

absolute india

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RDIF, PANACEA BIOTEC TO START SPUTNIK V PRODUCTION IN INDIA

THE THIRD KNIGHT

▶ With an efficacy of 91.6 per cent, Sputnik V is reportedly the first vaccine against Covid-19 in the world.

▶ The RDIF has signed a deal to produce 750 million doses of Sputnik V in India.

▶ The price of Sputnik V is less than \$10 per shot, making it affordable around the world.

▶ -The first consignment of 150,000 doses had arrived in Hyderabad on May 1 and the second consignment of 60,000 doses arrived on May 16.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Production of the Sputnik V vaccine against coronavirus will begin in India this summer, the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and pharmaceutical company Panacea Biotec announced on Monday. Sputnik V was registered in India under the emergency use authorisation procedure on April 12 and vaccination against coronavirus with the Russian vaccine started on May 14. As

announced in April, RDIF and Panacea have agreed to produce 100 million doses per year of Sputnik V.

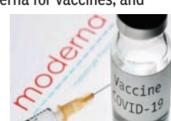
Sputnik V uses two different vectors for the two shots in a course of vaccination, providing immunity with a longer duration than vaccines using the same delivery mechanism for both shots. It is developed by Russia's Gamaleya National Center. It will be the third vaccine to be cleared for the immunisation programme in India after Covaxin and Covishield.

"The first batch produced at Panacea Biotec's facilities at Baddi will be shipped to the Gamaleya Centre [in Russia] for quality control. Full-scale production of the vaccine is due to start this summer. Company's facilities comply with GMP [good manufacturing practice] standards and are prequalified by WHO."

RDIF

PFIZER, MODERNA REFUSE TO SELL VAX DIRECTLY TO STATES

The Delhi Government on Monday slammed the Central Government of delay in procurement of vaccines from the international markets. Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia during a digital briefing on Monday said US pharmaceutical companies manufacturing Covid vaccines - Pfizer and Moderna have made it clear they won't sell directly to Delhi. "We have spoken to Pfizer and Moderna for vaccines, and both the manufacturers have refused to sell vaccines directly to us. They have said they will deal with the central government. We appeal to the Centre to import vaccines and distribute to the states," Sisodia said. This has come a day after Punjab said Moderna has refused to sell vaccines to the state directly. The Amarinder Singh government had reached out to all such manufacturers, according to officials, looking for direct purchases.



VACCINE CRISIS A SCANDALOUS INEQUITY: WHO

Geneva: The ongoing vaccine crisis is a "scandalous inequity" that is perpetuating the Covid pandemic, World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Monday. In his address at the WHO's 74th World Health Assembly, taking place online from May 24 to June 1, he said: "More than 75 per cent of all vaccines have been administered in just 10 countries." The fate of the rest of the world is controlled by a small group of countries that are making and buying the majority of the vaccines, he added. If the vaccines had been distributed equitably, the doses "administered globally so far would have been enough to cover all health workers and older people."



To minimise vax wastage, on-site registration for 18-44 years enabled

New Delhi: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Monday initiated on-site Registration in addition to online appointment for 18-44 years age group now on CoWIN, the service is only enabled only for Government Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) to minimise vaccine wastage and to facilitate those without internet reach. The ministry said the reason behind it to provide maximum vaccination as in case of sessions exclusively organised with online slots, towards the end of the day, some doses may still be left unutilised in case the online appointee beneficiaries do not turn up on day of vaccination due to any reason. In such cases, on-site registration of a few beneficiaries may be necessary to minimise the vaccine wastage.

Why vaccines are not free: Kerala HC to Centre

Kochi: The Kerala High Court on Monday asked the Centre why the vaccines are not provided for free to the citizens. The court pointed out that even though it would cost Rs 34,000 crore, the Centre has with it Rs 54,000 crore by way of dividend from the Reserve Bank of India. On Monday, in a related issue the Centre said it has so far provided, both through the free of cost category and through direct state procurement category, more than 21.80 crore vaccine doses (21,80,51,890) to States/UTs.

After b&w, now Yellow Fungus reported in UP

Ghaziabad | Agencies

As the country battles the Covid pandemic, besides its twisted offsprings the Black and White fungi wreaking havoc, now the first case of Yellow Fungus has also cropped up in Ghaziabad. ENT Specialist B.P. Tyagi has claimed that there is a patient of Yellow Fungus in his hospital, who is undergoing treatment.

The 45-year-old patient, resident of Sanjay Nagar in Harsh Hospital, Ghaziabad, is suffering from yellow fungus as well as black and white fungus. Professor Tyagi said, "This fungus is found in reptiles. I saw this disease for the first time. Amphotericin B injection is used to treat this

IDENTIFY FUNGUS BY NAME, NOT COLOUR: AIIMS CHIEF

"Black fungus is another family; this term got associated with mucormycosis due to the presence of black dots among the culture of white fungal colonies. In general, there are various types of fungal infections. Fungal infection observed in Covid-19 patients is mostly mucormycosis. While the number of cases are increasing, it is not contagious or infectious like Covid."



disease. It takes a long time to heal. This patient's condition cannot be said to be very good, he is still undergoing treatment." According to Tyagi, as far as the symptoms of this disease are concerned, there remains sluggishness or lethargy in the body while there is less appetite, due to

which the weight starts decreasing. Body wounds also heal very slowly. Cleanliness is very important to avoid this disease, as infection starts off due to poor hygiene. The more you keep cleanliness around you, the more you can stay safe from this disease.

Privacy 'highest priority: WhatsApp

New Delhi: WhatsApp on Monday said it has sent a reply to the notice by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) after the ministry directed the Facebook-owned platform to withdraw its controversial user privacy policy. A WhatsApp spokesperson said in a statement that the, "as a reminder, the recent update does not change the privacy of people's personal messages. Its purpose is to provide additional information about how people can interact with businesses if they choose to do so," the spokesperson said. The WhatsApp spokesperson said that the company "will not limit the functionality of how WhatsApp works in the coming weeks.

The Supreme Court on Monday suggested there must be a uniform policy and also some guidelines for issuance of death certificates for those affected with Covid-19. A bench comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah said many a time reasons given in a death certificate can be heart attack or lung failure, but these could be triggered by Covid-19. The bench asked Centre's counsel,

SC seeks reply on uniform Covid policy, guidelines for death certificates

Team Absolute | New Delhi

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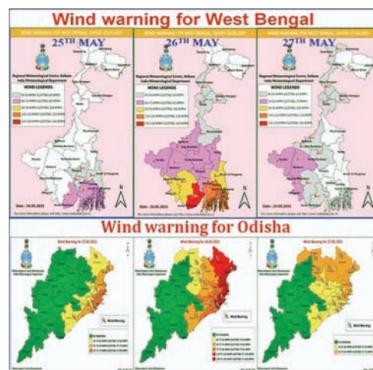
"So, how are death certificates being issued?" The top court issued notice to the Centre on a

PIL seeking Rs 4 lakh compensation to kin of each person who died after contracting Covid-

19. "It is respectfully submitted that as per Section 12 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 it is the fundamental duty of National Disaster Management Authority to provide minimum standards of relief to persons affected by Disaster. As per Section 12 (iii) of the Disaster Management Act 2005, NDMA is duty bound to provide ex-gratia assistance on account of loss to the persons affected by Disaster," said the plea filed by advocate Gaurav Kumar Bansal.

Odisha, WB on Yellow alert as 'Yaas' to turn into severe cyclonic storm

Gale winds, at speeds reaching 65-75 kmph and gusting to 85 kmph, are prevailing over west central Bay of Bengal. These are very likely to increase further becoming gale winds of speed, reaching 90-100 kmph and gusting to 110 kmph, over major parts of central Bay of Bengal by Monday evening and would decrease gradually from Tuesday afternoon.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A yellow alert has been declared both in Odisha and West Bengal after cyclonic storm 'Yaas' moved slowly north-northwestwards and was very likely to intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm during the next 12 hours, the IMD said. It is expected to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm during the subsequent 24 hours, said the IMD. It would continue to move north-northwestwards, intensify further and reach

It is very likely to cross north Odisha-West Bengal coasts between Paradip and Sagar islands around noon of May 26 as a very severe cyclonic storm.

northwest Bay of Bengal near north Odisha and West Bengal coasts by May 26 early morning. Heavy falls at isolated places is expected in north coastal Andhra Pradesh on Monday and heavy to very heavy falls at

isolated places in the region on Tuesday. In Odisha, light to moderate rainfall at many places with heavy falls at isolated places over coastal region of the state on Monday has been predicted by the IMD with heavy to very heavy rainfall in some districts later in the day. Light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy to extremely heavy falls at isolated places is expected in Jharkhand and Bihar on May 26 and 27 and isolated heavy falls on May 28.

MAHA TO TREAT MUCORMYCOSIS PATIENTS FREE

Mumbai: In a significant move, the Maharashtra government on Monday informed the Bombay High Court that it will treat all patients suffering from mucormycosis at designated hospitals free of cost besides planning to cap the treatment rates in private hospitals. The treatment will be given at pre-identified hospitals and nursing homes in the state under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana and the Pradhan Mantra Jan Arogya Yojana. While 130 hospitals in the state are notified under these two schemes, another 1000 shall be empaneled and the medicines required for mucormycosis treatment shall be provided free of cost, it said.

Awasthi emerges as front-runner of CBI chief



New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday discussed the names for the new Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) with the Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. The three members of the Select Committee discussed several names for the top CBI post for a fixed term of two years. According to sources, the names of Hitesh Chandra Awasthi, a 1985 batch IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, along with two others -- SSB DG R.K. Chandra and Special Secretary in MHA, VSK Kaumudi -- were discussed in the meeting.



DELHI POLICE REACH TWITTER INDIA OFFICE TO SERVE NOTICE OVER TOOLKIT ROW

Team Absolute | New Delhi
A team of Delhi Police reached the offices of Twitter India in Delhi and Gurugram on Monday evening to "serve notice" in connection with its probe into the alleged toolkit case.

A source in Delhi Police told IANS, "The Special Cell has sent a notice to Twitter. In its reply, Twitter said it has no more knowledge in the matter. So a team of Special Cell officers went to the offices of Twitter to record the statements of the persons there, but they were found closed."

The source also clarified that there no raids or searches are being carried out at the offices of Twitter in Delhi and Gurugram.

Later, Delhi Police issued a statement which said, "The Delhi Police team went to Twitter office to serve a notice to Twitter, as a part of routine process. This was necessitated as we wanted to ascertain who is the right person to serve a notice, as replies by Twitter India MD have been very ambiguous."

The action comes after the Special Cell sent a notice to Twitter India MD



Manish Maheshwari over the alleged toolkit case on May 21.

Earlier in the day, the Delhi Police had said, "We are inquiring into a complaint in which clarification is

sought from Twitter regarding the classification of a tweet by (BJP spokesperson) Sambit Patra as 'manipulative'."

The statement said that "it appears

that Twitter has some information which is not known to us on the basis of which it has classified it as such".

"This information is relevant to the inquiry. The Special Cell, which is conducting the inquiry, wants to find out the truth. Twitter, which has claimed to know the underlying truth, should clarify," the statement added.

In its notice to Twitter India MD, the Delhi Police had asked Maheshwari to be present in the office of the Special Cell on May 22 at 1 p.m. with all the relevant documents.

The Delhi Police also said that they were carrying out a preliminary inquiry pertaining to the 'toolkit' allegedly released by the Congress.

A war of words had erupted between the Congress and the BJP last week after Sambit Patra released a set of pages alleging to be the 'toolkit' of the Congress to defame the Narendra Modi government.

The Congress had approached the Delhi Police with a complaint against BJP chief J.P. Nadda, Patra, B.L. Santosh, Union minister Smriti Irani and others.

SC: Centre takes policy decisions regarding relief to people on repayment of loan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday said the Union government takes policy decision in connection with the nature of measures, to help people facing financial woes due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Advocate Vishal Tiwari filed a petition seeking some relief to borrowers during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M R Shah asked Tiwari to send a representation to the Union government. The bench said, "At the maximum, what we can do is that we can allow him (the petitioner) to give his representation to the central government."

The bench noted that the matter in connected with policy decision. After it was informed that the petitioner was not connected virtually to make his submissions, the top court posted the plea for further hearing on June 11.



"We will adjourn the case to June 11", said the bench.

The plea contended that the bank or financial institutions should refrain from taking action for auction in respect of any property of any citizen or person or party or anybody corporate for a period of six months. The plea urged the top court to issue a direction to the Centre to permit all the financial institutions to grant

interest free moratorium period for term loan. The petitioner also sought deferment of payment of loan instalments for a period of six months or till the Covid-19 crisis continues.

The plea added that no account should be declared as Non-performing Asset (NPA) for a period of six months, in the backdrop of the surge in the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Vax key to controlling pandemic, Govt doesn't care: Rahul Gandhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid shortage of vaccines, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday attacked the government saying it is not "serious" about it.

Rahul Gandhi tweeted on Monday, "Vaccination is the key to controlling the pandemic but GOI doesn't seem to care." His remark came on a day when the government informed that more than 1 crore people of 18-44 age group were administered vaccine under the ongoing drive. However many states have complained about shortage of vaccines and companies have refused to give directly to state governments. The achievement was



made within 23 days of the implementation of the Liberalized and Accelerated

Phase-3 strategy of Covid-19 vaccination that was started on May 1.

Vax drive in UP goes awry: Hesitancy, rumour push villagers into river

Team Absolute | Barabanki

Despite a sustained campaign and widespread publicity, vaccine hesitancy continues to prevail in the rural hinterlands of Uttar Pradesh where the pandemic is spreading its tentacles.

In Sisoda village in Barabanki -- where a group of residents jumped into the Saryu river to evade vaccination on Sunday -- the residents remain firm in their decision of not getting the jab.

Shishupal, a local farmer, said, "People have died even after getting vaccinated. I know of those who have had to be hospitalised after the jab. Jab marna hi hai to vaccine kyon?"

Shishupal, who has done matriculation, is convinced that the Covid vaccine is 'harmful' and spreads this 'information' among others.

"I have got this information from several of my friends who work in big cities. I am convinced as the local officials have not answered my



queries. My own uncle, who worked in Delhi, died a month after having both vaccine shots. What more proof do I need," he asked.

Mohd Ahsan, another resident, was also unwilling to take the jab. "Is there a guarantee that we will not get infected after the vaccine?"

There are many in adjoining village who rushed to take the vaccine and then got infected. Why is the government pushing for vaccination--they should give it to those who want it," he stated. Besides this, rumours abound in the village that the vaccine causes 'impotence' and this is mainly

responsible for driving the men away. On Sunday evening, a group of people in Sisoda village in Barabanki district had jumped into the Saryu river after seeing a team of health officials. The health team had gone to the village to give Covid vaccination to the local residents.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Ramnagar tehsil, Rajiv Kumar Shukla, said about 200 people of the village ran away from the village because of the fear of vaccine and reached the Saryu shore. When the health team reached the river, these people jumped into the river.

Shukla said he made the villagers understand the importance and benefits of vaccination, and tried to dispel the myths, following which only 18 people in the village got the jabs.

The villagers said they jumped into the river because some people had told them that this was not a vaccine, but a poisonous injection. It took a great deal of convincing to get people come out of the river.

GOVT CAN'T BE HELD LIABLE FOR COVID DEATHS IN GMC: GOA BJP CHIEF

Panaji: The Goa government cannot be held responsible for the deaths of Covid patients at the state's premier government hospital, state BJP president Sadanand Shet Tanavade said on Monday. Tanavade's comments came more than a week after nearly 80 persons died in five days due to lack of oxygen in the state's apex hospital, the government-run Goa Medical College (GMC), located near Panaji. "One cannot say the government is responsible for the Covid deaths," Tanavade told reporters. Tanavade said that patients require timely admission and an element of luck to overcome the deadly viral infection. "If the person reaches (the hospital) at the right time and if the person is

99 Buddhist monks test Covid positive in Sikkim

GANGTOK | Agencies

As many as 99 Buddhist monks of two monasteries tested positive for Covid-19 in Sikkim, officials said on Monday.

Officials in Gangtok said that the health and local administration officials are closely monitoring each and every Buddhist monastery in Sikkim and all kinds of precautionary and health facilities were provided to monks infected by the contagious disease.

According to the officials, 37 Buddhist monks from the Dharma Chakra Centre in Rumtek Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, 30 kilometers from Gangtok, tested positive for the virus on Sunday.

They said that 62 monks tested positive for Covid-19 at the Gunjang Monastery in Gangtok on Saturday and the monastery



was declared a containment zone.

Both the Rumtek Monastery and Gunjang Monastery are also tourist hotspots for various reasons including the majestic view of the mountain ranges.

The Covid positive monks have been shifted to Saramsa Garden making it as an isolation centre. Gangtok Sub-Divisional Magistrate Robin Sewa said that those monks who have come in contact with the Covid positive preachers are also being traced and tested. As the Covid positive cases continue to rise in the Himalayan state, the Sikkim government extended the ongoing lockdown for another week.

The mountainous state has so far registered 13,132 positive cases with 3,317 active cases on Monday. So far 224 people have died due to the disease in the state registering the fatality ratio of 1.71 per cent.

'DIVINE HORSE' FUNERAL IN K'TAKA SEES HUNDREDS, VILLAGE SEALED

BELAGAVI | Agencies

Amid the raging pandemic, hundreds of people in Gokak taluk of Karnataka's Belgavi defied all Covid safety protocols to take part in a "divine" horse's funeral. Authorities have now swung in action to seal of the village and test the residents.

This incident was reported on Sunday after the horse of Maradi Mutt, a local religious institution, died.

Some Mathas belonging to various castes and communities in north Karnataka region, have practice of rearing horses like some temples in Kerala rear elephants, as divine. Whenever such horse is let off by Mutt, people who live in the vicinity pray to the animal, while making offerings to it. After visuals of sev-

eral hundred people living in villages surrounding Maradi Matha flouting Covid norms, went viral on local media channels, authorities have now woken up and decided to carry out RT-PCR test to all residents of Konnuru village in Gokak taluk where the Mutt is located.

Gokak Tahsildar Prakash Huleppgol, under whose jurisdiction this village falls, told reporters that the state government has already directed him to "seal the village" besides carrying out RT-PCR test of all residents who live in Konnuru.

"The local police has already taken information of around 15 'influential' personalities of 15 villages who have organised such mammoth funeral procession of this horse," he said.

Gau rakshaks assault meat-seller, UP cops book victim for lockdown violation



Moradabad | Agencies

A Muslim man was allegedly assaulted by a group of men led by a person calling himself a 'gau rakshak' (cow vigilante).

The victim, identified as Mohammed Shakir, is in the business of transporting and selling meat.

The incident took place on Sunday afternoon in a village under the Katghar Police circle when Shakir was transporting meat. Based on a complaint lodged by the victim's brother, the police have

registered a case against the men who led the assault.

However, the police have also filed a counter case against Mohammad Shakir, under IPC sections relating to 'mischief by killing an animal', 'committing an act likely to spread infection', and 'violation of Covid lockdown guidelines'. Shakir had been arrested but was not jailed as the sections invoked against him are 'bailable'. He is currently recovering at home. The 'gau rakshak' Manoj Thakur, who led the assault has not been arrested as yet.

Data of 18cr Domino's India users out on Dark Web: Researcher

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After a hacker made 13TB data of nearly 18 crore orders of Domino's India with key details public on the Dark Web, cyber security researchers on Monday stressed on the need for organisations handling end-user data to invest more in cyber-security solutions and practices that will enhance their security posture.

Independent cyber security researcher Rajshekh Rajaharia first reported that Domino's India has been hit by a hacker again, after Alon Gal who is CTO of cyber security firm Hudson Rock, claimed in April that credit card details of nearly 10 lakh people who purchased online on Domino's Pizza India were allegedly being sold for over Rs 4 crore on the Dark Web.

According to Rajaharia, data of 18 crore orders from Domino's Pizza in India has now become public, that contains name, email, phone number and even the GPS location of the users.

According to him, the same person who earlier hacked financial services company MobiKwik has compromised Domino's



India. "The earlier hacker failed to receive ransom and sold the data to some unknown hacker, who has now posted the 13TB data of

Domino's India on the Dark Web," Rajaria told reporter. In an earlier statement, Jubilant

Foodworks that owns the master franchise for Domino's Pizza in India, told IANS that the company experienced an information security incident recently.

"No data pertaining to financial information of any person was accessed and the incident has not resulted in any operational or business impact," the spokesperson said.

"As a policy, we do not store financial details or credit card data of our customers, thus no such information has been compromised". According to Prakash Bell, Head of Customer Success and SE Lead, India and SAARC, Check Point Software Technologies, implementing technology solutions such as ZTNA, DLP, XDR and security posture management is key to ward off such incidents.

"Complementing these with employee education around data handling, vigilance, tight security controls, processes and audits would help creating the desired culture," Bell said in a statement.

There have been a string of hacking incidents involving Indian firms in the recent past, including Bigbasket, BuyUcoin, JusPay, Upstox and others.



SUNKEN TUGBOAT VARAPRADA LOCATED, SEARCH ON FOR VICTIMS

The development came two days after the ill-fated Barge Papaa-305 wreck was found in the vicinity of the Bombay High Fields, around 175 off Mumbai in high seas, where it had sunk late last Monday, large," he said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian Navy's specialised ship INS Makar has located the wreckage of the Tugboat Varaprada in the Arabian Sea where it had sunk last week during the Cyclone Tauktae fury, an official said here on Monday.

Divers are now going underwater to find out if any more persons are trapped in the tugboat during the devastating natural calamity.

The development came two days after the ill-fated Barge Papaa-305 wreck was found in the vicinity of the Bombay High Fields, around 175 off



Mumbai in high seas, where it had sunk late last Monday.

Late on Sunday, the IN announced that a total of 86 bodies have been

recovered from the Arabian Sea so far, including 70 from the two vessels that went under and 8 each which were washed ashore on Maharashtra and

Gujarat coasts.

There were 261 persons on board Papaa-305 and 13 others on the tugboat, an anchor-handling vessel which was towing the Barge GAL Constructor. Incidentally, all the 137 crew members on the Barge GAL Constructor were rescued in daring operations last Tuesday (May 18) after it was grounded near the Colaba Point. A total of 188 survivors - 186 from Papaa-305 and two from Tugboat Varaprada were picked up at sea during the massive IN-led Search and Rescue (SAR) operations which lasted for seven days, the first half being in extreme weather conditions.

"All 274 reported missing have been accounted for. Final confirmation, however, will be pending till the identification of all bodies are complete," the officials said.

The IN's teams of expert divers and specialist ship INS Makar located the wreck of Papaa-305 late on Saturday, followed by the location of the tugboat today, and a search is on to trace bodies of any others still feared missing.

Ex-Mumbai top cop granted relief from arrest till June 9

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Monday informed the Bombay High Court that it would not arrest former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh till June 9, provided he cooperates with the police in an atrocities case registered against him.

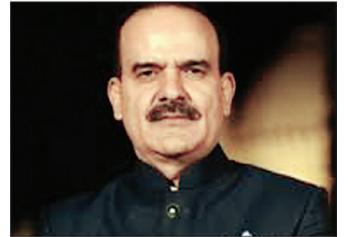
Singh, a 1988-batch IPS officer, is currently serving as the Comandant-General of the state Home Guards after he was transferred from the post of Mumbai Police chief last month.

On April 28, following a complaint filed by police inspector Bhimrao Ghadge, the Akola Police had registered a case under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989 and the Indian Penal Code against Singh.

Senior Counsel Darius Khambata, appearing for the Maharashtra government, told a vacation bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.R. Borkar that Singh would not be arrested till the next date of hearing on June 9.

Khambata argued that Singh cannot ride two horses at the same time by seeking relief from both the Supreme Court and the Bombay High Court in the same case.

Singh's lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani said that if interim protection is granted in the high court, his client would not press for relief in the apex court. However, complainant Ghadge's lawyer, Satish Talekar, opposed the



interim relief from arrest granted to Singh.

The court noted that the case dates back to 2016 and the FIR was filed after five years, and since the complainant waited for so long, nothing would happen if he waited for another two weeks. "He (Singh) was not arrested all these years. What purpose will it serve if he is arrested now," the court observed.

As per the FIR, Singh, who was the then Police Commissioner of Thane, had asked Ghadge not to chargesheet certain persons, but when he refused, he (Ghadge) was suspended and five FIRs were lodged against him. Last week, Singh had moved the SC alleging that he is being bounded with multiple cases lodged against him by the Maharashtra government as vendetta after he accused former state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of allegedly demanding a collection of Rs 100 crore from former cop Sachin Vaze.

Tauktae final toll in Maha 86, all bodies recovered from Arabian Sea

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Exactly a week after the devastating Cyclone Tauktae struck Maharashtra, a total of 86 bodies have been recovered from the Arabian Sea, including 70 from the two vessels that sank near Bombay High Fields, an official said here on Sunday.

Barge Papaa-305 and tugboat Varaprada sank in the Arabian Sea during the cyclone fury and a total of 86 crew members and oil workers died. While there were 261 persons on board Papaa-305, 13 others were on board Varaprada, an anchor-handling vessel. A total of 188 survivors - 186 from Papaa-305 and two from Varaprada -- were picked up at sea during the massive India Navy-led search and rescue (SAR) operations which lasted for seven days, the first half being in extreme weather



conditions.

In the past week, 70 bodies were recovered from the Arabian Sea by the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard. Besides, over the last couple of days, eight bodies have been recovered, after they were washed ashore on the Raigad coast of Maharashtra, while another eight were found from the Valsad coast in Gujarat.

"All 274 reported missing have been accounted for. Final confirmation, however, will be pending till the identification of all bodies are complete," the officials said.

The navy's teams of expert divers and specialist ship INS Makar located the wreck of Papaa-305 late on Saturday, and a search is still on for tracing the wreckage of the tugboat.

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW ARRESTED FOR KILLING 50-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Pune Police have arrested a 22-year-old woman for allegedly strangling her mother-in-law to death following a domestic dispute at their residence in Talegaon Dabhade near Pune. The woman later stuffed the body in a gunny bag and got rid of it with the help of her husband. Police have identified the deceased as Bebi Gautam Shinde (50) and have arrested her son Milind Gautam Shinde (29), her daughter-in-law Puja Milind Shinde (22). The two have been charged for murder and destruction of evidence in a case registered at Talegaon Dabhade police station, under Pimpri Chinchwad jurisdiction. A police officer said that a person staying in the neighbourhood reported to them early on Sunday about suspicious actions of the couple after noticing Puja and Milind moving a heavy gunny bag, the police launched a probe, footage from a nearby security camera showed the couple moving the gunny bag.

Mumbai Gets 3 Bids From Russia's Sputnik Covid Vaccine Makers

The RDIF's bids for Mumbai comes when Punjab and Delhi have said that private firms have refused their request for Covid vaccine supply.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Has received three bids for the supply of Russia's Sputnik V Covid vaccine, government sources have said. The city's civic body had earlier this month placed global tenders for one crore doses.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had placed the tenders on May 11. These were issued under India's latest nationwide COVID-19 inoculation policy, allowing state governments to procure Covid vaccine doses directly from producers. The deadline for submission of bids ends tomorrow. Of the three received till now, one was made directly by the

Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and the other two by its independent representatives, the sources said.

"The legal, technical, and financial aspects of the bids will be decided in two weeks, in consultation with the Maharashtra government after the bids close tomorrow," government sources informed. RDIF, or its representatives, are willing to transfer one crore vaccine doses in 60 days to BMC, they said.

The proposed import of Sputnik V, if it happens, will be independent of the manufacture of the vaccine which is being handled in India by Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's. Sputnik V was developed by the Moscow-based Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and

Microbiology and was registered on August 11, 2020, by the Russian Ministry of Health. It is cleared for use in India but it yet to get clearance from the World Health Organization. The next step in the bidding process for Mumbai involves a letter of interest to be sent to RDIF.

In all cases, the payment must be made to an escrow account of RDIF's, sources said.

Mumbai's success in receiving bids for Covid vaccine supply comes amid instances where Punjab and Delhi have revealed that the private manufacturers they approached had refused them, opting to deal only with the Central government.

MAHARASHTRA GOVT LIKELY TO EASE LOCKDOWN IN FOUR STAGES

Due to fears of a third wave in the state, restrictions will not be completely lifted, but there is scope for some relaxation.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the second wave of Covid-19 recedes, the Maharashtra government is preparing to ease the state-wide lockdown in a phased manner owing to the decline in Covid cases and positivity rate in the state.

Health minister Rajesh Tope indicated the same, saying, "Let's review the preparations. If all matters are positive, then only the chief minister and deputy chief minister, in consultation with the experts of the task force, can decide on the relaxation of the restrictions to some extent. Don't be under the illusion that restrictions will be completely removed."

It is learnt that planning to gradually lift the lockdown has begun and will be done by June 30. There is no clarity at this time as to when the easing will begin. Due to fears of a third wave in the state, restrictions will not be completely lifted, but there is scope to provide some relaxation.



In the first stage shops will be allowed to function from 7 am to 2 pm. While in second stage permission to open a few more shops related to daily requirements would be given. These shops will be allowed to open on alternate days. In the third stage Hotels, permit rooms, beer bars, liquor stores to open with restrictions. Hotels will not operate at full capacity, likely to start with a cap of 50 per cent and in the fourth stage Mumbai local, religious places including temples, district ban postponed.

Experts have hypothesised that a third wave of Covid cases is expected to hit in August-September 2021. The state will monitor a number of param-

eters to carry out the unlock if the caseload increases and the number of expected vaccinations are not done, then another lockdown is possible. The government will use three important criteria when deciding on a lockdown. It will be discussed in an upcoming cabinet meeting and with the task force. Only then will a decision be made.

Lockdown will be decided based on the following factors including Covid positivity rate falling to a single digit, ICU oxygen availability should be more than 60 per cent and Covid mortality rates across the state. Last week, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray had hinted at lifting the lockdown post June 1. However, the Shiv Sena supreme had said that people should not grow complacent and must continue to follow Covid-19 norms to keep the number of cases in check.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra on Sunday reported 26,672 new Covid cases and 594 deaths, taking the state's case tally to 55,79,897 and toll to 88,620. Out of the cumulative number of cases, 3,48,395 are active. As many as 29,177 new recoveries have pushed the total number of patients recovered to 5,14,027. The recovery rate is at 92.12 per cent while case fatality rate has now reached 1.59 per cent. The case positivity rate is recorded at 16.9 per cent.

Cyberbullies trolling 'Mahabharat' actor sent to 14-day JC

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Moving swiftly, a Mumbai Police team swooped on two cyberbullies based in Haryana and nabbed them for trolling and harassing 'Mahabharat' fame actor Aayush Shah and his sister Mausam Shah, officials said here on Monday.

Following a complaint by the Shah siblings to the VP Road Police Station, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Zone II) Rajendra Chavan, Senior Police Inspector Hemant Bawdhanekar and Police Inspector Avinash Mandale acted quickly.

Using tech-intel, they set up a team which managed to zero in on the duo - the Shahs' ex-employee Rohit Goyal and his partner Harshit D. Mittal - both based in Cheeka, Haryana, for allegedly abusing Mausam Shah on social media and attempting to extort money through blackmail.

A special team of officials comprising Police Sub-Inspector Abhijit Deshmukh, Dinesh Suryawanshi, Santosh More, Jitendra Salve, Maruti Kumbhari and Kumar Patharut

probed the matter diligently, and finally managed to track down the accused duo in Haryana last week. At one point, Goyal gave the slip to the police team searching for him in Haryana, but they went undercover and finally managed to nab him from his hometown. Shortly after their arrest, the two accused Goyal and Mittal were brought to Mumbai for further investigations, said the officials.

They were sent to police custody for six days by a Mumbai Court, and on Monday (May 24), further remanded to judicial custody for 14 days.

Aayush is an actor while Mausam is a publicity professional for several celebs and brands, and Goyal was in their employment which they terminated on grounds of non-performance.

Thereafter, Goyal allegedly started issuing threats and demanding large sums of money from the Shah siblings, and when they refused to oblige, they started harassing their friends, threatened them with death threats and demanded money from them also.

Pandemic's 2nd wave affects momentum of road construction, but unlikely to materially change trend: Crisil

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Last fiscal, the national highways sector thumbed a nose at Covid-19 and delivered a stellar performance, riding on higher project awards, record construction, and traffic that surpassed pre-pandemic levels once the lockdowns were lifted in the second half.

Though the second wave of infections has dampened this momentum, it may not have a material bearing on growth for the current fiscal, Crisil said in research report on Monday.

Lower National Highway (NH) awards of only 311 km in April 2021 are unlikely to deter the government from awarding more projects for the full fiscal as ramp-up typically occurs in the fourth quarter, the report added.

A decline in national highway construction to 853 km in April from the peak of 2,189 km in March may seem like a 61% nosedive. But this translates into a decent pace of 28 km per day, or 4x times faster than the April 2020 levels, despite endemic labour shortage.

Road engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractors also have learnings



from the first wave so scaling up can happen once the economy opens up again, just the way it did last fiscal, the report said.

The less-stringent, localised lockdowns this time around have had a softer impact on national highway traffic, which saw only a 15% decline in April, on-month. This was supported by the implementation of FASTag, which elimi-

nated toll leakages. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) awarded projects totaling 4,818 km last fiscal - a three-fiscal high - underscoring the government's sharp focus on the infrastructure sector. Favourable changes in the build-operate-transfer (BOT) and hybrid annuity model (HAM) agreements, and relaxation of bidder eligibility criteria indi-

cated a clear policy shift last fiscal to improve private-sector participation. The trend is expected to continue this fiscal as developers will be able to free up capital through stake sales, Crisil said.

Developers made up for lost time and construction at NHAI projects rose 5% on-year last fiscal. Given the acceleration in project awards, sharper focus on resolving land acquisition issues, and the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives to ease liquidity for road EPC players, the pace of construction should continue to increase steadily. Last fiscal, NHAI's HAM (hybrid annuity model) project auctions saw increased competition following relaxation of bidder eligibility criteria. Smaller regional players cornered 33% of the HAM projects awarded. Though their bids are not aggressive, financial closures and project execution would remain the key monitorables in the road ahead. Crisil said that the median rating for large players is A-, while that for small ones is BBB-.

HAM project developers saw an average delay of 3-4 months in achieving financial closure compared with the stipulated time. But

the 37% completed projects - awarded over fiscals 2016-18 - have been largely executed on time. About 55-60% of these were executed six months ahead of schedule on average, while the rest lagged by the same amount of time.

Land acquisition issues have persisted even before the pandemic. As many as 35-40% of the projects were granted the appointed date 16 months after the project award and a few were terminated before it because of land-related glitches. As many as 45-50% of under-construction projects that were awarded between fiscals 2016 and 2018 are delayed by 8-9 months on average, beyond their scheduled completion date (SCOD), largely because of de-scoping/delinking, and financing issues pertaining to a few developers.

A large chunk 66% of the projects awarded over fiscals 2019-2021 - are yet to commence construction awaiting financial closures and appointed dates. The under-construction projects face labour issues following the pandemic. The government's steps to extend milestones and SCODs ranging from 3-6 months provides them with the needed cushion.



DELHI SHUTS 400 VAX CENTRES FOR 18-44 GROUP AS STOCK DRIES UP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

At a time when vaccines are necessary to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, people between 18-44 age groups in Delhi will not be administered vaccines at any government-run centres on Monday as the administration claimed no stock left for youth.

Since the first week of May, the Delhi government had set up vaccination centres for 18-44 age groups and around 400 centres were opened at government-run schools across the capital, but they are closed now. However, vaccination drives for 45 and above age groups which were already operational at hospitals and other healthcare centres though have been extended with the idea of 'walk-in vaccination' at government-run schools.

Delhi has been raising alarms time and again regarding shortage of vaccines and knocking every possible door to get jobs for the citizens. Covaxin, which is manufactured by



Bharat Biotech, was out of stock for 18-44 age groups for the last two weeks and now Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII)

too have gone out of stock now. Over 300 vaccination centers to administer vaccines for 18-44 age groups remained shut on Monday as

no stock was left for this age group, however, walk-in vaccination drive for 45 and above ages groups was continued.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal repeated word vaccines three times, as SOS call for vaccines for Delhi. "Vaccinate, Vaccinate, Vaccinate," Kejriwal wrote on his Twitter handle in reply to a tweet by Jai Kotak, AVP at Kotak Mahindra Bank on Monday.

As per the Delhi government, a total of 64,240 people were vaccinated on Saturday, of which 44,676 received their first dose and 19,538 their second. Over 50 lakh doses of vaccines were administered in Delhi so far, and 11,51,356 people have been fully vaccinated after receiving both shots. "No one knows how many more Covid waves will come till then, how many more people will die. I request the Centre to ensure the delivery of the required number of vaccine doses to Delhi," Kejriwal had said on Sunday.

Over 500 black fungus cases in Delhi:

Hospitals short of drugs to fight the infection: Kejriwal

Kejriwal said that several government-run hospitals dedicated to Covid care are grappling with shortage of medicines for patients. These include Guru Teg Bahadur, Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash and Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty hospital.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid the second wave of the Covid pandemic, Delhi isn't just battling a shortage of vaccines, it is also grappling with a scarcity of drugs required to treat patients infected with the black fungus infection, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday. In the last few days, cases of black fungus have been diagnosed in large numbers and as of today more than 500 patients are being treated in over a dozen hospitals in the national capital. Kejriwal said that several government-run hospitals dedicated to Covid care are grappling with shortage of medicines for patients. These include Guru Teg Bahadur, Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash and Rajiv Gandhi

Super Specialty hospital. Kejriwal said the Delhi government did not receive medicines for black fungus on Sunday, even as the number of cases crossed 500. "We did not receive the medicine yesterday. So how can we treat the patients without the medicine? The injection is administered four to five times a day. If we are not given the injection, how can we treat patients?" asked the chief minister.

As of today Delhi needs around 2,000 injections per day for patients infected with black fungus, but the capital is being provided merely 400-500 injections, said Kejriwal.

"There is an extreme shortage of medicine and its production has to be increased. Since 4-5 injections need to be administered daily and there are around 500 patients, we need 2,000 injections every day but we are receiving only 400-500 injections," he added.

With lessons from 2nd wave of Covid, Delhi starts preparing for 3rd

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic continuing to decline in the last few weeks in the capital, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led Delhi government has started preparations for the next wave of Covid-19, which could require nearly 40,000 oxygen supported beds.

During the period April-May, when daily Covid cases were over 25,000 and the positivity rate was over 35 per cent, not only did the healthcare system of the capital almost collapse, but the Delhi government's Covid management system too was under total stress. To meet the challenges, the state administration had then deployed all its senior officials and Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was appointed as the nodal minister for Covid management.

Taking a lesson from the second wave, during which Delhi lacked a number of ICU beds with inadequate stock of oxygen resulting in several deaths in and outside the hospitals, the state administration seems geared up to ensure that the same situation is not repeated, if a third wave of the Covid pandemic hits the capital.

For this, the Kejriwal government has not only started augmenting the number of general and ICU beds, but is also working to ensure that Delhi does not grapple with a shortage of medical oxygen again. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday visited the oxygen depot in Mayapuri, which has been prepared to store the consignment of the oxygen cylinders received from China. He informed that around 6000 oxygen cylinders have been airlifted from China, out of which 4400

have been received and 1600 will be received within this week.

"These cylinders can be given to the individuals in need and if another wave emerges and the cases rise again then with these 6000 cylinders, the Delhi government can prepare 3000 oxygen beds, as two cylinders are needed on each oxygen bed," Kejriwal said.

The Chief Minister stated that for the country, this is the second wave but for Delhi this is the fourth wave, and this time, in the last week of April around 28,000 cases were recorded but now they have come down to 1500. The infection rate had also declined to 25 per cent. "It seems that this wave is subsiding but there has been no laxity in the efforts by the Delhi Government. We have already started preparing for the next, what is being called the third wave."

CASES AGAINST FARMERS IN HISAR TO BE WITHDRAWN

New Delhi: The cases filed against the farmers in Hisar on May 16 following their protest against the Centre's three farm laws will be withdrawn, it was decided in a meeting between the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha and the district administration after another large demonstration in the Haryana town on Monday. Meanwhile, one of the protesting farmers succumbed to a heart attack.

According to the SKM, the detailed discussion between the two sides saw the district administration seek apology for the police action on May 16, which came ahead of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's visit. Three decisions were taken in the meeting. Firstly, the police cases filed on May 16 against the protesters will be withdrawn; secondly, the administration will get the farmers' vehicles damaged by the police on May 16 repaired; and thirdly, a government job will be provided to an eligible kin of the deceased farmer, Ramchandra.

Centre to provide 30 ventilators, 20 oxygen concentrators for North MCD's hospitals

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation (North MCD) said on Monday that the Centre will provide 30 ventilators and 20 big oxygen concentrators for the hospitals being run by it.

There are three hospitals - Hindu Rao, the Rajan Babu Institute of Pulmonary Medicine and Tuberculosis and the Girdhari Lal Maternity hospital in Delhi which are operated by the North MCD.

Jai Prakash, Mayor of North MCD, said, "The Centre will provide 30 ventilators and 20 oxygen concentrators from PM Care Fund to three hospitals under the North civic agency. These ventilators and oxygen concentrators would help in strengthening the health infrastructure in the hospitals. These ventilators would also help us to fight against the third wave of Covid-19."

To review the Covid situation in the areas under the North civic body, the Mayor also convened a meeting with officials to take stock of facilities for treatment, cremation and sanitisation.

He said that officials have been directed to be more vigilant and ensure that bio medical waste is being collected reg-



ularly and sanitisation being done in residential areas regularly. He also directed the officials to ensure that people do not face problems at cremations and burial grounds. "North MCD is making efforts to provide all possible

facilities to the citizens under its jurisdiction. We are performing with limited resources but Delhi government is not doing as per requirement, although help is pouring in from all sectors public, private and social sector," Jai Prakash said.

Probing if Sushil's seized car linked to Neeraj Bawania gang: Police

A Delhi Police source said that the police has seized three vehicles, including a Mahindra Scorpio and a Honda City, from the stadium campus on May 4. All the vehicles are currently parked in Model Town police station.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Police is probing if one of the three vehicles, seized from the Chhatrasal Stadium following the brawl involving Olympian Sushil Kumar that left a

wrestler dead, is linked to the Neeraj Bawania gang.

A Delhi Police source said that the police has seized three vehicles, including a Mahindra Scorpio and a Honda City, from the stadium campus on May 4. All the vehicles are currently parked in Model Town police station. The source said that the police is investigating if Sushil Kumar had any links with the members of Bawania gang. Police is gathering the details of the Scorpio vehicle. The star wrestler was arrested by Delhi Police's Special Cell from Munda area on Sunday morning along with his aide Ajay Kumar, after being on run for over 18 days in several states following the death of 23-year old wrestler Sagar Dhankar of injuries sustained in the brawl.

Covid medicine hoarding: HC says Gambhir has done disservice, malpractice

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday directed the Drug Controller of Delhi to examine the procurement and distribution of FabiFlu by BJP MP Gautam Gambhir, and to take necessary action as per law.

A division bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said Gambhir has been a cricketer who played for India. "we are sure he had good intentions.... the way he has gone about it, he has actually done a disservice, unintentionally may be. This is not done." The bench took note that FabiFlu was in short supply at the time when the drug was being distributed by Gambhir.

The bench added that it is sure Gambhir had best intentions and he also started a charity and if he wanted to help maybe he could have provided funds. The bench added, is it a responsible behaviour to bulk purchase medi-



cines when you know there is a shortage? The High Court also took note of the AAP MLAs Preeti Tomar and Praveen Kumar's procurement of oxygen cylinders and directed an inquiry must be done by the drug authority. The court emphasised that the law must take its course. "Intentions may be lacking but, in that process, if they cross the line, law has to take its course. Even with best intention, they are malpractices", the court noted. The bench added that it has

narrowed down on three: Gambhir, Tomar and Kumar.

The court noted in Gambhir's case, FabiFlu left after distribution, were given to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). The court has sought report from Delhi's drug controller, detailing on the quantity of FabiFlu procured on the basis of a single prescription and then distributed to several patients/attendants. The court told the drug controller that a very clear case and it should find out against whom action is required to be taken. However, the court clarified that it has not directed that "any action be taken" against Gambhir or the two MLAs. The High Court was hearing a plea seeking registration of FIRs against political leaders involved in hoarding and illegally distributing Covid-19 medicines, which led to denial of these medicines to common people.

Delhi reports 1,550 fresh Covid-19 cases, lowest daily spike since March 27

Delhi recorded 1,550 new Covid-19 cases and 207 deaths in the past 24 hours, with the positivity rate slipping to 2.52 per cent.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi recorded 1,550 new Covid-19 cases and 207 deaths in the past 24 hours, with the positivity rate slipping to 2.52 per cent, data shared by the health department showed.

The infection count was below the 2,000-mark for the second consecutive day and the lowest since March 27 when 1,558 cases were reported. As per the latest health bulletin, these new

fatalities pushed the death toll due to Covid-19 in the national capital to 23,409.

A total of 61,506 tests, including 44,342 RT-PCR tests, were conducted in the last 24 hours, according to the health bulletin. Over 13.7 lakh patients have recovered from the virus till now and 4,375 patients were discharged in the last 24 hours itself. The number of active cases in Delhi currently stands at 24,578. The number of people under home isolation dipped to 13,806 while the number of containment zones dropped to 45,483, the bulletin said.

Meanwhile, lockdown in Delhi has been extended for another week, announced Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday.

Crackdown on liquor smugglers amid lockdown in Gurugram

Team Absolute | Gurugram

The lockdown seems to have given an opportunity to anti-social elements to resort to liquor smuggling in Gurugram.

Crackdown on such elements by the Gurugram police has led to the seizure of 2,074 bottles of Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL), 2,837 bottles of country-made liquor and 96 bottles of beer during the lockdown in 2021.

During the lockdown in 2020, the district police had recovered 51,652 bottles of IMFL, 49,710 bottles of country-made liquor and 15,393 bottles of beer.

Subhash Boken, spokesperson of Gurugram police, said that they have registered 380 criminal cases and arrested 389 persons involved in liquor smuggling in 2021, while in



2020, around 1,886 cases were filed and 1,941 persons were nabbed.

He informed that the police have set up 70 'nakas' (check-posts) besides forming patrolling parties for round-the-clock checking across the district. "Strict instructions have

been issued to all the concerned SHOs in the district to identify liquor smugglers/suppliers/bootleggers in their areas. The officers have been asked to take all possible legal action against all such persons, including under the relevant provi-

GURUGRAM POLICE CONSTABLE MOPS COVID VACCINATION CENTRE FLOOR

GURUGRAM | Agencies

A police constable, Vinod Kumar, who is also a frontline Covid warrior posted at a vaccination centre in Fazilpur village, has set an example while performing his duty during the Covid-19 crisis.

Like every day, Kumar reached the vaccination centre in Fazilpur village for duty on Sunday. He noticed that the centre was not clean so without wasting any time he started mopping the floor so that people do not hesitate to get their vaccination jobs.

Kumar's humanitarian gesture was appreciated by senior police officials and photos of the constable mopping the floor also went viral on social media platforms.

Several people saluted constable Vinod Kumar.

More than 200 police personnel have been deployed at 40 vaccination centres in Gurugram.

According to reports, a total of 300 police personnel have been infected with the virus, of which 100 have recovered and resumed their duties.



A few days ago, Inspector Satender Kumar, the Station House Officer (SHO) of the Sector-14 police station in Gurugram, had distributed face masks and sanitisers to poor labourers and workers while the SHO of the IMT Manesar police station, Inspector Yashwant Yadav, had served food and given face masks and sanitisers to needy labourers who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic and had no money to buy food.



VILLAGERS ATTACK MEDICAL TEAM DURING COVID-19 VACCINATION DRIVE

Two persons were later arrested in this connection, Additional Superintendent of Police Akash Bhuria told reporters.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Villagers in Ujjain district on Monday allegedly attacked a medical team when they tried to persuade residents to get vaccinated against COVID-19, police said.

Two persons were later arrested in this connection, Additional Superintendent of Police



Akash Bhuria told reporters. A video of the incident was also shared on

social media wherein the medical team members were seen fleeing after the ruckus created

by some villagers at Malikhedi village under Unhel tehsil.

Bhuria said the medical team had visited the village earlier also and locals were not ready to take the vaccine shots. When the health personnel reached the village again on Monday morning and tried to persuade the locals to get inoculated. When the health personnel reached the village again on Monday morning and tried to persuade the locals to get inoculated, some villagers allegedly attacked the husband of a woman panchayat office-bearer, who was part the medical team, he said.

Two persons were arrested and a case was registered under relevant provisions, the police said, adding that efforts were on to identify others involved in the incident.

Cong ups the ante against BJP in MP after by-poll win

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Congress has adopted an aggressive political strategy in Madhya Pradesh after its recent victory in the Damoh Assembly by-elections, with party leaders, including former Chief Minister Kamal Nath, intensifying their attacks on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) governments in the state and at the Centre.

In Damoh, the defeat of sitting Congress MLA Rahul Lodhi, who switched over to the Congress' Ajay Tandon came as a shot to the party. With the state hit hard by Covid, Congress leaders launched a blistering political attack on the BJP government for its failure to tackle the pandemic. Even the filing of a case against Congress MLA and former cabinet minister, Umang Singhar, for abetting a woman's suicide saw party leaders rally behind him and go on all-out offensive against the BJP.

Kamal Nath, who claimed that more than one lakh people had died in the state during March and April this

year due to the pandemic, also accused the BJP government of political vendetta by filing a case against Singhar, and said that he too has a CD against the BJP.

His aggressive stance has sent out a message to the workers at the ground level that they must raise their voice against the BJP government. With bypolls for three state Assembly and one Lok Sabha constituencies along with urban civic bodies and panchayats polls coming up ahead, Congress workers and the party as a whole have adopted an aggressive approach.

Political experts believe that the Congress has realised that it is competing with BJP's organisational machinery in the state. As the BJP organisation is steadily intensifying its preparation on the ground, grooming workers from the younger generation, the Congress has realised that the BJP can be fought only when there is enthusiasm among the Congress workers and leaders, they say. The Congress has been forced to change its overall outlook to match the BJP as an organisation, they claim.



OFFICERS AND STAFF OF PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT ON STRIKE AS COLLECTOR REMOVES KHANDWA OFFICER

"We strongly oppose the decision of the Khandwa collector to relieve Sharma from his post as he is not empowered to do so. The collector acted arbitrarily in the matter by encroaching on the powers of the Chief Minister."

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In a curious development, officers and employees of the Madhya Pradesh government's Public Relations Department went on an indefinite strike on Monday demanding suspension of Khandwa district collector who they alleged has "arbitrarily" removed the PRO of the district without having powers to do so.

The sudden development affected the dissemination of official news, sources claimed.

The dispute started after Khandwa collector Anay Dwivedi relieved the district's public relation officer (PRO) Brajendra Sharma of duties on May 22 following alleged complaints that he was not working properly. Later, Indore's divisional commissioner suspended Sharma on Sunday, relieved him of his duty, and attached him to the Department of Public Relations, Bhopal.

"We strongly oppose the decision of the Khandwa collector to relieve Sharma from his post as he is not empowered to do so. The collector acted arbitrarily in the matter by encroaching on the powers of the Chief Minister," Madhya Pradesh Jansampark Adhikari Singh said in a memorandum addressed to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who heads the department. The memorandum was

handed over to the Commissioner, Public Relations, Sudam P Khade.

"The association also wants the action taken against Sharma be rolled back and that Dwivedi is immediately suspended for encroaching on the powers of the chief minister," reads the memorandum.

All three unions of the public relation department's officers, employees and drivers went on an indefinite strike on the issue by disrupting the dissemination of government news for the media and the public.

According to sources in the Khandwa district administration, the collector had removed Sharma for alleged negligence in the duty which damaged the reputation of the state government.

Meanwhile, Dwivedi told media persons that action was taken against Sharma as per "administrative requirement". "Besides, the officer was not discharging his duties properly," the collector added.

Fingers raised over quality of oxygen used for treating Covid patients

"There is difference between oxygen for medical use and oxygen for industrial use. People who use it at home cannot differentiate between the two. Only manufacturers or suppliers can tell which is for medical use."

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Fingers have been raised over quality of oxygen and water used for oxygen supply to treat Covid patients. Other states too have raised the issue and considering to investigate the matter though doctors have also blamed overuse of

steroids, which causes black fungus. "There is difference between oxygen for medical use and oxygen for industrial use. People who use it at home cannot differentiate between the two. Only manufacturers or suppliers can tell which is for medical use. So, there are chances that people may have used the

used oxygen blindly at home," Sidhdhanta Hospital's Dr Subodh Varsheny said.

Dr ID Chaurasia, neurologist at Hamidia Hospital, said main thing is water, which should be distilled for supply of oxygen. "If potable water is used, it will cause fungal infection," he added.

Health Worker On Covid Duty Faces Conversion Probe

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A health worker in Madhya Pradesh is facing police investigation after she was seen in a video that purportedly showed her going door to door and asking people to pray to Jesus Christ to stay safe amid the COVID-19 pandemic. BJP MLA Rameshwar Sharma was among those who tweeted the video, alleging the health worker's motive was religious conversion.

In videos shared on social media, the health worker is seen visiting

homes at a village in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district. Some villagers alleged she is heard asking people to pray to Jesus Christ for protection from Covid and safe recovery, if infected.

A man is heard in the video confronting the health worker. "Why are you asking people to pray to Jesus Christ? Who sent you here? From which hospital are you? Why are you telling people that they will recover by praying to Jesus Christ?" said the man, who is recording the video.

The health worker, in a white coat,

is heard replying: "People are getting better by offering prayers to Jesus Christ."

Ratlam district tehsildar BS Thakur said they have got a complaint that the health worker under government contract was propagating Christianity while carrying out the "Kill Coronavirus" campaign at the village. Religious pamphlets were also found with her, Thakur said.

The tehsildar said a report will be sent to senior officers.

Tweeting the video, BJP MLA Rameshwar Sharma said, "Will the

coronavirus kill the conversion virus..." "This is not the time to propagate any religion. Doctors and medical professionals are engaged in selfless service to humanity. In such a situation, the woman is propagating a religion. This is condemnable," Sharma said.

Chief medical and health officer Dr Prabhakar Nanaware said they will send a report to the district collector, seeking to end the contract of the health worker. Local police inspector Dilip Rajoriya said a case will be filed after investigation.

Lockdown to be lifted phase-wise in district

Before starting the unlocking process, three zones Red, Orange and Green will be earmarked on the basis of the number of corona cases in different areas.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The lockdown will be lifted phase-wise in Bhopal, but, before starting the unlocking process, three zones Red, Orange and Green will be earmarked on the basis of the number of corona cases in different areas. Besides, micro-containment zones will be created, and, accordingly, stickers will be affixed to the houses of corona patients after unlocking. DME minister Vishwas Sarang said this while addressing a meeting at the police control room.

The minister said that, before June 1, entire exercise such as demarcation of zones and identification of micro-level containment zones will be carried out. Micro-planning will be done in the wards of Bhopal Municipal Corporation limits. There are sixteen such wards where monitoring will be done on a daily basis and a track of the number of cases will also be kept.

He added that, before the lockdown is lifted, a campaign would be launched to identify corona-infected patients and, over the next seven days, stickers would be put outside the houses of corona-positive people.

"Strictness will be increased outside the patients' houses and the areas will be sanitised regularly," said Sarang, adding that the police, Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) and district administration officials would take care of this exercise.

If Covid-positive patients do not follow Covid protocols, they will be shifted to hospitals and those who are living in small rooms will be shifted to Covid Care Centres, he added.

The city will be divided into three zones Red, Orange and Green and testing capacity will also be increased. The areas having more than 20 cases will be identified as Red Zones, while those having more than 10 cases will be called Orange Zones. If there are 5 to 10 patients, it will be marked as a Green Zone. If patients who are in home isolation come out of their houses, the police and administration should be informed by the neighbours on 1075.

Preparations for this have been done as the responsibility of monitoring corona patients is currently at the SDM level. Now, it will be changed to the ward, colony and home level, so that the infection can be prevented. Its grading will be done every week and, only after that, it will be decided in which areas exemption can be given from June 1.

Kamal Nath booked for 'spreading panic' with Covid remarks

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath has been booked for allegedly creating panic over the Covid-19 pandemic. An FIR has been registered against the Congress leader at the Crime Branch police station, Bhopal.

The case against Kamal Nath was registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by BJP leaders, including MLAs Vishwas Sarang and Rameshwar Sharma. Bhopal district president of the BJP, Sumeet Pachouri, was also among the complainants. Ramji Shrivastav, Bhopal Headquarter Superintendent of Police, said the complainants submitted two videos in a pen drive showing Kamal Nath allegedly spreading disinformation. The videos show the former chief minister addressing a press conference in Ujjain on Saturday where he said, "Corona, which has spread throughout the world, is being known as the Indian variant of the virus."



Such statements made by Kamal Nath, who is also the Leader of Opposition in the MP Assembly create confusion and defame the country internationally, said the complainants. They also accused Nath of disobeying WHO's guidelines, claiming that his actions amounted to sedition.

In addition, the complaint also said Kamal Nath hurled "false allegations" against the Madhya Pradesh government, accusing it of concealing the real number of Covid deaths in the state.

Kamal Nath has been booked under section 188 of the IPC (disobeying order duly promulgated by public servant) and section 54 of the National Disaster Management Act 2005 (raising false alarm as to a disaster or its severity, leading to panic). Earlier this week, the Government of India issued an advisory to social media platforms, asking them to remove all content with mention of the 'Indian strain' of Covid-19. The WHO has made it clear that any strain of the virus cannot be named after the country where it was first detected, said the advisory.

1ST COVID CENTRE FOR CHILDREN SET UP IN M

The Minister and his son Abhishek Bhargava have been actively involved in helping and serving the Covid patients and also launched an awareness campaign on the measures people need to follow to prevent the transmission of infection among children.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has set up the first Covid centre for children at Garhakota in Sagar district.

The 10-bed children ward was inaugurated by the Public Works Department Minister Gopal Bhargava. The Minister and his son



Abhishek Bhargava have been actively involved in helping and serving the Covid patients and also launched an awareness campaign on the measures people need to follow to prevent the transmission of infection among children.

The Minister said, "Children spread happiness in a family, their smile is our future."

Children's playfulness must always resonate in a family. We must remain aware and cautious from now on before the third wave of the pandemic."

He said the first Covid centre for children in the state is almost ready in Garhakota.

Arrangements are already being made for better treatment of the Covid-infected children here.

CORONA IS A CRISIS AGAINST HUMANITY, LET'S FACE IT TOGETHER: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that Corona is a crisis against humanity, everyone will have to face it unitedly. Together we must strive to achieve the goal of making the entire division Corona free by 31st May. Situation of Corona infection in the division is under control, but it should be borne in mind that even slight carelessness can prove to be dangerous. Chouhan was addressing the members of the district level, block level and village level Crisis Management Groups formed in the three districts of Narmadapuram division - Hoshangabad, Harda and Betul.

Chouhan said that it is satisfactory that now number of positive cases is declining, more people are recovering. The Chief Minister appealed to exercise awareness in the urban and rural areas of the division. Kill Corona campaign must continue constantly. Also, people should be constantly be made aware of the importance of masks, sanitization and social distancing. Members of the Crisis Management Group at the village level have an important role to play in Corona control at the village level and they are actually working as Corona warriors.

In his address through weblink, Chief Minister said that micro containment areas should be created where positive cases are rising. The system of home isolation should be perfect for infected persons. If adequate space is not available at home, they should be admitted to the Covid Care Centers. All Covid Care Centers should have good treatment facilities. Availability of health facilities in all district hospitals, community health centers and primary health centers should be adequate. Children's wards should also be ready everywhere. He said that special attention is required in the border areas of Betul district, adjacent to Maharashtra. People coming from



outside in the districts should be examined intensively. The Chief Minister also appreciated the work being done by Crisis Management Group members for prevention of Corona infection. He told the members of the Crisis Management Group working at the villages to strictly follow the rules and regulations to prevent Corona there. He said that Corona Protocol must be strictly followed in the next seven days to overcome the infection.

Chouhan said that Corona testing should continue. Constant contact should be maintained with people. At the same time, house-

to-house surveys should also continue under the Kill-Corona campaign. He said that there should be no negligence in distribution of medical kits in cases of cold and fever. Apart from this, members of the Crisis Management Group should also help the eligible people in availing the benefits of the schemes. No eligible beneficiary should be deprived of free ration. The Chief Minister said in his address that we must be alert towards the possibility of a third wave of Corona. Also keep children safe from it. He said that health services should be expanded in the districts, so that there is proper management of health services when needed in future. Apart from this, the benefit of vaccination should be extended to as many people as possible, while removing the misconceptions in this regard. Proper arrangements are also being made by the government for the treatment of black fungus.

Chouhan said that the state government has launched the Mukhya Mantri Covid-19 Bal Kalyan Yojana and the Mukhya Mantri Covid-19 Vishesh Anugrah Yojana. It should be publicized as much as possible and assistance should be provided from the schemes. The government is also working on providing Rs one lakh to the families of those who died of Corona.



BHAVINI PUROHIT, DHAVAL DAVE PLAN TO WED THIS YEAR-END



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Bhavini Purohit, who is engaged to Mumbai-based-businessman Dhaval Dave, says they plan to tie the knot at the end of the year. The actress adds they had plans to get married last year things got delayed owing to the pandemic. "We have been postponing our marriage for a year now, but finally, I hope things get better and the pandemic situation improves. In that case, we may look at getting married by the end of this year," she says. Meanwhile, the actress is making sure she meets her fiancé even during lockdown. "I am glad that we live nearby and we are able to meet regularly. We don't go out, either he comes to my house or I go over to his place and we hang out throughout the day. I'm thankful to him that he is making our engagement phase beautiful and memorable even during the pandemic," she says.

On the work front, the actress, who has been part of shows such as "Saath Nibhana Saathiya" and "Jana Na Dil Se Door", says that she wants to get back to work soon.

"It's been a while since I did my last show. It has been a long break for me. I didn't plan to take such a long break but it happened and now I don't want to extend it further. My fiancé, who has his own business, wants to join showbiz. I wish if we get cast opposite each other," she says.

RAGHAV JUJAL: APPEAL TO FRIENDS, CRITICS TO ADOPT VILLAGES THAT NEED HELP

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Dancer, choreographer and actor Raghav Jujal has been working hard to help people especially in rural Uttarakhand amid the ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Opening up on what inspired him to take up this initiative, Raghav told IANS: "My acquaintances and I have been receiving distress calls from rural Uttarakhand for oxygen and life saving equipment for Covid-19 positive patients. We connected with some government officers to understand the situation and we were told that help from all quarters at this time is crucial. The government has also assured us to support us in Uttarakhand in all possible manner." The 29-year-old Dehradun boy expressed gratitude to

those who have stood beside him in this noble cause. "My friends, acquaintances, followers, our volunteers, friends from the TV and film industry, government officials, and donors from around the world -- I'm amazed and overwhelmed to see how everyone is standing with us in this initiative," he said.

Quizzed on what Raghav and his team have done till now to help the common people in the state, he informed: "We were able to send some D Type cylinders to help PauriGarhwal with the help of officers and field volunteers. This achievement motivated my team, and now we have many more oxygen cylinders, medicines and beds coming for hill districts to save lives of needy

villagers in far flung hills of Himalayas.

"At present over 130 volunteers, mostly from different parts of the country, are helping us to help patients find ambulances, oxygen beds, oxygen cylinders, ICU beds, blood donors, etc. People are also working on ground to manage logistics in more than 10 districts."

Opening up on the problems he is facing in this initiative, the

dancer said: "Availability of amenities, equipment, medicines, supplies etc

in remote villages was an issue as was the non-availability of skilled technicians to operate oxygen cylinders and concentrators. Managing the logistics between different cities and villages in hills in an emergency situation is another challenge."

Raghav also appeals for more fund to carry out his task.

"So far we have exhausted all our aids and are in the process of raising more funds. We've started a fundraising campaign and need more people who can donate to us as we aim to cover approx 5000 villages." Working with Covid-19 affected people can pose a health risk for him, too.

Asked about the same, Raghav informed: "My family and I have recovered from Covid recently. We couldn't get the time to rest as the second wave of Covid made its way into remote villages. We are following all the protocols like double mask, PPE kit for volunteers working on the ground and sanitisation of medical supply boxes etc."

Quizzed if critics call his gesture a publicity stunt, what would he say in reply? Raghav smiled: "Critics will always have an opinion about anything and everything. I will do whatever it takes to help the people of Uttarakhand. I appeal to my friends, followers and critics to come together and create teams to adopt villages that need help. Any village in the country can be adopted, all we have to do is extend helping hands urgently."

SIDDHANT CHATURVEDI DRAWS COMPARISON WITH JOEY TRIBBIANI

Team Absolute | Mumbai



When it comes to food, Bollywood actor Siddhant Chaturvedi seems to bear a likeness with Matt LeBlanc's "Friends" character Joey Tribbiani.

Siddhant has posted two pictures on Instagram. The first picture is a still from "Friends" featuring Joey, and the Bollywood actor gives a quirky spin to the popular dialogue "Joey doesn't share food" from the sitcom.

He changed it to: "Siddy doesn't share food." Underneath, Siddhant shared a selfie that had: "(Also, Siddy sees food on Friend's plate)."

"Still be my friend?" Siddhant captioned the image, which currently over 40.5K likes on the photo-sharing website. The "Friends" reunion special will premiere on May 27. It was originally set to film in February 2020 but the unit was only able to start in April.

The special stars the original cast of Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry, and David Schwimmer with several guest cameos.

Film Festival To Celebrate World Cultures Via Cinema

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Culture Cinema 2021, a unique concept-based film festival that aims at celebrating world cultures via cinema is in the offing for Indian and global audiences, this July. The Festival is being supported by UNESCO New Delhi Office, CIFEJ, and JLF Litfest, among others.

Praveen Nagda, Festival Director, Culture Cinema 2021 informs, "We have received over a hundred entries already from 27 countries so far and the deadlines of submission have still a month to go. Every country has a unique culture and there are story-

telling opportunities for filmmakers."

Eric Falt, Director, UNESCO New Delhi Office said, "Congratulations for curating this special platform aiming at showcasing the diverse cultural expressions and creative ingenuity."

"We identified 21 unique categories including History, Music, Festivals, Art & Artisans, Architectural Heritage, Education, Social Practices, Travel & Tourism, Literature, Mythology, Traditional Sports, Biodiversity, Cultural Reforms, Attire & Ornaments, Food, Traditional Medicine, Cultural Taboos, Tribal Community, Diaspora, Battles and Philosophy for this festival. Our theme for this festival is

Prosperity, Development and Peaceful Co-Existence via Cinema," explains Nagda.

Culture Cinema Film Festival is expected to be simultaneously organized in a hybrid fashion involving leading academic institutions, cinema chains, and other cultural hotspots in the country ensuring a larger spread. The festival will have its Jury mix of festival directors, artists, authors, academicians, and cultural experts. This 5-day event in July will feature intellectual exchanges, filmmaking workshops, panel discussions, and open forums with global participation.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

There is a whole gamut of skincare products available right now online and in stores that might give our skin the glow, shine, anti-ageing, smoothness that we all crave. But, what happens when we stop using these products? Many of us have an endless list of skin concerns like pigmentation, others about dryness or oiliness, or pimples, or allergies. However, as you grow older, one of the best ways to take care of your skin is to focus on what you eat, rather than what you apply. Many of us face challenges in deciding what to eat to keep our skin young and healthy, defining a healthy diet, and understanding the role of diet in ageing. Currently, the buzzing topic is finding ways to maintain healthy skin and delay skin ageing. According to a study, there is a close association between sugar and some food processing methods (such as grilling, frying, baking, etc) with skin ageing, and their mechanisms are related to skin advanced glycation end products.

Skin health is closely linked to nutrition, which is required for all biological processes in the skin, from youth to ageing or disease. Nutritional deficiencies and eating habits can both repair and cause damage to the skin.

There are several simple things we don't follow regularly that can cause skin ageing: Not drinking enough water, deficiency of vitamin, proteins, trace elements like zinc, copper, iron, iodine, etc.

Water deficiency in the body can lead to tissue dehydration and functional issues (such as ageing and inflammation). Skin is no exception, and the state of moisture in the body is reflected in the appearance of the skin on the lips and limbs.

IS THERE A LINK BETWEEN NUTRITION AND SKIN AGEING?

It is advisable to at least drink more than two litres of water every day. Almonds are a source of 15 nutrients such as vitamin E, magnesium, protein, copper, zinc, iodine, etc. A new research suggests that there may be more than one reason to add almonds to your daily skin care routine. The study found that eating almonds daily in place of typical calorie-matched snacks improved measures of both wrinkle severity and skin pigmentation in postmenopausal women. Almonds are known to be a rich source of antioxidant vitamin E and deliver essential fatty acids and polyphenols, which make them a great addition to one's daily diet for improved skin health. Lack of Vitamin C can also cause skin disorders. They are available in abundance in oranges, lemons, strawberries and guavas. All of the body's tissue cells are constantly renewed, and only a sufficient protein intake can keep normal tissue renewal and repair going. The skin is no exception, with a 28-day skin renewal cycle being the norm. Apart from almonds that are rich in protein, you could also consume other protein-rich foods such as yoghurt (dahi), lentils and oats for healthier skin.

Enjoy tasty snacks with summer treats

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As season changes and we await monsoon, renowned chef Harpal Singh from Tata Sky Cooking brings some recipes that are easy-to-cook and deliciously filling.

Karele Ke Chips

Ingredients: Bitter gourd, turmeric powder, sugar, lemon, gram flour (besan), rice flour, oil, salt to taste, red chilli powder, carom seeds (ajwain), chaat masala, water as required.

Method: Wash bitter gourd and pat dry. Take out skin with the help of small knife and cut



into slices. Take a mixing bowl; add sliced bitter gourds, turmeric, sugar, lemon juice mix it well until sugar get melts. Keep it aside for 15-20min. After 15-20 min. wash them in running water. Take another bowl add slice washed bitter gourd, gram flour, rice flour, salt, red chilli powder, and carom seeds and mix well. Add water as required and mix well, so that all slices are coated well with masala mixture. Meanwhile heat oil in a deep pan/kadai for deep frying. Once it's hot, add bitter gourd slices to the oil in batches. Fry on medium low flame on both sides till the bitter gourds are crispy. Remove them from oil and drain on absorbent paper. Sprinkle chat masala on top. Serve with sweet chilli sauce or tamarind chutney



Instant Bread Cheese Vada

Ingredients: Bread Slice, curd, rice flour, cumin seeds, ginger, green chilly, coriander, baking soda, curry leaves, cheese cube, paneer cube, ginger, green chilly, coriander, salt to taste, oil.

Method: Cut the side of each bread, tear off them into small pieces and add them to mixing bowl. Add Curd, Rice flour, Cumin seeds, Ginger, Green chilli, Coriander, soda, curry leaves and salt. Mix it well and make dough. Keep it aside. Take another mixing bowl Add Cheese, Paneer, Ginger, Green chilli and Coriander. Mash it altogether. Add salt and mix well. Take bread mixer and make a ball, flatten them gently, put paneer and cheese

mix in middle and roll it around. Heat oil in pan and fry them in slow heat. When vadas are half done take out from oil keep it aside for a while and fry them again in medium flame till golden brown. Remove them on tissue paper. Serve with tomato ketchup and green chutney

Methi Anda Pakoda

Ingredients: Palak, methi Leaves, coriander Leaves, eggs, paneer, turmeric powder, red chilli, ajwain, besan, salt to taste, water as rey, oil.

Method: Take palak and cut them properly and keep it in a bowl.

Add methi leaves in the bowl, add coriander leaves in it. Now grate boiled eggs, paneer in the bowl. Add turmeric powder, red chili powder and ajwain in the bowl. Add besan in the bowl and salt to taste and mix them well. Then add water to make a binding mixture. Heat oil in a pan, add small dollops of binding mixture in the pan to deep fry it. Take them out of the pan when it turns light brown. Sprinkle chat masala and red chili powder on the pakodas and serve it with green chutney.





THE WEEKND, BTS, BAD BUNNY WIN BIG AT BILLBOARD MUSIC AWARDS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Canadian singer-songwriter The Weeknd won big at the Billboard Music Awards that took place at Los Angeles, Sunday night. He won a total of 10 awards from 16 nominations. While the Korean boy band sensation BTS won all categories nominated for and Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny also won multiple awards.

Rapper Drake was named the artist of the decade. He accepted the award with his 3-year-old son. Singer-songwriter Pink received the Icon Award and was joined onstage by her 9-year-old daughter.

The Weeknd was awarded as the top male artist, top radio songs artist, top R&B artist and top R&B male artist. His album, "After Hours" was named top R&B album and his single "Blinding Lights" as titled as the top radio song and top R&B song. He also performed his song "Save Your Tears" in the parking lot, later in the show.

Bad Bunny was named Top Latin artist and also won top Latin male artist, top Latin song and top Latin album. BTS won multiple awards including top duo/group, top song sales artist and top social artist.

Country music singer



Gabby

Barrett bagged three awards -- Top Country Female Artist, Top Collaboration and Top Country Song. She gave an emotional speech while accepting the award.

"I'm gonna try to keep together, as best I can," she said according to etonline.com. She laughed as she held back tears. "I wasn't supposed to mess up my makeup, so I gotta play it cool now. This means so much to me. I've been performing for 10 years, really hard...we've worked so hard to get here," she added.

Singer Machine Gun Kelly won the Top Rock Artist awards. According to hollywoodreporter.com, he said:

"First big stage I've been invited to accept an award on. I just want to say to the dreamers who are going to be tested by reality he way I was. Suspend logic and invite magic. If five years or 10 years or 12 years would have been too long waiting for this moment, then I wouldn't be having this moment. So just show the universe that it can't take a dream from you."

Singer Morgan Wallen also won three awards, for top country album, top country artist and top country male artists.

The other winners included Taylor Swift, who won the top female artist and top Billboard 200 artist. Kanye West won the top gospel artist award and top gospel song. Lady Gaga was named the top dance/electronic artist and also bagged the award for top dance/electronic album, Carrie Underwood won the award for top Christian album.

Priyanka and Nick Jonas set mercury soaring at BBMA

Los Angeles | Agencies

Celebrity couple Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas took the style quotient high with their red carpet look at the Billboard Music Awards on Sunday night in Los Angeles.

Priyanka was one of the presenters at the Billboard Music Awards while her husband performed at the music awards and hosted the ceremony. According to Page Six, Nick is recovering from a cracked rib injury and the actress stepped in to help her husband and agreed to be a presenter at BBMAs.

The actress took to Instagram to post pictures from the red carpet. Priyanka wore a thigh-high slit gown with a plunging neckline and a custom Dolce Gabbana ensemble. She teamed the golden ensemble with a thick belt and Bulgari jewels. Nick donned a designer number from Fendi.

Priyanka shared a picture of Nick hugging her at the awards. She wrote: "Husband appreciation post. Not even a cracked rib can stop this force of nature. So proud of you baby. With everything you do! Your work ethic, your pursuit of excel-

lence! You inspire me everyday! Crushed it today! I love you so much!"



ALLY BROOKE WORKING ON SOLO ALBUM

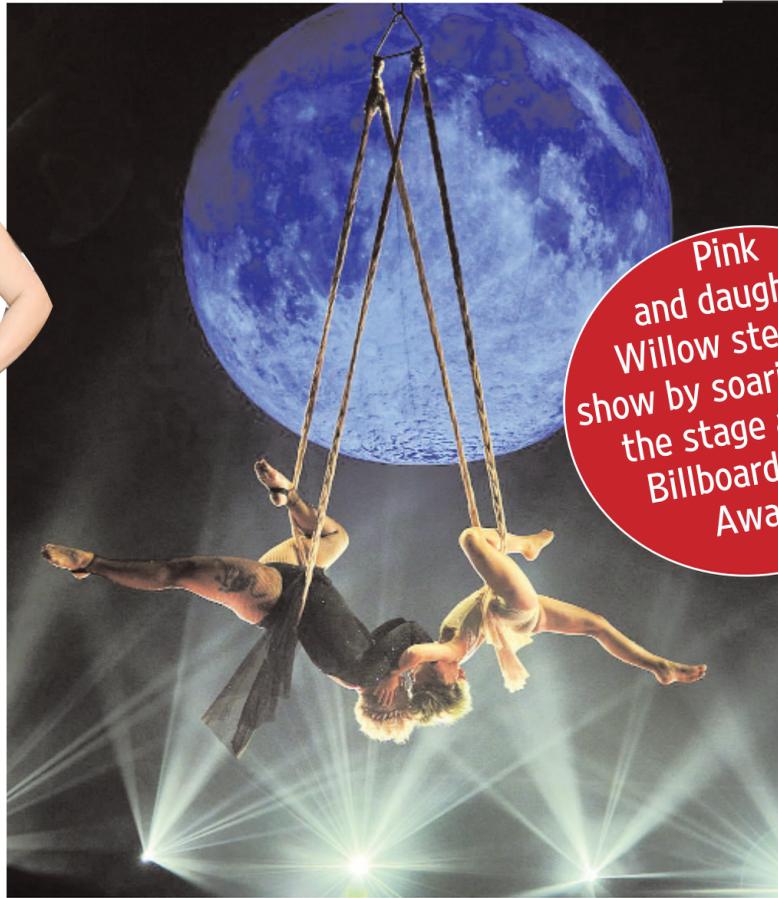
Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Ally Brooke, a former member of the girl group Fifth Harmony, says she has secretly been working on her first solo album. The singer is busy recording songs and says it will be "a huge piece of her heart".

"So I am working on my very first solo album, which is pretty unbelievable for me. It's pretty special and I've been working in Miami. I was just there. And in Puerto Rico. I've kind of been keeping it a secret ... It's going to be amazing. There's so many different producers and artists (that I'm working with). It's definitely going to be a huge piece of my heart. I know the fans are just going to explode. It's been an amazing journey for me," she said, according to contactmusic.com.

Meanwhile, the singer is also working on her new podcast called "The Ally Brooke Show". She had tried to start the venture three years back too but had failed.

"It's funny, I tried to start a podcast three years ago and it just didn't work out. I wasn't ready so it was always there. But for me it was about the timing and now the timing couldn't be more perfect. This is whilst I'm recording in the studio, having my own podcast to share with my fans and to bring in a new audience. It's going to be a really good platform to just be vulnerable," she said on "On With Mario Lopez".



Pink and daughter Willow steal the show by soaring above the stage at 2021 Billboard Music Awards

Los Angeles | Agencies

Before receiving the Icon Award at the 2021 Billboard Music Awards, legendary Pink stole the show with an acrobatic performance of Cover Me In Sunshine alongside her nine-year-old daughter Willow Sage.

The 41-year-old singer released Cover Me In Sunshine in mid-February, a duet with her daughter Willow, that kicked off a medley of her most iconic songs.

The performance featured mother and daughter showing off their acrobatic skills as they clung to rope swings and twirled high above the ground while delivering a memorable performance before she was presented with the Icon Award from one of the singer's first crushes, Jon Bon Jovi.

Her amazing talents were just one of many stunning performances put on during the star-studded show.

The singer completed her look with small gold hoop earrings as she performed the song with her daughter, while twirling about in the dual rope swings in an impressive acrobatic performance.

The performance even earned a rave review from a celebrity fan, Game of Thrones star Sophie Turner, who shared a stunned snap of herself on her Instagram story, adding, "Pink and her daughter OMG OMGOMG so beautiful."

Madonna highlights 'brave new world' in latest post

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Madonna has shared a set of pictures on social media about a brave new world on Monday. Madonna posted three pictures on Instagram, where she holds a placard that reads: "Clean and Sanitized for your city." In one, she is also seen holding a drink in one hand. She looks gorgeous in an all-black ensemble with matching beret and cat-eye reading glasses.

The first image has a caption that reads: "Brave," with earth and drink emoji. The second photo read: "New", while the third has the word "World" captioning it. In January, Madonna reportedly visited five countries in three weeks amidst the pandemic. The 62-year-old flew from Los Angeles to London with her backing dancer and boyfriend Ahlamalik Williams.



EMMA STONE'S REVEALS HER BABY DAUGHTER'S NAME

Los Angeles | Agencies

Emma Stone's baby daughter's name has reportedly been revealed as Louise Jean McCary. According to TMZ, who have obtained a 'copy of the birth certificate', the star, 32, chose the name as a sweet tribute to her grandmother, who is called Jean Louise.

Emma welcomed her first child with husband Dave McCary in March after the couple tied the knot in 2020. The publication claims that Emma, whose full name Emily Jean 'Emma' Stone, now sweetly shares the same middle name as her daughter. MailOnline has contacted Emma's representatives for comment. Emma first met husband Dave, a comedian, writer and segment director for Saturday Night Live, on the sketch comedy series in 2017. It was at the show's offices at 30 Rock that Dave romantically proposed to her in 2019 and they later married in 2020. The couple welcomed their first child, a baby daughter, on March 20, which was confirmed by TMZ at the time.



Karol G



EDITOR'S SPECS

B16172 is curable

Two doses of either Pfizer and AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine are highly effective against the B16172 variant, first identified in India, a new study has found.

THE PFIZER VACCINE WAS FOUND TO BE 88 PER CENT EFFECTIVE AT STOPPING SYMPTOMATIC DISEASE FROM THE INDIAN VARIANT TWO WEEKS AFTER THE SECOND DOSE, COMPARED WITH 93 PER CENT EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST THE UK VARIANT.

The vaccines were also found to give a similar level of protection against symptomatic disease from the UK variant (B117), the BBC reported on Sunday. The study, led by Public Health England (PHE), showed that three weeks after the first dose, both vaccines provided only 33 per cent protection against the Indian variant, while it offered 50 per cent effectiveness against the UK variant. The Covid jabs by Pfizer and AstraZeneca are likely to be even more effective at preventing hospital admission and deaths, the researchers said. For the study, a total of 12,675 sequenced cases were included between April 5 and May 16. Of these, B117 was detected from 11,621 cases and B16172 from 1,054. The Pfizer vaccine was found to be 88 per cent effective at stopping symptomatic disease from the Indian variant two weeks after the second dose, compared with 93 per cent effectiveness against the UK variant. On the other hand, the AstraZeneca jab was 60 per cent effective against the Indian variant, compared with 66 per cent against the UK variant, the report said. The difference in effectiveness between the vaccines after two doses might be explained by the fact that rollout of second doses of AstraZeneca was later than for the Pfizer vaccine, which was approved first. Other data shows it takes longer to reach maximum effectiveness with the AstraZeneca vaccine, PHE said. The study looked at data from all age groups from April 5, to cover the period since the Indian variant emerged. There is not enough data to estimate how effective the vaccine is against severe outcomes for the Indian variant, PHE said. There was higher confidence in the data from the first vaccine dose than that from the second as "there are bigger numbers that have been vaccinated with one dose", Jamie Lopez Bernal, consultant medical epidemiologist at PHE and the study's lead author, was quoted as saying.

Further, an impartial analysis will reveal that the generalists' bureaucrats, not the professional doctors manage every sector connected with providing health care facilities in the country. In such a scenario everything becomes expensive and a source of corruption.

India, which is known as pharmacy of the developing nations, is famous for its counterfeit medicines also. Added to this is the fact that the people who manage Drug Pricing are not professionally qualified. This further leads to seeping corruption and inflating prices, which might be 400-500 per cent of the actual production cost. Additionally generic drugs are not encouraged in the country, so ultimately a patient may have to shell out a bigger price for a product which might have cost a few rupees to manufacture.

The mushrooming of private speciality and multi-speciality hospitals across the country has also led to treatment getting costlier, as these hospitals are guided more by the profits than providing welfare or cure.

Way forward To provide universal medical aid to every citizen of the country at the lowest cost we'll have to restructure the whole medical system of the country. First, we'll have to ensure that medical education is in government's hand not with private institutes. Secondly, after becoming a certified doctor, through statutory guidelines every doctor should be made to work at a primary health-care centre, which will make him more aware of the people's troubles and also make him more empathic to his patients.

Thirdly, drug pricing should be through a fair and transparent mechanism and should be focussed at providing the drug at the least cost to the patients and to generate not unhealthy but reasonable profits for the manufacturer. Fourthly, there should be strict laws against pharmaceutical companies approaching individual doctors at hospitals to help promote their products. Lastly and most importantly, the government should ensure that the management and administration of hospitals is in government's hands and not the private sector, so as to ensure providing cost-effective medical facilities to every citizen of the country.

Overall, we may not be able to come out of this vicious cycle of corruption and nepotism, till the time we are able to give the reigns of managing the country's healthcare system in the hands of the professionals instead of the bureaucrats.

COUNTRY'S MEDICAL SYSTEM NEEDS A REVAMP

Asad Mirza

During the continuing Covid pandemic, one fraternity, which has been eulogised for its dedication and services in India, is the medical fraternity. Till date as per the Indian Medical association (IMA), 1017 doctors have died during the current pandemic since last year. The actual numbers may be higher as the doctors association only keeps a record of doctors registered with it. India has more than 12 lakh practicing doctors.

Though every Indian is appreciative of the doctors and para-medical staff for their commitment to their profession and their unparalleled services to the needy, yet the overall medical system in the country seems to have collapsed and this forces us to ponder and analyse the reasons for this and its plausible answers.

India's Health Budget It may not be wrong to say that since independence though India's defence budget has grown at an annual average rate of 9 per cent, with India being the third largest military spender in the world in 2019, its spending on health sector has been coming down.

It is a fact that the government's spending on health sector in India has been stuck at around 1% of GDP for close to 15 years. In 2004, the Government of India made a commitment to raise public spending on health to at least 2-3 per cent of GDP over the next five years. That did not happen. A similar commitment was reiterated in the 2017 National Health Policy, which commits to increasing public spending on health to 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2025. Till now, we have not seen signs of any significant increase in health spending by the government.

The allocation for health in the Rs 20-lakh-crore (\$260 billion) stimulus package announced by the central government last year on May 12, amounts to only 0.008 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The package in reality incentivises the private health sector, whose contribution has been negligible during the pandemic. It is reported that private hospitals, handled less than 10 per cent of the critical load of Covid-19 patients, besides charging an exorbitant price for treating Covid-19 patients.

Since Independence, though the successive governments built a robust system of a pri-



mary health centre in big villages and densely populated localities, supplemented with a District Hospital in every district of the country. However, over the years this system has been led to rot and collapse, due to the pressure from the business lobbies, which made entry into the healthcare system of the country by 1990. Basic infrastructure in the form of primary health care included maternal and child health care and family welfare services. Specialised health services were provided through government hospitals in the urban areas.

Though since 1951 the number of doctors in India has increased nine times. Yet, due to the population growth the average number of doctors per ten thousand population has increased only by three times.

In addition, India has fared poorly in its universal health coverage (UHC). This is the barometer by which every developed or developing country is judged as to how professionally, emphatically and proactively the respective governments provide medical care to its citizens. UHC is critical to ensure that all, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, such as women, daily labourers, homeless and migrants are cared for and attended to medically at the least or negligible cost. The UN has included achievement of UHC by 2030 in its Sustainable Development Goals and proclaimed December 12 as the International Universal Health Coverage Day. The Planning Commission in 2010, guided

by the high-level expert group on UHC for India, envisioned UHC as a means to ensure that all people and communities could access preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services of assured quality. However, we can't say with confidence that India has been able to achieve any parameters of the UHC. What ails our medical system? Maybe, the current scenario of the poor medical system in the country has arisen due to the crass commercialisation of the healthcare sector in India, from education to management.

First, medical education was made expensive and then the corruption seeped in. This assured seats at the medical colleges for the undergraduate courses and post-graduate courses being allotted to people with deep pockets through the discretionary management quota of the private medical institutes, which mushroomed throughout the country.

Though the medical student or future doctors seemed committed professionally to the ethics and professional standards of their profession, but in reality they too had to recoup the investment, once they became active professionally.

Secondly, the corporate hospitals, which lured doctors at big salaries, further muddied the waters. They were governed mostly with strict corporate policies of generating more business for the management, which was guided only by the profit generation of his enterprise.

Maritime partnerships are key to promoting national interest

BINAY KUMAR SINGH

During the Raisina Dialogue, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, in articulating his description of the 'India Way', said that India is now "more of a decider or a shaper rather than an abstainer". This is a welcome change in India's approach to the region and the world. If India hopes to contribute to shaping the future, it will need to look outwards. This implies shedding archaic baggage of past decades, along with the affliction of being myopically inward looking. Assuming greater roles and responsibilities regionally and globally should form a vital element of the approach alluded to by the Minister.

It is in this context that India's continued unwillingness to join broad, issue-based, multilateral security constructs may need a review. One of these important multilateral groupings is the Combined Maritime Forces or CMF that operate extensively in India's backyard. The CMF website articulates that the multinational maritime partnership "exists to uphold the International Rules-based Order". This is a concept that India's leadership too has been seized of in recent years. Moreover, it is not an alliance but rather a 'partnership'. Why then the reluctance to join? The CMF is an agglomeration of about 34 countries engaged in myriad security tasks in the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. Areas that are of critical and of direct interest to India. It has representation from countries spanning the entire globe. East and Southeast Asian representation includes Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, and Singapore. Europe finds representation through Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey. Interestingly, all these players are from beyond the region, but have still invested in such a partnership, driven by their individual and collective national interests. Of course, regional players like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Seychelles and UAE are



also part of the construct. Then there is Pakistan, which has been part of the CMF for well over a decade and has commanded two of the three Task Forces under the CMF on multiple occasions. In fact, the Pakistan Navy is currently in Command of Combined Task Force 151. Everyone seems to be playing, except India.

If India is to be a 'shaper' and 'decider' on the global stage, it needs to first be more proactive and engaged at the regional stage. Structures such as the CMF have the potential to accrue multiple strategic and operational benefits. For instance, being a part of the construct, Pakistan has a ready platform to promote its own narrative, build professional expertise, gain access to valuable operational information (if not intelligence) and, in essence, punch above its weight. Notably, it is able to play the game with practically no opponent, for instance, to challenge its version of events. From a geo-strategic perspective, the Indian Ocean is progressively becoming the primary arena for global competition and volatility. Threats like terrorism, drugs and gun-running, piracy, etc., all compete for attention. Then there is inherent land-based volatility in the region spilling into the seas like in Somalia, Yemen, and more recent-

ly in the Persian Gulf. On top of all these, great-power competition in its latest avatar is also being played out in India's backyard. As USA and China jostle for influence, other players are either hopping on to one bandwagon or hedging their bets. A complex mosaic indeed, and a game requiring keen skill, and more importantly a fresh approach. It is increasingly apparent that 'more of the same' will not do, nor will rigid approaches to dynamic issues foment advantages.

From an operational perspective, the Indian Navy's INS Suvarna undertook an operation off the coast of Kerala recently, seizing over 300 kg of narcotics. A few days earlier, a French Naval Ship FS Guepratte had also carried out a similar operation in the Arabian Sea to seize over 600 kg of narcotics. Two players, one evident goal, but both playing separately. Could they not play in collaboration? Can the whole not be more than the sum of its parts? Will joining an issue-based, non-binding construct such as the CMF not accrue tangible operational benefits for India? As India's defence budget continues to be under stress, harnessing partnerships across the region could be beneficial. From a regional and policy perspective, Prime Minister Modi has provided a vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region -- SAGAR. This alludes to cooperation and is collaborative in its essence. As players of all hues engage in pursuit of common goals in the region, India remains somewhat of an outlier. If India is to truly don the mantle of being a 'Preferred Security Partner', as envisaged by the political leadership, it may be time to think and act differently. It may be time to identify convergences with constructs like the CMF and, indeed, fast-track policy changes that promote India's interests through every possible avenue, including participation in multilateral constructs such as the CMF towards shaping and deciding the direction of the game.

(Binay Kumar Singh is an author and columnist. He can be reached at Twitter: @BinayBharat. The views expressed are personal)

AIMING FOR ZERO LEPROSY

Thirty years ago this month, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted a resolution to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem. Today, as the 74th WHA gets under way, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination Yohei Sasakawa is urging countries not to overlook leprosy amid the global coronavirus pandemic and aim for zero leprosy. The resolution adopted at the 44th World Health Assembly in 1991 called for the elimination of leprosy as a public health problem at the global level by the year 2000. "Elimination" was defined as reaching a prevalence rate of the disease of less than 1 case per 10,000 population. This was achieved globally by the end of 2000 and almost all countries have since replicated that success at the national level. Leprosy is not yet a disease of the past, however. Each year, around 200,000 new cases are reported and there are still endemic areas and scattered hot spots of leprosy in many countries. Some 3-4 million people are thought to be living with visible impairments or deformities due to leprosy, while stigma and discrimination towards those with the disease persist. In April, the fight against leprosy entered a new phase with the launch by the WHO of "Towards Zero Leprosy: Global Leprosy (Hansen's disease) Strategy for 2021-2030". The targets include zero leprosy patients in 120 countries and a 70 per cent decrease in new cases detected globally by 2030. Yohei Sasakawa, who has visited over 100 countries since first being appointed Goodwill Ambassador in 2001, welcomes the new strategy and believes it will accelerate momentum towards a leprosy-free world. But he cautioned: "These are ambitious targets, so commitments from national governments will be required if they are to be achieved. I realize these are challenging times, but we mustn't allow leprosy to be overlooked amid COVID-19."



Responsibility in honouring the Gaza ceasefire

Jonathan Zadka

As the hostilities from Gaza have halted, we enter a very delicate and sensitive period in hope that the terrorist organisations in the coastal enclave will indeed honour the ceasefire, and stop the indiscriminate rocket attack against Israel's civil population.

On Thursday night, Israel's Security Cabinet unanimously accepted the recommendation of all of the relevant security officials, the IDF Chief-of-Staff and the head of the ISA, as well as of the heads of the Mossad and the National Security Council, to accept the Egyptian initiative for a mutual ceasefire without pre-conditions. The security officials have briefed the Israeli Cabinet Ministers on Israel's significant achievements in the operation to date, some of which are unprecedented.

During operation "Guardian of the Walls", Israel was able to restore deterrence and bring about cease of hostility (quiet) quickly after the Palestinians provoked the current round of fighting. The ceasefire entered into effect on Friday night, and since, no hostilities have been recorded. However, the actual reality on the ground will determine the future and sustainability of this arrangement.

Hamas is embedded deeply in civilian areas and chose to target civilians while hiding behind civilians using them as human



shields. Despite Hamas' blatant disregard for international law or its citizen's wellbeing, Israel did everything feasible in order to prevent, or at least minimize, harm to the

Palestinian civilian population, often at the cost of operational advantage. In doing so, Israel employs precautions that exceed the requirements of international law, as well as

the practices commonly employed by advanced militaries of other like-minded states. Fighting an enemy that deliberately abuses the Law of Armed Conflict in the most cynical way, raises grave challenges for Israeli soldiers. Nevertheless, Israeli commanders strictly apply international law, including the principle of proportionality, in every military action. One must not ignore the question of who put Gazan civilians in danger in the first place. Hamas pays no price for its war crimes against its own civilians and, indeed, often it is Israel that is wrongfully blamed. This situation provides an incentive to Hamas to continue with its heinous practices.

Make no mistake, the moral responsibility for this deterioration, and for those harmed on both sides, falls entirely on Hamas and the terrorist organizations in Gaza. The rocket fire and terrorist activities against Israeli civilians must be unequivocally condemned by the international community, while recognizing Israel's right to protect its citizens, and working with the Palestinian Authority to immediately stop the incitement and violence.

Hopefully this will be the last cycle of violence initiated by the terrorist organizations from Gaza as their efforts should be directed at providing a better environment for the people of Gaza. For now, we pray for peace and security in our region.

(Zadka is the Consul General of Israel to South India. All views expressed are personal.)

SENSEX ENDS OVER 100 POINTS UP AMID VOLATILITY

The BSE SENSEX closed at 50,651.90, higher by 111.42 points or 0.22 per cent from its previous close of 50,540.48. It opened at 50,727.28 and touched an intra-day high of 50,857.59 and a low of 50,465.90 points. While the Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange settled at 15,197.70, higher by 22.40 points or 0.15 per cent from its previous close.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian stock market closed in the green on Monday with the BSE SENSEX closing 111 points higher.

Healthy buying was witnessed in the banking and oil and gas stocks. Selling in metal and telecom stocks capped the gains on the indices. The trading session, however, was volatile amid mixed global cues.

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its previous close of 50,540.48. It opened at 50,727.28 and touched an intra-day high of 50,857.59 and a low of 50,465.90 points. The Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange settled at 15,197.70, higher by 22.40 points or 0.15 per cent from its previous close.

The top gainers on the SENSEX were State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro and Axis Bank, while the major losers were Titan Company, IndusInd Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra.

Listed developers' sales share increases amid pandemic

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The overall housing sales share of the top eight listed realty players has surged amid the pandemic.

As per latest Anarock data, out of the total sales of around 93,140 units in the first nine months of FY2021 across the top seven cities, the top eight listed players' share stood at 22 per cent while non-listed leading players' share was 18 per cent. Non-branded developers accounted for a 60 per cent share. Contrast, of the total 2.03 lakh units sold in top seven cities in FY2017, the share of these top eight listed players was the lowest at about 6 per cent while that of non-listed leading players stood at 11 per cent and others (non-branded) had a whopping 83 per cent share.

The increased share of these top eight listed players over the years provides a clear roadmap of home buyers' evolving preferences.



The top eight listed developers considered are Brigade Enterprises, Godrej Properties, Kolte-Patil, Mahindra Lifespaces, Oberoi Realty, Prestige Estates, Puravankara, and Sobha. The top listed players together sold as much as 21.23 million square feet area in the first three quarters of financial year 2021 despite the first wave of COVID-19, rising by 2 per cent

against the corresponding period in FY2020, when 20.88 million square feet were sold. Among the listed players, Godrej Properties sold the maximum in terms of area (around 6.64 million square feet) in this period, followed by Bengaluru-based Prestige Estates with around 5.04 million square feet space. Anuj Puri, Chairman of Anarock

Property Consultants said: "After the roll-out of structural policies including RERA and GST, organized and branded players' dominance has risen exponentially. Homebuyer demand has tilted towards branded products. Both listed and leading developers have been catering to this new demand with projects for the affordable and mid-income segments, rather than playing only to the luxury homes gallery." This demand-supply equilibrium has helped keep sales momentum going during the pandemic, when housing demand rose significantly, he said. "The top eight listed players' sales share increased to 22 per cent from April to December 2020 - a major increase from 6 per cent in FY 2017. Even non-listed leading developers have ramped up their share from 11 per cent in FY 2017 to 18 per cent now. It is a major and ongoing realignment in residential real estate demand and supply," Puri said.

Remote job searches soared to 966% in April: Report

New Delhi | Agencies

As a majority of Indians are working from home, searches for 'remote work' skyrocketed to 966 per cent in April 2021, from the same period last year, according to data from job site Indeed.

The data revealed that searches for remote work were higher across age groups - 60-64, 15-19 and 40-44 at 13 per cent each, while the searches in the age groups 35-39 and 20-24 were 12 per cent each.

The data also revealed that Bengaluru topped the chart for remote job searches with 16 per cent followed by Delhi (11 per cent), Mumbai (8 per cent), Hyderabad (6 per cent) and Pune (7 per cent).

This burgeoning demand for remote jobs is backed by the fact that geographical boundaries are blurring while employers hire and the job seekers scout for opportunities.



"The Covid-19 pandemic has fast tracked the adoption of technology across functions in India and has set in motion the largest work from home experiment of our generation. Our data has reflected the same showing a consistent rise in searches for remote jobs," said Sashi Kumar,

Managing Director, Indeed India, in a statement on Monday.

The pandemic has defined the significance of skills as the top priority for hiring as opposed to location of the job seeker, the data showed. It is expected that employers would increase work-from-home options,

embracing hybrid work as the future of work. With the increasing need for technical integration across functions and sectors, job roles that require technical expertise to ensure seamless working have been the most in demand. The data also revealed that technical support specialist (25 per cent) emerged as one of the most searched remote jobs followed by data entry clerk (22 per cent), IT recruiter (16 per cent), content writer (16 per cent) and back end developer (15 per cent). "As businesses transitioned digitally, it has become a norm for employees and companies to work from anywhere and this change enabled by technology will see more and more companies turning to hybrid work in the future. We believe that going forward, recruiters will focus on role and skills based hiring, thus blurring geographical boundaries," Kumar said.

AAKASH LAUNCHES JEE-350 QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTS FOR JEE ASPIRANTS

New Delhi: Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), in association with Airtel DTH has launched a short term course for JEE aspirants named JEE 350 to mentor students from Class XIIth Pass for the upcoming JEE 2021 preparations. The classes will start from May 24, 2021 from 11:00am to 2:00pm on Aakash EduTV Channel no. 467, available on Airtel DTH. The course is designed with a robust model keeping in mind the objective to train learners to be able to give their best during the JEE 2021 by providing rich content material to enhance their learning experience during the 21-day customised course. Commenting on the launch of JEE 350 Course on Aakash EduTV, Abhishek Maheshwari, CEO, AESL, said, "The new JEE 350 course is highly favourable for aspirants as it will focus on essential concepts and will address 350 specific queries which are crucial to score better during their various attempts."

CMFRI'S INNOVATIVE TECH ENSURES BUMPER HARVEST OF GREEN MUSSEL

Kochi | Agencies

Experimental farming on a commercial scale with participation of local fish farmers, for the first time in Kerala, by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) at Moothakunnam near here has yielded a bumper harvest of green mussel.

The attempt has shown that innovative farming technology Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA), which combines appropriate proportions of fish, seaweeds and filter feeding bivalves to create balanced systems for environmental and economic stability, is economically feasible and well-suited to Kerala's ecosystem, as per CMFRI experts. The CMFRI started the venture in December last year as part of its research initiative for developing a sustainable

cage fish farming model suitable to Kerala's ecosystem. In the first harvest among the three crops of the integrated farming, around one tonne of green mussel was yielded from 150 strings hung around as many as four fish cages. Individual mussel grew to the size of 72 grams which is a successful growth rate in mussel farming. A scientific team led by CMFRI's Principal Scientist, Shoji Joseph, also observed that the fishes inside the cage attained better growth and seaweed being cultured around the cage also showed healthy status with fast growth rate. The fishes will be harvested by the end of the next month.

Joseph said that apart from enhanced income through diversified crops from a particular area during the same time period, the IMTA helps maintain environmental sustainability.

GO FIRST CARRIES OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS FOR NGOS



New Delhi: GO FIRST (formerly known as GoAir) ferried oxygen concentrators in collaboration with NGO - the Rotary Club of Ahmedabad and provided its valuable contribution in the selfless efforts to provide the much needed medical support to the efforts of Rotary Club. The consignment landed at Patna airport and the delivery was taken by NGO - the Rotary Club of Patliputra. Speaking on the initiative, Kaushik Khona, CEO, GO FIRST, said: "Every small step helps in contributing to the nation's fight against this unprecedented pandemic." GO FIRST was amongst the first Domestic Airline in transporting COVID vaccines in India. Recently, the company also announced its drive to vaccinate all its employees and bear the cost of the same."

SBI SHARES SURGE POST ROBUST Q4 EARNINGS

Mumbai: Shares of State Bank of India (SBI) rose on Monday after the bank reported a strong performance in the January-March quarter. Around 11.30 a.m., shares of the state-run bank on the BSE were at Rs 411.85, higher by Rs 10.75 or 2.68 per cent from its previous close. On Friday, the bank reported a rise of 80.15 per cent in its net profit for the Q4FY21 on a year-on-year basis to Rs 6,451 crore. Sequentially, the net profit has increased by 24.14 per cent. Besides, YoY Q4FY21 net interest income increased by 18.89 per cent to Rs 27,067 crore from Rs 22,767 crore reported for Q4FY20. In terms of fiscal year, the bank's FY21 net profit rose by 40.88 per cent to Rs 20,410 crore from Rs 14,488 crore in FY20.

FUEL PRICES RISE PAUSED AGAIN, RATE STABLE ON MONDAY

New Delhi: The oil marketing companies (OMC) kept petrol and diesel prices unchanged on Monday across the four metros. Accordingly, in the national capital, diesel price remains at Rs 84.07 per litre while petrol at 93.21 per litre. Similarly, in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, diesel continues to be priced at Sunday's level of Rs 91.30, Rs 88.87 and Rs 86.91 per litre respectively, and petrol at Rs 99.49, Rs 94.86 and Rs 93.27 per litre, respectively. With crude once again touching \$67 a barrel after the lows of \$64 last week, oil companies want to wait or pause in between before revising fuel prices.



Covid decline pushes equities higher, energy stocks climb

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India's benchmark equity indices ended mildly higher after a volatile trade session on Monday.

The indices opened higher but soon sold off in the first hour of trade.

However, healthy buying in power, realty, oil and gas, and capital goods kept pushing the market higher.

Globally, stocks struggled for momentum as investors awaited key US inflation readings for guidance on monetary policy, despite news of China's clampdown on mining and trading of cryptocurrencies.

The S&P BSE SENSEX closed the day's trade at 50,651.90, higher by 111.42 points, or 0.22 per cent, from its previous close.

Similarly, the Nifty50 of the National Stock Exchange ended the trade session at 15,197.70, up 22.40 points,

or 0.15 per cent, from its previous close. "Nifty has closed mildly higher on May 24, forming a doji after a rise, suggesting indecision at higher levels even as the Nifty approached past resistance levels," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities. "Large caps are finding it difficult to rise as a group while the broader market still keeps doing well. 15,256-15,108 is the band for the Nifty for the near term." Siddhartha Khemka, Head, Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said: "Even though it was muted for most part of the day, sustained buying interest was seen at every small declines." "Market sentiments were positive as fresh cases continued to be below 3L mark for almost a week now and earnings season has been healthy so far."

Landomus takes ad route to request PM for \$500 billion investment

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A relatively unknown US based company Landomus Group has announced a Build India programme under which it would like to invest \$500 Billion in Equity as the first phase of the \$2 Trillion investment.

This would be into the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) and Non-NIP projects listed by the Government of India under the India Investment Grid for "Invest India" initiative.

Landomus announced this through a newspaper advertisement addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Eyebrows are being raised as to why ads are put out for investments into NIP addressed to PM Modi when there are well laid out channels for foreign and domestic investors.

Landomus said Government of India, under its Invest India initiative, has created India Investment Grid (IIG) which outlines the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) and Non-NIP projects, which it aims to complete by 2025, with

a vision to provide quality lifestyle to its citizens, make India a global destination and reach the target of \$ 5 Trillion economy. "Due to the Covid Pandemic and the resulting loss of lives and livelihood, it is the need of the hour to invest in NIP and Non-NIP projects to boost the economy and generate jobs", it said.

Build India initiative by Landomus Realty Ventures, aims to invest \$500 Billion in Equity as the first phase of investment out of \$2 Trillion and complete the NIP and Non-NIP projects through its group of investors and developers. "Build India also aims to provide covid health care to the citizens of India to create a covid free and a healthy India", Landomus led by Pradeep Kumar Satyaprakash said.

In the advertisement addressed to PM Modi, Landomus said it aims to assist the Government in its endeavour to rebuild India. "Landomus Group requests you to provide us an opportunity to contribute towards your vision of a New India", the ad said. The website of Landomus Realty Ventures Inc lists a

New Jersey address. The website has no other details of its businesses, network or financials.

The Chairman and CEO is Pradeep Kumar Satyaprakash and directors are Mamatha HN, Yashas Pradeep Kumar, Rakshith Gangadhar and Gunashree Pradeep Kumar. The Indian entity is called Landomus Realty Ventures Private Limited incorporated on 17 July 2015. It is classified as Non-govt company and is registered at Registrar of Companies, Bangalore. Its authorized share capital is Rs 1,000,000 and its paid up capital is Rs 100,000. It is involved in Real estate activities with own or leased property. [This class includes buying, selling, renting and operating of self-owned or leased real estate such as apartment building and dwellings, non-residential buildings, developing and subdividing real estate into lots etc. Also included are development and sale of land and cemetery lots, operating of apartment hotels and residential mobile home sites. (Development on own account involving construction is classified in class 4520).

Peak margin levy will lead to export of business to overseas markets

ANMI has written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), expressing its opinion that there is a great disconnect between what is being collected from clients and what needs to be collected vis-a-vis the attendant risks arising in intraday trades. ANMI, however, reiterates that they are not against collection of intraday margin levied on clients nor the levy of full margin on the Clearing member irrespective of the nature of the trade.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI) has urged regulatory authorities to reconsider the proposed 100 per cent levy on day trade peak margins as the margin is 300 per cent of

what should have been the actual levy. ANMI has written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), expressing its opinion that there is a great disconnect between what is being collected from clients and what needs to be collected vis-a-vis the attendant risks arising in intraday trades. ANMI, however, reiterates that they are not against collection of intraday margin levied on clients nor the levy of full margin on the Clearing member irrespective of the nature of the trade. Sharing its data with the regulator, ANMI pointed out that the rate of overnight margins, levied on intraday trades are almost 3.33 times more than what is warranted based on the risks of the trade.

In the current margin structure, the current levy of Peak margins is actually 300 per cent of the margin which should have been actually levied," said ANMI spokesperson.

"The levy of margin being a high multiple on intraday trades is also causing effects elsewhere. Also, nowhere in the world, clients are required to pay upfront peak margins. Already open interest in Nifty is more in Singapore compared to India though it is a product based on Indian stocks. Indian markets are already at a disadvantage compared to SGX in terms of margins, time of trading, transaction cost and taxation. Any further unwarranted restrictions will result in export of business from India to overseas markets.

According to ANMI, the spike in peak margin will bring change in market behaviour by shifting from future to option buying and a shift in the mind-set of people gravitating more towards options trading and moving away from Stock / Index Futures and Stock Options. They also pointed out that higher margins would also imply prolonged carry forward of loss making trades giving a

false sense of security. Due to the shift, hedging opportunities have seen a dip due to lower volumes in capital market and commodity markets have been greatly impacted.

ANMI's concern over the peak margin issues rises as the deadline for the increase of current margin of 50 per cent to 75 per cent from June 1, 2021 is closing in. Between December 2020 and February 2021, traders were supposed to maintain at least 25 per cent of the peak margin. This margin was raised to 50 per cent between March 2021 and May 2021 and is proposed to be raised to 75 per cent between June 2021 and August 2021 and finally to 100 per cent from September 1st onwards.

ANMI hopes that the regulating authorities will consider our suggestions and bring the peak margin back within the band of 25 per cent to 33.33 per cent from the current rate of 50 per cent.



JUVENTUS, MILAN SEAL CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SPOTS

Rome | Agencies

The race for the Champions League in Serie A came to an end on Sunday, as Juventus joined AC Milan to move into the prestigious competition, knocking out Napoli.

Inter Milan and Atalanta had secured Champions League spots before the match day, with Milan, Napoli, and Juventus vying for the last two tickets. The trio was locked together going into the final round, as Napoli were level with Milan on 76 points, one point ahead of Juventus, Xinhua reports.

Juventus needed to beat Bologna in the final battle and hope either Milan or Napoli fail to wrap up all three points.

Juventus were 3-0 up in the first half at Dall'Ara stadium, and Alvaro Morata bagged his second after the break, Riccardo Orsolini scored a consolation goal for the home side.

AC Milan also pocketed the three points they needed by winning away to Atalanta 2-0 with a pair of



penalties from Franck Kessie, but Napoli only snatched one point after a 1-1 draw with Hellas Verona.

As a result, Milan, Atalanta, and Juventus rank from second to fourth respectively, while Napoli is placed fifth.

Newly-crowned Inter finished their 2020-21 season in style, crushing Udinese 5-1, with five different players on the scoresheet.

Also on Sunday, Sassuolo beat Lazio 2-0, Spezia shared the spoils with Roma at 2-2, Torino drew with

Benevento 1-1.

Liverpool and Chelsea confirmed their qualification for the last two places in next season's Champions League after a dramatic last day in the Premier League.

Sadio Mane scored a goal in each half as Liverpool breezed past Crystal Palace 2-0 to finish the season in third place, Xinhua reports.

Liverpool's win lifted them above Chelsea, who will return to the Champions League no matter what happens in next weekend's final



against Manchester City, despite a 2-1 defeat to Aston Villa.

Goals from Bertrand Traore after 43 minutes and Anwar El Ghazi's 52nd-minute penalty put Villa 2-0 up before Ben Chilwell pulled a goal back for Chelsea, who had Cesar Azpilicueta sent off in the last minute of the match.

Chelsea's defeat opened the door for Leicester City to finish above them and claim the last Champions League spot, but Leicester suffered a 4-2 defeat at home to Tottenham.

Anger in Japan over 'sacrifices' needed to host Olympics

Tokyo | Agencies

International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach and vice-president John Coates were the target of social media anger in Japan on Monday over their insistence that the rearranged Tokyo Games should take place amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Coates on Friday had said "absolutely yes" that the Games should go on from July 23 even if host city Tokyo remained in a state of emergency.

And Bach's comments reportedly made to a meeting of the international hockey federation (FIH) that "some sacrifices" were needed were also not readily accepted by many in Japan, whose population is firmly against the Games taking place according to recent polls, reports DPA. The IOC on Monday said Bach was not referring to sacrifices from the Japanese population but rather "everyone in the Olympic community".



This was needed to keep the sporting aspect of a toned-down Games alive so "the athletes can fulfil their Olympic dreams," Bach was quoted by the IOC.

Local organisers insist the Games can go ahead safely despite Japan fighting a fourth wave of the pandemic and Tokyo being continually placed in states of emergency -- the latest extending to the end of this month.

Foreign fans will not be permitted to attend the Games, which were delayed from last year, while the numbers attending from fed-

erations, sponsors and media have been cut.

Late last month, the Tokyo Olympic Games organising committee had said it had prepared for the possibility of holding the event without spectators.

"If the situation is expected to cause problems for the medical system, in order to put the highest priority on safety and security, there may come a time when we have to decide to go ahead with no spectators," Seiko Hashimoto, the organising committee president, had said in April.

Martins's work ethic will come in handy for India: FC Goa coach

Team Absolute | Goa

Midfielder Glan Martins's work ethic will help India football team during 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers in Doha, said FC Goa coach Juan Ferrando.

The 26-year-old Martins made the India squad for three FIFA World Cup Qualifiers on the back of a creditable performance for FC Goa in AFC Champions League Group Stage matches in Goa last month.

FC Goa drew three games against top Asian teams such as Qatar's Al Rayyan and UAE's Al Wahda, while losing two by narrow margins.

Martins played a key role in midfield. "Since Glan joined FC Goa in January, he has been working very hard. He has been very involved in everything the team does -- both in training sessions and in games. He has shown himself as a player who is willing to learn, improve and help the team achieve its goals.

"I think the most outstanding thing about Glan is his involvement in daily work and in understanding the game. He makes good choices



and involves the teammates playing around him. Glan reads the game well and most importantly, enjoys himself on the pitch," Ferrando told indiansuperleague.com.

"In both the 2020-21 ISL and the AFC Champions League, the whole team has progressed as a group and each of the players on an

individual level. That's what it's all about. I hope that Glan continues progressing in FC Goa and in national team. Regular game time usually improves a player's performance with each passing game," added Ferrando. The Sunil Chhetri-led India will play Qatar on June 3, Bangladesh on June 7 and Afghanistan on June 15.

London | Agencies

Canadian Denis Shapovalov has pulled out of the French Open with a shoulder injury.

The 14th-ranked Canadian, 22, had recently hit form on the European clay. Shapovalov pushed 13-time French Open champion Rafael Nadal all the way in the third round in Rome, holding two match points, and he backed that up by reaching the final of the Geneva Open on Saturday.

But, after losing to Casper Ruud, Shapovalov underwent tests on a sore shoulder and has decided not to play in the year's second grand slam, which starts on Sunday, DPA reports. Shapovalov tweeted: "I'm saddened to share that after consulting with my medical team I've made the difficult decision to withdraw from @rolandgarros."



Unfortunately my shoulder has been bothering me and while medical tests look good, it is for the best to rest. See you in 2022, Roland-Garros."

Shapovalov has played in the main draw at Roland Garros three times, with his best performances coming in 2018 and 2020, when he reached the second round.

NAGAL TO FACE MACORCA IN 1ST ROUND



Paris: India's ace tennis player Sumit Nagal will face Roberto Macorca of Italy in the first round of French Open qualifiers on Tuesday. Nagal, ranked 142 currently, will face Macorca (ranked 191) for the first time. The Indian has won two and lost five matches on the ATP Tour this season. He lost in the first round of the Australian Open this year after qualifying for the second round of the US Open in 2020.

Aussie batsman Hodge asks BCCI to 'locate' IPL dues

Sydney | Agencies

Former Australia batsman Brad Hodge took to twitter to bring to the Indian cricket board's notice unpaid dues for his services at Kochi Tuskers Kerala (KTK) in the Indian Premier League's (IPL) 2011 season.

"Players are still owed 35% of their money earned from ten years ago from the @IPL representing Kochi tuskers. Any chance @BCCI could locate that money?," wrote Hodge on his twitter handle while reacting to a report from former England international Isabelle Westbury on India women cricketers not getting their prize money from last year's T20 World Cup. The right-handed Hodge played

14 matches for KTK, scoring 285 runs at an average of 35.63.

KTK franchise was terminated by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) after only one season in the IPL and could not participate from the 2012 season since the owners could not pay the 10 per cent bank guarantee element of the franchise fee.

KTK was bought for Rs. 1,550 crore. The owners had to pay Rs. 156 crore every year, i.e. 10 per cent amount as bank guarantee every year which they failed to. Rendezvous Sports World, one of the co-owners of the franchise, took BCCI to the Bombay High Court contesting the termination. The court ordered BCCI to pay the franchise Rs 550 crore.



Hockey India adds 126 umpires and judges for competitions

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Hockey India (HI) said on Monday that it has added 126 candidates to its list of umpires and judges following two sets of online workshops from September last year till March 2021.

The candidates have become eligible to be appointed for HI-sanctioned sub-junior and junior category tournaments.

The umpires and judges -- 89 men and 37 women -- hailing from 19 states, were shortlisted from an initial list of 227 candidates. The 227 candidates were selected via an induction programme after they were nominated by their respective state member units. The induction programme for both umpires and technical officials was divided into three levels. Level 1 was designed to provide the candidates with basic knowledge of the latest international hockey federation (FIH) rules and regulations, among others.



COCO GAUFF MAKES BIG RANKING LEAP BEFORE FRENCH OPEN

Paris | Agencies

American teenager Coco Gauff and Spain's 23-year-old Paula Badosa made significant movement in the WTA rankings released on Monday, following their title triumphs at the Emilia-Romagna Open (Parma) and the Serbia Ladies Open (Belgrade) over the weekend.

Coco, who had moved up five places to 35 in the rankings last week, jumped another five spots to 20 in singles following her title triumph in Parma, where she defeated China's Wang Qiang 6-1, 6-3.

Badosa moved up 10 places to a career-high 34 following her Belgrade triumph.

There was no movement in the Top-10, with Australia's Ashleigh Barty leading the rankings, followed by Japan's Naomi Osaka and Romania's Simona Halep.

The 17-year-old Coco also became the youngest woman to sweep both the singles and doubles titles at a WTA event since Maria

Sharapova in 2004.

At 17 years, 72 days old, the American is also the youngest player to make her top-25 debut since September 12, 2005, when Nicole Pietrangeli did so at 16 years, 142 days.

Coco is the youngest American to make her top-25 debut in nearly 23 years (Serena Williams, June 8, 1998).

After starting the year at No.48, Coco was the No.9-ranked American and has currently improved her current position as fifth in line behind No. 24 Madison Keys, No.14 Jennifer Brady, No. 8 Serena Williams and No. 5 Sofia Kenin. In four clay-court events in 2021, Coco owns a 12-3 record on the surface.



WILL BE WARY OF 'DANGEROUS' PANT IN WTC FINAL: NZ BOWLING COACH



London: New Zealand will be wary of the danger that Rishabh Pant poses when they face India in the World Test Championship (WTC) final, said the team's bowling coach Shane Jurgensen. India play New Zealand in the inaugural WTC title from June 18 to 22 at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton. "Well, Pant is an extremely dangerous player who can change the game on its head. We saw how well he did it against Australia and England. He's extremely positive-minded, but with that comes potentially the opportunity to take his wicket," Jurgensen told The Telegraph.

Pant shook off the bad form he went through in 2020 during India's tour of Australia, in which he played an integral role in his team recording a second consecutive Test series win Down Under, despite the absence of a number key players. He has scored 515 runs in six Tests at an average of 64.37 this year.

India women cricketers need a players' body: Guha

London | Agencies

Former England woman cricketer Isa Guha wants a players' association for India women cricketers after British newspaper The Telegraph reported that Indian cricket board hasn't paid prize money due to them for T20 World Cup in 2020. Harmanpreet Kaur-led India had reached final of the tournament.

"Women are made to feel grateful for progress but there is still so much to be done to reach equity (& that isn't just equal pay). Players associations are a vital part of reaching this. India women will dominate the global stage when as much thought goes into their game as the men," wrote Guha while quote-tweeting the report on her timeline.

"While the men are at a different level there are still base level equities in player welfare. Things like payment/contract times, well-being support networks, domestic structure [professional] support, maternity provisions, retirement planning



are all things can be gained from having a PA

(players' association)," she added on her timeline.

On Sunday, a report by former England woman international and sports writer Isabelle Westbury in The Telegraph claimed that Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is yet to give prize money due to Indian players from T20 World Cup that ended on March 8, 2020.

Westbury was even more scathing in her attack on Indian board following a report in an India media outlet quoting the BCCI as saying that it was unable to pay since it received prize money late from the International Cricket Council (ICC). She called the claim a 'cover-up' as the ICC gave BCCI the prize money by April, 2020.

"However, dismayed that, even when exposed, the cover up continues. The BCCI received the prize money from the ICC by April 2020 latest. Not 'late last year'," tweeted Westbury.

Her report said that Australia's women players got their prize money by April, 2020 and England's players by May, 2020.

SENSEX ENDS OVER 100 POINTS UP AMID VOLATILITY

The BSE SENSEX closed at 50,651.90, higher by 111.42 points or 0.22 per cent from its previous close of 50,540.48. It opened at 50,727.28 and touched an intra-day high of 50,857.59 and a low of 50,465.90 points. While the Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange settled at 15,197.70, higher by 22.40 points or 0.15 per cent from its previous close.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian stock market closed in the green on Monday with the BSE SENSEX closing 111 points higher. Healthy buying was witnessed in the banking and oil and gas stocks. Selling in metal and telecom stocks capped the gains on the indices. The trading session, however, was volatile amid mixed global cues. The BSE SENSEX closed at 50,651.90, higher by 111.42 points or 0.22 per cent from

its previous close of 50,540.48. It opened at 50,727.28 and touched an intra-day high of 50,857.59 and a low of 50,465.90 points. The Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange settled at 15,197.70, higher by 22.40 points or 0.15 per cent from its previous close. The top gainers on the SENSEX were State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro and Axis Bank, while the major losers were Titan Company, IndusInd Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra.

Listed developers' sales share increases amid pandemic

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The overall housing sales share of the top eight listed realty players has surged amid the pandemic. As per latest Anarock data, out of the total sales of around 93,140 units in the first nine months of FY2021 across the top seven cities, the top eight listed players' share stood at 22 per cent while non-listed leading players' share was 18 per cent. Non-branded developers accounted for a 60 per cent share. In contrast, of the total 2.03 lakh units sold in top seven cities in FY2017, the share of these top eight listed players was the lowest at about 6 per cent while that of non-listed leading players stood at 11 per cent and others (non-branded) had a whopping 83 per cent share. The increased share of these top eight listed players over the years provides a clear roadmap of home buyers' evolving preferences.



The top eight listed developers considered are Brigade Enterprises, Godrej Properties, Kolte-Patil, Mahindra Lifespaces, Oberoi Realty, Prestige Estates, Puravankara, and Sobha. The top listed players together sold as much as 21.23 million square feet area in the first three quarters of financial year 2021 despite the first wave of COVID-19, rising by 2 per cent

against the corresponding period in FY2020, when 20.88 million square feet were sold. Among the listed players, Godrej Properties sold the maximum in terms of area (around 6.64 million square feet) in this period, followed by Bengaluru-based Prestige Estates with around 5.04 million square feet space. Anuj Puri, Chairman of Anarock

Property Consultants said: "After the roll-out of structural policies including RERA and GST, organized and branded players' dominance has risen exponentially. Homebuyer demand has tilted towards branded products. Both listed and leading developers have been catering to this new demand with projects for the affordable and mid-income segments, rather than playing only to the luxury homes gallery." This demand-supply equilibrium going during the pandemic, when housing demand rose significantly, he said. "The top eight listed players' sales share increased to 22 per cent from April to December 2020 - a major increase from 6 per cent in FY 2017. Even non-listed leading developers have ramped up their share from 11 per cent in FY 2017 to 18 per cent now. It is a major and ongoing realignment in residential real estate demand and supply," Puri said.

Remote job searches soared to 966% in April: Report

New Delhi | Agencies

As a majority of Indians are working from home, searches for 'remote work' skyrocketed to 966 per cent in April 2021, from the same period last year, according to data from job site Indeed. The data revealed that searches for remote work were higher across age groups - 60-64, 15-19 and 40-44 at 13 per cent each, while the searches in the age groups 35-39 and 20-24 were 12 per cent each. The data also revealed that Bengaluru topped the chart for remote job searches with 16 per cent followed by Delhi (11 per cent), Mumbai (8 per cent), Hyderabad (6 per cent) and Pune (7 per cent). This burgeoning demand for remote jobs is backed by the fact that geographical boundaries are blurring while employers hire and the job seekers scout for opportunities.



"The Covid-19 pandemic has fast tracked the adoption of technology across functions in India and has set in motion the largest work from home experiment of our generation. Our data has reflected the same showing a consistent rise in searches for remote jobs," said Sashi Kumar,

Managing Director, Indeed India, in a statement on Monday. The pandemic has defined the significance of skills as the top priority for hiring as opposed to location of the job seeker, the data showed. It is expected that employers would increase work-from-home options,

embracing hybrid work as the future of work. With the increasing need for technical integration across functions and sectors, job roles that require technical expertise to ensure seamless working have been the most in demand. The data also revealed that technical support specialist (25 per cent) emerged as one of the most searched remote jobs followed by data entry clerk (22 per cent), IT recruiter (16 per cent), content writer (16 per cent) and back end developer (15 per cent). "As businesses transitioned digitally, it has become a norm for employees and companies to work from anywhere and this change enabled by technology will see more and more companies turning to hybrid work in the future. We believe that going forward, recruiters will focus on role and skills based hiring, thus blurring geographical boundaries," Kumar said.

AAKASH LAUNCHES JEE-350 QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTS FOR JEE ASPIRANTS

New Delhi: Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), in association with Airtel DTH has launched a short term course for JEE aspirants named JEE 350 to mentor students from Class XIIth Pass for the upcoming JEE 2021 preparations. The classes will start from May 24, 2021 from 11:00am to 2:00pm on Aakash EduTV Channel no. 467, available on Airtel DTH. The course is designed with a robust model keeping in mind the objective to train learners to be able to give their best during the JEE 2021 by providing rich content material to enhance their learning experience during the 21-day customised course. Commenting on the launch of JEE 350 Course on Aakash EduTV, Abhishek Maheshwari, CEO, AESL, said, "The new JEE 350 course is highly favourable for aspirants as it will focus on essential concepts and will address 350 specific queries which are crucial to score better during their various attempts.

CMFRI'S INNOVATIVE TECH ENSURES BUMPER HARVEST OF GREEN MUSSEL

Kochi | Agencies

Experimental farming on a commercial scale with participation of local fish farmers, for the first time in Kerala, by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) at Moothakunnam near here has yielded a bumper harvest of green mussel. The attempt has shown that innovative farming technology Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA), which combines appropriate proportions of fish, seaweeds and filter feeding bivalves to create balanced systems for environmental and economic stability, is economically feasible and well-suited to Kerala's ecosystem, as per CMFRI experts. The CMFRI started the venture in December last year as part of its research initiative for developing a sustainable

cage fish farming model suitable to Kerala's ecosystem. In the first harvest among the three crops of the integrated farming, around one tonne of green mussel was yielded from 150 strings hung around as many as four fish cages. Individual mussel grew to the size of 72 grams which is a successful growth rate in mussel farming. A scientific team led by CMFRI's Principal Scientist, Shoji Joseph, also observed that the fishes inside the cage attained better growth and seaweed being cultured around the cage also showed healthy status with fast growth rate. The fishes will be harvested by the end of the next month. Joseph said that apart from enhanced income through diversified crops from a particular area during the same time period, the IMTA helps maintain environmental sustainability.

GO FIRST CARRIES OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS FOR NGOS



New Delhi: GO FIRST (formerly known as GoAir) ferried oxygen concentrators in collaboration with NGO - the Rotary Club of Ahmedabad and provided its valuable contribution in the selfless efforts to provide the much needed medical support to the efforts of Rotary Club. The consignment landed at Patna airport and the delivery was taken by NGO - the Rotary Club of Patliputra. Speaking on the initiative, Kaushik Khona, CEO, GO FIRST, said: "Every small step helps in contributing to the nation's fight against this unprecedented pandemic." GO FIRST was amongst the first Domestic Airline in transporting COVID vaccines in India. Recently, the company also announced its drive to vaccinate all its employees and bear the cost of the same."

SBI SHARES SURGE POST ROBUST Q4 EARNINGS

Mumbai: Shares of State Bank of India (SBI) rose on Monday after the bank reported a strong performance in the January-March quarter. Around 11.30 a.m., shares of the state-run bank on the BSE were at Rs 411.85, higher by Rs 10.75 or 2.68 per cent from its previous close. On Friday, the bank reported a rise of 80.15 per cent in its net profit for the Q4FY21 on a year-on-year basis to Rs 6,451 crore. Sequentially, the net profit has increased by 24.14 per cent. Besides, YoY Q4FY21 net interest income increased by 18.89 per cent to Rs 27,067 crore from Rs 22,767 crore reported for Q4FY20. In terms of fiscal year, the bank's FY21 net profit rose by 40.88 per cent to Rs 20,410 crore from Rs 14,488 crore in FY20.

FUEL PRICES RISE PAUSED AGAIN, RATE STABLE ON MONDAY

New Delhi: The oil marketing companies (OMC) kept petrol and diesel prices unchanged on Monday across the four metros. Accordingly, in the national capital, diesel price remains at Rs 84.07 per litre while petrol at 93.21 per litre. Similarly, in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, diesel continues to be priced at Sunday's level of Rs 91.30, Rs 88.87 and Rs 86.91 per litre respectively, and petrol at Rs 99.49, Rs 94.86 and Rs 93.27 per litre, respectively. With crude once again touching \$67 a barrel after the lows of \$64 last week, oil companies want to wait or pause in between before revising fuel prices.



Covid decline pushes equities higher, energy stocks climb

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India's benchmark equity indices ended mildly higher after a volatile trade session on Monday. The indices opened higher but soon sold off in the first hour of trade. However, healthy buying in power, realty, oil and gas, and capital goods kept pushing the market higher. Globally, stocks struggled for momentum as investors awaited key US inflation readings for guidance on monetary policy, despite news of China's clampdown on mining and trading of cryptocurrencies. The S&P BSE SENSEX closed the day's trade at 50,651.90, higher by 111.42 points, or 0.22 per cent, from its previous close. Similarly, the Nifty50 of the National Stock Exchange ended the trade session at 15,197.70, up 22.40 points,

or 0.15 per cent, from its previous close. "Nifty has closed mildly higher on May 24, forming a doji after a rise, suggesting indecision at higher levels even as the Nifty approached past resistance levels," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities. "Large caps are finding it difficult to rise as a group while the broader market still keeps doing well. 15,256-15,108 is the band for the Nifty for the near term." Siddhartha Khemka, Head, Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said: "Even though it was muted for most part of the day, sustained buying interest was seen at every small declines." "Market sentiments were positive as fresh cases continued to be below 3L mark for almost a week now and earnings season has been healthy so far."

Landomus takes ad route to request PM for \$500 billion investment

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A relatively unknown US based company Landomus Group has announced a Build India programme under which it would like to invest \$500 Billion in Equity as the first phase of the \$2 Trillion investment. This would be into the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) and Non-NIP projects listed by the Government of India under the India Investment Grid for "Invest India" initiative. Landomus announced this through a newspaper advertisement addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Eyebrows are being raised as to why ads are put out for investments into NIP addressed to PM Modi when there are well laid out channels for foreign and domestic investors. Landomus said Government of India, under its Invest India initiative, has created India Investment Grid (IIG) which outlines the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) and Non-NIP projects, which it aims to complete by 2025, with

a vision to provide quality lifestyle to its citizens, make India a global destination and reach the target of \$ 5 Trillion economy. "Due to the Covid Pandemic and the resulting loss of lives and livelihood, it is the need of the hour to invest in NIP and Non-NIP projects to boost the economy and generate jobs", it said. Build India initiative by Landomus Realty Ventures, aims to invest \$500 Billion in Equity as the first phase of investment out of \$2 Trillion and complete the NIP and Non-NIP projects through its group of investors and developers. "Build India also aims to provide covid health care to the citizens of India to create a covid free and a healthy India", Landomus led by Pradeep Kumar Satyaprakash said. In the advertisement addressed to PM Modi, Landomus said it aims to assist the Government in its endeavour to rebuild India. "Landomus Group requests you to provide us an opportunity to contribute towards your vision of a New India", the ad said. The website of Landomus Realty Ventures Inc lists a

New Jersey address. The website has no other details of its businesses, network or financials. The Chairman and CEO is Pradeep Kumar Satyaprakash and directors are Mamatha HN, Yashas Pradeep Kumar, Rakshith Gangadhar and Gunashree Pradeep Kumar. The Indian entity is called Landomus Realty Ventures Private Limited incorporated on 17 July 2015. It is classified as Non-govt company and is registered at Registrar of Companies, Bangalore. Its authorized share capital is Rs 1,000,000 and its paid up capital is Rs 100,000. It is involved in Real estate activities with own or leased property. [This class includes buying, selling, renting and operating of self-owned or leased real estate such as apartment building and dwellings, non-residential buildings, developing and subdividing real estate into lots etc. Also included are development and sale of land and cemetery lots, operating of apartment hotels and residential mobile home sites. (Development on own account involving construction is classified in class 4520).

Peak margin levy will lead to export of business to overseas markets

ANMI has written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), expressing its opinion that there is a great disconnect between what is being collected from clients and what needs to be collected vis-a-vis the attendant risks arising in intraday trades. ANMI, however, reiterates that they are not against collection of intraday margin levied on clients nor the levy of full margin on the Clearing member irrespective of the nature of the trade. Sharing its data with the regulator, ANMI pointed out that the rate of overnight margins, levied on intraday trades are almost 3.33 times more than what is warranted based on the risks of the trade. In the current margin structure, the current levy of Peak margins is actually 300 per cent of the margin which should have been actually levied," said ANMI spokesperson.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI) has urged regulatory authorities to reconsider the proposed 100 per cent levy on day trade peak margins as the margin is 300 per cent of

what should have been the actual levy. ANMI has written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), expressing its opinion that there is a great disconnect between what is being collected from clients and what needs to be collected vis-a-vis the attendant risks arising in intraday trades. ANMI, however, reiterates that they are not against collection of intraday margin levied on clients nor the levy of full margin on the Clearing member irrespective of the nature of the trade. Sharing its data with the regulator, ANMI pointed out that the rate of overnight margins, levied on intraday trades are almost 3.33 times more than what is warranted based on the risks of the trade. In the current margin structure, the current levy of Peak margins is actually 300 per cent of the margin which should have been actually levied," said ANMI spokesperson.

"The levy of margin being a high multiple on intraday trades is also causing effects elsewhere" Also, nowhere in the world, clients are required to pay upfront peak margins. Already open interest in Nifty is more in Singapore compared to India though it is a product based on Indian stocks. Indian markets are already at a disadvantage compared to SGX in terms of margins, time of trading, transaction cost and taxation. Any further unwarranted restrictions will result in export of business from India to overseas markets. According to ANMI, the spike in peak margin will bring change in market behaviour by shifting from future to option buying and a shift in the mind-set of people gravitating more towards options trading and moving away from Stock / Index Futures and Stock Options. They also pointed out that higher margins would also imply prolonged carry forward of loss making trades giving a

false sense of security. Due to the shift, hedging opportunities have seen a dip due to lower volumes in capital market and commodity markets have been greatly impacted. ANMI's concern over the peak margin issues rises as the deadline for the increase of current margin of 50 per cent to 75 per cent from June 1, 2021 is closing in. Between December 2020 and February 2021, traders were supposed to maintain at least 25 per cent of the peak margin. This margin was raised to 50 per cent between March 2021 and May 2021 and is proposed to be raised to 75 per cent between June 2021 and August 2021 and finally to 100 per cent from September 1st onwards. ANMI hopes that the regulating authorities will consider our suggestions and bring the peak margin back within the band of 25 per cent to 33.33 per cent from the current rate of 50 per cent.



SONA MOHAPATRA SAYS ALL HER SAVINGS WENT INTO 'SHUT UP SONA' BEFORE PANDEMIC

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Sona Mohapatra took to social media on Monday to open up on how all her savings went into making her documentary film "Shut Up Sona" just before the pandemic, and the ensuing lockdown has left her with no means of income. "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional... making happy whenever I can. My film #ShutUpSona is yet travelling to places around the world & winning festivals. All my savings went into this film, just before the pandemic broke & stopped us in our tracks with no means of income," Sona tweeted.

In a separate tweet, the singer also announced that her documentary film has been nominated in the category of "Best Documentary" at the New York Indian Film Festival 2022.

"SHUT UP SONA; Official selection & Nomination for Best #documentary-film at the @nyindianff 2022. @DeeptiCam @EspressoMedia #NewYork #wemademovie #love #music #travel," Sona tweeted earlier in the day.

Directed by Deepti Gupta, "Shut Up Sona" revolves around her journey as a singer, her brand of music, love for her country's roots and culture and how she has become a symbol of hope for a larger movement.

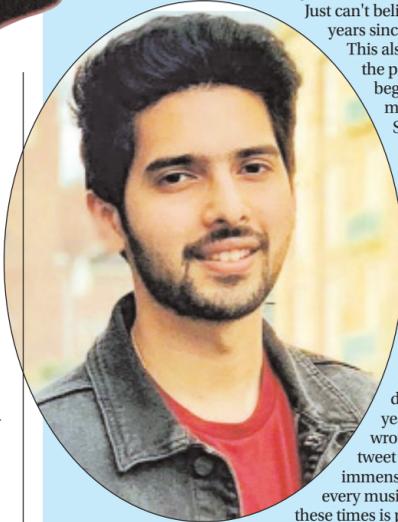
ARMAAN MALIK THANKS TWITTER FOR HELPING HIM CONNECT WITH FANS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Armaan Malik celebrated 10 years on Twitter on Monday, thanking the microblogging platform for helping him connect with fans.

"I joined Twitter in May 2011. Just can't believe it's been 10 years since my first tweet! This also happens to be the place where it all began for me and my #Armaanians! So thankful to @Twitter for making this connection between us stronger every day," Armaan tweeted on Monday.

Expressing his respect for musicians releasing songs amid the pandemic, the 25-year-old singer wrote in a separate tweet: "I have immense respect for every musician who in these times is putting together a song and releasing it. It's not easy at all." On the work front, Armaan collaborated with Korean-American singer-songwriter Eric Nam and international music producer KSHMR for a single titled "Echo", which released on Friday. The track highlights indecisiveness in a relationship that pushes partners off the edge.



Musician-producer Mukul Deora celebrates legend Bob Dylan's birthday

Team Absolute | Mumbai

For most of us, there are only a few people that awaken a feeling of inspiration. Their lives and their work connect with us on a level that is pure admiration. For renowned producer and musician Mukul Deora, that person is the internationally acclaimed American singer and songwriter, Bob Dylan.

Mukul Deora has established a name for himself in the music industry for over a decade and a half now. He released his first music album Stray in 2006 with Sony BMG. It reached number 12 on the Indian Music Charts. He also founded Transmit Audi which is an ambient sound collective company where they created lengthy soundscapes using resonances from Mumbai's aural fabric. This was the first time anyone had tried this in India.

A few years back, to pay homage to Bob Dylan, Mukul celebrated the legend's birthday by hosting a month-long radio show with Indian musicians who are also inspired by the Mr. Tambourine Man singer.

On Dylan's 80th birthday today, Mukul Deora has put his heartfelt words to paper, celebrating the journey of his idol. Sharing his admiration for the award-winning musician, Mukul says, "There are so many ways to pay homage to someone who is quite possibly the greatest artist ever. Someone who has, in an unparalleled career spanning nearly 60 years, has released 39 albums, inspired three generations of songwriters and won every conceivable award. I am going to take the personal route, not because my experiences are important but because I want to share the magic he has brought to my life."



Abhishek Banerjee: Was bored of getting only 'quirky' roles, OTT changed that

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Abhishek Banerjee says he owes it to OTT as a platform for helping him change his image in showbiz. He was only being offered comic roles, and OTT shows helped change that. "There is a nice word that people use, it's 'quirky'. I was only getting quirky roles. I was getting worried that why am I getting only quirky roles. I was bored of it. Thankfully 'Paatal Lok' changed that. It taught people that I can do a lot more than comedy," said Abhishek. The actor says that he was



able to prove her versatility because of OTT.

"What OTT did was it gave me the audience's eyes. It gave me stature. But what I feel is that OTT gave me that position of a well-rounded actor. Before that, I was doing only comic roles and I was tired of the kind of roles that I was offered all the time. "I was like, I am not here to do only comedy. I can do a lot of other characters and I am prepared. All my training is to prove my versatility to filmmakers and the audience," he says. Abhishek says that while he was sure that "Paatal Lok" will do well, but he had not anticipated it becoming this popular.

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With 7 years to the release of Heropanti, Kriti Sanon marks 7 years in the industry. At present, the actress has one of the best lineups in industry with 7 big budget films to her name, which shows how far the leading actress has come in such a short span of time.

Expressing excitement about her upcoming films, the actress shares, "As an actor, I crave to get diverse roles to be able to explore sides and worlds that I haven't done before. I'm fortunate to have gotten opportunities in such different genres."

She adds, "It's challenging but very satisfying and I hope I'm able to do justice to all. I

am probably in the most exciting phase of my career so far."

From the role of Sita in the mythology drama Adipurush with Prabhas, to a glamorous and grunge role in the action flick Jassi in Ganapath, none of her upcoming characters seem alike at all. She will also be seen in a horror flick for the first time in Bhediyaa with Varun Dhawan.

Kriti will also be leading the film, Mimi on her own shoulders completely where she will be seen playing a mother. The foremost diva of Bollywood also has Bachchan Pandey with Akshay Kumar and the quirky comedy Hum Do Hamaare Do pairing her alongside Rajkumar Rao besides another unannounced film in her kitty.

Kriti Sanon marks 7 years in Bollywood, says more excited about 7 upcoming films



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Lauren Gottlieb



'Hungama 2' to have a digital release

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Filmmaker Priyadarshan's new comedy "Hungama 2" will release on OTT. The film was earlier scheduled to open theatrically but the makers have now decided to take the digital route owing to the ongoing pandemic situation that has forced closure of cinemas all over India. The release date is yet to be confirmed by the makers. The film is a sequel of the director's 2003 comedy hit

"Hungama", and stars Pooja Kapur with Meezaan, Shilpa Shetty Kundra, and Pranitha Subhash.

"Hungama 2 is a lighthearted film meant to be enjoyed across all age groups, and we feel it will entertain the audiences and bring some cheer in these trying times. We will release the film on a digital platform this year and movie lovers can enjoy the laugh riot at the comfort of their homes. We have made Hungama 2 with utmost love and we are confident that our film will bring a smile to people's faces," producer Ratan Jain said.

The film also features Ashutosh Rana, Manoj Joshi, Rajpal Yadav, Johnny Lever and Tiku Talsania in pivotal roles.