

absolute india

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BIHAR MAN TURNS CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY, PROVIDES JOBS TO 35 PEOPLE

THE START UP

Alam said that amid the lockdown due to the second Covid wave, he got an order for 10,000 masks. He added that today there are 30 to 35 people working in this factory.

MANOJ PATHAK | Muzaffarpur

Even as the Covid pandemic has battered many lives across India, some have turned this crisis into an opportunity. One such person is Farooq Alam of Bihar's Muzaffarpur district.

Two years ago, Alam was an employee at a private firm in Delhi, but today he provides self-employment to 30-35 people in his Bangra Sugauli village.

Alam, 36, went to seek a job in Delhi four to five years back after he failed to secure employment in his state.

Finally, he got a job in a Delhi-based textile company, as he was skilled in both sewing and making readymade clothes. However, Alam's life took a u-turn last year, after the lockdown was imposed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Distressed after his job loss, Alam returned to his village and promised himself that he would never go to any other city in his life in search of a job.

Alam told reporter: Initially, our readymade tracksuits and jackets were sold in our rural and urban areas but later the demand was from Muzaffarpur, Hajipur, Gopalganj among other cities. Alam said that



after this, when orders started coming from other places too, a large hall was built in the village and the work was ramped up.

He added that currently his factory has 30 sewing machines and many other machines, which are used for making readymade clothes. He said that after that the demand for his clothes was from Delhi, Kolkata and Guwahati.

Shamshad, who works in this factory, said: "Today, we are all getting work in the village only because of the mercy of Allah, what can be better

After the outbreak of the first Covid wave and the subsequent lockdowns, I had contacted people from Ramgarhwa, Raxaul and Harsidhi areas, who were my fellow workers in Delhi, and then we decided to start making readymade garments in my village itself. They too agreed to my proposal and we started our business with five sewing machines.

than this." Alam said that they are now planning to expand the factory.



4.9L REMDESIVIR VIALS, 19 FOREIGN OXYGEN PLANTS DELIVERED TO STATES

Major consignments received on Thursday and Friday from the US, Italy, Canada, South Korea, Oman, British Oxygen Co. (UK), Koharu 3SP (Japan) and Gilead (US) include Remdesivir (68,810), Tocilizumab (1,000), ventilators or BiPAP or CPAP (338), oxygen cylinders (900) and oxygen concentrators (157).

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Nearly 4.9 lakh Remdesivir vials, 11,000 Oxygen Concentrators, more than 13,000 oxygen cylinders, 19 oxygen generation plants and over 6,800 ventilators received from abroad as medical Covid aid have been dispatched to the states so far, the government said on Saturday. These medical relief materials were received from various foreign countries between April 27 and May 14. A Coordination Cell has been set up in the Union Health Ministry to coordinate the receipt and allocation of foreign Covid relief material. This Cell started functioning from April 26. A Standard Operating Procedure has been framed and implemented by the Health Ministry since May 2 this year.

HIS FATHER WANTED HIM TO BE A DOCTOR BUT HE ASPIRED TO BE A POLICE OFFICER

Cop using his medical degree to fight Covid



BIJNOR | Agencies

Ganesh Kumar Gupta, posted as deputy superintendent of police (DSP) in Bijnor, is now treating Covid infected policemen at the new medical facility in Bijnor.

At least 162 policemen have tested positive for Covid-19 after returning from panchayat election duty in Bijnor district alone. Forty more have symptoms and are awaiting their reports.

With no beds in hospitals, the police department opened a new ward to treat the affected policemen and Gupta took charge of it. Superintendent of Police (SP),

Bijnor, Dharamveer Singh, said, "Circle officer Ganesh Gupta has come as a blessing in disguise. He is looking after all the policemen at the quarantine centre. Without him, things would have been difficult for us. We all are proud of our officer." Gupta, meanwhile, is happy that he has also fulfilled his father's wishes.

Wearing a PPE kit on top of his police uniform, he said, "My father, Om Prakash Gupta, had a shop in Gorakhpur. He wanted to see me as a doctor. I got a MBBS degree and then cleared the Provincial Police Service (PPS) exam in 2018. Now I am working as a police officer and a doctor. Both our wishes are being fulfilled."

Namdhari sect empowering slum kids with education

The sect, known for a distinct white dress code and turbans, has been imparting education to the underprivileged children at their doorsteps for past several years across the state through its volunteers. The sect believes that by empowering the children through education, they could push them out from the vicious cycle of poverty.



They have also started community libraries where their children can get books for studies at home.

Their book are collected through donation drives. On an average, the sect manages to collect around 500 books.

An offshoot of Sikhism, the Namdhari sect, whose spiritual gurus were known for pious ideals of promoting classical music and hockey, was founded in the 18th century by Bhai Ram Singh.

VISHAL GULATI | Chandigarh

An open-air school set up by the Namdhari sect of Sikhism led by spiritual head Thakur Dalip Singh in a street of Jalandhar city in Punjab, which is acclaimed for providing free quality education to slum children, is now providing them coaching to empower them amidst the uncertainty posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

A sect-inspired education initiative, which initially started in Ludhiana city in 2015, has now marked its presence in major cities like Amritsar and Patiala and even in small town Kalanaur in Gurdaspur district.

Tracing its reformative journey, a sect spokesperson told correspondent on Friday that earlier volunteers were dedicatedly teaching one to four children at a time in their shanties, giving them the much needed individual support and guidance, at least thrice in a week. Responding to the response, a non-formal education centre was opened in Ludhiana where a group of children employed at scrap yards and tea shops,

involved in petty jobs like roadside shoe shining and rag-picking and also employed as a domestic help were taught the basics of languages near their makeshift tents.

"We brought them together at one place i.e. a class," spiritual head Thakur Dalip Singh told correspondent.

The students, braving the extreme weather, sat on rugs and were eager to attend the school, he said.

The classes were held in open-street corners in the morning from Monday to Saturday. As most of them were engaged in odd jobs to support their families, they couldn't afford to lose their 'jobs'.

After Ludhiana the centres of non-formal education were opened in other cities and towns where a sizeable Namdhari population resides.

"Our volunteers have travelled a long way in the last six years. Starting their journey with just 25 children in 2015, now they have over 2,500 students," added the spiritual head, whose sect has tens of thousands of followers in India and abroad.

In the meantime, volunteers, mainly the women, have opened multiple branches where special classes for learning vernacular languages, besides taking care of their physical and mental health and overall holistic development, were introduced for the children, most of them grown up amid domestic violence, alcohol abuse and other traumatic incidents at their early lives.

The volunteers have also launched the pre-primary section at some locations where children below five years are groomed to get admission in a government school. So far 1,500 such students have been enrolled in the schools.

At some places the volunteers have hired rooms by pooling their resources and from donations near the slums to teach mostly the first-generation learners in their families.

Gangotri Dham doors opened amid Covid-19 protocols

The Char Dham Devasthanam Board's Additional Chief Executive is going with the 'Panchmukhi Doli'. Harish Goud of Char Dham Devasthanam Board informed that the doors of Badrinath Dham would be opened on Tuesday. While the doors of the second Madhya Maheshwar ji will be opened on May 24, the third Tungnath ji and the fourth Rudranath ji will be opened on Monday. The date of opening of the doors of Hemkund Sahib and Laxman Temple have not been decided yet.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The doors of Gangotri Dham were opened with full religious rituals at 7.30 a.m. on Saturday morning during the auspicious occasion of Baishakh



Shukla Tritiya. The idol of mother Ganga reached the Bhairon Ghati on Friday. Mother Ganga's Doli left for Gangotri Dham at 4 a.m. on Saturday. On this occasion, the aarti (puja) of Mother Ganga was performed wishing good luck for mankind. Due to the postponement of the Char Dham Yatra, the doors of the four dhams were opened in a symbolic way.

Only those people performing the tradition of puja are allowed to visit the Dhams. The prayers will continue in the dhams daily. Covid protocols were duly followed during the opening of the doors of the four dhams.

On this occasion, a few people of Gangotri Mandir Samiti, Sub-Divisional

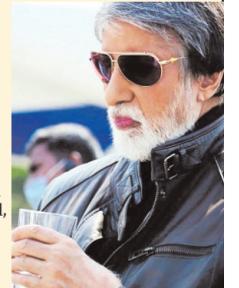
Officer, Special Officer of Uttarakhand Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board were present. Earlier, the doors of Yamunotri Dham have been opened and the doors of Kedarnath Dham will be opened on Monday. On Saturday, the 'Panchmukhi Doli' of Lord of Kedarnath reached Kedarnath.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat has said that the Char Dham Yatra has been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. If the situation returns to normal the Char Dham Yatra will begin. Devotees must offer prayers at their home. Earlier on Friday, the doors of Yamunotri Dham were opened on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya.

BIG B BUYS OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS FROM POLAND, DONATES VENTILATORS TO BMC

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amitabh Bachchan has blogged about how he purchased 50 oxygen concentrators from Poland and donated ventilators to BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). "I have to, in deepest gratitude thank profusely the Govt., of Poland, the Mayor of the City of Wroclaw, the Ambassador of India at Warsaw and the LOT Polish Airlines for their very gracious gesture towards me. The general call from the places that were in need of help had been for the urgent need of Oxygen Concentrators. These are and were difficult to procure and when I was not getting any immediate source to acquire them my friend and the Indian Consul in Wroclaw stepped forward," Bachchan wrote in his latest blog entry, late on Thursday. He further wrote: "...He came to know of my work in the procurement of Concentrators and came out with the name and details of a Polish Company that was making them and that were being exported to various parts of the World, and whether this could be one of the sources for my need. I immediately placed an order for 50 Oxygen Concentrators, which were blocked for me by him, since the equipment was in short supply and was being manufactured and sold out rather rapidly. So I have bought 50 concentrators and they shall be shipped out on the 15th of May." "Oxygen Concentrators, have also been ordered from another source and about 60 of them should be coming in a few days," he further informed in his blog post. Big B has also written about donating ventilators to BMC.



ANAND & 4 GMS RAISED \$50,555 COVID RELIEF FUND

Team Absolute | Chennai

A sum of \$50,555 was raised by online chess game site www.chess.com towards Covid-19 relief in India by organising chess games featuring five time World Chess Champion Grandmaster (GM) V.Anand and four other GMs Koneru Humpy, Dronavalli Harika, Nihal Sarin and R.Pragnanandhaa recently, said an official.

The five GMs played simultaneous games online against those who had paid the necessary fees (\$150 to play against Anand and \$25 to play against others).

During the course of the games, donations poured in, taking the total to \$50,555 against an earlier target of \$15,000. A big surprise of the day was



when International Master Levy Rozman (@GothamChess) donated \$10,000, the Chess.com official said.

While 70 per cent of the funds raised will be given to Red Cross India the balance 30 per cent will be given to All India Chess Federation

(AICF), a Chess.com official had told IANS earlier.

Recently the AICF Secretary told IANS that a sum of Rs 60 lakh has been raised till date under the Checkmate Covid initiative to provide financial assistance to chess

community members affected by Covid-19.

According to AICF's list of donors include, former Tamil Nadu State Chess Champion and a businessman S.Kailasanathan leads the table donating Rs 5 lakh and is followed by GM Arjun Erigaisi donating Rs 1 lakh. The AICF has provided Rs 11 lakh and Maharashtra Chess Association has contributed Rs 5 lakh while the names of other state associations including the cash rich ones were missing from the donor's list. According to AICF, Rs 30 lakh has been committed by various entities and the amount is yet to be credited to its bank account.

Meanwhile financial assistance was rendered to nine players or their families out of the collected Checkmate Covid fund by AICF.



INDIA WILL HAVE 51.6 CRORE VACCINE DOSES BY END OF JULY: HARSH VARDHAN

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday said that India will have 51.6 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses by July end including the 18 crore doses already administered.

Vardhan reviewed the public health response to Covid-19 and progress of vaccination with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

These states are depicting a higher growth rate in the number of daily cases, rise in positivity, high mortality and saturation of healthcare capacity.

The Minister highlighted the critical challenges faced by the states.

Vardhan expressed a strong view that the present plateauing of Covid cases should not be taken as a sign for complacency but as a breathing space to expand, revamp and improve Health Infrastructure.

State health administrators were advised to increase ICU and oxygenated beds, undertake oxygen audits, take stock of availability of medicines in the state and strengthen their medical workforce.

A common point of consensus among the state health Ministers was that vaccines had resulted in milder forms of Covid thereby preventing loss of precious lives.



Taking note of the fact that all the states require more vaccines to expand their vaccine coverage, Vardhan said, "Production is being steadily ramped up to cater to increased demand while vaccines that are being produced now continue to be equitably apportioned and swiftly sent to states/UTs."

Detailing the ramping up of vaccine production, he said, "We will have 51.6 crore vaccine doses by the end of July including the 18 crore

doses already administered. Sputnik has been approved. This along with the slated approval of the new vaccine of Zydus Cadila, Serum Institute of India- Novavax vaccine, Bharat Biotech's nasal vaccine and the Genova mRNA vaccine will push the availability of Covid vaccines to 216 crore doses in the August-December period."

Union Minister of State for Health, Ashwini Kumar Choubey assured his colleagues in states that the Union government will listen to all their requirements and try to fulfill them as per capacity.

States were advised to ensure complete utilization of available vaccination slots for 45+ age-group, health care workers, frontline workers with awareness campaigns for conveying the importance of completing the second dose of vaccine.

It was reiterated that States need to focus on reduction of vaccine wastage as that will be factored in subsequent allocations to that state.

States were advised to constitute a 2/3-member team at State level on the lines of the dedicated team at Union Health Ministry to regularly coordinate with manufacturers for timely supplies of vaccine through 'other than government of India channel' and also to coordinate with private hospitals for their procurement. The Union Health Ministry has already shared the list of private hospitals along with doses contracted and supplied with state/UTs.

Manipur: Scribe, activist held over FB posts

IMPHAL | Agencies

The Manipur police have arrested a journalist and a political activist over their Facebook posts reportedly criticising the ruling BJP leaders, police said on Saturday.

A police official said that Imphal-based journalist Kishorechandra Wangkhem and political activist Erendro Leichombam were arrested on Thursday evening from their homes on the basis of a complaint filed against the duo by Manipur state BJP Vice-President Usham Deban party General Secretary P. Premananda Meetei.

The complaint said that Wangkhem and Leichombam have posted offensive comments referring to the death of state BJP President Saikhom Tikendra Singh, who fell prey to Covid-19 at a hospital in Imphal on Thursday.

Referring to Singh's death, the detainees in Manipuri language had posted comments saying "cow dung and cow urine do not work".

Police said that the duo would remain in custody till May 17.

Wangkhem and Leichombam, both around 40-years, had been arrested twice earlier on charges of sedition and for making various posts on social media against the government.



Leichombam is the founder of the People's Resurgence and Justice Alliance, a political party whose candidate in the 2017 Manipur elections included rights activist from Sharmila, who unsuccessfully fought the polls after she broke her 16-year long fast for the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act from Manipur. Studied abroad, Leichombam also unsuccessfully contested the Assembly polls in 2017. Rights activists and various Manipur based organisations and elsewhere in the country had criticised the government for "overreacting".

Woman gang raped in Haryana's Farukhnagar, accused still at large

GURUGRAM | Agencies

A 22-year-old woman was allegedly gang raped by three unidentified men in Farukhnagar, about 20 km away from here, police said on Saturday.

The accused had filmed the act. The police have registered a case and constituted teams to nab them.

According to the police, the victim, a native of Samastipur district in Bihar, was residing with her sister in Sector-52 in Gurugram.

The woman told the police that on Thursday she along with her two male friends visited Judola village in the Farukhnagar area on their motorcycles, to buy meat for celebrating Eid. The



police said that they have identified the accused and one of them runs a roadside dhaba.

Cannot link Goa hospital deaths to O2 shortage: top official

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Saturday dodged questions related to the scores of deaths at the Goa Medical College (GMC), even as Dr. Shivanand Bandekar, dean of the apex institute claimed that it was difficult to pinpoint oxygen shortage as the cause of the deaths.



PANAJI | Agencies

We cannot put this as a direct answer. People who come to GMC are all referred cases, because we are a tertiary health centre. Their (patients) criticality is high and most of the patients die because of Covid pneumonia, where oxygen is part of the treatment. We cannot directly say that this is the reason why

they have died," Bandekar said, adding that several patients who were admitted to the hospital had high CT severity score.

Bandekar also disputed that 75 Covid patients had died in four nights at the facility between 2 am to 6 am, claiming deaths occurred through the day.

"If you see our timings and mortality bulletins that we publish. It is not foolproof to say (that patients died of

oxygen shortage). Someone was saying 2 am to 6 am more deaths. I do not believe that. Deaths occurred across 24 hours," the top health official told a press conference in Panaji late on Saturday.

CM Sawant and Health Minister Rane, whose leadership has been questioned both by the ruling as well as opposition MLAs during the crisis, however refused to take questions related to the deaths due to oxygen

shortage. Sawant however said that the high mortality rate in Covid patients in Goa was on account of "100 percent" transparency in reporting of such deaths. The Bombay High Court bench in Goa which has been hearing a bunch of petitions related to mis-handling of the Covid crisis, had however pinpointed oxygen shortage as the cause of deaths at the top hospital.

No denial of vaccine or essential services for want of Aadhaar: UIDAI

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on Saturday said in a statement that no one will be denied vaccine, medicine, hospitalisation or treatment for want of Aadhaar.

The statement has come in the present Covid-19 pandemic situations against certain reports suggesting that vaccination and a few other essential services like hospitalisation were being denied to the residents for want of Aadhaar.

UIDAI said that in the Covid pandemic circumstances, no one shall be denied a service/benefit just because he/she doesn't have an Aadhaar.

If one does not have Aadhaar or if



Aadhaar online verification is not successful due to some reason, the concerned agency or department has to provide the service as per Section 7 of Aadhaar Act, 2016 and the Cabinet Secretariat OM dated 19th Dec 2017, UIDAI said in a statement. UIDAI said that Aadhaar should not be misused as an excuse for denial of any essential service. There is a well established exception handling mechanism (EHM) for Aadhaar and it should be followed to ensure delivery of benefits and services in the absence of Aadhaar. If a resident does not possess Aadhaar for some or the other reason, she/he must not be denied essential services as per Aadhaar Act.

Hundreds throng Chennai's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium to get Remdesivir

Chennai | Agencies

Hundreds of relatives of Covid-19 infected persons converged at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium here on Saturday to buy the Remdesivir injection.

Their one immediate objective was to get the vial so that their loved ones are saved.

The Tamil Nadu government had shifted the Remdesivir sale venue from Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital to Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium to reduce crowds at the hospital.

"It is total confusion here. No [signage] boards were put up to guide people," a person told reporters. What was there was just a barricade to make people stand in the queue.

According to the people waiting to get the injection, the police were not properly informed. With confusion leading to frustration, people started protesting demanding proper arrangements. One person lamented to the media that the government should have supplied the injection to hospitals directly so



that they need not spend hours standing in the queue. With Covid-19 infection numbers going up in the state and with doctors prescribing Remdesivir injection for the patients, the demand for the injection has gone up.

Though medical experts have said that Remdesivir is not the only injection to cure Covid-19 patients, the demand for the drug has shot up as the doctors are prescribing the same.

ULFA (I) declares ceasefire days within Sarma's appeal, cites Covid situation

Anwasha Bhaumik | Kolkata

The banned separatist group, United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) or ULFA(I) has declared a unilateral ceasefire for three months following an appeal by new Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The ULFA-I chief Paresh Barua on Saturday made this declaration of a unilateral ceasefire for three months with immediate effect from his hideout on the Sino-Myanmar border.

The ULFA-I Commander-in-Chief in a statement made available to reporter by his spokesperson Rumel Asom said: "With utmost sincerity, we would like to inform the indigenous people of Assam that in view of the Coronavirus-induced situation, the ULFA (I) has decided to suspend all its military operations for the next three months with effect from today."

But the Assamese rebel chief alleged that a section of officials of the Indian security forces and Assam police have orchestrated a conspiracy to malign the image of ULFA (I).

This writer had reported in IANS earlier this week of 'backroom parleys' between CM Sarma's close coterie and ULFA go-betweens to facilitate a fresh peace effort.

"Both sides were waiting for Sarma to take charge as CM. Now that he has taken over, the ULFA has reciprocated," one of the go-betweens told reporter. He is a senior



Assamese journalist but wishes not to be identified. Paresh Barua had given his only on-camera interview so far, in 2016, to Newslive channel owned by CM Sarma's wife.

The Newslive journalist Chayamoni Bhuiyan met Barua in the Chinese town of Ruili, with both risking the wrath of Chinese authorities if discovered.

Barua's previous interviews with other journalists have been in jungle bases with ULFA not allowing videography of them for obvious security reasons.

A former Assam DGP, who wishes not to be identified, says Himanta Biswa Sarma has maintained a discreet link to Paresh Barua and also the surrendered ULFA leaders since his days as a student leader.

"He has waited to activate the contacts for a peace effort once he became sure of getting the top job," the former police boss said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Sarma is on a day-long visit to Tinsukia to assess the Covid situation in the district.

He visited the Tinsukia Civil Hospital to review the arrangements in the hospital amid the rising number of Covid cases and deaths in Assam. Sarma also visited the Tingrai market in Digboi where two people were killed and two were seriously injured due to a grenade blast in a hardware shop.

The CM also met the family of one of the deceased Surojit Talukdar and announced a Rs 5 lakh one-time financial aid for the families of the two killed in the grenade blast. While ULFA (I) denied responsibility for the blast, police officials suspect the incident was the handiwork of ULFA (I).

TN floats global tender to source 3.5 cr Covid vax doses

Chennai | Agencies

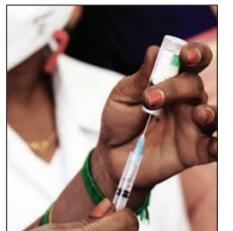
Tamil Nadu government on Saturday issued a global tender to source 3.5 crore units of Covid-19 vaccine.

As per the tender issued by the state government undertaking Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation, the winning bidder has to supply the vaccine within 180 days progressively from the date of the purchase order.

The shelf life of the vaccines supplied should be not less than six months on the date of receipt at the purchaser's site. The dosage form could be oral or injectable; liquid or freeze dried with sterile diluent packed separately.

The vaccine storage temperature specification should be "2-8-degree Celsius. Do not freeze", the tender stated.

In the case of the bidder being a vaccine manufacturer, the tender stated that it should have either directly or through any other authorised



dealer delivered at least 200 million doses, in any one of the last two years to any country in the world, of which at least 50 million doses should have been supplied in the last one year.

In case the bidder is not a manufacturer, then the bidder as authorised by the manufacturer must have supplied goods similar to the extent of at least 50 million doses in any one of the last two years to any country in the world, of which at least 25 million doses should have been supplied in the last one year. The technical bids will be opened on June 5, 2021.



Oscar Wilde

absolute india

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Heavy rains lash Kerala, coastal areas badly affected

'TAUKTAE' GEARS UP

According to the India Meteorological Department Tauktae is very likely to intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm during the next 24 hours and expected to move north-north-westwards and reach near the Gujarat coast by May 18 morning.

- The worst affected on account of the rough sea include the coastal hamlets in the state capital, parts of Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargode.
- With early warnings of the cyclone for the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the NDRF has mobilised adequate resources and self-contained rescue and relief teams in the coastal districts of these states which are likely to be affected by the cyclonic storm.
- The NDRF teams are keeping a close watch on the development of the situation which is being monitored 24x7 from the control room. Lines, requirement of a positive test for Covid 19 virus is not mandatory for admission to a Covid health facility. A suspect case shall be admitted to the suspect ward of a Covid Care Centre (CCC), Dedicated Covid Health Centre (DCHC) or a Dedicated Covid Hospital (DCH) as the case may be.
- Mild cases are referred to CCC, moderate cases to DCHC and severe cases to DCH.



wards during the past six hours, has caused huge damage to the coastal areas in Kerala. Even though the depression is approximately around 290 km away from Kannur, on account of the heavy rains across the state, and with the sea turning rough, the state govern-

ment has been forced to open numerous camps across the state to move people to safety. Even though so far there has been no casualties reported, the rain and the rough sea has caused innumerable hardships to the people, who are already battling the Covid pandemic. Starting Friday night, huge number of trees were uprooted and power supply disrupted for long hours on account of the high speed winds and heavy rain. With the state under a total lockdown from May 8, the only saving grace was the police did not have much work to man people on the roads.

FORCES PREPARE FOR CYCLONE

New Delhi: Indian Air Force, Navy and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are making preparations for Cyclone Tauktae, which is expected to cause 'very heavy' to 'extremely heavy' rainfall along the western coast of India in the next few days. Further, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has suspended all scheduled flights to the Agatti Airport in Lakshadweep due to heavy rain projections till 10 am on Sunday. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has kept 16 transport aircraft and 18 helicopters on operation readiness in peninsular India. "One IL-76 aircraft has airlifted 127 personnel and 11 tonnes of cargo from Bhatinda to Jamnagar," the force said in a statement. The Indian Navy stated that its ships, aircraft, helicopters, and diving and disaster relief teams are on standby for rendering full support to the state administrations as the cyclonic storm Tauktae approaches the western coast of India.

TAUKTAE BRINGS IN HEAVY RAINFALL IN K'TAKA

Bengaluru: Cyclone Tauktae has hit the coastal region of Karnataka resulting in heavy rainfall especially in Dakshina Kannada district, where wind speed of around 75 km per hour was recorded, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said here on Saturday. "Extremely heavy rainfall in few places on Sunday," the IMD said in its statement released on Saturday. The IMD prediction indicates that cyclone Tauktae may further intensify into a Severe Cyclonic Storm by Saturday evening, and into a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm come Sunday evening. By the early hours of Monday, the cyclone could gather maximum sustained surface wind speeds up to 150-160 kmph, gusting to 175 kmph in various parts of the coastal region of Southern India and up to Gujarat's coast.

Over 3.26L new Covid cases, 3,890 deaths in India in 24 hrs



Team Absolute | New Delhi

discharged in the last 24 hours, with 2,04,32,898 being cured from Covid till date.

Witnessing a decline, India on Saturday reported 3,26,098 new Covid cases and 3,890 fatalities in the last 24 hours, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said.

In the past 23 days India's daily Covid tally has plateaued over the three-lakh-mark and over 3,000 casualties for 17 days. On Wednesday, India recorded 4,205 fresh Covid deaths, the highest ever, while on May 7, the country had recorded its highest ever cases of 4,14,188.

India's total tally of Covid-19 cases now stands at 2,43,72,907 with 36,73,802 active cases and 2,66,207 deaths so far. According to the Health Ministry, a total of 3,53,299 people have been

DOOR-TO-DOOR COVID TESTING IN RURAL INDIA

New Delhi: Union government on Saturday stressed on localised containment strategies in states where Test Positive Rate (TPR) in districts is high and adopt 'door to door testing and surveillance in rural India' to contain the spread of Covid-19. The Prime Minister gave the direction while chairing a high-level meeting to discuss the Covid-19 and vaccination related situation in the country which is passing through the second wave of the deadly disease.

India remains hugely concerning: WHO

Geneva: India remains hugely concerning, with several states continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalizations and deaths, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General said in a briefing that WHO is responding and has shipped thousands of oxygen concentrators, tents for mobile field hospitals, masks and other medical supplies. "And we thank all the stakeholders who are supporting India," he said. "COVID-19 has already cost more than 3.3 million lives and we're on track for the second year of this pandemic to be far more deadly than the first," Tedros said.

Desperate villagers clash at Bihar health centre over getting vax

PATNA | Agencies

In a bid to get the anti-coronavirus jab, villagers fought with each other, sparking a massive clash at a primary health centre of Aurangabad's Dev block in Bihar on Saturday.

Eyewitnesses said more than 850 people turned out at a single health centre in the hope of getting the vaccination. "The villagers of Dev and adjoining areas came to the health centre and formed a long queue outside. Soon, they became out of control in absence of police personnel



and began pushing one another. Moreover, a group of people tried to jump into the queue which eventually turned into a massive fight between them," said Sunil Kumar, a villager of Dev.

He said that 12 village panchayats fall under the Dev block and a majority of the villagers come to the centre to get the vaccine.

GO FOR ANOTHER TEST IF SYMPTOMS PERSIST AFTER RT-PCR: AIIMS

New Delhi: If the RT-PCR test comes out negative, but symptoms are present, it is recommended to go for another test, suggested All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Saturday. The Central government institute also suggested to "immediately isolate yourself from others" if fever, dry cough, tiredness and loss of taste or smell, irritation in throat, headache, body ache, diarrhoea, rash on skin and redness is observed, clarifying that these are commonly observed symptoms among Covid-19 patients. "80 per cent of infected patients experience very mild symptoms," said the AIIMS.

India needs stricter action as WhatsApp privacy policy goes live

- After persistent reminders, the users will encounter limited functionality on WhatsApp until they accept the updates.
- The users won't be able to access chat list. After a few weeks of limited functionality, they won't be able to receive incoming calls or notifications and WhatsApp will stop sending messages and calls to their



Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the controversial WhatsApp privacy policy coming into effect from Saturday for its over 2 billion users including

more than 400 million in India, industry experts emphasised that the government must implement stricter data privacy rules and restrain the Facebook-owned app as was done while ban-

ning Chinese apps to protect the sovereignty of the country.

Giving an interim solace for those who do not accept the new policy, WhatsApp has said that its users will not immediately lose their accounts or face curtailed functionalities on the platform on May 15, but they will have to eventually go through limited functions if they fail to accept the new norms in the due course of time.

On Thursday, a senior Ministry of Electronics and IT official said during an Assocham event that the government is pro-actively looking at a best possible action over the new WhatsApp privacy policy.

WhatsApp has said that after giving everyone time to review the privacy policy from May 15, after a period of several weeks, the reminder people receive will eventually become persistent.

RECOVERED COVID PATIENT SPENDS RS 3.6K FOR 4 KM RIDE BACK HOME IN TN

Chennai: Due to the lockdown, recovered Covid patients are finding it tough to reach their homes, as the call taxis and auto rickshaws are not plying on the streets citing police threat, said the son of a recovered patient. "My mother, who had tested positive for Covid-19, was discharged today (Saturday). But call taxis and auto rickshaws were not accepting rides citing police harassment. They said police were levying heavy fines," Narayanan Anand, a private sector employee, told reporter.

According to him, his booking with an Ola cab got cancelled four times, while the same happened with Uber twice. Finally he managed to get hold of an ambulance service provider who charged about Rs 1,000 per km which came to Rs 3,600 in his case. The government as part of its lockdown restrictions had clearly said that call taxis and auto rickshaws are permitted if the passengers had to go to hospitals.

Covid outcomes may be more severe in children

- The study echoes the condition of many children infected with Covid-19 in the ongoing second and lethal wave of Coronavirus in India. Besides symptoms such as mild fever, cough, cold and abdominal issues, some even complained of body pain, headache, diarrhoea and vomiting. Children, even those below 1 year of age, were infected with the virus.
- Some kids are also reporting more severe complications like multi-system inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) -- a rare inflammatory condition with persistent fever. It generally occurs 2-4 weeks after the onset of Covid. Health experts have urged parents not to take their kids out and expose them to the virus.

For the study, the team identified nearly 12,000 pediatric Covid-19 patients. The team found that the most common symptoms included cough and difficulty breathing, gastrointestinal complaints such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain, and non-specific symptoms such as fever, tiredness, muscle pain, and disturbance of taste and smell.



NEW YORK | Agencies

Children with Covid-19 may not display typical symptoms such as fever, cough and shortness of breath, therefore more screening and vigilance are required, researchers warned. The study led by researchers at University of Alabama - Birmingham, US, found that children with Covid-19 may develop poor clinical out-

comes such as requiring hospitalisation, critical care services and mechanical ventilation.

"While the rates of poor clinical outcomes are relatively lower in children when compared to adults, 5-6 percent still required hospitalisation. Among those hospitalised, 18 per cent required critical care and 4 per cent needed a ventilator for breathing," said Vibhu Parcha, a clinical research fellow in the Division of Cardiovascular Disease.

The study also showed racial disparities in

health care -- evident in the higher risk of hospitalisation among children from underserved minority populations. The findings are published in the Nature Scientific Reports journal.

The World Health Organisation, in an October 2020 document, reported that Covid-19 is much less frequent in children than in adults. Children and adolescents represented about 8 per cent of reported cases (and 29 per cent of the global population).

4 killed, 7 hurt in Maharashtra building slabs crash



THANE | Agencies

At least four persons were killed and 7 hurt when the slab of a residential building crashed in the Ulhasnagar town of the district here on Saturday afternoon, officials said.

Besides, another 10 persons were rescued and search is on for some missing persons suspected to be buried under the debris, according to the Thane Fire Brigade. The incident occurred around 1.45 pm when the slab on the top floor of the ground-plus four-storied building, Mohini Palace in Camp 1 suddenly came crashing down.

As it fell it brought down other slabs on the lower floors taking along several of the residents, many of whom were trapped in the rubble.

Teams of the NDRF and Thane Disaster Response

Force, police and fire brigade besides locals rushed to the spot and started rescue operations in which at least 10 persons have been rescued so far after five hours.

Among the victims were a minor boy Monty Parshie, 12, two women Savitri Parshie, 60 and Aishwarya Dudhwal, 24, and Harish Dudhwal, 40, while one Sandhya Dudhwal is reported missing in the debris. The district administration has announced a compensation of Rs.5-lakhs to the kin of each deceased victim and further search is on to trace the other missing persons amid fears of the Cyclone Tauktae intensifying in Thane. Housing over 500,000 people, Ulhasnagar was one of the earliest settlements in the country housing Sindhi refugees to migrated from India from Pakistan during the Partition in 1947.



MAHARASHTRA ALL SET TO FACE CYCLONE TAUKTAE FURY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the Cyclone Tauktae whirls towards the Gujarat coast, Maharashtra is preparing to grapple its impact on the coastal Konkan and some interiors which are likely to be affected with heavy rains and gusty winds, officials said here on Saturday.

The entire coastal belt comprising Palghar, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg besides Mumbai is in a state of high alert with all rescue and relief agencies in full preparedness to tackle any eventualities.

The NDRF has deployed 3 teams in Mumbai, 15 in Pune and one in Goa with Cyclone Tauktae now said to be in the Arabian Sea off north Karnataka-south Maharashtra coasts. However, officials are optimistic that Maharashtra may escape the fury of the cyclone as it is likely to pass around 250 kms in the Arabian Sea, moving at an average speed of 7 kms/hr.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has reviewed the situation and asked the people and the government machinery to be vigilant, rekindling memories of the devastating Cyclone Nisarga that pounded Raigad-Ratnagiri in June 2020, at the height of the pandemic lockdown.

"In a preparatory meeting regarding Cyclone Tauktae on Friday night, Thackeray has instructed all Divisional Commissioners and district Collectors to be vigilant and well-



equipped in coastal areas, especially in Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg," informed an official of the CMO. Minister for Higher & Technical Education Uday Samant, who hails from Konkan said that the authorities are in complete readiness to handle any eventuality over the next few days. "We have also made special arrangements for hospitals and Covid-19 care centres, arranged backup generators for oxygen plants, fleets of ambulances deployed in case patients need to be evacuated and other requirements," Samant said.

Head of SID at the Climate Research and Services Pune, K. S. Hosalkar said that the latest satellite images indicate the system is getting matured and cloud bands are now on

coastal north Karnataka, Goa and south Maharashtra also.

Since past three days, a low pressure area has been rapidly developing over the Lakshadweep Isles and the Arabian Sea, with a powerful Cyclone Tauktae expected to hit the states on the west-coast of India, the IMD said.

The IMD has already put Mumbai and Thane under a Yellow Alert, signifying isolated heavy rains accompanied by strong winds, while an Orange Alert and Red Alert has been issued for several districts of Gujarat and Kerala. The Cyclone Tauktae will intensify into a full-fledged cyclonic storm on Sunday, causing heavy rains accompanied by gusty winds in southern and western coastal parts of the country, and it is expected to lash

Gujarat coast by morning of May 18.

The storm has already resulted in rainfall in large areas in Lakshadweep Isles, Kerala, parts of Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri and Palghar, with predictions of heavy to very heavy spells in some places and extremely heavy rains in isolated places till Sunday.

In Kerala, more heavy to very heavy rains are forecast for Saturday and heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places on Sunday and Monday, according to the IMD.

The cyclone would trigger heavy rains in Mumbai, coastal Southern Konkan region's Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts of Maharashtra, parts of Goa and Gujarat over the next three days when it reaches the Gujarat coast on Tuesday. Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg are likely to witness very heavy rains on Sunday and Monday, while Mumbai, Thane, Raigad will be llobbered with very heavy downpour on Monday, besides thunderstorms likely to hit Satara, Kolhapur, parts of the Western Ghats and Pune over Sunday and Monday. Coastal Maharashtra especially south Konkan could be lashed by squalls reaching speeds of upto 60 kmph on Saturday, and increasing up to 80 kmph on Maharashtra-Goa coasts on Sunday (May 16), besides very rough seas.

Fishermen already out in the Arabian Sea have been advised to return and others are warned not to venture into the sea from May 14-18.

Maha Corona crises: Fadnavis complains to Sonia Gandhi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Marking an unprecedented step, Maharashtra Bharatiya Janata Party's Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis here on Saturday shot off a detailed letter to Congress President Sonia Gandhi highlighting the acts of commission and omission by the state government in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis.

Fadnavis said he felt compelled to pen the letter after Sonia Gandhi's recent letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the reactions of various Congress leaders and since she was not apprised of certain issues pertaining to the same which he sought to highlight.

In the 4-page letter in Hindi, the BJP leader has targeted the Congress, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state and sought to defend the Centre and Modi.

Among other things, Fadnavis has stated how Maharashtra continues to account for 22 per cent of the Covid spread, which was earlier over 30 per cent, the state has 31 per cent of the total national death toll, and 14 per cent of all active cases in the country, and 22 per cent of the deaths in the ongoing second wave.

Fadnavis points out that though there is no BJP government in the state, the Centre has been giving full help to Maharashtra by way of 1.80 crore vaccine doses, 800,000-plus Remdesivir injections, 1,750 tonnes of oxygen, and other assistance, but in order to hide their shortcomings, some leaders keep targeting the Modi government.

He also attacked the MVA for allegedly suppressing figures of cases/fatalities, including



Mumbai - (whose example was recently praised by the Centre and courts) - and demanded to know whether 'hiding 9603 deaths in 2020 was a form of 'Maharashtra Model' practiced here".

The state BJP leader also dwelt on how the state is ignoring the rural hinterland where many requirements are still lacking, rampant blackmarketing of Remdesivir, the lockdown periods have been extended, budget figures are being manipulated in the name of elusive aid packages for the affected sections of the population.

Asking Sonia Gandhi and others to first check the status in her party ruled states before criticizing Modi, Fadnavis claimed that merely criticising the Centre or each other in these times critical times would not help, and he was merely trying to point out certain things without politicising.

Lavishing praise on the PM, he said the whole world is watching how he's handling the Covid crisis in the country, how the world is helping out India and now the Congress should stop indulging in politics since "it's the public, and they know everything."

Mumbai Police give 'Friends' reunion witty spin to spread Covid awareness

"Reunite' with your F.R.I.E.N.D.S - but only after the final season of #COVID19 please? Till then, online meet-ups will be there for you' #FriendsForever #FriendsOfSafety #TakingOnCorona," the tweet on the microblogging web-site read.



awareness.

The official Twitter handle of Mumbai Police shared a snapshot of the "Friends" reunion teaser and urged everyone to reunite with friends only after the final season of Covid-19.

"Reunite' with your F.R.I.E.N.D.S - but only after the final season of #COVID19 please? Till then, online meet-ups will be there for you' #FriendsForever

#FriendsOfSafety #TakingOnCorona," the tweet on the microblogging website read. This is not the first time Mumbai Police has referred to the entertainment world to create awareness. Previously they have tweeted with stills and dialogues from films like "Uri: The Surgical Strike", "GulaboSitabo", "Main Hoon Na" and "Stree" among many others for the purpose.

Covid resurgence to cause short-term disruption in credit off take: HDFC Securities

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The second wave of pandemic is expected to cause short-term disruption in credit off take, said HDFC Securities in a report.

"We expect recovery in credit growth over the medium term for our coverage universe," the report said. However, it pointed out that industrial credit growth remained muted although registering positive YoY growth for the first time since September.

"The large industrial credit, which constitutes 82 per cent of industrial credit, continued to de-grow at (-) 0.8 per cent YoY as the Capex cycle still remains elusive."

"Growth in credit to medium industries continued to surge, reaching 28.8 per cent YoY aided by disbursements under the ECLGS."

Nonetheless, micro and small



industries continued to grow slowly at just 0.5 per cent YoY. "Within industrial credit, credit for roads increased by 34.4 per cent YoY. Credit to the textile sector continued to dip (-) 0.9 per cent MoM, although YoY growth stood at 4.6 per cent." "Certain segments such as metals, all engineering, telecom and construction saw per-

sistent YoY de-growth." Besides, it cited that service sector credit growth decelerated significantly, reaching 1.4 per cent YoY in March 2021, after having improved to 9.3 per cent YoY in February 2021. "Within this segment, growth in credit to NBFCs increased to 4.5 per cent YoY while growth in credit for 'other services' de-grew (-)

6.7 per cent YoY." "Overall, trade credit growth improved to 11.8 per cent YoY. Wholesale and retail trade credit growth improved to 21.2 per cent YoY and 3.3 per cent YoY respectively."

In terms of the personal loan segment, the report cited a continued improvement in growth to 10.2 per cent YoY after hitting a 10-year low of 9.1 per cent YoY in January.

"This trend was led by growth in home loans and other personal loans." "Growth in credit card receivables improved to 7.8 per cent YoY. Vehicle loan growth continued to move closer to October 20 levels, reaching 9.5 per cent YoY."

It said that personal loan has been the most significantly impacted segment by Covid-19. In addition, agricultural credit growth continued to accelerate, reaching 12.3 per cent YoY boosted by back-to-back surplus monsoon seasons.

Maharashtra leads list of states where active caseload declined the most in last 15 days

Data shared by the ministry showed that Maharashtra, which had 664,683 active cases on May 1, witnessed a decline of 143,000 and currently accounts for 521,683 active cases.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra leads the list of states where the number of active cases of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) has declined the maximum in a 15-day period starting from May 1. Uttar

Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat and Telangana are the other states or Union territories which also saw a decline in their respective active caseload. In a tweet on Saturday, the Union ministry of health and family welfare listed five states where the active caseload declined the most since May 1 and another five states where it increased the most in the same period. Data shared by the ministry showed that Maharashtra, which had 664,683 active cases on May 1, witnessed a decline of 143,000 and currently accounts for 521,683 cases. Uttar Pradesh followed closely, as the active cases in the state fell by 116,968 and stood at 193,815 on Saturday from the 310,783 reported on May 1.

Meanwhile, the national capital Delhi reported 99,361 active cases on May 1 which has now reduced to 71,794 cases. The Union health ministry noted that this fall of 27,567 cases is the third highest in the mentioned time period. Gujarat and Telangana, two states which have been reporting a high number of new infections in the second wave, also witnessed a decline in their respective active caseload in the past 15 days. Gujarat's active caseload was 142,046 on May 1 and fell by 24,673 and currently stands at 117,373. Telangana reported 78,888 active cases and currently has 54,832, a decline of 24,056 cases.

Four southern states -- Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra

Pradesh -- along with Odisha saw their active caseload increasing in the last 15 days. Among these states, Karnataka witnessed the maximum spike. The state had 382,710 active cases on May 1 which has now grown to 598,625, an increase of 215,915 cases. Currently it has the maximum number of active cases among all states in India and adds 28 per cent to the national tally. Kerala saw its active caseload grow by 138,476 and currently has 442,550 cases from the 304,074 reported on May 1. Andhra Pradesh witnessed the third highest increase (80,807 cases added) in the 15 days. The state had 122,980 active cases on May 1 and currently has 203,787 cases.

Maha sees Covid deaths, cases drop; tally crosses 53 lakh

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra saw Covid-19 fatalities and new infections drop sharply on Friday, but the state tally crossed the 53 lakh mark and the toll raced past the 79,000 level, health officials said.

Compared with 850 deaths on Thursday, the state fatalities fell to 695, taking the toll to 79,552, while the number of new infections remained below the 50,000-level, dropping to 39,923, with the state tally rising to 53,09,215 now. The Mumbai situation contin-



ues to improve, with infections remaining below the 3,000-level, and further dropping to 1,660 - and the city

tally increased to 684,845, while deaths went down to 62 now, taking the total fatalities in the country's commercial capital to 14,102. For the second day, the state death rate remained stable at 1.05 per cent, while the number of active cases dropped from 533,294 to 519,254. Meanwhile, 53,249 fully-cured patients -- again more than the number of fresh infections -- returned home, taking the total to 47,07,980, while the recovery rate further improved from 88.34 per cent to 88.68 per cent now.

Maharashtra wants 50% vaccine doses of Bharat Biotech's Pune plant

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said Bharat Biotech had asked for 11.58 hectares in Pune district to set up a vaccine manufacturing plant, and that the government was actively providing assistance.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The state government will urge Bharat Biotech, the Hyderabad-based firm that is manufacturing the Covid-19 vaccine, to reserve 50 per cent doses manufactured at its proposed Pune plant for supply within Maharashtra, said deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar on Friday.

Pawar chaired the weekly Covid-19 review meeting at Pune's Council Hall. The administration discussed plans to deal with mucormycosis infections being detected in some Covid-19 patients.

Pawar said Bharat Biotech had asked for 11.58 hectares in Pune district to set up a vaccine manufacturing plant, and that the government was actively providing assistance.

"Pune divisional commissioner and district collector are going to process the request for the land at the soonest. They will also work on speedy approval for the provision of water, electricity and other essentials for the plant. It may take up to three months until the vaccine production commences at the plant. The company



will have to provide 50 per cent of the produced vaccine to the central government. However, we will request Bharat Biotech to reserve the rest (of the vaccine) for use

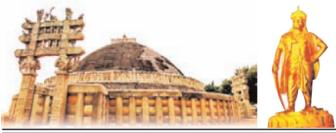
within the state," he said. Pawar also said the central government should regularly provide details about foreign aid received and its distribution among states. He also slammed criticism by Pune BJP leaders that the state government had deliberately delayed permission to the PMC to float a global tender to procure 25 lakh vaccines for Pune city.

"I have received a letter from BJP's Ganesh Bidkar on this issue. I must make it clear that the PMC does not need permission from the state government to float a global tender for vaccine procurement. I checked this information from the secretary of the urban development department (Bhushan Gagrani) and principal secretary Mahesh Pathak. The BMC took a decision in this regard on its own. Hence, what BJP leaders are saying has no meaning," he said.

The deputy chief minister said mucormycosis infections was an area of concern and the administration had stepped up efforts to ensure that patients got timely treatment and requisite medicine for the same.

"Mucormycosis patients have been identified in Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and rural areas. The treatment involves expensive injections, which may cost up to Rs 15 lakh. We have included the ailment under the flagship Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MPJAY) so that people can get treatment under the scheme," he said.

He said the administration was conducting a fire and electricity audit of all hospitals in the district after fire incidents at hospitals in Mumbai. "We have reports that some hospitals did not allow our teams to go ahead with the audit. Today (Friday), I instructed police that they should take strict action against such hospitals. It is something that will be good for all," he said.



EARLY DETECTION OF BLACK FUNGUS CASES SHOULD BE ENSURED - CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan has said that for the early detection of cases of black fungus, there is an urgent need to carry out a massive campaign in the entire state. Advisory should be issued by developing necessary strategies for immediate identification of cases of black fungus at each ward and village level. This will ensure immediate treatment in such cases. Chouhan has also instructed to create special wards in five medical colleges Bhopal, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Indore and Rewa for the treatment of black fungus.

Chouhan was addressing the 'brainstorm' on video conferencing with experts and group of officers on future action plans for strengthening Covid control and health services from the residence. Chouhan said that the campaign against Corona in the state was conducted with the cooperation of the public. From the district to the village level, the fight against Covid fought with the help of public through disaster management groups and other means has been successful and the infection has been controlled in the state. There is a long battle in this direction. The state government considers suggestions and discussion necessary to improve its strategy at every level. This meeting of experts and officials has been



called for the purpose of Madhya Pradesh ideally to control Covid.

Chouhan asked experts and group of officers to increase the participation of society in the management of Covid-19, make habits and behaviours necessary for Covid control to be a part of life permanently, better management of private and government hospitals, strengthening of health services, To encourage citizens to adopt healthy liv-

ing practices, seek suggestions regarding the expansion of traditional medical practices and relevance to the best practices of other states and countries and their state. Along with this, suggestions were also invited regarding the post covid care process, the condition and prevention of black fungus, the necessary preparations keeping in mind the third wave of corona and how we behaved after corona. Additional Chief

Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman gave a presentation on the management of Covid-19 in the state.

Sachin Chaturvedi said that where there are more cases including Bhopal, Indore, special strategy will have to be adopted. Community efforts should be presented on a special portal. Documentation of efforts to connect the community. State level testing, tracing as well as micro containment approach will have to be adopted. It is necessary to make efforts to preserve the economy. The next strategy should be developed by coordinating Digit Data for Health, E Sanjivani and Ayushman Bharat. There should be better coordination between private, government hospitals and insurance companies. Ayush Kit, Brew, There will also be a need to follow the discipline of Aayush with the use of steam. Rural health workers should be recruited to increase testing in rural areas. Negotiate the states together for the value of the vaccine. Talking with the Reserve Bank, taking advantage of the package of 50 crores, encourage entrepreneurs to install oxygen units. It is possible to build an economically prosperous Madhya Pradesh only from healthy Madhya Pradesh, so entrepreneurs should be encouraged to set up medicines and oxygen production units.

Madhya Pradesh Extends Ban on Interstate Bus Movement Till May 23

As per the new order issued by the state transport department, the ban on bus movement to and from the COVID-19-affected states of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh has been extended till May 23, additional commissioner transport Arvind Saxena said. The ban also covers vehicles that have All India tourist permits, the official added.



contain the spread of coronavirus. The state government had on May 7 issued an order banning interstate movement of passenger buses, which was effective till Saturday.

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The ban also covers vehicles that have All India tourist permits, the official added.

Madhya Pradesh on Friday reported 8,087 fresh COVID-19 cases and 88 fatalities that took the tally of infections to 7,16,708 and toll to 6,841.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government on Saturday extended the ban on the movement of passenger buses to and from Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan till May 23, as a measure to

Tiger Found Dead In BTR, 3rd In State This Week

Madhya Pradesh is home to a number of tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna. The central Indian state had regained the top slot in the 2018 census with a population of 526 tigers.



Representational Image

near a drain in the buffer area on Friday, Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve's field director Vincent Raheem said while talking to this correspondent over the phone.

"As the carcass was highly decomposed, the tiger's tongue and an internal organ were sent for testing to ascertain the cause of the death. The report is awaited," Raheem added. The carcass has been disposed of as per the guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), he said. Last Saturday (May 8), a tiger was

found dead in Kanha Tiger Reserve, officials said. A day before that, a dead sub-adult tiger (aged between 18 and 24 months) was found floating in a canal of an inter-state water project in Balaghat's Waraseoni tehsil, they added.

Madhya Pradesh is home to a number of tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna. The central Indian state had regained the top slot in the 2018 census with a population of 526 tigers.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A tiger was found dead in the buffer zone of the Bandhavgarh tiger Reserve (BTR) which took the number of tiger fatalities reported in the state to three within a week, an official said today. The decomposed carcass of the tiger was found

Govt Officials Vaccinate BJP MP's Staff, Kin At Home; Probe Ordered

The incident reportedly occurred at Ujjain BJP MP Anil Firojiya's residence. The incident came to light when BJP worker Kapil Katariya posted a picture of himself getting a Covid-19 vaccine on Friday and thanked Firojiya for it.

Team Absolute | Indore

Madhya Pradesh authorities have ordered an inquiry to probe reports of government healthcare workers having vaccinated BJP members and their families at the residence of BJP MP Anil Firojiya's in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain.

The incident came to light when BJP worker Kapil Katariya posted a picture of himself getting a Covid-19 vaccine on Friday and thanked Firojiya for it.

While authorities have said that there is no provision for inoculating anyone at their home, the Opposition Congress has hit out at the state machinery and Firojiya over the incident. This incident comes at a time when many states and Union Territories are facing a shortage of Covid-19 vaccines. Earlier this week, the Delhi government said



it was shutting down a few vaccination centres because of lack of doses.

Further, a number of social media users shared the pictures of the vaccination exercise carried out at the politician's residence and criticised the move. However, Firojiya defended himself saying that one of his party workers had called the medical team to his place without his knowledge.

"I was not at home. My mother is very old and she has also suffered injuries in her leg. So, one of our workers, Kapil Katariya, called the team. Had I known it before, I would never have allowed this to happen," Firojiya told media persons.

He further said he had himself received the vaccine at a hospital. "Rules are the same for everybody," he said. Ujjain district collector Ashish Singh said he has ordered an inquiry into the matter.

"I asked the officials to provide information about who gave the permission to send the team there. Strict action will be taken against the guilty. There is no provision to send a team to anybody's home," he said.

Congress MLA Mahesh Parmar while talking to media persons said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had tweeted a picture of him getting a jab in a hospital, but the Ujjain MP does not seem to be following his leader.

"The Ujjain MP considers himself a VVIP and calls the medical team to his home. This is Centre's failure. This is a shameful act," he said.

Parmar, who represents Tarana Assembly constituency, said that the incident has taken place when people are facing a crisis of medicines, oxygen and unavailability of doctors in the midst of pandemic. "Despite this scenario, a medical team is being sent to the residence of the local Lok Sabha member," he alleged. He said Firojiya should be removed from the post and the officials responsible for it should be sacked.

USE MASKS TO BREAK CHAIN OF CORONA INFECTION: MISHRA

Bhopal: Home Minister Narottam Mishra called upon the people to follow the corona guide line and get vaccinated to break the corona chain. Mishra was addressing the inauguration ceremony of 10 bedded wards at Basai Community Health Center in Datia district. He also inaugurated the isolation ward at Basai. He said that Chief Minister S Shivraj Singh Chauhan is reviewing and giving necessary instructions regularly to control the corona in the state, which should be followed by all. Mishra started and supervised the Covid Care Center (Isolation) set up in Basai Hostel. Taking stock of the arrangements, he gave necessary guidelines to the doctors. He said that due to the commencement of oxygen ward in Basai, patients will not have to bother for treatment. Now the patients will be able to get oxygen facility easily, they will be able to get back to their homes soon after getting well. He instructed the doctors that proper treatment should be ensured for the treatment of the infected patients of Corona. Mishra informed that 89 lakh 60 thousand people above 45 years of age have been vaccinated by Covid. The vaccination process continues. He urged the people above 18 years of age to book a slot and get vaccinated. Mishra appealed to the people to break the chain of corona infection, all use masks, sanitization and to follow the covid guide line completely. Get out of the house only when necessary work is done.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Medical Education Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang inaugurated the step down unit at Ashoka Garden Urban Health Center on Saturday. The ten-bed step-down unit has been established under the joint aegis of the Health Department and the Whish Foundation.

Sarang informed that the patients who were in normal condition after treatment in government and private dedicated health center and dedicated Covid Hospital in step down unit, who need to be kept under medical supervision in the hospital for a long



time due to comorbidities or other health problems. Or if they require oxygen, they will be referred to the step down unit. With the operation of the unit, space will be available for serious patients at Dedicated Covid Health

Center and Dedicated Covid Hospital. Sarang informed that 3 doctors and 3 staff nurses along with specialist will provide 24 hours services to monitor and provide treatment to the patients admitted in this unit. Yoga practice

sessions will be organized daily for the mental health of the admitted patients. Online entertainment programs will also be organized on Saturday and Sunday.

The necessary human resources for setting up this unit, oxygen concentrator, PPE kit, sanitizer, pulse oximeter, non-touch thermometer and other necessary resources for the supply of oxygen have been made available. Arrangements are also being made to bring patients to the center. Sarang informed that apart from Bhopal, the work of setting up step-down units is also being done in other districts of the state.

10th Board Exams Cancelled, 12th Exams Postponed

The Madhya Pradesh School Education Department has Cancelled Class 10 final exams and postponed Class 12 final exams until further orders, in view of the COVID-19 situation in the state.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh School Education Department has Cancelled Class 10 final exams and has again post-

poned Class 12 final exams until further orders, in view of the COVID-19 situation in the state. For Class 12, new dates will be announced when the situation improves and students will be given information at least 20 days in advance, it said.

"Keeping in view the severity of corona infection, the 12th examinations to be conducted by the Board of Secondary Education are postponed until further orders," the School Education Department said on social media.

Gathering of students at one place could result in the

spread of the virus and therefore, the board has decided to cancel Class 10 final exams, an official statement said. The board has also announced the criteria for promoting Class 10 students to the next higher class.

The board will consider students' performance in the half yearly, pre-board, exams, unit tests and internal assessments held during the academic year for preparing results. Earlier, on April 26, the board postponed the Class 10 and Class 12 board exams. The Class 12 exams were originally scheduled to begin on May 1.

Deficiency in ration distribution to beneficiaries will not be tolerated: Yadav FAIR PRICE SHOPS WILL BE INSPECTED CONTINUOUSLY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The government fair price shop operators should ensure the distribution of ration to the poor with complete honesty. The shop should be opened on time, the ration should be received by the poor people in prescribed quantity. No negligence will be tolerated in this. During the Corona curfew, the poor laborers continue to have their food provided even after the work is not done, this is a clear instruction of the Chief Minister of the state, Shivraj Singh Chauhan. Minister of State for Public Health Engineering and Ashoknagar District in-charge of Covid-19 Brijendra Singh Yadav said these things while inspecting the fair price shop located in the township of Mungavali. Yadav visited the fair price shop and inspected the food items, store registers



and portals available in the shop. He also inquired about distribution of ration from the shop operators and eligible beneficiaries.

Covid-19 Minister in-charge that fair price shops will be subjected to continuous inspection of food and revenue staff by the district

administration. During the Corona curfew, swift and harsh action will be taken against the shop operators who have committed to give free rations to the eligible beneficiaries. He said that 'poor kiplattikhali-hikhal' is the joint responsibility of the administration, administration and field staff.

The Minister of State held discussions with the Food Inspector on finding the government fair price shop Dundar closed. The Food Inspector informed that ration distribution has been shown on the portal.

The eligible beneficiaries associated with this shop told that they have not received ration as the shop has not opened for the last 15 days. Yadav instructed the Tehsildar Dinesh Sawale to submit the inquiry report in two days by matching the ration distribution and stock in the shop on the portal.

Local curfew in Indore villages

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Every effort is being made to deal with Corona in Indore district. Be it governance, administration, public representatives or rural people, everyone is making efforts in their own way. It is continuously seen in the rural areas of the district that the rural areas are united to strictly follow the public curfew to defeat the common people.

In charge of Indore district and Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silavat and Tourism Minister Usha Thakur during the visit to Mhow area, one such example appeared today in village Malendi of Mhow development block. While the villagers arranged for barricading from local resources in the village border to control the movement during the

Janata curfew, entry of outsiders from here was restricted to perfection. Silavat and Thakur, Collector Manish Singh also followed this arrangement of the villagers. Talked to villagers outside the village and appreciated their efforts. During the visit, the Ministers Silavat and Thakur urged the villagers to be alert and careful not to panic from Corona. Immediately check for symptoms as soon as you see them. Stay in isolation when positive. Those who have a living arrangement in their houses, have enough rooms, they should stay in isolation in the houses. Do not move around here and there. Villagers who do not have a place in their home and are positive, then they can stay isolated by going to the Covid Care Center.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

MANY OLDER ADULTS ADAPTED TECHNOLOGY DURING LOCKDOWN: STUDY

LONDON | Agencies

The Covid-19 lockdown led several older adults to adapt and engage with technology -- such as Zoom, WhatsApp or FaceTime -- to stay in touch with loved ones or participate in exercise classes or religious groups, finds a new study.

The participants reported that lockdown had led them to engage with neighbours and other members of their communities for the first time, while several said social distancing had brought an additional meaning to life, by highlighting what was important to them. "Those who engaged in such activity were able to prevent high levels of loneliness, therefore, helping older adults to increase their digital literacy and use of remote social interactions could be a really important tool for addressing loneliness," said researcher Anna Whittaker from the University of Stirling. According to the research, understanding the

coping mechanisms adopted by some over the 60s during the pandemic will play a key role in developing interventions to help tackle loneliness, isolation and well-being in the future. For the study, published in the International Journal of Environmental



Research and Public Health, the team surveyed 1,429 participants -- 84 per cent (1,198) of whom were over 60. The researchers examined the impact of social distancing during the pandemic on loneliness, wellbeing and social activity, including social support. More than 150 participants reported that their religious gatherings had moved online -- replacing face-to-face gatherings -- while 91 said that social gatherings with family and friends had changed in favour of online 'games nights'. The role of community -- particularly neighbours -- was mentioned by more than 300 participants.

The GST Council will meet for the first time this year on May 28, through video conferencing. The meeting coming in the backdrop of the fresh and more deadly Covid wave sweeping the country, is expected to announce a few Covid relief measures particularly on compliance matters. It may also announce a few measures to correct the inverted duty while discuss the compensation cess dues arising in 2021-22 due to a possible shortfall in cess collections.

Two other important items including lowering of GST rates for two wheelers and bringing natural gas into the indirect tax fold may also be included in the agenda for discussion. Smt @nsitharaman will chair the 43rd GST Council meeting via video conferencing at 11 AM in New Delhi on 28th May 2021. The meeting will be attended by MOS Shri @ianuragthakur besides Finance Ministers of States & UTs and Senior officers from Union Government & States," the office of the finance minister said in a tweet.

The GST Council has not met since October last year when the panel of finance ministers discussed GST compensation and the borrowing formula offered by the Centre towards compensating states for GST shortfall.

The 43rd meeting of the council is expected to again discuss the compensation issue for the current year but sources said it may also take a few steps to correct

GST Council to meet 1st time in 2021 on May 28 to discuss Covid relief

inverted duty structure without pursuing any increase in GST rates or move towards converging GST to a three rate structure.

Sources said that the council may at the next meeting also take up two other important items including lowering of GST rates for two wheelers and bringing natural gas into the indirect tax fold.

A top source in the finance ministry said that inverted duty correction, GST cut on two wheelers and inclusion of natural gas into GST fold are on the agenda and hopefully the council will offer some solution that is in the best interest of all stakeholders.

Correction of inverted duty structure, especially in sectors such as fertilizer, steel utensils, solar modules, tractors, tyres, electrical transformers, pharma, textile, fabric, railway locomotives among other goods is required.

Inverted duty refers to tax rates on

inputs being higher than those levied on finished products. This results in higher input credit claims by goods besides several administrative and compliance issues.

Currently, while duty on imported tyres is 10 per cent its inputs ie rubber attracts 20 per cent duty. Similarly, solar modules do not attract any duty while its components attract 5-10 per cent duty.

Similarly, the council may also consider lowering of GST rate of 28 per cent on two wheelers to give a boost to its sales affected during the pandemic. With a pickup in rural demand, as seen with increased tractor sales, any cut in rates would help the two wheeler makers to increase sales with competitive pricing.

The Council has in principle agreed to include five petroleum products under GST but has so far deferred its actual inclusion into the indirect as states fear big loss of revenue. But now, the government is considering bringing natural gas



under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime to begin with as it would be difficult to bring the entire oil and gas sector immediately under it.

Sources said that natural gas may be included under a three-tier GST structure where rates would vary depending on the usage. So, while piped natural gas (PNG) for homes may be kept at a lower rate of 5 per cent, commercial piped gas may attract the median 18 per cent GST rate and automobile fuel CNG may be kept in the highest bracket of 28 per cent.

India needs its own crypto unicorns: Experts

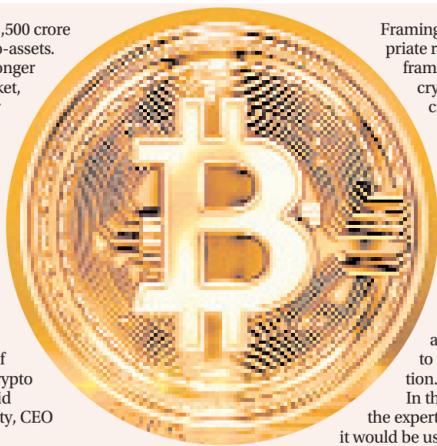
"India needs its own crypto unicorns and better regulations and for this, we must encourage our entrepreneurs to build for crypto," he added.

Stressing that India needs smart and sensible crypto regulation, leading cryptocurrency players in the country on Friday urged the government against the ban and sought engagement to build consensus on crypto regulation.

The government earlier indicated that it would take a 'calibrated approach' towards digital assets and formulating a Bill on cryptocurrencies. A final decision is yet to be taken.

At a webinar organised by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and its Blockchain and Crypto Assets Council (BACC) members, the stakeholders said that consultation and dissemination of information between the government and the industry participants is crucial to determining the most appropriate regulatory framework and supporting innovation. "There are over 1.5 crore Indians hold-

ing over Rs 1,500 crore worth crypto-assets. India is no longer a niche market, but a rapidly growing finance market. Despite the growth in crypto adoption, India is behind in terms of both regulations as well as number of successful crypto startups," said Nischal Shetty, CEO WazirX.



Framing an appropriate regulatory framework for cryptocurrencies and crypto assets continues to be a challenge with countries taking differing approaches to find a solution. In this regard, the experts said that it would be useful to

consider the approach of other jurisdictions such as Singapore that has taken a balanced approach with regulations aimed at preventing nefarious activity without impeding technology innovation. "India and Singapore are both emerging as fintech hubs and we hope that regulation in India will catch up soon with global best practices," said Vivek Kathalia, Head, Singapore Office and Leader, Technology Law, Nishith Desai Associates.

Stressing the need for collaborative effort amongst regulators and industry, Sriram Chakravarthi, Counsel, Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP stated that "in order to create an effective regulatory framework, governments should collaborate with the crypto-industry and representative bodies, and consider international approaches -- particularly on the cross-border aspects of crypto-regulation".

Covid pushes India's Pharma industry growth to 59% in April



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The fresh wave of Covid-19 in the country has pushed up sales of medicines and resulted in exponential growth for the pharmaceutical sector. According to total sales audit data from world's largest pharmaceutical market research firm IMS Health, the Indian Pharma Market (IPM) grew 59 per cent yoy in April, 2021 vs 16 per cent yoy in March, 2021 due to the low base effect in April, 2020 and sharp surge in Covid-19-related sales.

On the MAT (moving annual turnover) basis, IPM grew 9.6 per cent, primarily driven by pricing growth of 4.3 per cent and new product launch growth of 4.6 per cent. Volume growth was muted at 0.8 per cent. According to a report from Emkay Global Financial Services, all major therapies posted high double-digit growth in April 21.

Within Chronic therapies, Cardiac therapy grew 22 per cent. Similarly

Anti-diabetic therapy grew 10 per cent. VMS (vitamins, minerals and supplements) posted record growth of 80 per cent in April 21 vs 27 per cent in March 21.

The growth in respiratory therapy rebounded sharply at 64 per cent in April 21 after falling for nine consecutive months.

As per the brokerage, DRL grew the fastest at 79 per cent yoy followed by Cipla (77 per cent yoy) and Cadila (53 per cent yoy). Sun Pharma, Lupin and Ipca Labs reported growth of 30-52 per cent yoy.

Other notable outperformers are Glenmark (172 per cent), Aristo (77 per cent), Macleods (69 per cent), and Alkem (82 per cent).

While IPM growth could be strong in the next couple of months, driven by surging Covid-19-related sales and likely impact of stocking up, we believe growth could normalize as Covid-19 would delay normalization, Emkay said.

CLIMATE PROTECTION DEPENDS ON POLITICAL MAJORITIES: MERKEL



BERLIN | Agencies

German Chancellor Angela Merkel stressed on Saturday that far-reaching climate protection measures could be implemented only with the corresponding political majorities. "I understand - and it makes me a little sad, of course - that young people say, 'man, we had to go to court first before those in the government actually give us what we're entitled to,'" dpa news agency quoted the Chancellor as saying during a discussion with German climate activist Luisa Neubauer.

However, it was also true that "in a

democracy, I always have to get majorities for something", she added.

Merkel pointed to her own rural constituency as an example, where concerns over the building of wind turbines are always accompanied by complaints.

Simply ignoring people's concerns could lead to a situation where climate deniers could be in the majority, she said, who used former US President Donald Trump as an example.

In April, the Constitutional Court ruled that Germany's climate protection law was insufficient, and ordered the government to implement more detailed regulations for the period after 2030. The

federal Cabinet passed a new version of the law on Wednesday.

Neubauer, however, said that she found it difficult to frame action on climate change with "but we're in a democracy," as such phrasing "implies that it would be democracy that is standing in our way". The question is not how much climate protection can democracy afford before it's overstretched, Neubauer added, but rather "what do democracies need in the 21st century to get through this crisis?" "How should they be equipped. Because it's clear that more climate crises won't do our democracies any good."

INDIA TO BECOME MAJOR PRODUCTION HUB FOR ACC BATTERIES: ICEA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

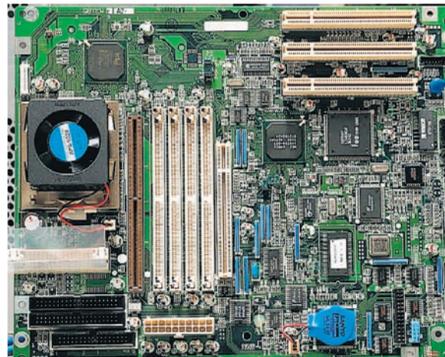
The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) has welcomed the Rs 18,100 crore Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme that has been approved for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery storage in the country.

In a statement, ICEA that represents mobile and component manufacturers such as Apple, Motorola, Nokia, Foxconn, Wistron, Flextronics, Lava, Vivo and others, said that it would promote newer and niche cell technologies in the country.

"We at ICEA believes that the PLI scheme would give thrust to 'Make in India' initiative and will attract huge investments of Rs 45,000 crore plus in the coming years. With this push for ACC batteries, the sector would witness robust growth in the coming years," said Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman, ICEA.

ACC batteries are the new generation of advanced storage technologies which stores electric energy as electrochemical and convert it back to electric energy as and when required.

The ACC covers major sectors, which are consumer electronics, mobiles, electric vehicles, advanced electricity grids, solar



rooftop etc.

Mohindroo said that we need to work on securing the raw material supplies for these core technologies specially lithium and cobalt.

"Our import burden of Rs 20,000 crore will also turn into a big opportunity and would make the country a major hub in producing clean energy," he added.

The ACC battery storage manufacturers will be selected through a transparent competitive bidding process.

The manufacturing facility would have to be commissioned within two years. The incentive will be disbursed thereafter over five years.

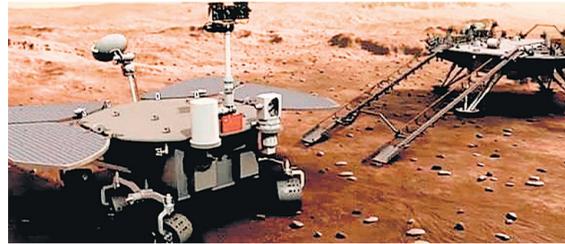
CHINA SUCCEEDS IN FIRST MARS LANDING

BEIJING | Agencies

The lander carrying China's first Mars rover has touched down on the Red Planet, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) confirmed on Saturday. It is the first time China has landed a probe on a planet other than Earth, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The Mars exploration mission has been a total success," Zhang Kejian, head of the CNSA, announced at the Beijing Aerospace Control Centre. "It's another important milestone for China's space exploration," he said.

The Tianwen-1 probe touched down at its pre-selected landing area in the southern part of Utopia Planitia, a vast plain on the northern hemisphere of Mars, at 7.18 a.m. (Beijing Time) on Saturday, the CNSA announced. It took ground controllers more than an hour to establish the success of the pre-programmed landing. They had to wait for the rover to autonomously unfold its solar panels and antenna to send the signals after landing, and there was a time delay of more than 17 minutes due to the 320-million-km distance between Earth and Mars. Tianwen-1, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, was launched from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site on the coast of southern China's island province of Hainan on July 23, 2020. It was the first step in China's plan-



etary exploration of the solar system, with the aim of completing orbiting, landing and roving on the red planet in one mission. The name Tianwen, meaning 'Questions to Heaven', comes from a poem written by the ancient Chinese poet Qu Yuan (about 340-278 BC). China's first Mars rover is named Zhurong after the god of fire in ancient mythology, which echoes with the Chinese name of the red planet: Huoxing (the planet of fire).

The spacecraft entered the Mars orbit in February after a journey of nearly seven months through space, and spent more than two months surveying potential landing sites.

In the early hours of Saturday, the spacecraft began to descend from its parking orbit, and the entry capsule enclosing the lander and rover separated from the orbiter at about 4 a.m.

After flying for approximately three hours, the entry capsule hurtled toward the red planet and entered the

Mars atmosphere at an altitude of 125 km, initiating the riskiest phase of the whole mission. First, the specially designed aerodynamic shape of the entry capsule decelerated with the friction of the Martian atmosphere. When the velocity of the spacecraft was lowered from 4.8 km per second to about 460 meters per second, a huge parachute covering an area of about 200 square metres was unfurled to continue reducing the velocity to less than 100 metres per second.

The parachute and the outer shield of the spacecraft were then jettisoned, exposing the lander and rover, and the retrorocket on the lander was fired to further slow the speed of the craft to almost zero.

About 100 metres above the Martian surface, the craft hovered to identify obstacles and measured the slopes of the surface. Avoiding the obstacles, it selected a relatively flat

area and descended slowly, touching down safely with its four buffer legs. The craft's plummet through the Martian atmosphere, lasting about nine minutes, was extremely complicated with no ground control, and had to be performed by the spacecraft autonomously, said Geng Yan, an official at the Lunar Exploration and Space Program Center of the CNSA. After separating from the entry capsule, the orbiter, with a designed lifespan of one Martian year (about 687 days on Earth), was lifted to return to its parking orbit and helped relay communications between the landing vehicle and Earth.

The rover Zhurong will take a further seven to eight days to detect the surrounding environment and conduct self checks before moving down from the lander to the Martian surface, according to Geng. The six-wheeled solar-powered Zhurong rover, resembling a blue butterfly and with a mass of 240 kg, has an expected lifespan of at least 90 Martian days (about three months on Earth).

The camera on the orbiter has taken detailed images at a resolution of about 0.7 metres, revealing the pre-selected landing area has complicated terrain with many rocks and more craters than previously expected. President Xi Jinping has also congratulated to all those involved in making this mission successful.



RUSSIA INCLUDED US, CZECH REPUBLIC IN 'UNFRIENDLY COUNTRIES' LIST

"To approve the attached list of foreign states committing unfriendly actions against Russia, citizens of Russia or Russian legal entities, against which countermeasures established by the decree of Russian President dated April 23, 2021, No. 243 ... shall be applied," the document published on Friday read.

Moscow | Agencies

Russia has included the US and the Czech Republic in a list of countries that have been classified as "unfriendly", according to a document published on the nation's official legal information portal.

"To approve the attached list of foreign states committing unfriendly actions against Russia, citizens of Russia or Russian legal entities, against which countermeasures established by the decree of Russian President dated April 23, 2021, No. 243 ... shall be applied," the document published on Friday read.

According to the document, the diplomatic mission of the Czech Republic would be granted permission to hire 19 employees from Russia, while the US diplomatic mission is forbidden to hire locals, reports



Xinhua news agency. Earlier in April, Putin signed a decree on countermeasures to "unfriendly actions" of foreign states amid an intensified diplomatic row with the United States and some European countries.

The government has since formed a list of foreign countries "committing unfriendly actions" toward the Russian Federation, Russian citizens or legal entities. These countries will either receive a cap on the number of locally hired employees or be completely banned from employing Russian staff at their diplomatic missions.

Israel-Gaza violent tensions continue unabated

The Hamas-run Ministry of Health said that 122 Palestinians have been killed, including 31 children and 20 women, and 900 others injured since Monday in the Gaza Strip.

Jerusalem | Agencies

Tensions between Israel and the Islamic Hamas movement, the worst since 2014, have continued unabated in the Gaza Strip with no sign of any ceasefire between the two sides to end to violence.

Overnight and at predawn on Friday, the tit-for-tat violent military confrontations between the two sides were intensified, reports Xinhua news agency. Hamas militants fired more barrages of rockets into Israel, and Israeli fighter jets kept striking on the enclave.

The Hamas-run Ministry of Health said that 122 Palestinians have been killed, including 31 children and 20 women, and 900 others injured since Monday in the Gaza Strip.

Witnesses and Palestinian security sources told Xinhua that Israeli army artillery on Friday struck the eastern



area of Gaza city with tanks, killing at least two.

Tanks hit the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahia, killing a mother and her four children, according to medical sources. An Israeli army spokesman said in a statement that the forces have intensively attacked posts that belong to Hamas, adding that 160 war

jets, artillery, and tanks participated in the military operation.

The statement said 150 targets were hit overnight and on Friday morning, adding that many of the targets were underground.

It said the Israeli army will continue its strikes on the militants who fire rockets at Israel. As the Israeli bom-

bardments intensified, Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants announced that their militants fired more barrages of rockets into Israel. Al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' armed wing, claimed responsibility for launching 100 rockets at the Israeli city of Ashkelon, in response to Israel's "targeting of civilians" in the enclave.

Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, also said that its militants carried out intensive rocket strikes at Israeli cities in southern and central Israel. The Israeli army said Gaza militant groups have fired more than 1,750 rockets at Israel, most of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system. Meanwhile, Palestinian sources said the contacts to reach calm between the two sides had so far failed, adding that Egypt, Qatar and the UN lead the mediation between the two sides for reaching a truce.

Biden signs executive order revoking US embassy in Kabul warns of increase in violence measures issued by Trump

The order signed on Friday will revoke the measure to establish a "National Garden of American Heroes" that called for erecting statues of hundreds of prominent Americans though some of them are controversial over their racial records, reports Xinhua news agency.

Washington | Agencies

US President Joe Biden signed an executive order that will revoke several measures issued by his predecessor Donald Trump.

The order signed on Friday will revoke the measure to establish a "National Garden of American Heroes" that called for erecting statues of hundreds of prominent Americans though some of them are controversial over their racial records, reports Xinhua news



agency.

The order also revoked Trump's another action which prioritised punishment for those caught vandalising statues or monuments.

The former President took the two measures in response to protests and vandalism targeting monuments of controversial historic figures amid nationwide demonstrations against racial injustice in the wake of the custodial

death of African-American George Floyd on May 25, 2020.

Trump visited Mount Rushmore in the state of South Dakota on the eve of July 4 Independence Day last year, accusing "angry mobs" of waging "a merciless campaign" to wipe out US history while pledging to construct a "National Garden of American Heroes" that will feature statues of "the greatest Americans to ever live".

The US State Department had also advised US citizens not to travel to Afghanistan due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, armed conflict and the coronavirus, adding that American nationals already in the country should consider departing.

Kabul | Agencies

The US embassy in Kabul on Saturday warned American citizens to exercise caution in places where people are known to congregate, saying that "historically, violence has increased in Afghanistan following the Eid holiday".

"The US government remains concerned that insurgents are intent on targeting foreigners via kidnapping schemes and attacks at locations such as hotels, residential compounds, security checkpoints, government facilities and airports," it said in a security alert.

Last month, the US State Department ordered some of its employees whose



functions can be performed elsewhere to depart from the American embassy in Kabul, reports dpa news agency.

Ross Wilson, the acting US Ambassador to Afghanistan, said that the decision was made "in light of increasing violence and threat reports in Kabul". The Department had also advised US citizens not to travel to Afghanistan due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, armed conflict and the coronavirus, adding that American nationals already in the country should consider departing.

Afghanistan is in a state of uncertainty after US President Joe Biden

announced that American troops will pull out from the country by September 11.

NATO also said it will abide by the decision. The international forces already began the official process of withdrawal on May 1. The Taliban have intensified attacks on provincial capitals, districts, bases and checkpoints since international troops began to withdraw. Currently, both the Taliban and the Afghan government have announced that they would observe a three-day ceasefire for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr that started on Thursday, but the violence continues.

China approves another inactivated Covid vax for emergency use

The vaccine reported no adverse events with an intensity of grade 3 or above in the first two phases of its clinical trials, according to the company's research submitted to MedRxiv, a web portal distributing preprints about health sciences.

Beijing | Agencies

China has approved one more inactivated Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, according to an announcement by the

developer of the jab. Shenzhen Kangtai Biological Products Co., Ltd., the developer, said on Friday that the vaccine it developed has started related work for Phase III clinical trial, reports Xinhua news agency.

The vaccine reported no adverse events with an intensity of grade 3 or above in the first two phases of its clinical trials, according to the company's research submitted to MedRxiv, a web portal distributing preprints about health sciences.

A grade 3 adverse event refers to side effects that are severe or medically significant but not immediately life-threatening, according to the Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events.

Research, development and industrialization of the vaccine are going smoothly, said the company, adding that a vaccine manufacturing plant built in the Nanshan district of Shenzhen in Guangdong province, has kicked off production.

Earlier this month, the World Health Organization (WHO) granted emergency approval for the Covid vaccine made by Chinese state-owned company Sinopharm.

It is the first job developed by a non-Western country to get WHO backing.

Prior to the WHO approval, the Sinopharm vaccine was already being widely used, with an estimated 65 million doses administered, according to reports.

'EUROPE HAS RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR SAFE REOPENING OF TOURISM'

Lisbon: The European Union (EU) has already had the right conditions for a "safe reopening" of tourism in summer, European Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton said. "The situation remains difficult. However, I am sure that we finally see light at the end of the tunnel and now we have the tools," he said at the High-Level Forum for Sustainable Tourism held in the Portuguese city of Porto on Friday.

Breton said the considerable increase in the production capacity of vaccines suggested that there will be enough doses to vaccinate 70 per cent of the EU population by mid-July. As for the "vaccine passport" in Europe, the Commissioner said: "The European Parliament and the Council are now ready to finalize negotiations by the end of May". Breton added that he is "confident of having it ready for the summer". Portuguese Economy Minister Pedro Siza Vieira said at the forum that the EU countries need to adopt a common approach for the reopening of tourism with a focus on the immediate recovery of the sector.

The Minister stressed that the tourism sector is fundamental for the recovery of European economies in the face of the Covid-19 crisis.



Climate protection depends on political majorities: Merkel

Berlin | Agencies

German Chancellor Angela Merkel stressed on Saturday that far-reaching climate protection measures could be implemented only with the corresponding political majorities.

"I understand - and it makes me a little sad, of course - that young people say, 'man, we had to go to court first before those in the government actually give us what we're entitled to,'" dpa news agency quoted the Chancellor as saying during a discussion with German climate activist Luisa Neubauer.

However, it was also true that "in a democracy, I always have to get majorities for something", she added. Merkel pointed to her own rural constituency as an example, where concerns over the building of wind turbines are always accompanied by complaints.

Simply ignoring people's concerns could lead to a situation where climate deniers could be in the majority, she said, who used



former US President Donald Trump as an example. In April, the Constitutional Court ruled that Germany's climate protection law was insufficient, and ordered the government to implement more detailed regulations for the period after 2030. The federal Cabinet passed a new version of the law on Wednesday. Neubauer, however, said that she found it difficult to frame action on climate change with "but we're in a democracy," as such phrasing "implies that it would be democracy that is standing in our way".

Colombian govt ready to meet strike leaders: Prez

We have said with all clarity that we are ready to meet with the members of the Strike Committee to advance in negotiations and forge agreements. That has been a message that has been transmitted in a transparent way," Duque said in a video posted on social media on Friday.

Bogota | Agencies

Colombian President Ivan Duque has reiterated that his government is ready to meet and begin formal negotiations with members of the National Strike Committee

following 16 days of protests and roadblocks sparked by proposed tax hikes that have since been rescinded. "We have said with all clarity that we are ready to meet with the members of the Strike Committee to advance in negotiations and forge agreements. That has been a message that has been transmitted in a transparent way," Duque said in a video posted on social media on Friday. The strike leaders, representing various unions, are demanding the elderly and low-income households receive a basic income for a period of six months of at least the monthly minimum wage, and improvements to the education and healthcare systems, among other demands. Duque said it was unnecessary to put up roadblocks that have led to shortages of food, fuel and other goods in some cities, especially in the southwest and west-central parts of the country.

China succeeds in first Mars landing

Beijing | Agencies

The lander carrying China's first Mars rover has touched down on the Red Planet, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) confirmed on Saturday.

It is the first time China has landed a probe on a planet other than Earth, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The Mars exploration mission has been a total success," Zhang Kejian, head of the CNSA, announced at the Beijing Aerospace Control Centre.

"It's another important milestone for China's space exploration," he said. The Tianwen-1 probe touched down at its pre-selected landing area in the southern part of Utopia Planitia, a vast plain on the northern hemisphere of Mars, at 7.18 a.m. (Beijing Time) on Saturday, the CNSA announced.

It took ground controllers more than an hour to establish the success of the pre-programmed landing. They had to wait for the rover to autonomously unfold its solar panels and antenna to send the signals after landing, and there was a time delay of more than 17 minutes due to the 320-million-km distance



between Earth and Mars.

Tianwen-1, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, was launched from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site on the coast of southern China's island province of Hainan on July 23, 2020. It was the first step in China's planetary exploration of the solar system, with the aim of completing orbiting, landing and roving on the red planet in one mission. The name Tianwen, meaning 'Questions to Heaven', comes from a poem written by the ancient Chinese poet Qu Yuan (about 340-278 BC).

China's first Mars rover is named Zhurong after the god of fire in ancient mythology, which echoes with the Chinese name of the red planet: Huoxing (the planet of fire).

US city to pay \$10m to family of unarmed black man killed by police

Washington | Agencies

The US city of Columbus has agreed to pay \$10 million to the family of Andre Hill, an unarmed African-American man who was shot dead by police in December 2020, local media reported.

The settlement, the largest in the city's history, will move to the Columbus City Council for a vote on May 17, reports Xinhua news agency.

"No amount of money will ever bring Andre Hill back to his family, but we believe this is an important and necessary step in the right direction," City Attorney Zach Klein said in a statement issued on Friday afternoon.

The city in the state of Ohio has also agreed to rename the gym located inside the Brentnell Community Center, which the victim frequented, the Andre Hill Gymnasium,

according to local media reports. Hill's daughter, Karissa, said at a press conference on Friday that the settlement is "one step but it's not full justice".

Hill, 47, was exiting a garage at a home where he was a guest around 2 a.m. on December 22, 2020, when he was shot and killed by then police officer Adam Coy, who was responding to a non-emergency disturbance call about a vehicle turning on and off. Coy did not have his body camera on at the time of the shooting.

The camera's look-back feature captured 60 seconds of video, but no audio, showing Hill held a cellphone in his hand and began walking toward the officers when he was shot four times by Coy.

Body camera footage from other responding officers showed more than 10 minutes passed before Hill was given any medical aid.

CARRYMINATI ON 30MN MARK

MY CONTENT HAS FOUND RESONANCE WITH MAJORITY OF MASSES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

YouTube star and digital creator CarryMinati, whose real name is Ajay Nagar, attributes garnering 30 million subscribers to his fans, saying the figures indicate his content is loved by most viewers despite criticism. "These increasing numbers are indicative that despite the criticism, my content has found resonance with the majority of the masses. I hope I can continue to entertain people with the same zest and zeal while also creating an impact socially," he said.

He looks back at his journey with pride: "This is such an emotional and overwhelming moment for me. My journey from a humble 50 views for my first video to 30-40 million per video



now, it's been an eventful journey with a fair share of hard work and struggles."

Latest this year, the 21-year-old digital creator will be seen facing the camera in the Amitabh Bachchan-Ajay Devgn starrer thriller "Mayday". Earlier this year, he made his musical foray into Bollywood writing and singing the song "Yalgaar" in the film "The Big Bull".

CarryMinati was also listed in Time Magazine's "Top 10 Next Generation Leaders Of 2019". He was also roped in for promotions of the Tom Cruise-starrer "Mission: Impossible -- Fallout". "Yalgaar" apart, he has dropped other rap singles including "Vardaan", "Zindagi", "Trigger", "Warrior", and "Bye

Pewdiepie" and has featured in Salim-Sulaiman's "Date Karle".

INSTAGRAM WILL SOON LET USERS POST FROM ITS WEBSITE



San Francisco | Agencies

Facebook-owned photo-sharing platform Instagram is reportedly working on an update to its desktop website that will allow users to create posts from there as well.

The update brings the post creator to the web version of Instagram -- which was previously only available on the mobile Instagram website besides the official app, 9To5Google, citing developer and app analyst Alessandro Paluzzi, reported. Paluzzi managed to enable the new option on his profile through undisclosed methods, and he shared some images on Twitter of how Instagram's post creator will work on the web, the report said.

The interface has been tweaked with a preview of the content next to the publishing options. Users will also find options to crop the image, apply filters and set a description.

The company recently announced to let users add up to four pronouns to their profiles, which they can then display publicly or only to their followers. It's another way to express yourself on Instagram and the feature is now available in a few countries today with plans for more. The company, however, did not specify which countries have this feature at the moment. he news comes at a time when a coalition of 44 US Attorneys General has signed a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg urging Facebook not to launch "Instagram for Kids", citing mental health and privacy concerns.

Ruskin Bond handpicks his favourite children's stories ahead of 87th birthday

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's favourite writer Ruskin Bond has brought forth a carefully curated and handpicked collection of his short stories in a new book titled 'All Time Favourites For Children'.

The Landour-based veteran author, who is also the recipient of Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan civilian honours, will release the book on his 87th birthday on May 19. He was born in pre-Partition India in 1934 in Kasauli (Himachal Pradesh). Bond grew up in Jamnagar (Gujarat), Dehradun, New Delhi and Shimla.

His first novel, "The Room and the Roof", which was written when he was seventeen, received the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957. Since then he has written over 500 short stories, essays

and novellas (including 'Vagrants in the Valley' and 'A Flight of Pigeons') and more than forty books for children.

Bond's 'All Time Favourites For Children', is published under the Puffin imprint of Penguin Books. The 232-

evocative episodes from Ruskin's life, iconic Rusty, eccentric Uncle Ken, ubiquitous grandmother, and many other charming, endearing characters in a single volume while also introducing us to a smattering of new ones that are sure to be firm favourites with young readers. Heart-warming, funny and spirited, this is a must-have on every bookshelf.

It is a keepsake edition with 25 stories, a mixed bag of his most cherished stories like 'Rusty's Adventures', 'Grandfather's Stories', spooky tales along with a diverse set of new stories like 'Goldfish Don't Bark', 'Friends from the Forest' and many more. These much-loved stories from the writer on the hill come with excellent and quirky artwork that makes the book an even more fun read.

Bond, who is a favourite among children and youth alike, took to Instagram and shared a fun image of him holding a soft drink and sporting a fake 'new mustache'. He said he's celebrating his birthday month.



Yoga, breathing exercises aid children with ADHD to focus



Moscow | Agencies

Yoga and breathing exercises have a positive effect on children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a new study suggests.

The researchers, including Sergey Kiselev from the Ural Federal University, say that after special classes, children improve their attention, decrease hyperactivity, they do not get tired longer, they can engage in complex activities longer.

"Exercise has an immediate effect that appears immediately, but there is also a delayed effect. We found that exercise has a positive effect on regulation and control functions in children with ADHD and one year after the end of the exercise," Kiselev

said. "This happens because the child's correct breathing is automated, it becomes a kind of assistant that allows a better supply of oxygen to the brain, which, in turn, has a beneficial effect on the behaviour and psyche of a child with ADHD," Kiselev added.

For the study, published in the journal Biological Psychiatry, the team studied the effect of exercise on functions associated with voluntary regulation and control in 16 children with ADHD aged six to seven years.

The team used a special breathing exercise based on the development of diaphragmatic rhythmic deep breathing -- belly breathing. According to the

researcher, such breathing helps to better supply the brain with oxygen and helps the reticular formation to better cope with its role.

"For children with ADHD, as a rule, the part of the brain that is responsible for the regulation of brain activity -- the reticular formation -- is deficient," the researcher said.

"This leads to the fact that they often experience states of inadequate hyperactivity, increased distraction and exhaustion, and their functions of regulation and control suffer a second time," Kiselev added.

In addition to breathing exercises, psychologists used body-oriented techniques, in particular, exercises with polar states "tension-relaxation".

'Antenna' would take '90s kids back to childhood

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Director Shoib Nikash Shah says that his film "Antenna" is sure to amuse today's generation of children on how things were done earlier.

The film is based in the nineties and it showcases the time when everyone would gather at one house to watch TV and there would be issues with the antenna.

Shah feels today's kids have no idea how life was without the internet, and the film will show them what life was like back in the day. "I'm sure this movie would take nineties kids back to their childhood! Even present-day kids,

who cannot imagine anything without the internet would find it interesting to see children on screen struggling with the antenna to watch their favourite show -- something that they get in just one click!" he says.

He adds: "The struggle of those kids and their journey would teach modern-day kids that they have to strive hard to achieve something in life. I have done theme-based films before also like 'Football' and 'My Angel, My Teacher'. I hope the audience finds this interesting along with the parallel plot of the film."

Produced by Raj Kushwaaha and Sakshi Seth, the film released on OTT platform-ShemarooMe on Friday.



Pre-register PUBG Mobile's Indian version on Play Store from May 18

Team Absolute | New Delhi

PUBG Mobile, which is all set to re-launch in India as Battlegrounds Mobile India, is beginning pre-registrations for the game on Play Store from May 18, South Korean video game developer Krafton said on Friday.

There will be specific rewards available for fans to claim, only if they pre-register the game. These rewards would be specific to Indian players only.

To pre-register for Battlegrounds Mobile India, please visit the Google Play Store and click on the "Pre-Register" button and your rewards will automatically be avail-



able to claim on game launch, the company said in a statement.

Krafton's brand new game will launch as a free-to-play experience on mobile devices.

It will be available exclusively to play in India only.

Recently, the company on its social media accounts and its websites mentioned that the game is coming soon in India.

According to the company, the game will offer a world-class multi-player gaming experience on mobile.

Battlegrounds Mobile India will release exclusive in-game events like outfits and features and will have its esports ecosystem with tournaments and leagues.



Aus IPL contingent may land in Sydney, BCCI to foot bill



Sydney | Agencies

The Australian cricket contingent that was part of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will return home within a day or two and quarantine in Sydney with the Indian cricket board (BCCI) likely to foot the bill for travel and quarantine. The Australian prime minister Scott Morrison had announced last week that the flights to repatriate Australian citizens stranded in India will start from May 15, Saturday. The first flight carrying the Aussie citizens reached Darwin on Saturday, though

many of them were not allowed to board it since they tested positive for Covid-19. The Aussie players and members of the support staff, however, are still in Maldives as they seek return. They could return late on Saturday or Sunday. According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald, 'the Indian cricket authorities will foot the bill of the returning Aussies who are likely to quarantine in Sydney'. As many as 38 Australians, including cricketers and support staff, had to quarantine in Maldives after departing India following the postponement of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Djokovic scripts comeback win over Tsitsipas, enters semis

Rome | Agencies

Serbian world No. 1 Novak Djokovic raised his game after trailing 4-6, 1-2 on Friday to earn a 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 comeback victory against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rain-hit quarter-final match of the Italian Open on Saturday. Djokovic will take on Italian Lorenzo Sonego -- who upset seventh seed Russian Andrey Rublev -- for a place in the final. Sonego recovered from a set down to defeat the Monte-Carlo runner-up 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.

The top seed Serbian returned to court on Saturday morning with Tsitsipas serving at 6-4, 2-1, and he broke serve in two of his opening five return games to force a decider. Djokovic then twice recovered from a break down in the decider to reach the final-four in Rome for the eighth straight year. "There are many things to say about today or yesterday's match. It kind of felt like we played two matches... The one yesterday, where he was the better player. He started better today also. I managed to somehow to hold my nerves [and] break his serve in the important moments in the second and third sets," Djokovic said after the match.

"The support of the crowd was amazing. It was great to play in front of



a crowd. [It was a] fantastic atmosphere. It was a bit of luck, a bit of mental strength and the right tactics at the right time. One shot, not even a point, one shot really decided the winner today. I am just glad to be on the better side." This is Djokovic's fourth straight ATP head-to-head triumph against Tsitsipas. The world No. 1 owns a 5-2 advantage against the 22-year-old, which includes an unbeaten 3-0 record on clay.

Tsitsipas made a strong start after the resumption of play to move into a 4-2 lead in the second set. But

Djokovic soon raised his level in return games. The defending champion won two marathon games on Tsitsipas' serve to push the match to a deciding set. Across return games at 4-3 and 6-5, Djokovic earned a combined nine break points. The 18-time Grand Slam champion used his forehand to break through on both occasions, ripping winners up the line to level the match.

"I had to dig very deep. Without a doubt, until the last shot I didn't know whether I was going to win but I believed that I could," Djokovic said.

Archery body initiates visa process for Oly qualifiers in France

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Archery Association of India (AAI) has initiated process for procuring visa for team to compete at next month's Olympic qualification event and World Cup in Paris. "We submitted online visa application forms on Friday to avoid last-minute rush. The



national women's recurve team is aiming to win a quota place in Paris (France)," an AAI official told reporter. The top three teams in the Olympic qualification event will earn quota places. The Indian men's recurve team qualified for Tokyo Olympics at the 2019 World Championships in the Netherlands. The women's team is yet to make cut for Olympics though Deepika Kumari has won an individual quota place. "Recently the team of Deepika, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari won the World Cup gold in Guatemala City. We hope they are able to repeat their performance in Paris too," said an archery team coach. According to an AAI official, the Olympic qualification event will take place on June 18 and 19 in Paris while the Archery World Cup Stage 3 is scheduled from June 21 to 27 at the same venue. The participants of the World Cup and Olympic qualification event will not have to undergo mandatory 10-day quarantine.

"Since women's team has to compete in the Olympic qualification event, they will leave on June 16 while those competing in the World Cup will go later," said the official.

India tour to Eng: Sthalekar blasts BCCI for ignoring bereaved Veda

Sydney | Agencies

Veda, a contracted player with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), lost her sister last week to Covid-19, two weeks after she lost her mother to the virus. She was also left out of India women's squad for England, announced on Friday.

"Whilst not selecting Veda for the upcoming series may be justified from their point of view. What angers me the most is that as a contracted player, she has not received any communication from BCCI, just to even check how she is coping," wrote Sthalekar on twitter.

Sthalekar called for a strong players' body in India, like they have in Australia, to take care of cricketers' needs.

"A true association should deeply care about the players that play the game, not focus solely on just the game at any cost. So disappointed. As a past player, the ACA [Australian Cricketers' Association] have reached out daily to see how we are and provided all kinds of services," said

The Indian cricket board has come under fire from former Australia cricketer Lisa Sthalekar, who has taken it to task for not communicating with India woman cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy as she grapples with the loss of her sister and mother due to Covid-19.



Sthalekar in her post. "If there was a need for players' association in India, surely it is now. The stress, anxiety, fear and grief that many players have experienced through this pandemic will take its toll on them as individuals and inadvertently affect the game." India does have a cricketers' body, Indian Cricketers' Association, formed on the instructions of

the Supreme Court of India, but its membership is limited to retired male and female players, as per the court's orders. There is, however, a plan to include active cricketers later. The Aussie cricketer-turned-commentator did a stint as a commentator during the Indian Premier League before returning home after the tournament was postponed midway.

IPL returnee Holder to miss initial part of Windies camp

St John's (Antigua) | Agencies

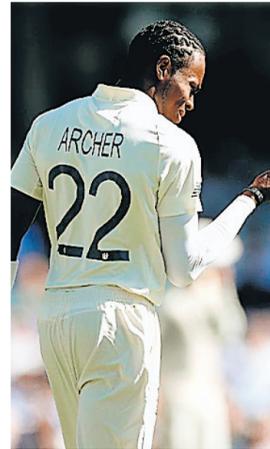
All-rounder Jason Holder, who was part of the postponed Indian Premier League (IPL) with SunRisers Hyderabad, has been rested for the first part of West Indies' three-week high-performance camp that begins on Sunday in St Lucia.

World No. 1 Test all-rounder Holder will join at the end of the month. He is being rested due to his workload across all formats of the game in recent months and will arrive in St. Lucia at the end of the month. The camp, which comprises 30 players, will include two 'best v best' inter-squad matches as West Indies look ahead to their final series in the ICC World Test Championship, against South Africa in June. Test captain Kraigg Brathwaite and fast bowlers Kemar Roach and Alzarri Joseph will not be attending as they are currently competing in English County Championship and will return to the West Indies for Test series if selected. "This camp is very important for our preparation for the upcoming Test

series against South Africa and for the rest of our busy and exciting summer. We will continue the work which we begun last year in England, to further develop our Test team into a force to be reckoned with in world cricket," said coach Phil Simmons. "We welcome the good news of a rise to sixth in the ICC Test Rankings. However, this is just the beginning of our journey and we know we have lots of hard work ahead of us."



Archer wants pace bowler Robinson in England Test squad



London | Agencies

England fast bowler Jofra Archer has made a strong pitch for the inclusion of Sussex team-mate Ollie Robinson in the England Test side for the upcoming summer.

"Hopefully Ollie Robinson will get his [England] chance this summer," Archer told the cricketer.com after the opening day's play between Sussex and Kent.

"We all know what he can do, he's a talented bowler and his stats prove that." England start the summer with a two-Test series against New

Zealand from June 2. That will be followed by a five-Test series against India from August 4 to September 14. Archer, who could not represent his franchise Rajasthan Royals during the now-postponed Indian Premier League (IPL) due to an elbow injury, demonstrated his return to full fitness on Friday, bowling a fiery spell for Sussex (2/29 in 13 overs) against Kent at Hove.

The duo of Archer and Robinson combined to take five Kent wickets, with the latter returning figures of 3/29. The two took a wicket each in the second innings too.

ARE OLYMPICS HAPPENING IN 2021? FEDERER WANTS AN ANSWER

Lausanne | Tennis

Legend Roger Federer said on Saturday that athletes around the world were waiting for the Tokyo Olympic Games organisers to decide whether the sporting extravaganza "will go ahead or not" due to the evolving global Covid-19 situation.

The Olympics are scheduled to be held between July 23 and August 8. "The athletes need a decision: is it happening or isn't it?" asked Federer, who is the joint record holder with Spaniard Rafael Nadal for winning most number of Grand Slam singles titles at 20 apiece.

"It's [the Olympics] difficult. Honestly I don't know what to think. I would love to play in the Olympics, win a medal for Switzerland... that would make me so proud. But if that doesn't happen due to the situation, I would be the first to understand," Federer told Switzerland's Leman Bleu television. Federer said nothing was clear as of now.



With Morocco experience, Surinder Amarnath eyes jr selector's post

Ahmedabad | Agencies

Former India batsman Surinder Amarnath has applied for the post of national junior cricket selector, and is banking on his Morocco experience as a coach and selector in early 2000s to get the job. He applied for the post last month, six days before the deadline ended on April 26.

"Yes, I have applied for the position. I hope to contribute to India's junior cricket and want India to develop good bench strength," Amarnath, 72, told IANS from Ahmedabad.

Currently residing in Ahmedabad, Amarnath, older brother of former India selector and batsman Mohinder, may bank on the experience he gained while developing cricketers from scratch in Morocco.



He served as coach and selector in the North African country during early 2000s when it was taking baby steps towards cricket. Amarnath played a key role in picking Moroccan cricketers from scratch, and later received recognition from the International Cricket Council for his work. He had also served as consultant to Goa Cricket Association. The dashing left-handed batsman scored a century on debut against New Zealand in Auckland in 1976, and went on to play 10 Test matches. He played his last Test in 1978. Amarnath also played two unofficial Test matches and 145 first-class games in a career spanning from 1963-64 to 1986-87. He captained Delhi to Ranji Trophy title and North Zone to Duleep Trophy title.

Women boxers hit roadblock ahead of Asian championships

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Half of 10-member women's team is doubtful to compete at the Asian Boxing Championships in Dubai starting May 21 after strict Covid-19 protocols at Army Sports Institute (ASI) in Pune didn't let them join the ongoing national camp.

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) had planned collective training for the 10-member squad at ASI ahead of the tournament.

However, ASI has allowed boxers to join only in batches. While five, including MC Mary Kom, had joined till Friday, the remaining five had been allowed to move into ASI only next week.

Sonia Lather (57 kg) Simranjit Kaur (60 kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (69 kg) are among those who have joined the camp.

"The remaining five boxers are expected to join the camp next week," said a boxing coach. BFI said that strict protocols at ASI have made things tough.



India football forward Lalpekhluva scores on 'riverfront'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India football team striker, Jeje Lalpekhluva, and a bunch of youth from his Mizoram village are making an effort to preserve the ecosystem of a river whose biodiversity is being impacted by rampant fishing.

The SC East Bengal player has formed a group that is working relentlessly to keep a vigil on Tuichang River near their home in Model Veng Nnahthial village to prevent unauthorised fishing. "Overfishing has greatly reduced the number of fishes in the Tuichang River over the years. It was turning out to be a big problem, even for the local fishermen who depend on the river for their livelihood," Lalpekhluva told the-aiff.com

The locals have identified a 500-metre stretch along the banks of the Tuichang where the fish are believed to have their spawning ground. They have set up a 24-hour patrol to ensure no fishing activities go on.





CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCES NEW PLAN TO BOOST FILM INDUSTRY

Los Angeles | Agencies

California Governor Gavin Newsom has announced a new measure by adding \$30 million to boost the state's film and television tax incentive program.

As part of the \$100 billion "California Roars Back" plan, this move would boost the existing \$330 million tax credit program by nearly 10 per cent, allowing the state to dole out a total of \$360 million annually to qualify film and television projects, Xinhua news agency quoted Newsom as saying on Friday.

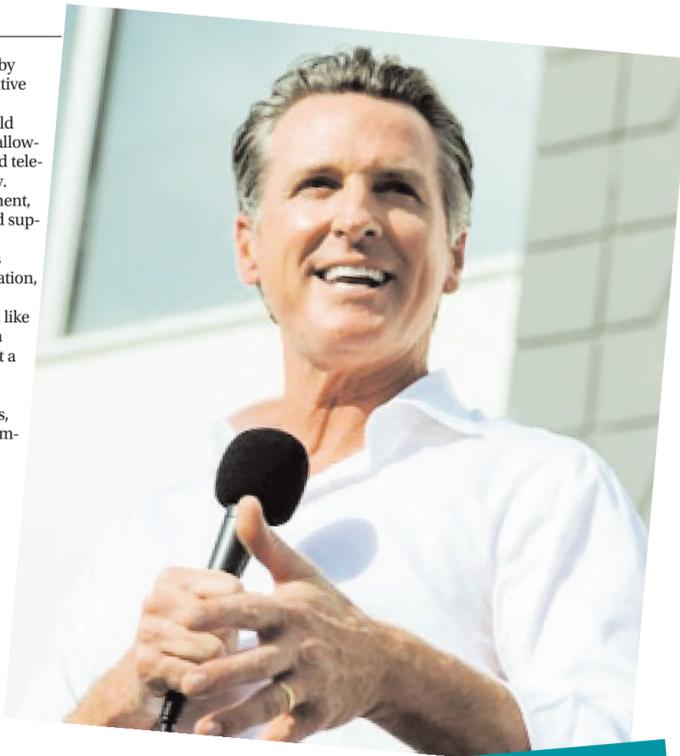
According to the Los Angeles City's Economic and Workforce Department, the industry contributed more than \$30 billion annually to California and supported more than 200,000 local jobs before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moreover, Newsom said this measure was designed to show the state's political gesture against those states who passed voter suppression legislation, like Georgia.

"This is an opportunity for those productions, TV and others, in places like Georgia, whose values don't necessarily always align with the production crews to consider coming back to the state of California," Newsom said at a press conference in Sacramento on Friday.

He added "that's what that \$30 million intends to do".

In recent days, Newsom announced a number of high-dollar initiatives, including an additional \$12 billion for homeless housing, \$2 billion to combat wildfires, and \$95 million for tourism.



Mindy Kaling learnt a lot from pregnancy during pandemic

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Mindy Kaling has talked about hiding her pregnancy during the Covid-19 pandemic, saying although she learned a lot from the experience it is not something she wishes to experience again.

"I don't know if I recommend everyone having a secret pregnancy during a world-wide pandemic, but I will say I learnt a lot from it. Definitely like a once-in-a-lifetime type of thing," Kaling said at #WOW2021, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

As for her parenting technique, Kaling, a mother of two, said the best parents are able to keep their cool and not "blow their top".

She added how she is "inspired by parenting where the parents don't scream. If you can not scream at your children, I think you're a good parent. To me, people who do not blow their top and also can stay on a consistent message. That to me -- I'm the most impressed by those people".

Kaling is a single parent but has help at hand from friends and family when it comes to raising her two kids. She says motherhood has helped her stint as a scriptwriter.

"If anything, (parenthood) has given me this flooding of memories of my childhood, I feel like I'm able to write even more. That has been one of the most unexpected pleasures of having children, is being able to tap back into my own youth," she said.

Katy Perry regrets being obsessed with boys in younger days

Los Angeles | Agencies

Pop star Katy Perry, who revisits her teenage years in her new "Electric" video, says she would have liked her early life to have been less about the opposite sex.

"I stumbled, I fell, I made mistakes. I learned from all of it. But I was pretty boy crazy. I think I was always searching for real love and true love," Perry tells PopSugar, according to a report in aceshowbiz.com.

Talking about what she would tell her younger self if she could hop in a time machine, she said: "Lose some time to be emotional about the boys... I'd say, 'Don't worry, keep swinging, make mistakes. Don't read the comments. Don't scroll down on the comments, and know how to separate real life from internet life. And boys aren't mature until they're 35, at least'."

Perry now has her family with fiancé Orlando Bloom, and welcomed her first child in 2020. She described giving birth as "the greatest gift of all".

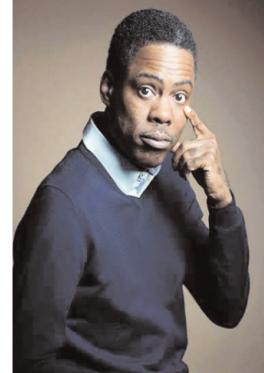
She also credited Bloom for supporting her in terms of balancing a busy work life and her newborn daughter.

"I have an incredible fiancé who has done this before. He has a 10-year-old son. So, he's been amazing, and we're so in love and we're so grateful."



Chris Rock wants sequel to his new horror flick 'Spiral', wishes he's in it

Los Angeles | Agencies



Actor Chris Rock hopes his horror thriller "Spiral: From The Book Of Saw" has a sequel and he gets to be part of that, too. "I hope this movie is like 'Creed'. In the sense that 'Creed' is technically like 'Rocky 7'. So, hopefully there's more 'Spirals' and hopefully I'm in more 'Spirals'," he told radiotimes.com, according to contactmusic.com.

Talking about how bagged the film, he said: "I was at a friend's wedding and they introduced me to the head of Lionsgate. I was like, 'Lionsgate? Oh, 'Saw.' They called me up. I was just poking fun at the Lionsgate about 'Saw!'"

"Spiral" is the ninth release in the "Saw" film series. It has been directed by Darren Lynn Bousman and written by Josh Stolberg and Peter Goldfinger. The film also stars Max Minghella, Marisol Nichols and Samuel L. Jackson.

Lily James sporting fake bust to play Pamela Anderson in series

London | Agencies

New pictures of actress Lily James as nineties star Pamela Anderson in the limited series "Pam & Tommy" have gone viral from the set of the show.

In the images James sports a messy blonde beehive with a blue slip dress and a lengthy white cardigan, with patchwork platform boots in a blue to match her dress.

To match "Baywatch" star Anderson's persona, James also wears a fake bust. Anderson had reportedly increased her bust size through two implant surgeries beginning in 1989, according to author Sheila Jeffreys.

The series



also stars Sebastian Stan as Anderson's former beau, rocker

Tommy Lee, and will focus on the marriage between Anderson and Lee, reports mirror.co.uk.

The show will also focus on the aftermath of Anderson's sex tape being released on the internet during this tenure.

"Pam & Tommy" stars Seth Rogen, Nick Offerman, and Taylor Schilling in other important roles.

According to mirror.co.uk, Anderson has reportedly slammed the show as a "cheap knock off" that puts her life in the spotlight.

Anderson claimed she has never heard of Lily James or Sebastian Stan before now.

NOEL GALLAGHER: OASIS IS DONE I'M AFRAID

Los Angeles | Agencies

Legendary musician Noel Gallagher, who once shot to fame as an integral part of Oasis, says the iconic rock band won't reunite. Although his brother Liam, who was also lead vocalist of the band, and he are often asked about the band, Noel says the band's legacy has been "set in stone".

"The legacy of the band is set in stone. If people have seen us, they'll understand what all the fuss is about. If you didn't see us, then that's tough cos I've never seen The Beatles or the Sex Pistols," says Noel, according to contactmusic.com.

He adds that he doesn't think he can make music in a band with other people at this stage in his career.

"People ask me that question on a daily basis and I can only say to you that, I just don't feel like it. When you're in a band, it's an absolute compromise so no I don't think I could come up with an idea and then run it by four people and then six weeks later, somebody knocks it back because their cat's got a cough so I like to march to the beat of my own drum. Oasis is done I'm afraid," says Noel, who was songwriter, lead guitarist, and co-lead vocalist of the band.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Madi Monroe



WHY SHILPA SHETTY SAID NO TO GROCERY SAVINGS?

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Whether its sumptuous kitchen delicacies, useful backyard garden gyaan, or power yoga punches, Shilpa Shetty has proven that she can never go wrong when it comes to nutrition that's packed with taste and health. But, what does she do when her brother-in-law orders groceries with a 100-rupee bachat? Seen these days in a humorous television commercial for Nourish Chakki Fresh Atta with Extra Chokar by BL Agro Industries Limited, Shetty embodies every ounce of the wisdom of the modern Indian woman, especially when it is about making smart choices for the family. In her signature comic style, the Bollywood diva educates her brother-in-law on the consequences of choosing ordinary food products

with an interesting 'Do Baatein' approach. Dressed traditionally and elegantly in a pink kurta, the fitness icon takes the dining table talk one notch higher by convincing her family to look at the bigger picture while ordering atta or flour. In a rather endearing 'bhabhi' avatar in the Nourish commercial, she drives home the message that we are what we eat; and immunity is not built by eating just about anything on the market shelves.

When it comes to healthy food choices, there's no one better than the fitness icon to explain the importance of choosing better. The TVC is the first in the series of three and garnered close to 1.4 million views on YouTube within two weeks of being launched.

Shilpa Shetty's fitness mantra? 'SaadharaanChhodo, Nutrition Chuno'. Not convinced? Let the diva convince you herself in this infotaining TVC.



KRYSTLE D'SOUZA: IF THERE IS A FUTURE IT WILL BE GREEN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Krystle D'souza spread a bit of environment-friendly optimism amidst all the Covid gloom in her new Instagram post on Saturday. "If there is a future it will be green," she wrote with a green heart emoji, alongside an image that shows her amidst greenery, in a gown that she stylishly wears over denim shorts.

The actress was recently seen in the recreated version of the song 'Ekbewafaa' by Bharat Goel. The number was originally sung by Sonu Nigam in the 2005 Akshay Kumar-Kareena Kapoor film 'Bewafaa'. In the music video of the recreated song, she features with Siddharth Gupta and AkshayKharodia.

KartikAaryan posts picture with face pack, asks fans for 'wrong captions

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor KartikAaryan on Saturday posted a picture on Instagram and asked fans to caption it wrongly.

The image shows Kartik with a face pack. Alongside the picture he wrote: "Wrong captions only."

Fans have some very funny things to say.

One wrote: "When mom says ki cow dunk is good for your face and you apply it and then she tells its a prank."

while another posted, "When parents say: Ladki wale dekhnne aa the h."

Actress Sophie Choudry wrote: "I was always

into masks."

Meanwhile, on the work front, Kartik will be seen in the film "BhoolBhulaiyaa 2" which also features Tabu and Kiara Advani. This is a sequel to the 2007 film "BhoolBhulaiyaa". It is expected to hit screens in November this year.

He will also be seen in the film "Dhamaka", which will release on an OTT platform.

Kartik was recently in the news for his controversial exit from Karan Johar's upcoming production "Dostana 2".



PRIYA BAPAT DONATES BLOOD AFTER COVID RECOVERY

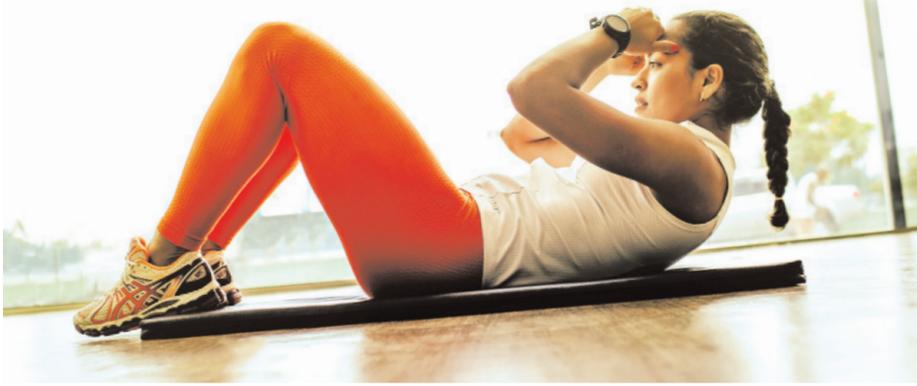
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Popular Marathi actress PriyaBapat has donated blood for Covid patients, after recovering from the coronavirus. "Everyone who can donate should donate. There is no two ways about it. We as a nation are facing the worst crisis ever. We are losing lives like never ever. In times like these everyone has to come together to fight the disease," Priya said. She added: "We have to follow protocols very strictly and do whatever possible in our capacities to help one another. I pray and wish that we get over the pandemic soon. The news has been unbearable."

The actress will be seen in independent filmmaker Aditya Kripalani's upcoming "Father Like".



How to choose a workout that fits your needs



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The process of staying healthy starts with choosing workout that backs your other healthier habits. It is essential that your chosen workout doesn't just help to make you fit, but also keeps energy levels up and provides an overall energy boost.

There are questions that need to be answered when you pick a suitable workout from the fitness basket. Essentially, the answers need to be very honest to avoid any lasting damages later on. The following pointers can be followed.

Understand the goal of your workout. Unless that's not set, chances of picking the wrong workout are possible. The end result gets reflected in an unhealthy and possible damaged body.

A thorough research of exercise forms, benefits and advantages to be gained needs to be researched in a comprehensive manner. It will be conducive in the picking process.

Following fads is all okay. But the workout needs to suit one's needs and not get influenced by fads.

Now that the basics have been drummed in the minds, the next step would be to choose the suitable workout from the few options out there.

CARDIO

An ideal cardio session allows for burning substantial calories. Running or walking is two good ways to do cardio. If weight loss is the chosen end result, then cardio helps start things and warm up for more intense workouts.

YOGA

This ancient Indian exercise method is perfect for an overall strong and fit body through a mixture of postures.

PILATES

For stronger cores, Mat Pilates is the proper choice. Along with toning the core and abdominal muscles, lower back, hips and buttocks, this workout is all about focussing on body strengthening and flexibility and lean muscles building. A flexible and controlled body will be quite possible. In fact, machine

Pilates combines the benefits of both weight training and Yoga.

HIIT

The workout technique alternates between small episodes of high intensity exercise and less intense rest. The varied exercises depend on the targeted body part for improvement.

WEIGHT TRAINING

This is perfect to build strength with weight training. Weights in workout routine can result in sturdy muscles and bones along with lesser injury threat. But weight training is not body building or creating a bulky body, its about toning the body and building muscle. Muscle building comes from premeditated practice and requires hardwork complete with weight-gain diet and supplements intake.

Choose the right workout for a healthy body.

MANOJ BAJPAYEE IS 'AWAY FROM EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Manoj Bajpayee is currently in the mountains and says he is away from everyone and everywhere. The actor posted a gamut of pictures on Instagram on Saturday of mountain tops and a rainbow, though he refrained from informing fans of his current location. "Away from everyone & everywhere ..!!!!!!" he wrote as caption. On the work front, he was recently seen playing a police officer named ACP Avinash, in the digital film "Silence... Can You Hear It". The mystery thriller film, also features Prachi Desai, Arjun Mathur, SahilVaid, Vaqar, Barkha Singh, Shirish Sharma, Sohaila Kapoor, Amit Thakkar and GarimaYagnik. He will soon be seen in the second season of the popular web series "The Family Man".



FEATHERED EYEBROWS? HERE'S HOW YOU CAN GET 'EM



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The 2021 photo-ready brow look of the year is 'Feathered eyebrows'. Light and fluffy brows that enhance the natural face structure and at the same time give you fuller-looking eyebrows is the beauty trend to watch out for this season. ChandniGoyal, Makeup Artist, Anastasia Beverly Hills, decodes how to achieve the feathered look in 5 simple steps:

* Golden Ratio Method: Map out the perfect shape of your eyebrows using the 3-step patented technique -- The Golden Ratio Method from Anastasia Beverly Hills that helps in determining

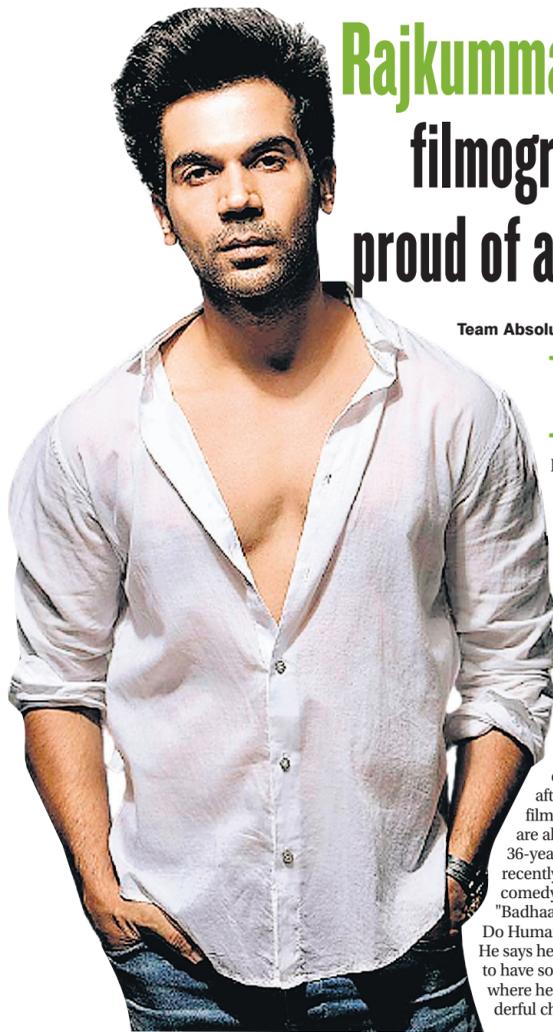
where your eyebrows should begin, end and arch. As per The Golden Ratio Technique, your eyebrows should begin directly above the centre of the nostril, end where the bottom outside corner of the nostril aligns with the outside corner of the eye, and arch from the centre of the tip of the nose aligning through the centre of the iris.

* Freeze your brows: Next, try to set your brows using a spoolie and Brow Gel or Brow Freeze to comb the eyebrow hair upwards. Brow Freeze is an extreme-hold colourless styling wax that lifts and holds brows in place for a feathered effect. You can also use any natural clear soap as a wax to and hold the brows.

* Fill in the gaps: Use your eyebrow pencil or Brow Powder Duo to fill in any gaps, use a lighter colour in front part and darker shade to fill in the rest of the brows for a naturally textured look.

* Stroke it: Next, use a Brow Pen to mimic natural soft hair-like strokes. The super fine-tipped detailing pen helps in creating natural-looking brow hair effortlessly. Brush it again for blending the strokes with natural hair.

* Highlight: Finish the look with the Pro Pencil on your brow bone to highlight the feathered texture of your eyebrows and to conceal stray hairs.



Rajkummar Rao: Want filmography I can be proud of after 50 years

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Rajkummar Rao has been tagged one of India's best actors. He has been feted with the National Award and has essayed characters that have redefined the Bollywood hero. The actor shares the kind of films he wants in his filmography.

In his 11-year Bollywood journey so far, Rajkummar has featured in many slice-of-life features including "Kai Po Che!", "Shahid", "Aligarh", "CityLights", "Bareilly Ki Barfi", "Newton", "Stree" and "The White Tiger". He says the pressure of Fridays doesn't make him feel insecure. "I feel very secure. I don't take the pressures of Fridays. I believe that there are some films that are for life -- some are meant for life and some for both box office as well as life, such as 'Stree'," the actor points out. "I just want to do good films. That's the only way I want my filmography to be (made up of) films I can be proud of when I turn back after 50 years and say these are films, I have done and they are all special," he says. The 36-year-old actor was recently seen in the horror comedy "Roohi". He has "Badhaai Do" and "Hum Do Humare Do" coming up. He says he wants every year to have some great films where he can play wonderful characters.

GUL PANAG: WAS ABLE TO LEVERAGE FILM CAREER TO DO OTHER THINGS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Gul Panag has been in the Hindi film industry for almost 18 years now, and she says her acting career enabled her to do other things that are important to her. Gul began her career in Bollywood with the 2003 film "Dhoop". Since then, she has worked in films like "Jurm", "Dor", "Dhoop", "Manorama Six Feet Under" and "Ab TakChhappan 2", besides the TV series "Kashmeer". She was last seen in the 2019 film "Bypass Road". "I have always done films that spoke to me and I was able to leverage my film career to do many other things. So, I made my film career an enabler of doing other things such as being a producer, entrepreneur, public speaker, motivational speaker," said Gul. "I have to say clearly that while acting remains something I am very deeply grateful to, it is one of the things I do in my life and because it is one of the things I do in life it is the enabler of everything else I do, and it's important for me," she added. "It's incumbent for me to make sure that I make choices wisely as an actor and choices that resonate with me," added Gul, who has voiced the National Geographic specials "Tiger Queen Of Taru" and "On The Brink".



Team Absolute | Mumbai

HIMANSH KOHLI: MY FATHER AND I USED TO HAVE THE MOST AWKWARD CONVERSATIONS

Actor Himansh Kohli says he has always been close to his parents, and often consults them for advice. Himansh was speaking on the occasion of International Day of Families on Saturday. "I remember my father used to counsel me and we used to have a talk regarding everything. We used to have even the most awkward conversations, so that I don't make mistakes in the future. It's necessary to open up to your parents, because the advice they give will always be in your favour, and they would also never let you do anything bad," said Himansh.

The actor grew up in a family of four. His parents run a security business while his sister, who is a baker, recently got married. They also have a dog called Donut at their Delhi home.

"Family is like having somebody who loves you unconditionally. Having family around is the basic requirement for any child to survive and thrive. Your family helps build your personality and have a perspective in life. Family makes a home, home," he said.

Having said that, the young actor also asserted that COVID has made everyone realise the importance of their families.

"I went through Covid with family and those were genuinely tough times. I got vaccinated. I request everyone to get vaccinated. We lost so many people in 2020, and it is happening again this year. The fear of losing someone has brought people closer. We have also learnt how home is the only place you'd want to be if everything starts falling apart," he summed up.

B-Town wishes pour in on Madhuri Dixit's birthday

Bollywood star Madhuri Dixit Nene celebrated her 54th birthday on Saturday, and industry colleagues took to social media to wish her on her special day.

Among the first to wish was veteran actor Anil Kapoor, Madhuri's co-star in numerous hits including "Tezaab" (1988), "Ram Laxhan" (1989), "Parinda" (1989), "KishenKanhaiya" (1990), "Beta" (1992), "Pukar" (2000) and "Total Dhamaal" (2019).

"Happy Birthday, @MADHURIDIXITNENE! As actors I feel all of us are the happiest on the sets, especially if you are working with friends... so I'm looking forward to being on set with you again! Wishing you all the health and happiness always!" wrote Anil. **Actress-politician Urmila Matondkar** described Madhuri as "graceful" and "gorgeous" while wishing her.

"Wishing a very Happy Birthday to the most gracious, graceful n gorgeous @MadhuriDixit ji.. lots of love n best wishes always," wrote Urmila.

Actress Raveena Tandon wrote: "Happy Birthday Beautiful! @MadhuriDixit loads love and happiness!"

Actor Abhishek Bachchan tweeted: "@MadhuriDixit wishing you a very happy, healthy and safe birthday. Lots of love and respect."

Actor Riteish Deshmukh, who shared screen space with Madhuri in "Total Dhamaal", says working with her was "a dream come true".

"Happy Birthday to the most beautiful @MadhuriDixit maam. Working with you was my absolute dream come true... I wish you happiness, love, best of health and may god fulfil your wish to work with me (again) real soon. Have a great great day," wrote Riteish.

Riteish's wife, actress Genelia, tweeted: "Happy Birthday @MadhuriDixit ji.. Wishing you the best of health and warmest regards."

Actress Ena Saha tweeted: "Wishing you a very happy birthday maam! Big time inspiration."

Actress Sonali Kulkarni tweeted: "Happy Birthday dear @MadhuriDixit. You prove that passion, talent and genuine beauty is absolutely timeless. 365 days of added awe and truck loads of love.. best wishes."

Actress Pallavi Shirke tweeted: "Wishing the charming and timeless beauty @MadhuriDixit ma'am a very Happy Birthday! May you always be blessed with good health & happiness. #HappyBirthdayMadhuriDixit"



VARUN SHARMA: ACTING HELPS YOU GET CLOSER TO PEOPLE AROUND YOU

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Tv actor Varun Sharma says that he got to know the people around him better after he became an actor, because he started to constantly observe everyone. The actor, who will soon be seen playing an ophthalmologist in "Aapki Nazron Ne Samjha", adds that he loves acting as it helps him play different roles. "As actors, you get to play so many different roles every day, I find it very exciting. As an actor, it's thrilling that you can live so many lives on screen. It also helps you in getting to know yourself better -- like if you are an extrovert but you can play an introvert too on screen and vice versa. I also feel the profession helps you get closer to people around you because you start understanding, observing, and learning from them," said Varun. Talking about his role in the show, Varun says the audience will get to see a different kind of chemistry between him and Nandini, essayed by Richa Rathore. "I play Nandini's childhood best friend who is an ophthalmologist. As Darsh is blind, he will get jealous of my bond with Nandini. I am sure the audience will love it," says the actor, who was last seen in the show "Tujhse Hai Raabta".

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



HIBA NAWAB MISSES 'JIJAJICHHAT PARR KOI HAI' TEAM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Hiba Nawab, popular for her starring role in the series "JijajiChhat Parr Koi Hai" (JCPKH), says she misses the entire team of the show on the occasion of International Day of Families on Saturday.

"The cast of JCPKH is like a family since we spend most of our time together when we are shooting. We are a group of lively and entertaining people, having everyone around is no less than a laugh riot. I genuinely miss spending time, shooting and laughing with them," she says, about shoots being cancelled owing to Covid lockdown.

Hiba is from Lucknow and says the set of her show has always been a "home away from home" for her. "Each and every individual, be it the co-stars or the crew members - they have never let me miss my family or feel lonely on the sets. We are always playing games or just chilling. We are not awkward or uncomfortable with each other which makes our on-screen chemistry so likeable. JCPH is like a home away from home," she says of the Sony SAB show.



Shivshakti Sachdeva