

absolute india

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CMIE'S survey shows 15 million jobs lost in May 2021

A TERRIBLE DISASTER

AS INFECTIONS HAVE STARTED TO DECLINE, LOCKDOWNS MAY BE EASED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SOME JOBS MAY COME BACK. BUT, RECOVERY TO THE 2019-20 LEVELS OF 404 MILLION JOBS STILL SEEMS VERY DISTANT.

CMIE's (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt.Ltd.) Consumer Pyramids Household Survey shows that the impact during these two months, particularly in May 2021 was severe on daily wage workers. Of the total 22.3 million jobs lost during April-May, 17.2 million were of daily wage earners. Business persons lost 5.7 million jobs during these two months and salaried employees lost 3.2 million. Labour has moved in and out of farmlands in a big way. In April, nearly 6 million left the farms because of the lean period. In May, over 9 million moved into farms as the kharif crop preparations begin around this time.

STEEP FALL

Employment fell from 390.8 million in April 2021 to 375.5 million in May 2021. This translates into a loss of 15.3 million jobs, or a 3.9 per cent fall in employment in the month. This is not as bad as the loss of 114 million in April 2020 but it comes second to only that draconian month of a complete nationwide lockdown. The May 2021 fall in employment is higher than the 12.3 million fall recorded in November 2016, the month of demonetisation.



REAL ESTE SUFFERS MOST

Mahesh Vyas | Mumbai
 In May 2021, India's labour participation rate at 40 per cent was the same as it was in April 2021. But, the unemployment rate shot up to 11.9 per cent from 8 per cent in April. Weekly estimates had foretold this increase. The weekly unemployment rate had touched 14.7 per cent in the week ended May 23. A stable labour participation rate combined with a higher unemployment rate implies a loss of jobs and a fall in the employment rate. The employment rate fell to 35.3 per cent in May 2021 from 36.8 per cent in April 2021. This is a very sharp fall for a single month. Except for the precipitous fall in the employment rate in April 2021 in the face of a nationwide lockdown, the employment rate has never dropped by 1.5 percentage points or more in any month in the past. May 2021 was therefore a particularly stressful month on the jobs front. May 2021 is also the fourth consecutive month of a fall in employment. The cumulative fall in employment since January 2021 is 25.3 million. Employment in January 2021 was 400.7 million. This has dropped to 375.5 million. April and May 2021 witnessed a particularly severe fall in employment. They account for 22.7 million of the 25.3 million job losses in the past four months. This is the period of the severe second wave of Covid-19. During these two months, India witnessed lockdowns of varying degrees for different durations in different regions. It was a period of substantial disruption in economic activities which was bound to reflect in employment. It is worrisome that in just April and May 2021 India lost 25 million non-farm jobs. It is possible some of these jobs will come back quickly when the lockdown conditions are eased. But, it is a reflection of the high informality and therefore the correspondingly high vulnerability of labour that is employed informally in India. A feature that stands out in the current job losses is that its age composition is substantially different from the composition earlier. And, this could be an additional source of worry. In the past job losses were concentrated in younger age groups. This is not the case this time. Job losses are concentrated in the elder age groups.



BREAD-EARNERS OF THE FAMILIES ARE IN CRISIS

The age group of 15-29 years did not see any job losses during April-May 2021. The age group of 30-39 years saw a net loss of 5.9 million jobs and those of 40 years of age or more saw a loss of 18.7 million jobs. Most of the job losses were borne by men. It can be conjectured that these middle-aged men were the main bread-earners of their families. It requires greater data analysis to conclude that the people who lost jobs during April-May 2021 were indeed the main breadwinners of their households. But, at the cost of some admittedly stereotyping of workers it may be worth worrying that the economic impact of these job losses on the households is more severe than it would have been if the job losses were mostly among the younger men and women.



RBI cuts growth forecast for FY22 to 9.5%

Amid the severe second wave of Covid-19 and the lockdowns across states, the RBI has sharply reduced the growth estimate for the April-June quarter to 18.5 per cent. The previous estimate for the period was 26.2 per cent. The growth projections for Q2, W3 and Q4 of FY 22 has now been kept at 7.9 per cent, 7.2 per cent and 6.6 per cent respectively.



The central bank has retained its key short-term lending rates along with the growth-oriented accommodative stance during the second monetary policy review of FY22 on Friday.

Accordingly, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the central bank voted to maintain the repo rate, or short-term lending rate, for commercial banks at 4 per cent. Likewise, the reverse repo rate was kept unchanged at 3.35 per cent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the 'Bank Rate' at 4.25 per cent. It was widely expected that MPC would hold rates and the accommodative stance.

In his statement post the MPC's decision, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said that the MPC is of the view that policy support from all sides would be required to gain growth momentum of the economy.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lowered its growth projection for the current financial year to 9.5 per cent from the previous estimate of 10.5 per cent.

Several banks and rating agencies have off late lowered the growth estimate for the current fiscal largely on the back of the economic impact of the lockdowns and the hopes for a double-digit growth now seem to be too ambitious.

RETAIL INFLATION FOR FY22 AT 5.1%

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India has projected India's retail inflation for the current financial year at 5.1 per cent. For the first quarter, April-June, the retail inflation or the consumer price index (CPI) inflation has been estimated at 5.2 per cent, followed by 5.4 per cent, 4.7 per cent, and 5.3 in second, third and the fourth quarter. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said that the favourable base effects that brought about the moderation in headline inflation by 1.2 percentage points in April, may persist through the first half of the year, conditioned by the progress of the monsoon and effective supply side interventions by the government.

Aditya Thackeray has narrow escape as chandelier crashes

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aditya Thackeray had a narrow escape as a huge chandelier crashed along with a slab at the Sahyadri Guest House here on Friday evening, officials said.

The incident occurred when Thackeray, along with top officials, was busy conducting a series of meetings at the hall no 4 of the posh state guest house. Shortly before 5 p.m., there was a deafening sound as a massive chandelier set on a slab collapsed outside his meeting hall, sending alarms among



the security personnel. There were no casualties in the incident, the cause of which is not clear.

NO DECISION ON INDEMNITY FOR LOCAL VACCINE MAKERS YET: GOVT

Asked whether Pfizer will be administered to children in the country, he said: "We have to understand that the child cohort is not a small cohort. When we are talking about children aged between 12 and 18 years, we are talking about at least 13-14 crore population and to cater to them, we will need 25 crore doses. We have to make a decision taking everything into account like the availability of doses."

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid request of indemnity by domestic vaccine manufacturers, the Central government on Friday said that the issue of



giving legal protection to Indian companies "is under watch" and no decision has been taken yet. Replying to queries during the Health Ministry press briefing, NITI Aayog's Member Health Dr V.K. Paul said: "The issue of indemnity has been brought up in the context of foreign company Pfizer with

whom we are in engagement. In principle, they expect indemnity should be given. About the request of indemnity by domestic vaccine manufacturers, Paul said: "For esteemed local manufacturers, it is an issue on which the government has a watch and there is no decision."

Pfizer is less effective against Delta variant: Lancet

London: People fully vaccinated with two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are likely to have more than five times lower levels of neutralising antibodies against the Delta variant (B16172) when compared to the original strain, according to new laboratory data that supports Pfizer's plans to deliver booster shots in Autumn. After a single dose of Pfizer-BioNTech, 79 per cent of people had a quantifiable neutralising antibody response against the original strain, but this fell to 50 per cent for Alpha variant (B117), 32 per cent for Delta variant (B16172) and 25 per cent for Beta variant (B1351), showed the study.

HC JUNKS JUHI CHAWLA'S PLEA AGAINST 5G, IMPOSES RS 20 LAKH COST

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Friday dismissed the lawsuit filed by actor-environmentalist Juhi Chawla against the setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country, and also imposed a fine of Rs 20 lakh for the abuse of the process of law.

Justice J.R. Midha held that the suit filed by Chawla and two others was defective, non-maintainable, and also contained unverified and vexatious assertions. Observing that Chawla did not approach any of the 33 defendants named in her suit and instead sought a declaration from the court, the bench said this declaration cannot be allowed under the law. It also said Chawla did not deposit the court fees for her suit and directed her to pay Rs 1.95 lakh within one week.



WUHAN LAB HEAD, US EXPERT FLAGGED COVID RISK IN 2015: REPORT

The 2015 paper's acknowledgments also cited funding from the US National Institutes of Health and from a nonprofit called EcoHealth Alliance, which had parcelled out grant money from the US Agency for International Development, the report said. Many experts have until recently denied the lab-leak theory and claimed that Covid-19 originated as a natural infection leaping from animals to humans. But now, there has been a shift.

WASHINGTON | Agencies

The head of China's Wuhan virology lab, also called as the 'bat woman', and an expert from the University of North Carolina in the US,

had in a paper published in 2015 flagged the dangers of their gain-of-function experiment of a novel coronavirus which could infect human cells, media reports said. In the research, Shi Zhengli and epidemiologist Ralph Baric used mice as subjects and inserted the protein from a Chinese rufous horseshoe bat into the molecular structure of the SARS virus from 2002, creating a new, infectious pathogen, the Vanity Fair reported on Thursday.

The findings were published in scientific journal Nature Medicine. It was unearthed by a small team of investigators, commissioned by Matthew Pottinger, the deputy National Security Adviser in the Donald Trump administration. The team aimed to unravel the origins of Covid-19.

"Scientific review panels may deem similar studies too risky to pursue," the researchers wrote in the paper and warned the world of "a potential risk of SARS-CoV re-emergence from viruses currently circulating in bat populations".

"The Central Vigilance Commission has observed that the absence of a uniform defined procedure for obtaining vigilance clearance, before engaging retired officials by government organisations, sometimes lead to a situation where officials with tainted past or having cases pending against them are engaged by the government organisations. Such a situation not only leads to unnecessary complaints/allegations, but is also against the tenets of fairness and probity, which is the basic principle governing the functioning of government organisations," the letter said. "In respect of retired officers belonging to All India Services, Group A officers of Central government or their equivalent in other organisations owned or controlled by the Central government, before offering employment to them on contractual/consultancy basis, vigilance clearance from the employer organisation, from which the government officer had retired, should be necessarily obtained," it said. "In case a retired officer had served in more than one organisation, vigilance clearance should be obtained from all the organisations where the retired officer had served during a period of 10 years prior to his retirement," the letter added.

CVC TIGHTENS RULES FOR EMPLOYING RETIRED GOVT OFFICIALS

Kolkata: The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has directed the secretaries of all the Central government ministries and departments, chief executives and chief vigilance officers of all public sector undertakings to get vigilance clearance before employing a retired official on contractual or consultancy basis. Interestingly enough, the letter came only a few days after the West Bengal government engaged former Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay as the chief advisor to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The CVC in its letter mentioned that the absence of a uniform procedure sometimes led to a situation where officials with tainted past or cases pending against them got engaged. The CVC has also made it clear that the private sector should also follow the procedure before employing retired government officials.



'If in room, man requests, woman complies': SC on not axing pre-arrest bail in rape case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday observed what can be said if a man and woman are in a room, and the man makes a request and the woman complies with it, as it refused to cancel the anticipatory bail granted to a Mumbai-based TV anchor, accused in a rape case.

During the hearing of the case registered in Delhi in February, a bench comprising Justices Navin Sinha and Ajay Rastogi asked the victim's counsel: "Our question is, purely for purpose of bail only, a question of normal human conduct and understanding."

"If a man and woman are in a room, and man makes a request and woman complies with it, do we need to say anything more at this stage?"

The rape victim had moved the top court against the anticipatory bail granted by Delhi High Court to Mumbai-based TV journalist Varun Hiremath. The counsel submitted the court virtually granted the benefit of doubt based on selective reading of the Section 164 (of the CrPC) statement of the victim. The counsel added that the accused evaded arrest for 50 days.

The victim's counsel also contended that IPC states that to each act, there has to be clear consent. "Let us assume a situation, where a woman disrobes herself and there is a particular activity the man wants to do, and the woman says no to

the penetrative act. But the man does it, then it becomes an offence," counsel argued.

The bench replied that is a larger question, which can be decided later and clearly told the counsel that the matter under consideration is for cancellation of bail only.

The counsel contended that the penetrative act was without the consent of the victim, and added,



even after disrobing, before the penetration, victim had pushed him away and said "no" many times and also vomited over him, but he insisted.

The counsel added, if there is a particular act, the man wants to indulge in, and there is no con-

sent, then it's an offence, and insisted that there was no continued consent.

After hearing arguments, the bench said there is no ground made out to interfere with the Delhi High Court order. "We find no reason to interfere in the matter. The Special Leave Petition is dismissed. Pending application (s) shall also stand disposed of," said the top court in its order.

The High Court order was passed on May 13, granting

interim protection to Hiremath on the condition that he shall join the investigation whenever required. The petitioner argued the High Court erroneously granted anticipatory bail in such heinous offences as rape and assault.

Choksi slips away from India's clutch again

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After a Dominican High Court adjourned the hearing in fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi's case, the eight member team of CBI, ED and MEA are now en route to India, without the diamond jeweller that duped millions in the PNB multi-crore fraud. The next hearing has been adjourned in the matter to June 14.

According to agencies sources, the private Qatar jet left from Dominica on Thursday along with the eight member team of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate, Ministry of External Affairs officials and two CRPF commandos.

The team of Indian officials had landed in Dominica on Saturday with a set of documents relating to the case of Choksi.

On Thursday, Dominican High Court Judge Bernie Stephenson adjourned the habeas corpus hearing of



Choksi, who is wanted in India in the Rs 13,500 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case.

According to Antigua News Room, a news outlet based in the Caribbean island, it was adjourned to allow lawyers for Choksi and the Dominican government to agree on the language to be used with respect to the injunction filed to prevent his removal from Dominica. It said that both parties are expected to meet to discuss the matter and to inform the judge, who will set a new court date.

Choksi, who is wanted in India by the CBI and the ED in connection with the PNB fraud case, had gone missing on May 23 from Antigua sparking a massive manhunt. He was captured in Dominica on May 26.

Choksi and his lawyers had claimed that he was forced on a vessel and was abducted. On June 2, Choksi pleaded not guilty to illegal entry at his court appearance and was denied bail. He appeared before the magistrate on a wheelchair in a blue T-shirt and black trousers.

According to Dominica News Online, the magistrate's court denied bail to Choksi after the government prosecutor argued that he was facing 11 offences in India and extradition proceedings in Antigua and could be a flight risk. The 62-year-old left India in January 2018, days before the CBI registered a case. On May 27, first pictures of Choksi emerged online, showing several signs of bruises on his arms and a swollen eye.

CBSE SETS UP 12 MEMBER COMMITTEE TO DECIDE CRITERIA FOR CLASS 12 RESULTS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Following the cancellation of Class 12 exams, the CBSE has constituted a 12 member committee to decide on the criteria for the results. The committee, which comprises Joint Secretary Education, Vipin Kumar, Commissioners of the Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas, and representatives from the CBSE, and UGC among other, will have to submit its report in 10 days. The Centre on Tuesday had decided to cancel the CBSE Class 12 board exams for 2021, in view of the Covid situation. Following this, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) scrapped the ISC (Class 12) exams for this year, saying that a scheme for evaluating the students will be announced soon. Some states have also cancelled the Class 12 board exams.



Monsoon enters Karnataka, rains in Bengaluru

Bengaluru | Agencies

The much-awaited southwest monsoon entered Karnataka with moderate rains in Bengaluru, an official said on Friday. "The monsoon entered Karnataka with moderate rains and gusty winds in coastal areas and south interior parts of the state, a day after it reached Kerala on Thursday. Conditions are favourable for it to advance further into the state," an India Meteorological Department (IMD) official told reporter here. Though rains were scattered and isolated in the coastal areas, they were widespread in the southern region, especially in and around



Bengaluru, which recorded 45mm till late evening. "The monsoon will advance over the next 2-3 days to cover most parts of the state with

widespread rains in most parts of coastal, south interior and some parts of north interior regions," said the official.

FACING FLAK, PUNJAB WITHDRAWS VACCINES FROM PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Chandigarh:

After facing criticism, Punjab government on Friday issued an order for taking back Covid vaccine doses from private hospitals. State Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said that the instruction to provide one-time limited vaccine doses to the private hospitals has been withdrawn by the state and all these vaccines will be administered free of cost to those in the 18-44 age group at the government vaccination centres. Sidhu said that as per the information provided by the state in-charge for Covid vaccination, Vikas Garg, about 42,000 doses were allotted to the private hospitals out of which only 600 were administered to the people. He said instruction has been issued to all civil surgeons that no fresh allotment to be made to any private hospital. Also, the private hospitals should return forthwith all the vaccine doses available with them.



2 African nationals held in Chennai for smuggling heroin worth Rs 70 cr

Chennai | Agencies

Two young African women passengers were arrested for trying to smuggle in 9.87 kg of heroin valued at Rs 70 crore, the Commissioner of Customs at the Chennai International Airport said on Friday. In a statement issued here, the Customs said two African lady passengers, who arrived by a Qatar Airways flight from Johannesburg via Doha, were intercepted at the exit point on suspicion of carrying narcotics.



One of them was in a wheelchair and on being questioned by the Customs officials about her health, she gave an evasive answer. The two were carrying a stroller bag each having

false bottoms. On checking the bags, eight packets containing 9.87 kg of heroin were found and seized. On questioning, it was learnt that one lady passenger from Zimbabwe was travelling to India for medical treatment at a private super-specialty hospital in Delhi along with her attendant, a resident of Cape Town in South Africa, on a visa granted on the basis of communication from the hospital.

ical treatment at a private super-specialty hospital in Delhi along with her attendant, a resident of Cape Town in South Africa, on a visa granted on the basis of communication from the hospital.

SP LEADER BOOKED UNDER PANDEMIC ACT

Gorakhpur | Agencies

An FIR has been lodged under the Pandemic Act by the Gorakhpur police against Samajwadi Party leader Shailendra Yadav, after a video in which he can be seen dancing at the wedding, went viral on the social media.

The wedding, sources said, was of his brother-in-law's. Shailendra Yadav is husband of district panchayat member Renu Yadav in Gorakhpur. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dinesh P. said that a case has been registered in connection with violation of the Pandemic Act and action will be initiated against those present at the event. He said that safety protocols were not followed at the wedding.



'Doctors need protection from Covid as well as BJP govt's callousness'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Days after a doctor in Karnataka was brutally thrashed by a mob, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said that the doctors not only need protection from the Covid-19 but also the BJP government's callousness.

"Doctors need protection from coronavirus as well as BJP governments' callousness. Save the saviours," he tweeted.

A 50-year-old doctor in Karnataka's Chikkamagaluru district was assaulted by a mob allegedly over the death of a six-year-old patient earlier this week. While, in another incident, a doctor posted at a Covid care centre in Assam's Hojai district was mercilessly attacked by a



mob including the family members of a deceased Covid patient on Tuesday. Both, Karnataka and Assam are BJP-ruled states.

3 arrested in Bihar for gang rape-murder of Muzaffarpur girl

Patna | Agencies

Police in Muzaffarpur have arrested three liquor mafias accused of kidnapping a young girl from a Bihar village, gang raping her and then mutilating the body before dumping it in river.

The incident appeared in Madhepur village under Maniyara police station on Sunday when the girl along with her mother went to a nearby chemist shop to purchase medicines.

As per the statement of the victim's mother, three persons arrived on a motor bike and kidnapped her at gunpoint.

"We informed the police immediately but they were unable to trace my daughter.



ter. "The next morning, we were informed by the police that a mutilated body was recovered on the bank of Kadane river near Kudhni village," the victim's mother said.

"We immediately rushed to the spot and identified her from the clothes," she said. "The postmortem confirmed rape. As per the identification of the accused, we raided several places and finally arrested them on the intervening night of Thursday-Friday," said Ravi Kumar Rai, an investigating officer of the case.

"Two out of three have criminal backgrounds. They were also involved in illegal liquor trade in Muzaffarpur," he said.

ED ATTACHES ASSETS OF CHHATTISGARH GOVT ENGINEER WORTH RS 1.72 CR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said that it attached immovable and movable properties worth Rs 1.72 crore of Chhattisgarh Public Health Engineering Department's Executive Engineer Surendra Kumar Chandra, and his family members, in a money-laundering case. An ED official said that the attached assets include bank balances, agriculture land, plots and houses in Bilaspur and in the district of Janjgir Champa.

The ED has registered a case of money laundering on the basis of FIR registered by ACB, Chhattisgarh Police and a subsequent charge sheet filed which discloses the disproportionate assets to the tune of Rs 1.72 crore amassed by Chandra.

The official said that money laundering probe revealed that most of the immovable properties were purchased in the name of Chandra and his wife.

"During investigation, it was found that illegally acquired cash was used by Chandra and his wife for registration of house under a scheme of the Chhattisgarh Griha Nirman Mandal," the official said, adding that subsequently, this registration was cancelled and the amount so deposited was returned in bank account which was further utilised for purchase of other properties.



CHANGE OF NAME

I, Rekha Ahirwal is wife of Army No. 15416079X. Rank L/Nk Name R.S. Ahirwal residing at House No. 8, SRG, The New Fort, Awadhपुरi, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) PIN - 462022 have changed my name Rekha to Rekha Ahirwal as per affidavit no. AY-936865 date 03.06.2021 before Bhopal court.

Full care being taken of post Covid patients

ADEQUATE AVAILABILITY OF BLACK FUNGUS INJECTION 'AMPHOTERICIN B' IN THE STATE: CM

ABOUT 80 THOUSAND CORONA TESTS BEING CONDUCTED IN THE STATE DAILY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that there is adequate availability of Black fungus injection 'Amphotericin B' in the state which is being given to both government and private hospitals.

Chouhan said that full care is also being taken of post Covid patients in the state. Doctors are regularly interacting with these patients and giving them necessary advice. Chouhan said that every single patient is being traced and treated by conducting maximum tests of Corona in the state. The number of tests being conducted per day has reached around 80 thousand.

Chouhan was reviewing the situation and arrangements of Corona in the state through video conferencing at Mantralaya on Friday.

Today 12 thousand 600 'Amphotericin B' injections for Black fungus have been received by air in the state. After two days, 17 thousand more injections will be available. At present, there are 1005 active patients of Black fungus disease in the state. There are 235 in Bhopal, 428 in Indore, 116 in Jabalpur, 40 in Sagar, 85 in Ujjain, 52 in Gwalior, 31 in Rewa, 15 in Dewas, 02 in Ratlam and 01 in Burhanpur. 72 percent post Covid patients were con-



tacted and given medical advice through District Command and Control Centers in the state. Post Covid complications were detected in 0.7 percent of the total post Covid patients who had recovered.

Today 798 new cases of Corona have been reported in the state, 2045 patients have recovered and 12 thousand 889 active cases still remain. The weekly positivity of the

state is 1.5 percent and today's positivity is one percent.

Now 32 districts of the state are in green zone where the weekly positivity is less than one percent. The remaining 20 districts of the state are in the Orange Zone with weekly positivity ranging between 1 percent to 5 percent. Not a single new case has been reported in Alirajpur, Chhatrapur and

Jhabua district while one new case each has been reported in three districts of Burhanpur, Katni and Mandla. There are only 2 active cases in Ashoknagar district.

More than 15 cases have been reported in only 4 districts of the state. As many as 246 new cases have been reported in Indore, 176 in Bhopal, 64 in Jabalpur and 18 in Sagar. The weekly positivity rate of Indore is 4.4 percent, Bhopal 3.33 percent, Jabalpur 1.6 percent and that of Sagar is 1.1 percent.

While 5006 patients of Corona are undergoing treatment in hospitals right now, 7883 patients are in home isolation. Among the patients admitted in the hospitals, 1834 patients are in ICU, 2011 patients are on oxygen beds and 1161 patients are on normal beds. During the review of Jabalpur district, Chief Minister directed that maximum testing should be conducted and contact tracing of every person found positive should be done. 64 new cases of Corona have been reported in Jabalpur, weekly positivity is 1.5 and today's positivity is 1.1 percent. Best treatment should be given to 370 Corona patients admitted in ICU in hospitals. Chouhan has directed that all the ministers-in-charge, officers-in-charge of Covid, members of Crisis Management Committees should speed up the vaccination campaign in their respective districts.

Covid-19: State records 798 new cases, 50 deaths, 2,045 recoveries

Today 798 new cases of Corona have been reported in the state, 2045 patients have recovered and 12 thousand 889 active cases still remain. The weekly positivity of the state is 1.5 percent and today's positivity is one percent.

taking the state's recovery count to 7,62,597, leaving it with an active caseload of 12,889, he said.

"Indore's tally rose by 246 to touch 1,51,049, while that of Bhopal reached 1,21,643 after the addition of 176 cases. The toll in Indore rose by two to reach 1,351. Bhopal has so far seen 945 deaths, including four in the last 24 hours. Active cases in Indore and Bhopal stand at 2,366 and 2,559 respectively," the official informed.

With 79,917 samples being examined in the last 24 hours, the number of tests in MP crossed 1.02 crore.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh on Friday reported 798 COVID-19 cases and 50 deaths from the infection, taking its tally to 7,83,743 and toll to 8,257, an official said. The day also saw 2,045 people getting discharged,

Coronavirus figures in MP are as follows: Total cases 7,83,743, new cases 798, death toll 8,257, recovered 7,62,597, active cases 12,889 number of tests so far 1,02,04,296.



Chief Minister's message on World Environment Day:

Make state oxygen rich by joining massive tree plantation campaign 'Ankur'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that an extensive tree plantation campaign 'Ankur' has been initiated with public participation in order to expand green cover of the state, to create a clean environment and a state full of vitality. The aim of Ankur campaign is to increase the absorption of carbon diox-

ide by trees and the emission of oxygen in the atmosphere.

In his message to the people, Chouhan, said that one has to download 'Vayudoot App' on mobile and get self-registered for public participation in 'Ankur' programme.

Participation certificates will be awarded to the selected participants for planting and taking care of fruit-bearing and huge trees. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan has appealed that more and more citizens should participate in this sacred environmental yagya by joining the campaign of massive tree plantation 'Ankur' with enthusiasm and contribute to protection and promotion of environment.

Chouhan said that World Environment Day is celebrated every year on 5th June with the aim of increasing awareness among common citizens about the environment and motivating them for positive work related to conservation and promotion. The main theme of this year's Environment Day is the

revival of ecosystem. Human life cannot be imagined without nature. It is necessary to understand the importance of the relationship of human beings with trees, plants, forests, mountains, rivers, lakes and land etc. Living with the spirit of companionship and peace with nature is the need of the hour.

Trees and vegetation are an important link in the ecosystem. The presence of dense trees and abundant vegetation indicates that the ecosystem is safe and active. Today natural resources are being adversely affected due to the necessity of development. The adverse consequences of man-made imbalances in the environmental system are surfacing in the form of climate change, imbalance in biodiversity and epidemics. So we have to keep our environment clean. In order to keep the atmosphere pure and increase the availability of oxygen, trees must be planted in a larger number. Chief Minister greeted the citizens on World Environment Day.

Scores of junior doctors resign after MPJDA declares strike 'illegal'

Nearly 3,000 junior doctors working in the six government medical colleges of the state resigned en masse from their posts

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Scores of junior doctors have resigned after the division bench of Madhya Pradesh High Court has declared their state-wide strike as "illegal" and ordered them to resume work within 24 hours.

The Junior Doctors' Association (JUDDA) have been on a strike for the past couple of days, pressing for various demands, including hike in their stipend.

On Thursday, the High Court while hearing a petition called the strike "unconstitutional" and asked the JUDDA members to return to their work within the next 24 hours.

The government had been told to take strict action against those doctors who do not resume their work within the stipulated time. It is pertinent to mention here that there are 3,000 junior doctors in six medical colleges across the state.

Madhya Pradesh Junior Doctors Association (MPJDA) president



Arvind Meena has said that all the junior doctors of the state have resigned. "Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan should intervene and make efforts to end the strike adding that nearly 3,000 junior doctors working in the six government medical colleges of the state resigned en masse from their posts on Thursday and submitted their resignations to the dean of their respective colleges," Madhya Pradesh Junior Doctors Association (MPJDA) president Dr Arvind Meena told media persons.

Meena has also accused the government of putting unnecessary pres-

sure on the doctors. The doctors have also threatened that they will take to the streets if the pressure mounts, as they are getting support from the people as well. They will also appeal to the Supreme Court on this matter.

However, sources said that the state government has promised 17 per cent hike in the doctor's stipend.

Meanwhile, the strike has completely disrupted the healthcare services across Madhya Pradesh.

Notably, The junior doctors have put forward multiple demands before the state government, including a hike in stipend and free treatment for

them and their families if they contract the deadly coronavirus infection. Meena said the state government has already cancelled their enrolment for the third year PG and therefore they won't be able to sit for examinations.

He said the MPJDA will appeal against the high court judgement in the Supreme Court.

Meena claimed members of the Medical Officers Association and the Federation of Resident Doctors Association will also join their agitation.

He said junior and senior doctors of Rajasthan, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Bihar, Maharashtra and AIIMS Rishikesh, among others, have supported their strike.

Meena claimed on May 6, the government authorities promised to fulfill their demands but nothing happened after that, forcing them to stop work.

Asked about the governments decision to raise their stipend by 17 per cent and whether they will resume duties after relevant orders are issued, M Meena said remained non-committal.

"The government has promised to raise the stipend by 24 per cent and till they raise it to that limit, the strike will continue," he said.

MP IS LEADER IN THE COUNTRY IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SWAMITVA YOJANA

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Madhya Pradesh is first in the country in preparing the rights records under the Swamitva Yojana, being run to provide the villagers the ownership rights of their possessions by surveying the rural population in the state. So far, rights records of 1615 villages of the state have been completed under the scheme. The rights records of 100% villages of Harda district have been completed. The percentage of villages where rights records have been completed is 41. Under the Best Practice by the Government of India, other states have also been suggested to adopt the process of implementation of Swamitva Yojana on the lines of Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh was visited by officers of other states to understand the process being adopted in Madhya Pradesh, while training was also given to them through video conferencing. Chouhan instructed the departmental officers that after completing the survey work under the scheme, distribution of rights records to the rural Aabadi should be started. Chouhan was taking a review meeting of the Swamitva Yojana of the Revenue Department on Friday. The meeting was attended by Revenue Minister Govind Singh Rajput through VC. Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Principal Secretary Revenue Manish Rastogi etc. were present. Under the Swamitva Yojana, the villagers will be given a government document of the right over their property in the form of an ownership card. Through this document, they will be able to buy and sell their property and get loans from banks easily.

Special on World Environment Day - 5th June 2021

MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION A CIVIC RELIGION

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Greetings to all fellow citizens on World Environment Day. Let us all bow down to every element of our environment which is always vibrating. Little plants-large trees, tiny springs-big rivers, tiny pebbles-huge mountains. Insects and humans. Today is the day to bow to all and pay reverence for their generosity.

By the way, Environment Day is celebrated every year. Every year some rituals are performed. Concerns are expressed. There are discussions on the threat to the environment. The concern is that environmental issues are not being deeply linked to our civic culture. Be it climate change or issues of keeping rivers clean and alive or saving trees. Our connection should have been deep.

Years ago the great English nature lover poet William Wordsworth said that let nature be your teacher. Nature teaches us that human life can be happy in any case. Co-existence is one of the greatest lessons of nature. Tamarind never asks Mahua why you grew in front of me. The tree does not give any punishment to the woodpecker that pierces the thick trunk of the tree with its sharp beak.

Recently came across some excerpts from the book 'The Hidden Life of Trees' by German botanist and very talented author Peter Holbein. Now it has been proved that trees communicate with each other. They have no script. They transmit their messages to each other through smell. They are sad and they rejoice too. It has also been proved by research that trees that live among members of their species have a longer life.

Every year the month of July comes and the people who pretend to save the environment assemble in large numbers. Photos of sapling plantations are published in the newspapers. As soon as the plantation time is over, no one asks in what condition the saplings that were planted are. They clearly escape their responsibility when there is the real task of protecting the saplings. Therefore, very few saplings



survive out of the total number of those planted. Planting of trees is considered auspicious in our Indian culture. Trees are revered in Indian worship system, because they are believed to be the abode of gods. Gautam Buddha's message is that every human being should plant a sapling every five years. In the present times, public awareness towards the environment has definitely increased, but the metropolitan society has still not been able to establish an intimate relationship with the trees and plants. History shows that if there is a lack of emotional intensity in environmental conservation, then there is no result. Healthy environment is equally needed by all irrespective of political party or ideology. Without oxygen there would be no life.

To avoid destruction, the society will have to learn to live with trees while reviving the tradition of nature-worship. It is necessary to explain to the new generation the concept of preparing new saplings of traditional trees like Neem, Amla, Peepal, Banyan, Mahua, Mango. The respect given to plants on the

land of India is not seen anywhere else. Western scholars, philosophers have also learned to respect nature from Indian scriptures and traditions. The famous American essayist and philosophical poet Sir Emerson told his disciple Henry David Thoreau that if you want to experience the supernatural vibrations and melody of nature, then learn to take refuge in it.

There should also be a voluntary ritualistic act of planting saplings on the part of the society. For the future generation to be proud of their ancestors, a little sensitivity is expected from the present generation. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has taken a resolution with self-motivation to plant a sapling every day. This is a unique initiative to encourage his civic culture and inspire common citizens. If every citizen accepts the challenge of becoming a responsible and sensitive caretaker of a living tiny plant, then we will all be enriched with greenery. So take a pledge today to respect our environment wherever we live.

On leaving medical college seat, tuition fee for entire period will have to be deposited

Warwade informed that the above rules are effective on all the students admitted from the year 2018. In the event of any post graduate student leaving the seat due to any reason, it will be mandatory to deposit the bond amount of Rs 10/30 lakh (as per admission) in the account of the concerned autonomous college.



rule, the conditions of the bond related to leaving the seat will be applicable to him. Under this, if the candidate resigns from the admitted seat of Government Medical and Government Dental College, the bond amount of Rs 10 lakh (admission year 2018 and 2019) / Rs 30 lakh (admission year 2020) will be payable to the autonomous institution. On resigning from the admitted seat of a private medical and private dental college, the tuition fee for the entire duration of the course conducted in the concerned private institution will be payable to the government.

Warwade informed that the above rules are effective on all the students admitted from the year 2018. In the event of any post graduate student leaving the seat due to any reason, it will be mandatory to deposit the bond amount of Rs 10/30 lakh (as per admission) in the account of the concerned autonomous college.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Medical Education Commissioner Nishant Warwade said that the government runs courses according to 'Madhya Pradesh Medical Education Admission Rules-2018 and Amendments on June 19, 2019' for the admission of students selected from NEET in undergraduate and postgraduate courses on the basis of merit in medical and dental colleges.

Warwade said that in the event of resignation of the candidate after the prescribed time limit as per clause-15 (1) (b) of the above



COVAXIN STOCK EXHAUSTED, SAYS AAP MLA ATISHI

Sharing the vaccine bulletin, Atishi said only about 10,000 Covaxin doses, meant for the second shot of those falling in the 45+ age bracket, were available till Friday morning.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The national capital has nearly exhausted its stock of Covaxin doses, AAP MLA Atishi said Friday, requesting the Centre for a quick replenishment, failing which many more vaccination centres will stop functioning. Sharing the vaccine bulletin, Atishi said only about 10,000 Covaxin doses, meant for the second shot of those falling in the 45+ age bracket, were available till Friday morning. By evening, that stock was also nearly over, she said, demanding 50 lakh vaccine doses for the city in June.

"As far as the second dose

is concerned, Covaxin stock needs to be replenished for both age categories (18-44 and 45+) from tomorrow...Covaxin centres for those aged 45 and above will mostly shut tomorrow. Even a second dose of this vaccine will not be available," Atishi said. The recommended gap between two doses of Covaxin is 4-6 weeks, while it is 12-16 weeks in case of Covishield.

Incidentally, for the 18-44 age group, vaccination has already come to a near halt in the city. According to the bulletin, 740 Covaxin and 1,350 Covishield doses are available for the 18-44 age group in Delhi.

And after Friday, even for

the 45+ age group, only 5.87 lakh Covishield doses remain available. The stock is expected to last 28 days. On June 3, a total of 53,018 vaccine doses were administered in Delhi, of which 37,747 received the first dose, while 15,271 people took the second dose.

"Government-run centres don't have a single vaccine dose left for the youth. Doses are available only in private hospitals. And in most cases, they are beyond the reach of 70 to 80 per cent of Delhi's population. At any of these private facilities, an average-sized family will have to spend Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 for inoculating all its members," she said.

DELHI RECORDS OVER 500 NEW COVID-19 CASES, POSITIVITY RATE RISES MARGINALLY



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi today recorded 523 new covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, a marginal increase over yesterday's 487 cases. The positivity rate for the last 24 hours also saw a marginal increase from 0.61% to 0.68%. On March 16, Delhi had recorded 425 cases and on March 17, the daily tally was 536, according to official data.

On Thursday, 487 fresh cases were recorded with a positivity rate of 0.61 per cent, according to the latest bulletin.

The infection rate, which had reached 36 per cent in the last week of April, has come down to below 1 per cent now.

Meanwhile, keeping an eye on the anticipated third wave of the pandemic, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday visited two healthcare project sites.

"To provide Delhi with world-class health infrastructure, a new 1,168 bedded hospital is being constructed by the Delhi government at Siraspur. Visited the site today to inspect the work. The work is advancing at a great pace. Efforts are being made to complete the work on time," he tweeted.

In another tweet, he said, "New blocks are being added in Bhagwan Mahavir Hospital by the @ArvindKejriwal Government with advanced facilities. Inspected the remodeling work today. This will increase its existing

The infection rate, which had reached 36% in the last week of April, has come down to below 1% now

bed capacity from 300 to 700 beds. The transformed hospital will serve Delhiites for many decades."

Delhi has been reeling under a brutal second wave of the pandemic that is sweeping the country, claiming a massive number of lives daily, with the recent oxygen supply shortage issue at various hospitals, adding to the woes. Since April 19, both daily cases and single-day death count had been spiralling up, with over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths recorded on April 20; rising to 306 fatalities on April 22. On May 3, the city registered a record 448 deaths, according to official data. However, the number of cases have shown a downward trend and the positivity rate too has been shrinking in the last several days. The number of deaths per day has also been showing a decline in the last couple of days.

The national capital had recorded 648 cases and 86 fatalities on Monday, 623 cases and 62 deaths on Tuesday, 576 cases and 103 fatalities on Wednesday.

On May 15, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said, "The virus is reducing in Delhi slowly and steadily, and I hope it diminishes completely and does not rise again. However, we are not going to become negligent in anyway", while sounding a tone of caution.

BOGUS CALL CENTRE BUSTED IN GURUGRAM, THREE ARRESTED

Gurugram | Agencies

A fake call centre was busted here and three people arrested for allegedly duping foreign nationals by creating false legal pressure in the name of the US central banking system, the Federal Reserve System (FRS), Gurugram police said on Friday.

Police said that the fraudsters used to cheat US nationals for resolving Social Security Number (SSN) verification issues and used to ask for \$200 to \$500 as service charge per client.

According to the police, SSN is a nine-digit number that the US government uses to all its citizens. The government uses this number to keep track of the residents' lifetime earnings and the number of years worked.

The bogus call centre was running for the last two months. The fraudsters posed as legal department employees to dupe their clients.



According to the police, a team from the Cyber Crime police station led by ACP Karan Goyal raided the call centre which was located in Suncity Success Tower, Sector 65, Golf Course Road, following a tip-off.

During the raid, the police arrested

three persons and seized three laptops and mobile phones, along with other electronic gadgets and a five page script the accused used to communicate with their clients.

The arrested were identified as Devang Awasthi, the owner of the call

MARATHON MEETINGS BY DELHI CM ON 4 SCENARIOS FOR POSSIBLE 3RD WAVE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday morning held a review meeting with an expert committee tasked with the preparations for the possible third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Kejriwal-led AAP government has recently formed two committees, an expert committee consisting of eight senior bureaucrats of the Delhi government, and the second, a 13-member 'task force' including doctors, experts and government officials to

With daily Covid cases reduced to below 500, the Delhi government has swung into action to prepare for a third possible wave of the pandemic, as experts have suggested that the capital would need around 45,000 ICU beds.



look into the whole issue, including children's safety.

As per sources in the Delhi government, Kejriwal along with Delhi Health Minister Satyender Jain held a meeting with the expert commit-

tee with the next meeting with the task force to be held at 4 p.m. on Friday. Sources in the Delhi government told IANS that the Kejriwal government is currently considering four scenarios for a possible third

wave of Covid-19 in the city. Alarming, in one of the scenarios, the daily new cases could be over 45,000. In the first scenario, the daily new cases could be as high as 28,395 which is the same as the second wave. In the second scenario, it could be 36,914, which is 30 per cent more than the second wave.

According to the third estimate, the number shoots up to 45,432, which is 60 per cent or more. The fourth projection indicates a bit of respite with daily cases expected to be around 15,000. The government is also making plans for oxygen arrangements for each of these scenarios. The scenarios are based on a report submitted to the Delhi government by IIT-Delhi. The city had faced a grave oxygen shortage during the second wave, which led to several deaths due to hospitals running out of oxygen.

GMDA USES DM ACT TO RESOLVE BADSHAHPUR DRAIN BOTTLENECK

Gurugram: The Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) has used the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to solve a human-borne disaster and resolve the long-pending dispute over the 33-metre stretch of Badshahpur drain, which causes flood-like situations during the monsoon season in Gurugram.

The GMDA officials said that once the construction work of the drain is completed, the capacity of rain water discharge will be increased by 2,300 cusecs from the present 800 cusecs, and it will bring huge relief for the people near the Hero Honda Chowk on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway, because this area of the city witnesses flood-like situation every year during monsoon.

The officials said the matter was resolved after the intervention of Sudhir Rajpal, the Chief Executive Officer of GMDA. GMDA Chief Engineer Pradeep Kumar said the Badshahpur drain passes through the middle of Gurugram city, from Ghata village through Khandsa village before finally emerging in the Najafgarh drain.

"The 26-km long Badshahpur drain helps clear about 60 per cent rain water from Gurugram. The total capacity of its water discharge was 2,300 cusecs but due to the dispute over this 33-meter bottleneck, the discharge of rain water at this point was only 800 cusecs. Because of this, people used to face huge water volumes during downpour," Kumar said. According to Kumar, looking at a widespread public interest, Rajpal wrote a letter to Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg, urging him to pass an order to build the drain under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. Its aim was to get rid of the flood situation that arises in every rainy season.

The officials said the GMDA's top official observed that it was a human-borne disaster, due to which the Gurugram residents face huge water problem every year.

Kumar said that an order has been issued to build the drain under the DM Act.

Superintendent Engineer of the GMDA, Rajesh Bansal, said that possession of land has been taken and work for the construction of the drain has been started which is likely to be completed by the first week of July, 2021.

Delhi govt to grant Rs 5 lakh to kin of O2 deaths

The Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi has set up a committee of senior doctors which has been tasked to find out the number of Covid-19 patients who lost their lives due to non-availability of oxygen during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi government will provide an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh to the family members of those who lost their lives due to a shortage of oxygen during treatment in hospitals across the national capital.

The Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi has set up a committee of senior doctors which has been tasked to find out the number of Covid-19 patients who lost their lives due to non-availability of oxygen during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday told the media that the four-member committee will find out the total number of people who have died

because of shortage of oxygen and then the government will decide further action in the matter.

"Delhi government has set up a four member panel and the list has been sent to the Lieutenant Governor's office for seeking approval. Once the approval is granted the committee will start functioning," said Sisodia, who is also the Nodal Minister for Delhi's Covid management.

"During second wave of the pandemic, there have been reports that several Covid infected patients have lost their lives due to shortage of oxygen in the hospitals. Delhi government has taken the matter seriously and has decided to provide Rs five lakh to the families of each person who lost their lives due to shortage of oxygen in Delhi," he added.

Sri Jagatguru' extends hand for cremation of the dead

Hapur | Agencies

Garmukteshwar in Hapur district of Uttar Pradesh state found a spiritual guru - Sri Jagatguru coming forward for cremation of the dead bodies found floating in the river Ganga. Weeks before, the scary news of several decomposed and bloated bodies in the river had rocked the nation. Multiple instances of dead bodies found buried along the banks of the river have also come to the fore from parts of Uttar Pradesh.

There seems to be no relief from the miseries as the second wave of coronavirus pandemic rages across the country. Sri Sri Santoshi Baba aka Sri Jagatguru was moved by the plight and the suffering. He without making it public initiated the movement for cremation of dead bodies.

Urging to speak about it, the diffident Sri Jagatguru says, "Hundreds of bodies were found floating in the Ganges required a decent burial. I felt they deserve help for their respectable last rites. We, through our

Sri Sri Santoshi Baba Foundation provided free wood and other materials needed for the cremation. We are ready to help more and more people across the nation who have lost their loved ones and are deprived to perform their last rites. A committee has been formed to streamline all its requirements. We are also open to people who wish to join us in this noble endeavor. Plans are also afoot to buy ambulances which will be an added help."



A pious devotee of Santoshi Mata, the goddess of satisfaction, he further adds, "The Covid-19 pandemic has tested everyone and has made everyone suffer in their own way. The kind of uncertainty we are all going through is tough to handle. The losses themselves are varied, ranging from the literal deaths of our near and dear ones. I won't list out the blows it has dealt with."

PLEA IN DHC TO OPERATIONALISE NON-FUNCTIONAL HOSPITALS BEFORE 3RD WAVE

New Delhi: A plea in the Delhi High Court on Friday urged it to direct the Delhi government to take immediate steps for ensuring operation of non-functional hospitals and to improve Mohalla clinics in the national capital to deal with the predicted third wave of Covid-19. Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Centre and Delhi government and sought their stand on the petition which also seeks formulation of a scheme for fair and transparent distribution of the ?one crore compensation to family of frontline workers who succumbed to Covid-19 while performing their duties. The plea by a Delhi resident has also sought speeding up of construction of all the hospitals, which are not yet completed and to use the staff of Mohalla clinics, if they are not being operationalised, to provide tele-consultation or man Covid centres. The petition has contended that if instant and prompt steps, precautions and necessary measures are not taken to prepare for a third wave of Covid-19, "it may result in many unfortunate/undesired deaths and this time death rate will be more than our expectations."



The applicants, after going through an online tutorial, will have to take a 10-minute-long test on basic traffic rules and a separate test on colour blindness.

SOON, TAKE YOUR LEARNERS' LICENCE TEST FROM HOME



will be valid for six months.

The project is part of the transport department's push to implement faceless services, thereby reducing the need for people to visit its offices. Currently, although one can apply for a learners' licence online, he/she has to visit the RTO offices to undertake the test.

An online portal will be launched as part of the project where people will be

able to apply for their licence. The portal will have an online tutorial, which the applicants will have to go through before taking a 10-minute-long test on basic traffic rules and a separate test on colour blindness.

According to the roadmap prepared by the department, people will visit the RTO only to undertake a final driving test or to get fitness tests of vehicles as these are services that cannot be done without the physical presence of the applicants. There are 16 RTOs across Delhi.

The government believes that the move will put an end to corruption in the form of bribery at the RTOs and end the free run enjoyed by touts.



BLACK FUNGUS: MAHA CAPS TREATMENT RATES FOR PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has approved a proposal by the Health Ministry fixing the charges to be levied by all private hospitals, till July 31, to make it affordable for the common man.



announced a cap on the treatment rates charged by private hospitals. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has approved a proposal by the Health Ministry fixing the charges to be levied by all private hospitals, till July 31, to make it affordable for the common man.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a major relief for patients suffering from mucormycosis (black fungus), the Maharashtra government on Friday

There are many 'super CMs' in MVA: Devendra Fadnavis taunts Maharashtra government

Fadnavis said this in response to a query over the Maharashtra government's clarification on Thursday evening that the existing coronavirus-induced lockdown-like restrictions have not been lifted anywhere, contrary to the announcement previously made by minister Vijay Wadettiwar.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Friday took a dig at the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and its ministers, saying that while there is only one chief minister, there are many 'super chief ministers', who make announcements about key policy decisions on their own.

consider themselves as chief minister and make announcements themselves," he told reporters. In any government, a chief minister takes a policy decision or chooses a minister to speak on an important issue.

and the occupancy of oxygen beds in hospitals is less than 25 per cent. He had held a press conference after a meeting of the State Disaster Management Authority in Mumbai.

number of coronavirus deaths. In Mumbai, of the total number of deaths that occurred due to this infection, 40 per cent have been shown as deaths due to other reasons.

Post vans in Maharashtra converted to ambulances for staff

Each of the converted postal van has been equipped with the necessary medical aids, including oxygen cylinders and the department has also obtained temporary licences to operate them as Covid ambulances.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a unique initiative, the Maharashtra Postal Circle has converted its mail motor vehicles into fully-equipped ambulances for post department staff and their families hit by Covid-19 pandemic, an official said here on Friday.

as ambulances, flagged off on June 1 by Chief Post Master General H.C. Agrawal in Mumbai, have reached their stations in Pune, Nagpur, Aurangabad and Kolhapur where they shall be based, the official said.

the necessary medical aids, including oxygen cylinders and the department has also obtained temporary licences to operate them as Covid ambulances.

An official said that during the pandemic times, there have been complaints of lack of availability of ambulances to shift Covid-19 affected people to the hospitals.

GAS LEAK TRIGGERS PANIC, COMPLAINTS OF BREATHING PROBLEMS

Mumbai: A gas leak in a chemical factory in Maharashtra's Badlapur reported late last night created panic among the locals. Several people, over a three-kilometre area, complained of breathlessness and a burning sensation in the eyes after the leak at Nobel Intermediates Pvt Ltd company at Shirgaon MIDC.

NESCO Covid hospital B'Day: Docs, patients dance it out

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Letting their hair down scores of PPE-clad doctors, nurses, paramedics and health workers along with patients danced away merrily to mark the first anniversary of the BMC's NESCO Covid-19 Jumbo Field Hospital, officials said here on Friday.



On Thursday, hundreds of patients undergoing treatment were pleasantly surprised to see herds of the frontline health workers in their blue or white or grey PPE kits suddenly breaking into carefree dance, in the halls, swaying to some popular Bollywood numbers played on the loudspeakers.

masked patients also feebly tried to rock and roll alongside their care-givers in the revelry. An official of BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said that the NESCO Jumbo Field Hospital was commissioned on June 2 last year and with 3,000 beds at one point of time, is considered among the biggest such Covid-19 field treatment facility of its kind in the world.

giving succor to their near and dear ones, and smiles of satisfaction among the health workers and BMC staffers who are toiling practically 24x7 at the hospital.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, NESCO - which completes 30 years of operations in 2021 - has been the playground for some of the biggest domestic or global exhibitions, MICE, trade shows, national-international business meets or entertainment that attracted top leaders from India and abroad.

Court Orders Maharashtra To Act Against Hospitals Turning Away Covid Suspects

Bombay High Court said both Maharashtra government and the Centre has issued guidelines to prevent such inconvenience to citizens.

Wednesday, a bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni said the state authorities must act against hospitals and medical centres that violated guidelines issued by the state and Centre last month on admitting suspected Covid-19 patients. The bench was referring to circulars issued by the state government and the Union government on May 17 and May 8, respectively.

tres, Covid-19 centres, etc., across the state, admit suspected Covid-19 patients, without insisting on an RT-PCR test report. Mr Jaiswal, in his plea, said some patients tested negative in their RT PCR tests, but their CT scans showed that they were suffering from Covid-19. Hence, such patients must not be denied treatment or hospital admission based on their negative RT-PCR reports, the plea stated.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bombay High Court has directed the Maharashtra government to take strict action against hospitals and medical centres that deny admission to deserving patients merely over lack of a positive RT-PCR Covid-19 test report. In an order passed on

that all hospitals, health centres,

The court said both the state and the Centre had already issued guidelines in the circulars to prevent such inconvenience to citizens, and what remained, was the strict implementation of the guidelines.

DIP IN DENGUE CASES A WELCOME RELIEF IN TIMES OF COVID

Pune: While Maharashtra recorded a very high number of coronavirus infections during the second wave this year, dengue cases have come down significantly in the last five months. As per state health department officials, only 530 cases of this mosquito-borne viral disease were reported from January to May this year, just over half of the 1007 cases reported during this period in 2020.

Juhi Chawla says there's misconception that her HC lawsuit is against 5G

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Juhi Chawla Mehta, who has filed a lawsuit in Delhi High Court on the health risks associated with 5G telecom technology, says there has been a general misconception that her suit is against the technology. The actress said concerned authorities should make public all data associated with the technology, in order to clear the air.



Juhi Chawla Mehta shared: "There seems to be a general misconception that our present suit filed in the Hon'ble Delhi High Court is against 5G technology. We wish to clarify here and once again very clearly state, we are NOT against 5G technology. However, we seek from the Government and the governing authorities, to certify to us and, therefore, to the public at large, that 5G technology is safe to humankind, man, woman, adult, child, infant, animals and every type of living organism, to flora, and to fauna."

radiofrequency radiation, the actress further stated: "Having written to several concerned government authorities since 2010, making a presentation to the 53rd

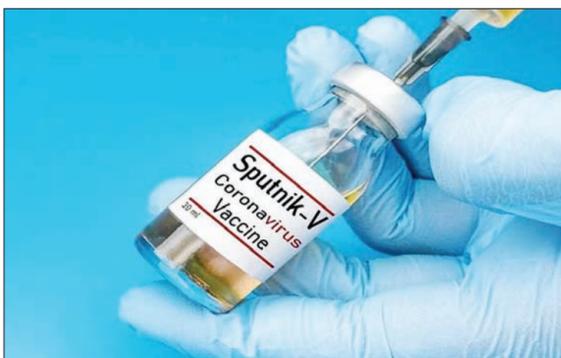
Parliamentary Standing Committee 2013-2014, filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Mumbai High Court 2015, found there has been no substantial movement in the EMF radiation matters, whatsoever. In 2019, on enquiring from the Ministry of Telecommunications, Government of India, I was informed in writing vide reply under the RTI Act that no studies have been conducted with regards to RF radiation, even as of today."

"Since prevention is well-accepted to be far better than cure, immediate measures must be taken to protect humanity and the environment, and for which all I am asking is to the concerned authorities to show me the data," she added. The plea filed by Chawla, Veeresh Malik and Teena Vachani contended that the levels of RF radiation are 10 to 100 times greater than the existing levels. It claims that the 5G wireless technology can be a potential threat to provoke irreversible and serious effects on humans and it could also permanently damage the earth's ecosystems.

BMC cancels 9 global tenders, but will get Sputnik soon

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has cancelled all 9 global bids it received for supply of Covid-19 vaccines, but Mumbaiers may soon get the Sputnik V jabs, top officials said here on Friday. Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar said that in early May, in view of the shortages of the life-saving doses, the BMC had floated global tenders for supply of around one crore vaccines which would be administered free to Mumbaiers, and the tender deadlines were extended twice. "However, as the final deadline ended, we received 9 bids. We have rejected all the 9 bids as they failed to comply with the important terms and conditions, mainly pertaining to the kind of tie-ups they would have with the vaccine manufacturers, the



quantity, rates and the time period within which they could assure the supply as per our requirements," she said. Accordingly, the BMC has now

cancelled all the tenders and Pednekar reiterated that it is the Centre's responsibility to supply the vaccines for the people. However, against this, BMC

Municipal Commissioner I. S. Chahal made a heartening announcement that the civic body was in talk with Dr Reddy's Laboratories for supplying the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccines. "The talks have been successful and Dr Reddy's Laboratories have agreed to provide us with some stocks of Sputnik V vaccine by June end, and later in July-August, it may be augmented," he said. A week after the BMC, the Maharashtra government had also floated global bids for buying five crore vaccines for administering to the people in the state free of cost. Till date, the state has given 2,32,92,259 jabs comprising first and second doses, to various permitted categories of citizens across various age groups, frontline workers and others, the highest in India.

Maha Covid toll crosses 98K with new high deaths, cases drop

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra's Covid-19 daily deaths and new infections continued to fall but the day's toll increased by a whopping 1,377 -- a new high -- which took the total zooming past the 98,000 mark, health officials said on Friday.



Compared to 553 deaths on Thursday, the state declared 1,377 fatalities (289 fresh, and 1,088 previous deaths), surpassing the previous peak of 1,320 deaths on May 23, to take the toll to 98,771.

The number of fresh cases fell below the 15,229 on Thursday to 14,152, and the state tally rose above the 58 lakh level, to 58,05,565. In Mumbai, the new infections remained below the 1,000 level for the fourth day running, dropping from 985 on Thursday to 968, while the city tally rose to 708,994. Deaths dipped from 27 a day earlier

to 24, taking the total fatalities in the country's commercial capital to 14,922 (after reconciliation). The number of active cases fell below the 2 lakh level, dropping from 204,974 to 196,894 now, as another 20,852 fully cured patients returned home, taking the total to 55,07,058 now, while the recovery rate further improved from 94.73 per cent to 94.86 per cent.

The Mumbai Circle - comprising Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, and Raigad districts - recorded 2,839 cases, taking the total to 15,43,282 and with 69 more deaths, the toll rose to 28,133 now, in view of the reconciliation of fatalities. Meanwhile, the number of people sent to home isolation stood at 14,75,476, while those shunted to institutional quarantine stood at 7,430.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Rakul Preet Singh took to social media on Thursday to express that she misses being on film sets, at a time when shooting is mostly stopped owing to the ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rakul shared a throwback photograph on Instagram where she flaunts her beautiful hair with a smile on her face.

"Can't wait to get back on set and enjoy good hair day, everyday @im_sal @aliyashaik28 #throwback to normal times," the actress wrote on Instagram tagging her makeup artist and hairstylist.

RAKUL PREET SINGH 'CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK ON SET'

Rakul recently took to social media to talk about pandemic-related stress, anxiety and offered a solution to people battling these problems.

Sharing a photograph of herself performing Yog Nidra, the actress had written: "No! I am not sleeping off. This is how I relax post workout, with a session of Yog Nidra, as suggested by my wellness expert @munmun.ganerwal. If the pandemic anxiety is making you sleepless, stressed or if you are recovering post COVID, she suggests giving Yog nidra a shot. And I cannot agree more! #everydaypostworkout."

On the work front, Rakul's latest release is the digital film "Sardar Ka Grandson" co-starring Arjun Kapoor and Neena Gupta.

Alia's then and now pictures make Jacqueline go 'aww'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Alia Bhatt on Friday shared two pictures on social media, which has melted the hearts of many. Alia posted two pictures on Instagram. The first has her dressed in a yellow co-ord with daffodil prints and a hat. The second picture is from her childhood. In both the photographs, she sits on the beach.

"Because no matter who we are," Alia wrote as caption, with an emoji of

cloudy sky with sun.

Alia's friends from the industry could not stop gushing over the photographs in the comment section.

Actress Jacqueline Fernandez wrote: "Awww"

Writer-filmmaker Tahira Kashyap dropped a few heart emojis.

Alia's mother and actress Soni Razdan said: "Awww baby".

The actress will soon be seen in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Gangubai Kathiawadi". She will also be seen in Ayan Mukerji's adventure "Brahmastra", "Baahubali" director SS Rajamouli's "RRR" and Karan Johar's multistarrer "Takht".

She is all set to turn producer, too, with "Darlings", a mother-daughter drama that features herself alongside Shefali Shah. Alia co-produces the film with Shah Rukh Khan.

ANANYA PANDAY: 'NEVER A BAD IDEA TO BE KIND'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ananya Pandey sure loves wearing her motto on her phone. A set of pictures she posted on Friday has the actress checking out her phone that has a back cover with the pop philosophy: "It's never a bad idea to be kind". In Instagram images, Ananya wears a face pack and clicks a selfie. She repeated the mantra on the back of her phone in her caption with some modification. "It's never a bad idea to be kind (especially to yourself)," she wrote, underlining the self-beauty care and flashing a slight pout in one of the frames. Her caption was accompanied by a spook and heart emojis. Ananya will next be seen in the film "Liger" opposite Telugu star Vijay Deverakonda. The film has been directed by Puri Jagannadh. Produced by Karan Johar, the film is scheduled to release on September 9. She also stars in Shakun Batra's untitled next with Deepika Padukone and Siddhant Chaturvedi.



WHEN VIJAY VARMA HIT 'NATURE BOY' MODE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Vijay Varma uploaded a fun video on Thursday, from the set of his recent web series "OK Computer". In the video he posted on Instagram Story, Vijay is seen in get-up as Saajan Kundu. He swings a long wire around himself while co-star Radhika Apte stands nearby talking to the crew. Vijay then moves to one side smiling, letting the camera crew to pass. "#Behindthescenes", "@itsvijayvarma aka Saajan Kundu aka Nature Boy," Vijay captioned the video, referring to the fact that they were filming in the outdoors amidst the backdrop of woods. The actor had garnered positive reviews for his performance in the show that also starred Jackie Shroff.

Vijay will soon be seen in "Darlings" starring Alia Bhatt, "Fallen" with Sonakshi Sinha, as well as "Hurdang" with Nushratt Bharuccha and Sunny Kaushal.



APARSHAKTI KHURANA, WIFE EXPECTING FIRST CHILD

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Aparshakti Khurana and his wife Aakriti are expecting their first child. Aparshakti made the announcement on Instagram, with a black and white picture where the actor is seen kissing his wife's baby bump.

He wrote: "Lockdown main kam toh expand ho nahi paya toh humein laga family hi expand kar lete hain #PreggerAlert (In lockdown, work did not expand so thought of expanding the family #PreggerAlert)."

Aparshakti, the younger brother of actor Ayushmann Khurrana, married Aakriti, whom he met at a dance class in Chandigarh, in September 2014.

Earlier, on Monday, Aparshakti uploaded his version of the classic Kishore Kumar song "Ek ladki bheegi baaghi" on Instagram. He will soon be seen in the film "Helmet" and web series "Stardust".

RAJKUMMAR RAO NARRATES SERIES ON LOCAL COVID HEROES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Stories of good Samaritans have emerged as rays of hope and positivity in these grim times. Spotting a number of these real-life superheroes through his narration is Bollywood actor Rajkummar Rao, who has recited a moving Hindi poem written by lyricist Swanand Kirkire as part of an eight-episode Spotify series.

Titled "Ruk Jaana Nahi", the limited edition original audio and video series highlights the stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things - from frontline workers to doctors. It launched the first episode's teaser last week, and will be followed by an original podcast on similar lines. Asked about his favourite line from the two-minute-long recital of Kirkire's poem, Rao says candidly: "You know honestly, I can't pick one line, when I first read Swanand sir's poem, I was so moved by the words, every line resonated with me, I knew I just had to be on board. Swanand Sir's words are so beautiful, I feel honoured to recite them on screen for everyone." The series puts the spotlight on young India and the sacrifices they are making to help other people in need.

Over the next few weeks, heartwarming videos and audio features will give listeners a glimpse into the lives of local heroes, including doctors who chose duty over their personal losses; Stories of those who have cooked meals for those in need; Individuals who are going out of their way to distribute masks (and smiles); Those with limited resources, but still delivering aid at their personal expense; and young Indians who've used their technology to connect patients with medical facilities. According to Spotify, there has been loss, despair, and heartbreaking scenes at our own homes, and across the country. But amidst the chaos, if there is one thing that has grown faster than the pandemic, it is humanity. We've been faceless strangers who've tried to help those who needed resources; we've also been at the receiving end of that kindness when our own loved ones were suffering.

Tiger Shroff shares a couple of 'hero shot fails'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Even a machoman can buckle under extreme conditions, ask Tiger Shroff. On Thursday the Bollywood action star, with a dash of candid humour, posted a couple of video clips on Instagram where he struggles to pull off stunt sequences that depict him as the infallible hero on screen. In the first clip, a shirtless Tiger struggles to stand straight and look intensely at approaching helicopters, owing to storm fans that are operating on the set. In the second, he fumbles while trying to tear off his shirt amidst sub-zero temperature.



Both videos seem to be from the Baaghi franchise of films. "A couple of hero shot 'fails' in I i couldnt stand firmly in one place with a heroic pose as i look on at the choppers cause of the intense storm fans..and two couldn't even rip my shirt off cos it was so cold (-7) either that or im just a weakling making excuses," wrote Tiger, with his post. "Tiger's mother Ayesha Shroff dropped as many as eight red heart emojis. The actor completed seven years in Bollywood in May. Tiger stepped into films with the 2014 release "Heropanti". His notable films include the "Baaghi", "Student Of The Year 2" and "War". His upcoming slate of work includes "Heropanti 2" and "Ganapath".





JENNIFER LOPEZ AND BEN AFFLECK SPOTTED ARM IN ARM

Los Angeles | Agencies

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck have been spotted arm in arm - in the clearest sign yet their romance is back on. The couple were photographed cosying up as they headed out on a dinner date.

J-Lo, 51, and Ben, 48, have been pictured together over the past few weeks but had not been seen together in public looking this close. They split in 2004 - and both have been married and had children since.

But their relationship seemed to be back on after J-Lo ended her engagement to former baseball ace Alex Rodriguez, 45, in April.

She went on a ski holiday in Montana with Ben, who split from actress Ana de Armas, 33, in January. The latest sighting came on Wednesday as they headed out for dinner at the boutique Pendry Hotel in West Hollywood. After finishing their meal, Ben was seen in the driving seat of his car with J-Lo next to him.

'MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 7' FILMING SHUTS DOWN AFTER POSITIVE CORONAVIRUS TEST

London | Agencies

The latest Mission: Impossible film has halted shooting in the U.K. after at least one member of the production tested positive for the novel coronavirus, a source close to the production confirmed. Filming on the Tom Cruise sequel will shut down for 14 days while those involved self-isolate. It is unclear how many people involved in the production tested positive. "We have temporarily halted production on Mission: Impossible 7 until June 14th, due to positive coronavirus test

results during routine testing. We are following all safety protocols and will continue to monitor the situation," read a statement from the production. The film has had a lengthy production process complicated by the pandemic. Mission: Impossible VII shut down in February 2020 just as the pandemic was beginning to shutter productions across the globe. In December, audio surfaced of Cruise berating members of the crew, who reportedly were standing too close together, violating COVID safety procedures.

Money Heist Part 5: First official images released



Los Angeles | Agencies

The first images of the much-hyped finale of "Money Heist" (originally titled "La Casa de Papel") were released on Thursday. The Spanish heist thriller series started in 2017, and has so far two seasons of two parts each. The upcoming part five will mark the finale of the show. The Alex Pina series tells the story about a criminal mastermind who goes by the name of The Professor, who plans the biggest heist in history -- to print billions of euros in the Royal Mint of

Spain. Helping him in his ambitious plan are a group of specialists who go by names of cities. The group takes hostages to help them in negotiations with authorities are gunning to nab The Professor.

The first images of the finale promise heavy-duty action as The Gang must bring out its toughest side to survive, fuelled by anguish, more weapons and the desperation of not having a plan. As the finale of the Netflix series unfolds.

Katie Price undergoing treatment to make derriere smaller

Los Angeles | Agencies

Former glamour model and singer Katie Price has shared that she is undergoing fat dissolving treatment to make her derriere smaller. Price shared the news in a YouTube video that she had undergone two colonic irrigations before beginning her fat-dissolving treatment, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

"We've been put under the test today. Literally, top-to-toe is good," she said, adding that she could "actually feel a difference".

"A few more treatments and that'll be good, won't it?" added the mother-of-five.

The model, once by her pseudonym Jordan, is also a singer and author. She launched her album, "A Whole New World" with Peter Andre in 2006 and had a stint on reality TV. She has written 11 bestseller novels, six autobiographical books, two series of children's books, and a book on fashion.



RICKY MARTIN: DON'T KNOW IF I'M NOT GETTING ACTING PARTS BECAUSE I'M GAY

Los Angeles | Agencies

Latin pop superstar Ricky Martin wants casting directors to give him a chance at great scripts. Martin has struggled to realise his ambition to attain Hollywood stardom even after the critical acclaim he garnered for his Emmy-nominated role in Ryan Murphy's 2018 true crime series, "The Assassination Of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story".

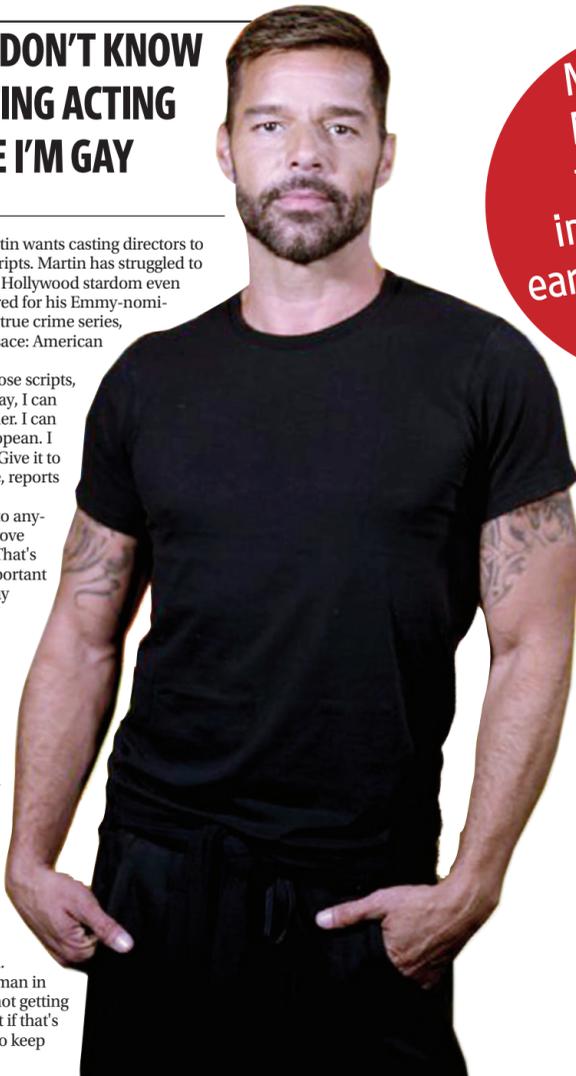
"I love acting. I'm waiting for those scripts, for those great scripts. I can play gay, I can play straight, I can play a serial killer. I can play Latin, but I can also play European. I am ready. Just give it to me, man. Give it to me," Martin told People magazine, reports aceshowbiz.com.

He added: "I just want to tap into anything that has to do with acting. I love theatre, too. I want to tell a story. That's what I want. I want to tell (an) important story, and I want to change the way people see life in general towards some more optimistic way."

Martin has also worked in Broadway, with performances in "Les Miserables" and "Evita", and he recalled a music executive saying he would be a bigger pop star had he continued keeping his homosexuality a secret.

"That was something that really affected me. And I was like, 'Am I really dealing with this? They're not playing my music in this country because I'm gay? Is this really happening?' We're talking about four years ago. This executive doesn't work for the record company anymore. He was fired. But I felt it. It hit me hard," he said.

Martin, who came out as a gay man in 2010, added: "I don't know if I'm not getting (acting) parts because I'm gay. But if that's the case, it's really sad. I'm going to keep working until life is different."



Madonna: My father taught me importance of earning one's way in life

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Madonna has penned a heart-warming note for her father Silvio Ciccone on his 90th birthday. She says he taught her the importance of hard work and earning one's way in life.

The pop star posted a collage of pictures featuring her family in her father's vineyard. Along side the clip, she wrote:

"My father is a survivor growing up as an

Italian

immigrant in the US and living thru many traumas but always working hard for everything he had -- He taught me the importance of hard work and earning one's way in life... Again I thank you. It was so special to spend your 90th birthday with you and my children in your vineyard. #happy-birthday #ohfather#thes-trangers @cicconevineyard."

Last month, Madonna shared a set of pictures on social media about a brave new world.

She posted three pictures on Instagram, where she was seen holding a placard that reads: "Clean and Sanitized for your city."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Zara Mc Dermott



EDITOR'S SPECS

Side effects of lockdowns

The researchers, from the University of L'Aquila in Italy, found decreased sleep quality, an increase in insomnia symptoms, shorter total sleep times, and later bedtimes and rising times among the 92.9 per cent participants who reported an increase in their electronic device usage during the shutdown.

INCREASED EVENING SCREEN TIME DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN NEGATIVELY AFFECTED SLEEP QUALITY, FINDS A NEW STUDY.

Conversely, participants who reported a decrease in evening screen time (only 7 per cent) reported improved sleep

quality and fewer symptoms of insomnia. The findings are published in the journal Sleep. "The overuse of electronic devices in the hours before sleep was a deeply rooted habit in our society already before the pandemic emergency, in particular among young people. In our opinion, the current period of social distancing added fuel to the fire," said first author Federico Salfi, doctoral student at the varsity's Department of Biotechnological and Applied Clinical Sciences. "The evidence of a strong relationship between screen habits and the time course of sleep disturbances during the lockdown period suggests that, now, more than ever, raising public awareness about the risks of evening exposure to electronic devices could be crucial to preserve general sleep health. This applies to both the ongoing pandemic and the future, as electronic technologies will find more and more space in our daily routine," added Professor Michele Ferrara, Director of the Laboratory of Sleep Psychophysiology and Cognitive Neuroscience. During the lockdown period in Italy, daily internet traffic volume almost doubled compared to the same time in the previous year. Researchers here conducted a web-based survey of 2,123 Italian residents during the third and seventh week of Italy's first national lockdown and evaluated sleep quality and insomnia symptoms, and inquired about usage of electronic devices in the two hours before falling asleep. The respondents who reported no change in their screen time exposure likewise showed no variations in their sleep habits. Notably, this group of responders had the best sleep quality and fewest insomnia symptoms in the first survey results, suggesting that the lockdown exacerbated negative sleep conditions for people already suffering from poor sleep quality.

Ghar-wapsi to be in focus at Trinamool meet

Saibal Gupta

Amid speculation of BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy's returning to Trinamool Congress, Mamata Banerjee's party is meeting for the first time on Saturday after their successful stint in the assembly polls. The two major issues that will feature is the 'ghar-wapsi' of the trinamool-turncoats and the party's strategy in the crucial bypolls. The meeting is likely to be chaired by the chief minister herself.

All senior leaders, including Abhishek Banerjee and strategist Prasant Krishor are likely to attend the meeting. Some leaders said they expected the party's top decision-making bodies to be rejigged to accommodate some new faces. However, there was no formal word on this. Sources in the party said that the top leaders of the party are getting feelers from several turncoats -- Trinamool congress leaders who joined BJP before the election -- expressing their willingness to come back.

These sources also indicated that there will be no uniform policy rather the return of the leaders will



be decided on a case-to-case basis. "We will consider every aspect of the leader and also take the opinion of the local leaders before allowing the person to return under the umbrella of the party again," a senior Trinamool Congress leader said.

Trinamool sources have also indicated that the high voltage elections have created a "trust-deficit" between these defectors and local workers, leaders said.

The party is also likely to thrash it out threadbare on a proposal mooted by party MP Abhishek Banerjee -- for a one-leader-one-

post formula in which leaders with ministerial berths and administrative responsibilities may be relieved of their party roles. art from Mukul Roy, who has dropped broad hints indicating that his equation with Mamata Banerjee, as well as Trinamool Congress, has diluted a lot, there are several BJP leaders who have expressed their willingness to come back to the party.

Sonali Guha who left the party not getting a party ticket in the assembly election said that she had left the party out of extreme emotion and in a fit of rage, but now

she has realised that she "has made a huge mistake".

In an emotional tweet to the chief minister, the former MLA of TMC wrote, "Sekhane (BJP) nijike maniyee nite parini. Mach jemon jol chara thakte pare na, temoni ami apnake chara banchte parbo na. Didi ami khomaprathi, daya kore amake khoma kore din. Apni na khoma kore ami banchbo na (which roughly translates into -- just like a fish she feels out of water in the BJP. She cannot live with the BJP. She cannot live without Banerjee and if her Chief Minister did not forgive her, she will perish)".

Expressing her willingness to join the TMC again, the former deputy speaker of the assembly wrote, "Apnar aanchaler tole amake tene niye baki jibonta amake apnar snehatole thakar sujog kore din (Take me under your fold and allow me to live the rest of my life under your guidance and blessing)".

Sarala Murmu who was allotted ticket for Habibpur assembly constituency left the party in March and joined BJP alleging that the district leadership were not allowing her to work. Though sources in the party said that she left the party because she wanted to contest

from Malda South. Murmu wrote a letter to Banerjee on Sunday expressing her willingness to join the party. However, there was no official confirmation to the letter yet from the party.

"There are many people who want to come back, including 6 MLAs and 3 MPs.

"They had left the party when the party was in trouble and now, they want to come back. I cannot make a comment on this because there has been no policy decision on this issue. "The party will decide the future of these people," Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said.

Apart from the 'Ghar-wapsi' issue which is likely to take the centre-stage in the discussion Mamata Banerjee is also expected to throw light on the bypoll issue. Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay has resigned as Bhowanipore MLA and started his outreach in Khardah.

The party has not made any formal announcement that Banerjee would re-contest from her old Bhowanipore seat. Likewise, Covid and resignation of two of BJP MPs Nisith Pramanik and Jagannath Sarkar as MLAs have also thrown open five assembly seats for by-elections.

Tribals in this MP village risk their lives every day for water



Naresh Kumar Mishra

On a warm morning, Rakesh Singh walks up a jagged valley bristled with stones, carrying up a 'kuppa' (a spherical vessel) full of water on his head. It was only 8 a.m., but the sun is already blazing. As sweat trickles down his forehead, the young farmer, a Gond tribal, takes off his blue checked shirt and continues ascending the valley, pacing his speed with each step as the rocky ground below his bare feet starts to heat up. He is not the only one on this arid route. Unmasked and oblivious to the threats of Covid-19, several villagers from Ghoghra, a small hamlet with a population of around 500 in the Hata block of Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, have been making this difficult trip just to fetch water.

"There is currently no water supply in the village. The nearest source of water is almost 1.5 km from our house," states Ramesh. The source is a 10-foot deep well lying below the Amkhua valley, situated in the buffer zone of the Panna National Park. In search of water, many

families, particularly women and children of Ghoghra, leave their village in the morning, as early as 6 a.m. With temperatures soaring to above 40 degrees in the summer, early mornings are the only suitable time for the villagers to make the trip down a craggy stairway in the valley dotted with bare trees.

The water from the well is used not just for drinking but also for cooking, bathing and washing clothes. The climb back is more challenging. Many women carry as many as three containers of water and washed clothes on their heads. This arrangement for water takes about 2-4 hours every day and puts the villagers at risk of accidents.

"This is dangerous terrain. Several people fall and sprain their ankles," states Vikas Yadav, a 28-year-old farmer from Ghoghra.

The village is home to the Gond tribal community and is located about 70 km from the district headquarters of Damoh, which is much more equipped with basic facilities. It also lies on the fringes of a dense forest. Animal-man conflict is thus, not uncommon.

"The area under the valley belongs to the forest department. There are many predatory animals including leopards, wild dogs and bears," states Surendra Singh, as he prepares to fill water in his kuppa.

A farmer in his mid-20s, Singh echoes the dangers of the valley and adds that people must walk up very carefully to avoid accidents and animals.

Villagers of Ghoghra have been making this journey for water for several years. Many hand pumps haven't been working due to low groundwater levels in the region. Three years ago, a solar-powered borewell was installed in the village. However, due to machine failure in early 2020, it has also been inoperative. "Every day, we have to fetch water on foot. We are not tired of complaining, but there is no one hearing," says Kavita Devi as she ascends the valley carrying a big pot of water on her head.

Surendra Singh validates this. He states: "We demanded water facility in our village. But no hearing has been held. The motor in the bore machine is also not working."

Ghoghra village Sarpanch Darelal Ahirwar refused to comment on the record about these claims. But there is no denying that the families of Ghoghra are suffering due to the negligence of the Panchayat.

Several officers are not attending office due to Covid-19 restrictions. So on-site inspections for these issues are not happening properly, says Virtesh Jain, CEO of the Janpad Panchayat. His office has been conducting several surveys to determine other possibilities of water facility and locations for more borewells.

Until those plans materialise, the villagers of Ghoghra continue risking their lives for a basic need.

(The author is a Damoh-based freelance journalist and a member of 101Reporters.com, a pan-India network of grassroots reporters.)

2 BOATS MIGHT HAVE PLAYED MAJOR ROLE TO BRING MEHUL CHOKSI TO DOMINICA

Anand Singh

Even as fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi, who is wanted in Rs 13,500 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case is facing charges of illegally entering Dominica, documents show that two boats may have been used in the operation involving his entry into the island nation.



Earlier on Thursday, Dominican High Court Judge Bernie Stephenson adjourned the habeas corpus hearing of Choksi. On Wednesday, a local court charged Choksi for entering Dominica illegally.

It is still being ascertained by multiple agencies including that on how he reached Dominica.

IANS has accessed the pictures of the boat, several documents, the two vessels and the pictures of two men dressed in black kurta payjama standing on board with three other men.

These two boats which might have been used are named -- Calliope of Arne and Lady Anne. The passenger list of Calliope of Arne shows Gurjit Bhandal, a resident of Birmingham in UK and Gurmit Singh, a resident of India.

According to the records of the Cobra tours, Gurjit Bhandal, a resident of Birmingham in UK and Gurmit Singh a resident of India are shown as passengers of Calliope of Arne. Calliope of Arne entered Dominica on May 25 at Portsmouth port, according to the Customs and Excise department documents.

According to records, Lady Anne boat passenger list shows Gurmit Singh also as a resident of UK along with Gurjit Bhandal, two crew members Egbert Joyeux as the boat captain and Eugene Davidson.

The large boat named Calliope of Arne by Cobra Tours belongs from St Lucia, another Caribbean country, while Lady Anne by one Hackshaw Boat Charters Limited also registered in St Lucia. It is claimed that two boats might have been used at different stages to bring Choksi to Dominica from Antigua.

Several calls and messages to Choksi's wife Priti Choksi and his lawyer Vijay Agarwal went unanswered by the time of filing this report.

Also, there was no confirmation from the Indian government over the two boats and their passengers in question.

Choksi's wife and his lawyers have been claiming that the businessman was abducted from Antigua by some men of Indian origin and later forced to board a vessel.

His lawyer in India, Vijay Agarwal, had told IANS: "Choksi was forced to get into a vessel from Antigua and was taken to Dominica and there were marks on Choksi's body, implying the use of force."

"There is something fishy and I guess it was a strategy to take him to another place so that there are chances of sending him back to India. So I don't know what forces are operating. The time will tell," he had said.

Antigua Police Commissioner Atlee Rodney has rubbished the claims of Choksi's counsel and said that they have no information on him being forcefully removed.

However, it is not yet clear how Choksi arrived in Dominica, where he is facing the charge of entering illegally.

Choksi had gone missing from Antigua from May 23 sparking a massive manhunt. He was captured in Dominica three days later on May 26.

A Dominican court has restrained the extradition of Choksi till further orders by hearing the habeas corpus plea filed by his lawyers.

On Wednesday, Choksi appeared before a local magistrate in Dominica and pleaded not guilty of entering Dominica illegally. On May 27, first pictures of Choksi emerged online, showing several signs of bruises on his arms and a swollen eye. An eight-member team of Indian officials has also landed in Dominica on a private jet for the extradition of Choksi.

Bullish foreign Investors want India to step up Covid-19 vaccinations

Mahua Venkatesh

The 21st century is India's century, Deloitte's global CEO Punit Renjen said in April just before the severe second Covid 19 wave that hit the country.

Did his opinion change after the harsh second wave? Apparently not. In a recent interview to CNBC, Renjen said that tackling Covid is the only way to get back to growth path. "On the longer term, I believe that this could be India's century, India has all the ingredients -- talent to demographics to consumer base," Renjen said adding that despite the severe Covid 19 second wave, India was still capable of posting a double-digit growth for the current financial year. As New Delhi now shifts its focus on embarking on an aggressive vaccination drive, the aim is to vaccinate one crore people daily by July-August and carving out a stringent mechanism to contain a possible third Covid 19 wave, economy watchers said that

India is set to become the favourite alternative investment destination to China.

"We need to have a single-minded focus on the vaccination drive across the country. Only when people are vaccinated, can we be fully prepared to deal with the infection and a possible third wave," D.K. Srivastava, chief policy adviser, EY India told India Narrative.

A report by EY India also said that while there has been some damage to economic growth in the first quarter due to the second wave, the overall impact could be contained by the pace of vaccination.

"Global investors are betting that the worst of India's catastrophic second coronavirus wave has passed, helping to push the country's stocks to record highs," the Financial Times said. It also added that though India's second wave overwhelmed health systems and caused acute shortages of oxygen and drugs and hit the economy, infections are now falling in much of the country,

including in the capital New Delhi and financial hub Mumbai.

Healthcare interlinked with economy With the rapidly changing economic contours, several companies have quietly started de-risking and de-coupling their supply sources but to ensure that India does not lose out on this opportunity, the thrust on vaccination, overall healthcare and its deliverables will only increase in the coming months.

"By mid-July or August, we will have enough doses to vaccinate 1 crore people per day. We are confident of vaccinating the whole population by December," ICMR chief Balram Bhargava said at a press briefing. Sources added that the country is also leaving no stones unturned this time in preparation to combat another Coronavirus wave to ensure that the economy is no more dented. "We are now focusing on vaccinations and overall healthcare facilities. From ease of doing business, it is now ease of healthcare accessibility," one of them said.

While vaccination is one of the main ways that could blunt the severity of the third wave, states and district level authorities have also been asked to start taking the necessary steps to be prepared with Covid related medical care, which includes oxygen cylinders and critical antibiotics. Investors are closely watching India's moves and the measures being taken to deal with the infection. The rapidly changing global geo-politics has in turn changed the geo-economic landscape pushing investors to look at India.

"Countries like Vietnam did emerge as an alternative investment destination to China but they have the geographical limitation of size in terms of geography as well as labour and market," a senior executive engaged with a multinational company told India Narrative.

Sources said that notwithstanding the severe second wave of Coronavirus, several foreign investors are in "advanced" talks with Indian authorities. In fact, a

group of South Korean investors even paid a visit to Sikkim just two months ago to explore opportunities in sectors such as pharmaceutical, energy, organic farming, food processing, and tourism. "Korean companies tend to be bold and try to be pre-emptive, so Sikkim can be one of the favorable destinations considering its various potentials," Moon Young Kim, Managing Director, KOTRA South Asia Region said.

A recent Hindustan Times report said that when external affairs minister S Jaishankar met US corporate icons on May 27, many showed keen interest to invest in India, overriding immediate concerns related to the pandemic. The production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, put in place last year, has also driven investors.

Meanwhile, the country's total foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2020-21 stood at a record \$81.72 billion compared to 2019-20.

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JO BIDEN EXPANDS BAN ON CHINESE SURVEILLANCE FIRMS DOING BIZ IN US

Washington | Agencies

Expanding a Donald Trump-era ban on Chinese surveillance companies with alleged ties to the military, US President Joe Biden has signed an executive order that increases the number of restricted Chinese firms from 48 to 59.

The executive order bans Americans from investing in additional Chinese firms starting from August 2.

The move is a clear signal that Biden wants to continue with old policies related to Chinese firms doing business in America and does not want US citizens to invest in companies that create and deploy surveillance technology.

The order, passed on Thursday, does not include Chinese firms DJI, WeChat, TikTok or its parent company ByteDance.

It is still unclear how Biden aims to address the TikTok ban.

The President had banned Chinese companies allegedly involved in military, intelligence, security research and development programmes, and



weapons and related equipment production under the "PRC's Military-Civil Fusion strategy".

"In addition, I find that the use of Chinese surveillance technology outside the PRC and the development or use of Chinese surveillance technology to facilitate repression or serious

human rights abuse constitute unusual and extraordinary threats, which have their source in whole or substantial part outside the US, to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the US," Biden said in the order.

Under the new order, the Treasury Department will be in charge of the list of banned companies.

The former Trump administration had previously put the authority on the Defense Department, reports The Verge.

The New York Times reported that the move is part of the Biden administration's not to facilitate human rights abuses in China, as the government there is known for using facial recognition technology, phone scanners and Artificial Intelligence as part of a surveillance push.

NO EXPLOSIVE DEVICE FOUND ABOARD AIR FRANCE FLIGHT

Paris: No explosive device was found on board an Air France flight which had been isolated after landing at the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris following a bomb alert, Minister of the Interior Gerald Darmanin announced.

The flight from Ndjamena, the capital of Chad, was isolated after landing in the French capital at 4.01 p.m. on Thursday. All passengers were disembarked and an inter-ministerial crisis cell had been convened following the suspicion of the presence of an explosive device.

'Next round of Iran nuke deal talks could be conclusive'

Tehran | Agencies

The next round of talks in Vienna to revive the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal could be conclusive and lead to an agreement, the head of Tehran's negotiating team Abbas Araqchi said.

"Today, after almost 10 days of intensive work, we have reached a point where all the delegations felt they should once again make further consultations in their capitals," Araqchi was quoted as saying on Thursday.

There is still some distance from the point where an agreement can be concluded, but "we are not far apart", he added.

The negotiators of Iran and the P4+1, namely Britain, China, France, Russia plus Germany, will therefore take "a week at

most" to make consultations in their capitals, Xinhua news agency reported citing Araqchi as further saying.

"A lot of discussions" were held regarding the "main disputed issues" in the last round of talks, and different solutions were discussed which now must be analysed to choose the best, the Iranian negotiator said.

Iran has not changed its official position and an arrangement must be agreed by "the two sides" over how the US returns to the Iranian nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and fulfil its commitments, he added.

After the latest meeting on Wednesday, Wang Qun, Chinese envoy to the UN and other international organisations in Vienna, said progress has been made but

there are some key differences on issues related to the lifting of sanctions.

Iran's legitimate concerns should be properly addressed, Wang noted.

The US government under former President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and unilaterally re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

In response, Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its JCPOA commitments from May 2019.

The new US government under Joe Biden has promised to return to the deal and ease sanctions against Iran.

The JCPOA Joint Commission began to meet on April 6 in the Austrian capital to continue the discussion about a possible return of the US to the landmark deal and how to ensure

World Bank, IMF urge action on vaccine access for developing countries

Washington | Agencies

The World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Thursday called on countries anticipating excess vaccine supplies in the coming months to release their surplus doses and options as soon as possible to developing countries.

"The coronavirus pandemic will not end until everyone has access to vaccines, including people in developing countries," World Bank Group President David Malpass and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in a joint statement to the Group of Seven (G7) industrialized countries, Xinhua reported.

"Worldwide access to vaccines offers the best hope for stopping the coronavirus pandemic, saving lives, and securing a broad-based economic recovery," said Malpass and Georgieva.

They noted that together with the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank Group and IMF have urged international support for \$50 billion of financing aimed at achieving more equitable access to vaccines and thus helping to end the pandemic everywhere.

The World Bank Group and the IMF call on countries anticipating excess vaccine supplies in the coming months to release their surplus doses and options "as soon as possible," in a transparent manner, to developing countries "with adequate distribution plans in place," they said.

Biden administration reaffirms commitment to Israel's security

Washington | Agencies

Senior US officials met with visiting Israeli Defence Minister Benjamin Gantz on Thursday, reaffirming US commitment to Israel's security.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Gantz discussed the US-Israel partnership and US ironclad commitment to Israel's security, according to a readout issued by the State Department, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The Secretary reiterated the importance of promoting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike and support for Israel's right to defend itself," it added.

Blinken also underscored the importance of humanitarian assistance and relief and recovery efforts in Gaza.

"As far as Gaza concerned, we do look for stability and prosperity for everybody," Gantz told reporters before their meeting.



Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met with Gantz separately on the same day. Gantz's visit came as Israel's opposition reached a deal to form a coalition government that would end the 12-year rule of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The White House noted on

Thursday that US policy would not change given a different leadership in Israel.

"We will leave... the politics and the determination about political formation in Israel up to the parties there," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a daily briefing.

6.1-magnitude quake jolts Indonesia, no casualties

The quake struck at 5.09 p.m. on Wednesday and the epicentre, with a depth of 10 km under the seabed, was determined to be 135 km south-west of Ternate city, according to the agency.

Jakarta | Agencies

An earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale jolted Indonesia's eastern province of North Maluku, with no casualties or damages reported so far, according to officials.



The meteorology and geophysics agency did not issue any tsunami warning as the tremors did not trigger a giant wave, reports Xinhua news agency. The quake struck at 5.09 p.m. on Wednesday and the epicentre, with a depth of 10 km under the seabed, was determined to be 135 km south-west of Ternate city, according to the agency. In the hardest-hit areas of Ternate city and Manado city, there were no reports of damage or casualties, disaster agency

officials said. "The jolts only caused panic among residents in Halmahera district. In Ternate, the jolts were felt by the residents," Head of Operation Unit of Disaster Agency of North Maluku Province Fehbi Alting told Xinhua. "There were no building damage or those wounded." In Manado, the tremors were also felt without triggering panic, a local disaster management agency official told Xinhua.

IRAN SLAMS SUSPENSION OF VOTING RIGHTS IN UNGA

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has expressed "strong dismay" over the suspension of the country's voting rights at the UN General Assembly (UNGA), saying the US sanctions were to be blamed for Tehran's inability to pay dues.

Tehran | Agencies

Iran and the Central African Republic will lose their voting rights at the UNGA since the countries are in arrears on paying their dues to the world body's operating budget, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a letter to UNGA President Volkan Bozkir circulated on Wednesday.

"In 'black is white' world, UN deprived Iran of its voting rights in the UNGA as we're in arrears," Zarif said in a tweet on Thursday, adding that the decision is "fundamentally flawed,



entirely unacceptable and completely unjustified". Iran's inability to fulfil its financial obligation towards the UN is "directly caused by unlawful unilateral sanctions imposed by the US",

the Foreign Minister added. He noted that since former US President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the 2015 nuclear agreement and reimposed unilateral sanctions on Tehran,

"the people of Iran have been under the most unprecedented economic warfare and indeed economic terrorism".

Zarif added that the Iranians "have been forcibly blocked from transferring their own money and resources to buy food and medicine, let alone pay UN contributions arrears".

The "extreme restrictions" on Iran's international banking relations caused by Washington's "acts of war and economic terrorism" have impaired the country's capacity to transfer its financial contribution to the UN, he added.

Ukrainian Prez, US senators discuss security situation

Kiev | Agencies

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky discussed the security situation in the country's conflict-hit region of Donbas with a delegation of visiting American Senators.

"This meeting is very important for us, as it reaffirms that the US is our strategic partner. Especially now, at a very tense time," said Zelensky.

The Senators said that the US is closely monitoring the security situation in Donbas, which comprises the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, and supports Ukraine in a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

On May 6, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had visited Kiev, during which he met Zelensky and had said that Washington supports Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independ-

ence and stands ready to continue its assistance.

He also praised the progress Ukraine has made on its reform path, urging continued efforts to deepen the land market, judiciary system and anti-corruption reforms.

Parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions along the Russian border have been controlled by rebels supported by Moscow for nearly seven years.

According to UN estimates, more than 13,000 people have been killed in fighting since 2014, while as many as 40,000 others have been wounded.

Despite the imposition of the latest ceasefire in 2015, around 50 people have been killed since the beginning of this year alone.

Kiev has repeatedly blamed Moscow for inciting the conflict.

Organiser of HK Tiananmen Square massacre vigil arrested

Richard Tsoi, secretary of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (HKAP) told dpa news agency that Chow was arrested at 8 a.m. at Central Police Station.

Hong Kong: Chow Hang Tung, vice-chairwoman of the group responsible for organising a banned candlelit vigil in Hong Kong last year to commemorate the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, was arrested on Friday.

Richard Tsoi, secretary of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (HKAP) told dpa news agency that Chow was arrested at 8 a.m. at Central Police Station. The police announced a ban on Tiananmen

commemorations last week, which they said was because of the pandemic.

They said that anyone breaking the ban could face five years in prison, and one additional year for publicizing an event. Tsoi said that police claimed Chow had breached the public order ordinance.

On Thursday, the force said they would deploy 7,000 officers around the city, with 3,000 of them tasked with guarding the city park where commemorative events have previously been held legally for decades.

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) on Friday criticised the Hong Kong police's use of the coronavirus pandemic to ban gatherings to commemorate the victims of the June 4 crackdown in 1989. "The common enemy of humans is the virus, not democracy," the DPP said in a statement, adding that the Chinese Communist

Party's distrust of democracy and hatred of people taking action was more worrying than the virus.

On Twitter, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen posted a message and picture showing dozens of lit candles.

"We must come together to stand up for our ideas," it read.

"The people of Taiwan will never forget all those who, 32 years ago today in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, gave their lives for the cause of freedom & democracy. Every year, we join our friends in Hong Kong & around the world in commemorating their sacrifice," she posted.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also issued a statement commemorating the 32nd anniversary of the Tiananmen Square atrocity. "The United States will continue to stand with the people of China as they demand that their government respect universal human rights. We honour the sacrifices of those killed

32 years ago, and the brave activists who carry on their efforts today in the face of ongoing government repression," it added.

In past years, events were held in Hong Kong's Victoria Park to remember those who died in the massacre in 1989. Often these featured guest speakers, music and singing, followed by a quiet vigil, with people showing solidarity by holding lit candles while sat on the ground.

Last month, activist Joshua Wong, currently imprisoned for last year's anti-government protests, was sentenced to a further 10 months for participating in the unauthorised assembly to mark the anniversary, which thousands defied authorities to attend. Since the new national security law was imposed by China on the city June 2020, police crackdowns on dissidents have intensified, with most of the opposition either behind bars or in exile.

Huge mystery sinkhole in Mexico growing

Mexico City | Agencies

A massive water-filled sinkhole which opened up for unknown reasons in a field in central Mexico is getting bigger, local authorities said.

The sinkhole, which was just five metres in diameter when it was first discovered in the village of Santa Maria Zacatepec in the central state of Puebla, is now 97 by 78 metres, the general coordinator of the local civil defence, Jose Antonio Ramirez, said on Thursday.

The owner of the only house in the vicinity, which stands directly on the edge of the crater, first discovered it when she heard a loud noise at the weekend. Ramirez said her house was at risk.

The causes of the sinkhole were being investigated. Mexico's nation-



al civil defence said underground water flowing in the easily eroded soil may have caused the crater.

The estimated depth of the hole is around 20 metres.

The Popocatepetl volcano is about 50 km west of Santa Maria Zacatepec. The ground there contains deposits of ash and fine vol-

canic fragments.

According to the US Geological Survey, sinkholes form when groundwater circulates underground, dissolving the rock beneath the surface and creating spaces and caverns underground.

Authorities have repeatedly warned the public to stay away from the crater.



FRENCH OPEN

WORLD NO. 1 BARTY PULLS OUT DUE TO INJURY

Paris | Agencies

Women's world No. 1 tennis player Ashleigh Barty pulled out of French Open midway through her second round match due to injury while fourth-seeded Sofia Kenin beat American compatriot Hailey Baptiste 7-5, 6-3 to enter third round. Barty, the 2019 French Open champion, was trailing 1-6, 2-2 before giving walkover to Poland's Magda Linette following recurrence of hip injury that she suffered ahead of the tournament. "It is heartbreaking," Barty told media after pulling out of the tournament. Australia's Barty, who also used to play cricket, was one of the favourites to lift the title. Barty entered the match with her left leg wrapped. Her movement was hampered from the earliest stages. Though she survived three break points to bring scores to 1-1 in first set, Linette won five straight games to win first set in 36 minutes.



Anastasia upsets 3rd seed Aryna, enters pre-quarters

World No.32 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia on Friday upset No.3 seed Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 2-6, 6-0 to reach the pre-quarterfinals of the French Open for the second time. Aryna was the highest-ranked seed remaining in the tournament following the withdrawal of Japan's Naomi Osaka and the retirement of world No.1 Ashleigh Barty. After Aryna's loss, Americans No.4 seed Sofia Kenin and No.7 Serena Williams are the only top 10 player remaining in the bottom half of the draw. Anastasia will meet 15th seed Belarusian Victoria Azarenka, who beat Madison Keys of the USA 6-2, 6-2 in the pre-quarterfinals.

Swiatek advances to 3rd round



On a day when women's section of French Open tennis was highlighted by pullout of Ashleigh Barty, defending champion Iga Swiatek and fourth-seeded Sofia Kenin resumed normal course by winning their second round matches to cruise into third round at French Open. Swiatek dispatched Rebecca Peterson of Sweden, 6-1, 6-1 in one hour and one minute to progress while Kenin beat American compatriot Hailey Baptiste 7-5, 6-3. Poland's Swiatek was emphatic in her win over her Swedish rival, winning 80 percent of her first service points, getting 15 break-points and ending up winning six of those. Swiatek will face 30th seed Anett Kontaveit of Estonia in her next round.

Nadal thrashes Gasquet, enters 3rd round



taken a set off Nadal since 2008.

Earlier on Thursday, former world No.1 Roger Federer, the oldest player at 39 in men's draw, entered the third round with a 6-2, 2-6, 7-6(4), 6-2 win over Marin Cilic of Croatia. World No.1 Novak Djokovic, too, moved into third round.

Swiss Federer, who is in Djokovic's half of the draw and could possibly meet the world No.1 in the quarter-finals, will next clash with Dominik Koepfer. The German defeated 30th seed Taylor Fritz 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 6-4 to advance. Djokovic also won on Thursday. The Serb defeated Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 to move into the third round. Djokovic hit 31 winners to clinch the match in two hours and nine minutes.

Rafael Nadal defeated Richard Gasquet 6-0, 7-5, 6-2 on his 35th birthday to reach third round of French Open here late on Thursday. The world No. 3, playing his first night match at the Roland Garros, took his head-to-head to 17-0 against Gasquet which is one of the most one-sided in Open era of tennis. The Spaniard won 84 percent on his first serve as compared 69 percent by the Frenchman. He also won seven of the 16 break-points he got. Interestingly, Gasquet hasn't

Olympic-bound wrestler Malik fails dope test



Navneet Singh | New Delhi

Olympic-bound wrestler Sumit Malik has failed dope test conducted by United World Wrestling (UWW) during the May 6-9 World Olympic qualifiers held in Sofia, Bulgaria.

The Delhi-based heavyweight wrestler Malik had won an Olympic quota place in men's 125 kg freestyle event in Sofia.

In the semi-final, the Indian wrestler had defeated Jose Daniel Diaz of Venezuela 5-0 to set up a title clash with Russia's Sergei Kozlyev. But he withdrew from the final due to an injury and got a silver.

The finalist in each weight category during the World Olympic qualifiers in Sofia were eligible to win quota places for Tokyo Olympics Games starting July 23. Last month, Malik was also included in Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) core group.

Soman, Seema to skip India's Olympic camp

Injured women wrestlers Sonam Malik and Seema Bisla will skip a month long Olympic training-cum-exposure camp in Warsaw, Poland, starting on Monday.



"Since Soman and Seema are on the injured list, only three wrestlers -- Ravi Dahiya, Deepak Punia and Anshu Malik -- will leave for Poland on Saturday," a wrestling coach associated with the camp told reporter. The camp will end on July 5.

Soman and Seema have qualified for the Olympics in the 62kg and 50kg freestyle events, respectively. They are currently training at their home akahras in Haryana, and are expected to regain full fitness and compete at the Olympics.

Focus now on fitness, setting biological clock for Tokyo: Namita

Team Absolute | Bengaluru

With less than 50 days to go for the scheduled start to the Olympic Games, the focus has shifted to maintaining peak fitness and ensuring the biological clock is set to the time she and her teammates will be playing in Tokyo, Indian hockey midfielder Namita Toppo said on Friday. "Fitness is key area of focus. The weather in Tokyo is going to be quite challenging and our training sessions

are now planned in such a way that our biological clock is set to the time we will be playing matches in Tokyo," said Namita, who along with the other players is currently training at the Sports Authority of India centre in Bengaluru.

A veteran of 160 international matches, Namita, who was a member of the Indian team that competed at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, where Indian women competed for the first time in 36 years, said

that from now on every single session was crucial with an eye on Tokyo.

"The players will have to give it their all in every single session. We have been working doubly hard and there is a great sense of competition within the core group at the same time there is a strong team-comes-first mentality among the players too," she said. Namita said that internal matches were being organised regularly to build the momentum for the Game.

WTC FINAL A CLASH OF DIFFERENT STYLES OF CAPTAINCY: LEE

Sydney | Agencies

Virat Kohli's cricketing brain and Pat Cummins's bag of tricks with the ball make them the best batsman and bowler in world cricket today, said former Australia speedster Brett Lee on Friday. The former Aussie pacer added that World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand this month will be clash of different styles of captaincy.

"When you look at the recent greats, it is hard to look past Virat Kohli. What an incredible record he has got. He is only getting better with age. He has got a great mindset, a great cricket brain as well," said Lee, who represented Australia in 76 Test matches and 221 One-day Internationals. The 44-year-old Aussie said Cummins beats the bat on more occasions than any other bowler. While Kohli is aggressive, Williamson is conservative



without being boring, according to him. "They are different. Kane is a lot more conservative without being boring. He has got a great cricket brain. I admire his level of calmness. And that is why I said that he is not a boring captain. He is a conservative captain, but attacks when he needs to. Because he is patient, and it works for him and his team," said Lee. "Look at the other side of



the ledger, and you look at Kohli, he is more of an aggressive captain," said Lee further. "There is no right or wrong answer to any of these because I have played under captains who are conservative and captains who are too aggressive. But this is going to be a great opportunity to see which one comes out on top because they are different. At the end of the day, they are two amazing cricket brains."

10-man India go down 0-1 to Asian champs Qatar

Doha | Agencies

Dominant Qatar beat a 10-man India 1-0 in a FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 preliminary Round 2 qualification match here on Thursday.

Qatar led 1-0 at half-time, Abdel Aziz Hatim making the difference between the two sides, slotting in a 34th minute winner at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

The win took Qatar to 19 points, seven ahead of Oman who have two matches in hand and will face Felix Sanchez's side on Monday. India stay on three points from six matches. Bangladesh and Afghanistan shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw in the other Group E tie on Thursday.

India's other qualification matches are against Bangladesh on June 7 and Afghanistan on June 15. India are bidding to qualify for the 2023 Asian Cup, though they



are out of contention for next year's World Cup. While Qatar are ranked 58th, India are 105th. The last time the

two teams met, in September 2019, India had held the Asian champions to a goal-less draw.

INDIANS TO MISS WORLD ATHLETICS CHALLENGE-RACE WALKING EVENT

La Coruna (Spain) | Agencies

In the absence of the top Asian athletes - the Indians will also miss it -- the main focus in the Spanish leg of this year's World Athletics Challenge-Race Walking competition here on Saturday will be on the top Europeans athletes.

"We aren't going to Spain to compete as the Indian athletes aren't getting visas to travel to Europe due to the second wave of Covid-19 in India," one of the athletes told reporter.

India has booked five Tokyo Olympic Games quota places in the 20km race walking event, including two in the women's section.

Olympian KT Irfan, Sandeep Kumar and Rahul Kumar have qualified for the Olympics in the men's 20km event while Bhawana Jat and Priyanka Goswami are the qualified women. "The top athletes compet-

ed in the National Race Walking Championship, held in February. Thereafter, there wasn't any exposure due to the pandemic," said one of the Olympic bound athletes.

In Saturday's race, Sweden's Perseus Karlstrom and the Spanish European champion Alvaro Martin and silver medallist Diego Garcia are among the favourites. Karlstrom, the reigning world bronze medallist is fresh from a commanding win in one hour 18:54 seconds at the European Race Walking Team Championships held last month in Podybrady, Czech Republic.

The Swede is enjoying a solid season as he also won in Murcia in March, on the occasion of the Spanish Championships, in a season's best of one hour 18:45 seconds.

More than 160 race walkers will take part in the event, Mexico's being the largest squad with 38 athletes.

Athletics legend Milkha 'better and more stable': Hospital

Team Absolute | Chandigarh

Legendary athlete Milkha Singh, who was on Thursday admitted to a local hospital after he complained of a low oxygen level, is stable and is being monitored by a team of medical experts, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) said on Friday.

"Flying Sikh Shri Milkha Singh ji being unwell due to Covid-19 was admitted in ICU of NHE block of the PGIMER on Thursday. On the basis of all the medical parameters on Friday, his condition has been observed better and more stable than Thursday. He is being closely monitored by a team of three doctors at PGIMER," said professor Ashok Kumar, official spokesperson of Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), in a medical bulletin on Friday.



WTC final pitch

IN 2021, SOUTHAMPTON PITCH HAS FAVOURED SEAMERS

Southampton | Agencies

The pitch at Hampshire Bowl, which will host World Test Championship (WTC) final between India and New Zealand this month, has favoured seam bowlers in early phase of the County Championship matches.

Three of the four county matches this season have so far seen at least one innings ending inside 100 runs. Home to Hampshire county, the pitch has given assistance to Pakistan pacer Mohammad Abbas and former South African pace bowler Kyle Abbott, both of whom are playing as overseas professionals for the team.

Abbott was a Kolpac player before he walked into an overseas contract this year. While Abbas has picked 18 wickets, Abbott has

scalped 15 in four matches. Leicestershire were dismissed for 84 by host Hampshire in the latest first-class match played at the venue -- also known as Ageas Bowl -- from May 19 to 22, before it was handed over for the Test match. The visiting New Zealand team, which was in quarantine in Southampton last month, also witnessed that match.

The hotel where the Kiwis stayed and where Indians are currently in quarantine overlooks the ground. Prior to the Leicestershire game, it was host Hampshire who folded up inside 100. They were dismissed for 79 by Somerset in a match played on May 6-9.

Earlier, in the first match of the season, Hampshire rode Abbas's six-wicket haul to stifle out Middlesex for 79.

Both Abbas and Abbott have picked a six-wicket haul each this season, their only five-wicket hauls. Despite seamers doing well, former England left-arm spinner Monty Panesar is of the opinion that the Southampton wicket will have something for the spinners.

"I think the Southampton wicket will help the spinners and also the fact that New Zealand players don't play spin very well [giving India edge]," Panesar had told reporter this week. The second match of the season showed that spinners could get some assistance from the pitch. England left-arm spinner Liam Dawson, who has played three Tests including one against India in 2016, and leg-spinner Mason Crane shared nine wickets for Hampshire in the match against Gloucestershire. Also, since it is the



WTC final and a neutral venue for both India and New Zealand, the pitch preparation will be overseen by the International Cricket Council and not by England and Wales Cricket Board. It may, there-

fore, have some help for spinners. The last time India played in Southampton, in 2018, England off-spinner Moeen Ali wreaked havoc by picking nine wickets to help defeat India.

Growth Oriented: RBI retains rates accommodative rates

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the central bank voted to maintain the repo rate, or short-term lending rate, for commercial banks, at 4 per cent. Likewise, the reverse repo rate was kept unchanged at 3.35 per cent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the 'Bank Rate' at 4.25 per cent.



Team Absolute | Mumbai
The Reserve Bank of India has retained its key short-term lending rates along with the growth-oriented accommodative stance during the second monetary policy review of FY22. Accordingly, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the central bank

voted to maintain the repo rate, or short-term lending rate, for commercial banks, at 4 per cent. Likewise, the reverse repo rate was kept unchanged at 3.35 per cent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the 'Bank Rate' at 4.25 per cent. It was widely expected that MPC would hold rates and the accommodative stance. As of now, India suffers from a massive spike in Covid-19 infections. Consequently, the situation has forced state govern-

ments to implement local lockdowns and travel restrictions which have started to slowdown economic activity. This trend has impacted economic activity. Accordingly, the RBI revised India's FY22 growth estimates to 9.5 per cent from 10.5 per cent. Besides, he said vaccination process should help to normalise economic activity. Furthermore, the RBI pegged retail inflation for FY22 CPI-based inflation at 5.2 per cent.

FLEXIBILITY TO RRBs IN LIQUIDITY MGMT. BY ISSUING CDS

Mumbai: To provide greater flexibility in raising short term funds by regional rural banks, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday decided to permit RRBs to issue Certificates of Deposit (CDs). Regional Rural Banks are scheduled commercial banks of India that operate at regional level in different states of India. They were created to serve rural areas with basic banking and financial services. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in his statement post the Monetary Policy Committee's bi-monthly meeting said that permission for CDs will facilitate greater flexibility in liquidity management. Accordingly, RBI has also permitted all issuers of CDs to buy back their CDs before maturity, subject to certain conditions. In December 2020, RRBs were permitted to access the liquidity windows of the Reserve Bank as well as the call/notice money market in order to facilitate more efficient liquidity management by these regional banks at competitive rates.

RBI'S BIG SURPLUS TRANSFER TO CENTRE DUE TO SHRINKING BALANCE SHEET SIZE BY FOURTH IN 2020-21

Last month the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had surprised many by announcing huge surplus transfer of Rs 99,122 crore to Centre for nine months ended March 31, 2021.



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Now it has justified the transfer suggesting that it was made possible due to lower risk capital provisioning by the central bank this year as its balance sheet size shrunk by a fourth. Addressing media persons about the MPC decisions after the statement of RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, the Central Bank's Deputy Governor T.Rabi Sankar said that the increase in balance sheet size of RBI which swelled to Rs 12.37 lakh crore in 2019-20 shrunk to a quarter at Rs 3.64 lakh crore in 2020-21. "This allowed lower risk capital provisioning this year allowing for generation of higher surplus," Sankar said. He added that along with this, transfer from profit to contingent fund has

also come down this year generating more surplus. The higher transfer of surplus is expected to help the government ease fiscal pressure caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and also aid in giving the economy a boost. In the past, the demand on the RBI for higher dividends and to part with a greater share of its capital has been a hotly debated issue between the central bank and the government. Skipping a direct answer, Das said during the post MPC press conference that surplus transfer was not a policy matter for the central bank but purely an accounting issue. The RBI Central Board last month approved the transfer

of Rs 99,122 crore as surplus to the Central Government for the accounting period of nine months ended March 31, 2021 (July 2020-March 2021), while deciding to maintain the Contingency Risk Buffer at 5.50 per cent. The RBI approved a Rs 1,76,000 crore (\$24.8 billion) dividend payment to the government, including Rs 1,48,000 crore for FY20. RBI earns via interest income on account of open market operations (OMOs), foreign exchange (FX) gains, and writing back of excess risk provisions. Its liabilities include issuance of notes and deposits held (CRR and reverse repos).

G-SAP 2.0 worth Rs 1.2L cr for liquidity support

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In a bid to infuse more liquidity in the market, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced undertake Government Securities Acquisition Program (G-SAP) 2.0 during the second quarter of FY22 and conduct secondary market purchase operations of Rs 1.20 lakh crore. The specific dates and securities under G-SAP 2.0 operations, however, will be indicated separately. "We do expect the market to respond appropriately to this announcement of G-SAP 2.0," said the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in his statement post the Monetary Policy Committee meeting. He noted that the foremost endeavour of RBI throughout the pandemic

has been to create conducive financial conditions so that financial markets and institutions keep functioning normally. Accordingly, adequate system level liquidity has been ensured and targeted liquidity to stressed institutions and sectors has been provided. As a result, borrowing costs and spreads have been reduced to historic lows, Das said, adding that This has incentivised a record amount of private borrowing through corporate bonds and debentures in FY2020-21. Reserve money rose by 12.4 per cent (y-o-y) as on May 28, 2021, while money supply (M3) grew by 9.9 per cent (y-o-y) (as on May 21), and bank credit by 6.0 per cent (y-o-y) (as on May 21). G-SAP operations and some instances of cancellations, devolve-

ment and exercise of green shoe options in G-Sec auctions have conveyed the Reserve Bank's views to the market. "With the second wave intensifying this financial year, the focus of the Reserve Bank is increasingly turning from systemic liquidity to its equitable distribution. In fact, the enduring lesson from the experience of the pandemic in the Indian context has been the deployment of unconventional monetary policy measures that distribute liquidity among all stakeholders," he said. The Governor said that RBI shall continue with its proactive and preemptive approach, relying on market-based channels of transmission as we strive to mitigate the toll of the pandemic and return the economy to a path of high and durable growth.



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The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has finally come to the rescue of the country's travel and tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors, which were worst affected in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The RBI has allowed

Banks allowed to provide liquidity support to Covid-affected sectors

tact-intensive sectors. A separate liquidity window of Rs 5,000 crore is opened till March 31, 2022, with tenors of up to three years at the repo rate, an RBI statement said. Under the scheme, banks can provide fresh lending support to hotels and restaurants; tourism - travel agents, tour operators and adventure/heritage facilities; aviation ancillary services - ground handling and supply chain; and other services that include private bus operators, car repair services, rent-a-car service providers, event/confer-

ence organisers, spa clinics, and beauty parlours/salons, the statement added. In order to incentivise banks for this liquidity offering to affected sectors, the RBI has allowed them to park their surplus liquidity up to the size of the loan book created under this scheme with the central bank under the reverse repo window at a rate which is 25 bps lower than the repo rate. This will offer banks an interest rate which is still 40 bps higher than the reverse repo rate on their surplus funds.

Exposure limit raised under Resolution Framework 2.0 to Rs 50cr

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The 'Resolution Framework 2.0' announced by RBI on May 5, 2021, so far had mandated a maximum aggregate exposure of Rs 25 crore for considering resolution of COVID-19 related stress of MSMEs as well as non-MSME small businesses, and loans to individuals for business purposes. "Based on a review, it has been decided to enhance the above exposure threshold to Rs 50 crore. Accordingly, the above categories of borrowers to whom the lending institutions have aggregate exposure of not more than Rs 50 crore as on March 31, 2021, and which have not been restructured earlier under any of the specified restructuring frameworks, shall be eligible to be considered for resolution under Resolution Framework 2.0," said the RBI's Statement on

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has increased the exposure threshold to benefit under its Resolution Framework 2.0 to Rs 50 crore.

Developmental and Regulatory Policies. This move would ensure more businesses get relief under the scheme. The decision comes at a crucial time as the most business activities across the country remain shut or are partially operational amid the severe second wave of Covid-19 and the lockdowns across states. Banks had last month asked the central bank to expand the ambit of the scheme and raise its exposure limit to above Rs 25 crore.

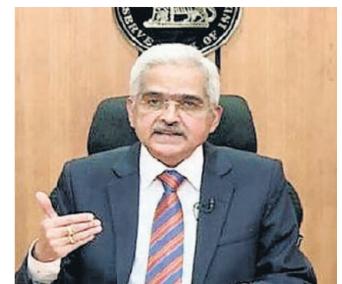
UNEP Recognizes Heartfulness Institute for its contribution to the Climate Action

Hyderabad: United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), under its Faith for Earth and United Religions Initiative (URI), has recognized the Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Heartfulness Institute) for being champions of sustainability and environment conservation on the context of World Environment Day, on 5th June 2021. President of Mission and Founder of Heartfulness, Kamlesh D Patel (Daaji), was felicitated as Faith for Earth Councilor for climate action - ecosystem restoration, for the year 2021-2022. Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Heartfulness Institute) was recognized for its ambitious initiative Forests by Heartfulness, an extensive outreach program towards afforestation, biodiversity and eco-system restoration. Each year, the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative recognizes significant contributions towards the cause of sustainability and environment conservation in areas such as clean water, climate action, ecosystem restoration, sanitation, responsible production and consumption etc. Addressing the audience at the UNEP felicitation ceremony, Daaji said, "The core of Heartfulness is built on sustainability, balance and simple living for betterment of humanity. As we bring sustainability into our environments, it's important to note that Inner pollution of the psyche defined as vrittis in Sanskrit by Sage Patanjali is the root cause of all pollutions. Along with the SDGs by UNEP, I recommend adding Zero thought pollution as a crucial goal for 2030 to achieve harmony and peace in the world."

Rs 16K crspl liquidity for SIDBI

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In a move to support small and medium businesses in their credit requirements, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a special liquidity facility of Rs 16,000 crore for Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). This comes over and above the Rs 15,000 crore liquidity support announced in April. This facility is expected support the MSMEs amid the current Covid crisis and the lockdowns across states. "In order to meet MSMEs' short- and medium-term credit needs to kick start the investment cycle with additional focus on smaller MSMEs and businesses including those in credit deficient and aspirational districts, it has been decided to provide a further special liquidity facility of Rs 16,000 crore to SIDBI," said Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies. It noted that the facility would be extended for on-lending and refinancing through novel models and structures including double intermediation, pooled bond, loan issuances among others. The facility will be available at the prevailing policy repo rate



for a period of up to one year. RBI said that it may consider further extension of the facility depending on its usage. On April 7, 2021, the central bank had extended fresh support of Rs 50,000 crore to All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs) for new lending in 2021-22, in a bid to nurture the growth impulses of the economy. It included a special liquidity facility of Rs 25,000 crore to National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Rs 10,000 crore to the National Housing Bank (NHB) and liquidity facility worth Rs 15,000 crore to SIDBI.

Hindustan Power vaccinates Staff Members and their dependents

Hindustan Power conducted a vaccination drive for all its staff members and their dependents at the Company's Corporate Office to safeguard them from the COVID 19 pandemic.

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The vaccination drive was extended to all employees, family members and dependents based out of Head Office in Delhi. Company-sponsored drive was conducted in two phases and con-

cluded on 1st June '21. In both the phases, approx. 650 beneficiaries in the age group of 18 to 44 years and 45 years and above, were administered Covid vaccine. The Company tied up with Fortis Escorts Hospital & Research Centre, Okhla, New Delhi for the vaccination drive. During the drive, the Corporate office was designated as Covid Vaccination Centre. Company created a separate entry and exit, a designated Registration Area, Pre-Vaccination waiting area,

Vaccination Room, and Post-Vaccination waiting area, including a Certification Desk that issued the vaccination certificate after completion of waiting period. These arrangements were highly appreciated by all the beneficiaries. Lalit Jain, President - Thermal, Hindustan Power said, "Safety and Security of our employees and its dependents have always been a priority area. Vaccination is the only step for fighting the Covid pandemic. We have made all appropriate arrangements as per the prescribed government guidelines and rules for vaccination."

GO FIRST transports 63 oxygen concentrators to Delhi



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GO FIRST (formerly known as GoAir) ferried a shipment of 63 oxygen concentrators to Delhi from Mumbai to be distributed across the state. Delhi is in dire need of O2 concentrators. The concentrators have been provided by the franchise cricket team Punjab Kings, which has tied up with Round Table India for distributing oxygen concentrators to patients with mild to moderate symptoms. These concentrators are given free of charge to the patients and after use, they are properly sterilised/sanitised and given to other patients. By using the concentrators, patients do not have to depend on oxygen cylinders or go to hospi-

tals for oxygen beds. This means that cylinders and hospital beds can be used for patients with severe Covid symptoms. Speaking on the initiative, Kaushik Khona, CEO, GO FIRST, said: "We at GO FIRST have always been at the forefront of providing support to the community to fight this unprecedented crisis. We will continue to support the nation in overcoming this pandemic." GO FIRST has been committed in its effort to support the nation's fight against the unprecedented Covid crisis. Last month, the airline ferried oxygen concentrators to Patna, in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Ahmedabad. Recently, the company also announced its drive to vaccinate all its employees and bear the cost of the same.



YAMI GAUTAM TIES THE KNOT WITH 'URI' DIRECTOR ADITYA DHAR

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Actress Yami Gautam announced on Friday that she has tied the knot with 'Uri' director Aditya Dhar in a private ceremony.

The wedding took place on Friday. Yami shared a picture from their wedding venue and said they were both private people and preferred to get married in presence of family and close friends.

"In your light, I learn to love - Rumi'. With the blessings of our family, we have tied the knot in an intimate wedding ceremony today. Being very private people, we celebrated this joyous occasion with our immediate family. As we embark on the journey of love and friendship, we seek all your blessings and good wishes. Love, Yami and Aditya," Yami said in an Instagram post.

The actress was flooded with congratulatory messages in the comments section from friends and fans alike.

Among Bollywood colleagues who greeted the actress were Vaani Kapoor, Jacqueline Fernandez, Dia Mirza and Vikrant Massey.

On the work front, Yami has "Dasvi", "A Thursday", and "Bhoot Police" coming up, besides a few yet-to-be announced ventures.



KAJAL AGGARWAL SIGNS NEW FILM 'UMA'

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Actress Kajal Aggarwal will play the female protagonist in a new film titled "Uma". "I look forward to commencing shoot as soon as the situation around us gets better. I'm always keen to give a green signal to scripts that are fun, entertaining yet challenging for me as an actor. I'm excited to share 'Uma' with all of you!" said Kajal.

The film is directed by Tathagata Singha and produced by Avishek Ghosh. "Uma" is slated to be shot in a start-to-finish schedule in the second half of 2021, keeping all Covid-19 protocols in consideration. The other cast members are going to be revealed soon.



Arshi Khan set to find her dream man on reality show

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Actress Arshi Khan, who rose to fame with her stint in "Big Boss 14", will soon be seen on a reality show where she will choose her life partner. Arshi says if she gets the "man of my choice", she "wouldn't mind getting married on screen". "I'm in talks for a reality TV show. The makers have been approaching me since the last two to three years, and things got finalised in the beginning of this year but because of the lockdown it went on hold. Now that the situation is getting a little better, makers are considering working on it again," says the actress. "If I find a man of my choice. I wouldn't mind getting married on screen," she says. The actress had recently talked about how she feels the need to have a boyfriend in life and realised it all the more during her Covid positive days. Arshi is also known for her roles in shows like "Vish", "Ishq Mein Marjawan" and "Savitri Devi College & Hospital".



Swara Bhasker reunites with 'Tanu Weds Manu' singer Krsna Solo in short film

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Actress Swara Bhasker will be part of a project with singer Krsna Solo after almost a decade when they work together in the upcoming short film "Dobara Alvida".

Swara's role as Payal Jassi Gill became popular in Aanand L. Rai's 2011 release "Tanu Weds Manu", which featured Krsna's hit song "Rangrez".

"A song always elevates the visuals we see on screen and the song for 'Dobara Alvida' is an absolutely soulful melody that will instantly tug at your heartstrings. Coming together with Krsna after 'Tanu Weds Manu' feels great as he is a very talented singer. Trust him to capture the true essence of the film," said Swara. Directed by Shashank Shekhar Singh, "Dobara Alvida" also features Gulshan Deviah and will release on June 8.

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Television actress Madalsa Sharma says she wore a lehen-

is married to actor Mimoh Chakraborty, says it was a challenge wearing the lehenga.

'Madalsa Sharma wore a 10-kilo lehenga for wedding scene in 'Anupamaa'

ga weighing 10 kilos for a wedding sequence in Rajan and Deepa Shahi's popular show "Anupamaa". The actress wore the stunning pink lehenga for the wedding sequence of her character Kavya to Vanraj Shah. Madalsa, who

"The lehenga I was wearing for my wedding weighed almost 10 kilos. It was a challenge, but I gave it my best," she said. Currently on the show, Kavya's dream of getting hitched to Vanraj has come true. Although Vanraj was having second thoughts about marrying her, he took the step at the last moment.



Bhushan Kumar's T-Series commences vaccination drive for staff and families

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Bhushan Kumar's T-Series has come at forefront for safe guarding their staffs and families during these tough times of Covid. Given the ongoing pandemic and India's efforts towards vaccinating it's citizens, Bhushan Kumar's T-Series has stepped forth and begun a vaccination drive for their staff. The vaccination drive has started from June 3 in collaboration with Bhushan's friends and joint producers, Cine1 Studios, Color Yellow Productions, Emmay Entertainment, Benaras Mediaworks, Luv Films, JA Entertainment and Retrophiles. With the film industry going through a crucial time with the lockdown and stalling of shoots, it is imperative to safeguard the interests of all and beginning this vaccination drive is certainly the right way to defeat the pandemic.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Ishita Dutta