

# absolute india



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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

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## INDIA BEGINS VACCINATION FOR 18 ABOVE, 6 STATES JOIN THE

# TOKEN DRIVE

Amid exponential rise in Covid-19 cases, India on Saturday started the third phase of vaccination drive covering those above the age of 18 years. However, the exercise began mainly in six states-- Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Odisha. All other states and Union Territories (UTs) have either deferred vaccination for the age group of 18-44 by a few days due to shortage of vaccine. Even in these six states, the drive is limited to just a few districts.



- The Centre has dubbed the drive as the Liberalised and Accelerated Phase-3 strategy of Covid-19 vaccination for which registration for the new eligible population groups commenced on April 28. Potential beneficiaries can either register directly on CoWIN portal ([cowin.gov.in](http://cowin.gov.in)) or through the Aarogya Setu app.
- Though vaccines are to be available for all adults below 45 from Saturday, as per the Centre's new policy, this is contingent on states-- and not the Centre-- making them available to citizens. The Centre will continue to provide vaccines to states and vaccinate, for free, those over 45.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The exercise began at a time when many states are reporting shortage of vaccines on contrary to the Centre's report available till 8 a.m. on Saturday which has claimed that more than 79 lakh Covid vaccine doses (79,13,518) are still available with the states and Union Territories (UTs) to be administered. The Centre has so far claimed to have provided nearly 16.37 crore vaccine doses (16,37,62,300) to states and

UTs "free of cost" of which the total consumption including wastages is 15,58,48,782 doses. Furthermore, the Centre has promised to provide more than 17 lakh (17,31,110) vaccine doses to the states and UTs within the next three days. It is to be noted that the government has made it mandatory for the 18-44 age group to register themselves on the CoWIN portal and get an appointment for vaccination against coronavirus, saying walk-ins will not be allowed initially to avoid "chaos" at

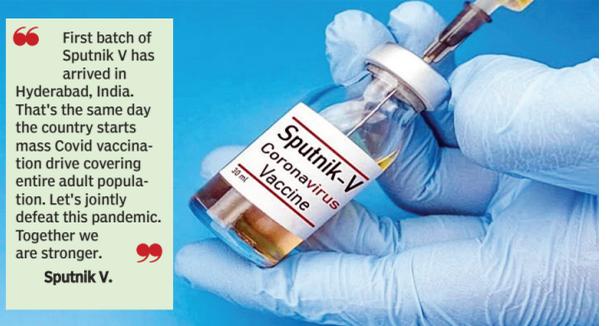
immunisation centres once the inoculations drive opens up substantially. States on the other hand have to negotiate with vaccine companies the price at which they will buy vaccines. This again will be from the 50 per cent of the vaccines that are made and cleared by the Central Drug Research Laboratory, Kasauli. The remaining will continue to go to the Centre for its programme. India has so far administered 15,49,89,635 doses since January 16 when the world's largest inoculation exercise started.

## FIRST CONSIGNMENT OF RUSSIAN VACCINE ARRIVES IN INDIA

# Sputnik is here

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

First batch of Russian vaccine for Covid-19, Sputnik V, arrived in Hyderabad on Saturday. A special cargo flight carrying the first consignment landed at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. It was immediately not clear how many doses have arrived. The consignment was delivered to Dr Reddy's Laboratories, which has entered into an agreement with the Russian vaccine maker. The company will seek mandatory approval of Central Drugs Laboratory for distribution of the vaccine in the country. Last month, the Indian regulators granted regulatory approval or restricted use authorisation to Sputnik V.



First batch of Sputnik V has arrived in Hyderabad, India. That's the same day the country starts mass Covid vaccination drive covering entire adult population. Let's jointly defeat this pandemic. Together we are stronger. **Sputnik V.**

With an efficacy of 91.6 per cent, Sputnik V was the first vaccine against Covid-19 in the world. Clinical trial data published in The Lancet indicated that the vaccine is "appears safe and effective".

## April GST collection sets new record, surges over Rs 1.41L cr

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's gross GST revenue collection reached a new record high of over Rs 1.41 lakh crore in April 2021, beating all expectations of lower collections in wake disruptions caused by fresh wave of Covid-19. Accordingly, the GST revenues during April 2021 are the highest since the introduction of the tax. The same feat was achieved even in March when collections at over Rs 1.23 lakh crore was the highest since introduction of GST in 2017. In line with the trend of recovery in the GST revenues over past six months, the revenues for the month of April 2021 are 14% higher than the GST revenues in the last month of March 2021," the Finance Ministry said in a



statement. According to the statement, the gross GST revenue collected in the month of April 2021 is at a record of Rs 1,41,384 crore of which CGST is Rs 27,837 crore, SGST is Rs 35,621, IGST is Rs 68,481 crore (including Rs 29,599 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess is Rs 9,445 crore (including Rs 981 crore collected on import of goods).



## WORK IS WORSHIP

It is rare to find a devout Muslim skipping 'roza' during the month of Ramadan. But for this ambulance driver in Prayagraj, working during the pandemic is more important than fasting.

Prayagraj : Faizul, who drives an ambulance is providing free hearing services to the poor and needy amid the pandemic, but he is also lending a helping hand to perform the last rites of orphans. The driver has been providing vehicles to ferry dead bodies of Covid-19 patients free of cost. A resident of Attarsuiya locality in Prayagraj, he has been working for the last 10 years to provide vehicles to ferry dead bodies of the poor for free, but during the difficult times of Covid-19, most of his time is spent in helping those in need. "These are difficult times. I move out as soon as I get a call. In such circumstances, it is not possible to keep 'roza' but I know Allah understands," he said. Faizul does not ask anyone for money, but accepts if someone offers on his own. Faizul is single by choice. "If I get involved in worldly things then my work may be interrupted, so I do not want to get married," said Faizul. He used to ferry dead bodies on a cart but later took a loan and bought an ambulance.

## Retd Kerala prof built houses for 200 underprivileged families



Team Absolute | Thiruvananthapuram

Dr M S Sunil, a retired zoology professor from Catholic College, Pathanamthitta in Kerala, is known for her compassion in providing shelter to the deprived and underprivileged. She developed the passion while working as the National Service Scheme (NSS) programme officer at her college. She came to know that a girl doing post graduation from the same college, along with her grandmother, was living in a makeshift shanty without a proper door. Moved by the plight of the girl, the professor decided to construct a home for the student. With the support of the students and fellow staff members, she constructed the home at a cost of Rs 1.17 lakh in 2005. Since then, there was no looking back for Sunil. The student, Asha, is now a higher secondary teacher in a government school and is still living in the home constructed by Sunil. Since 2005, the professor has constructed 200 houses for the deprived and the underprivileged and her 200th house was handed over to two widows, Janaki and Rukmini, at Kavalam in Alappuzha district of Kerala. The land documents are in the name of Janaki (80) while Rukmini is her close relative. The house which was built at a cost of Rs 5 lakh was supported by the Chicago Malayalee Association (CMA). President Ram Nath Kovind had conferred on her the Nari Shakti Puraskar for the year 2018 on Women's Day for her exemplary contribution to the society. The retired college professor has constructed 23 homes for those who had lost everything in the floods of 2018 and is now into construction of around eight homes with the 201st home being almost ready.

This is the 200th home handed over to a deserving family who were living in a dilapidated tent like accommodation. I really really happy and proud that I could wipe the tears from their eyes. **Dr. M S Sunil**

## The New Freshness

The fresh faced Jhataleka garners rave reviews for her natural performance in Tuesdays and Fridays, currently trending on Netflix India (Top 10 category).

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Miss India International Jhataleka made her entry into the world of films with the critically acclaimed and sweet romantic comedy, Sanjey Leela Bhansali and T-Series' Tuesdays and Fridays opposite Anmol Dhillon. Her lovable character Sia is what every career oriented girl would relate to and such was the same, as Jhataleka has got messages, calls and emails from young girls across the globe who look up to her character and are inspired by the same grit, determination and pazzaz she shows as Sia, an NRI girl raised by her single mother in London who is now working in Mumbai. Sia is the perfect amalgamation of the girl next door and a strong independent woman with a high sense of self respect.



Recently, the film made its digital release on Netflix India on and has been trending in the Top 10 category ever since! Apart from fans reaching out to the actor, Jhataleka is touched about the number of women messaging her via social media about the inter personal relations depicted in the film from family to love to friendships and more.

## PRANATI NAYAK TO GET OLYMPIC GAMES QUOTA

Navneet Singh | New Delhi

Gymnast Pranati Nayak, Asian bronze medallist in vault, will get the continental quota to compete in the Tokyo Olympic Games in July-August. Since the Asian Championships, scheduled in the last week of May in Tokyo, has been cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, the unused continental quotas will be reallocated to the eligible athletes from the Asian zone only. As per the rules, Sri Lanka's Elpitiya Badalge Dona Milka Geh is the first reserve for the Asian quota while Pranati is the second reserve. Both will, however, compete in the Olympics, starting July 23. The world body in gymnastics (FIG) will make an official announcement in this regard in June. Since the quota place is allocated by name, it can't be changed. Pranati said.



It's a big day in my life. I never thought I would get a chance to compete in the Olympics as there was no competition in 2020. And this year too due to pandemic all the major competitions have been cancelled. Hopefully I will get official communication from the Asian or the world body soon.

# 1st Dalit groom to ride horse

A large number of policemen walked along with the baraat (marriage procession) to stop interference from the high caste people -- a common occurrence in this village. As per the villagers, this village has never seen any Dalit groom riding on a horse even after 73 years of Independence.



Archana Sharma | Jaipur

It has been over seven decades since India attained Independence, but the caste system still holds sway in many parts of rural India. In a small village of Rajasthan -- Surajpura in Viratnagar town of Jaipur district -- turned into a virtual fortress during a Dalit wedding,

it being the first ever marriage here where the groom rode a horse as per Hindu tradition which the high caste people had never allowed to happen earlier. This time, groom Kailash Chand, son of Premchand Balai, sent a letter to MLA Indraj Gujjar and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot urging them to provide strict security to the marriage party -- it



being the first time after Independence that a Dalit groom will ride a horse in this village. Additional Superintendent of Police, Kotputli, Ramkumar Kaswa said that the groom had given in writing that he wanted police protection as he wanted to ride on a horse at his wedding. Hence, a huge police force was deployed to make history in this vil-

lage. The administration officials spoke to the villagers and convinced them to maintain peace during the wedding ceremony. The marriage was solemnised peacefully. However, what made it the talk of the town was that while relatives and guests were seen dancing in the 'baraat' a police team followed them everywhere to ensure their safety.



## 7 NAVY SHIPS TO BRING OXYGEN, MEDICAL EQUIPMENT FROM VARIOUS NATIONS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Seven Indian Navy ships have been deployed for the shipment of liquid medical oxygen-filled cryogenic containers and associated medical equipment from various countries to strengthen India's fight against the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"INS Kolkata, Kochi, Talwar, Tabar, Trikand, Jalashwa and Airavat have been deployed for the shipment of liquid medical oxygen-filled cryogenic containers in support of the nation's fight against Covid-19 and as part of operation 'Samudra Setu II'," the Indian Navy stated.

INS Kolkata and INS Talwar, deployed in the Persian Gulf, were the first batch of ships that were immediately diverted for the task and entered the port of Manama, Bahrain, on Friday. INS Talwar is headed back home with 40 MT liquid medical oxygen (LMO).

INS Kolkata has proceeded to Doha, Qatar, for embarking medical supplies and will subsequently head to Kuwait for embarking liquid oxy-



gen tanks.

Similarly, on the Eastern seaboard, INS Airavat has been diverted for the task, while INS Jalashwa, the LPD which played a

key role during operation Samudra Setu last year, was pulled out of maintenance, readied and sailed out to augment the effort, the Navy said. INS Airavat is scheduled to enter

Singapore for embarking liquid oxygen tanks, while INS Jalashwa is standing by in the region to embark medical supplies at short notice.

The second batch of ships comprising INS Kochi, Trikand and Tabar deployed in the Arabian Sea has also been diverted to join the efforts.

From the Southern Naval Command, landing ship tank INS Shardul is being readied to join the operation within 48 hours.

The Indian Navy also has the surge capability to deploy more ships when the need arises to further the nation's fight against Covid-19, it said.

All the ships are combat ready and capable of meeting any contingency in keeping with the attributes of the versatility of sea power, the Navy said.

It may be recalled that operation Samudra Setu was launched last year by the Navy and around 4,000 Indian citizens stranded in the neighbouring countries due to the Covid outbreak were successfully repatriated back to India.

## Missing Covid patients will face action: Karnataka DGP

Karnataka Director General and Inspector General of Police Praveen Sood has warned of tough action against those patients who had absconded after testing positive for Covid-19.

Bengaluru | Agencies

Sood's warning comes after Revenue Minister R. Ashoka had told media that around 3,000 covid patients had gone missing from the state's radar on Thursday.

Following the incident, Ashoka, who is also the Vice Chairman of the Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority, had directed the police to track these missing patients from Bengaluru.

Sood in his tweet said that the biggest disservice one can do is to switch off the phone and disappear after receiving the Covid positive report.

"Such people shall be traced and booked under Disaster Management Act for their misdemeanour and irresponsible act," he said, adding that one may not have symptoms but still might be the carrier. "Be responsible, cooperate and stay home," he said.

Sood also asked people to abide by the Covid restrictions seriously. "Let's take the



lockdown seriously. It's in our own interest and possibly the last resort," Sood said in another tweet. He said that more than 1,000 vehicles have been seized by police for loitering on flimsy grounds. "I am sure you don't want to return home without your vehicle. Cooperate with police, stay home and break the chain," Karnataka DGP warned the violators. Bengaluru police has so far seized over 6,000 vehicles since the lockdown was imposed on April 27. Karnataka imposed a 14-day lockdown in the urban areas of the state from April 27 night to May 12 morning in order to contain Covid. The state has been reporting about 35,000 cases a day while the active cases have reached close to 3.5 lakh.

## Jailed ex-RJD MP Shahabuddin succumbs to Covid-19

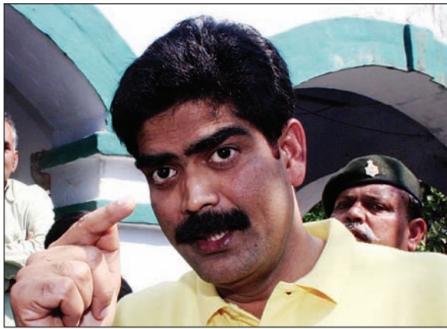
Team Absolute | New Delhi

Don-turned-politician and former Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Mohammad Shahabuddin passed away at a hospital in Delhi where he was undergoing treatment for Covid-19, officials said on Saturday.

The 53-year-old was serving a life sentence in a 2004 double murder case. He was shifted to the Tihar jail in 2018.

Sandeep Goyal, the Director General of Tihar jail, said in a statement, "Information has been received from the DDU (Deen Dayal Upadhyay) Hospital about the death of Mohammad Shahabuddin, an inmate of Delhi prison."

The official said that Shahabuddin was suffering from Covid-19 and was



admitted to the DDU Hospital on April 20.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Delhi High Court had directed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government and the prison authorities to ensure proper medical supervision and care of Shahabuddin.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh

had said that the doctor on duty for looking after Covid patients shall monitor Shahabuddin's health condition and treatment.

A court in Bihar had awarded a 10-year sentence to Shahabuddin for his involvement in an Arms Act case.

## Railways to deliver more medical oxygen to Delhi, UP, Telangana

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Even as several hospitals in the national capital are battling the less supply of medical oxygen, the Indian Railways on Saturday said that its Oxygen Express trains will deliver a record of 250 MT of LMO to Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana by Sunday morning.

A railway ministry spokesperson said that the national transporter has accelerated the pace of delivering liquid medical oxygen to various states across the country.

He said that Indian Railways has delivered 813 MT of LMO in 56 tankers to various states across the country. He added that 14 Oxygen Expresses have already completed their journey and five more loaded Oxygen Expresses are on the run carrying 342 MT of LMO in 18 tankers.

The official further said that Delhi



will receive its 120 MT of LMO in six tankers from Durgapur in next 24 hours. Earlier in the day, at least 12 patients at Batra hospital in died due to shortage of oxygen.

The official said that Haryana received its first and second Oxygen Express on Saturday carrying 79 MT of LMO in five tankers.

Third Oxygen Express carrying 30.6 MT LMO in 2 tankers has already started from Angul and currently on its way to Haryana.

He said that Madhya Pradesh received its second Oxygen Express carrying 70.77 MT of LMO to Jabalpur and Sagar from Jharkhand's Bokaro on Friday. The official said that third

Oxygen Express to Jabalpur carrying 22.19 MT Oxygen Express is on its way from Odisha's Rourkela and is expected to reach Jabalpur by tonight.

The official also said that Uttar Pradesh will be receiving its eighth Oxygen Express en-route from Bokaro carrying 44.88 MT LMO in three tankers. Uttar Pradesh has received approximately 355 MT LMO so far and more is on its way to Lucknow. He also said that Telangana will also receive its first Oxygen Express currently on the way from Angul carrying 124.26 MT LMO.

Tye official said that so far, Indian Railways has delivered more than 813 metric tonnes liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to Maharashtra (174 MT), Uttar Pradesh (355 MT), Madhya Pradesh (134.77 MT), Delhi (70 MT) and Haryana (79 MT). Telangana will start receive their Oxygen Express shortly.

## ONE HELD IN CHENNAI FOR SMUGGLING IN 1.2 KG GOLD



**Chennai:** The Chennai Air Customs said on Saturday that it has seized 1.2 kg gold from a passenger who flew into the city from Dubai. According to a statement issued by the Commissioner of Customs, Chennai International Airport, Mohamed Badurudeen arrived from Dubai with a 55 inch LED TV. When the officials examined it by opening its back cover, they found two heavy black rectangular bars concealed inside the speakers, which turn contained two gold bars. The two bars weighed 1.2 kg and are valued at Rs 57.75 lakh. Badurudeen has been arrested and further investigation is underway.

## Covid positive woman flees from isolation centre in Bihar

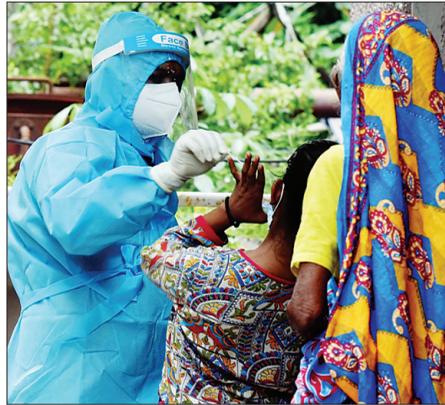
Patna | Agencies

A Covid positive woman escaped from an isolation centre in Bihar's Nalanda district on Saturday.

Confirming the incident, Krishna Kumar, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Hilsa sub-division, said that an enquiry committee has been set up and the woman inmate would be arrested soon.

The incident took place at the Vijayavani Beedi Shramik Hospital (VBSH) under the Deepnagar police station in Nalanda district.

Keeping in view the huge surge in the number of Covid



cases in Nalanda, the district administration has declared VBSH as a dedicated Covid facility. "The woman named Sushila Devi was arrested and booked under charges of physical assault. When she underwent a Covid test, she tested positive. Accordingly, we took her to the isolation centre for treatment," the DSP said. "As it is a serious issue, we have formed an enquiry committee and action will be initiated against the careless security personnel," he said.

Earlier, 19 Covid positive juveniles had escaped from an isolation centre in Saran district on April 19.

## Lockdown in Delhi extended by one week: Kejriwal



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the national capital, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday announced to extend the lockdown in the city for one more week.

Earlier on April 26, the Chief Minister had extended the week-long lockdown in the national capital till May 3.

Taking to Twitter, Kejriwal said, "Lockdown in Delhi is being extended by one week." The national capital has been witnessing a massive surge in the number of Covid-19 cases since the past few weeks. As per the data received on Saturday morning, the city recorded over 27,000 new cases and 375 deaths in the past 24 hours - the 13th straight day when Delhi reported more than 20,000 cases a day.

## Evolve national consensus to tackle Covid: Sonia Gandhi

Congress Interim President Sonia Gandhi in a video statement on Saturday asked the Union Government to evolve a national consensus to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.



states should wake up and work together and fulfill your responsibility," Sonia said in the message.

"My first request to the central government would be to transfer Rs 6,000 to migrants, testing should be increased, free vaccine is key to keep people safe," she added. Sonia Gandhi's message comes in the wake of the Covid surge which crossed 4 lakh cases on Saturday.

## Escaped undertrial held by Goa Police Crime Branch in HP

Panaji | Agencies

The Goa Police Crime Branch on Saturday arrested an undertrial Hemchand Bharadwaj, a Himachal Pradesh resident, after he returned to his native village during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. He

had escaped a Goa prison in August 2020.

A statement issued by the Crime Branch said that Bharadwaj, who is facing a drug-offence related trial in Goa, was arrested at his ancestral home in Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh on Saturday. The statement said that Bharadwaj, after his escape from Goa's

## GOVT TARGETS ROAD CONSTRUCTION WORTH RS 15 LAKH CRORE IN NEXT 2 YEARS

**New Delhi:** The Centre is giving utmost priority to the development of infrastructure and has set a target of road construction worth Rs 15 lakh crore in the next two years.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari made the announcement on Friday while addressing the Indo-US Partnership Vision Summit through video conferencing. The Minister was confident that his ministry will achieve target of 40 kilometres per day of highways construction in current fiscal, saying "the government is permitting 100 per FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in road sector". In India, Gadkari said, projects like National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) for 2019-2025 is the first-of-its-kind and the government is committed to provide world class infra to its citizens and improving quality of their lives. He said that under the NIP, there are over 7,300 projects to be implemented at a total outlay of Rs 111 lakh crore by year 2025 and that the project aims at improving project preparation, and attract investment into infrastructure like highways, railways, ports, airports, mobility, energy and agriculture and rural industry.



Colvale central jail in August last year, he "remained hiding across Goa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh being careful to not remain in the same place for too long".

"Seeing the opportunity to visit his hometown during Covid, he was apprehended in his hometown by the team of Crime Branch," the statement said.

Bharadwaj was arrested for the possession of one kg hashish in early 2020 by officials attached to the Pernem police station in North Goa.

## SP LEADER AZAM KHAN, SON ABDULLAH TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

**Sitapur :** Jailed Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Azam Khan and his son Abdullah Azam Khan have tested positive for Covid-19. The RT-PCR reports of 13 inmates, including Azam Khan, lodged in Sitapur jail, have come out positive for the infection.

Jail Superintendent R.S. Yadav said Rampur MP Azam Khan and his son Abdullah Azam Khan have been found to be infected with Covid-19 in a report released by the state health department on Friday night. Of the 13 inmates, 12 have been moved to a separate precinct.

According to the jail administration, Azam Khan had observed 14 'fasts' (roza) after which he complained of having contracted the infection. After investigation, he is undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

The prison doctor is examining all the jail inmates, including Azam Khan. The health department has been asked to investigate the other inmates. As soon as the health team arrives, Covid tests of more than 50 prisoners will be done.



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India logs 4L Covid cases for the first time in a new high

## BREAKING THE RECORD, DAILY

It was the first time when India crossed four lakh figure of Covid cases in a day. For the last nine days, over three lakh Covid cases were being reported while over 3,000 casualties have been reported for the past four days. On Friday, India witnessed 3,498 deaths, second highest fatalities in a day.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India witnessed highest spike of 4,01,999 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 3,523 fatalities due to coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHF) said on Saturday. India's total tally of total Covid-19 cases now stands at 1,91,64,969, the highest since the pandemic started in 2020, with 32,68,710 active cases and 2,11,853 deaths so far. According to MoHF, 2,99,988 people have been discharged in the last 24 hours taking the total recoveries to 1,56,84,406. The health ministry said that a total of 15,49,89,635 people have been vaccinated so far in the country, including 27,44,485 people administered vaccines in the last 24 hours. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, 28,83,37,385 samples have been tested up to April 29, 2021 for Covid-19, of these 19,45,299 samples were tested on Friday.

**Maharashtra reported a record high of 6,64,683 Covid-19 cases followed by Karnataka (3,82,710), Uttar Pradesh (3,10,783) and Kerala (3,04,074).**



### 12 succumbed in Delhi hospital due to O2 shortage

New Delhi: Twelve Covid-19 patients, including a doctor, lost their lives on Saturday afternoon at Delhi's Batra Hospital due to lack of medical oxygen for over an hour. The tragedy was reported at around 12.45 p.m. at the Batra Hospital in Delhi's Mehrauli area when eight persons, including a doctor, were reported dead. Later the toll mounted to 12. Stating that it was hard to revive such patients at a later stage, the doctor expressed apprehension that the death toll may rise. A total of 220 patients are currently on oxygen support at the Batra Hospital. In an SOS message, the Batra Hospital had said earlier, "Oxygen will last for another 10 minutes." While oxygen was later supplied to the hospital, it said that by that time, eight patients had already died. Another four patients died later.



### MAHANTA CHANDRADAS TYAGI IS NO MORE, WAS INFECTED WITH CORONA IN HARIDWAR



Bhopal: Mahant Chandramadas Tyagi of the Gufta Mandir Bhopal, died on Saturday. He was admitted to Paliwal Hospital in the city after getting infected by Corona during Kumbh in Haridwar. Confirming this, Dr. JP Paliwal said that all attempts to save Maharaj failed. Mahant Chandramadas went to Haridwar to attend the Kumbh. He came ill from there. He was admitted to a private hospital in critical condition. Sources said that his lungs were 100% affected. He breathed his last on Saturday afternoon. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Former CM of Madhya Pradesh Kamal Nath has expressed deep sorrow over the demise of saint. Last rites of Mahant were performed at Gufta mandir, large number of people following Covid norms attended last rites.

## 19 killed in Gujarat's Bharuch Hospital fire



Gandhinagar | Agencies

At least 17 Covid-19 patients and two from medical staff have died after fire broke out in the Bharuch designated Covid hospital on Saturday morning. Over 50-60 patients were admitted in the Patel Welfare Hospital when the fire broke out in the ICU ward at midnight. The fire officers have said that the hospital did not have an NOC for fire. "A fire erupted around 12.30 midnight in one of the two ICU care units in the Patel Welfare hospital in Bharuch, a designated Covid hospital on the Jambusar highway bypass.

Immediately, the police, the collector and fire fighters rushed to the spot and with combined efforts, the fire has been doused," said Rajendra Chudasama, the Superintendent of Police (SP), Bharuch. The fire was controlled within an hour and around 50 patients were rescued and shifted to nearby hospitals according to sources. It is learnt that the hospital building did not have a No Objection Certificate (NOC) mandatory to be obtained from the fire department. "The hospital's another building has got the NOC from the fire department, but this building did

A total of 19 people have died due to the fire, including 17 Covid critical patients admitted in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)'s unit 1. Prima facie, it appears that the fire might have been caused by a short circuit, but the investigation is going on.

Rajendra Chudasama, SP, Bharuch

not have an NOC," said Deepak Makhija, the Bharuch regional fire officer. Meanwhile, Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has expressed condolences and announced Rs 4 lakh ex-gratia to the kin of the deceased. The CM has also ordered an inquiry into the incident.

### WATER HAS GONE ABOVE HEAD, ARRANGE OXYGEN NOW: DELHI HC RAPS CENTRE

## 'Do it by whatever means'



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Saturday rapped the Centre over the shortage of medical oxygen in the national capital amid the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and directed it to arrange the life-saving gas "by whatever means", saying "water has gone above the head, arrange everything now". The court made the observation while hearing the

petitions on how the health infrastructure is trying to cope with the deadly second wave of the pandemic. Considering the death of eight Covid patients, including a doctor, at Delhi's Batra Hospital due to the shortage of oxygen earlier in the day, the high court said: "Water has gone above the head. You have to arrange everything now. You have made the allocations. You have to fulfil them. Twelve lives have

We direct the Centre to ensure that Delhi receives its 490 MT oxygen supply today by whatever means. Delhi is not an industrial state... It doesn't have cryogenic tankers. We'll see your explanation on Monday if you can't supply oxygen.

been lost. We can't shut our eyes to it. The high court further directed the Centre to ensure that Delhi receives 490 MT oxygen supply on Saturday by "whatever means". The court further directed the Centre to submit its explanation by Monday if it fails to supply medical oxygen to Delhi hospitals. The court also said that it is the responsibility of the Central government to arrange oxygen tankers as well.

### WOMAN DIES IN CAR WAITING FOR HOSPITALISATION

Noida: A 35-year-old woman died in a car outside a government hospital due to Covid after waiting for hours for a bed. Even her body remained inside the car for three hours. The eyewitness said that the relatives of Jagriti Gupta were trying to find a hospital bed for her at the Government Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS). Gupta, who worked as an engineer in Greater Noida, is survived by her husband and two children.

### GOOF UP IN GOA COVID DEATH STATS; OPPN SLAMS GOVT

Panaji: An unprecedented 54 persons succumbed to Covid-19 related complications in Goa and 2,303 new infections were reported in the last 24 hours, however, the health ministry has claimed that 14 prior deaths were included in Saturday's list due to a "technical glitch". As the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state crept closer to the one lakh mark (Goa's population is around 15 lakh), an Opposition MLA urged the Bombay High Court to suo moto extend the ongoing lockdown by a few more days in order to stem the surge.

### CENTRE IDENTIFIES 30 NITROGEN PLANTS TO PRODUCE MEDICAL OXYGEN

New Delhi: The Centre has identified 30 nitrogen generation plants for production of medical oxygen considering Covid-19 pandemic situation and to further augment availability of oxygen for medical purposes in the country. UPL Ltd converted one 50 Nm<sup>3</sup> per hour capacity Nitrogen plant to produce oxygen using Zeolite Molecular Sieve, and installed it at L.G. Rotary Hospital, Vapi (Gujarat). This plant is producing 0.5 ton per day oxygen and is operational since April 27. UPL Ltd is also under process of conversion of three more plants. On conversion to oxygen plants, these plants will be installed at hospitals in Surat and Ankaleshwar. In the existing nitrogen plants, replacing Carbon Molecular Sieve (CMS) with Zeolite Molecular Sieve (ZMS) and few other changes such as installation of oxygen analyzer, change in control panel system, flow valve etc., oxygen for medical use can be produced.

## SHUT DOWN INDIA FOR FEW WEEKS TO BREAK COVID CHAIN: FAUCI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, White House's chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci has suggested a complete lockdown for a few weeks to curb transmission of the Covid-19, the media reported.

According to Fauci, a temporary lockdown in India is the need of the hour as it could have a significant impact on the dynamics of the outbreak.

"You can shutdown temporarily to put an end to the cycle of transmission. So one of the things to be considered is to temporarily shut down. To have a country like India, where two per cent of people are vaccinated, is a very serious situation. You absolutely have to get more people vaccinated."

"We are very pained to see India suffering so much. And that's the reason why the rest of the world needs to chip in and help. There is suffering now but I guarantee that we will get it back to normal. Hang in there, help each other," Fauci added. Alongside lockdown, Fauci emphasised that the most important thing is to get oxygen, supplies, medication, PPE and vaccinations. India on Saturday started the third phase of the vaccination drive covering those above the age of 18 years.

## Chhattisgarh rolls out 'oxygen on wheels', ambulance services for Covid patients

New Delhi: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday started 'oxygen on wheels', a service aimed at providing free doorstep delivery of oxygen support to the Covid patients in home isolation. Under the service, Covid patients in home isolation, whose oxygen saturation is less than normal, will be provided free oxygen concentrator at their homes. Home isolation assistance team will regularly monitor such patients even after their recovery, the con-

centrators would then be collected back. The state government will also provide free ambulance and dry ration distribution services to the Covid patients. Inaugurating the three services of Raipur Municipal corporation virtually, Baghel said that the doorstep delivery of oxygen concentrators in the state would prove extremely beneficial for the patients in need. He added that the indoor stadium had also been converted into Covid hospital.

## Crisis over shortage of Remdesivir, Fabiflu to end by next fortnight

New Delhi: Though dire shortages of Covid-19 related medicines, seeing price spikes on the black market, the country's apex chemist body have assured that a sizable increase in supply of important life saving drugs from manufacturing companies would 'end the crisis' by next fortnight in India. "An unprecedented surge in demand of some crucial medicines, used in treating Covid patients, has created a mess. Now companies like Cipla or Cadila, and others have increased pro-

duction of vials manifolds. We promise supplies will be sufficient." Rajiv Singhal, General Secretary of All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD), representing over 9.50 lakh chemists across the country, told reporter. Explaining the reason behind the shortage and delay in supply of Remdesivir, a life saving drug for critically ill Covid patients, J.S. Shinde, President, AIOCD said that for production of a single batch of this drug, it takes around 15-16 days.

## Using oxygen concentrator without medical guidance can be harmful: Experts

- Oxygen concentrators are simple devices which do precisely what its name promises - they take in ambient air and increase the oxygen concentration, by filtering out and throwing away nitrogen.
- These oxygen concentrators work the same way in supplying oxygen needed by the body such as oxygen tanks or cylinders, with the use of a cannula, oxygen masks or nasal tubes. The difference is that, while the cylinders need to be refilled, the Oxygen Concentrators can work 24 x 7.
- According to a WHO training manual on pulse oximetry, if the oxygen saturation is 94 per cent or lower, the patient needs to be treated quickly.
- A saturation of less than 90 per cent is a clinical emergency.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Experts have recently warned that using oxygen concentrators without medical guidance can be very harmful. Now, according to the latest clinical guidance for management of adult Covid-19 patients, issued by the Union Health Ministry, an oxygen concentration less than or equal to 93 per cent on room air requires hospital admission, while that below 90 per cent is classified as a severe disease, requiring admission in ICU. The government advises that given the

prevalent situation in the wake of the second wave, one must do whatever he or she best can, in order to try and replenish oxygen levels, in the event of delay or inability in getting hospital admission as per the clinical management protocol. Speaking on the appropriate usage of concentrators, Professor and Head of Department Anaesthesia, B. J. Medical College, Pune, Sanyogita Naik said, that oxygen concentrators are also very useful for patients experiencing post-Covid complications which necessitate oxygen therapy.



Patients with moderate pneumonia induced by Covid-19 -- with oxygen saturation less than 94 -- can benefit from supplemental oxygen given through oxygen concentrator, but only till they get hospital admission. However, patients using it themselves without suitable medical advice can be harmful.



# PHASE 3 OF VACCINATION IN MAHARASHTRA GETS OFF TO A SLOW START

Mumbai started vaccinations for everyone aged above 18 from around 2 pm at only five BMC-run centres, which had a target of 200 vaccinations per centre

Seven Hills Hospital, Cooper Hospital and Rajawadi Hospital were the only five spots that did vaccinations on Saturday.

People started queuing up at Seven Hills from 8 am in the morning. Many people queued up at Nair Hospital even after their time slots were cancelled. They had managed to book appointments last night, but received cancellation messages on Saturday morning. Television channels reported that similar confusion plagued Pune's CVCs too. In Nashik, those in 18-45 did online registration and got tokens but vaccination didn't start till late in the day, there's a limited quantity of doses. Only two centres of 55 in Nashik city are giving doses for those above 18 years. Journalist Yatin Mota tweeted that he managed to get his job at Nair hospital after a 45-minute wait in a queue. Dr Ramesh Bharmal, Dean, BYL Nair hospital said they had received vaccine doses on

Friday evening following which they directed their staff to give these doses only to registered beneficiaries who are between 18 to 44 years of age. "We have been instructed to give jab only to the first 200 registered beneficiaries between 18 to 44 years of age. However there will be no walk-in registration at the centre," he said. Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar has urged citizens not to rush to vaccination centres after the drive resumes for all. Mumbai has paused vaccinations above 45 years for the time being and on May 1 carried out a handful of vaccinations in five centres. "Even after the availability of vaccine stocks, when vaccination starts, Mumbaikars should not rush to the vaccination centres unnecessarily. I appeal to everyone to leave the house only after receiving the message from the vaccination centre and confirming the availability of the vaccine after registering on the Co-win app," said Pednekar.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The third phase of vaccination in Maharashtra took off on Saturday with only a small number of centres inoculating about a few hundred at each centre. Huge queues and confusion around appointments marked the experience on Day 1 of universal Covid-19 vaccination in Maharashtra. State capital Mumbai started vaccinations from around 2 pm at only five BMC-run centres, which had a target of 200 vaccinations per centre. BKC covid vaccination centre (CVC), Nair Hospital,

# Centre Under Pressure Due To Covid Spike In States: Pawar

Experts have also predicted the third wave of the pandemic, Ajit Pawar said, adding, "Therefore, we are developing healthcare facilities across Maharashtra."

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Saturday said the Union government is under pressure due to the surge in coronavirus cases in several states as it has to supply oxygen and other material. He was speaking to reporters after the state foundation day event in Pune, of which he is the guardian minister. "During the first wave of the pandemic, Maharashtra was hit hard. But in the second wave, some other states have also been impacted badly, possibly due to the poll gatherings and Kumbh Mela. Therefore, the Centre is under pressure as it has to supply oxygen and other material to these states," he said.

"I feel the Centre should not have exported COVID-19 vaccines to other countries," he added.

Experts have also predicted the third wave of the pandemic, he said, adding, "Therefore, we are developing healthcare facilities across Maharashtra." The government is trying to set up infrastructure for the supply of oxygen, he said. "The Centre as well as the state governments have learnt a lot from this situation," the NCP leader added. Speaking about the vaccine availability, he said the government has discussed the issue with Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla and Bharat Biotech. "We are keen to import vaccines from foreign manufacturers with the permission of the Union government."



We have to vaccinate 5.71 crore people in the age group of 18 to 45 years," he said. According to Pawar, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has discussed the issue of vaccine supply with Mr Poonawalla. However, it seems difficult for them to supply such huge number of vaccines, he said. "We are not depending on one vaccine manufacturer only. We have also placed an order with Bharat Biotech. We are trying to vaccinate people as early as possible," he said. Pawar said the state has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's permission for import of vaccines from abroad.

## Bhima -Koregaon:

# NIA challenges laptop hacking charge by US firm

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has refuted a report by a US digital forensics firm suggesting that certain incriminating materials were allegedly planted into the laptop of one of the prime accused in the Koregaon-Bhima case.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The NIA's denial came in an affidavit filed in the Bombay High Court, dismissing contentions by the US firm Arsenal Consulting, which had claimed that the damning material including a conspiracy to assassinate the Prime Minister and overthrowing the government, was planted in the laptop of the accused Rona J. Wilson.

The affidavit came in response to Wilson's plea in February, seeking setting up of a Special Investigation Team comprising retired Supreme Court or High Court judges, legal and digital experts, to probe the alleged planting of fake documents in his laptop over a 22-month period, a stay on the proceedings against him and his immediate release.

However, the NIA has contended that Wilson's plea was not maintainable, and the Arsenal Consulting had "no locus standi to give such opinion" without the court's permission when the trial against Wilson and 15 other activists, academi-

cians, Dalits, etc, was still pending. Besides Wilson, another 15 persons were arrested in countrywide swoops in 2018, including P. Varavara Rao, Sudhir Dhawale, Surendra Gadling, Anand Telumbde, Gautam Navlakha, Jyoti Jagtap, Ramesh Gaichor, Shona Sen, Arun Ferreira, Sagar Gorkhe, Mahesh Raut, Sudha Bharadwaj, Vernon Gonsalves, Fr. Stan Swamy and Hany Babu, facing charges under the dreaded UAPA Act. Hitting back at the Wilson, the NIA said in the affidavit that it was for Wilson to explain how his laptop was allegedly hacked to 'plant 10 letters' when it was in his possession (from June 13, 2016 onwards) and so he could not blame the probe agencies which entered the picture only much later. Terming his allegations as 'vague', not giving the names of the alleged cyber-hackers, the NIA argued that Wilson's contentions were based on Arsenal Consulting's report which is not a part of the chargesheet, and hence his plea should be dismissed.

After hearing Wilson's plea, a division bench of Justice S.S. Shinde and Justice Manish Pitale had directed the NIA to file its reply by April 29 and

now the matter will come up for further hearing on May 4. In mid-Feb, Arsenal Consulting's report claiming that a malware attack had taken place on Wilson's laptop in June 2016 had created a sensation.

Among other things, the report said that Wilson's laptop was under surveillance and 52 documents (of which 10 were probed by the US firm) were delivered in a hidden folder, including one a day before his arrest on April 17, 2018. The NIA has pleaded that the court should not consider Arsenal Consulting's report which it (NIA) has not accepted, though the trial court could look into it at the relevant stage later.

Instead, the NIA stated an alternative remedy that Wilson could move the trial court for discharge instead of seeking quashing of the chargesheet against him. Arsenal Consulting had prepared its report after Wilson's lawyers requested help of American Bar Association (ABA) to conduct an independent forensic analysis of the clone copy of electronic copies given to him after the NIA chargesheet was filed.

## Maha sees slight dip in Covid deaths, toll breaches 69K-mark

Maharashtra on Saturday witnessed a slight dip in the number of Covid related deaths even as the states overall toll breached the 69,000-mark, while the number of daily infections rose marginally, health officials said here on Saturday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Compared to 828 deaths reported on Friday, the state on Saturday recorded 802 fatalities, lower than the peak of 1,035 deaths (April 28), taking the state's overall toll to 69,615, the worst in the country. The number of new cases remained above the 60,000-mark and went up slightly from 62,919 on Friday to 63,282 on Saturday, taking the state's tally to 46,65,754.

Mumbai reported 3,897 new cases on Saturday, which took the city's tally to 6,52,368 till date, after touching the highest daily spike of 11,206 cases on April 4. However, Mumbai's death toll went up slightly, from 89 on Friday to



90 now, taking the total fatalities in the country's commercial capital to 13,215, the highest for a single city in the country. After four days, the state's death rate went up from 1.05 per cent to 1.49 per cent, while the number of active cases stood at 6,63,758. On the brighter side, 61,326 fully-cured patients returned home, taking the total number of recoveries to 39,30,302 now, with a recovery of 84.24 per cent. The Mumbai Circle - comprising Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad districts - recorded a drop in new cases from 11,140 on Friday to 10,581 on Saturday, taking its overall tally to 13,81,460, while 160 deaths mounted its death toll to 23,466. Of the day's 802 total fatalities, Mumbai led the chart with 90

deaths, followed by 66 in Solapur, 57 in Nagpur, 54 in Pune, 45 each in Thane and Nashik, 37 in Osmanabad, 32 in Ahmednagar, 31 each in Aurangabad and Yavatmal, 29 each in Beed and Chandrapur, 27 in Latur, 25 in Satara, 24 in Bhandara, 21 in Amravati, 20 in Raigad, 19 each in Sangli and Nanded, 18 in Wardha, 12 in Sindhudurg, 11 in Parbhani, and 10 in Akola -- in the higher range. There were seven deaths each in Kolhapur, Jalna and Washim, 6 in Jalgaon, 5 each in Palghar, Nandurbar and Hingoli, 4 in Gadchiroli, and 2 each in Dhule and Gondia -- in the lower range. Two districts -- Ratnagiri and Buldhana -- didn't report any fatality on Saturday.

## Palghar School becomes Covid-19 centre for tribals

A school in Palghar, Maharashtra is helping the tribal population of the area deal with the pandemic by becoming a Covid-19 care

school in Maharashtra's Palghar has been transformed into a Covid-19 care facility dedicated to the tribal citizens of the area, providing them with beds and medication. The school will be able to accommodate several patients as it has been transformed into a 100-bed Covid-19 care facility, an official said on Saturday. Vivek Pandit, the founder of Shramajivi Sanghatana,

an organisation that fights for the rights of tribals, took an initiative in this regard. Talking to reporters, Pandit said, "When the entire world is reeling under the pandemic, we thought we should do something for the society."

He further added, "This is our way of helping the administration. This 100-bed facility would help the local tribal residents."

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In an effort to help the citizens of the city fight the pandemic, a private

## "Oxygen On Wheels" To Tackle Shortage In Maharashtra

"Today, Oxygen is the key to reducing mortality. The problem is not of oxygen production but its transportation from producing plants to hospitals and homes," tweeted Anand Mahindra.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Group chairman Anand Mahindra today rolled out the "Oxygen on Wheels" project to ease the transportation of oxygen

from producing plants to hospitals and homes amid acute oxygen shortage in Maharashtra due to rising COVID-19 cases. "Today, Oxygen is the key to reducing mortality. The problem is not of oxygen production but its transportation from producing plants to hospitals and homes. We're attempting to bridge this gap with "Oxygen on Wheels" a project implemented via Mahindra Logistics," tweeted Anand Mahindra. He said that the "Oxygen on Wheels" uses trucks in local shuttle routes to connect oxygen producers with hospitals and homes. An operations control centre has been established and the storage location is replenished

from the local refilling plant. A direct-to-consumer model is being conceived.

"I made a commitment to @CMOMaharashtra on Tuesday and in just 48 hours the @Mahindralog\_MLL team launched the program in Pune and Chakan with 20 Boleros," he said. He further said that 61 jumbo cylinders have already been delivered to 13 hospitals in urgent need. "I'm deeply grateful to the team." The rollout plan includes Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, Nagpur going live with another 50-75 Bolero pickups on the road in the next 48 hours," Anand Mahindra further said.

He also said that they will expand this project throughout the country.

"We have started in Maharashtra but will expand this through the country relying on the support of our trusted dealership network & the assistance of local administrations to succeed," he added. Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, various states across the country are facing an acute shortage of oxygen. India is facing the worst second wave of COVID-19 pandemic amid surging cases. The country reported over 4 lakh new COVID-19 cases and 3,523 deaths in the last 24 hours, as per the latest government data.

# Only seven districts will have enough isolation beds

According to these projections, Nagpur, Pune, Nashik, Chandrapur, Yavatmal and Chandrapur will be the worst-hit districts.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Only seven out of Maharashtra's 36 districts will have enough isolation beds by May 11 for a projected rise in Covid-19 cases, the state government has red-flagged based on its calculations. According to these projections, Nagpur, Pune, Nashik, Chandrapur, Yavatmal and Chandrapur will be the worst-hit districts.

The government has made these projections taking into account the current growth rate of cases to understand what the infrastructure demands would be for a "worst case scenario". The projections were shared in the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

Nagpur, set to be the worst hit, is heading towards a shortfall of over 43,000 isolation beds

if it touches the projected 1.13 lakh active cases by May 11. The district will fall short by 8,679 oxygen beds, 1,247 ICUs and 455 ventilators.

Nashik will also fall short of beds if its active caseload crosses the expected 95,000-mark. There will be a dearth of 38,615 beds, including 6,253 oxygen beds, 1,535 ICUs and 29 ventilators. In Pune, 1.2 lakh active cases are predicted by May 11 and the district will fall short by 26,345 isolation beds and 4,097 oxygen beds. Thane is expected to have a shortfall of 14,430 beds if its active caseload reaches 79,095. Districts have been given the estimates and directed to scale up beds.

In Akola division, deputy director in charge Dr Rajkumar Chavan said they are going to start a 200-bed jumbo centre and 50-bed dedicated Covid health centre. "We will get 250 more oxy-

gen beds. This won't go waste, as a third wave is also expected," he added.

Only Mumbai, Jalgaon, Dhule and Amravati are set to face no shortage in the number of beds, ICU or ventilator, the survey showed. All these districts are currently showing a decline in new cases. Mumbai, however, plans to set up more jumbo centres in Malad and Dadar and also scale up its intensive care treatment to prepare for a third wave.

In rural districts, the government plans to link patients with doctors in urban areas to monitor those needing ICU and ventilator treatment. Officials said that high definition cameras will be installed to monitor ICU patients and allow specialists sitting in other cities to direct how the person should be treated.

In Chandrapur, over 40,000 active cases are

expected, leading to a shortfall of 16,995 isolation beds, 3,989 oxygen beds, 954 ICUs and 249 ventilators. Yavatmal will fall short by 13,683 isolation beds if projected cases cross 39,000. The district will require 3,000 more oxygen beds and 760 additional ICU beds.

Mumbai, where the spike in cases started in February, has shown signs of having passed the second peak. It is expected to have 64,500 active cases by May 11, and will still have over 26,000 beds vacant. The city's positivity rate has been on a consistent decline this month. From 27.9 per cent on April 4, it came down to 19.1 per cent by April 14 and 9.01 per cent on April 29. The city's positivity rate is much lower than state average. Until a week ago, Mumbai was struggling with dearth of ventilators and ICUs. Now, with rapid decline in new cases this week,

it had 35 ICU and six ventilators vacant in hospitals on Friday morning.

Amravati is seeing a decline in new cases although its death rate still remains high. Other districts that will have enough isolation beds by May 11 are Dhule, Nandurbar, Solapur, Jalgaon and Ahmednagar.

At least 13 districts will fall short of enough ventilators, 18 will witness dearth of ICUs and 25 districts will fall short of oxygen beds, the projections stated.

"We are trying to speed up vaccination to increase immunity in the population. But when the next phase of immunisation will begun is still not clear. It depends on how fast we can get more vaccines," said Dr Archana Patil, Director (Family Welfare), Directorate of Health Services.



# SEEK TREATMENT AS SOON AS SOME SYMPTOMS ARE SEEN: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Corona is completely cured if treatment is started early, but the delay can be fatal. Therefore, if there are any symptoms then check up should be done immediately and at the same time give medical kit to the person so that treatment can start. Do not be careless at all, seek treatment as soon as some symptoms are seen.

Chouhan said that patients should be identified after conducting door-to-door survey and medical kit should be given and treatment started if symptoms like cold, cough, fever etc. are seen. By following the strategy of "early detection and cure", we can cure every corona patient. According to a study, Madhya Pradesh is coming down from Corona peak.

Chouhan was holding a meeting with members of the Corona Com-



Group through video conferencing from his residence today. The concerned ministers and officials were present in the meeting.

There are now 88 thousand 511 active cases of Corona in the state. In the last 24 hours, there has been a decline of 2285 active cases, 12 thousand 379 new cases have come, while 14 thousand 562 patients have been cured. Our positivity rate has

improved to 20.3% and weekly positivity rate is 22%. Additional Chief Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman said that according to the case prediction made by Dr. Mahendra Agarwal, Professor, IIT Kanpur, Madhya Pradesh has reached its Corona Peak. Now cases are decreasing. Chief Minister directed that the doctors must call and advise the patients under treatment

in home isolation at least once a day. Adequate supply of oxygen is being made in the state. The state is getting a quota of 589 MT of oxygen. 465 MT was received on 30 April, 489 MT oxygen supply received on May 1 and 503 MT supply is estimated for May 2. A total of 58 new oxygen plants are being set up in all districts of the state. Chief Minister instructed to speed up the work.



## Truck with over 2 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses found abandoned by roadside

Team Absolute | Jabalpur

A truck with as many as 2,40,000 doses of Covaxin was found abandoned by the roadside in Narsinghpur district. The estimated cost of these vaccines was found to be approximately Rs 8 crore. When police traced the driver's mobile location, his phone was found in bushes near the highway. A truck carrying over two lakh Covid-19 vaccines was found abandoned by the roadside near Kareli Bus Stand in Narsinghpur district of State on Saturday, police said. The truck was loaded with as many as 2,40,000 doses of Covaxin, they added. The estimated cost of these vaccines was found to be approximately Rs 8 crore.

The Kareli Police had received

information that a truck had been left by the roadside for a long time, but the truck's driver and conductor were missing. On receipt of information, Kareli Police reached the spot and while examining the truck, they found as many as 2,40,000 doses of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. "The estimated cost of these vaccines was found to be approximately Rs 8 crore. When police traced the driver's mobile location, his phone was found in bushes near the highway. The air condition of the truck was in a working condition which means doses are safe. We are looking for the driver and conductor of the truck, but they are untraceable as of now," Sub Inspector from Kareli Police Station Ashish Bopache said.

## MORE 'OXYGEN EXPRESS' TRAINS ON WAY TO HARYANA, MADHYA PRADESH

Bhopal: The Railways said on Friday that more 'Oxygen Express' trains were on their way to Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh as cumulative liquid medical oxygen (LMO) carried by the transport monolith reached 664 MT and 126 MT more are on the track. In an official statement, the Ministry of Railways said, the transport monolith had been continuing with its 'Oxygen Express journey' and trying to save as many lives as possible and was 'fully prepared to run even more such trains based on the requests from state governments.'

According to the Railways, Madhya Pradesh will receive its second 'Oxygen Express' carrying 47.37 MT LMO from Bokaro to Sagar and Jabalpur in four tankers.

## Oxygen audit launched in Ratlam

With an aim to optimise the use of oxygen, oxygen audit has been launched in the district.

Team Absolute | Ratlam

Collector Gopalchandra Dad claimed that there is no shortage of oxygen and every effort is being made to maintain supply to the hospitals, but he stressed the need for optimal use of the oxygen. He said that at present supply to the hospitals was being made sufficiently and cylinders, as demanded, have been supplied. He said that oxygen has become an important drug also and therefore its optimal use is also important. An official said that a meeting of the private covid hospital management was held with the district administra-

tion in which the demand of oxygen was reviewed and on the basis of the requirement of the oxygen per patient every hospital's requirement of oxygen has been ascertained. It was claimed that private hospitals were being supplied oxygen as per their requirements and supply shall remain continued as per demand. Ratlam city MLA Chetanya Kashyap claimed that an adequate supply of oxygen to the hospitals is being maintained here as per needs per bed. He appealed to the private hospital to continue to admit the patients as per their bed capacity as there was no shortage of oxygen for patient purpose. Kashyap assured that every hospital as per their bed capacity will be supplied oxygen timely. Private hospitals should admit the patients as per the approved bed capacity.

## RISE IN NUMBER OF COVID-19 BEDS IN INDORE AS CASES SURGE

Indore: Indore, Madhya Pradesh's worst coronavirus-hit district, will soon get a 100-bed COVID-19 facility as part of the state government's initiative to ramp up health infrastructure to tackle the surge in cases. A COVID-19 block with 100 beds is coming up on the fifth and sixth floors of the Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital and it is likely to start functioning from Monday or Tuesday, Indore Guardian Minister Tulsi Ram Silawat told reporters on Saturday. Meanwhile, a COVID-19 centre on Khandwa road doubled its treatment capacity from 600 beds to 1,200 beds during the day, the facility's in charge Vivek Shrotri said.

Some 7,500 beds earmarked for COVID-19 treatment were occupied currently in the district, a health official added.

## Knocking from village to village for special fever screening

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that Kill-Corona Abhiyan-2 is being conducted in all rural areas of the state for special fever screening from village to village and house to house. Especially in areas where the rate of infection is high, the survey team is reaching out and identifying potential patients on priority. 15 thousand 308 survey teams have been formed for the Kill-Corona Campaign-2 started from April 24 last. The survey of more than 2 crore 29 lakh 51 thousand 135 population has been completed by the survey teams so far. During the survey, samples of more than 84 thousand 148 potential patients have been taken. The campaign will run until 9 May.

Out of 22 thousand 811 gram panchayats in the state, 21 thousand 584 gram panchayats have pledged to impose public corona curfew, which is about 94.62 percent of the total panchayats. All government and private offices except essential services are operating with a 10 percent presence. The gathering of people is prohibited for organizing social, political, cultural sports, educational, public events and entertainment activities.

Vaccination work is also going on in the state. So far, about 80 lakh 69 thousand people aged 45 years have been vaccinated, health workers front line workers, senior citizens and above 45 years. More than 3 crore 22 lakh citizens



of the state will get vaccinated. The government will spend about Rs 2710 crore on this work. The program of 4.5 million doses of the Kovishield vaccine has been issued.

The number of Corona Volunteers across the state has now exceeded 1 lakh 8 thousand 375. All the volunteers are shoulder to shoulder with the government and are making significant contribution in public awareness works under Covid control. 1616 Volunteers have been registered in Alirajpur district. Volunteers have presented an all-purpose ambulance vehicle to the townspeople in the district's development Jobat. Recently, 7 cylinders of oxygen could be transported from Ambulance to Jobat. Under the Jeevan Amrit Yojana, 2 lakh 92 thousand 448 people have been benefited by distributing 1 lakh 16

thousand 979 decoction packets per family since April 8, 2021.

During the Corona crisis, the state government has started a program of innovation and yoga. The state has so far registered 2,918 yoga instructors. Of these, 2 thousand 531 yoga instructors were mapped with 25 thousand 233 home isolated patients. At present, 2,390 yoga instructors are currently doing yoga exercises online to 15 thousand 146 home isolated patients.

In this hour of crisis, the state government has issued an order to increase the due date of short-term crop loan disbursed in the Kharif 2020 season from April 30 to May 31. The state government has issued an order to increase the effective market price guideline for the year 2021 to 30 June 2021 for the registration of documents.

## Bima Hospital Covid Centre in Nagda to start with 50 beds

ICU ward won't be available and asymptomatic patients will also get treatment in this centre. Serious and critical patients will have to get treated in the ICU ward of Civil Hospital or will have to go to other cities.

Team Absolute | Nagda

In the wake of spike in Covid cases the isolation ward in Bima Hospital will begin with 50 beds instead of 24 and the people wandering for beds will get some relief. Out of these 50, 40 beds will be oxygen beds and 10 beds will be used for general patients. ICU ward won't be available and asymptomatic patients will also get treatment in this centre. Serious and critical

patients will have to get treated in the ICU ward of Civil Hospital or will have to go to other cities.

On Thursday collector Ashish Singh came to visit the Bima Hospital and said that the 24 bedded isolation ward will have 50 beds in total till Wednesday. MLA Dilip Singh Gurjar has released Rs 10 lakhs for beds in isolation ward of Bima Hospital and for extra beds in Civil Hospital from the MLA fund on Friday.

## In run-up to by-poll and after, Covid cases saw a jump in Damoh

Electioneering in Damoh began from the end of last month, soon after nominations were filed, and continued till April 15.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A day before the results of its Assembly by-poll, Damoh is reeling under the burden of Covid-19 cases that spiked manifold during and after a high-pitched election campaign.

Electioneering in Damoh began from the end of last month, soon after nominations were filed, and continued till April 15. In that time, the biggest political names of the state, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Rajya Sabha MP Jyoti Raditya Scindia, former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh and state Congress chief Kamal Nath descended upon the constituency to hold rallies, roadshows and Janata Sabhas.

Amid the campaigning, daily new cases in Damoh kept rising-11 on April 1, 36 on April 11, 54 on April 13, and 128 just three days later.

All this was happening as cases soared in the rest of the state, with a lockdown being imposed



in urban areas. Damoh, however, was left out of this lockdown, thanks to the by-poll necessitated by the resignation of Congress MLA Rahul Lodhi who joined BJP in October.

It was only on April 19-two days after voting that the lockdown came into effect here. By April 29, the district had recorded its highest single-day jump in new cases-129.

The results will be announced on May 2. Chouhan held public gatherings in Damoh

on three occasions. Scindia addressed two rallies during a single-day programme. Digvijay Singh had a two-day programme, while Nath held one roadshow.

On April 16, Digvijay Singh tweeted that he had tested positive. He quarantined himself in his Delhi residence.

Chouhan and Scindia cancelled their roadshows planned for April 15. This was also the day Congress candidate Ajay Tandon tested

positive. The rest of the campaigning was conducted by Tandon's daughter, who also accompanied Nath during his roadshow.

On polling day-April 17-Covid fear had set in. Damoh saw a voter turnout of 59.6 per cent-15 percentage points lower than the Assembly poll turnout in 2018. Congress state Mahila Morcha chief Mandvi Chouhan, who was said to have been laying the groundwork for the party in the poll run-up, fell to the virus on Thursday.

According to her son, Vikran Chouhan, she had returned with a fever which later turned out to be COVID by nearly 75 percent damage to her lungs. "She had returned with a fever from her stay in Damoh had walked to the hospital herself but she never came out of it alive. We tried our best with all help from all senior leaders looking after her directly and ensuring she gets the best treatment but it feels there is nothing that can save you from his virus," said Vikram Chouhan. State Urban development minister Bhupendra Singh, who was closely monitoring the Damoh by-polls, tested positive last week. He tweeted that he had tested negative four days later on Thursday owing to the second dose of vaccine that he had taken in time. Among other BJP's leaders who carried

out extensive campaigning and turned positive during the campaign and had to return included Archana Singh, BJP councillor from Chhatarpur, Shayam Tiwari from Sagar, Digvijay Tripathi and Panna district president Ram Chourasia.

Former Damoh district president, Dev Narayan Shrivastav also died on Thursday after suffering a brain haemorrhage for which he was being treated at Jabalpur where he also tested positive for COVID. However, according to Damoh district president for BJP, Pritam Lodhi, "Shrivastav who was tasked with co-ordination between the party workers did not go much of the field except while attending sabhas of senior leaders and he had tested positive much after the election campaign concluded on April 17."

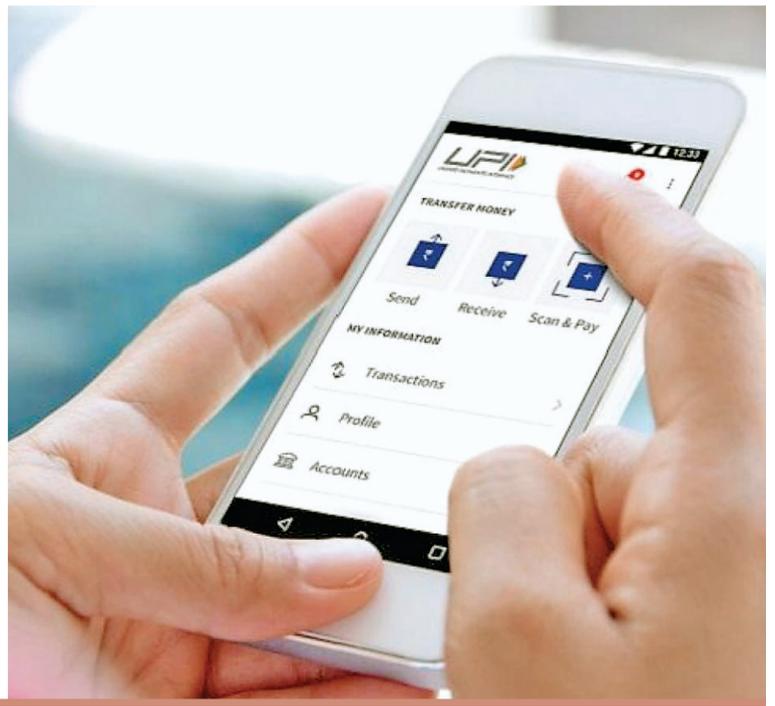
Other leaders from the Congress party including president of District Congress Committee, Manu Mishra who was pivotal in mobilizing resourcing in the district for the election. Mishra had tested positive on April 3 and subsequently, did not attend any gathering held by senior Congress leaders such as Digvijay Singh, Jitu Patwari and MLA Jaivardhan Singh. Mishra was hospitalized along with his wife and son.

# UPI, PAYMENTS FRAUDS SOAR HIGH IN EASTERN INDIAN STATES: REPORT

BENGALURU | Agencies

The eastern states in the country are witnessing high levels of digital frauds or UPI scams (41 per cent) via payment apps and online marketplaces, a report has revealed. According to TrustCheckr, a fraud data insights and analytics startup, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Assam, Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim are facing top frauds in KYC, fake cash-back, frauds through digital wallets, fake-selling, QR codes, UPI phishing, lottery scams and financial fraud on social media. The top scamsters are from Patna, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Meerut for one of the top payment apps (at 15 per cent) and most QR Code scams originate from Assam, accounting for 20 per cent of the total distribution. "Top cities where fraudster syndicates are active are Kolkata, Delhi, Jaipur, Guwahati, Patna, Chandigarh, Meerut," the report mentioned.

In QR code frauds, most fraudsters posed themselves as army men selling something on marketplaces. "Digital scams can trick users as they may appear as legitimate by revealing a few authentic details about them in order to earn their trust and move money. If it sounds too good to be true, one should be careful about such transactions. Our score parameters can give a go-ahead or early warning signs of fraud," said ShivrajHarsha, Co-founder, TrustCheckr. TrustCheckr identified over 1 million frauds together in B2B and B2C in the last 15 months — 25 per cent scams in KYC and 20 per cent in QR codes, while B2B scams were largely done with 30 per cent fake identities and 25 per cent synthetic identity frauds. "The common thread of digital payment frauds is phone number and email address. We check fraud signals with phone/email, validate the customer authenticity using historical fraud trends, fraud data sets, history and provide simple REST APIs with phone numbers as input, integration in less than 48 hours," said Adhip Ramesh, Founder, TrustCheckr.



## Like bees, wasps 'valuable' for ecosystems, human health

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Wasps deserve to be just as highly valued as other insects, like bees, due to their roles as predators, pollinators, and more, according to a new review paper led by UCL and University of East Anglia researchers. The study, published in *Biological Reviews*, compiles evidence from over 500 academic papers to review how roughly 33,000 species of stinging (aculeate) wasps contribute to their ecosystems, and how this can benefit the economy, human health, and society. Lead author Professor Seirian Sumner (UCL Centre for Biodiversity & Environment Research, UCL Biosciences) said: "Wasps are one of those insects we love to hate -- and yet bees, which also sting, are prized for pollinating our crops and making honey. In a previous study, we found that the hatred of wasps is largely due to widespread ignorance about the role of wasps in ecosystems, and how they can be beneficial to humans. "Wasps are understudied relative to other insects like bees, so we are only now starting to properly understand the value and importance of their ecosystem services. Here, we have reviewed the best evidence there is, and found that wasps could be just as valuable as other beloved insects like bees, if only we gave them more of a chance." Wasps are top predators of other insects. Predation by insects -- as biocontrol to protect crops -- is worth at least \$416 billion per year worldwide. Yet, this figure almost completely overlooks the contributions of hunting wasp predation. The review highlights how wasps' role as predators makes them valuable for agriculture. Wasps regulate populations of arthropods, like aphids and caterpillars that damage crops. Solitary wasp species tend to be specialists, which may be suited to managing a specific pest, while social wasps are generalist predators, and may be especially useful as a local source of control for a range of crop-eating pests.

The researchers say that wasps could be used as sustainable forms of pest control in developing countries, especially tropical ones, where farmers

could bring in populations of a local wasp species with minimal risk to the natural environment. Professor Sumner and colleagues recently published a study finding that common wasp species are effective predators that can manage pests on two high-value crops, maize and sugarcane, in Brazil. The review also highlights the pollination services provided by wasps. Pollination by insects is vital for agriculture, and its economic importance has been valued at greater than \$250 billion per year worldwide. The researchers found evidence of wasps visiting 960 plant species.

This included 164 species that are completely dependent on wasps for pollination, such as some orchid species that have evolved adaptations to attract the wasps they rely on, such as an appearance that mimics the back end of a female wasp. Many wasps are also generalist pollinators that visit a wide variety of plants, so the researchers say they could serve as 'backup pollinators' if a plant loses its local primary pollinator.

The review also describes other uses for wasps such as wasp-derived medications, as their venom and saliva have antibiotic properties, while yellowjacket wasp venom has shown promise in treating cancer. Wasps may even be a valuable food source, as their larvae are already harvested in some tropical countries for food. Co-author Dr Alessandro Cini (UCL Centre for Biodiversity & Environment Research, UCL Bioscience and University of Florence) said: "The value of wasps in supporting our crops remains poorly understood; we hope that by rehabilitating their bad reputation, we can collectively get the most value out of these fascinating creatures." The paper's first author, Ryan Brock (University of East Anglia) said: "Alongside other insects, many wasp species are declining from factors such as climate change and habitat loss. As such, there is urgent need to address their conservation and ensure that habitats continue to benefit from the far-reaching ecosystem services that wasps provide." The research was supported by the Natural Environment Research Council and a Marie Curie fellowship from the European Commission.



# NASA to launch balloons to study Sun-Earth system

WASHINGTON | Agencies

NASA is set to launch a suite of scientific balloons, carrying instruments that will help scientists understand the connection between the Sun and Earth. The experiment, under NASA's Scientific Balloon Programme, will kick off an ambitious schedule of 18 flights in 2021. The first campaign of 2021 -- with six balloon flights -- will lift off from NASA's Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility's field site in Fort Sumner, New Mexico, between April-end and mid-June. Among the six balloon flights, four experiments will study different aspects of the Sun's influence. They will focus on the stretch of sky 60-300 miles (100-50 kilometres) above the surface, where Earth's upper atmosphere and space meet.

The All-Sky Heliospheric Imager is a piggyback payload that will fly along with the Columbia Scientific Balloon Flight (CSBF) Test Flight II no earlier than May 5. It will test the instrument's capability to reduce stray light and observe the solar wind from here on Earth. Balloon-Based Observations for sunlit Aurora will test a wide-view infrared camera designed to study daytime auroras. Since auroras keep mostly to Earth's north and south poles, BALBOA will image airglow, the natural glow of Earth's entire atmosphere, on this test flight. It will fly as a piggyback payload on the CSBF Test Flight I no earlier than April 29. Balloon-borne Chirpsounder will demonstrate new technology for studying the ionosphere. It will fly about 25 miles above the surface, where it will send radio signals up into the ionosphere. It will fly on a hand-launched balloon no earlier than April 29.

Balloon Observation of Microburst Scales, is designed to observe microbursts, flashes of X-ray light that sporadically appear in the polar atmosphere. It will fly as a piggyback payload on the CSBF Test Flight I no earlier than April 29. In addition to generating new science, balloon experiments like these offer a low-cost way to test new instrument techniques and provide valuable opportunities for early-career scientists to gain hands-on experience, NASA said.



## Powerful Indians making aggressive calls for vaccines: Poonawalla

LONDON | Agencies

Admitting that he is facing immense pressure from "some of the most powerful people in India" demanding supplies of Covishield, Serum Institute of India (SII) CEO Adar Poonawalla said on Saturday that the company is also planning to start vaccine production in the UK, the media reported. In an interview with *The Times*, Poonawalla said that everything falls on his shoulders when it comes to delivering the Covid vaccine to millions in India. "I'm staying here (London) for an extended time because I don't want to go back to that situation. Everything falls on my shoulders, but I can't do it alone...I don't want to be in a situation where you are just trying to do your job, and just because you can't supply the needs of X, Y or Z, you really don't want to guess what they are going to do," Poonawalla told *The Times*. Referring to the phone calls from some of the most powerful people in India to get them vaccines first, he added: "The level of expectation and aggression is really unprecedented. It's overwhelming. Everyone feels they should get the vaccine. They can't understand why anyone else should get it before them." India is facing an immense crunch of vaccines amid the lethal

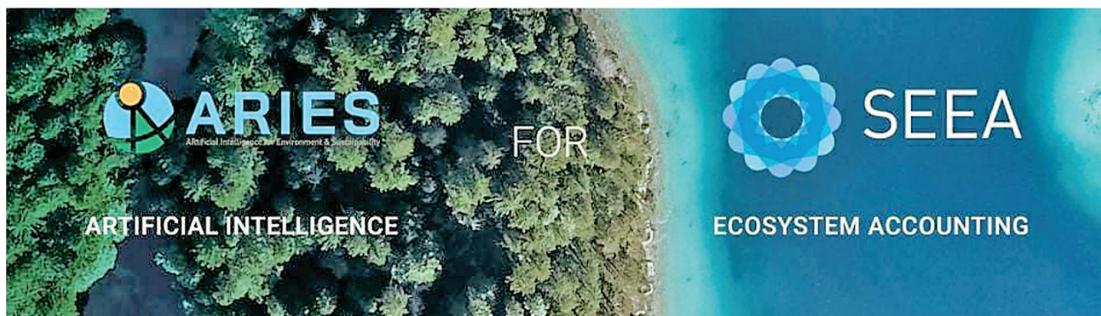


second Covid wave, and as the country started vaccination for people in the 18-44 age group in its third drive on Saturday, several states are unable to start the immunisation drive because of the demand-supply gap. The CEO of the Pune-based pharmaceutical company said that the company will make an official announcement to produce vaccines in London in the coming days. "There's going to be an announcement in the next few days," he said. Recently, SII had borrowed money from banks instead of waiting for the government's aid to arrive to scale up the production of its Covishield vaccine. The company assumed that the funding from the government will reach them very soon, probably by this week. Covishield has been developed by the Oxford University and AstraZeneca and manufactured by the SII. The government recently announced that it has given in-principle approval for credit to vaccine manufacturers, SII and Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, to boost India's vaccine production in the wake of the huge surge in Covid-19 caseload. The Union Finance Ministry has approved to sanction Rs 3,000 crore credit for SII and Rs 1,500 crore for Bharat Biotech. Poonawalla had earlier suggested that the company would require around Rs 3,000 crore to increase production of Covid-19 vaccines.

# UN LAUNCHES INTELLIGENCE TOOL FOR NATURAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTING

NEW YORK | Agencies

An innovative artificial intelligence (AI) tool that will make it easier for countries to measure the contributions of nature to their economic prosperity and well-being was launched by the United Nations and the Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3). Developed by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and BC3, the new tool, launched on Thursday, can vastly accelerate implementation of the new ground-breaking standard for valuing the contributions of nature that was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission last month. The tool makes use of AI technology using the Artificial Intelligence for Environment and Sustainability (ARIES) platform to support countries as they apply the new international standard for natural capital accounting, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Ecosystem Accounting. The new open-source and user-friendly digital tool, called the ARIES for SEEA Explorer, enables, for the first time, rapid and standardized yet customisable ecosystem accounting anywhere on the earth. "The ARIES for SEEA Explorer is a



game changer for governments that want to implement the recently adopted SEEA Ecosystem Accounting standard," stressed Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the Statistics Division. "This application allows countries to jump-start accounts compilation from global data sources, which they can refine with national data or model parameters."

The ecosystem accounts produced by countries will track the extent, condition and services provided by nature's ecosystems -- such as forests and wetlands -- in the form of physical

and monetary accounts and indicators. The adoption of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting has been heralded as a historic step forward for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to move beyond GDP in tracking global progress. Bert Kroese, Deputy Director for Statistics Netherlands and Chair of the UN Committee of Environmental-Economic Accounting, said, "The ARIES for SEEA Explorer will give countries a much-needed tool to make progress with the SDGs and the monitoring framework of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity

Framework. "Its low barrier to entry will ensure that no country is left behind when it comes to ecosystem accounting." RisengaMaluleke, Statistician-General of Statistics South Africa and Chair of the UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics, said, "The launch of the ARIES for SEEA Explorer on the UN Global Platform is an important step to mainstream the measurement of ecosystems and their contribution to the economy and wellbeing into global, regional and domestic

statistics that will feed into policy and decision making. Better measures of nature will contribute to better policies to save our planet." Building economic systems that value nature as a central source of human wellbeing, environmental health and economic prosperity in the post-COVID-19 world is essential, according to Susan Gardner, Director of UNEP's Ecosystems Division. "Having technology that incorporates and integrates the latest data, models and understanding of nature's contributions through natural capital accounting will facilitate well-informed nature positive decision-making from businesses and governments -- driving tangible action on biodiversity loss and climate change and a sustainable future for all," she said. The ARIES for SEEA Explorer is available on the UN Global Platform: a cloud-service environment supporting international collaboration among all countries in the world by sharing scientific knowledge, data, methods and technology. A number of countries have already started using the ARIES for SEEA Explorer. The explorer will continue to be expanded in the near future, by adding the functionality to derive indicators that allow to assess progress towards SDGs and the emerging post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.



# US TO ADOPT 'PRACTICAL APPROACH' TO NORTH KOREA: WHITE HOUSE

Washington | Agencies

President Joe Biden last month told reporters that North Korea ranked the top foreign policy issue for his administration. The White House said the Biden administration had reached out to Pyongyang through several channels but had not yet received any response. Washington: The US will explore diplomacy with North Korea and adopt a "practical approach," the White House said on Friday. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters aboard Air Force One that the Biden administration had completed its policy review on North Korea, Xinhua news agency reported. "Our policy will not focus on achieving a grand bargain, nor will it rely on strategic patience," she said. "Our policy calls for a calibrated practical approach that is open to and will explore diplomacy with



North Korea and to make practical progress that increases the security of the United States, our allies, and deployed forces." The term "strategic patience" and "grand bargain" refer to US policies toward North

Korea under the administrations of Barack Obama and Donald Trump. Psaki reaffirmed that the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula remains the policy goal, noting "the efforts of the past four

administrations have not achieved this objective." She added that the United States would continue to consult with South Korea, Japan, and other allies and partners on this issue. President Joe Biden last month told reporters that North Korea ranked the top foreign policy issue for his administration. The White House said the Biden administration had reached out to Pyongyang through several channels but had not yet received any response. North Korea First Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said in March that Pyongyang would ignore US outreach until Washington "rolls back its hostile policy." Denuclearization talks between Pyongyang and Washington have been stalled since the summit talks between top North Korea leader Kim Jong Un and former US President Donald Trump ended without agreement in February 2019 at the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi.

## US CDC ESTIMATES 1 IN 3 AMERICANS INFECTED WITH COVID

Washington: About 35 per cent of all Americans have been infected with Covid-19 over the past year, according to a new study of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC estimates that from February 2020 to March 2021, 114.6 million Americans were infected with Covid-19, 97.1 million had symptomatic illnesses and 5.6 million were hospitalised with Covid-19, the Xinhua news agency reported on Saturday. The current US population is about 330 million, according to the US Census Bureau website. The number of people who were infected with Covid-19, estimated by the CDC, is about 35 per cent of the total US population, or a little more than one in three people. Of those infected, nearly 50 per cent are between the ages of 18 and 49, and 23 per cent are 17 or younger. As for hospitalizations, about 47 per cent are estimated to be 65 and older, according to the CDC.

## Israel bans travel to 7 countries including India

The decision follows a ministry's warning against travel to the seven destinations, reflecting both the current situation and the morbidity levels according to several criteria such as the countries' declarations, the percentage of vaccination and recovery, and evidence of variants.

Jerusalem | Agencies

The Israeli government on Friday decided to ban travel of Israeli citizens to seven countries over high Covid-19 morbidity and fear of the spread of variants of the virus, according to a joint statement issued by Prime Minister's Office and Health Ministry. The seven are Ukraine, Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, India, Mexico and Turkey, the Xinhua news agency reported. The ban will take effect on Monday, and will last at least 13 days, the statement said. The decision follows a ministry's warning against travel to the seven

destinations, reflecting both the current situation and the morbidity levels according to several criteria such as the countries' declarations, the percentage of vaccination and recovery, and evidence of variants. The ban does not



include non-Israelis who live in these countries permanently, nor does it apply to stays at airports of these countries for connecting flights. On Friday, Israel reported 87 new Covid-19 cases, raising the total number in the country to 838,481.

## WHO adds Moderna vaccine to emergency use list

Before being validated for the WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL), the Moderna vaccine was already reviewed in January by WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation (SAGE), which makes recommendations for vaccines' use in populations.

Geneva | Agencies

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday listed the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, making it the fifth vaccine to receive emergency validation from the WHO. In December 2020, the US Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorisation for the Moderna vaccine, while the European Medicines Agency granted it a marketing authorisation valid throughout the European Union in January this year. Before being validated for the WHO



Emergency Use Listing (EUL), the Moderna vaccine was already reviewed in January by WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation (SAGE), which makes recommendations for vaccines' use in populations. The Moderna Covid-19 vaccine is an mRNA-based vaccine, which was found by the SAGE to have an efficacy of 94.1 per cent. The SAGE has recommended the vaccine for all age groups 18

and above, the Xinhua news agency reported. WHO's EUL procedure assesses the late phase II and phase III clinical trial data as well as substantial additional data on safety, efficacy, quality and a risk management plan of Covid-19 vaccines. In addition to the Moderna vaccine, the WHO has previously listed the Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca-SK Bio, Serum Institute of India and Janssen vaccines for emergency use.

## All Brazilians to be vaccinated against Covid by 2021-end

Brasilia | Agencies

All Brazilians can be vaccinated against Covid-19 by the end of the year, Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga has said. "We have enough doses for the second half (of the year) and it is possible to guarantee that by the end of 2021 our entire population will be vaccinated," Queiroga said on Friday during a press conference held jointly with the World Health Organization (WHO), Xinhua reported. Brazil expects to have 500 million vaccine doses available by the year end, said Queiroga. Nevertheless, he again called on countries with surplus doses to donate them to Brazil. "We reiterate our call to those who have extra doses of the vaccine to share them with Brazil, and we can contain the critical phase of the pandemic and prevent the proliferation of new variants of the virus," said the minister. Brazil opted for a diversified strategy to fight the pandemic, from partnering with other countries to promote technology transfer and national production of a vaccine, to signing contracts with pharmaceutical companies to supply vaccines, and participating in the United Nations-backed COVAX mechanism to access vaccines, said Queiroga. However, the South American giant needs to speed up its immunization campaign due to the worsening outbreak, he said. So far, 57.9 million doses have been distributed throughout Brazil, of which 42.1 million doses have been applied. Brazil has registered over 14.59 million cases of Covid-19 and more than 400,000 deaths from the disease.



## Ontario ban on entry of int'l students to impact Indians



Toronto | Agencies

Ontario, Canada's worst-hit province which is battling the third wave of the coronavirus, has sought a ban on the arrival of international students. Currently, students from India make up the majority of international students studying in Ontario. Making this announcement on Friday, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said that since 94 per cent of all new cases in Ontario are of new variant of the virus and are coming from outside, he would urge the federal government to

ban the arrival of international students into the province to check the spread of the virus. The Premier said, "Not enough is being done to keep these deadly variants out of Canada. Last week, the new Indian variant was reported here in Ontario. It didn't swim here I can tell you that." Responding to the Ontario Premier's request, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that his government would do everything to stop the spread of the virus. Trudeau said, "Premier Ford has asked that we should sus-

pend the arrival of international students and because at this time Ontario is the only province making this request, we are happy to work narrowly with them." Canada banned all direct flights from India for one month earlier this week, after Health Canada statistics showed that many passengers from India were testing positive for the virus. There were 219,855 Indian students in Canada last year, making up about a third of all 642,480 foreign students. The majority of them study in institutions in Ontario.

## GLOBAL COVID-19 CASELOAD TOPS 150.9 MILLION

Washington | Agencies

The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 150.9 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.17 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Saturday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 150,972,476 and 3,176,054, respectively. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 32,345,038 and 575,921, respectively, according to the CSSE. In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 18,762,976 cases. The other countries with more than two million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (14,659,011), France (5,677,835), Turkey (4,820,591), Russia (4,750,755), the UK (4,432,246), Italy (4,022,653), Spain (3,524,077), Germany (3,393,721), Argentina



(2,977,363), Colombia (2,859,724), Poland (2,792,142), Iran (2,499,077) and Mexico (2,344,755), the CSSE figures showed. In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 403,781 fatalities. Nations with a death toll of over 50,000 are Mexico (216,907), India (208,330), the UK (127,775), Italy (120,807), Russia (108,290), France (104,675), Germany (82,948), Spain (78,216), Colombia (73,720), Iran (71,758), Poland (67,502), Argentina (63,865), Peru (61,477) and South Africa (54,350).

## Pak cuts international flights to 20% to curb Covid cases

Islamabad | Agencies

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Saturday issued an advisory reducing the number of inbound international flights to 20 per cent to curb a further rise in Covid-19 cases. Amid high disease prevalence in various parts of the world and current disease situation in the country with corresponding extreme stress on the critical care system. Pakistan has decided to significantly reduce inbound International Air Travel from 5 May to 20th May," said the NCOC in a statement on Twitter. It was not immediately clear which routes and air carriers will be affected. The NCOC said that the decision will be reviewed on May 18. Inbound air traffic will operate at 20 per cent of the total current quantum, while there is no change in the existing Category C list countries. "Pakistani passport holders (stranded/short term visa) are allowed to travel to Pakistan subject to exemp-



tion by the committee as per procedures in vogue," the NCOC statement read. All inbound travellers to Pakistan, including those from the Category C list countries, must have a negative repeat PCR test before travelling to Pakistan (maximum 72 hours old) while a rapid antigen test will be done on arrival at the airport. Negative cases will undergo 10 days of self-quarantine at home with stringent TTO protocols, Geo TV reported. The statement said that positive cases will be shifted by the provincial/ district administration to a self-paid facility for 10 days quarantine with TTO of contacts (if any) and a repeat PCR test will be conducted on the 8th day of the quarantine period. In

case of a negative result, the passenger will be allowed to proceed home. However, in case of a positive result, the passenger will either undergo an additional quarantine period or be shifted to hospital as per the advice of health authorities.

The NCOC stated that registration on the Passtrack App by all inbound travellers before travelling to Pakistan is mandatory, however, deportees are exempted from registration on the app. Pakistan has seen record deaths in recent days from the coronavirus, and stricter restrictions on movement and gathering in public are planned for the upcoming Eid holiday. Officials are worried the country's health care system, already under strain, could reach breaking point if more contagious variants of the virus begin to spread, as has happened in neighbouring India. On Saturday, authorities reported 4,696 new confirmed Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours and 146 deaths from the disease.

## TURKISH SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT POSTS US GENOCIDE HISTORY

Ankara: Turkish social media account Clash Report recently posted a summary of the genocide history of the US on its twitter account, which has triggered discussions among netizens. In a timeline format, the summary posted on Wednesday listed out more than 20 events and descriptions about the genocide history, the Xinhua news agency reported. In the US genocide against Native Americans, "70 million Native Americans were slaughtered in their own land," it said. It also included the Vietnam War, the coup in Iran in 1953, and the Iraq War. In the Vietnam War, for example, "the US massacred 3 million Vietnamese civilians by using Agent Orange, a powerful herbicide," it said.

## 11 KILLED AFTER EXTREME WEATHER HITS EAST CHINA

Nanjing: Eleven people were killed and dozens injured after strong gales struck east China's Jiangsu Province, the provincial authorities said on Saturday. Gales and hail swept parts of Jiangsu on Friday night, including Nantong, Huaian, Yancheng, Taizhou and Suqian. The disaster has left 11 people dead, 66 injured and 3,050 evacuated, according to the Jiangsu Provincial Emergency Management Department. A fishing boat capsized due to the storm, and 11 crew members fell into the water. Two have been rescued and the search for nine others is underway, the Xinhua news agency reported. Local authorities are organising the relief efforts.

## PAK NCOC BANS PROCESSIONS ON YOUM-E-ALI

Islamabad: Amid surging coronavirus cases in Pakistan, the federal government on Saturday imposed a ban on Youm-e-Ali processions, while majalis will be permitted under strict SOPs which are already in place for Ramadan. An important session on the conduct of Youm-e-Ali was held at the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), chaired by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar. Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed, Minister for Religious Affairs Noor-ul-Haq Qadri and SAPM on Health Dr Faisal Sultan were also present, Geo TV reported. The provincial secretaries and representatives of law enforcement agencies attended the session through video link. Keeping in view the risk factor due to the ongoing surge in Covid spread across the country and particularly in major urban centres, it was decided to ban all sort of processions while holding of Majalis has been permitted under strict Covid SOPs which are already in place for Ramadan ul Mubarak," read an NCOC statement. The forum emphasised the need to engage religious scholars and community leaders at provincial and district levels for the implementation of these decisions. Pakistan has seen record deaths in recent days from the coronavirus, and stricter restrictions on movement and gathering in public are planned for the upcoming Eid holiday. Officials are worried the country's health care system, already under strain, could reach breaking point if more contagious variants of the virus begin to spread, as has happened in neighbouring India.



# Rosneft opens world's first Geonavigation School in Moscow

Moscow | Agencies

Russian oil company Rosneft has opened the world's first Geonavigation School, designed to train highly-qualified specialists in the field of drilling support. The school was created on the basis of the corporate Geological Drilling Support Centre, the school's curriculum includes more than 10 unique courses. Our Center is one of the world's leading providers of drilling support services and holds the most controlled horizontal wells in the world," said Yaroslav Smyslyayev, General Director of the Center for drilling support, Rosneft. The Center consists of several services. It includes not only geological support of drilling, but also the interpretation of logging, seismogeological analysis, geomechanical modeling of the support during drilling," Smyslyayev said in a statement. Integrated development of scientific and technological potential is one of the key elements of the



'Rosneft-2022 Strategy'. Geonavigation is the process of adjusting the trajectory of a well in real time in order to increase the penetration through the most productive part of the reservoir. Trajectory correction solutions are based on the analysis of logging data during drilling using specialized geon-

avigation software. "In 2020, we started working on the creation of an intelligent assistant to support drilling. As a result, we will have software modules that will be integrated into corporate software for drilling support 'Horizon Plus,'" said Alena Galkina, leading specialist in machine learning of the

department of geological support for drilling wells. Now, the oil industry employs various methods of artificial intelligence for data analysis. "The popularity of such methods has increased amid the enhancing of computing power, optimization of algorithms, and growth of data volumes. We manage information on more than 14,000 previously drilled wells of the Company. In addition, Rosneft drills about 3,000 new horizontal wells a year. Therefore, the use of such methods, in our case, is of great potential," Galkina informed. Smyslyayev noted: "Our center also develops intellectual property of the Company, we implement innovative solutions. One of the recent solutions we are developing now is a robot assistant module, which will directly inform the geonavigator, the interpreter, about the existing experience, and will assume and inform it about possible errors." Rosneft's Drilling Support Centre is one of the world's leading providers of drilling support serv-

ices and holds the most controlled horizontal wells in the world with more than 3,000 in 2020. The first Drilling Support Centre in the Russian oil and gas industry was commissioned in 2008 and began operating on a 24/7 basis in 2009. Since November 2017, all horizontal wells and horizontal sidetracks in Rosneft have been drilled with 100 per cent support of the Centre. The cumulative economic effect of the activities already exceeds RUB 1.6 billion. "Now, the Centre's resources allow 24/7 monitoring and support for all of the Company's drilling activities on high-tech horizontal wells and horizontal sidetracks, with more than 250 drillings happening daily," it said. Rosneft's specialists created new types of data monitoring and information processing, including interpretation of data on geophysical analysis of drills, geotechnical studies, seismic-geological analysis and 24-hour update of geological and hydrodynamic models right during the drilling.

# GOPICHAND TO ADDRESS TELANGANA STUDENTS ON FUTURE OF WORK

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

National badminton coach Pullela Gopichand and top industry professionals will address over 10,000 students from Telangana on future of work on May 1.

The Telangana Academy of Skills and Knowledge (TASK), the Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC), X Billion Skills Lab, and the United Nations Young Changemakers Conclave (UNYCC) have partnered to organize a summit on '21st century workplace skills' for the benefit of students from across Telangana.

Keynote addresses will be delivered by Gopichand and state's Principal Secretary, ITE&C and Industries, Jayesh Ranjan.

The summit, to be held virtually, features some of the top industry professionals such as Vikas Gupta, Managing Director, Talent, Deloitte; Renuka Bodla, Head, Novartis Biome India; Vijaya Mohana Reddy, the Chief of Staff/Strategist - IT, Dell; Koushik Srinivasan, Managing Director, KaN Associates; and Bhuvaneshwari Cheruvu, the Chief Marketing Officer, Artea. According to a research published by the India Today group, 80 per cent of engineering graduates and more than 60 per cent of MBA graduates in India are unemployable due to a gap between the curriculum content they're taught and



industry requirements.

While hiring for entry level jobs, companies now give preference to candidates who display proficiency in skills such as agility, creativity, critical thinking, negotiation, emotional intelligence, collaboration and the wisdom to make independent decisions in addition to their technical or academic skills. The Centre, in its new education policy, has

given special emphasis to these essential 21st century workplace skills.

However, a significant part of the conversations on the changing nature of work/jobs is limited to the English speaking, urban and intellectually elite audience, despite the fact that a majority of India's graduates hail from tier 2 and 3 cities where colleges may not be able to offer the required exposure and training in future ready job skills. As a result, several students from these towns and villages struggle to find jobs.

Recognising the changing priorities and requirements of the industry, TASK, TSIC and UNYCC have joined hands to address this skill gap and ensure that students are made aware of what needs to be done in order to build a sustainable career in the new technology driven world of work.

"The vision, mission and purpose of TASK is to bridge the industry-academia gap and ensure that students get a good start to their careers. In doing so, we also facilitate the industry to acquire trained human resources who can deliver first-day first-hour productivity. This Summit addresses some very pertinent aspects about today's work culture. I encourage students to use this opportunity and learn how to groom and shape themselves so that they become assets to the industry," said TASK CEO Shrikant Sinha.



## Epic Games is keeping 'Fortnite' off Microsoft Cloud: Report

San Francisco | Agencies

Epic Games is holding back Fortnite from being available on Microsoft's Xbox Cloud Gaming service, according to a new deposition made public as part of the Epic case against Apple. The Fortnite developer views Microsoft's xCloud service as competition to its PC offerings, and the company is deliberately not offering Fortnite on

xCloud as a result. Joe Kreiner, Epic's Vice President of Business Development, was questioned over why Fortnite isn't available on xCloud and confirmed it was a deliberate choice, The Verge reported. "We viewed Microsoft's efforts with xCloud to be competitive with our PC offerings," said Kreiner in the deposition. The court document makes it appear like Kreiner may go on to explain why, but the

next part of the questioning has been redacted. Fortnite is a free-to-play game on Xbox and the only way to currently access the game on an iPhone is through Nvidia's GeForce Now cloud gaming service. Epic Games partnered with Nvidia last year to launch Fortnite on GeForce Now and has helped Nvidia offer several other games from its PC game store on the Nvidia cloud gaming service.



## Ambulance drivers render yeoman service to Covid patients in TN

Chennai | Agencies

Ambulance drivers in Tamil Nadu are determined a lot catering to transporting Covid patients from homes to hospitals as well as from private to government facilities and also addressing the woes of the Covid patients' families. In fact, these good samaritans are doing a yeoman service to the society risking their health and lives. Several voluntary organisations are also active in the ground supporting

the families of the Covid patients with necessary counselling. Rajkumar Manikandan, an ambulance driver attached to a voluntary organisation at Teynampet in Chennai told reporter: "We are fully engaged now, these are the times when we will have to work for maybe 24 hours a day as cases are increasing and the patients have to be transported to the medical facilities with immediate effect.

However, I am happy that I can contribute something

to the society. The cries of the family members when someone is affected with the disease is unbearable even though I have transported several dead bodies across the country and witnessed the scenes at their homes while delivering the bodies of their dear and nears." The ambulance drivers are to wear PPE kits and there are several instances wherein the ambulance driver also doubles up as the councillors to patients who are mentally at very low ebb.

## Instagram working on new tools for influencers

San Francisco | Agencies

Facebook-owned Instagram is working on a suite of new tools to help influencers make money off its platform, including creator shops, affiliate commerce and a "branded content marketplace."

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the upcoming features during a live stream with Instagram chief Adam Mosseri.

Creator Shops would be an extension of the company's existing shopping features, which allows businesses to sell products, reports Engadget.

"We see a lot of creators setting up shops too, and one part of being a content creator business model is you create great content, and then you can sell stuff, and so having creator shops is awesome," Zuckerberg said. Zuckerberg also said the company is working on tools that would enable Instagram stars to get paid for promoting products. "Creators should be able to get a cut of the sales of things that they're recommending and we should build up an affiliate recommendation marketplace to enable that to all happen," he said. Instagram is also working on a "branded content marketplace" that would help match influencers with sponsors. Zuckerberg noted that such a tool could help enable up-and-coming talent to monetize and help create a kind of "creator middle class." According to the report, the new tools are still in the works, but could dramatically shift the way influencers monetize their following on the platform.



## Dating apps add Covid job criteria to find ideal partner

London | Agencies

Want to find an ideal partner on dating apps? First get vaccinated against Covid. According to a media report, many dating apps are allowing users to determine potential partners based on their vaccine status.

An increasing number of people on dating apps like Tinder, OK Cupid, Bumble and Coffee Meets Bagel are divulging information on whether they are vaccinated or are planning to take the jab against Covid-19, the Guardian reported.

Research by London-based Elate Date showed that more than 60 per cent of people on its platform did not want to date anti-vaxxers, the report said.

"It's becoming a bit of a flex to say you've been vaccinated. Our research finds that over 60 per cent of people wouldn't consider dating someone who was against having the vaccination and that it's become a trend to

include 'vaccination', 'antibodies' and 'shots' in dating bios in the same way people would their height, job or interests," Sanjay Panchal, founder of dating app Elate was quoted as saying to the Guardian.

In the US, the syringe emoji has become the new winkly face, while a double-dosed selfie on your profile will, it's claimed, bring you double the number of dates, the report said.

Users who claimed to have already received the Covid vaccine were being "liked" at twice the rate of users who said they weren't interested, The Guardian cited Michael Kaye, OKCupid spokesperson as saying to the New York Times. "Basically, getting the vaccine is the hottest thing you could be doing on a dating app right now," Kaye said. Tinder, had in January, found a 238 per cent spike in vaccine mentions in user bios, while Bumble reported "a steady increase" in the number of people including "vaccine" or "vaccinated" in their profiles, the report said.



## I make sure to allocate time for stage every year: Sumeet Vyas

Siddhi Jain | New Delhi

Sumeet Vyas, whose acting performances are effortless across the multiple mediums of web, stage and cinema, says theatre remains his first love. "Whenever I get an opportunity I try and come back on the stage. I make sure that every year I have some allocated time for the stage, as this is where I learned everything about acting, writing, and performing. It's always good to be grounded to your roots and that in turn helps you to grow further ahead in your performances," he told correspondent.

The 'Permanent Roommates' actor is part of a curated cast of South Asian actors from around the world, who are performing Dipti Bramhandkar's 'Islands of Contentment', presented by New York City's The Tank and co-produced by Hypokrit Productions. It's a virtual presentation.

An elegy to the (dis)harmony of romantic relationships, each piece invites us into the intimate, poignant and hilar-



ous interactions with significant others in the form of mod-

ern-day confessionals and offers the virtual audience channels for live interaction and deeper connection. Thirteen characters reflect on moments that feel strangely familiar: the break-up dream, the plight of the nice guy, the ex who unexpectedly shows up, and even a baking fetish.

Asked about what the stage has taught him the most, Vyas said:

"Theatre has taught me the art of discipline and dedication. There is no alternative to hard work while performing on the stage. While in films or web shows or TV, you might get a second chance or a retake, but that's not the case with the theatre. You have to be at your best and have to know every minute detail about the play so that you don't miss out on anything. Otherwise, you'll end up creating a mess in front of the audience."

Vyas, who tested positive for Covid-19 in April, said that his monologue is called 'Put a Ring On It'. The cast has individually acted and shot their monologues.

## Telegram to introduce group video calls in May



San Francisco | Agencies

Encrypted messaging app Telegram is all set to introduce group video calls for its users in May, including support for web-based videoconferencing. Telegram CEO Pavel Durov made the announcement via a message posted to his official Telegram channel where he wrote "we will be adding a video dimension to our voice chats in May, making Telegram a powerful platform for group video calls".

"Screen sharing, encryption, noise-cancelling, desktop and tablet support - everything you can expect from a modern video conferencing tool, but with Telegram-level UI, speed and encryption. Stay tuned!" he added.

The company originally planned to add the video call feature to its messaging service at some point in 2020. Telegram often taunts rivals over their tardiness to add new features but on video calls it has been a laggard, only adding the ability to make one-on-one video calls last August, TechCrunch reported.

In an April 2020 blog post, to mark passing 400 million users, it wrote that the global lockdown had "highlighted the need for a trusted video communication tool" - going on to dub video calls in 2020 "much like messaging in 2013".

However, it also emphasized the importance of security for group video calling - and that's perhaps what's caused the delay.

The company said it reached 400 million monthly active users in April 2020, up from 200 million in 2018.

## NIKITA RAWAL STAYS IN SHAPE EVEN DURING THE LOCKDOWN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

We saw some pictures of actress Nikita Rawal and we were mesmerized to see how well she has maintained. The gyms and all the fitness centres are closed and getting our hands on our favourite diet foods has become so difficult as we are all locked in our houses. Nikita Rawal is slaying this time. She almost has washboard abs and that's absolutely enviable.

We quickly got on a phone call with The Hero Abhimanyu star and here is what Nikita has to say, "I have recently taken up yoga and meditation. Meditation has brought so much into my life. While I am meditating I get like a bird's eye view into my life and what adjustments need to be made. I always loved yoga but I didn't practice it regularly. But off late I have been able to. Since there isn't much equipment at home to workout. And I must say it's changed my energy systems and flow completely. Not only do I feel fitter but mentally there is just no exhaustion. I feel my tanks are filled again and there is no soreness. I recommend it to everyone. It boosts immunity as well which is so necessary during these times." Well, we would try and up our fitness game and so should you and we have our inspiration right here.



## 'Harry Potter - A Magical Year' brings alive the Hogwarts' world

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Here's a unique and beautiful gift book for every day of the year, celebrating the astonishing art of Jim Kay paired with magical quotations from the original Harry Potter novels by J.K. Rowling.

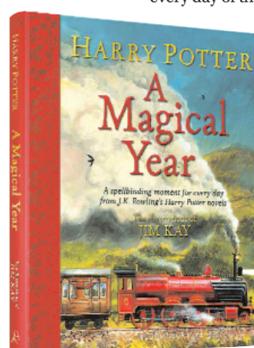
"Harry Potter e A Magical Year: The Illustrations of Jim Kay" (Bloomsbury) combines Kay's stunning colour illustrations with his previously unseen pencil sketches and preparatory pieces, offering a unique and fascinating insight into his sketchbook - an unforgettable journey through the seasons at Hogwarts.

Each day features a favourite anniversary or meaningful memory from the Harry Potter

novels with 366 short quotations e one for every day of the year, including the leap year.

All of the seven stories are represented in the book, from "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" through to "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows".

All around, Kay's scenic artwork and decorative painter's marks bring that moment to life in breathtaking detail. His unique interpretation is both captivating and transporting - picture frozen icicles glinting on the snowy towers of Hogwarts, the dancing eyes of Professor Albus Dumbledore, or the infectious hustle and bustle of Diagon Alley. Inside, a selection of the illustrator's most iconic images are complemented by previously unseen character studies, pencil drawings and preparatory pieces from the Jim Kay archive.





## POLLARD'S POWER-HITTING UPSTAGES RAYUDU'S AS MI CLINCH THRILLER

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Kieron Pollard's power-packed 87 not out off 34 balls (6x4s, 8x6s) overshadowed Ambati Rayudu's 72 not out off 27 balls (4x4s, 7x6s) as Mumbai Indians (MI) defeated Chennai Super Kings (CSK) by four wickets in a last-ball thriller in the Indian Premier League at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Saturday night.

Both Pollard and Rayudu butchered the bowlers who struggled to get their lengths right on a batting surface.

Chasing 218, MI got off to a flying start with openers Rohit Sharma and Quinton de Kock adding 71 in 7.4 overs. But three quick wickets brought CSK back into the match. Pollard then took charge and hammered the bowlers into submission. He added 89 for the fourth wicket with Krunal Pandya (32 off 23 balls) and got to his fifty in just 17 balls with a couple of boundaries on successive balls off Shardul Thakur.

With 47 runs needed in the last three overs, the Pollard-led MI took 17 runs off the 18th over bowled by Thakur, 15 off the 19th over bowled by Sam Curran and 16 off the last over bowled by Lungi Ngidi to take MI over the line.



### Brief scores

Chennai Super Kings 218/4 in 20 overs (A Rayudu 72 not out, M Ali 58, F du Plessis 50, K Pollard 2/12) vs Mumbai Indians 219/6 in 2 overs (K Pollard 87 not out, Q de Kock 38, S Curran 3/34).

### DHONI BLAMES DROPPED CATCHES, BOWLING FOR DEFEAT

"It was a brilliant wicket. The difference was the execution. Not being too tough on bowlers, we dropped catches at crucial stages. The bowlers would execute better and learn from this [defeat]."

### BUMRAH BOWLED HIS MOST EXPENSIVE SPELL IN IPL CAREER

New Delhi: Chennai Super Kings batsman Ambati Rayudu's assault did not even spare Mumbai Indians trump-card Jasprit Bumrah as India's strike bowler returned his most expensive figures (1/56 in four overs) in his Indian Premier League (IPL) career. This was also the first time in six years that the right-arm pace bowler, known for his razor sharp yorkers, conceded over 50 runs in his four-over spell.

Earlier, Rayudu had helped CSK get to a massive 218/4. Rayudu's attack left MI in a state of shock after the Rohit Sharma-led outfit seemed to have got back into the match with quick wickets.

He pulverised the Mumbai bowlers as they conceded 82 runs in the last five overs. Rayudu added an unbeaten 102 (off 49 balls) with all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja (22 not out off 22 balls).

## Williamson replaces Warner as SRH captain

Team Absolute | New Delhi

SunRisers Hyderabad (SRH) on Saturday announced that Kane Williamson will take over captaincy from David Warner for the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season.

Warner led SRH in the first six matches. The franchise lost five of those matches and is at the bottom of the points table.

"SunRisers Hyderabad would like to announce that Kane Williamson will be taking over the captaincy for tomorrow's match and for the remainder of IPL 2021," the franchise said in a statement on Saturday.

SRH also said that they will be changing the overseas combination for Sunday's game against Rajasthan Royals. "The team manage-



ment has also made the decision that they will be changing their overseas combination for tomorrow's match against Rajasthan Royals," added the SRH statement. The franchise said that the decision to replace Warner wasn't been easy.

## Rahul takes Orange cap from Dhawan, Purple stays with Harshal

Ahmedabad | Agencies

Punjab Kings (PBKS) skipper K.L. Rahul, who scored an unbeaten 91 on Friday night against Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), overtook Delhi Capitals opener Shikhar Dhawan in the race for Orange cap given to the top run-getter at the end of the tournament.

Rahul, who had won the Orange cap last season, has 331 runs in seven matches at an average 66.2. He has also scored runs at brisk pace. His strike rate is 136.21. Dhawan has 311 also from seven matches. He averages 44.43. Chennai Super Kings batsman Faf du Plessis (270 in six games), Delhi Capitals' Prithvi Shaw (269 in seven games) and Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson (229 in 6 matches) are next in the list of top run-getters. RCB and India skipper Virat Kohli is 12th with 198 runs while Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma is eighth with 215 runs. Despite below-par performances in the last few games, RCB's Harshal Patel continued to lead the race for Purple cap, given to the top wicket-taker at the end of the tournament. The right-arm pace bowler has 17 wickets from seven matches. He is ahead of Delhi Capitals pace bowler Avesh Khan who has 13 wickets from the same number of matches. Mumbai Indians leg-spinner Rahul Chahar and Rajasthan Royals all-rounder Chris Morris and fourth and fifth with 11 wickets each. Chahar is ahead due to better average. SunRisers Hyderabad's Afghan leg-spinner Rashid Khan has nine wickets from six games and is fifth in the list.



## Leipzig beat Bremen 2-1 to reach German Cup final

Berlin | Agencies

RB Leipzig advanced into its second German Cup final after overpowering resilient Werder Bremen 2-1 in extra time on Friday thanks to Emil Forsberg's last-gasp winner.

Neither side was able to score within 90 minutes, but at the start of extra time, Leipzig increased the pressure to seal a dramatic victory.

After the restart, Leipzig piled on the pressure, but Bremen's well-positioned defence neutralized every attack.

As the match progressed, both sides took more risks but neither could find the net within 90 minutes. Leipzig made a fairy-tale start into extra time as Hwang Hee-chan broke the deadlock in the 93rd minute after beating Pavlenka from eight meters.

Leipzig's joy was short-lived, as Leonardo Bittencourt danced through Leipzig's defence before finishing with a well-placed shot to restore parity in the 105th minute.



Both sides seemed to have settled for the penalty shootout, but Hwang remained in the thick of things and teed up for Forsberg, who made no mistake to volley home in the dying seconds. With the result, Leipzig moved into the second German Cup final in the club's history, whereas Werder Bremen were knocked out in the semifinals for the third time.

## JAYAWICKRAMA'S SIX-WICKET HAUL HELPS SL SECURE BIG LEAD

Pallekele: Left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama's dream debut in which he picked six wickets for 92 runs helped Sri Lanka dismiss Bangladesh for 251 in their first innings of the second Test. Jayawickrama's returns, the best innings figures on Test debut for Sri Lanka, helped the home side secure a big lead. Sri Lanka had earlier extended their first innings total to 493/7 in the morning, before declaring their innings closed. Niroshan Dickwella's quickfire 77 not out helped Sri Lanka approach the 500-run mark. The home side were 17/2 at stumps with an overall lead of 242 runs. In the morning, Bangladesh began their innings well, thanks to Tamim Iqbal's counter-attacking 92. He brought up his fifty in just 57 deliveries. This was his fourth consecutive half-century in the format.

### Brief scores:

Sri Lanka 493/7 dec in 159.2 overs (L Thirimanne 140, D Karunaratne 118, O Fernando 81, N Dickwella 77; T Ahmed 4/127, T Islam 1/83, S Islam 1/91) & 17/2 in 7 overs (D Karunaratne 13 batting, Mathews 1 batting; T Islam 1/2, M Miraz 1/7) vs Bangladesh 252 all out in 83 overs (Tamim 92, Mominul 49, Mushfiqur 40; Jayawickrama 6/92, S Lakmal 2/30, R Mendis 2/86).

## Two-time champ Zverev stunned by Ivashka in BMW Open

Munich | Agencies

Tennis player Ilya Ivashka earned the biggest win of his career at the BMW Open when he defeated World No. 6 Alexander Zverev in the quarter-finals.

The Belarusian broke Zverev's serve to stay in the match at 4-5 in the second set and won nine of the final 12 games of the match to clinch a 6-7(5), 7-5, 6-3 victory on Centre Court. Ivashka capitalised on double faults late in the second set from the two-time champion and claimed the crucial break of the decider at 4-3 to earn his maiden top-10 win.

Ivashka owns a 6-2 record on clay this season, following



runs to the AnyTech365 Andalucia Open quarter-finals in Marbella and the Barcelona Open Banc Sabadell second round. Last

week in Barcelona, the World No. 107 won three matches from qualifying and pushed eventual champion Rafael Nadal to a third set.

## OLYMPIC-BOUND INDIAN SHOOTERS MAY COMPETE, TRAIN IN EUROPE

New Delhi: The Olympic Games-bound Indian shooting squad could compete in European Shooting Championships this month as well as train in Europe, a coach associated with the national team said on Saturday. "A discussion is on to find the right place for the team to train as it has already missed vital training sessions because national camp couldn't be organised in New Delhi's Dr Karni Singh Shooting Ranges owing to the Covid pandemic. There is a possibility of finalising the plan early next week," the coach told reporter.

## CSK continue to lead, PBKS consolidate sixth spot

Punjab Kings (PBKS) consolidated their sixth position on the Indian Premier League (IPL) points table after their 34-run win over Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Friday night.

Ahmedabad | Agencies

PBKS now have six points, the same as Mumbai Indians (MI). However, the Punjab franchise is one spot behind MI due to inferior net run rate (NRR). PBKS have an NRR of -0.264 as against MI's NRR of +0.071. Chennai Super Kings (CSK) lead the table with 10 points from five wins in



six matches. Though Delhi Capitals (DC) and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) are also on 10 points, they both have played one match more than CSK.

CSK are ahead of the two on NRR. They have an NRR of +1.475 while DC have +0.466. RCB lag behind with -0.171. MI are fourth and PBKS are fifth.

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), Rajasthan Royals (RR) and SunRisers Hyderabad (SRH) make up the bottom three of the points table.

KKR and RR have four points each but KKR are ahead of RR with an NRR of -0.494 as against RR's -0.690. SRH are at the bottom of the points table with two points from six matches and an NRR of -0.264.

### IPL 2021 Preview: Match 28

## Under new captain Williamson, SRH face RR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

SunRisers Hyderabad (SRH) will be pressing the reboot button to their Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign when they take on Rajasthan Royals (RR) under new captain Kane Williamson at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Sunday.

The Hyderabad franchise lies at the bottom of the points table having scored just one win. Their biggest problem has been their middle-order batting which has failed to put up big scores and has slipped up during easy chases.

Williamson himself missed the first few matches of the season but ever since he has come back into the side, he has batted well. His half-century against Delhi Capitals took



the match into the power-play.

SRH have also been criticised for not fielding a balanced side and it will be interesting to see how Williamson picks his playing eleven on Sunday afternoon. Warner's comments during the tournament earlier suggested that he didn't have full authority in picking the playing eleven.

Thankfully for SRH, they will be facing RR who themselves are struggling to keep up with the race. RR are just one spot above SRH and a loss on Sunday will push them back to the bottom of the points table.

RR have only four overseas players with them after the departure of a number of them due to various reasons. They are still trying to get replacements. Match begins at 3.30 pm.

### IPL 2021 Preview: Match 29

## DC take on resurgent Punjab Kings

Ahmedabad | Agencies

Delhi Capitals (DC) will take on resurgent Punjab Kings (PBKS) in an Indian Premier League (IPL) match at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Sunday.

The Punjab franchise are coming off a big win over the strong Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) side, winning the match by 34 runs.

Their skipper K.L. Rahul, who has been among runs, will once again be crucial at the top. He will again have to play the role of an anchor and hope the youngsters in the team perform around him.

The big concern for PBKS will be the form of West Indian duo Nicholas Pooran and Chris Gayle.

While Gayle has been inconsistent, Pooran is enduring a very poor run. He



has become only the fifth batsman in the history of IPL to notch four scores of zero in a season.

Punjab's bowling looks good especially with the inclusion of Harpreet Brar. They now have a finger spinner along with a wrist spinner in Ravi Bishnoi. Australian pace bowler Riley Meredith showed great pace. But he suffered an injury during Friday night's game. Punjab will be hoping he recovers in time for Sunday night's match. DC, however, will be tough with their power-packed batting.

Punjab Kings will hope that Mohammed Shami uses some of his swing to get rid of the in-form Prithvi Shaw early.

DC's batting goes very deep and it will be a challenge for PBKS. Punjab batting too will have their hands full against a strong DC bowling line-up.



DJ Khaled releases new hip hop album

## 'Khaled Khaled'



Los Angeles | Agencies

DJ Khaled released his new hip hop album titled "Khaled Khaled". This is his twelfth full-length album. Khaled posted the cover of his album on Twitter while announcing the launch. "I like who I've become. Palms up together #KHALEDKHALED OUT NOW ON ALL PLATFORMS! SUMMER STARTS NOW Sun with face THANK YOU GOD! THANK YOU TO MY FAMILY! I DO THIS FOR YOU, FAN LUV ENJOY - Khaled Khaled," the musician posted on Twitter. The album consists of 14 tracks and features mega names including JAY-Z, Nas, James Fauntleroy, Harmonies by the Hive (speculated by fans to be Beyoncé), Justin Timberlake, H.E.R., Migos, Post Malone, Megan Thee Stallion, Lil Baby, DaBaby, Justin Bieber, 21 Savage and Drake.

## PARIS HILTON CALLS BEAU CARTER REUM HER 'TWIN FLAME'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Entrepreneur-socialite Paris Hilton shared a romantic post on her 17-month anniversary with beau Carter Reum on Friday. She tagged the businessman as her twin flame, who makes her dream bigger than she ever had before. Paris posted a video collage featuring Carter and her, and wrote, "Happy 17 Month Anniversary to my love Carter. I'm so happy that our souls found each other in this life. You lift me up and inspire me in ways you'll never fully know and I'm so thankful." She added that when she looks back at the memories they have created, the hotel heiress gets emotional. "When I look back at the memories we've already created together, I get so emotional and excited thinking about the adventures that still await us and the experiences we are destined to enjoy in this life. You make me dream bigger than I ever have before. My twin flame My other half. I love our love! #HappyAnniversary," she wrote. Paris and Carter got engaged on February 13.



## Danny Huston: I fell into acting

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor-director Danny Huston says he would have wanted to direct more films, but could never really make a name for himself behind the camera. That was when friends started offering him acting roles, and he started accepting these. "I started off as a director. I just sort of fell into acting because I wasn't able to get my directing projects off the ground and friends started casting me in their films out of the kindness of their hearts," said late legendary filmmaker John Huston's son Danny, according to contactmusic.com.

## Why Kelly Macdonald stopped watching 'Line Of Duty'

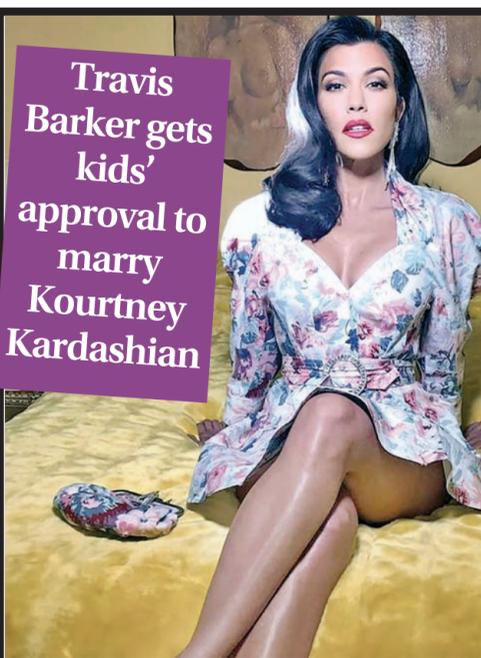
Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Kelly Macdonald, who plays the role of DCI Joanne Davidson in season six of "Line Of Duty", had to stop binge-watching the initial seasons as she found it intimidating. "I wasn't going to turn up I think in Belfast if I carried on. It was just too intimidating. I was sort of I think about midway through Thandiwe's (Newton) season. Yeah, so I need to get back to it at some point but yeah, it was just too much for me," she said. She added that she found it "scary" to portray the role of Davidson. "There was all sorts of scary parts of playing her, I found. There's a lot of dialogue that I'm not used to, you know. There's a lot of information but also, the nature of her character is very, sort of, closed down and she doesn't give anything away," she added, according to femalefirst.co.uk. "I was sort of relieved when I got to do the big interview scene, even though I was dreading it and it was all anyone seemed to be able to talk about - the page numbers, how many pages it was. Even though I was really, sort of, focused on filming that scene, it was a sort of relief almost, to let it all out," said Macdonald.



Talking about his latest directorial, the 2017 film "The Last Photograph", Huston calls it a "simple" and "beautiful" story.

"It's a simple, beautiful story, eloquently written by my friend Simon Astaire. A photograph is stolen from the main character, who then starts to spiral. And through the story we discover what the photo means to him. I guess we all have objects that carry meaning and bring the memory of someone we've lost back to us," he said in an interview with Metro newspaper.



Travis Barker gets kids' approval to marry Kourtney Kardashian

Los Angeles | Agencies

Musician Travis Barker has full support from his children to take his relationship with Kourtney Kardashian to the next level. The Blink-182 drummer has two children, Landon and Alabama, with ex-wife Shanna Moakler. The children have reportedly approved the idea of his father tying the knot with Kourtney, a source told Life & Style, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"(The couple) may be ruffling a few feathers with their extreme PDA (but the kids) aren't bothered by it. Of course, they roll their eyes, but they're hip kids, they get it," the insider went on. (The teenagers are) content with the way everything is right now... It's such a cliché, but they really are just one, big happy family," the source said. "(Travis' children think) Kourtney is super cool, especially Alabama. They talk about dating boys and makeup," the insider continued stating. "But what really matters to them is that their dad is happy," the source added.

## Justin Theroux likes to sleep next to his dog

Los Angeles | Agencies



Actor Justin Theroux is absolutely in love with his dog Kuma, a rescue pit bull mix, and thinks it is nice to open his eyes in the morning and see her lying next to him. Asked his favourite thing to do with his canine companion, Theroux told PeopleTV: "It's gonna sound slightly odd, but honestly, waking up with her. It's my favourite thing, because she'll lay there like this." "She fully puts her head on the pillows - I mean she sleeps like people. And it's really nice to wake up in the morning and have her right there with you," he added, according to a femalefirst.co.uk report.

Theroux adopted Kuma in 2018 in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. He is an advocate of animal adoption and pit bulls, and on a previous visit to an animal shelter, had pledged to pay the fees for anyone who gave a home to some dogs there, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Bebe Rexha



## Birthday wish is that everyone gets vaccinated

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Aahana Kumra is celebrating her birthday on Saturday and for this day all she wants is that everyone registers and gets vaccinated. The government has announced vaccinations for all adults starting from Saturday. The actress says, "As for birthday wish, I want you all to get your vaccination job. So, we as a country can get out of this crisis as soon as possible." Aahana goes on to add, "My heart goes to all the people who have lost their loved ones because of Coronavirus. Our medical staff and doctors are working day and night to save lives." On the work front, we will see the incredible performer next in the short film titled "Happy Birthday" along with Anupam Kher. She also has Madhur Bhandarkar's film, "India Lockdown" and the remake of famous French television drama "Call My Agent" in the pipeline.

## PAVAIL GULATI WANTS TO ENSURE STRAYS ARE TAKEN CARE OF DURING COVID CRISES

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Pavail Gulati is very worried about how animals are managing at a time the country battles the deadly second wave of Covid. He said he has been feeding strays and also trying to supply food to feeders. "I am not so worried about pets as much as I am worried about all the strays and



homeless animals. As lockdown began, my thoughts turned to them. I have been feeding cats and dogs locally and also provide food and other resources to feeders who love animals. I am trying to do my bit as much as I can," said Pavail. He added, "I am making sure that I do everything so that no animal sleeps hungry at night!" The actor said that he has heard stories of people abandoning pets during times as these, and urged people not to do so. "I haven't witnessed it myself but have heard stories about it happening. There was so much miscommunication around it that people did not know what to do with their pets. I feel just making them aware that dogs and cats only spread love is very important," he said, adding that he has a plan in mind to help these animals, too. "I have been working on something with a couple of friends of mine about a long-term plan. As for now, we should just be empathetic towards all the animals," he said. The actor said that it feels great to see that social media is being used for such a cause as amplifying requests and needs of Covid-affected families. "It breaks my heart to see the losses we are facing every day. (I have) Huge respect for all our doctors and frontline workers who are working determinedly to fight Covid-19. Also, it fills my heart with immense love and respect for every common man, influencer, actor who is making the correct use of social media to help the one in need. While social media can be a toxic place the same medium is working as an SOS tool for many. I would urge all to come forward in any way possible as even the smallest contribution has a huge impact," he said.

## Sarah Jane Dias tries to make lockdown healthier for fans

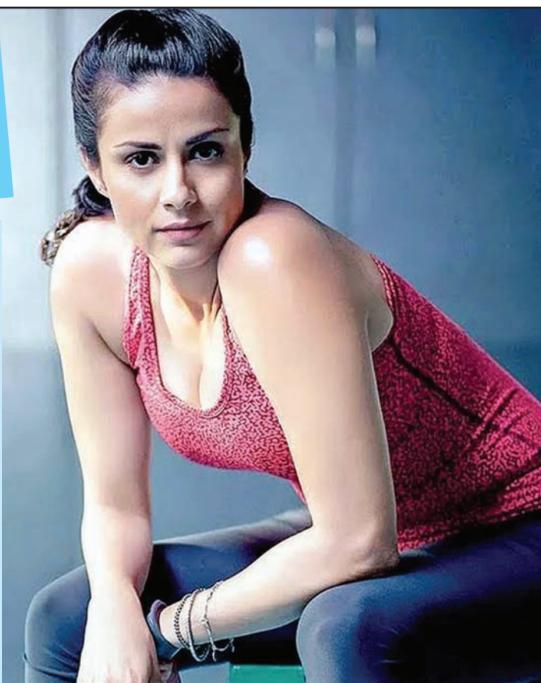
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress-model Sarah Jane Dias is trying to help her social media followers adapt to a healthier lifestyle during lockdown. She has started sharing her workout videos and immunity boosting diet tips. "The most important thing to do right now is to stay home and stay safe and in order to make sure that we are strong enough to deal with the crisis all around us and for some at our homes, we need to take as good care of our minds and our bodies as we can. Thus, I try to share whatever I incorporate in my own life to maintain my mental and physical health to all my followers on social media so they feel that they are not alone in this," said Sarah. "The current situation is out of our hands and the best we could do is stay indoors and try to work on our immunity. Diet is extremely important when it comes to immunity and health and also the right frame of mind. We need to put the right fuel into the body and also maintain the right frame of mind in order to be strong to fight this difficult time," she said. "Our bodies are designed to move and thus I am sharing home workouts which are for beginners and can be done very easily in a small space. I send my wishes, prayers and love to everyone out there. We need to stay strong and this too shall pass," she added.

## Gul Panag: Each woman who is part of our ecosystem is a role model

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Gul Panag dons many hats, from being an actor to an avid rider, a certified pilot, a mother and a wife. She has had a stint in politics, too, and is a serial half-marathon runner. Although she is famous, she underplays the tag of being a role model. "It is important to take your role as a role model seriously. When I say role model it is not just me because I am a public figure. I would say each one of us is a role model because, given the inequity in India with regards to access to opportunity for women, just the ability to choose what you do in your day is something women don't have access to," said Gul. She labels each woman a role model. "Each woman who is part of our ecosystem, they are all role models for women who don't even have the opportunity to decide what they would want to do in the next minute. So, we all carry on our shoulders the incredible responsibility," added Gul, who has voiced National Geographic's specials titled "Tiger Queen Of Taru" and "On The Brink". She continued: "Sometimes, walking a difficult path is an option we must exercise because in walking that path we make it easier for somebody else to go through it. I think the responsibility of being a role model and walking the path less trodden stay on one's shoulders, to make it easier for someone else to follow." It's not easy to be a pioneer at something, she stressed. "Being a pioneer is a big responsibility and one must take the plunge if they have the opportunity," Gul concluded.



## 7 healthy snacks to munch on while working from home

Team Absolute | New Delhi

We know that working from home is here to stay, owing to yet another if not deadlier Covid-19 wave. Home sheltering can make us crave carb-heavy or fat-loaded snacks, we must remember that eating healthy is the only way to keep our immunity in check.

It is certainly tricky to select from a wide range of 'healthy' tagged packaged foods, here's a list of seven lip-smacking snacks to munch on while you work from home!

### 1. Goopy Filled Cookie

Set to change your snacking game forever, the cookie is baked to perfection with deliciously rich dough and oozing a smooth indulgent filling. The cookies come packed with 20g of protein to help you reach your daily protein requirement. A perfect way to keep cravings in check while supporting training goals. Being fibre-rich, they are a great addition to a balanced diet without any meal prep.

### 2. Maniarrs Khakhra

The common go-to Gujarati snack relished throughout the world, the khakhras by Maniarrs are healthy and made primarily of ragi with multiple flavours and spices combinations. A new taste every day is ensured in its eight different variety combo pack.

### 3. The Healthy Cravings Co Roasted Makhana

Fox nuts or makhanas are dubbed as a great source of calcium. Coming as fat-free, these fox nuts are an ideal snack when you experience sudden hunger pangs at work or while studying. It also keeps your blood pressure in control.

### 4. Myprotein 6 Layered Protein Bar

Myprotein's another recent release, the 6 Layered Protein Bar, features six layers of taste and texture to provide a hit of protein, carbohydrates, and fibre. Packed with over 20g of protein, essential minerals calcium and copper, these mouth-watering treats are the ideal way to upgrade your healthy snacking.

### 5. Keeros Snack Pack

Popular among the Indian audience, given its nutritional value, this super snack has high fibre, high energy, good for your heart and bones. It keeps your cholesterol in control and even helps you in losing weight. A great snack option for those suffering from diabetes.

### 6. Grammingway Ragi Diet Chips

Craving for chips but not the fried ones? Ragi chips by Graminway are a healthy substitute to potato chips, being low in cholesterol and fat, these chips are made of ragi flour, vegetable oil and tapioca starch combined with the necessary spices. Munching these flavour-packed crunchy snacks in between your main meals keeps the hunger pangs away.

### 7. The Green Snack Co

The Green Snack Co vouches on spreading healthy, tasty and authentic foods. Offering a range of flavourful snacks made with the goodness of Quinoa, Kale leaves and some super Grains, the brand offers puffs, crisps, stix, and more. It is definitely a healthy snacking option. So #BingeOnGreen.



## Sonakshi Sinha urges people to contribute to organisations fighting Covid

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sonakshi Sinha on Friday shared an Instagram video urging all to donate to organisations that are helping people fight Covid.

In the video, the actress spoke of about how the country is going through a terrible time and appeals to everyone to help out in whatever way they can. "Hi everyone, let's talk. We have been hit by the second wave of covid and it is way worse than last year. It breaks my heart every time I hear of someone losing their family or their friend to Covid. Seeing visuals of what our health care workers, hospitals are going through. The urgent need for oxygen cylinders, concentrators, medicines, food and financial help for so many people. Seeing the way the situation has been handled, I believe we need to step in to make a difference. So here I am to make a sincere appeal to all of you, please come forward and donate and help in any possible way to fight this battle which we are all in together," she said.



"I have made a list of foundations like the Hemkunt Foundation, Khalsa Aid, Uday Foundation, Give India, Feeding India, Goonj and a few more. These guys are really doing an incredible job of reaching out to and helping those in need. Let's at least be a part of their efforts. I am mentioning their accounts below and in my stories, please check them out and agar aapkosailage, please please go ahead and donate. I have as well. Remember no amount is small in this crises. Sab sath-milkar is mushkilwaqtkaamnakarein, sab surakshitho, is baatkikaamnakarein. Stay safe, wear your mask, wash your hands, maintain social distance and get yourself vaccinated," she added in the video. She captioned the post as, "Lets make a difference, wherever you are! Foundations you can donate to, to help India fight Covid from ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD", listing website links of organisations. A host of other Bollywood celebrities such as Alia Bhatt, SonuSood, John Abraham and Bhumi Pednekar have been using social media to help people cope with the Covid crises.



**ELNAAZ NOROUZI:**

**IT TOOK YEARS FOR ME TO SET A FOOT IN FILM INDUSTRY**



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Elnaaz Norouzi, who started her Bollywood career with acclaimed series 'Sacred Games', says she never knew if she could establish herself in the Hindi film industry given her outsider tag. "The most difficult part was getting into the industry. It took me years to set my foot in the industry. I never saw if it would ever happen because I am an

outsider. The journey is still going on and I don't think the rest of the difficulties will fade away anytime soon, but it is getting better," said Elnaaz. The actress was recently seen in "Hello Charlie", which released on an OTT platform recently. As a viewer, she feels OTT platforms are the future, though as an actor she has a different take. "As a viewer, I feel OTT is the future. I used to say that even when I was doing

'Sacred Games'. More people are watching content on OTT platforms now. Cinema will always have its charm. I also plan to go watch a film in a theatre once it opens up," she says. The actress adds: "As an actor, I really don't care if I am being seen in a theatre or on an OTT platform because, in the end, we make films for the viewers where they like to watch it, it doesn't matter. As long as our hard work is getting released and getting viewers."

**Varun Dhawan: We are in this together**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Varun Dhawan shared an Instagram message with fans on Saturday, highlighting the need to donate for concentrators in hospitals amid the shortage of oxygen. In another post earlier in the day, the actor philosophised over an important thing we must keep in mind once the pandemic is over.

"If we all survive this, as I hope we shall, remember that when it came down to it, we didn't fight for land or weapons or house or jewellery. We didn't fight for concert tickets or fancy designations or religions or politics. We didn't fight for shares in a company or a seat at the table. We didn't fight for business class tickets or the keys to a house by the beach. When all this is over, remember, that we fought for air," he wrote in a message he posted earlier in the day.

He captioned the note as, "WE are in this together." Later, he posted about donating money for oxygen concentrators in hospitals. He urged all fans to donate.



**SANJANA SANGHI LAUNCHES MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN**



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sanjana Sanghi on Saturday announced the launch of a mental health campaign titled Here to Hear. As part of her campaign, people will get free sessions with psychologists and qualified listeners associated with the online counselling platform.

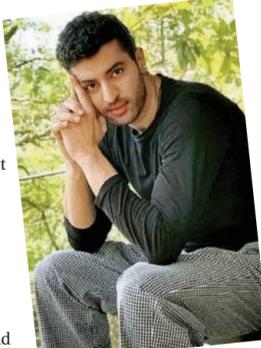
"There was never a rule book handed to any of us, on how to cope with a catastrophic pandemic like we are presently facing. And in the absence of that rule book, amidst such a grave crisis that is ridden with loss of life and uncertainty - we can easily find ourselves consumed with all kinds of worrying thoughts, fears, anxieties, and confusion," she posted on Instagram. She added that she is happy to see people supporting each other in these days of crisis.

"I'm so proud to see all of us as citizens stepping up to help in ways big & small, and I truly hope our work that has gone behind making Here to Hear possible helps. De-stigmatising seeking the support of mental health experts, as well as emphasising the importance of doing so to be able to disentangle the many thoughts that may be making this already tough circumstance even tougher is extremely crucial," she said. The actress said that the programme is open for everyone and is free of cost. "Anybody who is seeking help can register and book a 30-minute De-Stress Session at 'Here to Hear' anywhere, anytime, absolutely free of charge thereby bridging the gap of inaccessibility and non-affordability of quality mental health care services," she said. The platform will provide counselling therapies through audio and text support sessions.

**ZEBBY SINGH : DON'T MIND BEING COSY ON SCREEN BUT I CAN'T BE VULGAR**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Zebby Singh, who recently joined the cast of the television show "Tujhse Hai Raabta", says while he is open to playing a bold role on screen, as long as it is not vulgar. "OTT series are real and interesting. The audiences connect to them and enjoy them the most. I'm open to playing powerful roles in that platform too. I prefer doing action and romance on screen. As for bold sequences, I don't mind being cosy on screen, but I can't be vulgar," he says.

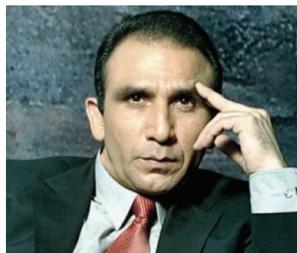


Zebby has been known for his work in television series such as "Papa By Chance" and "Vish Ya Amrit: Sitara". His music video "Khwabon Khayalon Mein" released recently. The video co-stars actress Pooja Bisht. Talking about the shoot of the song, he says, "We shot the song in the month of January this year, in Gujarat. Now, the song has finally released. It gives you another level of happiness when your projects start streaming. Right now, I'm in Goa for the shoot of my show 'Tujhse Hai Raabta'. The actor plays Param in the show. "Param will bring new content to the show. I will be seen as a 'jugaadu' (resourceful) brat, and will bring a twist in the protagonist's (Reem Shaikh) life. Being a real Punjabi, it is fun to play a reel Punjabi character. I can really connect to him," he says.

**Bikramjeet Kanwarpal dies due to Covid complications, B'Town mourns loss**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood took to social media to mourn the demise of actor Bikramjeet Kanwarpal due to Covid-related complications. He was 52. After retiring from the Indian Army, Bikramjeet entered showbiz in 2003. He has been part of films such as "Rocket Singh: Salesman Of The Year", "Aarakshan", "Murder 2", "2 States" and "The Ghazi Attack". He has also been TV shows such as "Diya Aur Baati Hum", "Yeh Hai Chahatein", "Dil Hi Toh Hai" and "24". He was also seen in the web series "Special Ops".



"Extremely sad news. I've known Major Bikramjeet for so many years. He

friend will miss you," while Vishal Dadlani wrote: "A man who lent dignity to everything he did, #BikramjeetKanwarpal carried the Fauji stamp. Jai Hind, Sir," wrote Neil Nitin Mukesh, mourning the death of Bikramjeet, who passed away on Friday. Filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar, who has worked with the actor, also expressed his grief. He wrote: "Saddened to hear demise of Maj. Bikramjeet Kanwarpal a talented actor who had acted in my films Heroine, Page3, Corporate & Indu Sarkar. Will miss our conversations on Indian Army and his dream project film on Siachen. My Condolences for his family and friends. #OmShanti Folded hands."



**ADIL HUSSAIN: DIDN'T WANT TO ACT IN FILMS, MOST FILMS DIDN'T INSPIRE ME**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Adil Hussain says before he was offered the 2010 hit "Ishqiya", he never harboured a desire to enter Bollywood. He admits not caring much about the films being made at the time. "My first film in Hindi language was 'Ishqiya'. I never went to Bombay to look for work in films. I didn't want to act in films, most of the films didn't inspire me. I did not watch them or like them, apart from a very few," he told IANS. The actor recalls "Ishqiya" director Abhishek Chaubey had to convince him to come on board.

"When Ishqiya came to me, Abhishek Chaubey flew from Bombay to Delhi to convince me to act in his film. He asked me why I was not in Bombay, and I said that I don't like the films and so why should I be in them.

So, he said that this was a very different kind of film. He told me the story and I loved the story," he says. Hussain says that for him the story of a film makes all the difference. "I don't have a criterion but a basic standard. I grew up with great stories in Assam, stories by great writers. I went to NSD and have done plays across the globe, of the greatest playwrights. If I read the script and it sounds mundane or uni-dimensional, then it doesn't inspire me to act, even if they pay a lot of money. I make sure that a film has some meaning and is close to my heart, I believe in it, it is written well, woven well and the director is able to put across the story which he wants to make," he says. Hussain has been seen in films such as "English Vinglish", "Life Of Pi" and "Lootera". His latest release was "The Illegal", which dropped on OTT recently.

**INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY**



Sakshi Malik