart palpitating!" Taapsee on Wednesday was seen reading Pandit's books such as "Dakaiti 60 Lakh Ki", "HawaskaAatank" and "PyaarKaAatank". The actress will next be seen in "HaseenDillruba", which is pitched as a mystery thriller.



## National Award-winning filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta passes away at 77

Team Absolute | Kolkata

Multiple National Award-winning Bengali filmmaker and renowned poet



Buddhadeb Dasgupta passed away peacefully in his sleep on Thursday around 6 a.m. at his South Kolkata residence. He was 77.

Dasgupta was battling kidney and age-related ailments for quite some time and undergoing treatment for the same. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted, "Saddened at the passing away of eminent filmmaker

Buddhadeb Dasgupta. Through his works, he infused lyricism into the language of cinema. His death comes as a great loss for the film fraternity. Condolences to his family, colleagues and admirers."

Dasgupta was honoured with the National Film Award for Best Direction for his films "Uttara" and "Swapner Din", while his films "BaghBahadur", "Charachar", "LalDarja", "Mondo Meyer Upakhyan" and "Kaalpurush" were honoured with the National Award for Best Film.



## Asha, Mrinal, Manasi and Tushar star in 'KhwabonKeParindey'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actors Asha Negi, Mrinal Dutt, Manasi Moghe and Tushar Sharma are all set to feature in an upcoming web-series titled "KhwabonKeParindey", which celebrates friendship. A trailer of the drama series was released on Wednesday.

Directed by Tapasvi Mehta, "KhwabonKeParindey" revolves around the lives of Bindiya, Dixit and Megha, who go on a road trip from Melbourne to Perth. On their journey, they meet the quirky, witty and rugged hitchhiker Aakash. The youngsters rediscover themselves through this journey. Talking about the show, Asha Negi shared, "The kind of roles that I have played in my stint with television have been completely different from the role of Bindiya, hence when I read the script, I knew it would be a challenge for me. But thanks to me director, Tapasvi, the journey has been extremely smooth. He helped me in the transition into the character of Bindiya quite seamlessly."

Mrinal Dutt, who plays the character of Dixit, expressed: "Shooting for this show was the most beautiful experience the actor and the traveler in me could have asked for. It was constant shooting on the go, driving through the spectacular terrains of Australia with a very enthusiastic young crew, which very soon became a unit of friends. It's a beautiful coming of age drama and I am pretty sure the youth will connect with it." Tushar Sharma added, "My character, Aakash, is versatile, quirky and carefree. His unpredictable nature is what sets him apart. I am happy that I got to essay a role wherein I could portray a range of emotions. Working in 'KhwabonKeParindey' was an enriching experience as it brought together two very important aspects of my life - acting and travelling." The six-part web-series is slated to release on June 14 on Voot.



## BHUMI TO STAR ALONGSIDE AKSHAY IN 'RAKSHABANDHAN'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Bhumi Pednekar will once again be seen sharing screen space with actor Akshay Kumar in the upcoming film "RakshaBandhan". Taking to Instagram on Wednesday to make the announcement, Bhumi shared an image, where she can be seen sitting alongside Akshay and filmmaker Aanand L. Rai.

"A very special film and a very special reunion. Am supremely excited to be collaborating again with two of my favourite creative powerhouses & humans. Am full of gratitude to be a part of this special, heart-touching story," she captioned the image.

Akshay, who shared screen space with Bhumi in the 2017 film "Toilet: EkPrem Katha", welcomed her on board. Sharing the same picture on Instagram, the actor wrote: "When you are happy, it shows. And indeed we are to have @bhumipednekar onboard #RakshaBandhan."

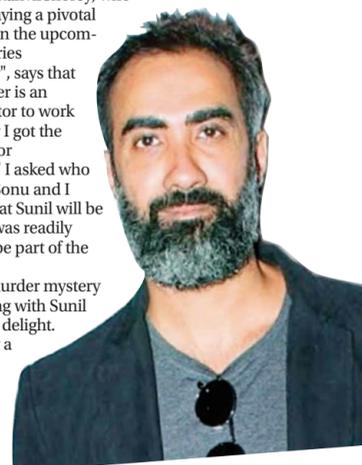
Announced last year on the occasion of RakshaBandhan, the movie revolves around the brother-sister bond. Other details about the film are still under wraps.

## Ranvir Shorey: Sunil Grover was one of the reasons I signed Sunflower

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Ranvir Shorey, who is playing a pivotal role in the upcoming web series "Sunflower", says that Sunil Grover is an exciting actor to work with. "After I got the narration for 'Sunflower' I asked who is playing Sonu and I was told that Sunil will be doing it. I was readily excited to be part of the story then."

"It is a murder mystery and working with Sunil was such a delight. He is really a talented actor who is getting all the deserving chance



now. He started with comedy so his journey was different. But really, Sunil is a very good actor," said Ranvir. The story of the show revolves around a murder that happens at a housing society named Sunflower and the investigation that follows.

Ranvir plays a police inspector in the show while Sunil is Sonu, one of the residents. Ranvir has appeared in uniform earlier in "Rangbaaz" and "Lootcase", and he shared how he keeps the approach towards his performance fresh with every new cop role. "As an actor I think I should not play it like a caricature and that is why I do not look at the character based on profession." There could be two professional actors, who are completely two different personalities, right? It is the same with any two police officers as well, so keeping a few elements aside, I try and play the character, who happens to be a police officer. "When you play characters, each time they are different and that is how I keep it fresh and engaging for the audience," shared Ranvir. Directed by Vikas Bahl, the web series has a huge ensemble cast Mukul Chadha, Girish Kulkarni, Annapurna Soni, Dayana Erappa, Ashish Vidyarthi and Shonali Nagrani, along with Ranvir and Sunil. It releases on Zee5 on June 11.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Krystle D'souza