

# absolute india

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI



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## IMMEDIATE GLOBAL IVERMECTIN USE CAN END PANDEMIC, SAYS SCIENTISTS

# THE SILVER BULLET!

Led by the Front Line COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance (FLCCC), a group of medical and scientific experts reviewed published peer-reviewed studies, manuscripts, expert meta-analyses, and epidemiological analyses of regions with ivermectin distribution efforts all showing that ivermectin is an effective prophylaxis and treatment for COVID-19.

- The common antiparasitic ivermectin is being touted as a miracle cure for Covid-19 by doctors and campaigners the world over.
- Many regions around the world now recognise that ivermectin is a powerful prophylaxis and treatment for Covid-19.
- South Africa, Zimbabwe, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Mexico, and India have approved the drug for use by medical professionals.



"We did the work that the medical authorities failed to do, we conducted the most comprehensive review of the available data on ivermectin. We applied the gold standard to qualify the data reviewed before concluding that ivermectin can end this pandemic."  
**Pierre Kory, MD, president and chief medical officer of the FLCCC**

Washington | Agencies

A peer-reviewed research has claimed that global ivermectin use can end Covid-19 pandemic, as the medicine significantly reduces the risk of contracting the deadly respiratory disease when used regularly. Peer reviewed by medical experts that included three US government senior scientists and published in the American Journal of Therapeutics, the research is the most comprehensive review of the available data taken from clinical, in vitro, animal, and real-world studies.

A focus of the manuscript was on the 27 controlled trials available in January 2021, 15 of which were randomised controlled trials (RCT's). Consistent with numerous meta-

analyses of ivermectin RCT's since published by expert panels from the UK, Italy, Spain and Japan, they found large, statistically significant reduction in mortality, time to recovery and viral clearance in Covid-19 patients treated with ivermectin. "Our latest research shows, once again, that when the totality of the evidence is examined, there is no doubt that ivermectin is highly

effective as a safe prophylaxis and treatment for Covid-19," said Paul E. Marik, founding member of the FLCCC and Chief, Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School. The results as seen in this latest study demonstrate that the ivermectin distribution campaigns repeatedly led to "rapid population-wide decreases in morbidity and mortality."

## CBSE's app to counsel students from class 9 to 12

ACCORDING TO THE CBSE, THE APP IS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' PSYCHO-SOCIAL WELLNESS. FROM MONDAY, THIS APP WILL BE FULLY AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS.

# 'dost for life'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The CBSE has launched a mobile app with the aim to solve the mental health problems of students from class 9 to 12 during the ongoing Covid pandemic. Materials related to education, society, emotion and behaviour will be made available in the app. The anxiety related to the examinations, internet addiction disorder, depression and special learning disability will be removed through the help of this app. The app contains many features, including counselling sessions, expert advice, guidance on what to do after class XII, mental health tips, and an audio-video protocol related to Covid-19. Apart from this, CBSE Board will give another chance to the students of class X to pass the exams. Students of 10th will pass on the basis of internal assessment and half-yearly examination. Despite this, if a student fails, he/she will be given another chance to take compartmental examination.

With the help of the app, students and parents will be able to get answers to their questions on education, health and social topics. This mobile counselling app of the CBSE is named 'dost for life'. Free live counselling sessions will be conducted for the students through this app, the CBSE said. At least 83 volunteers have already joined for live counselling. Of these, 66 are in India and the rest 17 are in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Nepal, Oman, Kuwait, Japan and the USA. The counselling sessions will be held three days a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

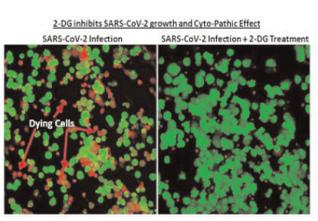
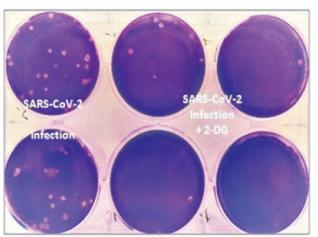


## DCGI APPROVES DRDO'S ANTI-COVID DRUG FOR EMERGENCY USE

- Being a generic molecule and analogue of glucose, it can be easily produced and made available in plenty in the country.
- The drug comes in powder form in a sachet, which is taken orally by dissolving it in water.
- It accumulates in the virus infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and energy production. Its selective accumulation in virally infected cells makes this drug unique.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Drugs Controller General of India has approved an anti-COVID-19 drug developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) for emergency use, the Defence Ministry has said. An anti-Covid-19 therapeutic application of the drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) has been developed by INMAS, a lab of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad. Clinical trial results have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence. A higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in Covid patients. The drug will be of immense benefit to the people suffering from Covid-19. In April 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, INMAS-DRDO scientists conducted laboratory experiments with the help of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and found that this molecule works effectively against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and inhibits the viral growth.



## 5 friends turn their luxury rides into emergency hospital to supply O2

# The Good Samaritans

The idea was conceptualised by Chandesh Guhija (44) who runs a car service centre in Kota after he saw people running around in search of oxygen and medicines. He along with four friends -- Ashish Singh, Bharat Samnani, Ravi Kumar and Aashu Kumar -- converted three luxury cars into an emergency hospital for those patients who were unable to get beds in oxygen wards.



Archana Sharma | Jaipur

Five friends in education city Kota have turned their three luxury cars into an 'emergency hospital' and have been providing oxygen to critical patients in these vehicles.

Two cars are serving as ambulances and a gas kit has been installed in all cars. The AC of the car needs to be put on till the time oxygen is being supplied to the patient. One cylinder in the car can provide oxygen to three patients and we were able to arrange 3 oxygen cylinders after standing in queues for hours. Needy people continue calling us, but it's difficult to cater to each and everyone, they said. Since the last 10-12 days, we have been supplying oxygen cylinders to patients' families free of cost. However, it was taking more time and

## KERALA COP'S UNIQUE WARNING FOR VIOLATORS

Team Absolute | Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday asked local bodies to ensure proper Covid protocols are followed, even as police got tough on violators saying police clearance for jobs and passports will bear the brunt of their present action.



C.H. Nagaraju, Police Commissioner, Kochi

Vijayan held an online meeting with the ward members of the local bodies and asked them to ensure that there is a proper and working ward-level committee to ensure proper Covid protocols are followed. Across the state, police was out in full strength and was very tough on those who ventured out without a proper reason as the lockdown came into effect. The Chief Minister called the meeting at a time when the entire state has come under a total lockdown which came into effect Saturday morning and would be in force till next Sunday. Kerala on Friday recorded 38,460 new Covid cases after 1,44,345 samples was tested in the past 24 hours, while the total number of active cases stood at 4,02,650. It was on account of the surge in cases and the positivity rate crossing 25 per cent that the total lockdown was effected.

## SC FORMS NATIONAL TASK FORCE TO STREAMLINE OXYGEN ALLOCATION

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Saturday set up a 12-member National Task Force (NTF) to facilitate public health response to Covid-19, including streamlining of oxygen distribution in the country, based on scientific and specialised domain knowledge. A bench comprising Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah said: "A consensus has emerged that there is a need to ensure that the allotments of medical oxygen to the states and UTs are made on a scientific, rational and equitable basis. At the same time, it must allow for flexibility to meet unforeseen demands due to emergencies which may arise within the allocated territories." The top court said: "It is necessary that an effective and transparent mechanism is set up within the Union Government for the purpose of allocating medical oxygen to all states and UTs for being used during the Covid-19 pandemic." The Union Government has agreed to set up a National Task Force to streamline the process. This Task Force would be tasked inter alia with formulating a methodology for the scientific allocation of oxygen to the states and UTs. The SC bench said the establishment of this task force will enable the decision makers to have inputs which go beyond finding ad-hoc solutions to the present problems.



## New way of urban foresting

- After selecting a location based on soil quality, water availability and secured boundary wall, an area is dug up to 0.60 metres depth and followed by filling with various layers of rice husk, farmyard manure, cocopeat and 'Jeeva Mutram'.
- Subsequently, planting points are marked at a grid of 0.75M x 0.75M and then species of high canopy (16 varieties), medium canopy (19 varieties) and low canopy (18 varieties) are planted.
- Zero usage of chemicals and fertilizers inspired the authorities to go for the Miyawaki technique. This ensures a cent per cent native, organic and natural plantation within a short time.
- These dense forests not only help retain groundwater, recharge groundwater tables and support local biodiversity but also increase the green cover and curb air pollution.

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

An initiative by National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) using Miyawaki plantation has succeeded in developing a mini forest amid the concrete jungle in Telangana's Ramagundam, known for blazing summers. The mining town in Peddapalli district is also known as Agnigundam (furnace) for the scorching heat it experiences every summer with the highest temperature even touching 50 degree Celsius. The town, known for coal mines runs by the Singareni Collieries Company Limited,

also boasts of NTPC's 2,600 MW Ramagundam Super Thermal Power Station, the largest in South India. The Miyawaki project launched by NTPC-Ramagundam early last year at its oxidation pond has developed into a dense forest with 100 per cent survival and set an ideal example of urban foresting. The phase I&II of the project covers over 7,662 square meters with plantation of around 14,034 trees. Experts say this method is ideal for urban spaces where a few cents of land can be set aside to increase the green cover. Under Miyawaki method, dozens of native species

are planted in the same area, close to each other, which ensures that the plants receive sunlight only from the top and grow upwards than sideways. It requires very little space and plants grow ten times faster, and the forest becomes maintenance-free in three years. In January last year NTPC launched the project, covering over 1,400 square metres having around 2,900 trees of 53 varieties. Officials from district administration and forest department and hundreds of students from four NTPC township schools participated in the massive plantation. Developed in association with Peddapalli district adminis-

tration and the forest department and executed by the Telangana State Forest Development Corporation Limited (TSFDCL), the project involves a scientific way of planting. In November last year, NTPC-Ramagundam launched second phase of Miyawaki method plantation at its oxidation pond area covering 6,044 square meter area by planting around 10,684 plants of 61 varieties. Impressed by the work done by NTPC-Ramagundam, police in neighbouring Karimnagar district has also taken up plantations with Miyawaki method at some of their campuses in Karimnagar town.





# CENTRAL LEADERSHIP DISCONNECTED FROM GROUND REALITY: BENGAL BJP LEADERS

■ Sexist comments like the 'Didi O Didi' remark of the Prime Minister and Ghosh's comment that Mamata should wear shorts also worked against the BJP, claimed a party leader. Another leader suggested that the party should now start identifying candidates for the next general elections in 2024 instead of parachuting in outsiders.



claimed a BJP leader. Former West Bengal BJP Chief and former Governor of Tripura and Meghalaya, Tathagatha Roy openly criticized the ticket distribution and the role of central appointees for affairs of the state unit. Blaming state in-charge Kailash Vijayvargiya, co-in-charge Arvind Menon, Shiv Prakash and state unit Chief Dilip Ghosh, Roy had tweeted, "These people have heaped the worst possible insults on ideologically driven BJP workers and devout Swayamsevak who had been relentlessly working for the party since 1980s."

Other West Bengal BJP leaders including a few who lost in the Assembly polls said, "All the Central leaders assigned to manage the party's poll affairs had failed to do their homework and worked as dictators, ignoring the feedback from the local cadre."

A West Bengal BJP leader claimed that the party strategists failed to present a credible local face and made it Bengali (Mamata Banerjee) versus non Bengali (Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah).

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Despite increasing its tally from three seats to 77 in the 294 member Assembly, many West Bengal BJP leaders feel that the central leadership's failure to gauge the mood on the ground and ignoring the local leadership were the main reasons for losing the high stakes battle to the Mamata

Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC). Failure to form the government in West Bengal, which was considered the last frontier by the saffron party along with Kerala, West Bengal leaders told reporter that there was little involvement of the state leadership in the decision making, there was too much deployment of central leaders from other parts of the country, especially from North

India, and a failure to present a credible and effective Bengali leadership. A section in the West Bengal BJP unit feels that if the Central leadership had heard the local cadre the result could have been better. "Local leaders are well connected with the people and aware of issues concerning them and by ignoring them the Central leadership completely disconnected itself from the ground,"

# Mamata accuses EC of directly helping BJP

Kolkata | Agencies

Speaking on the first day of the Assembly after returning to power for the third time in a row, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday stroked a major controversy by accusing the Election Commission of India of directly helping the BJP during the recently-concluded Assembly polls in the state, in which the Trinamool Congress cruised to a landslide victory.

She also alleged that unable to accept the mandate of the people, the saffron brigade was inciting violence in the state.

"I can challenge that had the Election Commission not helped them (BJP) directly, they would not have won even 30 seats. In this election, rigging took place in some places under the watch of the poll panel. There should be electoral reforms made immediately, else the democratic fabric of the country will be jeopardised," Banerjee said during her speech on the floor of the Assembly, where Biman Banerjee was elected the Speaker for the third straight terms.

Warning stern action against the BJP for 'inciting' violence in the state, the Chief Minister said, "For the last six months, they have not done anything but pushing the country to the brink of destruction. They had only one target and that was to capture Bengal and now they (BJP) cannot accept the



mandate of the common man. So they are trying to incite violence in the state and are posting fake videos."

The Chief Minister also directed the administration to take stern action against anyone trying to fan communal tension in the state.

# Decongest jails: SC orders re-release of all eligible prisoners

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In the backdrop of an unprecedented Covid-19 crisis prevailing in the country, the Supreme Court on Saturday passed a slew of directions to decongest prisons and ordered forthwith release of all those prisoners who were granted bail or parole last year due to the pandemic.



Chandigarh | Agencies

Even as he made it clear that there was no question of sabotaging the farmers' agitation against the farm laws, which his own government was vehemently opposed to, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday said no violation of the weekend lockdown and other restrictions in the state could be allowed at any cost, given the current grim situation.

"There are lives at stake, saving them is our priority, and it is the responsibility of every Punjabi to save them," said the Chief Minister, urging BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) and BKU (Ekta Dakaunda) leaders not to give a twist to his Friday's comments on the issue.

Amid the call of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha to oppose the weekend lockdown, the Chief Minister had on



Friday asked the Director General of Police to strictly enforce all the weekend restrictions and not allow any violation at any cost. Despite the farmer leaders' appeals to the shopkeepers, shops across the

state largely remained closed in the state on Saturday. Leaders of two farm organisations had misinterpreted his statement to raise doubts about his intentions towards the ongoing farmers' stir against the 'black' farm laws, said the Chief Minister. "How can my government go against the interests of the farmers when it was the first in the country to move the amendment laws in the Vidhan Sabha to annul the draconian farm laws of the Central government?" asked the Chief Minister, asserting as far as the Central laws were concerned, his government's stand against them had been clear and consistent.

Noting that the situation in the state was extremely grim, the Chief Minister said, "This is not the time to play politics but to put all our energies into protecting the life of every human being."

# FIRE BREAKS OUT ONBOARD INS VIKRAMADITYA

Mumbai: A minor fire broke out onboard the Indian Navy aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya on Saturday, an official said here. The duty staff observed smoke emanating from the part of ship having accommodation for the sailors. The ship's personnel on duty acted immediately to fight the blaze and there are no reports of any casualties in the incident. "All personnel onboard have been accounted for and no major damage has been reported. An inquiry into the incident is being ordered," said the official. Further details of the incident which happened in the harbour, are awaited.

# PETITION FILED WITH NHRC OVER DEATHS DUE TO LACK OF O2 ACROSS INDIA

A petition has been filed against the Central government with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) over the deaths caused by Covid-19 due to non-availability of oxygen. The petition has been filed by Human Rights activist Vishnu Kumar Gupta.

Ghaziabad | Agencies

The petition said, "District hospitals and private hospitals in the country have neither installed oxygen plants nor have oxygen storage facilities whereas Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants can be set up at these places in lesser time and cost in a single month."

"The PSA oxygen plant costs exactly the amount which many hospitals spend every year to procure oxygen for themselves."

"There is a shortage of oxygen due to lack of its buffer stock in our country. If the government had taken into account the common man's Right to



Life guaranteed in the constitution amid last year's coronavirus crisis, such a catastrophic situation would not have arisen had the buffer stock of oxygen and its production/supply been taken care of."

Advocate Gupta said, "The Central government has failed to assess the implications of this pandemic. The third wave of Covid-19 is expected in October 2021 so it becomes primary responsibility of the government that keeping in mind the current and future oxygen supply, it must make sure that PSA plants are set up expeditiously in all government district hospitals and private hospitals in the country."

# UP GOVT TO HOLD FUNERALS OF COVID VICTIMS FREE OF COST

Lucknow: With the bodies of deceased Covid-19 patients piling up in large numbers, the Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday passed an order according to which it would hold the funerals of all those persons who died of the virus without charging any money. This government order would be applicable within the Municipal Corporation limits.

The municipal corporations will bear the expenses of funerals at all crematoriums, cemeteries and cremation grounds falling within the limits of the corporation.

It has been made mandatory to follow Covid-19 protocols while conducting such funerals. The expenditure incurred on the funerals will be met by the urban bodies from their own resources or from the State Finance Commission. A maximum amount of Rs 5,000 will be spent on each funeral.

# Bengaluru adopts Mumbai model to tackle second wave of Covid

Bengaluru | Agencies

Taking a cue from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)'s success in tackling the second wave of Covid, Karnataka issued directives to set up Ward Decentralised Triage and Emergency Response (DTER) Committees for Covid management in all 198 wards in Bengaluru based on the Mumbai model.

The ward level committees will have officials of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), ward committee members, government officers, volunteer RWAs and civil society organisations. "This will help in the decentralisation and provide better supervision for ward-level Covid governance," read the directives issued by the Revenue Department's principal secretary, N. Manjunath Prasad. The directive also stated that ward level Community Triage is seen as a successful intervention in many cities including Mumbai. "Currently there is a delay in informing the test results to the patient due to the centralised ICMR process followed by BU number generation process," the directive notes. "The ward DETER com-



mittees (WDC) will now be set up in all 198 wards of the BBMP and they will be entrusted with activities related to Covid management," the directive explained.

According to this directive the WDCs will be headed by a ward nodal officer and the order states that ward level war rooms can also be set up. The main objective of setting up the WDCs is that it becomes the first point of contact with the government for Covid patients or their attendees in Bengaluru.

The focus of these ward level committees will be to help people access hospital beds. In particular, the role of a triage coordinator is outlined in the order. This is someone who offers community triage services with the help of a support staff. A competent and trained doctor can guide the triage centre while doctors, interns, final year students of MBBS, Dental, Nursing or AYUSH doctors will also be at the triage centre. This centre will work with the WDC.

# ASSAM TEA ESTATES WITNESS STEEP SPIKE IN COVID CASES

Guwahati: Amid the drought-like situation prevailing in Assam, the tea industry in the state is facing the Covid blues as over 500 workers in many tea gardens have been infected by the virus, health officials said on Saturday.

Health officials in Guwahati said that after the detection of the virus in many workers, several measures have been taken to check the spread of the virus, including setting up of containment zones and ramping up testing facilities.

According to the officials, till Saturday, at least 503 tea garden workers in many estates under 14 districts have been infected by the virus. These districts are -- Dibrugarh, Biswanath, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Udalguri, Charaideo, Kamrup (Metro), Baksa, Darang, Dhemaji and Sivasagar.

# Over 14L beneficiaries in 18-44 age group vaccinated

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A total of 14,88,528 beneficiaries in the age group of 18 to 44 years have so far received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine across 30 states and UTs.

The maximum of 3,08,171 beneficiaries in the third phase vaccination are reported from Maharashtra followed by Rajasthan (2,49,315), Gujarat (2,47,652), Delhi (2,41,870), Haryana (2,04,101) and Uttar Pradesh (1,02,407). The third phase of the Covid vaccination started on May 1 covering people aged between 18 and 44 years.

There are 35,152 beneficiaries in the age group of 18 to 44 from Odisha followed by Assam (33,693), Jammu and Kashmir (2,785), Tamil Nadu (10,703), Madhya Pradesh (9,833), Karnataka (8,681), West Bengal (4,123), Punjab (2,785) and Chhattisgarh (1,026).

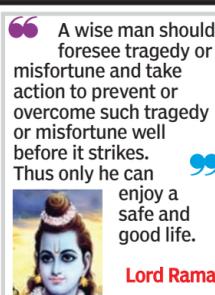
Only 934 people of the age



group have received Covid vaccines in India's famous tourist state Goa so far, Andaman and Nicobar Islands (663), Telangana (498), Bihar (291), Andhra Pradesh (148), Kerala (112), Ladakh (86), Jharkhand (81), Uttarakhand (19) and Himachal Pradesh (14).

Only one beneficiary has been reported from Puducherry so far while there are two beneficiaries each in Chandigarh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.

Cumulatively, 16,73,46,544 vaccine doses have been administered, as per the latest report of the Union Health Ministry.



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No refusal to treatment of Covid patient from different city : Govt

## TREATMENT IS MANDATORY

The Health Ministry on Saturday issued important guidelines for treatment of Covid patients mandating that no patient will be refused treatment or oxygen on the grounds that the patient belongs to a different city or not being able to produce valid ID proof.

- No patient shall be refused admission on the grounds that he/she is not able to produce a valid identity card that does not belong to the city where the hospital is located.
- As per the new guidelines, requirement of a positive test for Covid 19 virus is not mandatory for admission to a Covid health facility. A suspect case shall be admitted to the suspect ward of a Covid Care Centre (CCC), Dedicated Covid Health Centre (DCHC) or a Dedicated Covid Hospital (DCH) as the case may be.
- Mild cases are referred to CCC, moderate cases to DCHC and severe cases to DCH.



सत्यमेव जयते  
Government Of India

said the order applies to hospitals under central government, states and UT including private hospitals.

The new guidelines are pursuant to the Supreme Court order dated April 30 and exercise of powers under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

As per the new guidelines, no patient will be refused services on any count. This includes medications such as oxygen or essential drugs even if the patient belongs to a different city. The guidelines state that the admissions to hospitals must be based on need. It should be ensured that beds are not occupied by persons who do not need hospitalisation.

The Chief Secretaries of states shall issue necessary directions for the new guidelines within three days.

### INDIA HAS GOT 3L REMDESIVIR VIALS, OVER 6K O2 CONCENTRATORS FROM ABROAD

New Delhi: India cumulatively has so far received three lakh Remdesivir vials, 6,608 oxygen concentrators, 3,856 oxygen cylinders and 14 oxygen generation plants from the global community in the last 12 days. The global community has also dispatched 4,330 ventilators or Bi PAP to India from April 27 to May 7. The major items received on Friday from the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), Switzerland, Poland, the Netherlands and Israel include Oxygen Concentrators (2,060), Remdesivir (30,000), Ventilators (467), and Oxygen Generation Plants (three).

### RAILWAYS DELIVERED HIGHEST DAILY LOAD OF LMO

New Delhi: The Indian Railways said on Saturday that it has delivered nearly 3,400 MT of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) in more than 220 tankers to various states across the country till now. A Railway Ministry spokesperson said that on Saturday, the highest ever single-day load of 718 MT LMO is on the run in different Oxygen Expresses trains. He also said that 41 tankers are on the run at the moment.

### RECORD 4,187 COVID DEATHS IN INDIA

New Delhi: India has recorded 4,187 deaths due to Covid-19 in the last 24 hours -- the highest so far, along with 4,01,078 fresh cases, taking the total number of cases in the country to 2,18,92,676, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said on Saturday. It is the fourth time after May 1 that India has crossed the four-lakh-mark of new cases in last 24 hours. On Friday, India recorded 4,14,188 cases. It also breached the maximum deaths in 24 hours. On May 6, India recorded 3,980 deaths -- the highest till then. In the past 16 days India has continued with over three lakh cases and over 3,000 casualties have for last 10 days.

### ARMY SETTING UP OXYGEN PLANT, 3 COVID HOSPITALS IN PUNJAB, HRY

Chandigarh: In an effort to tide over the oxygen shortage in the region, the Indian Army is working round-the-clock to resuscitate an oxygen plant and commissioning 100-bed Covid hospitals in Chandigarh, Patiala and Faridabad, the defence's Public Relations Office (PRO) said here on Saturday. The Western Command in a separate tweet said to overcome shortage of ambulances with polyclinics, it had pooled in its resources and provided eight service ambulances in polyclinics across the NCR (National Capital Region) for use by the defence veterans.

## 21 die in Raj village allegedly after Covid victim's burial sans protocols

Team Absolute | Jaipur  
Around 21 persons lost their lives at a village in Rajasthan's Sikar district allegedly after the burial of a Covid victim, whose body was brought from Gujarat, without following any Covid protocols.

The incident was reported recently from Kheerva village in Sikar, the Assembly constituency of Rajasthan Congress chief and state Education Minister Govind Singh Dotsara.

Officials said that the corpse was brought from Gujarat and around 21 people, who came in contact with the body, lost their lives in the days after the final rites were performed in the vil-



lage. The body was taken out of the plastic bag and many people had touched it during the burial, they said. However, Lakshmanaraj sub-divisional officer Kulraj Meena said that out of the 21 deaths, only 3-4 deaths occurred due to Covid-19.

### NINE KILLED IN GELATIN STICK EXPLOSION IN ANDHRA

Amaravati: At least nine workers were killed and some others injured in gelatin sticks explosion in Andhra Pradesh's Kadapa district on Saturday, police said.

The incident occurred near Mamillapalle village in Kalasapadu mandal when the labourers were unloading gelatin stick from a vehicle for using them at a limestone mine. Such was the impact of the explosion that the body parts of the deceased were blown apart and the vehicle was completely burnt. The workers hailing from Kalasapadu and Pulivendula mandals were carrying gelatin sticks for blasting the rocks at the mine. Police rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies for autopsy. They took up the investigation and were trying to find out if the quarry had license to use the explosives. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy conveyed his condolences to the families of the deceased also enquired about the incident and its reasons from senior officials.



## Ambulance with Rudy name used for carrying sand: Pappu Yadav

PATNA | Agencies

After more than 30 ambulances were unearthed from an office of BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy in Bihar's Saran district, a video of some labourers loading sand in an ambulance went viral on the social media on Saturday.

The video was uploaded by Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) chief Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav on Twitter. He has also uploaded a message where he is saying: "Rajiv Pratap Rudy would use the ambulance in a better way than using it for sand transportation. He also had a driver for it." "But he does not have drivers to operate ambulances



and help patients," Yadav said while tagging @RajivPratapRudy @PMOIndia.

RJD Darbhanga unit has also uploaded this video on its Twitter handle and said: "People are dying due to unavailability of ambulances and here ambulance is used for the transportation of sand." This tweet was retweeted by RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav.

In the viral video of 3 seconds, a group of 4 labourers is seen loading sand in the rear side of the ambulance. Both Pappu Yadav and RJD Darbhanga claim that the name of Rajiv Pratap Rudy is mentioned on the ambulance. Absolute India does not authenticate this video.

## BIG SURGE IN COVID DEATHS, CASES IN ANDHRA

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh saw a big surge in Covid fatalities and new cases during the 24-hour period ending 9 a.m. on Saturday.

The virus claimed 96 lives during this period while 20,065 new cases were detected in this 24-hour cycle. The fresh fatalities pushed the state's cumulative death toll to 8,615, while its overall case tally rose to 12,65,439.

West Godavari district accounted for the maximum deaths (14), followed by 12 in Visakhapatnam, 10 each in Anantapur and Guntur, nine each in East Godavari and Vizianagaram, seven each in Kurnool and Nellore, six in Chittoor, five in Kadapa, four in Krishna and three in Srikulam. According to state health officials, the government and private laboratories in the state tested 1,01,571 samples during the 24-hour period. The state has so far conducted 1,72,62,441 tests. The period also saw 19,272 people recovering from the virus, taking the state's total number of recoveries to 10,69,432. The number of active cases in the state now stands at 1,87,392.

## Ensure 700 MT O2 per day to Delhi until further orders: SC to Centre

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The Supreme Court on Saturday made it clear to the Centre that there shall be no reduction in the allocation and availability of medical oxygen to Delhi and its direction with regard to the provisioning of 700 MT oxygen per day to the national capital shall continue pending further orders.

A bench comprising Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah said: "We direct the Union of India to remedy the situation forthwith and to ensure that the direction issued by this court for the availability of 700 MT is strictly observed on a daily basis, pending further orders."

The Delhi government had informed the top court that it has



computed the requirement of oxygen on the basis of the formula which has been adopted by the Union government.

The top court noted that the Centre has not disputed the cor-

rectness of the computation on the basis of the formula. The bench said that at this stage, no contrary material has been placed on record by the Union government.

## Wake up from slumber, mitigate Covid challenges: IMA to Health Ministry

Noting that the collective consciousness, proactive cognizance, and requests made by the IMA and other professional learned colleagues are put into the "dustbin", the association said the decisions are taken "without realizing the ground realities".

- When Rs 35,000 crore were allotted in the budget, the IMA said, with which the maximum required 200 crore vaccine doses are purchasable.
- "Why the central government is shedding its responsibility? Unless the government comes out and implements with willingness and steadfastness for equitable distribution, we will not be able to achieve the goal".
- Today for the last seven days, the IMA said, "no vaccine is available in small and medium private hospitals".

ing it is "astonished to see the extreme lethargy and inappropriate actions" from the department in combating the agonizing crisis caused by the devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the last 20 days, an IMA statement said, the association has been insisting on the need for complete, well-planned pre-announced national lockdown rather than few states declaring lockdown ranging for 10 days to 15 days - so as to getting breathing time for the health care infrastructure to recoup and replenish both the material and manpower.

"Lockdown will break the chain of devastating spread," said the IMA, a national voluntary organisation of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine in



India.

However, it said, the Central government had refused to implement

the lockdown resulting in mounting of new patients beyond four lakhs every day and the number of moderate to severe cases are increasing to nearly 40 per cent.

The equitable, accessible, and affordable vaccination for all above 18 years were demanded by the IMA based on scientific facts from April 6 onward but the vaccination drive was started from May 1, it said. Considering differential Covid vaccine pricing system as "unhumanistic", the IMA said the people of the age group between 18 and 45 years are forbidden to get the free vaccination from the central share of 50 per cent and they are placed

under the mercy of the state governments.

The IMA also raised question over the government hiding actual Covid deaths. "Why are we trying to hide actual deaths? If the public comes to know about the actual deaths, their seriousness to adopt Covid-appropriate behaviours will rise."

"Sporadic night curfews have not done any good. Life is precious than the economy. Wake up from slumber and respond to mitigate the growing challenges in covid pandemic. It is unfortunate, the ministry has failed to make the necessary required roadmap and ensure vaccine stock, resulting in the majority of the places where vaccination could not be rolled out for people above 18 years."

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The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Saturday slammed the Union Health Ministry, say-

## Rahul Gandhi questions GST on Covid vaccines

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday slammed the government over the goods and services tax (GST) on vaccines, saying the lives of can be lost but the Prime Minister's tax collection should not be lost.

In a tweet in Hindi, Rahul Gandhi said, "Lives of people can be lost, but the tax collection of the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) should not be lost." He also used the hash tag of GST. His remarks came after several Congress-ruled states questioned the five per cent GST on the Covid vaccines. With the five per cent GST on Covid vaccines the state governments have to pay Rs 15-20 extra per dose to the central government.

The Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh governments have opposed the move of collection of GST on Covid vaccines manufactured in India. Even Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has written to Finance Minister



Nirmala Sitharaman for waiver of GST on Covid vaccines.

### ASSAM BJP MLAS WILL CHOOSE NEW CM TODAY

New Delhi: A week after the assembly poll result, the Assam BJP MLAs are likely to meet on Sunday in Guwahati to choose the new Chief Minister of the state.

BJP Chief I.P. Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday discussed with current Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. After the meeting, Sarma said, "Assam BJP Legislature Party will probably meet tomorrow in Guwahati. You will get all the answers after the Legislature Party meeting." Both Sonowal and Sarma are seen as probable candidate for the Chief Minister's post. Nadda first held a discussion with Sarma and Sonowal separately and then with both of them together.



# AMIDST SHIV SENA'S ONSLAUGHT PM LAUDS MAHA CM'S COVID EFFORTS

# Solapur imposes stricter Covid-19 curbs till 15 May

In a significant development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called up Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to get an overview of Maharashtra's war against the Coronavirus, an official said.

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During the conversation, the PM lauded Thackeray's efforts and observed that the state has put up a good fight during the ongoing second wave of Covid-19, even as the Shiv Sena slammed Modi for the manner in which the Coronavirus crisis has been handled at the national level.

Thanking Modi, the CM appreciated his guidance in the state's Covid war right from the beginning and how the Centre had accepted certain suggestions given by Maharashtra.

Thackeray took the opportunity to request for more Central help and support in terms of critical needs like medical oxygen and apprised the PM on the state's plans to tackle the possible Covid-19 'third wave' expected to hit soon.

The PM's appreciation came at a



time when a belligerent state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been repeatedly targeting the Maha Vikas Aghadi government's handling of the pandemic situation.

Interestingly, the Modi-Thackeray interlude came on day when the Shiv Sena's party newspapers 'Saamana' and 'Dopahar Ka Saamana' slammed the Centre for going ahead with the Central Vista project estimated to cost around Rs 13,000 crore in the midst of the pandemic.

"Small countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal have rushed aid to 'Atmanirbhar India'. The truth is that the country is surviving today only because of the legacy of Jawaharlal

Nehru-Indira Gandhi. But, Modi is not ready to stop work on the Central Vista project to construct a new Parliament building and a house for the Prime Minister spending thousands of crores of rupees," said the Saamana in stinging comments.

"The whole world is terrified of India now. There are all kinds of flights, trade and business restrictions which is hitting the country's economy. Yet, the country is trudging along because of the contributions of Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, PV. Narasimha Rao, Manmohan Singh and their visionary policies. It is time now for Modi to take steps in the interests of the country," said the Saamana's

strong edits.

Modi's call came a day after Thackeray decided to form a special Covid Task Force on Pediatrics as the probable 'third wave' could hit children in a big way, especially since this category is not yet cleared for the vaccination drive.

Thackeray has also urged the PM to permit states to launch their own App to handle the vaccinations and they could be linked with the Centre's CoWin App to streamline the process.

"This will ensure better interface and experience for citizens who are really keen to take the vaccine shot," Thackeray said in a letter to Modi, which discussed the load on the App that leads to glitches or crashes.

The Maharashtra CM has also sought the Centre's green signal to purchase Covid-19 vaccines from manufacturers other than Serum Institute of India Ltd, Pune and Bharat Biotech International Ltd, Hyderabad. "If the states are allowed to procure from other manufacturers as well, we would be able to cover a larger population in a shorter time to help reduce the impact of the possible third wave," Thackeray pointed out.

Both Modi and Thackeray also discussed the overall pandemic situation, the vaccination programme and related issues in the country.

- As per the new order, shops selling essential commodities, such as milk, groceries, vegetables and fruits, will remain closed and only home delivery of these items will be permitted
- As Sec 144 of the CrPC is already imposed there, the movement of the people is not allowed except for valid reason

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Amid rising cases of Covid-19 in Maharashtra and the state's attempt to contain the spread through lockdown-like restrictions, the authorities in Maharashtra's Solapur have announced stricter restrictions for a week, till 15 May, in the city as well as other parts of the district.

As part of the fresh curbs, which will come into effect from 8 pm on Saturday, shops selling essential commodities, such as milk, groceries, vegetables and fruits, will remain closed and only home delivery of these items will be permitted, officials said.

As per the earlier guidelines, shops selling essentials were allowed to operate from 7 am to 11 am in the district.

The restrictions will remain in place in Solapur city and other parts of the district till May 15, officials said.

"In view of the rise in COVID-19 cases, a

decision was taken to make the lockdown stricter in the district. As per the new restrictions, shops selling essential commodities will remain shut, and only home delivery of these items will be permitted from 7 am to 11 am," Solapur district collector Milind Shambharkar said. As section 144 of the CrPC is already imposed in the district, the movement of the people is not allowed except for valid reasons, he said. All the essential services, such as hospitals, medicals, diagnostics services, vaccination centres, insurance offices, pet shops, animal care centres, veterinary clinics, banks and all other services, which are related to healthcare will remain open, he added.

"Shops selling agriculture-related products are allowed to remain open till 11 am," the official said. According to him, hotels and restaurants are closed, but home delivery of food items has been permitted.

Meanwhile, the count of new coronavirus cases in Maharashtra on Friday dropped by over 8,000 compared to the day before as 54,022 fresh infections came to light, the health department said. The tally of cases rose to 49,96,758. On Thursday the state had reported 62,194 COVID-19 cases. As many as 898 deaths were reported on Friday, taking the COVID-19 death toll to 74,413.37,386 people were discharged, increasing the total recoveries to 42,65,326.

As many as 2,68,912 COVID-19 tests were conducted in the state in the last 24 hours, taking the tally of samples examined so far to 2,89,30,580.

## Sugar mill in Osmanabad to generate 20 MT oxygen daily amid supply crunch

## Hingoli records lowest coverage, admn blames it on poor allocation of jobs

Dharashiv Sugar Mill in Maharashtra's Osmanabad district will generate 20 metric tonnes of oxygen per day from its ethanol plant.



The tiny district has 13.8 lakh people, with 4.14 lakh aged above 45 years. Among them, only 44,909 people have received at least one dose until May 2.

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Amid acute shortage of medical oxygen supply, a sugar mill in Maharashtra's Osmanabad district is all set to generate 20 metric tonnes of oxygen per day from its ethanol plant.

The ethanol plant at Dharashiv Sugar Mill has a capacity of 60 kilo litres per day and this has been modified to generate 20 metric tonnes of medical grade oxygen which usually gets released in the

atmosphere. Speaking to media persons, Mill chairman Abhijit Patil said, "The trials are almost successful with state FDA officials coming to Osmanabad to test the quality of the oxygen generated from the ethanol plant."

"Osmanabad district has a total daily requirement of 16 metric tonnes of oxygen. At present, the district is falling short of four metric tonnes of additional oxygen means

Osmanabad will be able to fulfill the need of neighbouring districts like Latur, Solapur, Beed among others," he added. Maharashtra has 202 registered sugar factories, of which 130 mills are having ethanol plants. At least 100 sugar mills are likely to follow this method of oxygen generation from ethanol plants, which means the state will have additional 2,000 metric tonnes of oxygen on any given day.

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Marathwada's Hingoli district has recorded the lowest immunisation coverage in the state, with only 10.8 per cent of those aged above 45 years so far vaccinated with the first dose. The state's vaccination average is 29.1 per cent.

The tiny district has 13.8 lakh people, with 4.14 lakh aged above 45 years. Among them, only 44,909 people have received at least one dose until May 2.

Interestingly, Hingoli was a top performer in the initial days of the vaccine roll out in January, recording 100 per cent or sometimes more,



immunisations. On January 16, it was scheduled to give jabs to 200 healthcare workers and managed to vaccinate all. On January 22, it scheduled 200 but vaccinated 234 people.

From February, the district's daily performance started dipping. "There is no vaccine hesitancy here, in fact, people are enthusiastic and keep

inquiring whether vaccination centres are open. The problem is availability of doses, which is affecting our performance," said District Health Officer Dr S P Pawar.

He added that vaccine "supply to Hingoli is limited" and the state government has been requested several times to increase stock. "If the district

gets 5,000 doses, it finishes the stock in two days and most centres sit idle for four to five days until fresh stock arrives." "We have also begun vaccination in sub-centres to reach out to the village population," Pawar said.

State officials, however, said doses are allocated based on a district's daily vaccination rate and active cases, and Hingoli manages to vaccinate only 500 to 1,500 people a day.

Hingoli MP and Shiv Sena Hemant Patil said the district has 62 centres. "In some pockets, there is vaccine hesitancy. Haphazard allocation of doses has also hampered the drive," he said. Blaming poor allocation of shots, Collector Ruchesh Jayavanshi said: "It is a vicious cycle, if we get less stock, we will immunise less number of people. There are times when centres have no stock for three to five days at a stretch. We are utilising the entire quota allocated to us." Officials said the limited healthcare staff in the district is also strained between Covid-19 and vaccination duty.

## Maharashtra Govt To Seek Intervention Of PM, Prez Over Maratha Quota; Panel To Be Formed

## Positivity, mortality rates rise as rural Maharashtra becomes a concern

On Saturday, the Maharashtra government decided to seek the intervention of PM Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind to ensure the restoration of the Maratha quota

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On Saturday, the Maharashtra government decided to seek the intervention of PM Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind to ensure the restoration of the Maratha quota. This decision was taken in a meeting of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on the Maratha reservation. The Constitution bench of the

Supreme Court struck down the Maratha quota in educational institutions and public employment on May 5. In the meeting attended by Ministers Ashok Chavan, Eknath Shinde, Dilip Walse Patil, Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte, Advocate General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni and other officials, it was also decided that a committee will be formed to analyse the SC verdict on Maratha reservation and will submit its report in 15 days' time.

In the SEBC Act which came into force on November 30, 2018, the Maratha community was declared as a "Socially and Educationally Backward Class" and accorded 16% reservation, propelling the total reservation in Maharashtra to 68%. While upholding the validity of this law, the Bombay High Court reduced the quantum of

Maratha reservation to 12% in educational institutions and 13% in public employment. However, the SC stayed the reservation on September 9, 2020, and referred the matter to a larger bench. On Wednesday, the Constitution bench comprising of Justices Ashok Bhushan, S Abdul Nazeer, L Nageswara Rao, Hemant Gupta and S Ravindra Bhat unanimously ruled that neither the Gaikwad Commission nor the High Court made out any grounds for exceeding the ceiling of 50% reservation for Marathas. Moreover, the apex court observed that there was no question of revisiting the verdict in the 1992 Indra Sawhney vs Union of India case which had capped the total reservation at 50%. Thus, it struck down the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and

Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act, 2018 to the extent that Marathas cannot be held as "Socially and Educationally Backward Class" and they are not entitled to reservation. Meanwhile, Shivaji Maharaj's descendant and BJP MP Sambhaji Chhatrapati urged the Maharashtra government and the Centre to ensure that Maratha reservation is granted despite the SC order. In identical letters addressed to Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray and his predecessor Devendra Fadnis, the Rajya Sabha MP stated that the SC judgment was unfortunate for Marathas. Maintaining that the demand of Maratha quota is "non-negotiable", the BJP parliamentarian asserted that the onus of ensuring this lies on the state government as well as the Centre.

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Covid-19 positivity rate in Mumbai has come down from 17 to 9% while positive cases have been surging in rural Maharashtra with a high mortality rate, as per the state government's weekly report. It said the Nandurbar tribal district has recorded the highest 2.93% mortality rate, in Hingoli it is 2.46% and 2.33% in Sindhudurg. In Nanded, the mortality rate is 2.29% and 1.19% in Aurangabad. Maharashtra's average mortality rate is 0.98% over the last week. There are 22 districts which are witnessing a surge in positive cases with a high mortality rate in the state.

The report reveals that Covid positive patients' weekly growth rate is also higher in rural areas. The 3.18% growth rate in Ratnagiri, 2.83% in Budhana, 2.67 per cent in Parbhani, 2.64% in Beed, and 2.60% growth rate of positive cases in Sindhurgh. In Mumbai the growth rate is 0.51% while the doubling ratio is 130 days with 90% per cent recovery. The weekly positivity is the highest in Palghar at 40.85%, while it is 39.25% in Budhana and 39.02% in Ahmednagar, 34.87% in Hingoli, 34.37% in Satara and 32.77% in Parbhani, 31.96% in Beed. In Pune, the positivity rate is 29.15%, while it is 29.20% in Nasik and 26.45% in Thane over the last week. State

Health minister Rajesh Tope says positive cases are plummeting in 15 districts, but there is a surge in the remaining 22 districts in the state. He said lockdown has helped in containing the spread of the virus, but in rural Maharashtra, positive cases are rising.

"In the urban localities, people are following lockdown measures strictly, but in rural areas, people are still casual, resulted in the spike in positive cases. If required, more stringent measures will be imposed to contain the spread of the virus and bring down positivity and mortality rates," Tope said. Latur, the rural district of Maharashtra, is witnessing a major surge in positive cases.

## Amid shortage, Maharashtra plans to first vaccinate 35-44 year olds

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray is expected to take a decision on it, state health minister Rajesh Tope said, adding the inoculation of those in the 18-34 age group would start once the doses are available in adequate quantity.

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Amid limited stock for the third phase of vaccination for the 18-44 age group and to control crowding at inoculation centres, Maharashtra plans to first give the shot to those in the 35-44 age group, with preference to people with comorbidities, the government indicated on Friday.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray is expected to take a decision on it, state health minister Rajesh Tope said, adding the inoculation of those in the 18-34 age group would start once the doses are available in adequate quantity.

Currently, the state is inoculating citizens in the 18-44 age group only at five centres in a district, as the number of doses is limited. The state started the drive with 300,000 Covishield doses and later purchased 479,000 Covaxin doses. So far,



215,284 citizens in the 18-44 category have been inoculated since May 1.

"The move was prompted as we saw several instances where people from urban areas took appointments at vaci-

nation centres in rural areas," Tope said.

The minister said such incidents caused "unrest" among locals in rural areas. "In many places, tech-savvy people from cities take appointments for vaccination in talukas and rural areas. Till we have abundant supply of vaccines, we will have to make slots as per the age group and comorbidities. If 100% from the 18-44 category are allowed to go, there can be crowding. We plan to have an age bracket of 35 to 44, with preference to people with comorbidities. I will discuss this with the chief minister," said Tope.

The state is also in talks with the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), Russia's sovereign wealth fund that helped finance the vaccine Sputnik V, to purchase doses. "We are trying to get the stock available with them," Tope told reporters on Friday.

He said the state has not got the doses assured by Serum Institute of India for inoculation of the 18-44 category. "The institute had assured us that it would supply an additional 350,000 doses, but so far it has not come. For the 18-44 age group, we are going slow as per the availability of 779,000 vaccines. As we get more stock, we will ramp it up."

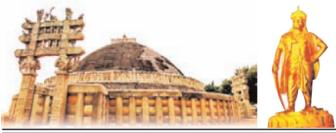
With the vaccination of over 700,000 people in the 45+ age group on Wednesday and Thursday, the state is left with a limited number of doses. With under 100,000 doses remaining, the vaccination drive for people over the age of 45 is expected to slow down this weekend, unless doses arrive

from the Centre, Tope said. Maharashtra had received 900,000 doses earlier this week from the Centre.

Tope said they are "constantly" following up with the Centre to provide doses of Covishield and Covaxin. Over 400,000 people in the state are due for their second dose of Covaxin. With the Centre not sending Covaxin doses, the state will take a decision on diverting the doses it has purchased for the second dose of people over 45. The Centre provides vaccines to the states for free. The state has also been buying vaccines for those in the 18-44 age group.

"Two days ago, we had received 900,000 doses for vaccination of people over 45 years. Of the stock, 800,000 doses have been consumed. We have some thousand vaccines left. We appeal to the Centre to provide vaccines in large quantities, especially Covaxin. Around 400,000 to 500,000 people are due for their second dose of Covaxin. It has to be given within 42 days. If they do not provide in time, the state will divert the Covaxin doses it has purchased. But we are confident that the Centre will provide adequate doses," Tope said.

The minister reiterated the state is prepared to purchase 120 million doses in one go for the inoculation of 57.1 million population in the 18-44 category as vaccination remains the "top priority" of the government. He added the state has the capacity to ramp up daily vaccinations to 1 million, but the stock is not available.



# CM CHOUHAN DISCUSSES COVID PANDEMIC WITH PM NARENDRA MODI ON PHONE

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan discussed the present situation of corona infection in the state after talking to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over phone on Saturday. Chouhan gave information regarding innovative efforts to prevent corona infection. Central government will provide all possible help to Madhya Pradesh for prevention and treatment of corona infection: Prime Minister Modi

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Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan discussed the present situation of corona infection in the state after talking to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi over phone on Saturday. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan told the Prime Minister that due to the active efforts of the government and the community, the positive rate of corona infection in the state has been steadily decreasing, which has

come down to 17.43 percent. The recovery rate is also increasing continuously, which was 82.88 percent on 30 April, today has increased to 83.53 percent on 8 May. Chouhan shared with the Prime Minister the innovative efforts made by the state government for the prevention of corona infection. Expressing satisfaction over the efforts of the state

government, Prime Minister Modi assured the Chief Minister of all possible help. Chouhan spoke about the progress of the Kill Corona Campaign, Corona Curfew, Corona Valentines, Isolation Center, Covid Care Center in the state, the Government's efforts for the construction of temporary Covid Hospitals, Public Awareness

Campaign, and Yoga to Health Campaign. Chouhan discussed in detail the availability of remdesivir injection supply of oxygen, and the new oxygen-producing plant being set up at various places in the state. Chouhan also discussed with the Prime Minister the progress of the ongoing Covid vaccination in the state.

# Magnitude 4.3 earthquake strikes near Ashoknagar

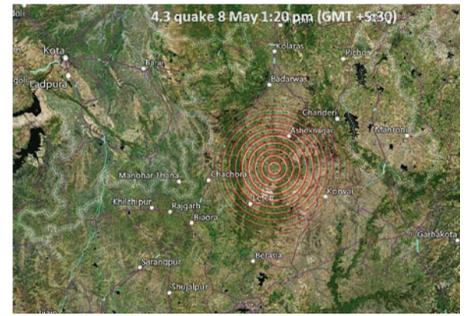
The exact magnitude, epicenter, and depth of the quake might be revised within the next few hours or minutes as seismologists review data and refine their calculations, or as other agencies issue their report.

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An earthquake of magnitude 4.3 occurred around noon on Saturday 8 May 2021 at 12:50 pm local time near Ashoknagar, Madhya Pradesh, India, as reported by India's National Center for Seismology (NCS).

According to preliminary data, the quake was located at a shallow depth of 10 km. Shallow earthquakes are felt more strongly than deeper ones as they are closer to the surface. The exact magnitude, epicenter, and depth of the quake might be revised within the next few hours or minutes as seismologists review data and refine their calculations, or as other agencies issue their report.

Based on the preliminary seismic data, the quake should not have caused any significant damage, but was probably felt by many people as light vibration in the area of the epicenter. Weak shaking might have



been felt in Sironj (pop. 45,500) located 28 km from the epicenter, Ashoknagar (pop. 64,700) 29 km away, Raghogarh (pop. 63,900) 42 km away, and Guna (pop. 153,700) 45 km away.

Other towns or cities near the epicenter where the quake might have been felt as very weak shaking include Etawa (pop. 55,200) located 64 km from the epicenter, Basoda (pop. 69,300) 64 km away, and Chanderi (pop. 32,500) 68 km away.

VolcanoDiscovery will automatically update magnitude and depth if these change and follow up if other significant news about the quake become available. If you're in the area, please send us your experience through our reporting mechanism, either online or via our mobile app. This will help us provide more first-hand updates to anyone around the globe who wants to know more about this quake.

# Do not panic, keep up the spirit, all will recover soon: CM

CM Chouhan sought detailed information regarding the arrangements at the Covid Care Center from the concerned authorities. He instructed to ensure continuous availability of medicines, oxygen and other basic facilities at the center. He said that patients admitted at the Covid Care Center should not have any problem.

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Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday inspected the 40-bed Covid Care Center running in the tribal girls hostel of

Nasrullaganj. During the inspection, he spoke to the patients admitted in the centre and told them not to panic, keep up their spirits and assured them that all will recover from Corona infection. On this occasion, Chouhan sought detailed information regarding the arrangements at the Covid Care Center from the concerned authorities. He instructed to ensure continuous availability of medicines, oxygen and other basic facilities at the center. He said that patients admitted at the Covid Care Center should not have any problem. Chouhan said that the patients admitted should get proper treatment in good environment. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also took stock of Polytechnic College campus Nasrullaganj. He instructed to set up a 20-bed temporary Covid Hospital in the college in view of the huge settlement around

Nasrullaganj. The Chief Minister said that apart from medicines, injections and availability of oxygen, trained medical staff should also be posted here. Divisional Commissioner Kiyawat said that Covid Care Center will soon start here with all facilities. Chouhan told the public representatives present on the occasion to maintain constant contact with the citizens and also make people follow the Corona guideline along with Janata Curfew in small towns, townships and villages. He instructed the officers to constantly monitor the health of the people and make efforts to arrange for tests and treatment along with isolation as soon as the initial symptoms are detected. On this occasion, Divisional Commissioner, Kavindra Kiyawat, IG, DIG, SP SS Chauhan, Karthikya Singh Chouhan and senior officials were present.

# TIGER FOUND DEAD IN CANAL IN BALAGHAT DISTRICT

The carcass was found floating in a canal of Rajiv Sagar project at Khadagpur village of Balaghat district's Waraseoni tehsil on Friday, the official said.

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A carcass of a tiger was found floating in a canal of an inter-state water project in Balaghat district, neighbouring Maharashtra, an official said on Saturday.

The carcass was found floating in a canal of Rajiv Sagar project at Khadagpur village of Balaghat district's Waraseoni tehsil on Friday, the official said.

Photographs of the stripes of the sub-adult big cat will be sent to forest officials in Maharashtra for identification, Madhya Pradesh additional principal chief conservator of forest (Wildlife) JS Chauhan said.

"We are going to send a pic-



ture of the stripes of the sub-adult (18 to 24 months) tiger to our Maharashtra counterparts to identify if he belonged to that state, as Nawegoan-Nagzaria Tiger Reserve in Bhandara and Gondia districts was not far from the spot," Chauhan said.

Officials will also study the

stripes of the tiger to ascertain if he belonged to MP, as parts of the Kanha Tiger Reserve fall in Balaghat district, he added.

It is easy to identify tigers, as their stripes are recorded in cameras, which are installed to photograph them during tiger census in the state, the official said. A post-mortem is

being conducted to ascertain the exact cause of death, he said, adding the big cat's body parts were intact when he was found and there were no external injuries.

Water from the Rajiv Sagar project is shared by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, the official said.

# COVID-19: CASES AGAINST 200 PEOPLE FOR THRONING MOSQUES

Chhatarpur: At least 200 people had gathered in Jama and Paltan mosques in Nowgong town, located 25 km away from Chhatarpur, on Friday in violation of guidelines, which allow only five persons to gather at any religious place, said tehsildar Piyush Dixit.

Cases of violating COVID-19 norms have been registered against at least 200 people for offering prayers in two mosques in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur district, an official said on Saturday.

At least 200 people had gathered in Jama and Paltan mosques in Nowgong town, located 25 km away from Chhatarpur, on Friday in violation of guidelines, which allow only five persons to gather at any religious place, said tehsildar Piyush Dixit.

Dixit said the management of these mosques had been asked in the past not to organise public gatherings and act as per the guidelines, and no action was taken against them earlier.

"Cases have been registered under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code and other legal provisions," said Nowgong police station in-charge Sanjay Bedia.

# BJP suspends 6, gives notice to ex-minister over 'anti-party activities'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After facing defeat in Damoh Assembly bypoll in Madhya Pradesh, the BJP's state unit has issued a show-cause notice to former minister Jayant Malaiya for indulging in "anti-party activities" and suspended the primary membership of his son and five mandal presidents, a party functionary said on Saturday. he Congress on Sunday retained the Damoh Assembly seat with the party candidate Ajay Tandon defeating his former colleague and nearest BJP rival Rahul Singh Lodhi by a margin of 17,097 votes. Lodhi had later alleged that "massive internal sabotage" by Malaiya (74) and others had led to his defeat.

Talking about the action

taken against them, state BJP media in-charge Lokendra Parashar said, "As per the directives of MP BJP president VD Sharma, the party's state unit on Friday served a show-cause notice to former minister Jayant Malaiya, seeking clarification for the anti-party activities during Damoh bypoll." The party also suspended the primary membership of its five mandal presidents and convenor of the party's district Prashikshan Prakosh (training cell) Siddharth Malaiya (son of Jayant Malaiya), he said. According to Parashar, the action was taken for their alleged involvement in anti-party activities during the bypoll, for which polling was held on April 17 and the votes were counted on May 2.

# Every patient will get a bed for treatment: CM Chouhan

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that every Covid patient in the state needs normal, oxygen and ICU for treatment. Beds will be provided. For this, continuous beds have been increased in every district. All districts should ensure that every Covid patient gets beds in hospitals for treatment.

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Chouhan said that do not tell Corona to hide. This disease is cured by starting the medicine in the beginning, but it becomes fatal if it is delayed. A door-to-door survey campaign is being carried out under the Kill Corona campaign. Covid aid

centers are being built in the cities. Patients with colds, coughs, etc. get free medical kits and take medicines immediately.

Chouhan said that a campaign against Covid should be made a mass movement in the state. All sections of the society should be added to it. After surveying every village, city to city, every hidden patient should be identified and he should be given medicine and healed.

Chouhan was taking a meeting of Corona Control Core Group through video conferencing from his residence today. The concerned ministers and officials attended the meeting through video conferencing.

Chouhan instructed that every poor person of different categories in the state should get 5 months free ration compulsorily, it should be ensured. There is a continuous decline in new cases of corona in the state. In the last 24 hours, 11 thousand 598 new cases have come, 4445 patients



have become healthy. The number of active cases is one lakh 2 thousand 486. Weekly new episodes have been declining for the past three weeks. The state has come in 15th position in the country in terms of infection. The seven-day average positivity rate of the state is 19 percent.

Of the total corona patients in the state, 75% are in home isolation and 25% are in hospitals, out of which 14% are on oxygen beds, 7% are on ICU beds and 4% are on general beds.

Under the Chief Minister Covid Treatment Scheme, at present 515 eligible patients admitted in various hospitals of the state are being given the benefit of free Covid treatment. In this, an amount of 19 lakh 46 thou-

sand 700 rupees will be given by the government to the hospitals as on date. In a total of 72 cases of over-charging by private hospitals for treatment of Covid in the state, an amount of 15 lakh 97 thousand rupees has been returned to the relatives of the patients and FIR was registered against 25 persons.

Chouhan instructed that black-smiths of Remdesivir should not be allowed to go to jail, it should be ensured. Action is going on continuously in the state. Today action has been taken in 3 episodes. NSA has been acted in 20 episodes in the past.

Chouhan directed that the oxygen bottling plant at Bina should be started soon. Two plants of 90-90 tonnes are being built there. From these, 18 thousand cylinders will be filled daily.

Chouhan instructed that attention should be given to safety related to electricity in every hospital. Also, it should be ensured that every hospital has a generator.

# CM takes stock of under construction Covid Care Centre in Budhni

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Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that in view of increasing cases of corona infection, covid care centres will be set up in rural areas, where all arrangements will be made for patients. Chouhan arrived on Saturday to take stock of the 300-bed Covid Care Centre at the Eklavya Residential School campus at Budhni in Sehore district.

Chouhan said that this state-of-the-art Covid Care Centre will be started soon with 300 beds. In this, the process of recruitment of patients will be started soon by Rapid Response Team. He said that with the establishment of this temporary Covid Care Hospital, local patients will not have to go to other cities for treatment.

Chouhan visited Covid Hospital being built in Eklavya Residential Complex and discussed with ITC Company engineers and senior officials and got information through lay-out. ITC officials said that this hospital will be built in three phases. In the first phase, 144 beds will be ready by



May 20, which will have oxygen. After this, the second and third phases will be ready in the next 15 days. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan directed to ensure quality of work of Covid Hospital and to provide all necessary arrangements and basic facilities like fire safety, water etc. on time. He also instructed to construct toilets near Covid Hospital, so that the admitted patients would not have any problem.

Earlier, Chouhan also reached Covid Care Centre in Eklavya Residential Complex and spoke to the admitted patients. Chouhan said that along with all the medical facilities, other facilities should also be provided for the proper treatment of the admitted patients. He instructed the physicians that the Covid Centre should be provided the state-of-the-art resources, so that patients can get

better treatment facilities during the course of treatment.

During the inspection, Chief Minister spoke to the patients Priyanka, Rajesh, Deepak, Rudra and Shivam admitted to the Covid Care Centre in Eklavya Residential Complex through video calls and learnt about their well-being and wished them well for their speedy recovery. During the review of the Covid Centre, Dr. Ankush Sharma, in-charge, told the Chouhan that at present a 72-bed Covid Care Centre has been constructed in 36 rooms of Block-A, B and C of Eklavya Residential Complex. 50 oxygen-rich beds have been set up in it, in which 23 patients are under treatment. So far 62 corona patients have been treated and discharged.

Chouhan has said that the state government is making all possible and best efforts to deal with the corona epidemic. He also expressed satisfaction with the spirit of the citizens that they are trying to get rid of this epidemic by following public curfew and guidelines. Chouhan made a surprise inspection of the Shahganj Covid Care Centre in Sehore district dur-

ing his visit to Budhni on Saturday and reviewed the arrangements there. A 16-bed Covid Care Centre has been set up at Shahganj. Four oxygen cylinders and two concentrator machines are also available here.

Chouhan expressed satisfaction that due to citizens' awareness, no Covid-19 patient is admitted here. Chouhan discussed with the medical staff including the duty doctor during the inspection. He said that proper arrangements should be made for quick check-up and treatment of corona infected people. There should be no negligence in the treatment of patients. Chouhan asked the public representatives to maintain constant contact with the citizens and also follow the Corona guidelines along with Janata Curfew in small cities, towns and villages. He instructed the officers to constantly monitor the health of the people and that efforts should be made to arrange for tests and treatment along with isolation as soon as the initial symptoms are detected. Chouhan praised the observance of Corona curfew in Shahganj and also thanked the citizens.

# MILD COVID VERY UNLIKELY TO CAUSE LASTING HEART DAMAGE: STUDY

LONDON | Agencies

Mild Covid-19 infection is very unlikely to cause lasting damage to the structure or function of the heart, a new study suggests.

The researchers, including Thomas Treibel from the University College London (UCL), said that the findings should reassure the public, as they relate to the vast majority of people who had Covid-19 infections with mild or no symptoms.

"Disentangling the impact Covid-19 has on the heart has been a challenge. But we're now at the stage of the pandemic where we can really start to get a grip on the longer-term implications Covid-19 has on the health of our heart and blood vessels," said Treibel.

For the study, published in the journal JACC: Cardiovascular Imaging, the research team included 149 healthcare workers.

They identified participants with mild Covid-19 from the COVIDsortium, a study in three London hospitals where healthcare workers had undergone weekly samples of blood, saliva and nasal swabs for 16 weeks.

Six months after a mild infection, they looked at the heart structure and function by analysing heart MRI scans of 74 healthcare workers with prior mild Covid-19 and compared them to the scans of 75 healthy age, sex and



ethnicity matched controls who had not previously been infected.

They found no difference in the size or amount of muscle of the left ventricle -- the main chamber of the heart responsible for pumping blood around the body -- or its ability to pump blood out of the heart.

The amount of inflammation and scarring in the heart and the elasticity

of the aorta -- which is important for blood to easily flow out of the heart -- remained the same between the two groups.

When the researchers analysed blood samples, they found no differences in the two markers of heart muscle damage -- troponin and NT-proBNP -- six months after mild Covid-19 infection.



# Kenya launches census to boost conservation of iconic species

NAIROBI | Agencies

Kenya has launched a three-month national wildlife census whose results will inform retooling of conservation programs for iconic species grappling with climatic and human-induced threats.

Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife Najib Balala said on Friday that the first-ever wildlife census in Kenya will enable the government to obtain accurate data on wildlife resources including giant land mammals, carnivores and marine life, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The census will utilize globally recognized methodologies to obtain accurate data on wildlife resources in the country and mitigate future threats to their survival," Balala said during the televised census launch at Shimba Hills, in the

coastal county of Kwale.

He said the census, which will utilize state-of-the-art satellite technology, has been funded by the government to the tune of 250 million shillings (\$2 million).

It will strengthen evidence-based management of iconic species that are an integral part of Kenyan heritage besides contributing to national coffers through tourism, Balala said.

"We want precise data on wildlife population in the country to guide effective conservation of species amid challenges like climate change, changing land-use practices, and competition with agriculture," he said.

Data-driven interventions are key to minimizing human-wildlife conflicts that have emerged as a grave threat to the survival of iconic species like elephants, rhinos, and lions, Balala said. Census data will help Kenya review

the existing conservation models, strike a balance between livelihoods and conservation, he said, noting that the census will be carried out in protected areas like forests, marine ecosystems, and rivers.

Fred Segor, principal secretary at the State Department of Wildlife, said the census will help determine the exact population of wildlife species, their distribution, economic value, and emerging threats.

The government is required by law to regularly update wildlife population data as a means to strengthen conservation efforts, he said.

According to Kenya Wildlife Service, the census will count terrestrial, freshwater, marine mammals, key birds, endangered primates and reptiles in the 47 counties across the country, whose rich wildlife resource is one of its key economic pillars.

# Accept privacy policy or lose functions in some weeks: WhatsApp



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Facing criticism over its upcoming privacy policy, WhatsApp has said that its users will not immediately lose their accounts or face curtailed functionalities on the platform on May 15, but they will have to eventually go through limited functions if they fail to accept the new norms in the due course of time. The Facebook-owned messaging platform with more than two billion users, with over 400 million users in India, warned that failing to accept the new policy would result in users losing some functionalities after "persistent reminders". "After giving everyone time to review, we're continuing to remind those who haven't had the chance to do so to review and accept. After a period of several weeks, the reminder people receive will eventually become persistent," WhatsApp said in an FAQ update. After persistent reminders, the users will encounter limited functionality on WhatsApp until they accept the updates. This will not happen to all users at the same time. "You won't be able to access your chat list, but you can still answer incoming phone and video calls. If you have notifications enabled, you can tap on them to read or respond to a message or call back a missed phone or video call," WhatsApp warned. After a few weeks of limited functionality, you won't be able to receive incoming calls or notifications and WhatsApp will stop sending messages and calls to your phone. WhatsApp, however, won't delete your account if you don't accept the update. "No one will have their accounts deleted or lose functionality of WhatsApp on May 15 because of this update," the company informed. For the last several weeks, WhatsApp has been displaying a notification to its users providing more information about the update. Raising concerns over the changes to WhatsApp's privacy policy, the Union Ministry of Electronics and IT had asked the messaging platform to withdraw the recent change, along with several industry groups raising the question over the data sharing of WhatsApp users with Facebook.

# 1 in 3 women with Covid pneumonia at lung damage risk: Lancet

LONDON | Agencies

Most patients hospitalised for Covid-19 infection return to full health, but one in three may develop lung damage even after a year, according to a study published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine.

People are most commonly hospitalised for Covid-19 infection when it affects the lungs -- termed Covid-19 pneumonia. The study showed that even after a year, a third of patients' measures of lung function were reduced, particularly how efficiently oxygen is transferred in the lungs into the blood. This was more frequently found in women than in men.

In around a quarter of patients CT scans showed there were still small areas of change in the lungs, and this was more common in patients with more severe lung changes at time of hospitalisation. About 5 per cent of patients still reported breathlessness, found researchers from the University of



Southampton in the UK.

"The majority of patients with severe Covid-19 pneumonia appeared to fully recover, although for some patients this took many months. Women were more likely to have persistent reductions in lung function tests and further investigation is needed to understand if there is a

sex specific difference in how patient's recover," said Mark Jones, Associate Professor in Respiratory Medicine at the varsity.

"We also don't yet know what happens beyond 12 months and this will need ongoing study," Jones added.

The team worked with collaborators in Wuhan, China, to investigate the natural history of recovery from severe Covid-19 pneumonia up to one year after hospitalisation. About 83 patients were recruited after they were discharged from hospital following severe Covid-19 pneumonia and were followed up after three, six, nine and twelve months.

The research provides evidence that routine respiratory follow-up of patients hospitalised with Covid-19 pneumonia is required. It also highlights the need for exploring treatment strategies, including the role of exercise programmes to prevent the development of long term Covid-19 related lung changes.



# Two lionesses at UP's Etawah Lion Safari contract Covid

LUCKNOW | Agencies

After eight Asiatic lions had tested positive for Covid-19 at Hyderabad zoo, two lionesses have tested positive at Etawah Lion Safari in Uttar Pradesh. Both the big cats Gauri and Jennifer have been placed in isolation. According to the safari administration, the condition of both lionesses is reportedly stable. Etawah Lion Safari Director K.K. Singh said both the lionesses had been suffering from fever since April 30. Blood and faeces' samples of both the lionesses were sent for examination to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly on May 3. On May 6 evening, both lionesses were confirmed to have contracted Covid-19.

# 'Government should incentivise use of clean fuels'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the government imposing a green tax on old polluting vehicles, Indian Auto LPG Coalition (IAC) is advocating the need for this deterrent to be accompanied by incentives to people shifting to cleaner alternative fuels such as auto LPG.

The Union Ministry for Road Transport and Highways recently approved a proposal to levy a 'green tax' on old vehicles in a bid to curtail pollution and push consumers to switch to environmental-friendly alternatives.

Notably, hybrid vehicles and vehicles running on clean alternative fuels such as LPG, CNG and ethanol will be exempt from this tax. The initiative aims to make polluters pay for environmental pollution in India's choking cities.

While welcoming the move as a step in the right direction, Indian Auto LPG Coalition has suggested that penalising polluters should be accompanied by reward for users of clean fuels.

"India's choking cities need to shift a large number of their private vehicles to clean alternative fuels immediately and



pushing consumers to switch their existing vehicles to clean alternatives is the quickest way to achieve this. This is why a penalty for polluters must also be accompanied by reward or incentives for citizens switching to clean fuels to make it more impactful," said Suyash Gupta, Director General, Indian Auto

LPG Coalition.

Petrol and diesel vehicles including cars, two-wheelers and three wheelers can easily be converted to Auto LPG or CNG by installing conversion kits. Conversion kits that currently cost up to Rs 25,000 can be made significantly more affordable with GST cuts and subsidy support, said that the nodal body for the promotion of Auto LPG in India.

These conversion kits are taxed at a prohibitive GST rate of 28 per cent, a policy that is dichotomous to the government's commitment to clean energy.

"Rationalising this prohibitive GST rate on conversion kits to 5 per cent has been a long-pending plea of the Auto LPG sector. Reducing this GST rate will make conversion kits more affordable for mass usage," Gupta said.

He further said that the government must also consider subsidising conversion kits for consumers as a move towards incentivizing personal vehicle users to shift to clean gaseous fuels at a mass level. The green tax on polluting vehicles together with incentives for consumers shifting to clean fuels can have a quick and remarkable effect on India's urban air quality, Gupta added.

# 'Books from India are my gift to the world'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In 1998, Ray McLennan, who till then had been importing into the UK "all sorts of things" from India like musical instruments, saris, tilak, Tulsimalas and agarbatti, purchased Motilal Books, a small Oxford-based distributor focusing on academic bookshops and university libraries.

In 2014, he set up his own company, Rays Books of India Pvt Ltd, to broaden his accessibility. Between them, the two companies recorded a turnover of 1.7 million pounds in 2020, in spite of the Coronavirus pandemic, riding largely on online sales.

"I needed a new challenge, and having found it hard to get books from India, and the constant issues with payment, quality, reliability, and general information on what is in print, decided to improve all the logistics, providing a much needed service for all Indian publishers, from the biggest to the No.1 authors," McLennan, who is originally from New Zealand, told IANS in an interview from his base in St. Albans in Hertfordshire, north of London. "My gifts from India to the world are printed books across the full spectrum of subjects, many unique to India and others international, but produced more cheaply in India than elsewhere. Religious and spiritual development titles are the most popular category of Indian publishing worldwide. But all academic subjects, fiction, wildlife and tourism, and of course cookery, are always selling," he added. And how - 16,000 books were sold per month in 2020 and made for 9,000-plus titles sold during the year. "We have had an increase in turnover (in spite of the pandemic), but due to increased freight costs, a lower margin. Our greater sales are because online selling is king. Bookshops have been closed much of 2020," McLennan said. His Indian associate, KPR Nair of Konark Publishers, was quite astounded when he visited McLennan in St Albans in 2019.

"I could not believe my eyes when I saw the kind of stock of books held by him of Indian authors, from ChetanBhagat to Shobha De to Ramachandra Guha to Shashi Tharoor. I was floored by his in-depth knowledge of our products and equally by his



passion about Indian culture and our way of life, etc. What was to be a brief meeting thus ended up in a four-hour-long passionate talk about books, history and culture and untold stories about Indian authors and our publishing industry.

"To sum it up, both of us did not get time even for the minimum civilities of a cup of coffee. We did not simply realize it; we were so caught up in our talk. We smelled, sipped, drank, but it was all books and books," said Nair.

Only in India, McLennan said, "is the English publishing scene full of titles on an endless range of subjects, authors and publishers. As the world's largest distributor of this material outside of India we work with the worldwide book trade to list between 700-1,000 new titles a month, adding to a range of over 100,000 such titles available today. We have over 9,500 Indian published titles in stock with Amazon.co.uk, and 13,400 units in stock with Amazon.com in the USA".

"We have titles available from more than 750 Indian publishers we exclusively represent into the UK and the worldwide book trade, including Penguin Random House, HarperCollins India, Westland, Konark, Orient Blackswan, TERI, Juggernaut, Kitab Mahal and Jaico. "We exhibit internationally every year at the London Book

Fair (the 2020 edition was cancelled and the 2021 event will be held digitally) where we meet with publishers and customers. We attend the Delhi World Book Fair every year in February (the 2021 edition was virtual), which presents us an opportunity to meet contracted publishers and new publishers, see new titles, and plan future business with them all to maximise sales outside of India," McLennan said.

He visited India originally in 1975, has since visited the country every year, and since 2004, multiple times a year.

The establishment of Rays Books of India Pvt Ltd improved the procurement percentage of all books he had a demand for and that dramatically improved sales. "We went from supplying only 55 per cent of titles ordered by me to 85-90 per cent, and that, in turn, told the UK market that greater availability was now possible, which again increased orders," McLennan said.

"We are pushing new developments all the time. Adding new titles to our selection is a priority. We are currently adding over 500 new titles to the world's book trade records, every month, every year," he pointed out.

"We want to sell as many of each title as possible, and as a specialised wholesale distributor of Indian publishing, we estimate that around 75-80 per cent of all Indian publishing sold in the UK is sold by Motilal (UK) Books of India," he added.

Over time he built up the inventory of titles held in stock in the UK, "and that again increased the speed of supply to all types of trade customers, such as book chains, independents, libraries, schools and specialist niche markets.

"From 2006 we have been the only major supplier of all Indian publishing worldwide, and although we have had financial collapses, terrorism, changes of governments, ebooks, Brexit, and now Covid, our sales have continued to increase as we create more awareness of what has been published, its price and where to get it.

"Yes, Covid is giving us problems, but we will continue to supply demand which is mainly coming from the USA and the UK as can only be expected as the two biggest centres of English language publishing and selling," McLennan concluded.



# IMRAN, SAUDI CROWN PRINCE SALMAN COMMIT TO TIES

The two leaders reaffirmed the strong and historic bonds between the two countries rooted firmly in shared beliefs, common values, mutual trust and longstanding tradition of mutual support

Islamabad/Jeddah | Agencies

Visiting Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on Saturday have affirmed their commitment to fortify the 'upward trajectory' in bilateral relations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in Islamabad said.

The Prime Minister and the Crown Prince met in Jeddah and held wide-ranging talks on bilateral, regional and international issues, The Express Tribune quoted the Ministry as saying.

"The talks were marked by exceptional cordiality and a commitment to fortify the upward trajectory in the bilateral relationship."



"The two leaders reaffirmed the strong and historic bonds between the two countries rooted firmly in shared beliefs, common values, mutual trust and longstanding tradition of mutual support," it added. During the meeting, special emphasis was laid on increasing Saudi investments in Pakistan, collaboration in the field of energy, and increased job opportunities for Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia, according to the MoFA.

The two leaders also signed an agreement on the establishment of the Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination

Council (SPSC). Khan also extended an invitation to Crown Prince Salman to visit Pakistan, stated the MoFA.

Besides Foreign Minister Qureshi, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed, Senator Faisal Javed and other senior officials are also part of the official delegation, reports The Express Tribune.

On May 4, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa reached Riyadh to meet Saudi civil and military leadership in what seemed to be part of the preparation of the prime minister's visit.

## PALESTINIAN PREZ BLAMES ISRAEL FOR JERUSALEM CLASHES



Ramallah: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has held the Israeli government responsible for the recent clashes in East Jerusalem. "Israel is fully responsible for the repercussions of the dangerous developments, mainly the escalated Israeli assaults on our people in East Jerusalem," Abbas said in a televised speech aired on Palestine TV on Friday.

He also said that Palestine will request from the UN Security Council to convene soon to discuss the situation in East Jerusalem, reports Xinhua news agency. On Friday, Palestinian and Israeli media sources said that clashes broke out between Palestinian worshippers and the Israeli police at al-Aqsa Mosque in the old city in East Jerusalem.

# Over 200 injured in violent Jerusalem clashes

Jerusalem | Agencies

More than 200 people have been injured in heavy clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in Jerusalem, authorities said on Saturday.

The Palestinian Red Crescent gave the number of injured as 205, 88 of whom were taken to hospitals, reports dpa news agency.

Many of them had been hit by rubber bullets.

According to the Israeli police, 17 officers were injured, about half of them needing treatment in hospital. Clashes occurred between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in the Old City on the holy site known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary.

There were also clashes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

Thousands of believers had gathered there for prayers on the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. According to the police, the clashes began when stones and firecrackers were thrown at officers near an access gate.

Police officers then moved into the compound to deal with the rioters.

The confrontations continued well into the night.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas blamed Israel for the escalation.



The Islamist Hamas movement, which governs the Gaza Strip, condemned Israel's actions. It will "pay the price for its aggression", Hamas said in a statement.

There was initially no reaction from the Israeli government. The US State Department and UN special envoy Tor Wennesland expressed deep concern about the ongoing violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Both called for moderation. Since the start of Ramadan and the delay of Palestinian parliamentary elections, tensions and violence have repeatedly erupted in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israeli security forces had most recently prevented an attack on one of their bases in the north of the West Bank on Friday morning; two attackers were killed.

Unrest was initially triggered by Palestinian anger over Israeli police blockades in the Old City during Ramadan. A conflict over the possible evictions of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood further exacerbated tensions.

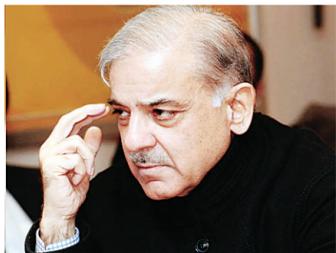
# Pak Oppn leader stopped from leaving country despite court permission

London | Agencies

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Shehbaz Sharif, was stopped from leaving the country despite having court orders to go abroad for medical treatment.

Sharif was stopped and offloaded from a Doha-bound flight during early hours of Saturday. After arguments with the immigration officials, he was informed that there was a problem with the system update.

The drama at the airport unfolded after the airline issued Shehbaz Sharif a boarding card. However, after arriving at the immigration counter, he was informed that he cannot board the plane, reason being the system had not been updated yet for him to leave the country. Sharif was granted a one time permission by the Lahore High Court (LHC) to fly abroad on health grounds. He is a cancer patient and had informed the court that he was advised by his doctors to get treatment done in the United Kingdom (UK). The LHC granted him permission to go abroad on medical grounds from May 8 to July 3, scheduling the hearing on his petition, seeking removal from the blacklist on July 5. At the airport, Sharif showed the



court orders to the immigration officials, who insisted that until the system was not updated, Sharif's name remains on the blacklist or the no-fly list. "Shahbaz Sharif was held back at the behest of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Shahzad Akbar", said PML-N spokesperson Mariyum Aurangzeb. "Restraining him from travelling abroad is in contempt of court. The claim regarding system not being updated is false," she added. Mariyum Aurangzeb lashed out at the government for coming down to mean maneuvers. "The government has come down to outright mean maneuvers, but this does not make any difference to Shahbaz Sharif," she said.

## US-LED ALLIANCE REPORTS ATTACK ON IRAQ MILITARY BASE

Baghdad: A US-led

alliance fighting the Islamic State (IS) terror group on Saturday said an air attack had targeted a military base in western Iraq, causing no casualties. Alliance spokesman Colonel Wayne Marotto said on Twitter that the "Ain Al-Asad Air Base (AAAB) was attacked by an unmanned aerial surveillance system" at around 11.30 p.m. on Friday, dpa news agency reported.

"No injuries reported. A hangar was damaged. The attack is under investigation," he added.

So far, there has been no claim of responsibility for the attack. It was the latest in a series of attacks targeting bases housing US forces in Iraq. In recent months, the heavily-fortified Green Zone in the capital Baghdad, home to the US embassy, and facilities housing American troops in Iraq have been the target of repeated attacks blamed on pro-Iranian groups.

# Islamist militants occupy part of Philippines market

Manila | Agencies

Islamist militants on Saturday occupied a part of a public market in a southern Philippine town as they fled an offensive by government troops, the military said.

The militants, numbering around 80 men, fired their guns in the air as they swooped down on the market in Datu Paglas town in Maguindanao province, 960 km south of Manila, dpa news agency quoted Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Baldomar, an army spokesman, as saying.

"They took food and threatened the civilians," Baldovar said. "They were cornered when our forces were deployed in different areas and occupied (part of the market) because of the presence of our soldiers and policemen." The militants, who were members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), fled six hours later when more soldiers arrived, he added. As they withdrew, the rebels opened



fire on a group of commuters along the highway, triggering a firefight with soldiers, Baldovar said. No civilians or soldiers were reported killed or hurt in the violence, said Major General Juvmax Uy, an army division commander. The rebels were fleeing military operations in the nearby towns of Shariff Aguak, Datu Saudi Ampatuan and Mamasapano over the past two weeks, he said. The rebels left homemade bombs at the market, but no

property was damaged, Uy said. He also denied social media reports that hostages were taken. The BIFF is a splinter group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which signed a peace agreement with the government in 2014.

It has allied itself with the Islamic State and has been blamed for bombings, extortion and attacks on government troops in the province of Maguindanao.

## PAKISTAN EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER URANIUM SEIZURE IN INDIA

Islamabad: Pakistan has

expressed serious concern over reports of seizure of uranium from unauthorised persons in India, stating that security of nuclear materials should be a top priority. According to sources, the Mumbai Anti Terrorist Squad recently seized 7.10 kg radioactive natural uranium and arrested two persons in connection with the case. The confiscated material is expected to be worth at least \$2.9 million. "We have noted with serious concern the reports about seizure of more than 7 kg natural uranium from unauthorised persons in India," read a press release issued by the Pakistan Foreign Office.

# 'US, JCPOA parties serious about reviving Iran n-deal'

Tehran | Agencies

The US and all parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) are serious in efforts to rescue the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal, a senior official said here.

After Friday's meeting of the Iran nuclear deal in the Austrian capital of Vienna, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, who heads Iran's delegation to the negotiations, was quoted as saying by official media that all parties are serious in reaching a solution despite numerous challenges, Xinhua news agency reported.

Besides, "the news coming to us from the Americans is that they are both serious about returning to the JCPOA and are ready to lift a large part of (anti-Iran) sanctions", he added.

"However, in our opinion, it (the sanctions announced for removal) is not complete yet. For that reason, the nego-



tiations will continue until we reach all our demands," Araqchi added.

Iran is serious in re-embracing its JCPOA obligations if its demands are

met, he said, adding that "this has nothing to do with other issues in Tehran, including the upcoming presidential elections".

The JCPOA was reached in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council -- the US, the UK, Russia, France, China, plus Germany) together with the European Union. Tehran agreed to roll back parts of its nuclear weapons program in exchange for decreased economic sanctions.

Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its commitments in May 2019, one year after the administration of former US President Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned the agreement and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran.

The JCPOA Joint Commission began to meet in offline format on April 6 in Vienna, aiming at getting the US and Iran to resume compliance with the nuclear agreement.

## 160 ILLEGAL MIGRANTS VOLUNTARILY DEPORTED FROM LIBYA

Tripoli: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said that it has deported 160 illegal migrants from Libya to their home country Bangladesh this week. "IOM this week facilitated the safe return of 160 Bangladeshi migrants stranded in Libya via its Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) program," Xinhua news agency quoted the UN agency as saying in a statement on Friday. The migrants were stranded in Libya due to Covid-19 and the challenging security situation in the country, the statement said. It added that the IOM had worked closely with Libyan authorities and the Embassy of Bangladesh in Libya to assist the migrants in getting home. At least 6,992 illegal migrants have been rescued so far this year, including 545 women and 335 minors, reports Xinhua news agency. Additionally, 139 illegal migrants died and 349 others went missing on the Central Mediterranean route so far in 2021, the IOM said. In 2020, 11,891 illegal migrants were rescued and returned to Libya, while 381 illegal migrants died and 597 others went missing on the Central Mediterranean route, the Organization added.

# Portuguese PM calls for 'fair, inclusive' Europe

Lisbon | Agencies

Europe's post-pandemic economic recovery will only succeed if it is "fair and inclusive", said Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa.

He made the remarks on Friday as he opened the Porto Social Summit, an event hosted by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), reports Xinhua news agency.

Prime Minister Costa, who chairs the Council of the EU, said that "the time has come to rapidly launch economic and social recovery based on the engines of climate and digital transitions in a sustainable way".

These transitions "generate opportunities, but they also generate great anguish and much anxiety for millions of workers, as well as fears for small and medium-sized companies that fear losing competitiveness with the new environmental demands".

"The EU must not forget the flip side of these transitions, the need for a strong social pillar to combat inequality, to create new jobs, to ensure requalification and social pro-



tection," Costa said.

He also stated that the European Commission's plans "are not only a response to the current situation, but above all, they are an instrument for the future". According to the Prime Minister, the Covid-19 pandemic has "revealed the importance of a strong social state," in addition to "multiple weaknesses that still exist in our societies". "A precarious society is not a resilient society. Recovery cannot just meet the present emergency and the time has come to combine emer-

gency with recovery," he concluded.

Echoing Costa's message, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasised that Europe is "stronger when it is united by social programs".

"Together we are stronger, together we can make our social rules work for all Europeans. Together we can deliver on Europe's promise," she said.

According to von der Leyen, the objective of the summit is "to build a social Europe that is capable of realizing our ambitions". Thanking Costa

for hosting the Social Summit, von der Leyen said that "the pandemic uncertainty is not over yet and recovery is still at an early stage".

"Thanks to our single market social economy, we can give people certainty, who now more than ever need tangible and positive changes."

The two-day summit is attended by President of the European Parliament David Sassoli, the European Council President Charles Michel, the Commission's Executive Vice Presidents Margrethe Vestager and Valdis Dombrovskis, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, as well as 24 European heads of state and government and other political and institutional leaders, social partners and civil society. Topping the agenda is the action plan presented by the Commission in March, which sets out three major goals for 2030: have at least 78 per cent of the European population in employment; ensure that at least 60 per cent of adults participate in trainings; and lift 15 million people out of poverty and social exclusion.

# Mexico, US agree to bolster cooperation over immigration

Mexico City | Agencies

Mexico and the US agreed to strengthen cooperation to tackle the issues that drive Central American migrants north, following a video call between Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and US Vice President Kamala Harris.

According to a statement from the Mexican President's office, Lopez Obrador laid out for Harris his administration's plan to curb immigration during the call on Friday, reports Xinhua news agency.

Called "Sembrando Vida" or "Planting Life", the plan essentially calls for fighting environmental degradation and poverty, two of the main causes of unregulated migration.

"We have many things in common and we agree with the policy that you are undertaking on immigration matters, and we are going to help," Lopez Obrador told Harris. In a statement, Harris said: "We agreed to work together to establish a strategic partnership to address root causes of migration, spur economic development, and expand security cooperation. I told the President I look forward to visiting Mexico on June 8."

The two sides also discussed current restrictions on cross-border travel due to the



Covid-19 pandemic, ways to promote bilateral trade with sanitary measures in place, and vaccination progress in the border region.

Likewise, they discussed promoting investment in southern Mexico to strengthen cooperation within the framework of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) on free trade, the statement added. US President Joe Biden has entrusted Harris to head efforts to curb northward migration from Mexico and the countries of Central America's Northern Triangle: Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

# COVID CRISIS CAN IMPACT CHILD NUTRITION IN INDIA: UNICEF

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With half the children under five in India being malnourished, the present Covid-19 crisis could further impact child nutrition and service delivery across the country that is in the grip of a ferocious second wave, said the UN Children's Fund UNICEF.

"With 27 million births and 30 million pregnancies every year, life-saving services to help women give birth are critical in India," said Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF Representative in India, on Friday. "However, as health facilities continue to be overwhelmed treating Covid-19 patients, there are reports of pregnant women struggling to find the required support to give birth." She noted that schools across the country remain closed, and remote learning is also disrupted in several states. "This is tearing 247 million children in elementary and secondary education away from these safe spaces, just when they need them most. In addition, many children do not have access to digital learning. Learning loss will therefore continue for children in India.

"We're assisting the government to ensure that critical services for the most vulnerable children continue to function across all states.

"UNICEF in India has been on-the-ground working tirelessly since the start of the pandemic."

The UN official noted that India is in the grip of a ferocious second wave of Covid-19.

"In the last 24 hours (till May 7), India bore the burden of 414,188 new



daily cases, which is highest daily case count ever recorded by any country in the history of Covid-19 pandemic -- higher than even the count a day earlier (412,262). There were 3,915 deaths due to Covid-19.

"UNICEF is very concerned about this deadly daily surge in new cases. This wave is almost four times the size of the first wave and the virus is spreading much faster. On an average there were more than four new cases every second and more than two deaths every minute in last 24 hours.

"With the surge in cases, the virus is also affecting more people across age groups, including children and infants." She said, "What is happening in India should raise alarm bells for all of us. The pandemic is far from over. Covid-19 cases are rising at an alarming rate across South Asia, especially in Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Entire health systems could collapse, leading to more tragic loss of life. "Very low levels of vaccination in

most South Asian countries (less than 10 per cent in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal) is adding to concern of the virus spiraling even further. Besides South Asia, we are also seeing alarming situations in other parts of the world. "Along with the increase in COVID-19 cases, the impact on children being affected by the virus has also increased. And of course the impact of the outbreak and public health and social measures on children is likely to be aggravated following the second wave. They are living through a tragedy.

"Children are losing parents and caregivers to the virus leaving many of them destitute, without parental care." The UN official said, "While there isn't enough data yet, we can see that illegal adoption pleas have surfaced on social media, making these orphans vulnerable to trafficking and abuse. "UNICEF is calling for greater efforts to safeguard these orphans. We need to promote kinship

care, family tracing, enhance functionalities and accelerate the sponsorship of destitute families.

"This surge is having dire consequences for children whose access to essential health, social, protection and education services is being constrained.

"Children are facing mental health issues and are at greater risk of violence, as lockdowns shut them off from their vital support networks.

"They are missing out on life-saving routine immunization, critical care and treatment for pneumonia and other diseases."

UNICEF has sent critical lifesaving supplies to support India at this difficult time. For example, 3,000 oxygen concentrators, testing kits and other critical equipment in place.

It has sent additional critical life-saving supplies to India, including two million face shields and 200,000 surgical masks. Additionally 2,000 more oxygen concentrators will arrive by the second half of May with another 2,650 being procured.

"We support the regular monitoring of more than 50,000 Covid vaccination centres across 27 states of India," the UN official said.

"Covid has shown more than ever we are living in an interconnected world. India is under threat today. We need solidarity to prevent the situation from getting worse in other countries. We are very thankful for the support and compassion from the international community. We need the compassion and contribution to continue until we see the end of the pandemic," she added.

## 78% OF 16-17-YEAR-OLD ENCOUNTERS PORN ON INTERNET IN UK: REPORT

London: A new survey has revealed that 78 per cent of Internet users in the UK between the age of 16 and 17 reported that they had encountered pornographic content on the Internet. The survey, published in the journal Policy and Internet, suggests that young consumers are also turning to social media portals for access to explicit material. Adolescent users of online pornography are more likely to be male. "At present, the online pornography market is highly concentrated. It is dominated by a few global firms. Indeed, only a handful of websites account for the majority of consumption," said researcher Neil Thurman from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet. Based on a survey involving a sample of 1,000 UK adolescents, the team found that, on average, the participants had last visited such sites 6 days before filling in the questionnaire. And many respondents said they watched porno videos and viewed picture galleries on that very day. The team also found that adolescents spent an average of 2 hours per month on commercial pornographic websites, almost always accessed on their smartphones or tablets. The researcher suggests that in addition to country-specific measures, there should also be pressure placed on the major global publishers of pornography, to encourage them to introduce effective age restrictions in all the markets in which they operate.



## Microsoft reportedly shelves Windows 10X: Report

San Francisco | Agencies

Microsoft reportedly won't be bringing its Windows 10X operating system variant to market as it has now been shelved, in favour of improving Windows 10 instead. According to The Verge, citing Petri, Windows 10X will no longer ship this year, and the OS will likely never arrive in its current form. The company had originally been planning to deliver Windows 10X, a more lightweight and simplified version of Windows, alongside new dual-screen devices like the Surface Neo. That was before the pandemic hit, and Microsoft decided to prioritise Windows 10X for single-screen laptops instead. The switch was designed to position Windows 10X as more of a Chrome OS competitor. Windows 10X included a simplified interface, an updated Start menu without Live Tiles, multitasking



improvements, and a special app container for performance and security. Microsoft's overall goal with 10X was to create a

stripped-back, streamlined and modern cloud-powered version of Windows.

Microsoft has always seen Chromebooks as a big threat in businesses and schools, but over the past year, there has been a big increase in demand for regular Windows laptops. Despite a global chip shortage, the PC market hasn't slowed down during the pandemic, the report said.

Microsoft has directly benefited from increased Windows revenue. Windows OEM revenue grew by 10 per cent in the recent quarter, reflecting strong consumer PC demand. Windows non-pro OEM revenue also grew by 44 per cent.

## Impact of Covid-19, Brexit on studying or working in the UK

Team Absolute | New Delhi

For many Indians, the UK has been the among the most popular destinations for higher education and settling abroad.

However, the recent completion of Brexit, a new student route in October 2020, and skilled worker route from December 2020 along with the current pandemic situation is bound to impact those coming to the UK on student/work visa, says Dattatraya Kadikar, Immigration expert and Founder of HSMP Services UK.

**Kadikar further writes:**

The new post-Brexit Immigration Rules state that The Graduate Route will allow two years un-sponsored stay in the UK after completing a bachelor's or master's degree, and three years after completing a PhD. Whereas the work visa route, which replaced Tier-2 General Visa, will offer opportunities to IT, Healthcare, Legal and R&D professionals from India.

With the introduction of Brexit alone, students from India are supposed to have better opportunities for studies and work visa. However, the Brexit and pandemic collectively have had a huge impact on UK businesses and industry. It appears that the demand for talent has changed in the past couple of years. New entrants in the UK must ensure that their skills and experience are in demand in the UK in this post-Brexit, post-pandemic period.

Many old job roles in the UK may become redundant post-pandemic and there may be a need for skills upgradation or adaptation as per the demand. The UK has been a global hub for the finance and R&D industry. With changes in the UK immigration policies, UK is also attracting innovative start-ups to come and set up their businesses in the UK.

In spite of this, healthcare professionals, IT professionals and teaching experts will be in demand in the UK, which would mean better opportunities for migrants from India. With

the huge demand for teachers and education support jobs, teachers from India will need to obtain special certification to be eligible to work in the UK.

The UK Government has announced a special Health and Care visa for medical doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers who are in great demand in the UK due to pandemic. People applying under Health and Care visa will not be required to pay Immigration Health Surcharge, which is ₹1,624 per person per year. UK also has announced new Start-up visa and Innovator visa to complement the existing Global Talent Visa.

A new Highly Skilled visa has been announced in the Budget Speech which will be launched from 2022 for which the details will be disclosed in the next few months.

UK and India have recently signed a migration deal -- "The Migration and Mobility Partnership" -- on May 4 to boost work visas for Indian nationals under an ambitious new immigration partnership. This unique agreement will allow up to 3,000 young professionals from India to come to the UK, every year, for two years to work, study, travel and experience the UK's culture and lifestyle. Those who come to the UK under this new scheme will be able to switch to Skilled Worker Visa or other permissible visa categories which lead to Permanent Residency and British Citizenship.

This will be a major boost for those who wish to migrate to the UK without job sponsorship. It should be noted that the stay in the UK under Student and Graduate routes does not count towards the permanent residency in the UK, for which the qualifying period in most categories is 5 years. Other visa categories mentioned above lead to Permanent Residency or Indefinite Leave to Remain after 5 years and British Citizenship after one more year. The UK has taken vaccination drive seriously, as a result, the country and economy are slowly opening up. There are a lot of opportunities that lie ahead for Indian students and skilled workers.

## Create the perfect environment for your kids to ace their exams

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Whenever exam times are around the corner, parents tend to turn into superhumans to provide the best study environment for their kids. As we spend more time at home due to pandemic, we all have come face to face with some of the stress and restrictions homes present us. Especially when it comes to finding a quiet corner to study and ace those multiple tests and final exams. From skewed sleep cycles to a noisy surrounding, studying from home is not easy on the kids, but strong planning and building a favourable study environment can change the apprehension around exams.

To ensure your child has the perfect environment to prepare for the upcoming exams, follow these effortless tips by IKEA India and make their exam time a little less stressful and a lot more fun.

### Where to begin -- tidy up and organise

The cleaner and more organised a study table is, the better your child can concentrate and make way to absorb new concepts and ideas. Having a tidy space around study area can help concentrate when it's time to sit down and study. An organised desk laden with storage boxes and desk organisers like TJENA can be your saviour while they comfortably jot down all the answers, concepts and ideas on a SVENSAS memo board. Want to take an extra effort? Don't forget to use pegboards like SKADIS to their study desk to hold all the little things they need while working on problems or formulating answers.

### Go ergonomic all the way!

Distance does matter. Especially between your child and the tables, chairs they use while studying. None of us are a huge fan of posture-related pains, for either ourselves or our kids. So the study surface distance should be about waist-height. When your child sits down to read or study, she/he should be able to rest her/his



elbows on the table without hunching up their shoulders. They can try the BESTABURS desk or something similar that works best for keeping away that posture pain. The key is to not have everything close to hand, and allow them enough room to move, reach around for their books and other study material. When they are sitting at their desk, look for a chair like ORFJALL swivel chair, it gives back support, is adjustable and swivels allowing for that all-important movement. Investing in an ergonomic chair has multiple benefits and sitting in the right posture to study is one of them.

### Make the space comfortable

For a productive study session, create a space around your child that moves as per their convenience. A flexible setting allows them to study comfortably, while giving room to move around and break the monotony. Pick a spot that will help you keep your child relaxed, focused, and alert. If they like studying in the comfort of their bed, a bed tray like KLIPSK along with a NAVLINGE spotlight clamped to it can save your day. Grab a cushion to keep them comfy and a pencil case to keep them well-equipped.

### Light it up

A well-lit environment also helps concentration and relieve eye strain. Especially using light

levels similar today light. If you can, setting up a study space next to a window is ideal. But you can also recreate daylight using SKURUP lamps that have a similar light spectrum to natural sunshine. Task lighting on the desk helps provide focused lighting while studying.

### Let the nature in

Letting in nature around the study area can drastically help with your child's concentration, if you don't have a window, plants are great for filtering stale air and oxygenating their study environment. Keeping indoor plants in your kid's room can help purify the air and brighten up their room. You can add hanging pots like the elegant SKURAR or the self-watering SOMMARFEST -- you can simply fix them to a wall if there's not enough floor space!

### Importance of good sleep

A good night sleep is your child's best friend. Creating a right environment to get a good night's sleep to recover the energy needed for a new study day is important. It is important for your child to wake-up refreshed everyday so that she/he can concentrate better and for that they need a comfortable sleeping solutions like BEITO mattress and ergonomic pillows like SKOGSLOK. Afterall, being comfortable when you're asleep is key for making the most of your waking hours.

### Don't forget the healthy meals

Prepare and serve healthy/nutritious food to your kids in OFTAST, so it gives them instant energy whenever it is required during exam time. Nutrition plays an important role in keeping energy levels up. Keep their daily dose of Vitamin C in check by including SPRITTA in your kitchen. Finally, make sure to keep your child hydrated. Drinking water has been shown to help with focus when they're stuck in the middle of preparation.

With all these tips and solutions, you become a partner for building the required environment to ace exams.

### SCHOLARSHIP ALERT

**Scholarship Name 1 : DXC Progressing Minds Scholarship 2021**  
**Description** : DXC Technology invites applications from students studying in the first year of BE/BTech program in CS/IT/EE/EC streams. The scholarship supports meritorious students belonging to under-privileged sections of the society.  
**Eligibility** : The scholarship is open for Indian nationals only. The students must be presently pursuing studies in the first year of BE/BTech program in CS/IT/EE/EC streams in the academic year 2021-22. They must have obtained at least 60% marks in the previous class. The annual family income should not exceed ₹4 lakh (₹4,00,000) from all sources. Applicants must not be availing any other scholarship benefits of ₹6,000 per annum or more. Children of DXC/Buddy4Study employees are not eligible for this program.  
**Prizes & Rewards** : 50% of the total fees or ₹40,000 per annum (whichever is less)  
**Last Date to Apply** : 15-06-2021  
**Application mode** : Online applications only  
**Short Url** : www.b4s.in/absolute/DXC1

**Scholarship Name 2 : IISER Berhampur Post Doctoral Research Fellowship in Biological Chemistry and Nanomedicine 2021**  
**Description** : Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Berhampur (IISER Berhampur) is inviting applications for IISER Berhampur Post Doctoral Research Fellowship in Biological Chemistry and Nanomedicine 2021 from Ph.D. degree holders.  
**Eligibility** : The fellowship is open for candidates below 35 years of age who hold a Ph.D. degree in a relevant discipline (Biological or Chemical Sciences or related), with a consistently good academic record throughout and have submitted the thesis and awaiting the award of the degree. This position is open for candidates with 0-5 years of experience after obtaining a Ph.D. degree in one of the specific research areas such as Biological Sciences and Chemical Sciences.  
**Prizes & Rewards** : Up to INR 54,000 per month plus HRA  
**Last Date to Apply** : 23-05-2021  
**Application mode** : Online application only  
**Short Url** : www.b4s.in/absolute/BCN8

**Scholarship Name 3 : IIT Indore Department of Computer Science and Engineering Junior Research Fellowship 2021**  
**Description** : Indian Institute of Technology, Indore invites applications for the IIT Indore Department of Computer Science and Engineering Junior Research Fellowship 2021 from bachelor's/master's degree holders. The fellowship is meant for a project titled, "Reducing Parameterized Complexities of Matrix Determinant and Permanents".  
**Eligibility** : The fellowship is open for candidates who hold a Master's degree in Computer Science/Maths with a valid NET/GATE score, OR a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Engineering with a valid GATE score. Alongside, they should have a basic knowledge of theoretical computer science, graph theory, and linear algebra.  
**Prizes & Rewards** : INR 31,000 per month plus HRA  
**Last Date to Apply** : 20-05-2021  
**Application mode** : Via email only  
**Short Url** : www.b4s.in/absolute/SEF8

**Scholarship Name 4 : IIT Dharwad SERB-SRG Department of Mechanical Engineering Junior Research Fellowship 2021**  
**Description** : Indian Institute of Technology, Dharwad invites applications for the IIT Dharwad SERB-SRG Department of Mechanical Engineering Junior Research Fellowship 2021 from B.Tech or M.Tech degree holders. The fellowship is meant for the project code and title, "ME/KMC/SERBSRG/2020 Experimental Study of the Performance of a Flow-controlled Centrifugal Compressor Subjected to Distorted Inflow".  
**Eligibility** : The fellowship is open for candidates below 28 years of age who hold a B.Tech or M.Tech degree in Mechanical Engineering (Fluid and thermal sciences or relevant to aerodynamics). The candidate must also qualify National Eligibility Test - CSIRUGC NET including lectureship (Assistant Professorship) or GATE. Alongside this, they should also have a strong orientation towards fluid mechanics or aerodynamics, preferably with experience in high-speed flows, or performing experiments and analyzing the data.  
**Prizes & Rewards** : INR 31,000 per month plus 16% HRA  
**Last Date to Apply** : 22-05-2021  
**Application mode** : Via email only  
**Short Url** : www.b4s.in/absolute/SGF5

# ENGLAND-BOUND PACER KRISHNA TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) pace bowler M Prasidh Krishna has tested positive for Covid-19 although his tour of England with India team may not be in jeopardy as he felt better on Saturday following light fever over the previous two days.



The pace bowler is supposed to travel to England as one of the four standby cricketers along with fellow pacers Avesh Khan and Arzan Nagwaswalla, and batsman Abhimanyu Easwaran. "He is under-

going two weeks of quarantine at home. It is mild." Krishna becomes the fourth KKR player to test positive after Varun Chakravarthy, Sandeep Warrier (who tested positive last week) and New Zealander Tim Seifert, whose test result was announced positive on Saturday morning in a statement by New Zealand Cricket. Seifert is being flown to Chennai from Ahmedabad for treatment on the completion of which he will leave for home. The Indian team's departure for England is still over three weeks away and Krishna may recover by that time since the infection is said to be mild. The right-arm pace bowler Krishna made his international debut during the ODI series against England in March and picked six wickets in three matches. India have named a 20-member squad along with the four standby cricketers.

# I didn't expect selection: Arzan Nagwaswalla

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Left-arm pace bowler Arzan Nagwaswalla was "speechless" before his eyes were filled with tears during the seven-hour journey from Ahmedabad to his village Nargol in Valsad, Gujarat, on Friday when he received news of his selection as a standby to Indian squad for the England tour. "I called up mom and dad the first thing after I came to senses. I was so excited. I couldn't have stopped on the road because Covid-19 protocols don't allow you to step out of the car," Nagwaswalla told reporter from Nargol on Saturday. It was a seven-hour non-stop trip from Ahmedabad to his village as he munched the snacks his mother had packed for him when he had left home to join Mumbai Indians nets in March. The 23-year-old player was returning from Delhi where he was a net bowler with the Mumbai Indians, after the Indian Premier League was postponed due to the raging Covid-19 pandemic. The subsequent calls, congratulatory ones from friends and for interview requests from the media drained him so much that he could barely pick the phone during the last phase of his journey. "I



was exhausted. By the end of it, I was so tired that I could barely pick calls and talk," said Nagwaswalla. "I did not expect the call. Everyone has confidence that I would get through one day or the other. I also had that confidence. [But] this was very unexpected and surprising," he said.

# Rani, team-mates recover, to resume training soon

Bengaluru | Agencies

The Indian women's hockey team skipper Rani Rampal would be looking forward to resuming training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre here after she and six of her team-mates completely recovered from Covid-19. Rani, along with experienced goalkeeper Savita Punia, Navjot Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Rajani, Navneet Kaur and Sushila, had tested positive for the virus following their return to the national camp on April 24 after a 10-day break. Two support staff -- video analyst Amrutprakash and scientific advisor Wayne Lombard -- had also tested positive, although all of them were asymptomatic. "Thank you everyone for the love and mental support through messages/calls during the last two weeks. Me



and my teammates and support staff are fully recovered from the Covid now," Rani said on Twitter. "Feeling blessed to have you all as members from our hockey fraternity/friends/fans. Special thanks to Hockey India, SAI for taking good

## UEFA AGREES TO REINTEGRATE NINE 'SUPER LEAGUE' CLUBS

Lausanne: The European football governing body (UEFA) has begun the process of reintegration of nine of the 12 clubs which were involved in the now defunct 'Super League' project. UEFA convened an emergency meeting of its executive committee late on Friday which took into consideration the spirit and the content of the Club Commitment Declaration and decided to approve various actions, measures and commitments made by the clubs. "A formal confirmation of the commitments and the manner of the clubs' reintegration and participation in UEFA Club Competitions has been agreed between and signed by UEFA and those nine clubs. The approved reintegration measures are full and final," said UEFA in a statement. UEFA said that the nine clubs had "acknowledge and accept" that the Super League project was a mistake and had apologised to fans, national associations, national leagues, fellow European clubs and UEFA.

# Indian shooters to compete in Zagreb World Cup in June

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Olympic Games-bound Indian shooters, who are scheduled to train in Zagreb, Croatia, from May 11, will also compete in the World Cup starting there on June 22. The International Sport Shooting Federation announced on Friday that Croatia would host the last World Cup before the Tokyo Olympics that start on July 23. A 13-member Indian team will also compete in the European Shooting Championships, starting on May 20 in Croatia. The European competition will be organised in rifle, pistol and shotgun events. "Since the World Cup in Croatia will be organised in both individual and mixed team events in rifle pistol and shotgun, it will be a good platform to fine tune preparation for Olympics," said an Indian shooting coach. Last month, the Baku World Cup, which was scheduled to start on June



22, was cancelled due to rising cases of Coronavirus in Azerbaijan. The Indian shooting squad leaves for Croatia early next week in a charter flight. India has won 15 Olympic quota places, including two in skeet. The national camp for the core group of shooters was supposed to be held here at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Ranges from the third week of April. But it was postponed due to the pandemic. The elite shooters will now train in Europe until the start of the Olympics.

# Wilson's brace helps Newcastle shock Leicester City

Striker Callum Wilson scored twice to help Newcastle United stay above the relegation zone with a stunning 4-2 win over Leicester City.

Leicester | Agencies

Jonny Evans was injured in the warm-up for the home team with Marc Albrighton replaced him. Newcastle took advantage as an error by Caglar Soyuncu allowed Joe Willock to score in the 22nd minute. Wesley Fofana's header was saved at the other end by Martin Dubravka. Paul Dummett then doubled Newcastle's lead with his third Premier League goal in the 34th minute. Wilson's breakaway strike in



the 64th minute made it 3-0. The English footballer then added a fourth nine minutes later after his initial effort had rebounded off a post. Albrighton's swerving shot gave Leicester some hope 10 minutes from

time. Kelechi Iheanacho made it 4-2 with a low shot in the 87th minute. With the win, Newcastle climbed to 13th among 20 teams with 39 points from 35 matches. They are 12 clear of third-from-bottom Fulham, who have four matches left to play. Leicester are in third place with 63 points, five clear of fifth-placed West Ham United, who have a match in hand. Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers had made two changes to his side. While Evans was replaced by Albrighton as a part of a late change to the starting XI as mentioned above, Portugal star Ricardo Pereira replaced left-back Luke Thomas. Albrighton took up a left-sided wing-back position, while Timothy Castagne played as a right-sided centre-back.

# 1980 Olympic hockey gold medallist Pal, Kaushik passes away

Lucknow | Agencies

India lost two of their 1980 Moscow Olympic Games gold medal-winning heroes on Saturday. Maharaj Krishna Kaushik and Ravindra Pal Singh. Both were affected by Covid-19. Singh, 62, died early in the morning in Lucknow and in the evening 66-year-old Kaushik, also a former India women's chief coach, passed away at a hospital in New Delhi. Singh, a bachelor who lived with his elder sister in a joint family, had recovered from Covid-19. He had a breathing problem, and 'felt depressed', and had anxiety. He was shifted to an oxygen bed in a ward after having recovered from Covid, though he continued to have the breathing problem. After his condition deteriorated on Friday, he was taken to the Intensive Care Unit and put on a ventilator. He passed away early on Saturday. Besides plating in the 1980 Moscow and



1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Singh appeared in several top international tournaments, including the Champions Trophy in Karachi (1980 and 1983), the Silver Jubilee 10-Nation Cup (Hong Kong, 1983), World Cup (Mumbai, 1982), Asia Cup (Karachi, 1982), the 1981 India-Pakistan Test series, and the Malaysian Quadrangular series in 1980.

## PLAY IPL IN ENGLAND IN SEPTEMBER: KP

London: The availability of players from world's top two T20 Internationals teams -- England and India -- should prompt the Indian cricket board (BCCI) to host the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL) matches in England in September, said former England captain Kevin Pietersen. "I have seen people talking about the UAE as a possible destination to finish the IPL in September but I actually think that the IPL should move to the UK," said Pietersen in his blog on betway.com. "There is a window in September after the England v India Test series has finished. All the best English players would already be there and all of the best English players would be available as well," added the South African-born English player who was commenting at the IPL.



# Osaka, Billie Jean King get Laureus World Sports Awards

Monaco | Agencies

World No. 2 tennis player Naomi Osaka has been named 'Sportswoman of the Year' at the Laureus World Sports Awards for her achievements on and off the court, while tennis legend Billie Jean King was awarded the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by the Laureus Academy. This is Osaka's second recognition at the Laureus Sports Awards. She won the 'Breakthrough of the Year' award in 2019 after a season that saw her win her first WTA title at the BNP Paribas Open and begin her ascent to the top of the game with her first US Open title that fall. Osaka was also nominated for 'Sportswoman of the Year' in 2020 after a season in which she captured her first Australian Open title and become the first Japanese player to ascend to World No.1. "I've watched so many of my role



models win this (Sportswoman) award, so it definitely means a lot now to be holding it," Osaka said on Friday. "I am so happy to receive it. It really means a lot to me." Coming out of a season interrupted by the sport's shutdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Osaka emerged as the dominant force on hard courts. The 24-year-old marched through the US

summer season, making the Western & Southern Open final before capturing the US Open, her third major title. She continued her form in 2021, winning back-to-back Slams for the second time in her career after capturing her fourth major, at the Australian Open in February. Osaka's impact was not limited between the tramlines. During the Western & Southern Open, the Japanese joined in the athlete-led protests regarding racial injustice in America, a decision that led to a one-day stoppage in play. At the US Open, in an effort to raise awareness about racial injustice, Osaka wore seven masks with seven names of black victims of racial violence. Tennis legend Martina Navratilova presented Billie Jean King with her 'Lifetime Achievement Award', in recognition of her excellence on the tennis court as well as her life's work in pursuit of gender and racial equality.

## ITALIAN OPEN: SERENA-OSAKA CLASH ON CARDS IN Q-F

Rome: Japanese tennis ace and world No. 2 Naomi Osaka could clash with Serena Williams in a mouth-watering quarter-final match of the Italian Open (May 8-16), the draw for which was announced on Saturday. In another interesting quarter-final match-up, No. 1 seed from Australia, Ashleigh Barty could face Aryna Sabalenka in a rematch of the Stuttgart and Madrid Open finals. Serena, a four-time champion in Rome in 2002, 2013, 2014 and 2016, will be competing for the first time since her Australian Open semi-final loss to Osaka. The American begins her campaign against either Roland Garros semi-finalist Nadia Podoroska or a qualifier, before a projected third-round meeting with No. 10 seed Belinda Bencic. Osaka, whose best showing at the tournament was a quarter-final run in 2019, faces a tough test as she will take on either Daria Kasatkina -- a two-time titlist at the Phillip Island Trophy and St. Petersburg this year -- or the surging Australian Open quarter-finalist Jessica Pegula.





## HIWETEL EJIOFOR: ANNE HATHAWAY WOULD BE A GOOD DIAMOND THIEF



Los Angeles | Agencies

British actor Chiwetel Ejiofor, shares the screen with Anne Hathaway in the heist comedy "Locked Down". Asked who would be able to steal a diamond, he said that Anne would do a better job.

"My instinct is to say Anne, I don't know why! I feel like she would certainly be the brains behind it," said Ejiofor in an interview with contactmusic.com. "It was just fantastic to make a film

with her," he added.

The film has been directed by Doug Liman, known for helming "The Bourne Identity", "Mr & Mrs Smith", "Edge Of Tomorrow" and "American Made" in the past.

The story of "Locked Down" revolves around a married couple who are separated but forced to live together during the pandemic, and how they plan to steal a vault at a popular department store.

## MICHAEL B. JORDAN: 'CREED III' SHOOT TO START 'PROBABLY MID-NOVEMBER'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Michael B. Jordan has shared that the shoot of his much-hyped upcoming boxing drama "Creed III" is scheduled to start later this year. Jordan, who stars as champion boxer Adonis Creed in the franchise, makes his directorial debut with the third film in the series besides continuing to star as the protagonist.

"Probably before the end of the year, probably mid-November or so. Right after this one (Tom Clancy's 'Without Remorse'), I'm in full prep mode," Jordan said on "The Jess Cagle Podcast With Julia Cunningham", reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The first "Creed" film opened in 2015, followed by "Creed II" in 2018. Both films were globally successful. The franchise is a spin-off of the iconic "Rocky" series of films starring Sylvester Stallone as the fictional boxing ace Rocky Balboa. The "rocky" films had had Carl Weathers playing Balboa's friend and fellow American pugilist Apollo Creed. Adonis Creed is the son of Apollo Creed, and carries the lore forward.



## MEGAN FOX ON HAVING THREE SONS: IT'S LIKE UFC FIGHT NIGHT ALL DAY

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Megan Fox says having three sons is nothing short of watching a UFC fight night throughout the day.

Megan has three boys - Noah (eight), Bodhi (seven) and Journey (four) with her former husband Brian Austin Green.

"I don't know what it's like to have a girl. For me, it's like UFC Fight Night all day, every day. We need to live in a padded cell for everyone to

be safe," Fox said on the "The Kelly Clarkson Show", reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She added: "They love each other. They're best friends, but the fighting is non-stop because they have so much energy and they're so rambunctious that it's just a melee. My kids will pull out fists full of hair and be like, 'I got your hair, Noah!'"

Fox had reportedly introduced her children to her boyfriend Machine Gun Kelly and things are going well, according to a source.

## CHRIS MARTIN: MY WHOLE BEING IS BUILT AROUND PLAYING TO PEOPLE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Coldplay frontman Chris Martin said he misses playing live for people but he is trying to come to terms with that situation.

"I mean my whole being is built around playing to people but I'm also trying to be accepting of the situation and not rely on that to be happy with each day but as soon as we can, are you kidding!" Martin told the Australian radio show "Fitzy & Wippa", according to contactmusic.com.

Coldplay came out with a new single "Higher Power" on Friday, and Martin said it is influenced by Frank Sinatra's style. "I'm listening to so many things all the time, '80s, '90s and '50s. I'm going through a big Sinatra phase but I don't know if you can hear that in that song," he laughed.



## Drew Barrymore: My heart goes out to people of India who're trying to hold it together

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Hollywood star Drew Barrymore has urged everyone to help India amid the Covid-19 second wave. The actress addressed the issue on her popular talk show, "The Drew Barrymore Show". "Hello everyone and Namaste India! This one's a special message to the people of India. A lot of you guys already know of my deep-rooted connection with the country and how I've always loved India for its culture, its people and so much more!" she said.

Barrymore added it "holds a very special place in my heart", and that in her visits, she has met so many "wonderful peo-

ple" who have truly inspired her as a person, which propelled her to write a chapter in her book, too.

"Today, as we cope with the worldwide situation, my heart goes out to the people of India who're trying hard to hold it together. My sincere wishes and prayers to you to stay strong and believe that we will come out stronger together," she said.

The actress added: "I came across a couple of articles online that truly invigorated a sense of faith and positivity in me, like a 110-year-old Covid-19 survivor in India, or how a man donating his entire life's savings towards relief. Countless people, celebrities and organisations coming together and pledging support,

people starting food centres and relief groups - and this is truly the need of the hour." "A small contribution could really help and make a giant difference, and even save a life! I'm doing my bit and urge you to do whatever is in your capacity. Most importantly, I'm sending you a lot of love, healing and prayers and faith in the light at the end of this dark tunnel."

"Namaste. Thank you so much and all of my love," Barrymore conclude on the show that airs on Zee Cafe in India.

Many international celebrities including James McAvoy, Camila Cabello, Shawn Mendes, Jada Smith have helped and also urged fans to help the people in need.



## BEBÉ REXHA ON DEALING WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER: PUTTING IT IN A SONG NORMALISES IT FOR ME

Los Angeles | Agencies

Pop star Bebe Rexha has opened about her battle with bipolar disorder, and she claims to be in a better place despite her struggle with the condition. The 31-year-old singer has also found a way to deal with the issue through her music. "Sometimes putting it in a song normalises it for me. It's just my truth," she said.

In fact, she made a reference to her mental health in the Travis Barker-featuring track "Break my heart myself" in the new album "Better Mistakes".

"I've learned that you have to be your own cheerleader. I wish I would've known that 10 years ago," the Grammy-nominated singer opened up about her condition to People magazine. She shared that she manages her mental health issue with medication and "a lot of therapy," reports aceshowbiz.com. The singer added: "It's a part of me I am constantly dealing with. It's tough." Her family and boyfriend Keyan Safaryi have been a source of support, she said, adding: "I'm in such a better place in my life. I feel so much more free and at peace." Bebe first revealed her struggle with bipolar disorder in April 2019.

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kim Kardashian



### SONAKSHI: 'STAYING HOME HAS BECOME A HOBBY'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sonakshi Sinha on Saturday added a dash of wit on Instagram saying she has reached the point when staying home has become a hobby. She urged all to get vaccinated and drive Covid away. "Reached that point where staying home has become a hobby. #coronabhagao #getvaccinated," she wrote alongside a selfie she posted. Sonakshi recently announced her upcoming project "Bulbul Tarang", which will have an OTT release. She will also be seen in "Bhuj: The Pride Of India", co-starring Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi, and is gearing up for her web series debut in "Fallen", which casts her as a cop.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Lizaa Malik is in the city to help her employees, who have tested positive for Covid-19. "It's a precarious time for everyone. Things are falling off for a lot of people. We have about 50 of our employees who tested positive. This is the time we have to stand for them and I am not turning away," Lizaa said.

Lizaa added she, along with her business partner, is providing for ICU beds and anything else that might be

required - be it financially or emotionally.

"We are in it together and we will stand strong. I request everyone to follow all the SOPs and take care of themselves. Stay indoors if it's not an emergency. And this too shall pass. We have to fight this battle together," she said.

Lizaa Malik helps employees in Delhi amid Covid-19 crisis



### SUNNY LEONE'S DIET WON'T LET HER GORGE ON NOODLES!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sunny Leone sure is resilient when it comes to sticking to her diet. The actress posted a fun video on Friday, where she is seen trying not to get tempted by the bowl of noodles. In the Instagram video, Sunny sniffs the bowl of noodles, but regrets that her diet regime doesn't allow her to gorge on the dish. "When you are on a diet and have a craving for #Maggi," she wrote. Meanwhile, Sunny has been taking to her social media to also encourage fans and cheer them up as the country battles with the deadly second wave of Covid-19. Recently, she also joined hands with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in order to feed 10,000 migrant workers in Delhi. The actress is currently part of the reality show "Splitvilla". She shot for the show in Kerala earlier this year.



### SOHA ALI KHAN WANTS A 'MAGIC WAND'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Soha Ali Khan could really use a magic wand right now, going by her social media post on Friday. Soha posted a picture of her daughter InaayaNaumiKemmu on Instagram, where she is seen playing with a wand. "Could really use a magic wand right about now," she wrote on the image. Soha, who is married to actor KunalKemmu, also shared a video of her daughter running around and playing in the house. "Keeping spirits high with our party for 1! #lockdown #stayhomestaysafe," she captioned the video. Kunal and Soha got married in 2015 and Inaaya was born in 2017.

### Sai Dharam Tej: 'Mask on'

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

South star Sai Dharam Tej on Saturday urged all to keep their masks on even as the second wave of Covid-19 wreaks havoc all over India. Sai posted an Instagram picture shot from top angle, which shows him lying in bed with a face mask on. He gave a quirky touch to the photo sketching blue devil horns on his cap, and completed the picture with an angry gaze into the cam-

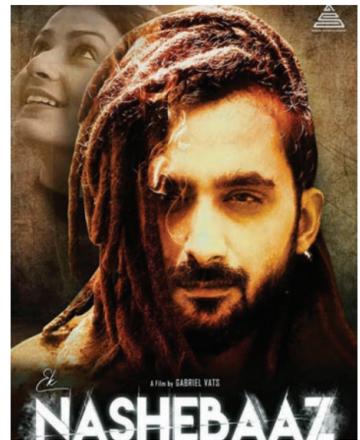


era. "Mask on," he captioned the photo, with a masked emoji and a devil emoji. The actor last year had announced that he will be seen in a mystical thriller film directed by debutant Karthik Varma Dandu. The untitled project is his 15th film. Sai Dharam Tej had also shared the poster of the upcoming movie. The poster featured a pentagram with an eye popping out in the middle. Telugu superstar Chiranjeevi's nephew Sai Dharam Tej made his acting debut with "PillanuvvuLenijeevitham". He was then seen in films like "Rey", "Subramanyam For Sale", "Supreme", "Thikka", "Winner", "Tej, I Love You" and "PratiRojuPandage" among others.

### Ek Nashebaaz is all about Life in the cage of drugs: Gabriel Vats

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Writer Director Gabriel Vats just completed First shooting schedule of his movie Ek Nashebaaz in Utrakhand. Recently teaser poster of the movie Ek Nashebaaz has released. The film reveals the darker side of Rehabilitation centre. The film shows how the youth's life is deteriorating after addiction to drugs. Ek Nashebaaz is Written and Directed by Seema Saini.



Gabriel Vats and Geetanjali Sharma are in the lead role along with Govind Namdev, Pankaj jha and others. Under the banner of A Snipper entertainment LLP, Ek Nashebaaz is produced by Neeraj Sharma, co-produced by Rajeev Deshwal, Jyoti Panwar, Seema Saini. Chandrakant

Kumar and Ravi Verma are the executive producer. The film will hit the theatre in October 2021. Ek Nashebaaz is a musical drama film. The film revolves around Noori, Rajnish and drug rehab centre. The pages of a hidden book opens when psychiatrist Noori steps in the door of a drug rehab centre, where she discovers Rajnish's life in those dark walls which in turn becomes Noori's life's motive. Noori wins the struggle of getting Rajnish free from the Rehab center, but fails to depart the dark memories of Rehab from his mind. Prior to this Gabriel Vats had brought up a film based on the male pregnancy 'I am Mr. Mother'. Gabriel believes to bring up such topic which doesn't gets limelight.

## Mother's Day Special: Celebs share fondest childhood memory spent with their mom

Mother, the words define our existence. Our life is what our mothers make of it. They are our guiding force. Without our mothers, we are nothing. Since our childhood, she guides us through everything that helps us learn and grow in our lives. Celebrities share their fondest memories spent with their mother as a child. They also talk about that one gift which they want to give their mothers.



#### Meera Deosthale

When in school, I used to participate in all kinds of competitions. My mother would prep me up for everything, train me and I used to come back with trophies. Whenever I used to misbehave or make any mistakes, no one was allowed to scold me or raise a voice except my mother. She would teach me a lesson in her own sweet way.



#### Sidharth Sipani

As a child, I wanted a toy that was very expensive, but we couldn't afford it back then. But being a stubborn kid I asked mom to get me that toy. So, mum had to ask dad to get the toy. I remember waiting for my mom to come back from the market and was happy when she got me the gift. But after growing up I realised my mistake.



#### Nibeditaa Paal

I am family oriented and share close bonds with my mother from the beginning. I remember as a kid we had gone to Rotorua together and on many such vacations to New Zealand. We had so much fun every time. I don't think any gift can suffice or match her value! But she is a foodie like me. I would love to cook some good food for her this Mother's day.

#### Priyamvada Kant

As a child, my mom used to keep me busy with paints and brushes, while she would be working on her huge sculptures. I also fondly remember her teaching me dance and helping me with all school plays and functions.

#### Mohit Daga



I remember that she used to bribe us by saying that 'learn this shloka, and then I'll give you Rs 5 for ice cream'. She wanted to make us devotional towards our religion and our Guruji.



# Harshvardhan Rane reveals his super power

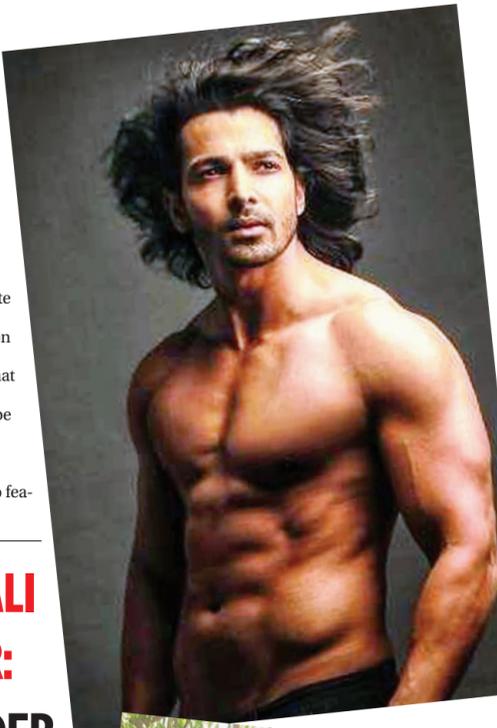
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Harshvardhan Rane has revealed his super power that can avert problems in an Instagram post on Saturday, accompanied by an image where he flaunts big muscles and a bigger smile.

"A smile can avert so many problems! Super power," Harshvardhan wrote alongside the image.

The actor was last seen on screen in Bejoy Nambiar's "Taish", a revenge drama that dropped digitally last year.

Harshvardhan will next be seen in the Taapsee Pannu-starrer "Haseen Dillruba", a mystery thriller directed by Vinil Mathew. The film also features Vikrant Massey.



## GEETANJALI TIKEKAR: I SURRENDER TO THE SCRIPT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Geetanjali Tikekar, who is part of the show "Kyun Utthe Dil Chodd Aaye", says she is a director's actor and totally goes by the writer and director's vision.

"I didn't get much time to prepare for this role but I have a great team who works with me, and I just totally surrender to the script. I like to follow my directors and writers' visions as they are the ones who have an inside to the character. Having said that I feel delighted to be part of the show and the given role," she says.

The actress plays the role of Tara Devi in the show and says there are no similarities between her and her character. "My reel and real characters are poles apart from each other. My reel character isn't as forgiving, accommodating and lenient as my real self. But you could say Nalini is my alter ego. She can get away with things because she's a queen for whom the only thing that matters is being right all the time," she says. Geetanjali says that she has had an eventful journey as an actor. "It's been over 19 years since I've been a part of this industry and there's no place I'd rather be. The journey has had highs and lows but mostly highs. I was studying in Pune when I happened to audition for a TV show. My life changed overnight when I got selected. Mumbai has been my home ever since," she says. "Kyun Utthe Dil Chodd Aaye" airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



## Choreographer Rajit Dev to make acting debut in music video

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Choreographer Rajit Dev will soon face the camera, in the music video "Kareeb". He will share screen space in the song with actress Divya Agarwal.

"I want people to see a new side of me. I've been teaching and training actors for over 100 songs in my career as an assistant and a choreographer. This is the first time I'm playing a hero in a song. My expectation is just that the audience supports us and shows us love for the work that we have done," he told IANS.

The song is sung by Vishal Dadlani, which was one of the primary reasons for Rajit to come on board.

"Vishal Dadlani has always been one of my favourite singers. He's an amazing singer-

music director. I've choreographed a lot of his songs like 'Tehehnehes' in 'Khaali Peeli'. I worked on all songs in 'Befikre', 'Sultan', 'Tiger Zinda Hai' and 'Bharat' as an assistant choreographer. I have always loved choreographing for his numbers," said Rajit.

He is excited by the entire process of shooting the music video because he has also choreographed the song. "This is a debut for me in front of the camera. I loved the whole process. It was a little hectic for me on the sets because I have also choreographed the song, I had to explain the shots to the camera team and then perform," he said.

The video has been directed Udit Jawrani and the song is composed by Goldie Sohel. The lyrics are by Kunal Verma. The music video will release on May 11



# Kalki Koechlin debuts as writer with memoir on motherhood

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After making waves with films like "Margarita with a Straw", "Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani" and "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara", award-winning French-Indian actor Kalki Koechlin is to debut as a writer with "The Elephant In the Womb", publisher Penguin Random House India announced on the eve of International Mothers Day on May 9.

In this unique graphic book, a combination of personal essays and think-pieces, we finally have that candid, funny and relatable book on pregnancy and parenting that mothers, expectant mothers, and anyone even thinking about motherhood have been waiting for.

Gorgeously illustrated by Ukrainian artist Valeriya Polyanychko, with deeply personal journal entries captured in real time, alongside reflections and anecdotes, this is a ground-breaking book - it's the motherload!

Commenting on the experience and inspiration, Kalki said: "While I was struggling with my pregnancy and my new role as a mother, it was my friends who helped me. They shared their rough times and dark phases and how they got through it with laughter and contemplation, and that helped me more than those who spoke only of the glorious, blessed babe in arms that brought light into their lives." Illustrator Valeriya Polyanychko, said: "We often take motherhood for granted and assume that it's something that just happens. Kalki's book uses quick wit and a sense of humour to take the reader down the long and winding road of parenting. Not only did Kalki's emotional journey deeply resonate with me, but illustrating this book has also been one of the most profound and enriching experiences I've ever had."

With whimsy and compassion, with uproariously funny art and spellbinding honesty, "The Elephant in the Womb" blends the deeply private with the blazingly political. It's an eye-opener for anyone who has ever thought that pregnancy was all about the glow and that motherhood was all about fulfilment. From fixing broken parts to enduring untimely farts, Koechlin's nuanced prose tells us the bare-faced truth about the physiological discomfort and manic expectations that make it a bittersweet experience.

Talking about the book she commissioned, Manasi Subramaniam, Executive Editor and Head of Literary Rights, Penguin Press, Penguin Random House India, said: "Kalki Koechlin's book deals with the mother of all issues - the fact that parenting is as exhausting as it is fulfilling, as draining as it is inspiring, and as frustrating as it is joyous. We romanticize motherhood in popular culture, and I'm so glad Kalki has pulled back the curtain on what is essentially the physical and emotional labour of much of the female population."



# Param Singh: It's okay to agree to disagree in a mature relationship

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Param Singh, who is part of the show "Ishk Par Zor Nah", says it is important to have the space to speak your mind in a relationship.

On the show, Ahaan and his lady love Ishqi come from diverse backgrounds. While Ahaan lives a disciplined and controlled life, Ishqi is free-spirited and vibrant in nature.

"I believe that a mature relationship is when you realise that it's okay to agree to disagree. Opinions and ideologies aren't right or wrong. Even in the show, Ahaan and Ishqi share polarising views but none of them are wrong. Both have justifiable reasoning and thought processes. Their past experiences have moulded

their opinions," says Param. The actor adds that it's important to give freedom to your partner to hold their independent point of view.

"So, even if your significant other shares an altogether different point of view, we should learn to unlearn, accommodate new points of view, and even if there's no mutual agreement, we shouldn't let disagreements come between us and should always be emotionally available to our partners. Despite differences, respecting each other is the sign of a healthy relationship," he says.

"Ishk Par Zor Nah" airs on Sony Entertainment Television.



# Vikram Bhatt warns about Whatsapp forwards that spread Covid misinformation

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker-writer Vikram Bhatt says we should all be wary of "Whatsapp groups and millions of forwards which talk about remedies and preventive measures" related to Covid purely on the basis of hearsay.

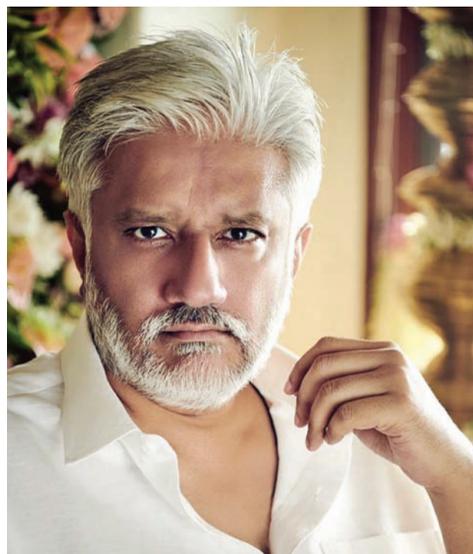
"There's a lot of misinformation. The thing that makes me happy in this grim scenario is the way people are helping one another through social media. Strangers are reaching out to each other through social media. Oxygen langars, food providers, volunteers helping ends meet - this is the real India. We saw a glimpse of that when Mumbai experienced a deluge in July 2005. This spirit of humanity and science will beat the virus," he said.

Bhatt was speaking when he appeared as a guest to discuss ways for people to stay positive in this hour of crisis, on an Instagram Live series hosted by Sunny Leone's husband Daniel Weber. Vikram's daughter Krishna also joined the chat.

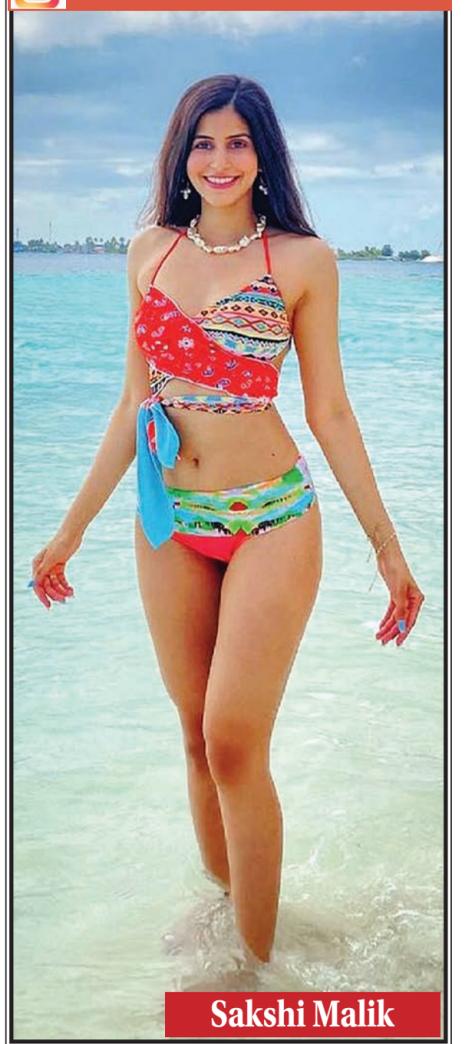
The Bhattas are guests on the third session of the series, which aims at highlighting stories of hope emerging amidst the current Covid situation in the country.

"At some point, we have to start making ourselves accountable for what we're going through. The pandemic in its second wave is worse because it has penetrated into the villages. The numbers barely reflect the ground realities. We have to blame ourselves for this. The way out of this is to follow SOPs, and follow science to the T," Bhatt pointed out.

"There's a reason I started this daily chat in which we talk about stories of hope. It's important to discuss the good that citizens are doing for each other without even knowing one another's names. It took a pandemic for people to realise that their strength lies in standing united as a force. The stories of how people have gone out of their way to help one another and act bravely in these times are essential to keep hope alive," said Weber, about the objective of the show.



## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sakshi Malik