

absolute india

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL



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May GST collections beat pandemic blues; remain over Rs 1L cr-mark

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

According to the statement, the gross GST revenue collected in May 2021 was Rs 1,02,709 crore of which CGST was Rs 17,592 crore, SGST Rs 22,653 crore, IGST Rs 53,199 crore (including Rs 26,002 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess Rs 9,265 crore (including Rs 868 crore collected on import of goods).

With May collections staying above the Rs 1 lakh crore-mark, it is the eighth month in a row when GST revenues crossed the threshold. The collections are surprising as most of the states have been under strict lockdown due to the pandemic.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's gross Good and Services Tax (GST) revenue collections remained above the psychological mark of Rs 1 lakh crore, clocking a high of Rs 1,02,709 crore in May 2021, beating all the expectations of lower collections in the wake of the disruptions caused by the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the GST revenues in May 2021 are lower than the record Rs 1.41 lakh crore collections made in the previous month, the highest since the introduction of the tax in 2017, they are still significant as most tax experts had feared that the real impact of the pandemic and the lockdowns in different parts of the country would pull down GST col-

lections significantly in May. The revenue figures include GST collections from domestic transactions till June 4 since the taxpayers were given various relief measures in the form of waiver or reduction in interest on delayed return filing for 15 days for the return filing month of May in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic. In May, the government settled Rs 15,014 crore to CGST and Rs 11,653 crore to SGST from IGST as regular settlement, the statement said. In addition, while the taxpayers with a turnover of above Rs 5 crore had to file their returns by June 4, which they would have otherwise filed by May 20, smaller taxpayers with turnover less than Rs 5 crore still have time till the first week of July to file their returns without any late fee

and interest. The revenues from these taxpayers are deferred till then. Thus, the actual revenues for the month of May 2021 would be higher and would be known when all the extended dates expire, the Finance Ministry said.

The revenues for the month of May 2021 are 65 per cent higher than the GST revenues collected in the same month last year. During the month, revenues from import of goods were 56 per cent higher, while the revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) were 69 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year.

Finance Ministry

Megha Ganne storms into shared lead at US Women's Open

New Sensation

On Thursday, Ganne, 17, emerged as the first amateur in 15 years -- the last was Jane Park in 2006 -- to lead the US Women's Open after the first round. She carded a 4-under-par 67 and one off the 18-hole amateur scoring record. Ganne is only the sixth amateur in the tournament's 76-year history to shoot 67 or better. On Friday, Ganne hung in tough and levelled with the world's best women golfers.



Nikhila Natarajan | New York

Indian-American teenager Megha Ganne from New Jersey is drawing high praise from across the sporting world and beyond after storming into

shared lead in the second round at the US Women's Open at The Olympic Club, San Francisco. A four minute video of Ganne's performance from Round 1 is currently on a wild ride across the internet. "I think the key is just playing in these (kinds of tournaments) more and more and you get better at it," Ganne told reporters at the venue. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy tweeted his support for Ganne, Friday afternoon. "New Jersey's own Megha Ganne is on absolute fire at the US Womens Open. Megha e all of New Jersey is behind you as you continue to dominate the leaderboard. Ganne, a high schooler, has verbally committed to Stanford University for the Fall of 2022. She seems to be enjoying every moment of her sensational run right now. "I wish every event had a gallery watching me because it just makes me play better, I think. And I love being in the spotlight," she told reporters Friday. This is a developing story and will continue to be updated.

2 Indian institutes sign MoU to boost medicinal plants production

The Cure

The MoU will facilitate development of Quality Planting Material (QPM) of medicinal plants and herbs identified by NMPB, help in establishment of their nurseries for QPM, development, promotion, conservation and cultivation of the appropriate medicinal plants in different agro-climatic zones, including the threatened medicinal plant species and plants for the high-altitude regions.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) and the National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI) have signed an MoU for extending joint collaborative efforts to boost the cultivation and production of medicinal plants and herbs in India. Through this collaboration, NMPB will support CSIR-NBRI in carrying out the potential medicinal plant species with high commercial

value for the germplasm collection or conservation and establishment of nursery, seed banks, and gene banks. The MoU was signed on Friday. NBRI while undertaking the survey of medicinal plants will work in coherence with NMPB in the desired direction. The outreaches of NMPB and its implementing agencies like State Medicinal Plants Boards (SMPB's), Regional-cum-facilitation centres will work together under the ambit of this MoU.

The Environment Guards

SELF-HELP WOMEN'S GROUP GUARDS FORESTS IN JHARKHAND TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT



These women have divided themselves into four groups and guard the forest area every day from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. in the morning and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the evening. Carrying sticks in their hands, these women who are emphasising on environmental protection, also count the number of trees daily so that they come to know of any reduction in the number of trees.

Manoj Pathak | Ranchi

The active participation of rural women in Jharkhand in environmental protection is a one-of-its-kind initiative taken by the women of Sakhi Mandal, a self-help women's group from Jharbada panchayat in Anandpur block of West Singhbhum district, to save the forests from being cut down. Through this initiative started by the rural women in April 2021, awareness is being spread about environmental protection among the villagers. These women are guarding the forests with sticks in their hands. The villagers say that in the past, during the cultivation and harvesting of these wild

crops for livelihood, smaller trees nearby were cut and forests were also set on fire. Seeing the destruction of forests, the women of Sakhi Mandal took the initiative to protect the forests. "Save the Jungle" initiative was started by 104 rural women from 7 Sakhi Mandals of this area. They gather at one place everyday and then divide themselves into groups and guard the forests. If any woman evades her responsibility of guarding the forests she has to pay a fine of Rs 200. Now the rest of the villagers are praising this effort by these women and also contribute voluntarily in this work. Villagers now collect wood according to their needs after informing the women of Sakhi Mandal.

The balance in the environment is lost due to the cutting of forest trees. It is the responsibility of all of us to save the environment so we have to protect the forests on our own. Forests are a significant part of our livelihood. If there is a threat to forests, our future will also not be secure.

Nemanti Jojo, Member, Sakhi Mandal

Punjab Mail, India's oldest train that served Britishers, turns 110

The train steamed out of Bombay's Ballard Pier station - which was the hub of the erstwhile Great Indian Peninsular Railways (GIPR), that later became the CR. From 1914, the Punjab Limited started originating and terminating at the Bombay VT Station, now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Mumbai and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

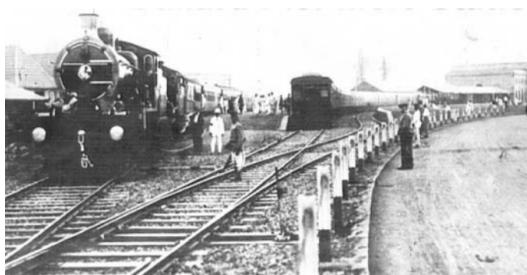
Team Absolute | Mumbai

The oldest running long-distance train of the Indian Railways, Punjab Mail, connecting Mumbai-Firozpur - originally linking Bombay with Peshawar (now in Pakistan) - turned 110 on Tuesday, June 1, Central Railway officials said. The Punjab Limited as she was called then, is a little over 16 years older than its more glamorous counterpart Frontier Mail, though its origins are rather vague. Based on a Cost Estimate paper of 1911 and a complaint by an irate passenger in Oct. 2012 about "the later arrival of the train by a few minutes at Delhi" station, the CR concluded that the



Punjab Mail made her maiden run on June 1, 1912. To begin with, there were the P&O steamers bringing in the mail, and excited officers of the British Raj along with their spouses, coming to their

first postings in colonial India after a 13-day long sea voyage from Southampton to Mumbai Port. The passenger coaches were all corridor cars in first class, dual berth compartments, and well



appointed with lavatories, bathrooms, a restaurant car, a compartment for the luggage and servants of the British officers. By mid-1930s, it also started catering to the Indians on the move in Third class

cars, it got the first airconditioned coach in 1945, from May 1976, it was hauled by diesel engines, and by 1980s with electric engines as a large part of the trunk routes on the IR network got electrified.

Heritage Wheels

The Punjab Limited used to run on fixed mail days from Bombay to Peshawar covering 2,496 kms in around 47 hours along the Great Indian Peninsular route, via Itarsi, Agra, Delhi and Lahore. Today, the journey time of Punjab Mail, hauled by electric engines, has come down significantly, covering the 1,930 kms between Mumbai CSMT-Firozpur Cantt in 34 hrs 15 mins.

At that time, it had only 3 passenger cars with a total capacity of 96 travellers, three for postal goods and mail, and was the fastest running train in the British India. Compared to the original 6 cars of the Punjab Limited, Punjab Mail now has 9 air-conditioned coaches, 6 sleeper coaches, 5 general second class coaches, a pantry and a generator van.

Himachal using plastic waste to build roads



Shimla | Agencies

As part of Himachal Pradesh's initiative to use plastic waste to build roads, every year, about 60 tonnes of plastic waste are being collected to melt 190 km of roads, an official said on Saturday. Speaking at the state-level virtual World Environment Day function, Principal Secretary (Environment, Science and Technology), K.K. Pant, said the state has taken many steps for environment protection,

pollution control and climate change adaptation. Pant said that plastic cups, plates, glasses etc. have been banned in the state since 2011. Items made of thermocol such as cups and plates were banned in 2018. He said the state has launched a buyback policy for procuring non-recyclable plastic waste at Rs 75 per kg to tackle the problem arising due to plastic packaging waste. Under the scheme, 135,600 kg plastic has been procured by spending Rs 87 lakh.



LOCKDOWN TO REMAIN IN DELHI, MARKETS, METRO TO REOPEN

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The lockdown would continue in the national capital, but with certain relaxations. Shops and malls will be allowed to open on an odd-even basis from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., from Monday, said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday.

While addressing a digital press conference, the chief minister announced that private offices will be allowed to function with 50 per cent staff. While, in the government-run offices, group A staff will be allowed to function with 100 per cent capacity, while group B with 50 per cent staff.

Giving a major relief to the commuters in the city, Kejriwal further announced that Delhi Metro which had been completely shut during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic will restart services with 50 per cent capacity from Monday. Speaking on the third wave of



coronavirus, Kejriwal said he held a series of meetings to review the preparations for a possible third wave with a target of around 37,000 cases a day. "During the second

wave, Delhi registered the highest daily Covid case - 28,395 on April 20, so we have set a target to be prepared for at least 37,000 in a day. If we will be ready to tackle 37,000

patients a day, we will be capable of enhancing our capacity if the number of cases surge more," Kejriwal added.

The Delhi government has set up a special task force of senior officials and doctors for advance preparation to deal with a possible situation with children are infected. "This task force has been assigned to prepare the health system of Delhi as we would need separate ICU beds, oxygen setup, medicines and other facilities. A detailed discussion was held yesterday with task forces (committees) and have directed them to submit their recommendations in the next two weeks," Kejriwal said.

He further said with an expected third wave of Covid-19, 420 tonnes of oxygen storage capacity is being prepared. "We have also spoken to Indraprastha Gas Limited to produce 150 tonnes of oxygen," he added.

Kerala has administered 1 cr vaccine doses: Health officials

Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

The Kerala health authorities on Saturday said that since the first dose of the corona vaccine was given in the third week of January, till now one crore doses have been administered.

The health officials in a statement said the vaccination numbers include 78,75,797 first dose and 21,37,389 second dose. This was done without wasting even a single dose of vaccine. As many as 4,74,676 people in the age group of 18 to 44 years received their first vaccine dose. In the age group of 45 to 60 years, 27,96,267 people received their first vaccine dose while 1,97,052 people received their second dose as well.

Likewise 35,48,887 people above 60 years received their first jab and 11,38,062 received their second jab, too. With respect to health



workers, who were the first to receive the vaccine jabs, 5,20,788 got the first dose while 4,03,698 got their second one, too. Besides 5,35,179 frontline Covid warriors in the state got their first jab and 3,98,527 got both the doses. The health ministry statement

said the state received 1,04,13,620 vaccine doses and it includes 7,46,710 Covishield and 1,37,580 Covaxin vaccines which were purchased by the state government while the Centre supplied 86,84,680 Covishield and 8,44,650 Covaxin doses.

Assam gets sixth national park, another to come up

Guwahati | Agencies

Diverse wildlife rich Raimona in western Assam's Kokrajhar district has been notified as the state's sixth national park on the occasion of the World Environment Day on Saturday.

Attending the World Environment Day programme at Gandhi Mandap in Guwahati, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the state government has decided to upgrade Raimona Sanctuary in BTR (Bodoland Territorial Region) to a national park. He said: "Work is also underway to give national park status to Dehing Patkai. Science & Technology Department of the state government is being rechristened as



Department of Science, Technology and Climate Change, from today (Saturday)." State Environment and Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya said that a statutory notification

declaring 422 sq km Raimona as a national park was brought out on Saturday. The existing five national parks in Assam are Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Orang and Dibru-Saikhowa.

TAMIL NADU CANCELS CLASS 12 BOARD EXAMS

Chennai:

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday announced the cancellation of Class 12 state board examinations due to the Covid-19 spread. In a statement, Stalin said discussions were held with experts and cross sections of the society on holding the exams for 12th standard students. While there were differing views, all were of the unanimous view that the student's health should be safeguarded. The Central government has recently cancelled the Class 12 exams for students studying under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) stream and several state governments have also cancelled the exam in their states, Stalin said. He said medical experts had opined that the Covid-19 spread is huge in the state and there is also the risk of a third wave.



Rejig in Trinamool: Abhishek given more responsibility in party

Kolkata | Agencies

After successfully leading the Trinamool Congress through the Assembly elections in West Bengal, its MP Abhishek Banerjee has been given more responsibility in the party set up on expected lines.

Accordingly, Abhishek, the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, has been appointed as the all-India General Secretary of the Trinamool, replacing Subrata Bakshi. The decision was taken at the party's core committee meeting held on Saturday.

In a surprise development, actor-turned-politician Sayoni Ghosh, who recently lost in the Assembly elections, has been appointed as the president of Trinamool Youth Congress, in place of Abhishek.

Meanwhile, Bakshi retained his post as the state president of the party following the new 'one-person-one-post' theory which has been implemented in the party from Saturday.



Veteran leader and known to be close to Chief Minister Banerjee, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, has been given the responsibility of Trinamool women's wing in place of Chandrima Bhattacharya, while Dola Sen has been made the national chief of

the Trinamool Congress trade union. Interestingly enough, Ritabrata Bhattacharya, who joined the Trinamool from the CPI-M, has been made the state secretary of the Trinamool Congress trade union.

Two sisters beaten and gangraped in Rajasthan, 4 held

Jaipur | Agencies

Rajasthan Police on Saturday arrested four accused for sexually assaulting two sisters aged 19 and 20 after beating them up severely in Jaipur.

Police officials confirmed that the sisters, aged 19 and 20 years, who were residing in an apartment here were taken to a house in Luniawas on June 1 by two of the four accused. At the Luniawas house, the youths, along with two of their associates, allegedly thrashed and gangraped the two girls.

These accused, identified as Atal and Pankaj, even threatened the sister duo against disclosing the incident to anyone.

After the incident, the sur-



vivors shared the atrocities with their family members. Subsequently, the police were registered. Pratap Nagar SHO Shrimohan Meena said that the survivors' medical examination was conducted and efforts were made to nab the four accused. Police on Saturday arrested all the four accused and they will be produced in court soon, he said.

AS MONSOONS LOOM, GOA SHUTS BEACHES FOR VISITORS

Panaji:

Beaches and water sports activity in Goa have been shut down for visitors from Saturday, amid the impending arrival of the south west monsoons. According to an advisory issued by Drishti Marine, a private lifeguard agency which mans the state's beaches, wading into the sea has been banned, while people have been advised against visiting rocky areas and cliffs by the sea. "Pre-monsoon showers have already hit Goa. Over the past few days light showers were witnessed along the coastal stretch. We have put up red flags at all the beaches which means that the area is not meant for swimming." Navin Awasthi, operations head of Drishti Marine said in a statement on Saturday. "Curfew is currently still on in Goa, so we advise visitors not to venture onto the beach. Even wading into the waters is not advisable. Our team of life-savers present along the coast are monitoring the weather conditions. The team is trained to carry out rescues even in rough weather," he also said. The advisory also said that the seas off Goa were rougher than usual in wake of the Cyclone Tauktae which wreaked havoc in the state last month.



Railways delivered over 25K MT of LMO to 15 states so far

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Railway Ministry said on Saturday that it has transported more than 25,000 MT of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) to several states in over 1,500 tankers.

A ministry official said that the Oxygen Express trains have crossed the milestone of 25,000 MT of LMO delivery.

He said that so far, the Railways has delivered more than 25,629 MT of LMO in more than 1,503 tankers to various states across the country.

The official said that 368 Oxygen Express trains have completed their journey so far and brought relief to various states.

The official further said that seven loaded Oxygen Express



trains are on the run with more than 482 MT of LMO in 30 tankers. He said that Assam received its fifth Oxygen Express with 80 MT LMO in four tankers from Jharkhand.

The official further said that more than 3,000 MT LMO has been offloaded in Karnataka by Oxygen Expresses.

The Indian Railways started Oxygen Express trains 42 days back on April 24 from Maharashtra with a load of 126

MT. The official said that Railways provided oxygen relief by Oxygen Express trains to 15 states, namely Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Assam. Till now, 614 MT of oxygen has been offloaded in Maharashtra, nearly 3,797 MT in Uttar Pradesh, 656 MT in Madhya Pradesh, 5,790 MT in Delhi, 2,212 MT in Haryana, 98 MT in Rajasthan, 3,097 MT in Karnataka, 320 MT in Uttar Pradesh, 2,787 MT in Tamil Nadu, 2,602 MT in Andhra Pradesh, 225 MT in Punjab, 513 MT in Kerala, 2,474 MT in Telangana, 38 MT in Jharkhand and 400 MT in Assam.

IED DETECTED IN SRINAGAR OUTSKIRTS

Srinagar: An improvised explosive device (IED) was detected by the security forces on Saturday in Chanapora locality, on the outskirts of Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar district.

Police said the IED was placed inside a box and left close to the police post in Chanapora area.

"Bomb disposal squad has reached the spot. The area has been cordoned off in order to defuse the IED", police said.

HIMACHAL EXTENDS STATEWIDE CURBS TILL JUNE 14

Shimla:

The Himachal Pradesh government on Saturday decided to extend the statewide Covid-19 restrictions till June 14. A decision in this regard was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur.

However, it was decided to cancel the Class XII examinations of the state school board in accordance with the government's decision.

The Himachal Pradesh Board of School Education would devise a formula for calculating the awards keeping in view the formula being devised by the CBSE and will declare the results accordingly. It was also decided that in case the students are not satisfied with the results they would be allowed to appear in a special examination to be conducted once the situation becomes conducive.

Shun your ego, withdraw farm laws: Congress to govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress said on Saturday that the Central government should shun its ego and withdraw the three 'contentious farm laws.'

In a statement, Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "One year ago, the anti-farmer Narendra Modi government had brought three black agriculture ordinances on this day, June 5, 2020. At that time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proclaimed that he was creating an opportunity for the farmers with these laws during the Covid pandemic disaster."

Hitting out at the government, the Congress leader said, "But in reality, he (Modi) created an opportunity of annual trade of agricultural products worth Rs 25 lakh crore for his crony capitalist friends and wrote agony in the destiny of 62 crore farmers."

He alleged that through these agricultural laws, the BJP government created opportunities for hoarding and black marketing of food grains for its capitalist friends, while the farmers had to face lathi charge, water cannons and tear gas shells. Surjewala said that with these three 'black' laws, Modi wrote a 'reward' for his capitalist friends to buy crops at arbitrary prices and trampled the future of the farmers by writing a 'decree' for the end of grain markets.

"With these agricultural laws, the Modi government has wreaked havoc on the farmers in such a way that it intends to convert the farmers brothers into 'bonded labourers' of a few capitalists through unethical provisions of contract farming. It seems that the Modi gov-



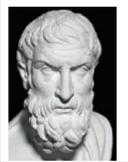
ernment is still committed to return the favours of its crony capitalists, who helped it capture power in 2014," Surjewala said.

He also said that as soon as the Modi government came to power in 2014, it tried to grab the lands of the farmers through an ordinance.

"Then in 2015, the Modi government filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court saying that the farmers can never be given cost plus 50 per cent profit as the Minimum Support Price (MSP). Then came the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana in Kharif 2016, from which a few insurance companies earned a

whopping profit of Rs 26,000 crore. Not only this, he waived the loans of his capitalist friends of about Rs 10 lakh crore, but declined the loan waiver to the farmers," he said. The Congress leader also said that the government increased the excise duty on diesel by 820 per cent and imposed taxes on agriculture.

It is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows.



Epictetus

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Mercury to rise 3-4 C in NW India: IMD

No significant change in maximum temperature is likely over most parts of Central India during the next 24 hours, but there will be rise in temperature there too by 2-4 degrees Celsius thereafter.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Temperatures are likely to rise by three to four degrees Celsius over most parts of northwest India in the next three days due to increase in moisture and variable wind direction, said India Meteorological Department (IMD). There is possibility of rainfall later in the day on Saturday and Sunday while the weather

will be dry from June 7 to June 9 in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, GilgitBaltistan and Muzaffarabad; Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi and west Rajasthan. It would be a "gradual rise" in temperature till early next week and there would be no large change in maximum temperature during next 24 hours till Sunday, said the weather office. However, no significant change in maximum temperature is predicted over rest of the country during next 4-5 days. Strong surface winds from 25 to 35 kmph is likely to prevail over plains of northwest India on June 8-9. The highest temperature in different observation stations in northwest India oscillated between 33 to 43 degrees Celsius on Friday.

SOUTHWEST MONSOON ADVANCES INTO MANY COASTAL STATES

Southwest monsoon, which hit Kerala two days ago, has further advanced into more parts of the central Arabian Sea and many coastal states in the country, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday. On Saturday, the monsoon has extended in the entire coastal Karnataka and Goa, some parts of Maharashtra, most parts north interior Karnataka, some parts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, more parts of Tamil Nadu and the central Bay of Bengal and some parts of the northeast Bay of Bengal, the IMD said.



'Twitter' Dorsey on wrong side of Indian hurricane, 'Koo' Aprameya says he is ready

LAST CHANCE TO TWEET

India on Saturday slammed a notice to billionaire Jack Dorsey's Twitter, giving the microblogging platform one last chance to "immediately" comply with her new information technology rules which came into effect from May 26, 2021.

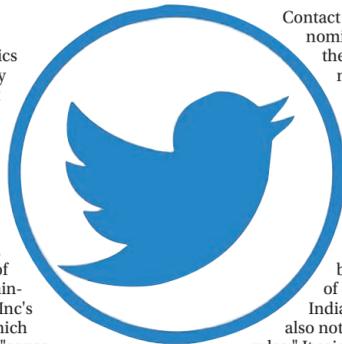
As per Statista, India has upwards of 17.5 million Twitter users, which makes it the third biggest market for Dorsey in the world after the US and Japan. As on date, Koo counts "more than 6.5 mn downloads".

At 68.8 million Twitter followers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has the second highest number of followers among all the political leaders on the planet after former US President Barack Obama.

On Friday, a peeved Nigeria blanked out Twitter, following the platform's decision to take down President Muhammadu Buhari's tweet. The ban was imposed because of "the persistent use of the platform for activities... capable of undermining Nigeria's corporate existence," Abuja said in a statement.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Furious Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) warned Twitter that failure to adhere to the norms will lead the platform to lose exemption from liability under the Information Technology Act. Such loss of exemption will expose Team Dorsey, including Dorsey himself, to multiple headaches under the IT Act, 2000, as well as other penal provisions of the land. The notice sent by the ministry noted that in view of Twitter Inc's non-compliance with the rules which came into effect on May 26, 2021, "consequences follow. The ministry said that it is clear from the responses of the company that till date it has not informed about the details of the Chief Compliance Officer as required under the Rules. Further, it also said that the Resident Grievance Officer and Nodal



Contact Person nominated by the platform are not its employees in India as required under the new rules. "The office address of Twitter Inc as mentioned by you is that of a law firm in India, which is also not as per the rules." It said that the refusal to comply demonstrates Twitter's lack of commitment and efforts towards providing a safe experience for the people of India on its platform.

However, as gesture of goodwill, Twitter Inc is hereby given one last notice to immediately comply with the rules, failing which the exemption from liability available under section 79 of the IT Act, 2000 shall stand withdrawn and Twitter shall be liable for consequences as per the IT Act and other penal laws of India.

-MeitY



We have a strong new investor on board and have raised \$30 million. We have strengthened our engineering and product teams overall. We have made some very localised product features like 'Talk to Type' and 'Multilingual Kooing' live on the app. Our system is now ready to handle much more scale than before and we are also ready with a plan to handle any sudden surge in traffic. It makes complete sense for Koo India to adapt to local laws no matter which country we launch in the future. Given our Indian culture and upbringing, can't even imagine Koo India defying compliance in another country!

Aprameya Radhakrishna, Founder, Koo

646 doctors succumbed to Covid during 2nd wave: IMA

Delhi reported the maximum number of fatalities among doctors at 109, followed by Bihar (97), Uttar Pradesh (79), Rajasthan (43), Jharkhand (39), Gujarat (37), Andhra Pradesh (35), Telangana (34), Tamil Nadu (32), West Bengal (30), and Maharashtra and Odisha (23 each).

A total of 16 doctors lost their lives in Madhya Pradesh during the second wave, followed by nine in Karnataka, eight in Assam, five each in Chhattisgarh, Manipur and Kerala, three each in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Punjab, two each in Tripura, Uttarakhand and Goa, one in Pondicherry and one at an unknown place.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

As many as 646 doctors lost their lives in the fight against Covid-19 during the second wave of the pandemic, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said on Saturday.

During the first wave of the pandemic last year, a total of 748 doctors had fallen prey to the deadly virus, the IMA added. India has been struggling with a massive surge in coronavirus cases for the past few months. While the daily count of cases has reduced, the number of deaths continues to be high.

INDIA LOGS 1.2L COVID CASES IN 24 HRS, 3,380 DEATHS

India reported 1,20,529 fresh coronavirus cases on Saturday, the lowest single-day spike in around two months, taking its overall tally to 2,86,94,879, as per the Health Ministry data. With the addition of 3,380 fatalities in the last 24 hours, India's Covid death toll till date stands at 3,44,082. The active caseload has reduced to 15,55,248, which comprises 5.73 per cent of the total infections, while the national recovery rate has improved to 93.08 per cent, the data showed.

Half of Maharashtra to open up from Monday

MUMBAI AND PUNE, AMONG THE WORST-AFFECTED DO NOT FIGURE IN THE LIST YET.

Team Absolute | Mumbai



After nearly two months of strict lockdown-type restrictions, the Maharashtra government has decided to cautiously initiate a five-phased Unlock 2.0 from Monday (June 7), starting with 18 of the state's 36 districts, officials said here on Saturday. In the first phase, it will take effect in: Aurangabad, Bhandara, Buldhana, Chandrapur, Dhule, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Jalgaon, Jalna, Latur, Nagpur, Nanded, Nashik, Parbhani, Thane, Washim, Wardha and Yavatmal districts. The decision comes after

detailed deliberations of over a week by state Disaster Management Unit with all other concerned departments and stakeholders, as per a detailed notification issued by the CMO early on Saturday. The state has been divided into 48 units as per districts and municipal corporations, and five levels, depending on the positivity rate and occupancy of oxygenated beds. (Detailed news on Maharashtra page)

Samyukt Kisan Morcha observes 'Total Revolution Day'

Gurugram: The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) here on Saturday observed the first anniversary of the introduction of the Centre's three contentious farm reform ordinances as "Sampurna Kranti Divas" or "Total Revolution Day", and also burnt copies of these laws near a BJP MLA's office. SKM president Chaudhary Santokh Singh told reporter that a section of farmers had also assembled in the premises of the civil hospital and raised anti-government slogans. "The BJP-JJP led Haryana government is fearing the farmers agitation against these three black laws. Following the government's order, a large number of local police personnel were deployed to stop the farmer's reaching the BJP MLA's office in old Gurugram," Singh said. "We were stopped by the police personnel just around 10-12 meters away from the MLA's office. The farmers had told the police that their protest was peaceful and the Constitution permits peaceful agitation. Even the Supreme Court had also said that farmers can protest peacefully but despite that the peasants were being stopped from reaching the legislator's office," he added.

Global food prices at highest in a decade

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Global food prices rose in May at their fastest monthly rate in a decade, even as world cereal production is on course to reach a new record high, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations said. The FAO Food Price Index averaged 127.1 points in May, 48.9 per cent higher than in April and 39.7 per cent higher than in May 2020.

A surge in the international prices of vegetable oils, sugar and cereals led the increase in the index, which tracks the monthly changes in the international prices of commonly-traded food commodities, to its highest value since September 2011 and only 7.6 per cent below its all-time peak in nominal terms. The FAO Sugar Price Index increased by 6.8 per cent from April. The FAO Cereal Price Index



increased 6 per cent from April, led by international maize prices, which averaged 89.9 per cent above their year-earlier value. International wheat prices also showed a late-month decline but averaged 6.8 per cent higher in May than in April, while international rice quotations held steady. A new Cereal Supply and Demand Brief offered FAO's first forecast for world cereal production in 2021 --

pegged at nearly 2,821 million tonnes, a new record and a 1.9 per cent increase from 2020, led by a foreseen 3.7 per cent annual growth in maize output. World cereal utilisation in 2021/22 is predicted to expand by 1.7 per cent to 2,826 million tonnes. Total cereal food consumption is forecast to rise in tandem with world population, while an increased use of wheat for animal feed is also anticipated.

MAN KILLED FOR JUST A GLASS OF WATER IN BIHAR'S BEGUSARAI

Patna: A physically challenged person was killed in Bihar's Begusarai district just for a glass of water, a police official said on Saturday. The deceased Chote Lal Sahani, 50, a native of Bodepura village under Chauhari Police Station in Begusarai district, died during treatment in Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH). The incident happened on Friday when Chote Lal Sahani went to a nearby pond in the village for fishing. While returning home, being thirsty, he took a glass of water from a water pot which belonged to Dinesh Sahani. "While Chote Lal was drinking the water, he was spotted by Dinesh Sahani and his son Dipak Sahani. They brutally beat him up using batons. The victim somehow reached home with the help of other villagers," said Raghendra Kumar, in-charge of Chauhari police station.

Fauci's emails 'verify' Wuhan lab leak claims: Chinese biologist

Now, as international leaders finally focus on her Wuhan lab-leak theory, the scientist told Newsmax that Fauci's emails contain "a lot of useful information suggesting that he always knew more than he revealed, the New York Post reported.

Beijing | Agencies

Chinese virologist Li-Meng Yan, who was among the first to suggest Covid-19 leaked from a Wuhan lab, has said that US' top infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci's emails prove she was right all along. Yan was one of the first to research the emerging coronavirus and previously revealed she was forced into hiding after accusing Beijing of a cover-up. "They verify my work from the very beginning, even from last January, that these people know what happened, but they choose to hide for the



"Dr Fauci knows all these things. Even back to February 1 last year immediately realised that there would be gain-of-function experiment involved in the Covid-19 virus. He "definitely" feared that the lab was carrying out the experiments -- which can increase the transmissibility of viruses -- but "was worried not to tell this to the public."

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and for their own benefits," Yan insisted of the treasure trove of

documents released this week. She insisted of Fauci and the apparent gain-of-function work carried out by the now-notorious Wuhan Institute of Virology in the heart of the city where the pandemic first emerged. Yan has reportedly published three reports on the origins of the coronavirus -- two last year and one in 2021. In the latest, published on March 31, she insisted Covid was "a product of the bioweapons programme of the CCP government, the network of which includes not only the CCP scientists but also certain overseas scientists and organisations.

ANAND MAHINDRA, NILEKANI CHOOSE 'TECHALLI' AS NEW TITLE FOR B'LURU

Bengaluru: Mahindra group chairman Anand Mahindra and Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani have zeroed in on 'TechHalli' as the new title for Bengaluru, days after the former asked the Twitterati to suggest new a title for the tech city, instead of calling it the 'Silicon Valley of India.

Taking to Twitter on Saturday, Anand Mahindra said, "We have a result: @NandanNilekani who agreed to be a co-judge shortlisted four entries and then we both converged on one entry from those that we thought was the most appropriate. And the winner is (Drumroll please) 'TechHalli' submitted by @SrinivasPreddy."

Explaining why he feels that 'TechHalli' is the perfect name for Bengaluru, Anand Mahindra said the entry cleverly put the 'H' in Tech to double use.

"By capitalising the 'H' he drew attention to 'Halli' meaning village/place in Kannada. So we now go from Silicon Valley to TechHalli! Srin, DM@MahindraRise your mailing address to receive a model Pininfarina H2 Speed car," Anand Mahindra said.

He also replied to the Twitterati who said that many would not know the meaning of 'TechHalli'.



BARRING MUMBAI, PUNE, HALF OF MAHA TO OPEN UP FROM MONDAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After nearly two months of strict lockdown-type restrictions, the Maharashtra government has decided to cautiously initiate a five-phase Unlock 2.0 from Monday June 7, starting with 18 of the state's 36 districts, officials said here on Saturday.

In the first phase, it will take effect in: Aurangabad, Bhandara, Buldhana, Chandrapur, Dhule, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Jalgaon, Jalna, Latur, Nagpur, Nanded, Nashik, Parbhani, Thane, Washim, Wardha and Yavatmal districts.

The move comes as Maharashtra's daily death figures shot up to a new record of 1,377 and the toll zoomed to 98,771 on Friday - just below Poland's 74,101 fatalities. The state's caseload breached the 58-lakh mark on Friday to touch 58,05,565 - higher than France which ranks No 4 in the world with 57,01,029 infections till date.

The Unlock decision follows detailed deliberations of over a week by state Disaster Management



Unit with all other concerned departments and stakeholders, as per a detailed notification issued by the CMO early on Saturday.

The state has been divided into 48 units as per districts and municipal corporations, and five levels, depending on the positivity rate and occupancy of oxygenated beds.

Both, Mumbai and Pune, among the worst-affected do not figure in the list yet. Suburban local trains will not be thrown open for the general public in the Mumbai

Metropolitan Region of Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad.

Districts with a case positivity rate of 5 per cent or less and occupancy of hospital beds with oxygen is less than 25 per cent will come under Level 1. These districts shall be completely unlocked with all activities continuing normally including transport, shops, restaurants, malls, theatres, cultural events, sports, industries, government and private offices, construction activities, weddings and funerals, as in the past.

Level 2 would include 5 per cent positivity rate and 25-40 hospital oxygen beds occupancy where CrPC Sec 144 will continue to be enforced, those with positivity rate of 5-10 per cent and oxygen bed occupancy less than 40-60 per cent shall be in Level 3 with the guidelines to "minimize movement post-5 p.m. on weekdays and weekends". The areas with a positivity rate of 10-20 per cent and 60-75 oxygen bed occupancy come under Level 4, and those with positivity rate of 20 per cent and above with 75 per cent or higher oxygen bed occupancy fall under Level 5 for the unlockdown purposes. District Collectors, and Municipal Commissioners of various civic bodies shall issue separate notifications on which areas are classified under which categories in their jurisdictions.

As per indications, given the current number of cases and fatalities, the country's commercial capital is unlikely to open up fully as it falls in Level 2.

Maha Guv plants sapling in memory of Sir Anerood Jugnauth



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Paying a unique homage to an ex-foreign head of state and government, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari planted a sapling in memory of the former President and Prime Minister of Mauritius, the Right Honourable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, an official said here on Saturday.

The sapling was planted outside the gubernatorial residence in the Raj Bhavan

complex - where the National Tricolour flutters at half-mast in memory of the departed Mauritian leader - who passed away on Thursday in Mauritius, aged 91.

The Governor planted a sapling of the Taman plant (Lagerstroemia Speciosa), known as 'Pride of India' and whose flower is also the 'State Flower of Maharashtra'.

On the solemn occasion, Koshiyari recalled that Sir Jugnauth had visited the Maharashtra Raj Bhavan sev-

eral times in the past, the last being in 2016, and today's plantation ceremony happened to coincide with the World Environment Day (June 5). A prominent leader in his country of 1.27 million people Sir Jugnauth - who served twice as President and six times as PM of the island nation of Republic of Mauritius - was conferred with a Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 2020, among other global awards and honours.

TV actor Pearl V Puri arrested for allegedly raping 5-year-old

Team Absolute | Mumbai

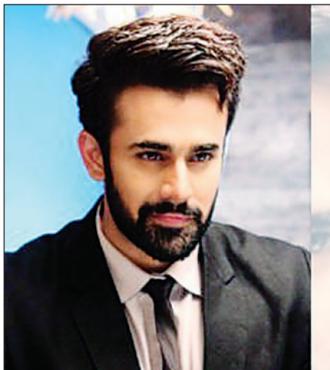
Naagin 3 actor Pearl V Puri has been arrested by Palghar police in Maharashtra in connection with an alleged molestation and rape case of a child, officials said here on Saturday.

The 31-year-old actor has been booked by Mira-Bhayander Vasai-Virar police, invoking charges of IPC Sec. 376 AB and POCSO Act, 4, 8, 12, 19, 21 for the rape of the minor girl, said the officials.

He will be produced before a local court later on Saturday for remand.

According to the Valiv Police Station, which lodged the case, the victim's family had complained that Puri had allegedly molested and raped the girl, around two years ago.

Pearl began his career as a television actor with the 2013 show "Dil Ki Nazar Se Khoobsurat" while Ekta Kapoor's "Naagin 3" and "Bepanah Pyaar" made him popular. He was last seen in the television series "Brahmarakshas 2".



An official statement on behalf of the actor is awaited. While fans are heartbroken with the news of his arrest, a section of netizens are criticising the actor on social media posts for the allegation levelled against him.

Over 1,100 villages in Nanded district become coronavirus-free

The district has 1,604 villages across 16 tehsils. Of these, 1,179 villages have become COVID-19-free and as on June 4 there is not a single positive case there, the district official said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Out of the total 1,604 villages in Nanded district of Maharashtra, as many as 1,179 have become coronavirus-free, while 271 others have not reported even a single infection case during the second wave of the pandemic, an

official said. Nanded district has so far recorded over 90,000 coronavirus positive cases and more than 1,800 people have died due to the viral infection till now.

The district has 1,604 villages across 16 tehsils. Of these, 1,179 villages have become COVID-19-free and as on June 4 there is not a single positive case there, the district official said. Apart from them, 271 villages remained untouched by the pandemic during its second wave, the official added. Nanded Zilla Parishad's CEO Varsha Thakur attributed this encouraging scenario to the team work.

"The village gram panchayats, panchayat samitis, members of the

ZP, anganwadi workers, health department staff of the district administration and ZP worked together to break the chain of the virus. The villagers contributed by following the protocols," she said. "However, the pandemic is not over yet and the villagers should be more alert," she added.

Seventy-seven of the 271 villages in the district that did not report even a single case are from the tribal-dominated Kinwat tehsil.

"This tehsil is surrounded by Yavatmal district in Maharashtra and Adilabad district in neighbouring Telangana state, which witnessed a spike in cases during the second wave," another official said.

Apart from Kinwat, 42 villages from Hadgaon, 39 from Kandhar, 22 from Loha, 16 from Bhokar, 17 from Mahur, 15 from Mudkhed, 12 from Nanded, nine from Himayatnagar, seven from Degloor, four each from Ardhapur, Dharmabad, Umri, two from Mukhed and one from Biloli are away from the infection, the official said.

Then there are villages that have set examples in terms of vaccination and treating the patients at the local level. helgaon village in Naygaon tehsil has achieved the target of 100 per cent vaccination, while Bhoi village in Bhokar taluka treated patients in the village itself, the official said.

Monsoon Arrives In Maharashtra, IMD Says Progressing As Expected

The southwest monsoon arrived in Maharashtra on Saturday, bringing showers in some coastal parts of the state.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

According to an official from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the southwest monsoon arrived in Maharashtra on Saturday, bringing rains to several coastal areas of the state. The monsoon is progressing as expected, according to Shubhangi Bhute, director of the IMD's regional center. The progress of the monsoon is as per our expectations, said Shubhangi Bhute, director of the IMD's regional center.



The southwest monsoon arrived in Maharashtra on Saturday, bringing showers in some coastal parts of the state, an India Meteorological Department (IMD) official said. A

few days back, the IMD had predicted that monsoon is likely to be normal in the north and south India, above-normal in central India, and below-normal in the east and northeast India. Quantitatively,

the monsoon seasonal (June to September) rainfall over the country as a whole is likely to be 101 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA) with a model error of plus or minus four percent, it had said.

Maharashtra unlocks from Monday: Here are the new norms for inter-district travel

From the latest norms on inter-district travel to the procedure for e-pass application, here is what you need to know.

Team Absolute | Pune

The Government of Maharashtra on Friday announced five levels of restrictions across administrative units in the sPunetate based on case positivity and percentage of oxygen bed occupancy - with level five being the one with strictest of the restrictions. In each of the levels, different types of activities have been permitted.

The restrictions will be eased from Monday, and an order on the same is expected before then. An e-pass

remains a mandatory prerequisite for inter-district travel by passengers in private cars, taxis or buses, if they are moving to or passing through, with a stoppage, a place under level 5 category.

For levels 1 to 4, inter-district travel has been allowed without the requirement of an e-pass. In the case of places in the level 5 category, to and from movement along with passing through, if there is any stoppage inside, is allowed only with an e-pass. And this is allowed only in the case of medical emergencies or for persons performing essential duties. The application has to be made online on covid19.mhpolice.in from where the application is moved to the local police jurisdiction for processing according to the place of origin chosen by the applicant. The applicant will require a

valid identity proof, medical certificate, wedding card or related documents for marriage, medical report of persons travelling for medical emergencies, death certificate in the case of death, or a document pertaining to other emergency purposes.

Every police jurisdiction has formed dedicated cells for processing applications. Officials said an attempt is being made to clear applications at the earliest, or at least one day prior to the travel date. Some of the key reasons for the rejection of e-passes are invalid or inadequate documents being attached, no medical certificate attached, excess number of co-passengers than the prescribed limit as per the government norms, incomplete form at the time of application, and no photo or unclear photo attached.

MAN ATTACKS PIZZA DELIVERY BOY WITH IRON ROD OVER PETTY ISSUE; HELD

Thane: In a shocking incident reported from Thane where a man landed in police custody on alleged charges of an attempt to murder his neighbour.

The accused has been identified as Raghu, Raghuvir Vikram Singh Chawda (27) and as per the cops, the incident took place when on Monday, when the victim (Naresh Panchal), a pizza delivery boy had entered the public toilet. The accused broke open the toilet door and warned him of playing loud music. The accused thereby attacked him with an iron rod and the victim was severely injured after the attack.

The chapter did not close here as the accused started running after the victim when he tried to escape. He managed to catch him near the rickshaw stand and again hit him on his head with an iron rod, according to the police. The victim sustained severe injuries and is admitted to the hospital. The police are further probing the case and the accused has been arrested and an offence under Section 307 and 506(2) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been registered against him. Another appalling incident was reported from Maharashtra capital Mumbai where a body of a man in his 30s was recovered from a drain. The police are yet to identify the body found at Sanjay Gandhi Nagar in Bandra (East) and it did not have any mark of external injuries. Following the same, a case of accidental death has now been filed.

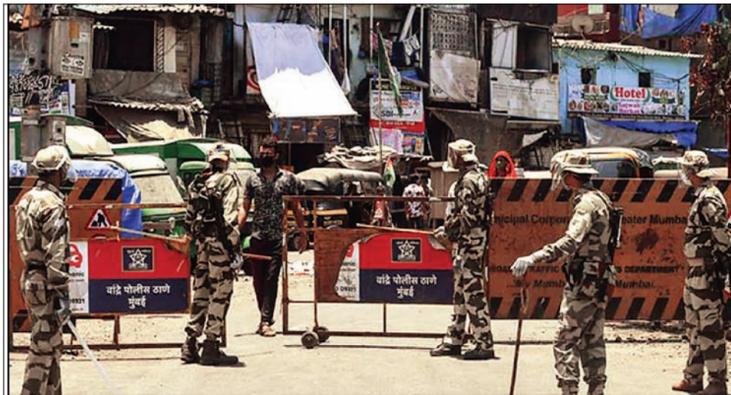
MAHARASHTRA UNLOCKS BUT EXPERTS WARN NOT TO TAKE COVID-19 LIGHTLY

At this point, it is risky for a large number of people to leave their homes without taking the necessary precautions. As the threat of a third wave remains, and monsoon season is approaching, it is critical that people stay safe at home, get vaccinated when eligible, and take the best care of themselves and their families. Furthermore, there is Covid, as well as the burden of monsoon-related diseases.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the number of daily Corona virus cases and deaths in Maharashtra has decreased, the state government has approved a five-level unlock plan for the state. Despite the fact that this unlock program is based on the positivity rate and occupancy of oxygen beds in each district, medical experts warn that citizens should not let their guard down.

Maharashtra still has 1,96,894 active cases, with a 1.7 per cent case fatality rate. The state reported 14,152 new Covid-19 cases and 289 deaths on Friday.



In response to the news of unlocking, Dr Lancelot Pinto, consultant pulmonologist, PD Hinduja Hospital and MRC, said that it is necessary from an economic standpoint, but that the danger is far from over.

"With the knowledge that we've gained over the last year and a half, we need to do this [unlock]," said Dr Lancelot Pinto.

Dr Pinto emphasised that as the state begins to unlock, allowing people to gather together, allowing crowding in halls, restaurants, and gyms, lowering one's guard when it comes to masks should

not be considered, even in the most liberal unlocking scenarios, until the majority of the population is vaccinated.

"A graded unlock, with work from home incentivised and encouraged, and non-essential businesses encouraged to go online, should continue to be the aim, whenever feasible. With the knowledge, we now have about the virus's airborne nature, we also need to reconsider air conditioning and ventilation," Dr Pinto said.

According to the state's newly announced unlocking plan, districts in Level 1 will have the

fewest restrictions, while those in Level 5 will have maximum or near-lockdown-like curbs.

Dr Tushau Prasad, Consultant Emergency Medicine, Wockhardt Hospital, Mira Road reminded that the state is still dealing with the repercussions of the second wave.

He acknowledges that many people have lost their jobs and are struggling financially as a result of the lockdown restrictions, but he cautions the state as it prepares to lift them.

"At this point, it is risky for a large number of people to leave their homes without taking the necessary precautions. As the threat of a third wave remains, and monsoon season is approaching, it is critical that people stay safe at home, get vaccinated when eligible, and take the best care of themselves and their families. Furthermore, there is Covid, as well as the burden of monsoon-related diseases. It is a difficult situation for the entire country, and everyone must be aware of the threat," he said. Dr Tushau Prasad warned citizens not to take Covid-19 lightly, saying, "Once the restrictions are eased, people move out of their houses, go on vacations, don't wear masks, and fail to maintain a social distance, which leads to an increase in Covid-19 cases."

"It is critical to follow Covid-19 protocol and care for children, who are also susceptible to Covid-19 at this time. A Covid-appropriate behaviour will ensure that there is no mass infectivity, thereby preventing the next wave," Dr Tushau added.



STATE'S POSITIVITY RATE IS 0.8 PER CENT, CORONA CURFEW WILL CONTINUE TILL JUNE 15: CM

Crisis Management Committees of villages, wards, cities and districts are maintaining total vigil in the unlock process. We will have to adopt Covid friendly behaviour i.e. wearing masks, maintaining distance, washing hands frequently etc. Shopkeepers will also have to adopt precautions like maintaining distance, not allowing the shops to be crowded.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the situation of Corona infection in the state is under control. As many as 81 thousand tests were conducted in the state yesterday, in which only 718 cases tested positive. The positivity rate has now come down to 0.8 percent. There are five districts of the state in which not a single case of Corona has been found. We hope that many districts of the state will be completely Corona free in the next few days. Chouhan was holding a discussion with media representatives after plantation in Smart City Park. Chief Minister said that at present there are several Corona cases in Indore, Bhopal and Jabalpur, due care is being taken continuously. If the positivity rate becomes less than five percent, then Corona infection is considered under control. We have reached 0.8 percent positivity rate.



wards, cities and districts are maintaining total vigil in the unlock process. We will have to adopt Covid friendly behaviour i.e. wearing masks, maintaining distance, washing hands frequently etc. Shopkeepers will also have to adopt precautions like maintaining distance, not allowing the shops to be crowded. Chouhan said that 75 thousand to 80 thousand tests will be conducted daily in the state. It is our endeavour to ensure that if an infected person is found in any part, then he should be identified immediately. Necessary treatment should be started by isolating the patient at home or admitting him to the Covid Care Center as per requirement. Along with this, the process of contact tracing will also continue. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that the Kill-Corona campaign will continue in the state, so that immediate treatment can be started in cases of cold, cough and fever. Chouhan said that it is our endeavour to ensure that utmost care is taken, so that employment and establishments can also remain under control. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that I am sure that people of the state continue to cooperate. I am grateful for the patience and support of the people of the state. Chief Minister Chouhan said that Corona curfew will remain in force till June 15, relaxation will be given as per requirement.

Chouhan said that people's cooperation is still necessary. Crisis Management Committees of villages, wards, cities and districts are maintaining total vigil in the unlock process. We will have to adopt Covid friendly behaviour i.e. wearing masks, maintaining distance, washing hands frequently etc. Shopkeepers will also have to adopt precautions like maintaining distance, not allowing the shops to be crowded. Chouhan said that 75 thousand to 80 thousand tests will be conducted daily in the state. It is our endeavour to ensure that if an infected person is found in any part, then he should be identified immediately. Necessary treatment should be started by isolating the patient at home or admitting him to the Covid Care Center as per requirement. Along with this, the process of contact tracing will also continue. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that the Kill-Corona campaign will continue in the state, so that immediate treatment can be started in cases of cold, cough and fever. Chouhan said that it is our endeavour to ensure that utmost care is taken, so that employment and establishments can also remain under control. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that I am sure that people of the state continue to cooperate. I am grateful for the patience and support of the people of the state. Chief Minister Chouhan said that Corona curfew will remain in force till June 15, relaxation will be given as per requirement.

Building permission will be given only on planting saplings: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that now building permission will be given on the condition that the person who builds the house will definitely plant a tree. The condition of planting sapling will be mandatory for building permission, whether it is a municipal corporation, municipality, nagar panchayat i.e. any level of urban body. If there is no space at home, it will be necessary to plant a sapling in a park or public place and protect it.



Chouhan was addressing the state-wide Ankur plantation campaign on the occasion of World Environment Day today. Chouhan interacted with the District Nodal Officers of Ankur Abhiyan of 5 districts through VC. In the programme, the plantation activities in Harda were presented through the film. Chouhan said that it will be the responsibility of the Gram Panchayats in the villages also that every house that is built, a tree must be planted in it. This condition will also be applicable to the houses being built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Apart from houses, trees will be planted in schools, panchayat buildings, fields etc. This condition will also be applicable on government buildings and offices. As many trees will have to be planted by the builder according to the number of flats built in a multi-storey building. The condition of planting trees will be added in the construction of all government, non-government buildings. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that people will plant trees with self-motivation also because environmental protection is not a slogan but a mantra for us.

Chouhan appealed to the people of the state to cooperate in saving the environment. He said that all the people of the state must plant trees once in a year, because planting saplings is like planting life. Trees are the only living oxygen plant. Trees give us life; a big tree provides shelter to many birds and animals. Every tree has a role in main-

taining environmental balance. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan appealed to the people of the state to plant a sapling on every happy occasion, birthdays, marriage anniversaries as well as on the death anniversary of parents and the loved ones in their memory. Chouhan said that Ankur programme has been started to encourage tree plantation with public participation. Vayudoot app has been launched for this on Buddha Purnima May. 26. So far more than 15 thousand participants have registered in this programme. Plantation photos have been uploaded on the app by more than 2,500 participants. Those who plant trees will be called Vriksha Veer and Vriksha Veerangana. The selected participants will also be honoured with Pranavayu Award. Chief Minister congratulated the officers and participants of the district for the highest registration so far in Niwari district. Chouhan said that it is necessary to save the environment if we have to save the earth and keep the earth fit for the coming generations. For this it is necessary to plant trees, save rivers. Chouhan also interacted with the participants of Ankur Abhiyan.

CM inaugurates oxygen plant of Jaora Civil Hospital

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the oxygen plant, set up with public cooperation at Civil Hospital Jaora, is an example of public initiative and exemplary leadership ability to solve problems. This work done in the spirit of providing relief to the people at the local level in the difficult circumstances created by the disaster of Corona is the result of diligence and passion. Chief Minister was addressing a virtual programme organized on the occasion of the inauguration of an oxygen plant set up at Civil Hospital, Jaora from his residence. An oxygen plant



with a capacity of 20 cubic per hour has been set up at Civil Hospital Jaora with the efforts of local MLA Rajendra Pandey and public cooperation. With this, 65 patients can get uninterrupted oxygen. 72 cylinders can be filled daily from this plant. In this difficult times of Corona, more than Rs one crore were received from donors in addition to MLA fund, MP fund for setting up the oxygen plant and arrangement. With the installation of this plant, 10 lakh people of the area

including Jaora will get relief. On the occasion of the dedication programme, Chouhan appealed that as the plant is being launched on the occasion of World Environment Day, trees must be planted in the plant premises. Chief Minister said that the situation of Corona infection is under control, but it is necessary to adopt Corona friendly behaviour. Necessary resources will be increased in all hospitals including Jaora to face the possible third wave of Corona. It will be possible to stop the third wave only with the cooperation of the public, mobility of Crisis Management Committees and public representatives.

"HEINOUS:" MEDICAL BODY ON "HARASSMENT" OF MP DOCTORS

"IMA stands with them and demands that the state government look into their cause," the statement added.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Indian Medical Association on Saturday issued a statement saying that it is "appalled to learn of intimidation tactics by Madhya Pradesh bureaucracy against junior doctors in the state, in view of their demands for bed reservation, workplace security and stipend hike". "IMA stands with them and demands that the state government look into their cause," the statement added.

The medical association said that junior doctors of Madhya Pradesh have been for the past six months demanding for some genuine rights, including including a hike in stipends and free treatment for them

and their families if they contract the deadly coronavirus infection and Covid incentives at par with medical colleges in most other states.

"IMA HQ stands with the junior doctors of Madhya Pradesh and we demand that the state government look into their cause and respond to their genuine demands by engaging with them at the earliest," IMA said in a statement.

IMA further accused the Madhya Pradesh government for their refusal to give written assurances and said that doctors have been forced to tender their resignations.

"They've been in frequent contact with the administration for the past six months and have received only verbal assurances rather than written commitments for their demands. As a last resort, they have been on strike for the previous 5 days as a result of the government's refusal to give written assurances, but the state government has yet to take any steps to engage in meaningful dialogue with

them. They have been forced to tender their resignations en masse," it said.

The Madhya Pradesh Medical Science University (MPMSU) is using intimidation tactics, threatening to cancel their registrations and demanding that they pay a seat departure bond and quit their hostel rooms, the IMA claimed.

"One of the junior doctors had to witness his parents being harassed by the state bureaucracy," the medical association claimed.

IMA has termed such events unforgivably heinous and said that at this time of the epidemic, such harassment of frontline workers who have been serving selflessly is unacceptable.

"IMA (HQs) is appalled to learn of such events, which are unforgivably heinous. They are the same health-care workers whose efforts were lauded by our Prime Minister. At this time of the epidemic, such harassment of frontline workers who have

been serving selflessly is unacceptably cruel," IMA added.

On Friday, over 3,000 resident doctors resigned in Madhya Pradesh demanding a written assurance of "what they were promised by the government."

The resident doctors, protesting since May 31, had put forward five demands, namely an increase in the stipend by six per cent per year, and separate arrangements at hospitals to treat doctors and their families. They also demanded that for the resident doctors on Covid duty, an additional 10 per cent marks must be given during government appointments.

They further added that those on Covid duty must be exempted from the compulsory one-year bond of rural service.

On Thursday the High Court of Madhya Pradesh had declared the state-wide strike of junior resident doctors as illegal and had ordered them to resume duty within 24-hours.

IGRMS ORGANISES LECTURE ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On the occasion of World Environment Day IGRMS organised a lecture of Alok Kumar Kanungo on "Signified, Signifier and Sign: Identities of Naga Artefacts in the museums" via Google Meet and Facebook live. The lecture was chaired by Director IGRMS Dr Praveen Kumar Mishra. Introducing Dr Kanungo, the director said that he was presently Assistant Research Professor (Archaeology) at IIT Gandhinagar, Gujarat and Adjunct Faculty in Flinders University, Australia. For the past two decades, Dr Kanungo has conducted research on the museum collections and contemporary practices of the Nagas, resulting in numerous publications including the book German Anthropologists on the Nagas Hills.



The lecture was extensively formulative in the manner of bringing new strategic research productivity for the recreation of the social identity and ethnicity of Nagas, conceptualization of the origin, tracing the migratory route, translation of cultural heterogeneity, adaptation and social significance of Nagas through the collective study of their cultural materials from field, and by integrating the field notes, diaries of initial

visitors to the hill with his scientific documentation of the Naga heritage in the pre-World War(s) collections in various museums across Europe and UK.

He shared his discontentment towards unprecedented imperialist loot and intellectual colonization of the indigenous culture of the Nagas. Dr Kanungo critically advocates the memorialist approach and being a cultural mediator made a new investigation in potent archival locus in the various museums of the world to document and narrativize their cultural entities and historicism for the revivalism and restoration of Naga heritage.

Parole of 4,500-odd jail inmates extended

About 4,500 prisoners are currently out of jails in the state on parole for 60 days. But the government has decided to extend the parole of such prisoners by another 30 days in view of Covid-19 cases

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Parole granted to around 4,500 inmates of Madhya Pradesh jails in view of the coronavirus pandemic has been extended by 30 days, which will take the total period to 90 days, a state minister said on Saturday.

"About 4,500 prisoners are currently out of jails in the state on parole for 60 days. But the government has decided to extend the parole of such prisoners by another 30 days in view

of Covid-19 cases," Madhya Pradesh minister for Home and Jails Narottam Mishra told reporters.

With this, the parole period of such prisoners has gone up to 90 days (from 60 days), he said.

The decision has been taken as it is possible that the prisoners, currently out on parole, may bring coronavirus infection into the jails and infect other inmates on their return, the minister said.

"The state government has also directed the jail officials to conduct RT-PCR tests of all the prisoners lodged in the jail," he said.

So far, 18,000 prisoners lodged in the jails have been vaccinated against the viral infection and more than 100 health camps were also organised in jails, Mishra added.

Parole was first granted after the Supreme Court in March last year asked states to take steps to decongest jails so as to contain the spread of Covid-19 in these facilities.

MP issues licence for Amphotericin-B production in State

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has issued a licence to a Jabalpur-based company to manufacture Amphotericin-B, a key anti-fungal drug used in the treatment of black fungus or mucormycosis, an official said.

The Food and Drug Controller of Madhya Pradesh issued the licence to Revacure Lifesciences, a private sector company in Umariya-Dungaria industrial area of Jabalpur district, on May 31, which is valid till December 22 this year, a government release said.

The manufacturing of Amphotericin-B injection in Jabalpur will benefit Mahakaushal, Vindhya and Bundelkhand regions of the State as this drug will be available easily to the patients suffering from black fungus disease at a relatively low cost, it said. The government said this is the second company in the State to be



given the licence for Amphotericin-B production. Earlier, Indore-based Modern Laboratories had received the licence. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on June 4 claimed there was no scarcity of Amphotericin-B injections in the State. A consignment of 12,240 injections arrived at Indore on June 4 and around

17,000 more injections will be available after two days, he said.

At present, there are 1,005 active cases of black fungus in the State. There are 235 such patients in Bhopal, 428 in Indore, 116 in Jabalpur, 40 in Sagar, 85 in Ujjain, 52 in Gwalior, 31 in Rewa, 15 in Dewas, two in Ratlam and one in Burhanpur, the Chief Minister added.

LET'S PLANT A TREE -SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Planting saplings is considered auspicious in our Indian culture. Trees are revered in Indian worship system as they are believed to be the abode of gods. They are the source of life for every living being. What we have understood so far that the nature has borne the greatest brunt on account of our injudicious behavior causing alarming damage to the environment.

Today is the World Environment Day. It is the day for us to understand our responsibilities as a society to protect and conserve what the nature has gifted us. The best contribution towards this is to plant a tree.

Saving environment is not just a day's job. It is integral to our daily life.

Understanding the importance of our relationship with trees, plants, forests, rivers, lakes, land etc. and living in harmony and peace with them is the imperative of today's time. Animals, birds, rivers, oceans, mountains, air, light, and forests all are indispensable to human society and Creation of a vibrant society is possible only in coexistence. That is why conservation of environment is sine qua-non of our life.

Celebrating Environment Day should not be a ritual. It should be a day to take a pledge to save, beautify and protect nature

and its every single aspect. We are passing through an era when the question of conserving our environment has become critically important. Climate change, ozone layer depletion has posed a major threat to human existence. Preventing this cannot be left for tomorrow. We have to wake up to this cause today with utmost commitment and seriousness.

Now we are slowly recovering from the outbreak of Corona, but for keeping the society free from such pandemics in future we must make our environment safe. Planting trees, can only save our earth for us and our posterity.

I appeal every one that make every occasion of your happiness happier and more meaningful by planting a tree. Plant a tree on your birthday, and give a message to the society to save and love nature. Make memory of your lost loved ones everlasting by planting a tree. Also plants can be the best gifts.

I have resolved to plant a sapling every day throughout the year. I will protect them and watch them grow into a tree. This is my humble small effort towards protecting our earth.

I extend my hearty wishes to all of you on the World Environment Day and call upon everyone to participate in protecting and

enriching our environment by planting a tree. I do not say that you plant a tree every day, but planting a tree and watering it daily, is a matter of emotional bond with the nature. It will be a pleasure to watch it grow. This is exactly what gives you the pleasure of bringing up your own child. Your efforts will make the whole humanity better. What I have experienced that planting a tree is nothing less than a creation. Let us spread the joy of creation around us. Save the environment, save the earth and make human life happy.

In keeping with the spirit of World Environment Day, the Madhya Pradesh Government has launched a major plantation campaign 'Ankur' with public participation. The drive aims at greater absorption of carbon dioxide by trees and release of oxygen in atmosphere by green lungs. For participation, what all you have to do is to download on mobile 'vayudoot app' and after self-registration, a photo of sapling plantation is to be uploaded. Citizen will get a certificate of participation and selected participants will be honoured. I urge everyone to become part of this plantation campaign and do their bit for the environmental conservation. (The Blogger is CM of MP)

AFTER COVID2.0 FIASCO, GOA READIES TO PROTECT KIDS FROM 3RD WAVE

Panaji | Agencies

Criticised for its poor preparation and handling of the second wave, the Pramod Sawant government in Goa appears to have stormed off the blocks quickly to gear up for the impending next wave of the coronavirus pandemic, which according to experts is expected to impact children.

Nearly 100 persons died due to lack of oxygen at the state's apex health institute, the Goa Medical College at the peak of the second wave, a tragedy which had put a question mark over the handling of the second wave by Health Minister Vishwajit Rane.

In a bid to prep for the third wave, Sawant appears to have kept the reins of the health administration in his hands, as the chairperson of the newly founded Special Task Force, which he has formed to handle the impending crisis. The force has already started tracking down the over 120 paediatricians in the state, who will be imparted key skills, like ventilator training from next wave.

According to Sawant, nurses will also be trained to handle Covid emergencies related to children ahead of during the third wave.

"There are around 120 paediatricians in Goa. Apart from the senior-most paediatricians, we will be training the rest of them in ventilator operations. Nurses will also be trained," according to Sawant.



The training programme for doctors and nurses is expected to begin from June 7. Apart from the fatal oxygen crisis, shortage of trained manpower, as well as shortcomings in the existing health infrastructure, were some of the key elements, which led to the criticism of the state government during

the second wave, where the state witnessed nearly 3,000 new infections a day. The Goa government is also in the process of ramping up the infrastructure for critical care of paediatric patients, which includes setting up of a 60-bedded paediatric intensive care unit (PICU).



Record levels of deforestation in Brazilian Amazon continue

Brasilia | Agencies

Record levels of deforestation continue unabated in the Brazilian Amazon and in May alone, 1,180 square kilometres of the rainforest were chopped down, according to official data. It marks a 41 per cent increase compared to the same month a year earlier, the data released by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) on Friday revealed.

It is also the third month in a row to see record levels of Amazon deforestation, and the first time since records began that deforested area exceeded 1,000 square kilometres, dpa news

agency reported.

Greenpeace Brazil said the preliminary data shows the risks the Amazon, one of the world's largest reserves of biodiversity, is exposed to day after day.

Climate think tank Observatorio do Clima said the data is particularly worrying because May marks the beginning of the dry season, when the practice of clear-cutting to clear trees from sites accelerates in the Amazon region.

If this trend continues for the next two months, the annual rate of deforestation for 2021, which is measured from August to July, could hit an unprecedented high, the think tank warned.

Brazil owns a large part of the

Amazon, about the size of Western Europe, that stretches across nine states.

This ownership makes it a key player when it comes to the fight against climate change.

US climate envoy John Kerry recently called on Brazil to help fight climate change and make efforts to preserve the Amazon region.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, however, is more in favour of opening up the Amazon region to economic exploitation, and environmental authorities have been deliberately weakened.

He is also accused of creating a climate where farmers feel encouraged to take land for their own agricultural use.

ARUSHI NISHANK CHOSEN GUEST OF HONOUR FOR UNEP FAITH FOR EARTH COUNCILLORS RECOGNITION CEREMONY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Arushi Nishank is an acclaimed kathak dancer, actor and entrepreneur. She is also a social activist and environmental conservationist passionate about Environmental issues. She has founded NGO, Sparsh Ganga, making the Ganga pollution free via the Namami Ganga campaign, planting more trees to save the earth, and more.

Given that Arushi has power backed several projects in the Save the Earth arena, it comes as no surprise that she was approached to be the Guest of Honour Online for the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Faith for Earth Councillors Recognition Ceremony on the eve of World Environment Day. Following a series of initiatives and conventions organized in partnership with faith-based organizations, UN Environment launched the Faith for Earth Initiative in November 2017.

The goal of Faith for Earth is to strategically engage with faith-based organizations.

Faith for Earth has three main goals: to inspire and empower faith organi-

zations and their leaders to advocate for protecting the environment, to green faith-based organizations' investments and assets to support the implementation of SDGs, and to provide them with knowledge and networks to enable their leaders to effectively communicate with decision-makers and the public.

Speaking on the same, Arushi affirmed that, "In this covid-19 situation, we understood two major things, first, the importance of humanity and secondly oxygen. This time will pass but we have to think about the aspects connected with this. We have lost our near and dear ones because of lack of oxygen. We all know the biggest source of oxygen is trees so let's take a pledge to plant more and more trees and save oxygen." The Faith for Earth Councillors Recognition Ceremony helmed by the prestigious United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is a part of the 6 month long program that started in January 2021 under the guidance and support of UNEP Faith for Earth Nairobi, UNEP India and United Religions Initiative in three countries i.e. India, Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Under this program, the associations have worked extensively to build an active network of Faith Based Organisations that could address the present environmental urgencies we are threatened with.



Restoring a benign balance between man and environment

Team Absolute | New Delhi

"A great silence is spreading over the natural world even as the sound of man is becoming deafening, little by little the vast orchestra of life, the chorus of the natural world, is in the process of being quietened. There has been a massive decrease in the density and diversity of key vocal creatures, both large and small. The sense of desolation extends beyond mere silence," says Bernie Krause, who recorded the sounds of over 15,000 species in the last 60 years.

Today, the animal and insect voices of the natural world are slowly extinguishing, never to be heard again and such is the rate of species extinction and the deterioration of pristine habitat that half of Krause's recordings are now part of archives. These are impossible to repeat because the habitats no longer exist or because they have been deeply compromised by human noise. His tapes are possibly the only record of the original diversity of life in these places.

The world has failed to achieve even one of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets signed by 170 countries through the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), says the latest Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 (GBO-5) report 2020. The report says that one million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction, and the world's efforts to curb bio-

diversity loss aren't going anywhere.

"Biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate, and the pressures driving this decline are intensifying," says Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, executive secretary of the CBD. "Things have to change. If we take action, the right action - as the report proposes - we can transition to a sustainable planet," says Mrema.

While conservation actions have rescued between 11 and 25 bird and mammal species from extinction over the past decade, the CBD report says, far more have been declared extinct. And, extinction is just the tip of the iceberg. Common species are becoming rarer and sliding into more vulnerable risk categories on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List. The World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) 2020 Living Planet Report also estimated that globally, populations of nearly 21,000 species of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians plummeted by an average of 68 percent between 1970 and 2016.

India is one of 17 mega-biodiverse countries in the world. With only 2.4 per cent of the earth's land area, it accounts for 7-8 per cent of the world's recorded species.

Home to 96,000 species of animals, 47,000 species of plants and nearly half the world's aquatic plants, India's management of its natural resources is crucial to protecting global biodiversity.

New Books on Consciousness and Para Consciousness hit stands

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Indian-American author Dr Vipin Gupta, who has been globally recognized for his work towards exploring the vastly integrated processes inside nature, is back with 2 new books around this project. His new books delve into the hidden mysteries of mother nature around the most sought-after issues of consciousness and para-consciousness.

He has already published 4 books, which capture the issues of divine energy and present reality earlier this year. His writings show the great interconnectivity of modern science and the ancient religious and spiritual world. On one hand, he challenges various laws of modern sciences, he explains the application of metaphysics in great detail linked with everything around us.

Dr Vipin Gupta says, "My 5th book, What is Consciousness reveals the secret origin of consciousness, soul, spirit, entity, space, and time, where I explain how to evaluate, organize, and



transcend the fragmented consciousness within the three dimensions of time, four dimensions of space, and three dimensions of the entity. While my 6th book, What is Para Consciousness reveals

the secret thread of life that lies hidden within our para-consciousness. In this year, I plan to write 6 more books covering various aspects of the project VIPIN."

In his literary works, Dr. Gupta takes a management approach to advancing sciences while explaining the hidden mysteries of nature, relationships of scientific advancements with the processes existing in mother nature.

The first four books by Dr. Vipin Gupta viz. What is Divine Energy, What is Present Reality, Is Present Reality, and Is Divine Energy are now available in full and nutshell editions on Amazon and elsewhere as paperback, hardcover, digital, and audible forms.

Dr. Gupta is a professor of management and a co-director of the Center for Global Management at the Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration, California State University, San Bernardino. Dr. Gupta has a Ph.D. in managerial science and applied economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Has Taj Mahal become safe from environmental pollution?

Brij Khandelwal | Agra

As we celebrate another world environment day during the raging Covid-19 pandemic, questions relating to the safety of the iconic Taj Mahal from pollution are being asked by green crusaders in Agra.

Since 1993, after the Supreme Court intervened and passed a series of orders to secure the sensitive Taj Trapezium Zone, from the ravages of pollution, the union and the state governments have spent thousands of crores of Rupees on a slew of projects designed to bring down the air pollution level.

However, according to environmentalists the positive results of these measures have yet to show. The crude reality is that neither the air pollution level has come down, nor

has the general quality of life improved in the 10,000 sq km eco-sensitive zone around the Taj Mahal. The suspended particulate matter (SPM) in the ambient air continues to remain alarmingly high round the year, and the dry-polluted river Yamuna poses a serious threat to the Taj Mahal and other Mughal monuments along its banks.

During the scorching summer months the Taj is enveloped in yellowish sand from the neighbouring Rajasthan desert. Any discernible visitor can tell that the summer heat is taking its toll on the Taj Mahal, the timeless monument of love, blasted by sand from the dry Yamuna bed and the dust-laden winds from the Rajasthan desert, Bhattacharya added. Many scientific studies in the past have identified the gaps left by illegal mining in the Aravali ranges that have raised the SPM (suspended particu-

late matter) in Agra. Against a standard of 100 microns per cubic metre, it remains as high as 300, touching 500 during summer months. The problem is that sandy particles rub against the monument and leave pock marks that make the surface rough.

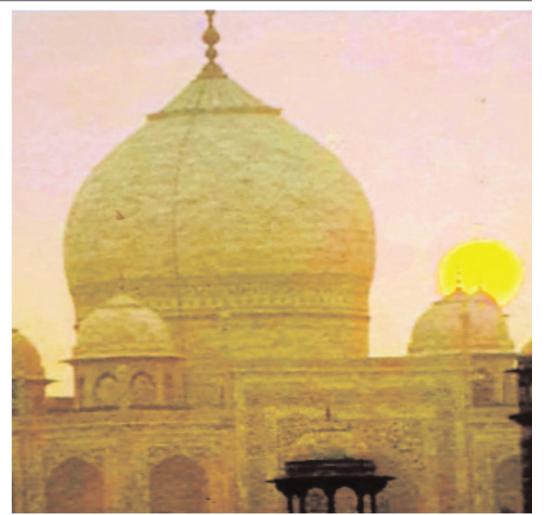
The biggest challenge to the environment in the ITZ has been the continuously increasing number of automobiles. The number of vehicles in the past three decades has shot up from thousands to lakhs. Fortunately, a large number of vehicles in the city are now running on CNG (gas), as are the industries that are being allowed to run after the 1996 Supreme Court directive to shut down all coal based industries in the ITZ.

The number of vehicles in the city has shot up from around 40,000 in 1985 when Firozabad too was part of the Agra district,

to more than a million now. The opening of the Yamuna Expressway, the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, has increased vehicular traffic, while the pressure of heavy vehicles on the Delhi-Kolkatta and Delhi-Mumbai national highways passing through Agra has increased phenomenally.

Though the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has restored the Mehtab Bagh at the rear of the Taj Mahal and the state forest department has developed a dense green buffer along the river bank on the opposite side, the Yamuna flows stinkingly.

"If there is no fresh supply of water in the river that touches the Taj foundation to provide a shock-absorbing buffer to insulate the building from seismic movements, the fear is that the monument could tilt, cave in or struggle for stability," fear local conservationists.





RUSSIA, US MUST MEND TIES: PUTIN

Addressing the 24th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on Friday, Putin said that he plans to discuss strategic stability, international conflict settlement, cooperation against Covid-19, arms control, anti-terrorism, and climate change with US President Joe Biden during their first summit in Geneva on June 16.



conflict settlement, cooperation against Covid-19, arms control, anti-terrorism, and climate change with US President Joe Biden during their first summit in Geneva on June 16. "To a certain extent, Russian-American relations have become hostile to internal political processes in the US. But I hope this will end someday," Xinhua news agency quoted Putin as saying during a plenary session of the forum. "Fundamental interests in the fields of security, strategic stability and arms



reduction are still more important than the current domestic political situation in the US," he added. Relations between Washington and Moscow have been adversarial in recent years. The two sides have obvious differences on issues related to Ukraine, cybersecurity, human rights, and US election interference. The much-anticipated Russia-US summit in a third country was first proposed by Biden during a telephone conversation with Putin on April 13, according to the Kremlin.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Russia and the US must try to find ways to mend the tense bilateral relations, which are currently at an extremely low level, Russian President Vladimir Putin said. Addressing the 24th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on Friday, Putin said that he plans to discuss strategic stability, international

TALIBAN CAPTURES ANOTHER DISTRICT IN AFGHANISTAN

Kabul: Taliban militants have captured another district in Afghanistans eastern province of Nuristan, adding to recent military gains, officials said on Saturday. Provincial councillor Saidullah Nuristani told dpa news agency that government forces have abandoned Doab district after 20 days of resistance.

According to Nuristani, the militants had blocked all the supply routes to the district, forcing the government forces to evacuate the district after being unable to receive any food supplies or ammunition from the central government for nearly a month. Ismail Ateekan, an MP representing the province, claimed that the government forces had left the district without fighting, after an agreement that was mediated by the local tribal elders in the area. In return, the insurgents did not attack them during the evacuation. He said the district connects Panjshir and Badakhshan provinces to Nuristan, and the militants now pose a threat to the neighbouring Laghman province since they have besieged the Noogram district in the province, according to MP Ateekan.

Oversight Board hails move as Facebook bans Trump for 2 yrs

San Francisco | Agencies

Facebook has suspended US former President Donald Trump from its platforms for two years, the maximum penalty under a newly revealed set of rules for suspending public figures, a move that was hailed by the independent Oversight Board which had upheld the earlier decision by the social network to ban Trump.

Facebook said on Friday that it will reevaluate the ban and make the decision whether to end or extend it. According to Nick Clegg, vice president of global affairs at Facebook, the company will look to experts to assess whether the risk to public safety has receded at the end of the two-year suspension. "We are suspending his (Trump) accounts for two years, effective from the date of the initial suspension on January 7 this year," Clegg said in a blog post.

When the suspension is eventually lifted, there will be a strict set of rapidly escalating sanctions that will be triggered if Trump commits further violations in future, up to and including permanent removal of his pages and accounts.

The Oversight Board said in a statement that it is encouraged that Facebook is adopting many of the Board's policy recommendations in this case. "The Board is now assessing Facebook's response to our recommendations, including greater transparency around the 'strikes' policy, how Facebook will apply the 'newsworthiness allowance' to the accounts of politicians and other influential individuals, and the new enforcement protocols," it said.



Facebook has said it is committed to being more transparent about the decisions it makes and how they impact its users.

"As well as our updated enforcement protocols, we are also publishing our strike system, so that people know what actions our systems will take if they violate our policies," Clegg said. The Board said it believes that the steps Facebook has committed to today will contribute to greater clarity, consistency and transparency in the way the company moderates content, and promote public safety, defend human rights and respect freedom of expression.

The Oversight Board voted against reinstating Trump's Facebook and Instagram accounts in May while saying it was not appropriate for Facebook to impose an "indefinite" suspension.

It required Facebook to revisit the case, either restore Trump's accounts, make the ban permanent or define a suspension for a set period of time.

The board is a panel of about 20 former political leaders, human rights activists and journalists picked by Facebook to deliberate the company's content decisions.

Mexico to hold largest ever mid-term polls in history

Mexico City | Agencies

Mexico is gearing up for the largest ever mid-term elections in the country's history on Sunday, with tens of thousands of candidates vying to fill more than 20,000 public posts, according to authorities.

The race to watch, said political observers, is the one to fill the Chamber of Deputies, or the lower house, in which the ruling progressive National Regeneration Movement (Morena) hopes to maintain or strengthen its qualified majority, as the conservative opposition strives to gain ground, reports Xinhua news agency. The mid-terms will essentially decide whether President Andres Manuel

Lopez Obrador will be able to carry on with his so-called "Fourth Transformation", combat public-sector corruption and make the country more energy independent, or be forced to temper his reform drive during his remaining time in office. Up for renewal are 15 of the country's 32 Governor posts, 500 federal deputy seats, 1,063 local deputy seats and 1,923 mayoral posts, among others, with a total of the 20,415 popularly elected positions. According to the National Electoral Institute, 93,676,029 Mexicans will be eligible to vote at 162,896 polling stations across the country. To improve their chances in the lower house, Mexico's three largest opposition parties -- the Institutional Revolutionary

Party, Democratic Revolution Party and National Action Party -- joined forces to back the same candidate for each seat, aiming to take votes away from the Morena-led coalition that includes the Labor Party and Ecologist Green Party of Mexico. To maintain its two-thirds qualified majority in Congress, Morena will need to garner 334 deputy seats, a number which Lopez said will be tough to win, despite the party's lead in various polls.

The elections are expected to go smoothly, though violence targeting candidates has traditionally marred political campaigns in Mexico with some 89 politicians assassinated so far, including 35 candidates, according to risk analysis firm Etelekt.

EGYPT SENDS HELP TO GAZA FOR RECONSTRUCTION

Gaza: Egypt has sent massive engineering equipment and crew to the Gaza Strip for its reconstruction after the 11-day devastating bloodshed in and around the Palestinian enclave last month.

The equipment, including a large number of trucks, bulldozers and cranes, will remove debris and rubble from the buildings that were destroyed during the 11-day Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, Xinhua news agency quoted local media reports as saying. The aid comes after a pledge made by President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi to contribute \$500 million to help reconstruct Gaza with the participation of Egyptian companies.

"1st leg of Nord Stream 2 pipeline to supply gas in 10 days"

"I am happy to announce that today, two and a half hours ago, the pipe-laying for the first leg of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline was successfully completed," Putin said at the 24th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on



Nord Stream 2 pipeline between Moscow and Berlin, which is expected to supply gas within 10 days.

"I am happy to announce that today, two and a half hours ago, the pipe-laying for the first leg of the Nord

Stream 2 gas pipeline was successfully completed," Putin said at the 24th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on Friday.

The work on the second line is currently underway, and the Nord Stream 2 is purely economic and commercial, he told a plenary session of the forum.

The President noted that the route via the Baltic Sea is shorter than onshore, making gas supplies more affordable, predictable and environmentally friendly, Xinhua news agency reported.

"We are ready to continue to implement similar high-tech projects with our European partners and others," Putin said. The 1,230-km Nord Stream 2 pipeline is designed to pump natural gas from Russia to Germany through the Baltic Sea and could deliver 55 billion cubic metres of gas annually.

World Bank to increase financial support for Lebanon

Beirut | Agencies

World Bank Group Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, Ferid Belhaj said that the global lender will increase funds allocated to the most vulnerable families in Lebanon.

"We will be offering more funds to the most vulnerable families, as requested by Lebanese Finance Minister Ghazi Wazneh, on condition that these funds be provided the soonest possible in cash to poor families," Belhaj said on Friday following his meeting with Wazni.

Belhaj noted that the social safety net financing plan which is funded by a World Bank loan of \$246 million will be soon implemented by the Finance Ministry.

Earlier this year, the World Bank had approved the loan to establish the financing plan aimed at helping the most vulnerable families as Lebanon has been going through its worst economic and financial crisis with a poverty rate exceeding 50 per cent. In a new report released on June 1, the World Bank said that Lebanon's prolonged severe economic depression may place it among the 10 most severe crises globally since the mid-19th century. "In the face of colossal challenges, continuous policy inaction and the absence of a fully functioning executive authority threaten already dire socio-economic conditions and a fragile social peace with no clear turning point in the horizon," the report said.

Free roaming elephants in Namibia worsen human-wildlife conflict

Windhoek | Agencies

The growth in numbers of free roaming elephants in Namibia has resulted in an increase in Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) incidences, Environment Ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda said.

In an interview with Xinhua news agency, Muyunda said on Friday currently there are more elephants in unprotected areas than they are in protected national parks.

"Our elephant population in Namibia is healthy but this means that they move into farming and communal areas resulting in an increase in conflicts between humans and elephants. The elephants cause damage to infrastructure by breaking fences, damaging dams and water tanks and pushing over windmills to the disadvantage of communities," he said. According to



Muyunda, Namibia is home to about 24,000 elephants where the majority are free roaming. "The northwestern population is estimated based on aerial surveys at 4,627 elephants (2,911 of those are in protected

areas). The northeastern population numbers are over 19,549 with just 6,413 of those found in protected areas. Movements between different populations sporadically occur, providing opportunities for genetic

interchange. Numbers will continue to be through aerial surveys at two to three year intervals," he said. Muyunda said the country continues to educate communities on how to deal with elephants and how to mitigate conflict. He said the country has also enforced other measures to mitigate elephant conflict such as population management by reducing numbers through auctions or translocations.

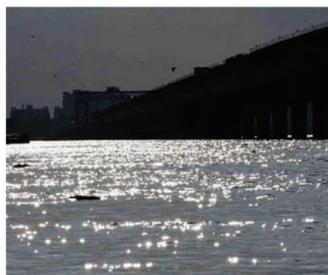
He added that the costs of HWC to communities and governments can be outweighed by the economic benefits generated by conservancies that devolve rights over wildlife and the right to benefit from its sustainable use to local communities.

"What we want to ensure is that there is minimum conflict," he said.

Last year, Namibia paid around \$370,000 to individuals, farmers for livestock loss, crop damage, injuries to people and loss of life.

RIGHTS BODIES APPEAL TO INDONESIA NOT TO PUSH BACK ROHINGYA

Numerous boats, each with hundreds of Rohingya asylum seekers, have been leaving overcrowded refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh for Southeast Asian destinations every year.



"Until we know for sure that they are not being pushed back, the Rohingya are not 100 per cent safe there."

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) also appealed to ensure that the refugees are not pushed back. "ASEAN leaders, having done almost nothing for years, should dramatically rethink their approach to the Rohingya crisis," said Brad Adams, HRW's Asia director. "A coordinated regional response is desperately needed to protect Rohingya in

Myanmar, in refugee camps abroad, and at sea, while pressing Myanmar to take the steps necessary for them to return home safely." Numerous boats, each with hundreds of Rohingya asylum seekers, have been leaving overcrowded refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh for Southeast Asian destinations every year.

Malaysian and Thai authorities have been pushing the boats back to sea, leaving hundreds of refugees in precarious condition, without access to adequate food and water for months.

The boat that landed in Aceh had sailed on February 11 from Cox's Bazar carrying 90 Rohingya refugees, most of them women and children, with the hope of reaching Malaysia.

But the boat's engine failed four days after leaving Cox's Bazar and it ran adrift until Indian Coast Guards rescued it.

Of the 90 people who set out on the voyage, eight were found dead by the Indian Coast Guards who later helped repair the vessel. Indian authorities provided food and

essential supplies to survivors but refused to let them set foot on their shores.

Bangladesh, too, denied re-entry to 81 survivors. Over the last three months, international aid agencies and family members of those onboard have made repeated appeals to India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Malaysia for information about the fate of the survivors on the boat.

Dwi Prafitria, spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Indonesia, has said that the refugees currently don't have a place to stay.

"We have to coordinate with the local government. Authorities in Indonesia, including local police and immigration, were not immediately available for comment.

More than 1 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are living in teeming camps in Bangladesh, including tens of thousands who fled after a deadly crackdown in 2017.

Human traffickers often lure Rohingya refugees, persuading them to travel on rickety vessels with the promise of work in Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia.

US adds 559,000 jobs in May as hiring rebounds

Washington | Agencies

US employers added 559,000 jobs in May, rebounding from April's hiring slowdown, with unemployment rate dropping to 5.8 per cent, the Labour Department reported. The latest data followed upwardly revised job growth of 278,000 in April and upwardly revised increase of 785,000 in March, indicating a bumpy road in labour market recovery, reports Xinhua news agency.

In May, job gains were notable in leisure and hospitality, public and private education, as well as health care and social assistance, according to the report released on Friday by the Department's Bureau of Labour Statistics.

Employment in leisure and hospitality increased by

292,000, as pandemic-related restrictions continued to ease in some parts of the country, the report showed, while noting that the figure is still down by 2.5 million, or 15 per cent, since February 2020. Employment in local government education, state government education and private education increased by 53,000, 50,000 and 41,000, respectively, but is still lower than the pre-pandemic level.

Construction employment edged down by 20,000 in May, reflecting a job loss of 17,000 in non-residential specialty trade contractors, the report showed.

Employment in retail trade declined by 6,000, which is 411,000 below its pre-pandemic level. The unemployment rate dropped by 0.3 percentage point to 5.8 per cent.





Art for Education **WHERE FASHION MEETS PHILANTROPY**

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Christie's announces Art for Education, the inaugural celebrity art auction fundraiser to benefit the Chema Vision Children's Center (Chema) in Nairobi, Kenya. The online sale is produced in collaboration with LA's art and luxury fashion retailer, Church Boutique, and the eco-fashion house Ministry of Tomorrow (MOT) powered by Christie's charity auction partner Charitybuzz. The online auction runs from June 1-16 with an in-person preview at Christie's New York from June 4-9. The sale features 24 original celebrity designs on eco-friendly handbags supplied by MOT. All proceeds from the auction will be donated to Chema to help fund the schools operating budget with a goal to raise \$100k. Each handbag features a unique hand-painted design created by some of Hollywood's biggest names including Madonna, Naomi Campbell, Halle Berry, Lenny Kravitz, Zoe Kravitz, Paris Jackson, Lionel Richie, Eddie Murphy, Evan Ross, Maggie Q, Usher, Raquel Bitton, Chrome Hearts and more. The Chema school is situated in the middle of Kibera, Africa's largest urban slum and was established to provide quality education for some of Kibera's most vulnerable children. Many of the students are orphans or children of single parents without income to pay for school fees. Just before the pandemic, Chema was forced to relocate because the school structure was not up to code. MOT's vegan bag production facility is located near the school and Julian Prolman, president of MOT heard about the school's dilemma. Through an initial fundraiser orchestrated by MOT, Chema was able to relocate to a safe building. Art for Education continues to fundraise to ensure there are adequate funds to cover faculty and operational expenses that includes a daily meal for the students. When Church Boutique's founders, Rodney Burns and David Malvaney, learned about the urgent need at Chema from their supply partner MOT whose branded bags are featured at The Church Boutique, they quickly reached out to their network to request support. Without hesitation, Rodney and David's luminary friends offered to help. In addition, Laurie Lynn Stark, the creator of the international jewelry and clothing brand Chrome Hearts, has joined in to create her own unique MOT tote. We believe that luxury is a privilege that comes with the responsibility to care for others in need and therefore we are thrilled to collaborate with MOT to do what we can to make a difference in the lives of children born into challenging circumstances," said Rodney Burns. Chema is a Swahili word meaning something good, and that is what we are trying to do with Art for Education," said Julian Prolman.

Tinder adds 'Block Contacts' feature to avoid awkwardness



Team Absolute | New Delhi

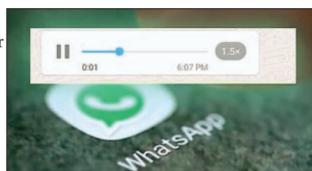
Dating app Tinder is rolling out a new feature that allows members to block personal contacts in the app by using their phone numbers. Tinder members everywhere will be able to access Block Contacts within their profile settings. From there, they can input which of their contacts they'd rather not see, or not be seen by, on Tinder. We may not be able to save you from awkward run-ins at the coffee shop, but we are giving you more control over your experience on Tinder," Bernadette Morgan, Group Product Manager, Trust & Safety at Tinder, said in a statement. We are rolling out Block Contacts as an additional resource empowering members with peace of mind by helping create a worry-free

space for them to spark new connections,"AMorgan added. According to the dating app, the new feature will empower users to confidently like their way to sparking new connections while avoiding the awkwardness of a familiar face they would rather not see. Whether those contacts are already on Tinder or decide to download it later using the same contact info, they won't appear as a potential match. A Initially tested in India, Korea and Japan, members who adopted the Block Contacts feature on Tinder added about a dozen contacts to their block list. Available in 190 countries and 40+ languages, Tinder is the highest-grossing non-gaming app globally. It's been downloaded more than 430 million times and led to more than 60 billion matches.

WhatsApp unveils new 'Fast Playback' feature for voice message

Team Absolute | New Delhi

To allow users to increase the playback speed of voice messages, Facebook-owned WhatsApp has rolled out a new 'Fast Playback' feature aimed at those who rely on long voice messages. WhatsApp's Fast Playback feature lets you change playback speed between the default 1x setting, to 1.5x speed or 2x speed, without changing the pitch of someone's voice. It is simple to use -- as you press play on a voice message you will see the playback speed appear, which is set to 1x by default. Simply touch the speed to increase the speed to 1.5x or 2x, the company said in a statement. Then simply press play. In honor of the launch of fast playback, WhatsApp has shared a short video on social platforms -- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, it added. WhatsApp voice messages let you speak to friends and family whenever it suits you and lets them listen whenever it suits them, while still giving everyone a more personal connection than you get from a text message. Users can simply open an individual or group chat, touch the microphone icon and slide up to lock hands-free recording. However, it can be hard to find the time to listen to a long voice message. Therefore, WhatsApp is introducing Fast Playback, which speeds up the message, making it possible to reduce the time it takes to listen to your longest voice messages, the company said. The new feature is now available for users on WhatsApp.



Facebook acquires Unit 2 Games

San Francisco | Agencies

Facebook has announced that it is acquiring Unit 2 Games, the developer behind free-to-play game creation and sharing tool Crayta. Like some other platforms out there, it builds on top of the Unreal Engine and gives users a more simple creation interface teamed with discovery and community features. Crayta has cornered its niche pushing monetisation paths like Battle Pass seasons, giving the platform a more Fortnite-like vibe as well, TechCrunch reported. The report said that Unit 2 has been around for just over three years and Crayta was launched last July. Its audience has likely been limited by the studio's deal to exclusively launch on Google's cloud-streaming platform Stadia, though it's also available on the Epic Games Store as of March, it added. The title feels designed for the lightweight nature of cloud-gaming platforms, with users able to share access to games just by linking other users and Facebook seems keen to use Crayta to push forward their efforts in the gaming sphere. The entire team will be coming on as part of the acquisition, though the financial terms of the deal weren't shared.



Negative impact of Covid stress on adolescents: Study

New York | Agencies

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant detrimental impact on adolescents' mental health, especially in girls, finds a new study that included 59,000 participants. The study, published in The Lancet Psychiatry, found that negative mental health outcomes were disproportionately reported by girls and older adolescents (13-18-year-olds), compared to same-age peers before the pandemic. At the same time, it revealed a decline in cigarette smoking, e-cigarette usage and alcohol intoxication among 15-18-year-old adolescents during the pandemic. "The decrease observed in substance use during the pandemic may be an unintended benefit of the isolation that so many adolescents have endured during quarantine," said researcher John Allegrante from the Columbia University in the US. Previous studies of adolescents

during Covid-19 found evidence of increased mental health problems and certain types of substance use that had been rising before the pandemic. This study, however, compares current data with several pre-pandemic time points, which enabled the researchers to separate the effect of Covid-19 from other recent, downward trends in adolescent mental health. According to the researchers, prior studies have not been designed to determine whether clinically relevant levels of depression -- as opposed to self-reported depressive symptoms -- and substance use have increased during the pandemic. The study "differs in methodology from previous studies in that it tracked the population-based prevalence of mental health outcomes and substance use over several years to better understand the potential effects of Covid-19 from recent upward trends in adolescent mental health problems, the team said.

TikTok now plans to collect biometric data of US users

San Francisco | Agencies

Chinese short-video making app TikTok is now going to collect biometric data of users in the US, including faceprint and voiceprints, as the fate of the ByteDance-owned company remains in limbo in the country. TikTok has introduced a new privacy policy section for US users, saying it "may collect biometric identifiers and biometric information" from its users' content. "We may collect biometric identifiers and biometric information as defined under US laws, such as faceprints and voiceprints, from your User Content. Where required by law,



we will seek any required permissions from you prior to any such collection," the company said in its new privacy policy. The privacy policy further read that TikTok may

collect information "such as identifying the objects and scenery that appear, the existence and location within an image of face and body features and attributes, the nature

of the audio, and the text of the words spoken in your User Content. In the US, couple of states like Illinois, Washington, California, Texas and New York have biometric privacy laws. A TikTok spokesperson told The Verge on Thursday: "As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency, we recently updated our Privacy Policy to provide more clarity on the information we may collect". Earlier on Thursday, US President Joe Biden expanded a Donald Trump-era ban on Chinese surveillance companies with alleged ties to the military, increasing the number of restricted Chinese firms from 48 to 59.

World Environment Day: Brands and their sustainability initiatives

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Environmental sustainability has become the buzzword now and everybody in the fashion industry is talking about reuse, reduce, rework and recycle. Fashion brands have initiated various projects making a commitment to move towards being more sustainable. Absolute India lists down some 5 fashion and beauty brands to know about such initiatives:



AMERICAN EAGLE

As part of American Eagle's broader sustainability goals, the brand has introduced 'Real Good' products. Real Good jeans are made in factories that meet expectations which include water reduction and management, wastewater that is less in volume and does not contain restricted or hazardous chemicals and water recycling.

PANERAI

Panerai reinforced its com-

mitment to a sustainable environment and a healthy ocean by announcing its partnership with Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO) to develop ocean literacy activities as part of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

ASICS

Sport and exercise fans wanting to keep their activity levels high, but their environmental impact low need

look no further than a new collection of environmentally sustainable footwear and apparel launched by ASICS on Earth day. The new pack cross-category collection has been created using a circular manufacturing approach that saw around 5 tons of textile waste, the equivalent of 25,000 t-shirts, recycled into new shoes.

HUSH PUPPIES

The brand under the Bata India umbrella has launched an exclusive range of eco-friendly sneakers, The Good

Shoe, on this World Environment Day. This range of sneakers has been created from recycled plastic bottles and utilises Bloom algae technology, replacing petroleum-based materials.

FOREST ESSENTIALS

The brand sources its ingredients from local farmers who use environmentally sound farming practices and also have an organic farm in their factory at Lodi, where they grow high quality plants and herbs.



French Open

SLOANE SETS UP PRE-QUARTERS CLASH WITH BARBORA

Paris | Agencies

American Sloane Stephens gave an indication of her French Open ambitions, defeating No.18 Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic 6-3, 7-5 in one hour, 55 minutes to move into the pre-quarterfinals on Saturday.

The 2018 runner-up will next face another Czech player, world No.33 Barbora Krejickova, who had won her maiden title in Strasbourg last week

to signal her intent. Barbora extended her winning streak to eight, thrashing No.6 seed Elina Svitolina of Ukraine 6-3, 6-2.

Karolina and Elina's exit means the only seeds remaining in the top quarter of the draw are No.13 Jennifer Brady, No.24 Coco Gauff (both US) and No.25 Ons Jabeur (Tunisia).

On Saturday, Barbora simply blew away the No.6 seed Elina with her carefully-disguised shots, which fetched her 38 winners in the match.



Tsitsipas enters in fourth round



Paris: Fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas came back after losing first set to beat John Isner 5-7, 6-3, 7-6(3), 6-1 and enter fourth round of French Open late on Friday at Roland Garros. Spanish Pablo Carreno Busta beat American Steve Johnson 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 to also progress. Tsitsipas, a semi-finalist last year, won the match against Isner in two hours and 38 minutes.

VONDROUSOVA REACHES 4TH ROUND

Paris: Marketa Vondrousova of Czech Republic, who reached the 2019 French Open final, defeated Polona Hercog in straight sets, 6-3, 6-3, to enter fourth round of French Open late on Friday even as seeded players continued to fall at Roland Garros. In another late third round game on Friday, Paula Badosa Gibert of Spain defeated Romania's Ana Bogdan in three sets. She won 2-6, 7-6, 6-4. Earlier, seventh-seeded American star Serena Williams kept her hopes of a 24th singles Grand Slam title alive as she overcame compatriot Danielle Collins 6-4, 6-4 to reach the fourth round. World No.32 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia upset No.3 seed Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 2-6, 6-0 to reach the pre-quarterfinals for the second time.



1st Test: Southee's five-wicket haul pegs England back



London | Agencies

New Zealand fast bowler Tim Southee's five-wicket haul left England tottering at 207 for seven an hour after lunch on fourth day of first Test at Lord's on Saturday.

Southee (5/41 in 23 overs), who had removed Zak Crawley on the second day,

returned on Day 4 with impact after the third day's play was washed out. He picked the wickets of Ollie Pope (22), Daniel Lawrence (0), James Bracey (0) and Ollie Robinson (0) to run through England's middle and lower middle-order.

Kyle Jamieson picked the other two wickets. Only opener Rory Burns could

offer any resistance after skipper Joe Root fell early on fourth day for 42 to Jamieson.

With a day lost and the third and fourth innings yet to start, it looks that the first of the two Tests will end in a draw.

Brief scores (at lunch, Day 4) New Zealand 378 all out vs England 207/7 in 85 overs (R Burns batting 86)

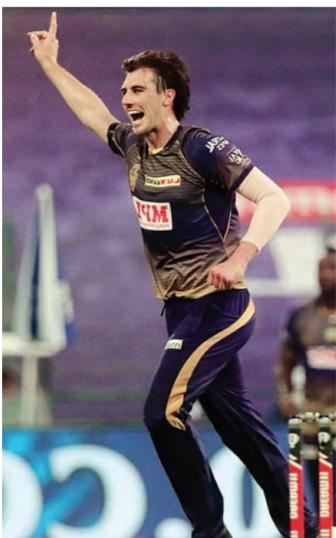
IPL 2021's resumption suffers first casualty as Cummins pulls out

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 suffered a setback months before its resumption in UAE in September when franchises' worst fears regarding availability of foreign players started to come true with pullout of Australia pacer Pat Cummins from Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR). Cummins has told KKR's veteran India player Dinesh Karthik that he won't be able to make it for the second leg of the tournament.

KKR may also miss England captain Eoin Morgan, who leads the franchise. "Pat Cummins has himself said that he will not come. But when it comes to Eoin Morgan, there are still three months to go. A lot can change from now till September. But if I am asked to lead, I will be ready for it," Karthik told Times of India in an interview.

There has been no statement from Cricket Australia yet on the availability of its players for the remainder of IPL 2021 whereas England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has already clarified that its players won't skip international matches which coincide IPL. ECB director of cricket Ashley Giles had last month said England have a packed schedule.



SINGAPORE F1 GRAND PRIX CALLED OFF DUE TO COVID

Singapore: Formula One's Singapore Grand Prix has been called off this year due to coronavirus restrictions, local organiser Singapore GP Pte Ltd have confirmed. "To cancel the event for a second year is an incredibly difficult decision, but a necessary one in light of the prevailing restrictions for live events in Singapore," said Colin Syn, deputy chairperson of Singapore GP Pte Ltd.

The race was scheduled to take place on October 3. But organisers said they had no choice given the "unpredictable Covid-19 situation". They argued that the decision to cancel puts priority on the health of fans, the public and all participants, reports DPA. Formula One reportedly already has options to fill the Singapore slot, but no decision has been taken yet. Recently, the race in Canada was cancelled.

Bumrah, Shami, Ishant should start for India in WTC final: Agarkar

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Bumrah, Shami - the No.1 bowler for me in the Indian Test line-up - and Ishant Sharma, who has gotten better over his career. So, those three certainly will start and if it is a green seaming wicket, you might see a fourth one for all you know," said Agarkar on Star Sports.

"The seamers will play a part and India has got as formidable an attack as any in the world. I think that's been their strength over the last few years," added the former Mumbai bowler, who played 26 Tests and 191 ODIs.

Agarkar, 43, said he cannot imagine a dry pitch in June in England and expected seam bowlers to get some help. "We still don't know what

Jaspit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami should start for India in this month's World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand, former India pacer Ajit Agarkar has said.



the conditions are likely to be, but we presume in England -- with the Dukes ball in particular -- there will

always be help for seam bowlers. You can't imagine a pitch being very dry in mid-June," he added.

The Southampton wicket has supported seam bowlers in county matches during the early part of this summer.

Judokas Sushila, Jasleen fight for one Olympic quota place

Budapest | Agencies

Sushila Devi and Jasleen Singh Saini will compete in their respective (women and men) categories at World Judo Championships, each aiming to earn more points than the other in a bid to qualify for Tokyo Olympics.

"Sushila Devi will compete in the women's 48 kg while Jasleen Singh Saini will take part in the men's 66 kg group," a national coach told reporter ahead of the tournament which starts on Sunday.

The eight-day long tournament in Hungary is the last Olympic qualification event and offers valuable world ranking points. Only one of Sushila and Saini will make it to the Tokyo Olympic Games starting July 23. Sushila, with 989 points, is the top-ranked Indian judoka while Saini



has approximately 920 points in his kitty. Each win in the World Judo Championships will fetch a judoka 200 points and the one with most aggregate points in end of the month rankings will go to Olympics. "Depending on the draw, anyone can improve their ranking. Since there is one continental quota place, the player with maximum points would be eligible to earn a ticket to Japan," said one of the athletes. More than 600 competitors, including 279 in women's category, will be in action in the tournament. Earlier in April, a 16-member Indian judo team had to pull out of Asian Oceania Olympic qualifier tournament in Bishkek as two athletes had tested positive for Covid-19 in the pre-event testing.

ECB RACISM ROW: UMPIRE HOLDER SAYS WILL PERSIST WITH HIS CLAIMS

London: Former English umpire John Holder has lashed out at England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) over the latter's statement that he and fellow umpire Ismail Dawood have withdrawn their claim of institutional racism. "Our case against the ECB has been beaten on a legal technicality. I have not withdrawn any of the claims I made," umpire Holder said. "The tone of ECB's statement would give the uninformed reader the impression that we have accepted their version of events and backed down. This is not the case at all. We remain convinced that the ECB is institutionally racist," added Holder who had launched legal challenge against ECB along with Dawood saying their careers were impacted due to institutional racism within England cricket set-up. "Having read that statement, I knew I could not work with these people any more. There is no trust. They are not looking to learn from my experiences; they are looking to silence me and give the impression that things have been resolved. That is misleading and disingenuous," Holder, whose last assignment as ECB umpire was in 2009, told ESPNcricinfo.com. Dawood, a former cricketer who umpired in 16 first-class games and two Women's ODIs and was last on the reserve list of umpires in 2014, said, "We were offered token roles to work with Neil Snowball at the ECB which were an insult to us and the many others that have suffered at the hands of the ECB."



38 SL cricketers refuse to sign tour contract, England tour in doubt

Colombo | Agencies

After 38 Sri Lankan cricketers refused to sign the contracts for the upcoming tour of England, serious doubt has been cast over team's scheduled departure for England on June 9.

Sri Lanka are scheduled to play the first of the three T20Is against England June 23. The three-match ODI series will begin on June 29. Besides, they are to play two tour matches, against Kent and Sussex.

The list of cricketers not willing to sign on the dotted line has gone up from the previous 24, before the



three-match ODI series against Bangladesh last month, to 38.

The cricketers are seeking transparency in the new system implemented by SLC, which reportedly gives 50 per cent weightage to performance since 2019, 20 per cent to player fitness, and 10 per cent each to leadership,

professionalism, and future potential and adaptability.

The players say that they have no idea how much they have scored on each count and that their scores should be revealed to them. The players want that performance and fitness should be the only criteria for drawing up contracts.

Kohli's India team not a patch on Windies, Australia at peak

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Current Indian team's back-to-back Test series wins in Australia has led to its comparison with world-conquering West Indian and Australian teams of past even though Virat Kohli's men are yet to prove themselves dominant on foreign soil.

Apart from the fact that they are yet to win a Test series in South Africa, New Zealand and England, where they suffered humiliating series loss in 2018, India won series in Australia in 2018-19 and 2020-21 only after close contests. Those wins can't be termed one-sided like the wins scored by West Indies of 1980s and Australia of 1990s and 2000s.

While West Indies swept two series against England 5-0, in England in 1984 and in the Caribbean in 1985-86, they remained unbeaten between 1980 and 1985-86 in 10 out of 11 Test series with the 1981-82 series in Australia as the only draw (1-1). They also hammered Australia twice during that phase -- 3-0 win in 1983-84 at home and 3-1 win away from home in 1985-86. They also won a Test series 3-1 in Australia in 1988-89. During the decade 1979-80 to 1988-89, West Indies played 20 series winning 14 and drawing five. Their only series loss came in New Zealand in 1979-80. Earlier, in the 1970s, they won seven out of 14 series they played during the decade (1970-71 to 1979-80) and drew



three series. The Aussies of 1990s and early 2000s were dominant too.

In the 1990s, though Australia failed to score series wins in India, they were otherwise winning almost everywhere. Out the 31 Tests series they played from 1989-90 till 1999-00, the Aussies won 20 including a few overseas.

In 2000s (2000-01 to 2009-10), Australia played 35 series, winning 28 series in what is termed as the one of the most dominant phases of any team in history of Test cricket.

No wonder former India captain Sunil Gavaskar isn't happy by the comparison. He says India won't be able to dominate as the West Indians or the Aussies of the past did since they are inconsistent. "I am not too sure they will be able to dominate like West Indies did. They were winning all five Test matches, even Australian were, winning four out of five. I am not too sure if this Indian team can do that because of the fact that while they are actually a supremely talented team, there are at times inconsistencies that you see," said Gavaskar on The Cricket Analyst Show on YouTube.

He, however, said that this team can become unbeatable if it weeds out inconsistencies. "That is the only thing that makes me hold my breath a little bit. But as far as the potential of this team is concerned, I think sky is the limit," Gavaskar said.



KHLOE KARDASHIAN'S HOUSE WAS ALMOST STOLEN!

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV personality Khloe Kardashian said that her house was almost stolen from her as the builder took her deeds when they stopped working together.

Khloe said she and her mother Kris Jenner had purchased houses from the same builder when this happened.

"You know the contractors ran off with our houses? So, we don't have houses currently. We bought these houses from a builder who was building these houses and he has investors behind him. We ran a background check on him. He had a 35-page rap sheet. I told mom I was not comfortable using him. Mom wanted to still use him.

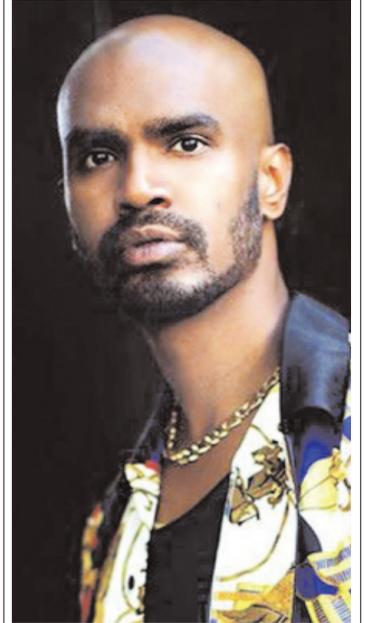
Whatever. We ended up firing him because he sucked and he was trying to steal from me and now he took our houses and they've been on a standstill," Khloe said, according to femalefirst.co.uk.

The situation got worse because of the pandemic, she added.

"A contractor left with our deeds, a lot of our money, and we're not allowed to go onto our properties. So, we can't even have a contractor take over while we're trying to get our deeds back or close escrow. And we can't even take him to court right now due to Covid. So, we have to work everything out by mediation first," she said.



TORONTO-BASED TAMIL RAPPER SHAN VINCENT DE PAUL DROPS NEW SINGLE 'SAVAGE'



Toronto | Agencies

Toronto-based Tamil artiste Shan Vincent de Paul on Friday released "Savage", the new single of his third studio album, "Made In Jaffna". Shan says he has written the track solely for personal artistic expression, to appease the "rap head" in him.

"Savage" was a purely cathartic creation for me where the expression took precedence over 'accessibility'. I wanted to write an 'anti-hit', something that didn't pander to any kind of audience, sound or trend. It was a gateway to tap into a darker side without having to keep up the facade of a glossy, perfect world that we often see on social media. The title is also a tongue-in-cheek reference to the term colonizers used to describe us for eating with our hands," he says.

"Savage" is the first of 12 singles to be released for the 14-track album, which is scheduled to release on August 27. Previously released singles -- "One hundred thousand flowers" and "Heaven" featuring fellow Canadian Tamil artiste Navz-47 -- are also part of the album.

Matching Shan's vocal ferocity in the video of the new song is Paris-based hip-hop dancer and Bharatanatyam enthusiast UshaJey's choreography, whose hybrid mix of two dance styles have made her a social media star.

Shot in Berlin, the video features two avatars of Usha, performing her trademark hybrid Bharatanatyam.

On UshaJey's choreography, Shan says: "Her style is so unique and innovative while perfectly capturing elements of the East and West. I knew she had to be the star of the video when I saw her style. It was a perfect way to respond to the derogatory title of 'Savage' that was often used against us. I also wanted to take Bharatanatyam as far away from the realm you would expect it to be in."

"Made In Jaffna" releases on the AR Rahman-led artiste-centric platform and label, maajja.

JESY NELSON ACCIDENTALLY LEAKS FIRST SOLO SINGLE ON INSTAGRAM

Los Angeles | Agencies

Jesy Nelson appeared to accidentally leak her first solo single on Instagram - six months after quitting Little Mix. The 29-year-old star baffled fans when she uploaded a short clip of the heartbreak track only to delete it moments later.

She then uploaded the video again, but this time with the sound switched off.

In the brief social media post, Jesy is sitting in the recording studio listening to the track - filming the computer as it plays.

In the snippet of the song, the beauty appears to croon: "Sorry that you're back so soon...", but the rest of the line is not clear. Jesy originally posted the video to her main grid, before deleting and

cryptically adding the silent version to her Instagram story. And the gaffe left Jesy's fans excited for her impending solo career, with one tweeting last night: "Ugh I can't wait for Jesy Nelson's solo music, girl needs to drop something for me to stream asap."

Jesy revealed that she'd signed her first solo record deal last month, after quitting Little Mix in December due to the "toll being in the band took on her mental health".



ALEXANDRA CANE UNDER FIRE FOR SLAMMING COVID VACCINE AS 'EXPERIMENTAL'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Love Island's Alexandra Cane suffers trolling for slamming Covid vaccine as 'experimental' and claiming 'we're in World War 3'. The reality TV star, 29, told fans she would "not subscribe to fear" as she refused to get the jab. "I personally will not be getting it as it is very much in the experimental stages and I have no idea of the after effects," said Alexandra. "I am a sovereign being who has the basic human right of deciding what I believe is best for my body. I choose not to inject something that I have not much information of, nor do I wish to follow suit because others are."

She added: "Be mindful the mass media is just one narrative." The star - who coupled up with Doctor Alex George on the fourth season of the UK reality show in 2018 - passionately defended her choice, adding: "I believe the mind and body are connected and finding energetic within the vessel that is made up of trillions of cells (energy)."



Why Lisa Kudrow was nervous singing 'Smelly cat' on 'Friends: The Reunion'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Lisa Kudrow, popular as Phoebe in "Friends", revealed that she was really nervous as she forgot the chords of the hit song "Smelly cat", before her duet with Lady Gaga on the recent, "Friends: The Reunion".

"That was great. I was really nervous when I first heard that. And then I prepared - I realised I had to learn 'Smelly cat' again, and I tuned my guitar and then realised I don't know the chords.

But I googled it. All the chords were there for 'Smelly cat'," Kudrow said on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show".

Her comments come after the show's director Ben Winston shared that Gaga has a "synergy" with Kudrow.

Speaking about their performance, Winston had said: "I told Lisa that I wanted a music performance and didn't want it to be the theme song. I asked if she'd consider singing 'Smelly cat' and she thought it would be fun, but said she never really played guitar. We gave her a

guitar to practice that morning.

"I gave her a list of three or four names of people I thought would be really great to duet with, but Gaga was, without question, my number one. And she loved the idea of Gaga.

"Gaga - and I don't think she'd mind me saying - has some Phoebe spirit in her." There is synergy between Lisa Kudrow and Lady Gaga in some way. Gaga said yes in a heartbeat. She was like, 'I would love to perform in Central Perk with Lisa Kudrow'."

Phillip Schofield lauds Holly Willoughby's unwavering support after coming out as gay

Los Angeles | Agencies

Phillip Schofield has lauded Holly Willoughby for her unwavering support after he publicly came out as gay last year. The presenter, 59, who publicly shared his sexuality in a historic interview last year, reflected on the impact his revelation has made, admitting he was 'taken by surprise' upon seeing the huge reaction from fans.

In a joint interview with The Times Magazine with Holly, 40, ahead of Sunday's BAFTA Television Awards, Phillip lauded her as being 'therapy' as she remained a constant figure during his decision to come out. On 7 February 2020, Phillip, firstly taking Instagram to share a statement before appearing on This Morning to discuss his news with his co-host and best friend Holly, during which he broke down in tears. Looking back on the moment, Phillip admitted that there was 'an element of selfishness' when coming out the way he did as he was 'protecting' himself in a way, but he failed to realise the positive effective that this would have on those watching. When asked if the warm response from his coming out is reflective of more tolerant times, Phillip said he 'hoped so'.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kendall Rae Knight



CELEBS BACK AWARENESS DRIVE ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Celebrities including Malaika Arora, Pratik Gandhi, Dia Mirza, Sania Mirza, Neeraj Pandey and Shital Bhatia have come together to support an awareness campaign on World Environment Day.

With the aim to raise awareness and rekindle hope within every individual with simple yet impactful calls to action -- like tree plantation and avoiding plastics usage -- a special film will be released in partnership with UN India and WWF India on June 5. The campaign is called "#StopTheMelt".

To drive deeper engagement with the audience, a five-hour content including "Wild Karnataka", "The Story Of Plastic", "Jeremy Wade: Mighty Ganga", "Great Global Clean-Up" and "India 2050" will be telecast.

"2020 was a year of reckoning -- a global pandemic that's wreaked havoc in every part of the world, and a climate crisis that continues to deepen. This year, as we enter the UN



Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, we must vigorously renew our commitment to

tackle climate change head-on through collective action -- plant more trees, change our diet, say no to plastic and pledge to re-use,

reduce and recycle. That is the call to action of our new campaign #StopTheMelt," said Megha Tata, managing director (South Asia, Discovery Inc). The show airs on Discovery India.

BHUMI PEDNEKAR: YOUR VOICE IS YOUR BIGGEST TOOL, YOU CAN'T USE IT LOOSELY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Bhumi Pednekar, on the occasion of World Environment Day on Saturday, said that while expressing opinion is important, it also often leads to backlash.

"Being woke is about putting your opinion and standing by it for the betterment of society. I feel it's a double-edged sword because at times being woke can also have lots of backlash," Bhumi, who is also an environmentalist, said.

She added: "More often than not I feel you need to have a certain amount of confidence to step out and put the thoughts you believe in out there, but it needs to come from a place of responsibility and from a place of knowledge."

The actress said a person who can influence cannot use their voice loosely as it is their biggest tool.

"I think that's very important, especially when you are a person who is in a place of influence and there are many that follow you, your voice is your biggest tool and you can't use it loosely. As we say that with great power comes great responsibility, and especially for influencers this statement is like the truest," she added.



SIMBA NAGPAL: HIGH TIME ALL OF US SUPPORT LGBTQ COMMUNITY

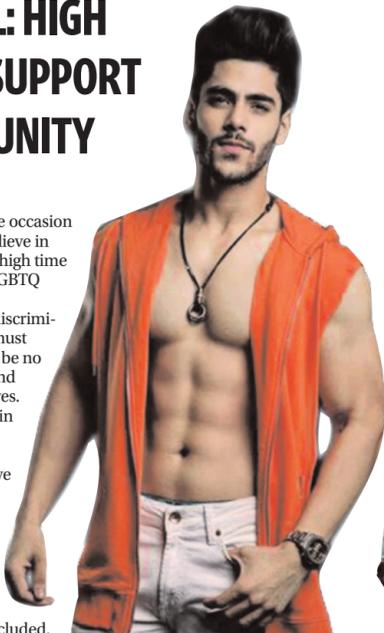
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Television actor Simba Nagpal, on the occasion of Pride Month, says he does not believe in gender discrimination and that it is high time that all come together in support of the LGBTQ community.

Simba said: "I don't believe in gender discrimination. As we all are humans and we all must access equal value in society. There must be no such boundaries that bring insecurities and troubles for someone to express themselves. It's high time that all of us come together in support of the LGBTQ community."

The actor, who is seen in the show "Shakti: AstitvaKeEhsaas Ki", feels true love has no conditions or boundaries.

"In my show, I play a character who falls in love with a eunuch. For her, I do anything that can protect her from society. For society such relations are taboos but I feel pure love has no conditions and boundaries. It's we youngsters who can change society for the better," he concluded.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hrithik Roshan recently came to the rescue of his fellow members from Cine and TV Artists Association (CINTAA), as he donates Rs 20 lakh to the association and also provided ration kits, which will in turn will help out as much as 5,000 members who are below poverty line.

Hrithik Roshan donates to CINTAA amidst second wave of Covid-19

During the first wave of Covid-19 too, Hrithik came forward to donate a sum of 25Lakh towards CINTAA, which provided help to as many as 4,000 daily-wage artists and their families.

Speaking about the same, General secretary of CINTAA, Amit Behl says, "Hrithik Roshan had helped us during the last lockdown too; he had donated Rs 25 lakh. This time, the money he gives us will be utilised in getting 5000 members of the association vaccinated and help members below the poverty line with ration".

The actor is seen making continuous efforts to do the best he can to help people who are stuck during the crisis. In the past too, during the first wave of the Covid-19 virus, the actor came forward to help put the community in need. From contributing towards safeguarding the health and safety of the frontline warriors by facilitating the delivery of hand sanitizers to Mumbai Police, to procuring Oxygen Cylinders and concentrators for Covid-19 patients, Hrithik has proactively been working towards helping the ones in need, in multiple ways.

Green tea might help tackle Covid: Indian-origin researcher

London | Agencies

As India continues to be ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic, a team of researchers is investigating how green tea could give rise to a drug capable of tackling Covid-19.

The initial findings suggested that one of the compounds in green tea could combat the coronavirus behind Covid-19, said lead author Suresh Mohankumar, who researched during his time at JSS College of Pharmacy in Ooty before taking up his current role at Swansea University Medical School. "Nature's oldest pharmacy has always been a treasure of potential novel drugs and we questioned if any of these compounds could assist us in battling the Covid-19 pandemic?" said Mohankumar. "We screened and sorted a library of natural compounds already known to be active against other coronaviruses using



an artificial intelligence-aided computer programme," he added.

Mohankumar emphasised that the research was still in its early days and a long way from any kind of clinical application, in the study published in the journal RSC Advances. "The compound that our model predicts to be most active is gallic acid, which is present in green tea and could be readily available, accessible, and affordable," the researcher said.

There now needs to be further investigation to show if it can be proven clinically effective and safe for preventing or treating Covid-19. "This is fascinating research and demonstrates that natural

products remain an important source of lead compounds in the fight against infectious diseases," said Andrew Morris, Professor, Swansea University.

"I am also really pleased to see this international research collaboration continuing now that Mohankumar has joined the Pharmacy team," Morris added.

28 per cent and 30 per cent higher in patients with moderate and severe obesity, respectively. A

New York | Agencies

Covid-19 survivors who have moderate or severe obesity may have a greater risk of experiencing long-term consequences of the disease, com-

Obesity may increase risk of long-term complications of Covid

pared to the patients who do not have obesity, showed an observational study. Obesity is known to weaken the immune system and create a chronic inflammatory state. These conditions can lead to poor outcomes after an infection with SARS-CoV-2, which is the virus that causes Covid-19, as per the study. "To our knowledge, this current study for the first time suggests that patients with moderate to severe obesity are at a greater risk of developing long-term complications of Covid-19 beyond the acute phase," said Ali



Metabolism', showed that compared to patients with normal body mass index (BMI), the risk of hospital admission was

Aminian, director of Cleveland Clinic's Bariatric & Metabolic Institute. The study, published online in the journal 'Diabetes, Obesity and

In patients with a BMI of 35 or greater, the need for diagnostic tests to assess cardiac, pulmonary, vascular, renal, gastrointestinal, and mental health problems was significantly higher, compared with normal BMI patients.

"The observations of this study can possibly be explained by the underlying mechanisms at work in patients who have obesity, such as hyper-inflammation, immune dysfunction, and comorbidities," said Bartolome Burguera, chair of Cleveland Clinic's Endocrinology & Metabolism Institute.

"Those conditions can lead to poor outcomes in the acute phase of Covid-19 in patients with obesity and could possibly lead to an increased risk of long-term complications of Covid-19 in this patient population," Burguera added.

The team included a total of 2,839 patients who did not require ICU admission and survived the acute phase of Covid-19. The normal BMI group was considered as a reference. Obesity is a disease classified as having a BMI of 30 or greater.

Shama Sikander plants a tree at home to celebrate World Environment Day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shama Sikander planted a tree a day ahead of World Environment Day, which falls on June 5.

Shama, who has often spoken on issues pertaining to environment and balance, feels this is the right time to pay attention to our surroundings.

"The essence of this day can be felt currently in an unfortunate way. The current pandemic is a great representation of the imbalance that humans have created in the environment. Plants have enriched and protected the environment in so many ways. I decided to plant a tree in order to contribute to the wellness of environment in a humble, small way," she told IANS.

The actress pointed out that that a contribution to the environment right now will help generations to come. "People who are happy and live a longer life are so often seen as more connected to nature and this is backed by research in the major blue zones of the earth. Let's all plant trees and take care of them. They actually take care of generations. Let's follow the protocols and get vaccinated whenever the opportunity arises. This is a war against the virus and we have to defeat it at any cost because we can," said Shama.



ARJUN KAPOOR: FILM SETS ARE THE BEST CLASSROOMS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Arjun Kapoor calls the film set the best classroom, and shares that he loves to make as many movies as he can and keep improvising by being on the sets. Arjun posted his views with a video collage on Instagram on Saturday, featuring clips from all his films, from "Ishaqzaade" to "Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar".

"I have grown up over this last decade on film sets. I feel strange not being there. It's my life, passion and hobby! I'd love to make as many movies as I can and keep improvising by being on the sets," he wrote.

"They are the best classrooms. When it comes to films, I'm like any other child in a candy store. I'm in awe of what our work can do to engage and entertain people. Can't wait for that to happen again!" he added.

Arjun will next be seen in two films -- "Bhoot Police" and "Ek Villain Returns".



JACQUELINE FERNANDEZ SIZZLES IN TEASER OF BADSHAH'S 'PAANI PAANI'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The teaser of Badshah and Astha Gills new song "Paani Paani", featuring Jacqueline Fernandez, has been unveiled. The song is set to launch on June 9. Jacqueline shared the poster of the upcoming song on Instagram and captioned it: "Setting (fire emoji) this Summer."

The song has been written, composed, and sung by Badshah along with Astha, and features Jacqueline in the video, which has been shot in the exotic Jaisalmer.

This is the second time Badshah and Jacqueline will be collaborating.

The two were last seen grooving on the track "Genda Phool" last year.



Sonakshi Sinha's birthday wish: Things go back to how we all want them to be

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sonakshi Sinha took to social media on Saturday to thank fans, followers, industry colleagues and friends for their wishes on the occasion of her birthday, which was on June 2.

Sonakshi expressed that her birthday wish this year was normal life be restored, as it was before the Covid-19 pandemic.

"My wish this birthday was that by the next one, things go back to how we all want them to be. A silent prayer for the ones who left us, the ones who are suffering and gratitude for the ones who are doing all they can to help. I wished for your happiness, health and an end to this mayhem. Also no more lockdown birthdays!!! Thank you for all the love you sent my way... for that I am forever grateful," she wrote.

On the work front, Sonakshi will next be seen in Ajay Devgn starrer "Bhuj: The Pride Of India". The upcoming film also features Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi.

Apart from this, the actress is all set to make her web series debut with "Fallen", where she plays a cop.



Elli AvrRam on being stereotyped: Never did I fear it

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Elli AvrRam says that she has never feared being stereotyped in the film industry, although people often tell her to beware of this aspect. "Never did I fear it from my heart because in my heart I know my passion, my talent and what I have to offer to this world of art, and it's got no limits," said Elli.

The actress says she refuses a project only if she doesn't feel connected to it.

"I've refused many songs because I follow one simple rule -- if it makes my heart smile of excitement, I'll do it. If not, then I won't be able to give justice to the song or project because I can't do anything half-heartedly and it's not fair to the filmmakers either," she says. Elli's last Bollywood outing was last year's "Malang". Earlier this year she was seen in the dance number "Harfunnmaula" with Amir Khan in the film "Koi Jaane Na".



YamiGautam shares photos from her mehendi ceremony

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress YamiGautam took to Instagram on Saturday to share photographs of her mehendi ceremony. Yami shared the knot with "Uri: The Surgical Strike" director Aditya Dhar in a hush hush wedding ceremony and the couple announced the news on social media on Friday evening.

In the photos shared on Saturday, Yami dazzles in a golden yellow salwar suit. The actress flaunts minimal make-up with red lipstick and a little eye makeup.

Yami chose to keep it simple with her hair tied in a braid, a gold nosepin and traditional dangler earrings. The actress is seen laughing her heart out while waiting for her mehendi to dry up, which looks artistic alongside her red nailpolish.

Quoting 14th century Kashmiri mystic LalDed or Lalleshwari, the actress captioned her photographs: "O dear one, why worry? What is meant for you will always, always find you. - Lalleshwari."

On Friday evening, Yami shared a photograph of their wedding and wrote, "With the blessings of our family, we have tied the knot in an intimate wedding ceremony today. Being very private people, we celebrated this joyous occasion with our immediate family. As we embark on the journey of love and friendship, we seek all your blessings and good wishes. Love, Yami and Aditya."



Team Absolute | Mumbai

On World Environment Day on Saturday, actor AyushmannKhurrana reminisced about his trip to the Northeast to shoot for Anubhav Sinha's "Anek", directed by Anubhav Sinha.

"I will never ever forget the beauty of nature in its full glory that I witnessed at the Kaziranga National Park and Shillong when I was shooting for 'Anek'. As a lover of nature, I was bewildered to see the beauty that exists in our country. It was breathtakingly beautiful," Ayushmann said.

The star added, "My trip to Northeast was an eye-opener of what can be achieved by being in harmony with nature, and as a wildlife enthusiast it was a dream come true for me," he added. Ayushmann urged everyone to be conscious about protecting the environment and the planet. "I have always believed that we will have to find solutions to live in harmony with nature. The future of humankind depends on co-existing with nature and

AYUSHMANN RECALLS 'EYE-OPENER TRIP' TO NORTHEAST ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

pre-serving it. Look all around us, things that have never happened before are happening now because we have pushed nature to a tipping point," he says. The actor added, "We aren't realising that we won't survive if we continue on this path. We have to protect and nurture what we have for the future generations. This planet has provided abundantly for all of us and we should take care of it."

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Pooja Batra