

# absolute india

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## FREE VAXINATION FROM JUNE 21

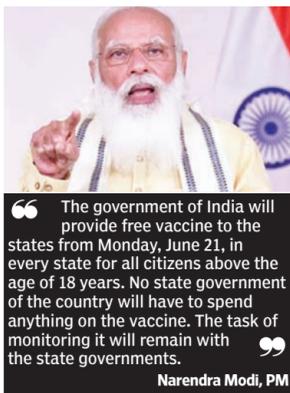
## 17 killed as major fire engulfs Pune sanitiser factory

Addressing the nation, the Prime Minister made it clear that the states will be provided these vaccine doses free of cost from Central government.

The Prime Minister said that government of India itself will buy 75 per cent of the total vaccine production from vaccine manufacturers and give it free to the state governments. 25 per cent of the vaccines being made in the country will be provided directly to the private sector hospitals while they will be able to charge a maximum service fee of Rs 150 for a single dose after the fixed price of the vaccine.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the second wave of coronavirus has been indicating a declining trend in India for the last few days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced that all Indians above 18 years of age will be administered free Covid-19 vaccine from June 21. Till now, the Prime Minister said crores of people of the country have got free vaccine. "Now people of 18 years of age will also join it. Only the Government of India will provide free vaccine to all the countrymen," the Prime Minister reiterated. It was decided on Monday that the government of India will also bear the responsibility of 25 per cent of the work related to vaccination with the state governments, said



The government of India will provide free vaccine to the states from Monday, June 21, in every state for all citizens above the age of 18 years. No state government of the country will have to spend anything on the vaccine. The task of monitoring it will remain with the state governments.  
Narendra Modi, PM

the Prime Minister, adding "this arrangement will be implemented in the coming two weeks. In these two weeks, the central and state governments will together make necessary preparations according to the new guidelines." He also announced that Covid-19 vaccine supply would increase in the country in coming days and trial for three more vaccine is going on. "Due to the continuous efforts and hard work that the country has been doing for a long time, the supply of vaccine is going to increase even more in the coming days. Currently, seven companies are producing different types of vaccines in the country and trial of three more vaccines is also going on in advanced stage," the Prime Minister said.

### IF VACCINES ARE FREE, WHY SHOULD PVT HOSPITALS CHARGE FOR THEM: RAHUL TO PM



Hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced free vaccination for all above 18 years of age, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Monday questioned him saying if vaccines are free for all, why should private hospitals charge for them. "One simple question - if vaccines are free for all, why should private hospitals charge for them?" Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet. He tweeted with the hash tag of #FreeVaccineForAll.

### PMGKAY EXTENDED TILL DIWALI

In a relief to over 80 crore Indians, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced to extend the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) till Diwali. In this time of pandemic, the Prime Minister, while addressing the nation, said the government is standing by the poor with every need as their partner.



While at least 17 persons perished in the blaze, around 10 other workers are feared trapped or missing in the incident, till the time to go for print, said an official of Pune Rural Police Control.

Eyewitnesses said that the bodies - now taken to Sassoon Hospital, Pune - had been charred to such an extent that it is difficult to ascertain their gender or identity, but co-workers estimate that more than 12 women are among the fatalities. Locals who rushed to the spot said that many of the male workers managed to escape through the smoke and flames, and at one point the relief teams had to bulldoze a factory wall to rescue some others including women, trapped inside.

Team Absolute | Pune

At least 17 persons, mostly women, were killed in a major fire, followed by explosions, that erupted in a sanitiser manufacturing factory in Maharashtra's Pune district on Monday afternoon, officials said. The blaze erupted around 3 p.m. in private chemical company, SVC Ltd, in the MIDC area of Pirang village, and quickly spread within the enclosed premises, trapping many working there. Thick clouds of black-grey smoke could be seen billowing out of the factory premises alarming the locals, many who rushed to the spot. Fire Brigade

teams from MIDC, Mulshi, disaster rescue teams and others rushed to the spot to battle the conflagration. Pune Collector Rajesh Deshmukh, Superintendent of Police Abhivan Deshmukh and other officials also rushed to the site to supervise the relief operations. A company official said that while the blaze was brought under control by late evening, they were unable to provide any clues on how the fire could have started. Tehsildar Abhay Chauhan had earlier said that 11 bodies were recovered as rescue operations were going on in full swing. Another six bodies were found later.

### SENSEX, NIFTY SETTLE AT RECORD HIGH CLOSING LEVELS



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian stock market climbed to fresh highs on Monday with both the BSE Sensex and the Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) ending at their record closing highs. Nifty also touched a new intra-day high of 15,773.45 points. It closed at 15,751.65, higher by 81.40 points, or 0.52 per cent, from its previous close of 15,670.25 points. Sensex closed at 52,328.51, higher by 228.46 points, or 0.44 per cent, from its previous close of 52,100.05. It had opened at 52,231.38 and touched an intra-day high of 52,378.69 and a low of 52,054.76 points. The top gainers on the Sensex were Power Grid, NTPC, and UltraTech Cement, while the major losers were Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, and HDFC.

### Choksi names 'Indian officers', 'mystery' woman in complaint to Antigua police

Team Absolute | New Delhi

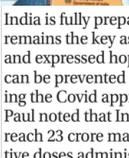
Fugitive businessman diamantaire Mehul Choksi, who is currently in Dominica, has named mysterious woman Barbara Jabarica, and alleged Indian officers Gurmit Singh and Narindra Singh in his complaint filed with the Antigua and Barbuda Police. On June 4, a news agency was first to report the name of Gurmit Singh, a resident of India whose name was mentioned in the passenger list of the two vessels - Lady Anne and Calliope of Arne. The news agency had accessed the pictures of the vessels, several documents, and two men dressed in black 'kurta pajama' standing onboard with three other men. The passenger list of Calliope of Arne mentions the names of Gurjit Bhandal, a resident of Birmingham in the UK, and Gurmit Singh, a resident of India, according to the



records of the Cobra tours. The Calliope of Arne had entered the Portsmouth port in Dominica on May 25, according to the Customs and Excise department documents. Choksi's complaint with the Antigua Police was filed on June 2. In his complaint, Choksi, who is facing charges of entering Dominica illegally, has stated that that he has been residing in Antigua and Barbuda for the last three years, and there he came in contact with Jabarica, who used to stay in his neighbourhood. He also stated that he had gone to meet Jabarica on May 23 at around 5 pm when he was abducted by 8 to 10 people claiming to be Antigua police officers. Antigua and Barbuda police have commenced an investigation into the possible abduction of Mehul Choksi from Antigua.

### '3RD COVID WAVE CAN BE PREVENTED'

New Delhi: NITI Aayog's Member (Health) V.K. Paul on Monday expressed hope that the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic can be prevented by following appropriate behaviour instructed by the government. Paul's remarks came while presenting a brief snapshot of the vaccination status, preparedness for paediatric Covid-19 care, and the way forward to prevent the third wave at the 28th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19. He stressed that India is fully prepared but caution remains the key as lockdowns are lifted and expressed hope that "the third wave can be prevented if we continue following the Covid appropriate behaviour". Paul noted that India took 141 days to reach 23 crore mark in terms of cumulative doses administered, which remains the second highest in the world after the US, which did in 134 days. Also, India is one of the world's fastest countries in terms of number of doses administered so far, he added.



### Gold coin, fridge for vaccine takers in Bihar



Team Absolute | Patna

The Sheohar district administration in Bihar has decided to give gold coins and other home appliances to those who take corona vaccine and are 45 years of age and above. The idea is to promote corona vaccine in the district as many villagers have declined to take it. Sajjan Rajshekhher, the district magistrate of Sheohar said: "We are aiming to vaccinate cent-per cent people of 45 years of age and above in the district by July

15. Sheohar is flood affected district in Bihar with majority of land go under water after monsoon sets in." "Every year, monsoon starts from July 15 and hence we have set the target for that date. Once the monsoon starts here, it will be extremely difficult to reach to those villages. We witnessed 43 village Panchayats out of 53, which were affected by flood last year," Rajshekhher said. Sheohar has 60,369 persons above 45 years and some of them have already taken the shot.

### Ready to quit if BJP high command wants: Yediyurappa

Bengaluru: An embattled Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday said he was ready to quit office if the BJP high command wanted him to go. "I will resign if the party high command directs me to do so. Till then, I will continue as chief minister and work for the state's development," Yediyurappa told reporters here in Kannada at an event outside the state secretariat. Asserting that he would remain in office as long as the party high command had trust in him, the chief minister said he would not react to rumblings in the party over his leadership but will work for the state day and night. Noting that the party had provided him an opportunity to serve the state for the fourth time, Yediyurappa said as he was busy in fighting Covid pandemic, he was not concerned over activities or statements of some party members against him. Admitting that there was no lack of alternate leaders in the party's state unit, Yediyurappa said he does not agree with the view that there were no leaders in the party other than him.

## 'Covid-19 pathogen has genetic footprint never observed in natural coronavirus'

The CGG-CGG combination has never been found naturally. That means the common method of viruses picking up new skills, called recombination, cannot operate here, they wrote in the WSJ. A virus simply cannot pick up a sequence from another virus if that sequence isn't present in any other virus. At the minimum, this fact - that the coronavirus, with all its random possibilities, took the rare and unnatural combination used by human researchers - implies that the leading theory for the origin of the coronavirus must be laboratory escape, they wrote.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Science Suggests a Wuhan Lab Leak", as per an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal by two leading US experts. Steven Quay and Richard Muller say in the WSJ essay that the Covid-19 pathogen has a genetic footprint that has never been observed in a natural coronavirus. They said that the possibility that the pandemic began with an escape from the Wuhan Institute of Virology is attracting fresh attention. President Joe Biden has asked the national intelligence community to redouble efforts to investigate. They say that the genome sequencing of Covid-19 suggests that the virus was manufactured inside a Chinese laboratory. SARS-CoV-2's genetic sequencing almost certainly demonstrates



that it is an artificially-manipulated virus developed in a laboratory, they say. Quay, who had briefed the US Congress on the virus' origins early last year and published a 193-page study in January suggesting the virus was "laboratory derived", and Muller, a Physics Professor at University of California Berkeley, wrote the op-ed in the WSJ. The experts argued that "the most compelling reason" to support the lab leak theory wasn't related to the cir-

cumstantial evidence about Chinese experiments in coronavirus gain of function research, alleged illnesses among lab workers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology or US intelligence reports, but because SARS-Cov-2's "genetic footprint has never been observed in a natural coronavirus". "In gain-of-function research, a microbiologist can increase the lethality of a coronavirus enormously by splicing a special sequence into its genome at a prime location. Doing this leaves no trace of manipulation. But it alters the virus spike protein, rendering it easier for the virus to inject genetic material into the victim cell. Since 1992, there have been at least 11 separate experiments adding a special sequence to the

Much of the public discussion has focused on circumstantial evidence: mysterious illnesses in late 2019; the lab's work intentionally supercharging viruses to increase lethality (known as 'gain of function' research). The Chinese Communist Party has been reluctant to release relevant information. Reports based on US intelligence have suggested the lab collaborated on projects with the Chinese military. same location. The end result has always been supercharged viruses," they said in the op-ed. Covid-19 has the genome sequencing 'CGG-CGG' and the experts assert that no naturally occurring coronavirus - such as SARS or MERS - has ever had a CGG-CGG combination.



# No compromise with encroachment on forest land: SC on eviction of 10K from Aravallis

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday ordered eviction of around 10,000 residential constructions, which had come up in Haryana's Lakkadpur-Khori village in the Aravalli Forest area.

A bench comprising Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari said: "We had passed an interim order in February 2020 since it was an encroachment of forest land, and it has to be vacated."

The bench noted that it will ask the Faridabad Municipal Corporation, why after its February order, the encroachments were not removed till June 2021.

The bench said as far as forest land was concerned there cannot be any compromise irrespective of policy, or whether the state wants to accommodate them it's up to them.

The bench queried counsel, representing the municipal corporation, why its order on removal of encroachments on forest lands has not been complied to till date? The counsel submitted that people



in the area were trying to encroach further. The bench reiterated that no concession can be granted in connection with encroachment on the forest land.

The top court was hearing a plea filed on behalf of residents of Khori Gaon Basti in Faridabad, Haryana, seeking an immediate stay on the proposed demolition of about 10,000 houses in the area.

The plea challenged the Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran

Rehabilitation Policy, which limits the cut off for rehabilitation to 2003.

The bench told senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, representing the petitioners, vacate the premise on your own so that corporation does not have to spend on evicting you, and if you want your petition to be considered, be a law-abiding citizen.

The bench noted "land grabbers can't take refuge of rule of law", and directed the state government to provide logistical support to evict the

people from forest land and clear all encroachments.

Gonsalves contended that there should be a reasonable cut-off date, and this is the worst cut-off date. The bench replied that in 2020, it had made it clear corporation must clear the forest land. "You should have vacated on your own", noted the bench.

Gonsalves said during Covid pandemic, people will be scattered, and insisted residents were poor people.

The bench insisted that people should vacate the forest land peacefully. "Sorry, we are saying sorry plainly.....there will be some other grabbing of the forest land. First land has to be free.. This is about forest land, and this is more important", the bench replied to the petitioners' counsel seeking stay on eviction.

The bench said the corporation should remove all encroachments on the forest land not later than six weeks and report compliance under the signature of chief secretary and secretary of Haryana Forest Department.

The top court has posted the matter for further hearing on July 27.

# SOPS ISSUED FOR VACCINATION OF PEOPLE GOING ABROAD TO STUDY/WORK



Following several requests for second dose of vaccines from people planning to travel abroad, the Centre on Monday issued guidelines to states and Union Territories to provide vaccines to such people who have completed 28 days of their first dose.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a statement, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said: "Taking note of the several representations received by the Ministry for allowing administration of second dose of Covishield for such persons who have only taken first dose of Covishield and are seeking to undertake international travel for edu-

cational purposes or employment opportunities or as part of India's contingent for Tokyo Olympic games, but whose planned travel dates fall prior to completion of the currently mandated minimum interval of 84 days from the date of first dose, the Ministry has written to states/UTs to facilitate vaccination of such persons." It said that with the receipt of several representations, the issue was dis-

cusSED in Empowered Group 5 (EG-5) and appropriate recommendations received in this context.

According to the ministry, with a view to providing full vaccination and facilitating international travel for these segments of people, states and Union Territories were asked to designate a competent authority in each district for according permission for such administration of second dose of Covishield.

## EAST INDIA LIKELY TO SEE RAINFALL FROM JUNE 10

New Delhi: Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall activity is very likely over most parts of east India and adjoining central India from June 10 under the influence of a low-pressure area forming over the north Bay of Bengal and the neighbourhood, the IMD said on Monday.

Isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is also very likely over Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, east Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh during June 8 to June 11, said the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) National Weather Forecasting Centre in its report.

It also said that southwest monsoon is likely to advance into most parts of Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand and some parts of Bihar, due to the low pressure area which is likely to form around June 11.

The weather office further predicted enhanced rainfall activity along the west coast.

Due to strengthening of southwesterly winds and other favourable meteorological conditions, the IMD said, fairly widespread to widespread rainfall activity is very likely over northeastern states during the next 4-5 days.

Isolated heavy rainfall was very likely over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura from Monday and in the coming days.

Under the influence of the offshore trough at mean sea level from north Maharashtra coast to north Kerala coast, the IMD predicted, isolated to fairly widespread rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm and lightning over parts of south peninsular India during next 4-5 days.

"Dust raising strong surface winds (30-40 kmph) very likely to prevail over plains of northwest India during June 8 and 10."

## Radha Mohan Singh meets UP gov, fuels speculation

Lucknow | Agencies

Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP) national vice president and Uttar Pradesh in-charge Radha Mohan Singh called on UP governor, Anandiben Patel, on Sunday, amidst intense speculation of a cabinet reshuffle in the Yogi Adityanath government.

Singh, however, described his visit as a 'courtesy call'. Speaking about his meeting with the governor, Singh told reporters, "I have known the UP governor since long and had not met her as something or other kept delaying my meeting. Finally, today I was able to meet her as courtesy demanded so especially since she is the governor of the same state of which I am the in-charge."

Before visiting the Raj Bhavan, Singh met the state BJP chief Swatantra Dev and Jal Shakti minister Mahendra Singh, once again triggering a buzz over the party strategy



ahead of the assembly elections next year.

Singh and the BJP's national general secretary (organization) B.L. Santhosh had met state leaders for three days last month after which both the leaders backed Yogi Adityanath, describing him as the most hardworking and efficient chief minister. When asked if discussions were held around cabinet reshuffle, Singh said there are some fertile minds "who keep doing their own farming". He backed the chief minister,

saying his government is very popular.

Radha Mohan Singh will be meeting UP assembly speaker Hriday Narain Dikshit later in the day. Meanwhile, Swatantra Dev said that seven vacancies in Yogi Adityanath government will be filled at the appropriate time. The Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections are scheduled to take place in 2022. In the 403 member Uttar Pradesh Assembly, among the major parties, BJP has 309 legislators, SP-49, BSP-18, and Congress-7.

## Govt decided to provide free vaccines after SC's rap: Congress

The Congress on Monday contended that the Narendra Modi government's decision to provide free vaccines to all above 18 years of age was taken after the Supreme Court pulled it up and questioned its vaccine policy.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Addressing a press conference here, Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said: "Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress President Sonia Gandhi, party leader Rahul Gandhi and several others have been writing to the government for providing free vaccines to every citizen of the country, but the government did not heed to its demands." "And the Narendra Modi government was brought into the dock by the Supreme Court and several other courts of the country. And today at least the government has accepted the demands of the Congress partially to vaccinate all above 18 years of age for free."

His remarks came after Prime Minister Modi, in a televised address to the nation, said that all Indians above 18 years of age will be administered free Covid-19 vaccine from June 21, and that the states will be provided these vaccine doses free of cost from the Central government. Launching an attack on the government, the Congress leader said that by not buying vaccines from May 2020 to January 2021, and not allowing free vaccines to all till June 7 this year, the government has committed a sin due to which lakhs of people lost their lives. Surjewala said that in the last six months the government has taken three different steps, and then the Supreme Court and several other courts of the country slammed the government over its "confused" vaccine policy.

## Mamata announces cancellation of Class X, XII board exams

Kolkata | Agencies

In a major announcement, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Monday that the Madhyamik (Class X) and Uchha Madhyamik (Class XII) board examinations will not be held this year in view of the Covid situation in the state.

The evaluation process for the students will be decided by the respective boards in consultation with the expert committee and the state education department, which will be



announced within seven days.

"We had formed an expert committee and majority of its members are of the view that given the pandemic situation, the students should not be allowed to go to schools to appear for the exams. We also took feedback from the public through emails. Out of the 34,000 respondents, 79 per cent are against holding the Class X board exams, while 83 per cent are opposed to conducting the Class XII board exams," Banerjee said.

## 'ASTHI VISARJAN' THROUGH SPEED POST NOW

Team Absolute | Varanasi

The postal department and a socio-religious platform, Om Divya Darshan, have come together to offer services for 'asthi visarjan' (immersion of ashes) in Ganga and 'shraddh' rituals in Varanasi, Prayagraj, Haridwar and Gaya.

This service is especially for those who could not perform the post-death rituals including Asthi Visarjan and 'shraddh' of their loved ones who died during the pandemic. Those who avail the new facility will also be able to view the rituals live.

Postmaster general of Varanasi region, Krishna Kumar Yadav, said: "Many lost their dear ones to Covid, but could not perform their last rites. Now, ashes can be sent through speed post to these holy cities by intimating the postal department."

He said that people will need to register themselves on the portal of Om Divya Darshan for 'asthi visarjan' or 'shraddh' ceremony on the portal. The ashes can be placed in a packet and sent by speed post to Varanasi, Prayagraj, Haridwar and Gaya.

The 'asthi' packet should



be neatly packed and 'Om Divya Darshan' inscribed in

bold along with details. The speed post charges will be

borne by the sender.

He said after the booking, the sender should update details, including speed post barcode number on the portal of Om Divya Darshan. Once the packet is received at post office, it will be delivered to the portal's address.

After that, empanelled priests shall perform the 'shraddh' ceremony on a pre-decided date and time slot, which would be webcast to family members. Thereafter, a bottle of Ganga water will be booked and delivered to family members of the deceased through a speed post.

## India reports over 28K mucormycosis cases till date: Govt

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A total of 28,252 cases of mucormycosis have been reported in India so far from 28 states in which 86 per cent have a history of Covid-19 infections and 62.3 per cent of diabetes, the Central government said on Monday. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said this while chairing the 28th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers on Covid-19 through a video-conference, here.

"So far, 28,252 cases have been reported from 28 states. Out of these, 86 per cent (24,370 cases) have a history of Covid-19 infection and 62.3 per cent (17,601) have a history of diabetes."

Maharashtra has report-



ed the maximum number of Mucormycosis cases (6,339) followed by Gujarat (5,486).

Till May 25 night, over 768 mucormycosis cases were being treated in Andhra Pradesh followed by Madhya Pradesh (752), Telangana (744), Uttar Pradesh (701), Central institutions (592), Rajasthan (492), Karnataka (481), Haryana (436), Tamil Nadu (236), Bihar (215), Punjab (141), Uttarakhand (124), Delhi (119), Chhattisgarh (103), Chandigarh (83), Kerala (36), Jharkhand (29), Odisha (15), Goa (10), Jammu and Kashmir (5), Himachal Pradesh (3), Puducherry (2) and Tripura (1). Mucormycosis is one of the rapidly spreading infections observed in patients recovering from Covid-19.

## Gangster involved in BSP leader's murder shot dead

Gorakhpur | Agencies

A dreaded gangster and accused in the murder of a BSP leader, who had been operating from Nepal, has been shot dead by the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) in an encounter.

Sharpshooter Pervez Ahmed had escaped to Nepal after killing BSP leader Jugaram Mehndi and the police had declared a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his arrest.

STF DSP Dharmesh Kumar Shahi told reporters that Pervez Ahmad was killed in an encounter at Sarharai Road in Pipiganj of Gorakhpur area on Sunday when he was seen on a motorcycle with one of his associates.

Ahmad, a resident of Makhdoomnagar in Ambekar Nagar district, was also a close aide of underworld don Khan Mubarak.

He operated from Nepal and smuggled fake currency notes in Uttar Pradesh districts and Nepal.



STF sources said that Ahmad had come to Gorakhpur from Nepal to meet someone and the Pipiganj police surrounded him at Chhualat area. The police asked them to surrender, but he opened fire at the

police team. Ahmad was killed in retaliatory firing, the police said. The police also recovered one 0.32 mm pistol, one 9mm pistol along with Rs 500 from his possession.



# POLLING BOOTHS IN DELHI TO BE TURNED INTO VAX CENTRES: KEJRIWAL

While the Delhi government's 'door-to-door' ration delivery scheme is a fresh political flashpoint between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Centre, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has decided to use his flagship scheme for vaccination drive in the national capital.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Addressing a digital press conference on Monday, Kejriwal announced to start mass vaccination campaign naming - 'Jahan Vote, Wahan Vaccination', adding that vaccination centres to be shifted to polling booths in each Assembly Constituency of Delhi.

officers (BLO), who along with a civil defence volunteer will visit residential colonies, will book a slot for vaccination and will appeal to the citizens of Delhi to pay a visit to where they vote for Covid jobs, Kejriwal told the press.

The four-week vaccination campaign will cover as many as 70 municipal wards every week, with an objective to administer the first

dose to all the citizens above 45 years and above.

However, as of now, people only aged above 45 will be covered under the scheme as Delhi government's vaccine stock for 18-44 age group is not available. "Door-to-door awareness drive will be launched soon in Delhi. The first phase of the campaign will start in 70 wards and we have set a target to

give the first dose of Covid vaccine to all citizens who are above 45 years of age. People of 18-44 age group will also be included in the scheme once the Centre provides vaccines for youth," Kejriwal said.

Delhi has around 280 municipal wards in all 70 assembly Constituencies.

Citing that people are not visiting Delhi government's vaccination centers, so it will be shifted to polling booths. The Delhi government is providing free vaccination at government-run schools, apart from hospitals and other healthcare centers. "People in the 45 plus age group are not coming to vaccination centres on their own. So, we will now visit their homes," Kejriwal stated. He further informed that out of 57 lakh people in the 45 plus age group, 27 lakh have been vaccinated with the first dose. Now they will be given anti-Covid vaccines at polling booths. This door-to-door vaccination campaign, however, seems a political move of Kejriwal eyeing Delhi Municipal Corporations (MCD) elections scheduled for next year.

# Delhi gets Covaxin stock for 18-44, to use it for 2nd dose

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi government has received 40,000 doses of Covaxin from the Centre for the 18-44 age group, but this will be administered only as the second dose, AAP lawmaker Atishi said on Monday.

Addressing a press conference, she said that new slots have opened up on CoWIN for 18-44 and those willing to get the second dose can register. "We are happy to tell you that 40,000 doses of Covaxin have been sent to us for 18-44 age group. We are going to administer only the second dose to people who had received the first dose of Covaxin in the month of May," Atishi said.

Vaccination for this segment in Delhi has been stopped for the last two weeks and people of the city had to go to cities like Meerut, Bulandshahr, and Agra to get their doses.

Presenting the latest vaccine bulletin, Atishi said:



"On June 6, 15,707 doses were administered. The number decreased because it was a Sunday and the vaccination drives happened only in private hospitals, as government hospitals, dispensaries, and centres were shut. With this, the total number of vaccinated individuals went up to 56,67,221, out of which 12.85 lakh have been vaccinated with both the doses."

The Arvind Kejriwal government will start vaccination drives at polling booths under its 'Jahan Vote, Wahan Vaccination' campaign launched on Monday. Chief Minister Kejriwal told the press that people are not turning up at vaccination centres to get their Covid jabs and therefore, the administration has decided to reach their doorstep to provide them vaccines.

# Delhi reports 231 new Covid cases, lowest since March 2

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The national capital on Monday reported 231 fresh cases of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, the lowest since March 2, officials said.

On March 2, Delhi had reported 217 new cases with daily positivity rate of 0.33 per cent.

The daily positivity rate dipped to 0.36 per cent, according to the health bulletin released on Monday.

Thirty-six more people succumbed to the disease in a day, pushing the death toll to 24,627.

The number of Covid patients in home isolation have reduced to below 2,000 (1,932), while 876 people



have recovered in the last 24 hours.

The tally of active Covid-19 cases stands at 5,208.

On Sunday, Delhi had recorded 34 fatalities, the lowest in around two months, and 381 cases.

On Saturday, the city had reported 60 fatalities and 414 new cases of Covid-19 with a positivity rate of 0.53 per cent. The day before, it had recorded 50 deaths and 523 new cases with a positivity rate of 0.68 per cent.

# Tech firms continue Covid relief work as cases subside

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Cloud software firm Salesforce on Monday announced \$1.1 million donation to United Way of Hyderabad, Concern India Foundation, Rise Against Hunger India and Youth for Seva, to support the Covid response across India.

These organisations are focused on procuring medical equipment and supplies, raising vaccine awareness, building community isolation centers and providing food security to the most vulnerable sections of the society.

Salesforce has also partnered with HSBC and the Khosla family to deliver medical supplies to different cities across the country.

In total, 6000+ oxygen concentrators and 10,000 pulse oximeters will be delivered to the critical locations through partnerships with the Red Cross and GiveIndia. Oxygen concentrators will also be made available to all the employees of



Salesforce in India and outside.

Through Salesforce's 'Pledge 1 per cent' campaign, its members and a global coalition of 43 companies have collectively contributed \$28 million to support the relief efforts focused on medical supplies, vaccine awareness and food security.

Salesforce employees in India and around the world have also joined forces to start a 24x7 volunteer helpline that provides employees and their families in India the latest crowdsourced information on hospital bed availability and how to access resources.

The information provided include Covid testing, doctor consultations, quarantine facilities, hospitalisation, medicine availability, and more, the company said.

Meanwhile, edtech company BYJU'S has received \$1 million in funding from the Breakthrough Global Foundation and DST Global to support the education of the kids affected due to Covid-19 in India.

# UNIQUE DISABILITY ID CARD ALSO ALLOWED FOR GETTING COVID SHOT

New Delhi:

With a view to facilitate access to vaccination for persons with disabilities, the Central government on Monday directed all states and Union Territories (UTs) to include the Unique Disability Identification (UDID) card in the list of prescribed photo identification documents for Covid-19 vaccination.



Union Health Ministry, in a letter, told states and the UTs to include the UDID card as a photo ID while registering on CoWIN 2.0. As per the guidance note for CoWIN 2.0 issued on March 2 this year, seven prescribed photo IDs were specified and prescribed for verification of beneficiary prior to their vaccination. In its letter, the Union Health Ministry stated that the UDID card, issued to persons with disability by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, has all the necessary features such as the name, year of birth, gender and photograph of the person, and meets the criteria for use of identification in Covid-19 vaccination. "The necessary provisions for same are being made and would be available in CoWIN shortly," it said.

The Health Ministry has also advised states and the UTs to widely publicise the use of UDID card as a permissible photo ID for accessing Covid vaccination. The move is another step taken by the Central government under its approach for ensuring smooth and effective Covid-19 vaccination drive which started on January 16.

# Two illegal arms supplier held in Gurugram

Team Absolute | Gurugram

The police in Gurugram have claimed to have arrested two arms smuggler and seized from them 11 pistols, 22 magazines and 15 live ammunition which were supposed to be supplied to local criminals and gang members.

"Kuldeep, also known as 'CM', 27 and Mukesh Kumar, 24 a resident of Muthra in Uttar Pradesh, were arrested from Maharaja Agrasen Bhawan, Sohna in Gurugram on Sunday following a tip-off. The duo had come from Uttar Pradesh to supply arms to his contacts and criminals in Gurugram," Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime), Preet Pal Sangwan said on Monday.

"The duo were carrying an illegal weapons consignment in one big black bag. The accused were on their motorcycle when they were nabbed by a team of crime branch unit Sector-17. They



culprits had brought the weapons from Uttar Pradesh for Rs 15-16 thousands per weapon and used to sell it in Rs 50-60 thousands to their potential customers," Sangwan said.

During interrogation, the culprits disclosed that earli-

er they had supplied weapons in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Hodal and Palwal. It was their first attempt to sell these illegal weapons in Gurugram but they were nabbed.

"Kuldeep is a physically challenged person and

used to work in a mobile shop whereas Mukesh works in a Faridabad based company," the police officer said.

A case under relevant sections of the IPC was registered against the culprits at Sohna city police station.

# HARYANA REDUCES COST OF RT-PCR TEST TO RS 450



Gurugram: The Haryana government on Monday reduced the rate for the Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) test at private laboratories from 499 to Rs 450 while the charge for home collection has been capped to Rs 650 from Rs 699, an official said.

An order in this regard was issued by Rajeev Arora, Additional Chief Secretary, department of health and family welfare, Haryana.

Deputy Commissioner Gurugram, Yash Garg has also issued an order to all the private hospitals and private laboratories of the district, warning that violation of these orders will be taken under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code. "In case of suspicion of corona infection the most reliable test among all tests is considered as RT-PCR test. Now the government has revised its maximum rates, no hospital or lab operator can charge more than that," Civil Surgeon Gurugram, Virender Yadav said.

Referring to other types of tests of Covid-19, Yadav said that there are 4 other tests related to this pandemic, whose rates are also determined by the government. The rates of CBNAAT (Rs 2,400), TrueNat (1,250), Rapid Antigen test (Rs 350) and an IgG Elisa-based test (Rs 250).



# Lancet raised eyebrows with highly political editorial that attacked Modi: Chellaney

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Strategic affairs author Brahma Chellaney has raised questions about medical journal Lancet's ties with PLA linked scientists and a recent editorial where it attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "presiding over a self-inflicted national catastrophe". In a tweet, Chellaney said, "The Lancet's ties to PLA-linked scientists may explain why early on it published letter clearing Wuhan lab of blame. It was instrumental in

discrediting hydroxychloroquine for Covid treatment by publishing a fake study, which it later retracted after destroying confidence in HCQ"

"More recently, The Lancet raised more eyebrows by publishing a highly political editorial that attacked Modi, including for "attempting to stifle criticism." It warned of "a staggering 1 million deaths" by Aug. 1, with Modi "presiding over a self-inflicted national catastrophe", the tweet said.

"The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that India will see a staggering 1 million

deaths from COVID-19 by Aug 1. If that outcome were to happen, Modi's Government would be responsible for presiding over a self-inflicted national catastrophe. India squandered its early successes in controlling COVID-19", Lancet had said in the editorial.

"Until April, the government's COVID-19 taskforce had not met in months. The consequences of that decision are clear before us, and India must now restructure its response while the crisis rages. The success of that effort will depend on the government owning up to its

mistakes, providing responsible leadership and transparency, and implementing a public health response that has science at its heart", Lancet said.

"Local governments have begun taking disease containment measures, but the federal government has an essential role in explaining to the public the necessity of masking, social distancing, halting mass gatherings, voluntary quarantine, and testing. Modi's actions in attempting to stifle criticism and open discussion during the crisis are inexcusable", Lancet said.

# GURUGRAM TO SOON LAUNCH PORTAL FOR COVID INFO

Gurugram: The residents of Gurugram will no longer have to visit different websites for information related to Covid-19. To overcome this problem, the district administration is preparing a website with all features including information on Covid tests, vaccination camp and information about dedicated Covid hospitals. The website is expected to be operational by the first week of July.

The administration officials said once the website is operational every Covid related information will be available with just a single click. Deputy Commissioner Gurugram Yash Garg informed that the website is being prepared for the convenience of the residents. They will get all the health related information on this single platform.

At present Covid cases, recovered patients and other information can be seen on the administration's 'covidGGN' portal. One has to go to the 'OneMap' app for the report. Apart from this, one has to visit the website of the state government for the state bulletin.



## Entire market to open from Thursday with the slogan 'Tika lagwao- Dukan Khulwao'

Shop owners, their workers to get vaccinated on Wednesday, Meeting with traders' organizations chaired by Medical Education Minister



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Making a new experiment, Medical Education Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang has fulfilled the demand of opening shops of traders' organizations. He has said that with the slogan 'Tika Lagwao-Dukan Khulwao' it will be mandatory for all the shopkeepers and their employees to get vaccinated. In view of this, 100 percent vaccination will be done on Wednesday by setting up a camp for the traders and their employees.

An important meeting chaired by Minister Sarang was held on Monday at the Smart City office with the representatives of the district administration and business organizations for opening the market. It was

decided in the meeting that the entire market would be opened in the capital Bhopal from Thursday, for which the shopkeepers would have to ensure 100 percent vaccination. Along with this, shops will be allowed to open only after ensuring compliance with Covid guidelines. Sarang said that granting permission to open the market on Saturday also is under consideration. Traders will have to ensure that their customers follow Covid guidelines. Announcements regarding social distancing, wearing masks, vaccination etc. will be made in the market.

Sarang said that Corona is not gone completely, so caution is very important. Markets will have to be opened while adhering to Covid guidelines. On Wednesday, free vaccination camps will be organized

by the government in all the markets of the new and old city. It will be the responsibility of the traders' organizations to ensure 100 percent vaccination of the traders and their employees. Only then will the market be allowed to open. Market opening and closing time will be as per Corona protocol. With the opening of the market, traders will have to make circles outside the shops. The CST team that will ensure adherence to guidelines will have to be supported, only then will Bhopal win over Corona. Everyone will have to keep in mind that there should not be a situation of lockdown again in Bhopal.

Collector Avinash Lavania, DIG Irshad Wali and representatives of business organizations of new and old city were present in the meeting.

## PLANT MORE SAPLINGS THAN THE TREES THAT ARE CUT IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: CM

Every effort should be made for conservation and promotion of forests, Chouhan holds meeting over Forest Department's approval for development projects

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that saplings should be planted many times more than the trees being cut in development projects in the state, so that there is no harm to the environment. The saplings should be protected and taken care of. Two lakh trees are estimated to be cut in the development project of Chhatrapur district. These should be replaced with 10 lakh saplings.

Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that CAMPA fund should be used for compensation, afforestation, plantation, maintenance, rehabilitation of degraded forests, wildlife habitat development, forest and wildlife management and forest infrastructure development etc.

Three crore 36 lakh saplings will be planted this year

This year three crore 36 lakh saplings are being planted in 33 thousand 686 hectare area in the state with CAMPA fund. Last year, two crore 86 lakh saplings were planted in 38 thousand 63 hectare area of the state.



WORK DONE IN MADHYA PRADESH WITH CAMPA FUND

Works done with CAMPA fund in Madhya Pradesh include preparation of plantation area in 33 thousand 687 hectares, tree plantation and maintenance in 69 thousand 057.57 hectares, rehabilitation of degraded forests in 61 thousand 94.51 hectares, wildlife habitat development in 12 thousand 577.20 hectares, housing area treatment in 7 thousand 362 hectare, establishment of bamboo forests in an area of 46 thousand hectare area and works of infrastructure development, nursery upgradation (11 research extension centers) and (06) depot upgradation works.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE INCREASED IN THE STATE

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that employment has been affected the most during the Corona period. During the second wave, Madhya Pradesh government deposited assistance amount in the accounts

of street vendors, Karmakar Mandal labourers and farmers. Madhya Pradesh government is making efforts to increase employment opportunities to the maximum. Chouhan said that self-employment schemes are being pro-

moted. Under the Urban and Rural Street Vendor Scheme, the government will continue to provide a loan of Rs 10 thousand without interest on its guarantee to the small traders. Chief Minister said that the process of recruitment in govern-

ment jobs has been started. The recruitment process of 22 thousand 670 teachers which was stopped in the state has been restarted. Recruitment of doctors, nursing staff and paramedical staff is being done in the Health department.

## OLD FEMALE TIGER DIED



Bhopal: A female elderly tiger 'Kamlesh' of Van Vihar National Park Zoo Bhopal has died on Sunday evening. Its age was about 13 years. This female tiger from Indore Zoo was brought to Van Vihar National Park on March 9, 2017. Director Van Vihar Ajay Kumar Yadav told that the old tiger was unwell for more than a fortnight. The tiger's health was monitored and treated by the doctors, but due to old age, the health could not improve. After conducting the post-mortem of the dead old tiger Kamlesh, the body was cremated in the presence of Van Vihar officials, doctors.

## 101 PSA oxygen plants will be set up in the state: CM Chouhan

Ensure adequate oxygen storage arrangements at all divisional headquarters

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Chouhan has said that the state has to be made completely self-sufficient in oxygen production. Along with the establishment of oxygen production units in the state, adequate storage arrangements should be ensured in all the divisional headquarters so that any emergency can be dealt with effectively. Production should be started within time-limit in all 101 PSA Oxygen Plants to be set up in the state. Efforts should be made to make maximum units functional by August 30. A capacity of 800 metric tonnes of oxygen storage is to be developed in the state. Chief Minister Chouhan said that he would review the progress being made in this direction every week.

PRODUCTION CAPACITY IS INCREASING CONTINUOUSLY

It was informed in the meeting that 120 metric tonne capacity air separa-



ration units are already operational in the state. Apart from this, information has been received from prominent hospitals in the private sector to develop a capacity of more than 50 MT. Proposals have been received to develop units of oxygen production of more than 60 metric tonnes in new private units.

101 PLANTS TO BE ESTABLISHED BY SEPTEMBER 30

It was informed in the meeting that orders have been issued to set up 101 PSA oxygen plants in health institutions of the state. Out of these 18 plants units have been delivered. Plants will be set up at all places by September 30. Eight plants will be

set up in medical colleges, 60 in district hospitals, 12 in civil hospitals and 19 in community health centres. Civil hospitals of Waraseoni, Sendhwa, Katju Hospital, Pandhurna, Kukshi, Itarsi, Sarangpur, Biaora, Nasrullaganj, Lahar, Maihar and Jaora will be benefited. Along with this, oxygen plants will also be established in community health centres of Budhni, Rahti, Ghoradongri, Suwasra, Sitamau, Shargarh, Narayangarh, Garoth, Ambah, Chachoda, Gohad, Hastinapur, Karera, Mohana, Pohri, Sevda, Kolaras and Chanderi. Oxygen plants will also be set up in one hospital each in Jabalpur and Indore.

## Corona guide-line to be followed by commuters- Parmar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The people coming and going in the city should be compulsorily followed by the Corona guide-line. These instructions were given by the Minister of State for School Education (Independent Charge) and General Administration Inder Singh Parmar in a meeting of the Crisis Management Group of Shajapur district today through video conferencing. Parmar said that public representatives and officials should visit the city regularly to bring awareness. Take the mike in hand and run a public awareness campaign and warn the



traders not to overcrowd the shops. The shopkeepers were roped outside their shops, Make balls and ask them to follow social distancing and make the shopkeepers and customers use masks compulsorily. If found without mask, challan action should be taken against the

shopkeeper. Also, take action on sitting three rides on the bike. Parmar also directed to remove the scattered ballast and mud etc. on the roads of the city for smooth traffic arrangement.

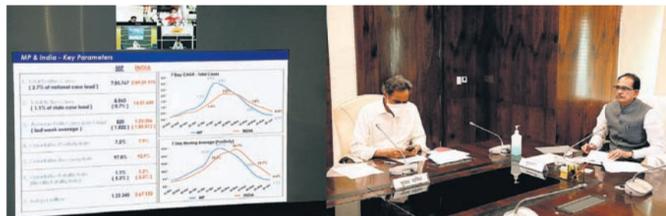
During the discussion, suggestions were given to keep all shops except chemist (medical) shops closed from 10 pm on Friday night to 6 am on Monday, i.e., to be completely closed on Saturday and Sunday. In the meeting, members of the crisis management group including Collector Dinesh Jain and public representatives joined online through video conferencing.

## Will have to learn from the reasons and circumstances of second wave: Chouhan

Decide the process of opening of markets at the local level, Chief Minister reviews the situation and arrangements of Corona

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the corona curfew will continue till June 15. The situation of corona infection is under control, but full vigilance and caution is required. Chief Minister Chouhan directed the ministers and officers in charge of the districts to stay in dialogue with the Crisis Management Committees and keep the committees active. Study the circumstances and reasons for the arrival of the first wave of Covid, its end and the second wave coming again. There is a need to learn from this study. We have to see what caused the second wave, on the basis of which we can stop the third wave. For this, it is necessary to adopt Covid friendly behaviour. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan was addressing the review meeting of Corona at Mantralaya. In the meeting, the minister in charge of the Corona Core Group, the officers in charge of the districts virtually attended. Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains and Additional Chief



Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman attended the meeting from Mantralaya.

STATE AT NUMBER 19

It was told in the review meeting that on the basis of number of active cases, the state has come at number 19 in the country. More people are getting healthy than new positive cases. On June 6, 735 people were found corona positive, while 1934 people recovered.

HOSPITALIZATION REDUCED

The improvement in the situation has resulted in a reduction in hospitalizations. Out of the total active cases, only 43 per-

cent of the people are getting hospitalized. Out of a total of 8860 active cases, 5059 people are in home isolation. While 837 persons are on normal beds, 1421 persons are on oxygen beds and 1543 patients are on ICU/HDU beds. The number of patients admitted under Ayushman Bharat scheme is also decreasing.

643 PATIENTS OF MUCOUS MYCOSIS WERE DISCHARGED

Information was given on the status of Mucous Mycosis that so far 643 patients out of total 1004 active cases have been discharged. 47 new cases were reported and 36 persons were discharged.

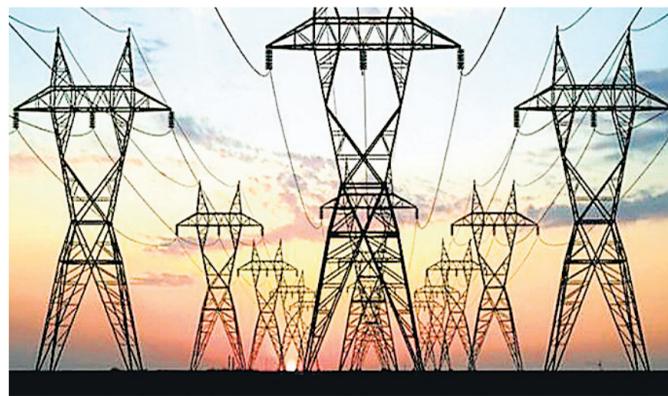
POSITIVITY RATE OF 46 DISTRICTS IS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT

Not a single district of the state is now in the Red Zone. The positivity rate of all the districts is less than 5 percent. The positivity rate of Bhopal, Indore, Ratlam, Betul, Jabalpur and Anuppur districts is between 1 and 5 percent. The number of new positive cases is 202 in Indore, 131 in Bhopal, 54 in Jabalpur, 15 in Ratlam, 12 in Betul and 7 in Anuppur. While the positivity of the remaining 46 districts is now less than one percent. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan

## PAINTING COMPETITION ORGANIZED BY INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL HUMAN MUSEUM

Bhopal: Painting competition is being organized by Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya on the occasion of World Environment Day. Children up to class XII can participate in this competition. Children will also have to give a declaration regarding their class in which class they are studying. Children have to draw or paint a doodle around the word 'IGRMS', titled 'Environmental Protection'. The participants have to use their imagination and innovative ideas with 'IGRMS' at the center. In the competition, the children have to make a drawing or painting in the size of a quarter of the drawing sheet. It can also be submitted by making it in digital medium. Its size should be 300 dpi when made in digital medium. Only one drawing can be submitted by a participant. The participants will have to scan the drawing made by them on the drawing sheet or take a clear photograph of it and e-mail it to igrmsacty@gmail.com by 10 PM on 9th June 2021. Along with this, the original painting will have to be deposited at the main gate number one of the museum by June 15, 2021 or will have to be sent through courier. In case of sending through courier, the last date will be June 25.

## ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST BUILDERS/ COLONIZERS OF UN-ELECTRIFIED COLONIES



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Before taking housing, shop in hundreds of colonies being developed by builders in the capital Bhopal and its adjoining areas, the public should note that do not have to live in the dark without electricity connection. It is worth mentioning that private builders are selling residential plots, houses, shops in more than 50 private colonies by taking temporary electricity connections for a limited time without getting electrical infrastructure work done in Bhopal city and its surrounding areas. Due to this, citizens taking plots, houses and shops are not getting quality electricity supply on one hand and on the other hand they have to use electricity at

higher rates applicable for temporary connections as compared to domestic rates. It has been clarified by the Central Zone Electricity Distribution Company that due to being an un-electrified colony, there is no provision to give statutory regular connection to the consumers. Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company has said that in the colonies being developed by private builders/colonizers in the capital Bhopal and adjoining areas, it is necessary to get the electricity infrastructure work done as per rules, so that the consumers residing there are given valid electricity connections as per rules and at prescribed rates. To supply quality electricity. The company has said that as per the Electricity Supply

Code, temporary electricity connection can be given only for a maximum period of 5 years. Legal action is being taken against such builders/colonizers by the Central Zone Electricity Distribution Company, who are using electricity and selling electricity by taking temporary connections without getting the electrical infrastructure work done. For this, the power company has written a letter to the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) requesting action. All field officers have been directed by the company to appeal to the common citizens and consumers to ensure that before buying plots, shops and houses in the colonies, whether the colony is electrified or not.



Monday's case count in the western state is 2,338 less than that of Sunday's, when 12,557 people tested positive for the viral disease.

MAHARASHTRA LOGS 10,219 NEW COVID CASES; 730 IN MUMBAI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Monday recorded 10,219 cases and 154 more deaths due to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), taking the case-load and death toll to 5,842,000 and 100,470 respectively, according to the state health department's bulletin. Over 21,000 people recovered on Monday and the cumulative recoveries have climbed to 5,564,348. Monday's case count in the western state is 2,338 less than that of Sunday's, when 12,557 people tested positive for the viral disease. The state capital



Mumbai also continued to see a downfall in its daily Covid-19 disease tally with 730 cases recorded on Monday, taking the case-load to 711,373. The toll has climbed to 14,999 after 28 people died on Monday.

Maharashtra has started easing Covid-19 related restrictions and has come up with a five-level unlock plan on the basis of positivity rate and occupancy of oxygen beds in cities and districts.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday dedicated All Terrain Vehicles for patrolling at Mumbai beaches to safeguard tourists and citizens, officials said here.

The state of the art ATVs can operate on land, sand, swamps or other terrain to render immediate help in case of emergencies and will be stationed initially around the beaches at Chowpatty, Juhu and others which attract hordes of locals and tourists daily.

Having a capacity of 570cc, the ATV is a fast vehicle manned by four security personnel and equipped with facilities like vehicle ropes or floating hooks to render assistance.

The 10 ATVs, donated by the Reliance Foundation, were flagged off by Thackeray in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Ministers Dilip Walse-Patil, Aditya Thackeray, and Aslam Sheikh, Mayor Kishori Pednekar, Director General of Police Sanjay Pandey, Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale, MP Arvind Sawant, MLA M.P. Lodha, RF's Shirin Kotwal and other officials. Similar ATVs are used for beach patrolling by the



police in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, while the Mumbai Police has other specialised vehicles for monitoring the security on the dozen-odd popular beaches dotting the west coast of the city.

Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar takes over as D-G Naval Operations

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar took charge as Director General Naval Operations on Monday, the Navy said. He has commanded the missile corvette INS Kora, the missile frigate INS Shivalik and the aircraft carrier INS Virat. He has held important staff appointments in Integrated Headquarters MoD (Navy) in the Directorate of Staff Requirements, Directorate of Personnel, and the Directorate of Net-Centric Operations.



Pune, he was commissioned into the Indian Navy in January 1987. He is a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Naval War

College, Karanja, and Naval Command College, Newport, Rhode Island, USA.

The Flag Officer is a specialist in Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and has served on frontline warships of the Navy as ASW Officer and later as the Executive Officer and Principal Warfare Officer of Guided Destroyer INS Mysore.

Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar is a recipient of the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal for distinguished service.

Special Bombay HC bench to hear Goa Cong disqualification case

Panaji | Agencies

A special division bench of the Bombay High Court bench in Goa, will now hear a petition challenging Goa legislative assembly Speaker Rajesh Patnekar's ruling in April this year rejecting the disqualification of 10 former Congress MLAs, after Justice M.S. Sonak recused himself from hearing the case.

"Justice Sonak recused in the matter stating that he had appeared for some of the respondents earlier. The matter now will have to be listed before a special division bench..." state Congress president Girish Chodankar said on Monday.

The matter had come up at a virtual hearing on Monday, during which senior advocate Kapil Sibal appeared on behalf of the Congress party, while Solicitor General of

India Tushar Mehta appeared for Patnekar.

On April 20 this year, the Goa Speaker had passed two orders rejecting two separate petitions filed against 12 current BJP MLAs -- ten former Congress MLAs and two former MLAs of the Maharashtra Gomantak Party - which had sought their disqualification for illegally merging their respective party units into the BJP.

In the petition filed before the High Court which has challenged the Speaker's ruling, Chodankar

has said that the merger by the 10 ex-Congress MLAs was not valid. The petition also states that a resolution purportedly passed on July 10, 2019 by the ten then Congress MLAs merging the breakaway Congress unit into the BJP at a meeting of the Goa Pradesh Congress Committee, was never passed and that the resolution was allegedly a forged document.



Dilip Kumar is stable, Don't believe in rumours: Saira Banu

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Saira Banu shared a social media post on Monday evening updating about her husband, ailing Bollywood legend Dilip Kumar's health. In her statement shared on Dilip Kumar's official Twitter account, Saira Banu assured netizens that the 98-year-old is stable and would be discharged soon.

Her statement reads: "Past few days my beloved husband, Yousuf Khan, has been unwell and recuperating at a hospital in Mumbai. Through this note, I want to thank all of you for keeping him in your prayers and for all the love and affection. My husband, my Kohinoor our Dilip Kumar Sahab's health is stable and doctors have assured me that he should be discharged soon."

Requesting netizens to not pay heed to rumours, the actress further wrote: "I urge you not to believe in rumours. While I ask you to pray for Sahab's health, I am praying that the almighty keep all of you safe and healthy during this pandemic." Dilip Kumar was admitted to a Mumbai hospital on Sunday after complaining of breathlessness. Around Monday noon, a twitter post on his official handle said the actor was on oxygen support and his condition was stable.

Message from Saira Banu. Past few days my beloved husband, Yousuf Khan, has been unwell and recuperating at a hospital in Mumbai. Through this note, I want to thank all of you for keeping him in your prayers and for all the love and affection. My husband, my Kohinoor, our Dilip Kumar Sahab's health is stable and doctors have assured me that he should be discharged soon. I urge you to not believe in rumours. While I ask you to pray for Sahab's health, I am praying that the Almighty keep all of you safe and healthy during this pandemic.

Fuel price rise for 2nd straight day takes it to new highs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Fuel price rise in the country continued on Monday with oil marketing companies (OMCs) increasing the pump rate of both petrol and diesel for the second consecutive day.

Accordingly, the retail prices of petrol and diesel increased by 28 paise and 27 paise per litre to Rs 95.31 and Rs 86.22 per litre respectively in Delhi on Monday.

In the city of Mumbai, where petrol prices crossed Rs 100 mark for the first time ever on May 29, the fuel price reached new high of Rs 101.53 per litre on Monday. Diesel price also increased in the city to reach Rs 93.57 a litre, the highest among metros.

Across the country as well petrol and diesel prices increased between 24-28 paise per litre on Monday but its retail prices varied depending on the level of local taxes in different states.

Mumbai is not the only city to have unique distinction of petrol breaching the Rs 100 per litre mark. Thane reached the mark few days back while few other cities in

Rajasthan (including Jaipur) Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, having the highest VAT levels on auto fuels in the country, have already been selling normal petrol for over Rs 100 a litre for past several days.

Ganganagar in Rajasthan has the highest level of petrol prices at Rs 106.29 a litre while diesel price there as well is closing on the century mark remaining at Rs 99.23 a litre. While Rajasthan in general has high retail prices of fuels due to high VAT rates, Sri Ganganagar, a small city in the state near the India-Pakistan border, has the most expensive auto fuel in the country due to higher freight it had pay to get fuel at stations.

Premium petrol price has already crossed the Rs 100 per litre mark in several parts of the country through increase in the retail rates in the month of January and February.

With Monday's price hike, fuel prices have now increased on 20 days and remained unchanged on 18 days since May 1. The 20 increases have taken up petrol prices by Rs 4.91 per litre in Delhi. Similarly, diesel has increased by Rs 5.50 per litre in the national capital.



1 KILLED, 5 INJURED IN BANDRA BUILDING COLLAPSE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 28-year-old youth was killed and five others injured when a building collapsed in the Kherwadi area of Bandra East on Monday, officials

said. At around 2.30 a.m., the five-storey structure Razzak Chawl crashed on an adjoining two-storey tenement, trapping many families as they slept. Locals rescued six from the crash debris while the Mumbai

Fire Brigade managed to save 11 more from the rubble.

The victim was identified as Riyaz Ahmad. The five injured have been rushed to nearby hospitals for treatment, as the search continues for more victims.

Goa caught in bind as Centre drops ivermectin from Covid drug list

Panaji | Agencies

The Goa government's recent initiative to distribute crores of rupees worth of ivermectin tablets as prophylaxis treatment for Covid-19 is now caught in a bind, with the central government dropping the anti-parasitic drug from its Covid management protocol.



Hours after the central Health ministry's Directorate General of Health Services circular dropping ivermectin among several other drugs from its list, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said that he had sent the circular to the state's Health Secretary Ravi Dhawan. "I have sent the circular to the Secretary Health. We will have to see," Sawant

told reporters at the state Secretariat.

In a major decision, the Goa government on May 10 had amended its Covid treatment protocol, recommending that all persons above the age of 18 should take five tablets of ivermectin, to prevent the viral load, which more of then than not causes excessive trauma and even death in Covid-19 positive patients.

The tablets would be distributed free of cost at all public health centres and through officials of the Women and Child Development as well as anganwadi workers, Health Minister Vishwaji Rane had said. The Congress had also alleged a scam of Rs 22.50 crore in the purchase of ivermectin tablets.

Pandemic Unlockdown now hinges on 'Oxygen availability'

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

In a unique move, the Maharashtra government has decided to make the availability of medical oxygen as the centre of its pandemic second wave Unlockdown policy, whereby easing of restrictions started after over two months from Monday, (today, June 07), a top official said.

The state has started the Unlock process dividing the districts and civic bodies into Levels 1,2,3,4,5, with the restrictions based on oxygen bed occupancy status and case positivity rate.

As per the latest Unlocking rules, the government has stressed on 'State Level Oxygen Trigger' as the liquefied medical oxygen is "the most critical resource" for the treatment of Covid-19, as the state's easing started on a 5-Level scale.

Presently, the state's LMO production capacity is 1,200 tonnes/day, but there are serious challenges in importing oxygen from other states as well as internally transporting it to remote areas in the state, noted Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte.

The government is now taking its measures to contain the



spread of the Coronavirus "much before the number of patients requiring oxygen-based treatment overwhelms the state's oxygen production capacity," he said.

Kunte pointed out that on an average of 1,000 patients require 20 tonnes of oxygen daily, hence the state can support 60,000 patients from its own LMO production of 1,200 tonnes daily.

This necessitated the need for the 'State Level Oxygen Trigger' whereby if the total patients on oxygen beds are over 45,000-50,000 irrespective of the trend of oxygen bed occupancy, then no other local parameters like Covid positivity rate would apply and the state shall be above Level 4.

Similarly, if the oxygen beds occupancy is between 35,000-

45,000, or higher but with a reducing trend, those areas shall be above Level 3.

On each Thursday, the Public Health Department will make a state-level audit of the same and announce the oxygen beds occupancy besides district level positivity rate and oxygen beds occupancy, Kunte said.

Thereafter, the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) will be empowered to take the necessary steps to further ease/tighten restrictions, which would be applicable from the following Monday.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced on Sunday that depending on the local situation, the local district Collectors were authorized to

tighten/ease the curbs in their respective areas.

He further hinted that in case of violations, overcrowding or improper implementation of the norms, the local authorities would be held directly responsible for the same.

Terming it as "a most innovative initiative" Covid-19 expert Dr. Pradeep V. Mahajan, who is Chairman of StemRx Biosciences Solutions Pvt. Ltd., said that it will effectively "strengthen the system beforehand to ensure it can handle any surge of cases if something goes wrong in the Unlockdown".

"Now, the government will know how many new cases may come up and what's the advance preparation to handle them by way of hospital beds, oxygen availability, the medical staff, etc., and it needs to be emulated elsewhere in the country," Mahajan told correspondent.

Currently, the SDMA and other district or municipal authorities are keeping close tabs on public behaviour, adherence to rules, the crowd patterns in both rural and urban areas, etc as the Unlocking process kicked off today across the state as per the 5-Level policy, with Mumbai falling in Level 3.

# ELLI AVRRAM FLAUNTS HER NUNCHUCKS SKILLS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Swedish-Greek actress Elli Avram hits aggro mode in her new Instagram post on

Monday. She posted a video clip where she is seen honing her skills with the nunchucks, a traditional martial arts weapon consisting of two sticks connected with a short chain or rope.

In the clip, Elli is dressed in a blue bralette paired with black yoga pants and she practices using the weapon in the gym.

"Hello Monday #bebadass #letsdothis#putyourheadon-myshoulder #lol#ElliAvram #yourstruly," she wrote as caption.

Nunchucks were memorably made popular way back in the eighties by the original martial arts superstar Bruce Lee in his films.

Elli's last Bollywood outing was last year's "Malang". Earlier this year she was seen in the dance number "Harfunnmaula" with Aamir Khan in the film "Koi Jaane Na".

# YAMI GAUTAM SHARES HER NEW BRIDE LOOK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress YamiGautam treated fans with her new bride look on social media on Monday. Yami posted a picture, where she is seen wearing a bright red saree with gold work, and gold jewellery.

She completed her look with red lipstick and vermilion (sindoor) on her head as she posed for the camera. For the caption, Yami chose a line from the song from the film "Mission Kashmir". The line "Rind posh maalgindanedraaye lo lo" she wrote, which translates to "Let's welcome the spring season". "Rind posh maalgindanedraaye lo lo Let's welcome the spring season," she captioned the picture.

Yami announced on June 4 that she has tied the knot with "Uri" director Aditya Dhar in a private ceremony. On the work front, Yami has "Dasvi", "A Thursday", and "Bhoot Police" coming up, besides a few yet-to-be announced ventures.



# Babil shows how he listens to 'bad screenplay'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Babil Khan, son of late actor Irrfan Khan, shows how he listens to bad screenplay and tries "to pretend", in a set of Instagram pictures he posted on Monday.

"Listening to bad screenplay and trying to pretend," he wrote alongside the images, where he is seen, gazing and smiling.

Actor Vijay Varma took to Babil's comment section and wrote: "Been there done that." Actress TillotamaShome called Babil "so brave".

Babil is all set to make his debut in Anushka Sharma's upcoming production titled "Qala". He has wrapped up his first shooting schedule. The film also stars "Bulbul" actress TriptiiDimri.



# NEEM AND ALOE VERA, YOUR SKIN CARE ESSENTIALS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Summers in India are getting hotter with each passing year and the monsoons are almost upon us in some ways. The heat causes our skin to become rough and tanned, the sweat and grime clogs pores, ultimately resulting in an uneven skin tone. Before you purchase your next 'expensive-so-must-be-great' product, it's time to check out the kitchen garden for some humble Neem and Aloe Vera.

Aloe vera contains 75 potentially active constituents: vitamins, enzymes, minerals, sugars, lignin, saponins, salicylic acids and amino acids. It contains vitamins A (beta-carotene), C and E, which are antioxidants. So basically, it packs in the power of the multiple serums and masks we use into one refreshing gel. Neem, especially in the oil

format contains fatty acids (EFA) and is high on the disinfection quotient.

A combination of the two can help with a myriad of skin issues that concern us during these months.

\* Clearing the skin, unclogging pores-- Neem helps with clearing our bacteria and microbes that cause acne and eruptions of the skin; the good acids in aloe vera help with skin regeneration and overall smoothness. When combined, these magic ingredients clear out pores, remove blackheads/whiteheads without drying out the skin or leaving flaky peels. Prolonged use leaves the skin brighter, even toned and smooth.

\* Acts as an anti-pollutant -- The antioxidant properties of Aloe Vera reverses effects of sun burns and tan. Neem helps remove the germ/grime buildup on the skin

caused by sweat and grime and is anti-inflammatory. Therefore gives lasting protection from environmental damage especially when used in everyday skin/hygiene products like in a body wash.

\* Rejuvenating -- The collagen from the EFA in the neem and the antioxidants in aloe vera help in restoring skin elasticity, improves skin texture and appearance, puts back vitality in skin and helps in plumping the skin to make it look vibrant.

\* Hydrating -- The most critical summer skin care need is always hydration without an oily finish. Our humble aloe vera and neem serves this function too! It moisturizes and freshens the skin especially when used pre-or during daily baths.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Television actress ShubhangiAtre, popular as Angoori in the sitcom "BhabijiGhar Par Hain", feels Covid-19 reminds us that it is high time to understand the importance of the environment.

"The Covid-19 emergence has unleashed some drastic consequences and revealed how disastrous the loss of the ecosystem can be. We cannot attain sustain-

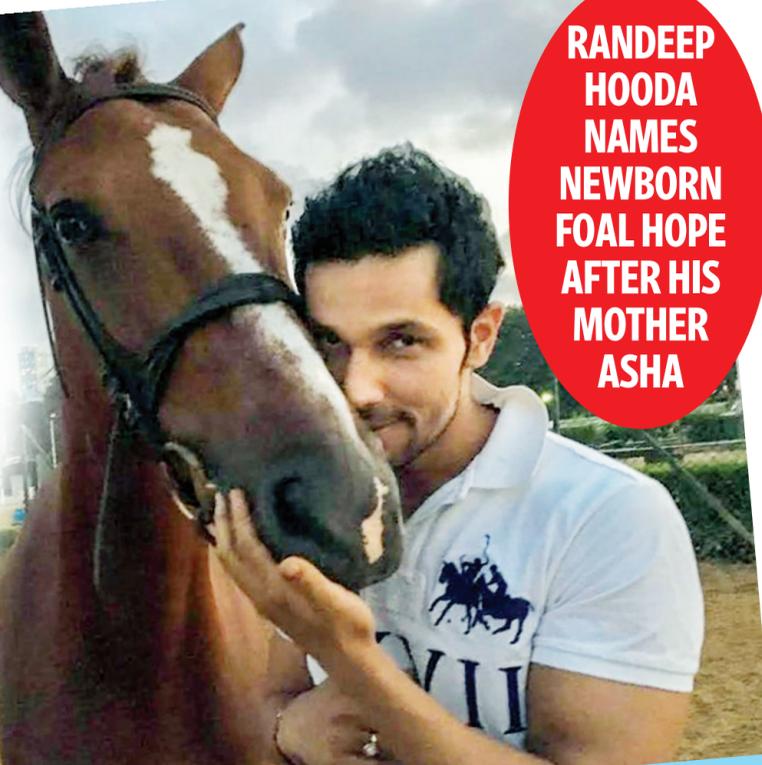
able development goals in the absence of ecosystem restoration," she said.

She added: "Preventing the biodiversity loss is the key to our survival post the pandemic. If we need the old normal days back then we must change ourselves to new normal beings, who not only keep their homes clean, but also the environment pollution free."

"The environment provides us with life-sustaining resources,

and it is essential to preserve and protect them. It is a home for many living species and maintains the balance in the ecosystem," said Shubhangi.

"There are many threats to the environment, such as deforestation and pollution, which affect not only us but all living beings around us. We have already created a lot of damage to nature, now it's high time to start being responsible," she added.



# RANDEEP HOODA NAMES NEWBORN FOAL HOPE AFTER HIS MOTHER ASHA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Randeep Hooda's mare Dream Girl has given birth to a foal, whom the actor has christened Hope. The actor says his mother's name is Asha and it means Hope in English, explaining his choice of the name. "I'm extremely thrilled with the arrival of the little one. As Dream Girl is in Bangalore for delivery and I couldn't be there, I can't wait to see her, hug her bring her and baby Hope back home when she can travel. My mother's name is Asha, and it means Hope in English and hence the name," Randeep said.

Randeep keeps sharing pictures and videos of his horses on his social media with his fans. A few months back, the actor shared a post on social media announcing that his horse Dream Girl, who won him the silver medal at 2019's National Equestrian Championship was expecting a baby in May 2021. On the work front, Randeep was recently seen in the Salman Khan-starrer "Radhe". He will next be seen in "Unfair N Lovely", a comic take on India's obsession with fair skin. The film is set against the backdrop of Haryana and casts him opposite Ileana D'Cruz for the first time.



Kubbra Sait hosts and curates an interesting Q and A session with prominent members of the community

# THE LGBTQIA COMMUNITY DESERVES OUR UNANIMOUS SUPPORT -KUBBRA SAIT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kubbra Sait is known to be vocal about the causes that she supports, right from women's rights to support for the LGBTQIA community. Putting her social media platform to optimal use, Kubbra has now curated a unique and interactive online session called LGBTQIA+ For Dummies wherein she will interview 4 prominent members from the community. Sait will ask them 2 questions namely: what is the most frequent question people ask you? What's the question that you wish people asked you.

The sessions went live on her social media on 5th June with the debut guest, the acclaimed and award-winning director, Onir, who is most recognised and lauded for his directorial movie, My Brother Nikhil amongst more work.

Speaking on why she initiated this interesting and need of the hour concept, Kubbra said that,

"The love we received from the community has always overwhelmed me and left me at a loss of words. The thought behind this concept was to normalise the fact that I'm a dummy when it comes to know more about the community. I often make mistakes with pronouns. I also unintentionally make mistakes by making a comment which is not correct or doesn't fit with the guidelines of the community." Adding to her comments, she highlights more on the facets of homophobia, something our society is still largely plagued with, she affirms that "I think homophobia is a state of mind. It is a conditioning, the films in the 1990s or even the early 2000s used to have a gay joke thrown in just for the sake of laughs, I don't think that was okay. We need to develop a tune in our minds against discrimination when it comes to how we talk to and about the queer community. I'll correct somebody if they don't fully understand the concept or make an initiative where I actually reach out to people. The community is so strong in their own skin and they're already doing enough. We just need to stand there and support them and be in solidarity with them at the least. It's their time to shine."

The sessions that have commenced with director Onir, will also see Durga Gawde, Luna and Sushant Divgikr in the month of June, which is also known as the Pride Month giving rise to the reason why Kubbra chose to host them now. All one can say is that Kudos to you Kubbra for initiating, curating and actioning this!





# LIAM PAYNE SPLITS FROM FIANCEE MAYA HENRY AND QUILTS BOOZE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Liam Payne has split from his fiancée Maya Henry - just 10 months after their engagement. The 27-year-old star dropped the bombshell news during a podcast appearance - also revealing he'd quit drinking. The One Direction singer referred to 21-year-old Maya as his "partner at the time of lockdown". The hunk also said on The Diary Of A CEO podcast that he needed to "work on himself"

- adding that he's been sober from alcohol for over a month. When asked if he'd been drinking in lockdown, the former One Direction star replied: "No, I've been sober just over a month now, I think it is." The star proposed to Maya with a £3million diamond ring in August 2020 after two years of dating. He and the Texan-born beauty were first linked in August 2018 - shortly after Liam split from Cheryl, who he shares four-year-old son Bear with.



# ASHLEY ROBERTS DOESN'T NEED A MAN TO SUPPORT HER

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Ashley Roberts says she does not need a man to financially support her or to take care of her. However, she insists that she is looking for love, as long as he loves her independence. "I wouldn't say it's a learning thing. It's just something new that would be nice to have. I've been really good at being driven and taking care of myself, and I would like for someone to come in and support me," said the singer, who is part of the band The Pussycat Dolls. "Not financially, and not that I need a man to take care of me, but I would like to share my life with someone whose company I enjoy and who supports me. But I'm really good on my own," she added. Roberts says she wants to experience the world with someone, reports femalefirst.co.uk. "So, this is the thing, it's finding someone to go on adventures with. I want to experience the world with someone that makes me laugh, but who also has the emotional intelligence to have an interesting conversation," she added. The 39-year-old singer tried to be "open" to other ways of dating. "I enjoy that chemistry and that connection. You can't beat that. I'm excited to get dressed up, feel cute, and get out there," she added.



Towie's Elliott Wright expecting second baby with wife Sadie

Los Angeles | Agencies

Elliott Wright is expecting his second baby with wife Sadie after dad Eddie's tragic death and his restaurant fire. It has been a difficult six months for the 40-year-old star, who poignantly said his late dad has "sent them an angel". "DAD SENT US AN ANGEL" Towie's Elliott Wright expecting second baby with wife Sadie after dad Eddie's tragic death and restaurant fire. He and 29-year-old Sadie announced their happy news in a new interview, where he shared: "I've probably had the worst year of my life and probably the worst I'm ever going to have. "At the start of this year I unfortunately lost my father, and then my restaurant burned down 11 days after I buried my dad." Elliott went on to OK! magazine: "I've always been a positive person and I'm trying to look at the positives. "I said to Sadie, "My dad sent us an angel", we're taking the positives out of that." Elliott's family faced heartache when his grandparents, uncle, and dad Eddie were all hospitalised with Covid. Tragically, Eddie lost his battle with the deadly virus in March, and was laid to rest on 15 April.



# JACQUELINE JOSSA REVEALS BODY 'TRANSFORMATION'

Lisbon | Agencies

Jacqueline Jossa showed her Instagram followers her body "transformation" - but not all was as it seems. The former EastEnders star, 28, prompted her followers to ask her anything after returning home from her holiday in Portugal. One fan simply told her that she is "body goals" following her incredible swimwear shoot. However, Jacqueline told her fans it's all about position and lighting as she compared two photos side-by-side. Looking phenomenal in both, Jac lifted a thumbs up while standing side-profile in the pool. In the same brown bikini, she faces the camera with her body illuminated by the sun. She captioned the pics, "It's really not it's all about lighting and how you hold yourself, and I love high waisted clothing always lol." Jacqueline opened up last week about feeling "nervous" about donning the swimsuits for the shoot.

# AMY WINEHOUSE MADE SECRET VISITS TO BARBARA WINDSOR TO PREPARE SCRIPTS TOGETHER

Los Angeles | Agencies

Winehouse loved making secret visits to -Barbara Windsor's house so the pair could rehearse lines from her EastEnders scripts, with the singer playing Peggy Mitchell. Despite being in a private -hospital having treatment for alcohol addiction, Amy would regularly sneak off to spend time with the late Carry On actress, who she saw as a "surrogate nan" after the death of her beloved grandmother Cynthia. In an exclusive interview ahead of the tenth anniversary of Amy's death at 27 from alcohol poisoning, her best friend Tyler James has revealed the highs and lows of their amazing friendship - and told how she once smoked heroin in Harrods and begged him to have kids with her. Former singer Tyler, who himself battled alcohol addiction and is now clean, has written the book My Amy about his close friendship with the troubled star. Remembering Amy's visits to the soap legend in 2010, he told The Sun: "When she met Barbara it was as though she became a new nan figure for her. "Amy was in and out of private hospitals being treated for addiction to alcohol but it was easy to sneak out and Barbara lived round the corner.



# ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Beyonce

# Vera Farmiga calls 'The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It' a 'colon cleanse'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Vera Farmiga says her latest release "The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It" is so scary that it will give the audience a "colon cleanse". The film is the new sequel in "The Conjuring" franchise that started in 2013, and sees Farmiga return as paranormal investigator Lorraine Warren. "It's a real colon cleanse, isn't it?" she says in an interview on "Smallzy's Celebrity Small Talk" to host Kent Small, according to contactmusic.com. Farmiga recently appeared with Patrick Wilson, her co-actor in the film, on Nova FM show, where he said although he had never been scared of anything while shooting the films, there were spooky things going on during the shoot of the first film. "There were some weird things on the first one but not really on anything else," Wilson claimed, adding that he was not scared of the Anabelle doll that plays a defining role in some of the films. "I've been in there - to the Warrens' house -- where their real Annabelle is and, like, we made ours. Ours is a prop, there's eight of them, they're like dolls! To me, they're just creepy dolls and there's no reason that those dolls should actually scare people," he said.

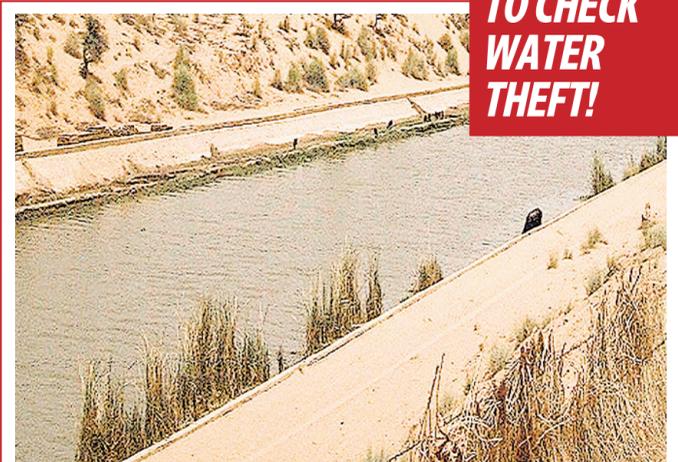




EDITOR'S SPECS

## Karnataka is in News

**L**ess than a week after a massive furore against Tech giant Google, e-commerce giant Amazon too got caught up in a controversy as its e-commerce arms in Canada, United Kingdom, Japan and Mexican sites were found selling a Kannada state flag (Yellow and Red) bikini along with the state emblem on Friday. This incident came to light when the Kannada Rakshna Vedike (KRV) Praveen Shetty camp protested and gave a call to boycott Amazon besides contemplating formally lodging a complaint with the state police. Shetty, who led the protest, told reporters that the Kannada state flag is the symbol of pride for seven crore Kannadigas and Amazon has made a huge mistake by hurting the sentiments of millions across the world with its insensitive act. A YouTuber MYNameis Madhu lashing out at the e-commerce giant said that this is the work of Amazon's country specific sites. "Amazon Canada has shocked the Kannadigas across the globe with their audacity of promoting sale of personalised Kannada flag coloured bikini. This has not just happened in Canada alone, they are selling the same product in the United Kingdom, Japan and Mexico too," he said. The YouTuber added that the same e-commerce giant had stoked controversy in January 2017 by offering a doormat with the Indian flag for sale. "Then our leader Sushma Swaraj, who was the external affairs minister at that time, had dealt with this giant with an iron hand," he said. Swaraj had sent out a strongly worded message to Amazon India representatives asking them to tender an apology for disrespecting the national symbol which hurt the sentiments of an entire country besides ordering Amazon to remove all the products insulting the national flag. Swaraj had taken strong objection to Amazon's Canada arm selling several offensive products like India flag underwear and panties, Indian emblem thongs and dog t-shirt, Indian flag shoes and flip flops and much more. Ironically, these items were sold by CafePress apparently co-founded by an India-origin individual, Maheesh Jain. On Thursday Google came under severe criticism after it produced a search result stating that Kannada was the ugliest language. After a backlash, Google had tendered an unconditional apology.



### Archana Sharma

This may sound bizarre but is true that a special police station is coming up in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan to prevent water theft. The Rajasthan government shall open this unique police station to prevent theft of irrigation water which flows through the Indira Gandhi canal running in the area. A staff of 60 policemen will be deputed to take immediate action on rampant water theft cases reported frequently in this area. The new police station coming up to check water theft will be headed by a CI and will have a staff of 5 sub-inspectors, 8 head constables and 40 constables, said Nohar MLA Amit Chachan, adding that "Influential and dominating farmers take water to their fields leaving other farmers to suffer." Officials confirmed that it is for the first time that a police station has been started to stop water theft in any state. Recently, 12 new police stations were sanctioned in the state and this unique police station is one amongst them. In the last four years, 74 cases of water theft were registered in Hanumangarh dis-

trict alone. Of these, 28 have been registered in Bhirani police station. Additional SP (Hanumangarh) Jassaram Bose says that the theft incidents are higher in Nohar and Bhadra Vidhansabha areas as there is no 'chakbandi'. "A few people from Haryana steal water leading to water crisis in the tail areas here. People caught stealing water are registered under IPC section 397," he said. Water theft cases have also been reported from Sriganaganagar and Hanumangarh districts. In such a situation, the number of such police stations will increase in future as the Canal Department also wants the police to be stationed at a certain distance from the canal. Police sources say that a long pipe is inserted into the canal and water is taken into the field, surreptitiously. Indira Gandhi canal is the longest canal of India which traverses through seven districts of Rajasthan including Barmer, Bikaner, Churu, Hanumangarh, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Sriganaganagar. Around 650 km long, it starts from Harike Barrage in Punjab and terminates in irrigation facilities at the Thar Desert in Rajasthan.

# Palestine, the old conflict in a new context

D.C. PATHAK

**T**he conflict between Hamas and Israel is fundamentally about the claim on what is the third most important religious site for Muslims after Mecca and Medina and the Temple Mount, the holiest place in Judaism -- both located in the same premises. It is on the mediation of Egypt that Hamas and Israel accepted a cease-fire -- even as the UNSC failed to bring about any agreement despite several meetings, on account of differences amongst the members on familiar political lines. The whole episode is yet another warning that a conflict on religion had the potential of precipitating a 'war'. US President Joe Biden, in a response aimed at promoting reconciliation, has promised financial aid for the rehabilitation of Palestinians, particularly in Gaza and firmly supported the idea of two states as the final solution of the longstanding problem in Palestine. He has reiterated the US decision to reopen its Consulate at Jerusalem. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has since met President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority at Jerusalem to assure him of the American stand that justice had to be meted out to Palestinians, emphasise the need for Palestinian unity and call for a peaceful political solution without recourse to acts of terrorism. The Biden Presidency is adopting an even-handed approach while retaining its special equation with Israel. India has also chipped in with its support for the two-state resolution but unlike in the past it does not show any pro-Palestine tint. That the ceasefire could at best be a fickle truce was manifest in the fresh trouble that blew out between Israel Police and Muslims gathered at the Mosque for Friday prayers on May21, hours after the agreement was made public.

The Palestine-Israel conflict signifies one of the oldest disputes rooted in religious claims and has seen many transactional phases in which the two sides received endorsement from different quarters. It is presently caught in an amalgamation of three strands -- clash of 'faiths', differing geopolitical alignments and the state of intra-Palestinian rivalry between Hamas and the PLO. The problem has touched a new milestone as the present paradigms point to a mix that was not seen before.

In the play of religion, the familiar tussle between the secular nationalism of PLO and the rising hold of Hamas -- an offspring of Muslim Brotherhood with its deep commitment to the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine -- had been a prime determinant of the developments there in the era of Cold War. Hasan al-Banna, the Islamic thinker who established Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria in 1928, was driven by the desire to replace the regimes there with an Islamic rule that would base itself on the puritanic message of Quran.

The Muslim Brotherhood disapproved of the idea of nationalism itself and when the

**The recent spell of violence lasting eleven days in which rockets fired on Israel from Hamas-controlled Gaza and the deadlier missile offensive of Israel that demolished entire buildings on the other side resulting in loss of some 250 civilian lives including children -- mostly Palestinians -- was the culmination of a simmering conflict in East Jerusalem around the Al Aqsa mosque sparked off by the action of Israel Police in not letting the local Muslims assemble at the mosque in course of Ramadan.**



Baathist leaders of Syria and Egypt, Hafez al-Assad and Nasser, aligned themselves with the Soviet camp it launched Jihad against them -- with direct and indirect endorsement of the US. Banna put forth the thesis that an Islamic state was a 'reformed' entity that could live in 'competition not conflict' with a Western democratic state. There had been since then a Western tilt towards Hamas at the cost of the PLO.

When Nasser hanged Sayyid Qutb, leader of the Brotherhood, Syed Ramadan, his deputy, had managed to get away and he was kept with Western help at an Islamic Centre at Geneva by Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi, an admirer of Banna who had earlier set up Jamaat-e-Islami at Lahore in 1941 with the same mission as of Brotherhood -- for the Indian subcontinent. More recently, when Muslim Brotherhood used the Egyptian revolution of 2011 against the Hosni Mubarak regime to install Mohammad Morsi as President, the US was happy.

His successor Gen. el Sisi restrained Brotherhood at home but remained on the right side of the US and had an outreach to both Hamas and Israel because of his advocacy of two-state solution in Palestine. He was able to mediate for the current cease-fire that elicited a lot of appreciation from President Biden too. The equation of the US-led West with Muslim Brotherhood that existed in the Cold War scaled down steadily because of the path of competitive extremism that the latter chose in parallel to Islamic radicals -- who were the sole target of the US-led West in the 'war on terror' resulting from 9/11 -- possibly because of the desire not to lose ground to the latter. Islamic radicals of Al Qaeda-Taliban combine and ISIS, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, carried the historical legacy of an inborn enmity towards the West.

There is consequently a three-way division in the Muslim world as of now -- Islamic radical forces with their acolytes spread across geographical boundaries, Saudi Arabia and UAE at the helm of OIC being totally in the US camp and an emerging group of Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia and Qatar which had no

problem with either radical Islam or Muslim Brotherhood and was not willing to toe the American line in geopolitics.

Anti US sentiment and hostility towards Israel led Iran to help Hamas with arms while the Russia-China combine, upholding the cause of Palestine right through the Cold War, extended support to PLO and President Abbas of Palestinian Authority. Russia did not, however, want any escalation and its foreign minister was in touch with US and UN to stop the conflict.

China had a similar position but was more explicit about Israel halting its aggression first. In an interesting turn of alignments, the Muslim world is getting 'politically' divided between pro-US countries led by Saudi Arabia-UAE axis who are opposed to radicalisation and others who were accommodative towards Islamic radicals and extremists and were not willing to toe the American line. The latter, significantly, are now on the right side of the China-Russia camp, politically.

President Biden views the world through the lens of human rights and is apparently not bothered so much with ideological and religious divides, which explains his line of moderation towards the 'threat' of radicalisation, silence on Pakistan -- a country viewed by the international community as a harbinger of Islamic militants -- and endorsement of the politically guided two-state solution in Palestine without relaxing on the staunch defence of Israel. What would not go unnoticed by India is Biden's refusal to call Islamic terrorists or to decry Pakistan's military alliance with China that had a strategic 'give and take' basis. As an upshot of these shifts, Hamas and PLO may hopefully be pushed towards political reconciliation and coexistence with Israel.

The world had been moving fast towards faith-based 'wars' and it is to be seen if the trend of a visible shift towards a 'political' bipolarity between US and China would remain free of the added aggravation of a religious conflict. Unfortunately, in our side of the globe the Sino-Pak alliance represents this dangerous mix and India has to formulate a

strategy that enables it to handle Islamic militants set upon India by Pakistan while the country negotiates its own position as an independent global power on the emerging world scene.

India has to maintain a close relationship with the US as the lead player of the democratic world, be an active part of the multilateral group like QUAD for the security of the Indo-Pacific against Chinese incursions, deal with the two hostile neighbours on the borders, keep up the policy of punishing Pakistan for any mischief in Kashmir or elsewhere and counter its manipulations in Afghanistan and finally use its own political and economic strength and influence to emerge as a major power on the global stage in general and in South Asia in particular.

A threat specific to India is from the unhindered plans of Pakistan, encouraged by Sino-Pak alliance -- to use radicals and extremists for its 'proxy war' against India. It got affiliates of Al Qaeda and ISIS to make their appearance in Kashmir and could draw in elements of Hamas, wedded to Jamaat-e-Islami's doctrine of Islamic state, to join the subversive forces there as well.

Internationally, Pakistan is gaining from the support of Turkey, Malaysia and Qatar on Indo-Pak issues including the Kashmir 'dispute' and the emerging scene in Afghanistan. The Biden administration continues to presume that Pakistan was still a useful ally because of its potential as an influencer with regard to Taliban -- that would ease the process of withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. Considering the level of violence Afghan Taliban has maintained even after the Doha agreement, it seems US is willing to pull out of Afghanistan anyway and leave the Ashraf Ghani government to sort matters out with the Taliban. Pakistan will like to secure the 'strategic depth' it was seeking in Afghanistan all through these years of conflict there. India has to handle the challenge in South Asia largely on its own.

(The writer is a former Director Intelligence Bureau)

## SPECIAL POLICE STATION IN RAJASTHAN TO CHECK WATER THEFT!



### Mohammed Shafeeq

**A** month after being dropped from the state Cabinet following allegations of land encroachment, Rajender on Friday announced his decision to quit the party and also resign as a member of the Legislative Assembly. Though Rajender's announcement to end his nearly two-decade-long association with the TRS and decision to join the saffron camp may not have any immediate impact on the ruling party, the development may encourage others unhappy with the leadership of Chandrasekhar Rao aka KCR to raise their voice. The development came at a time when Telangana entered the eighth year of its formation under KCR, whose leadership so far remains unchallenged.

"Exit of Eatala Rajender reiterated the fact that TRS is synonymous to KCR, and he is the sole proprietor of the party. The claims of multiple owners to the pink brigade can be put to rest. This development will re-establish supremacy of KCR, and this is an answer to all future dissidents in the party," said political analyst Palwai Raghavendra Reddy. While KCR and his party will defend the action against Rajender by citing his alleged acts of omission and commission, the bitter allegations by the former minister are likely to embarrass the TRS leadership and provide ammunition to the otherwise weakened opposition.

KCR, who revived the Telangana

## Can Rajender pose a challenge to KCR's leadership?

**The exit of former minister Eatala Rajender from the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) marked the end of a cold war between him and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and sparked a debate on the impact the former would have on the ruling party with his joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).**

movement in 2001 by floating the TRS, continues to have a vice-like grip over both the party and the government.

In fact, the action against Rajender, who has been his confidante since the formation of the party, is believed to be a well-calculated move to nip in the bud any possible rebellion or challenge to his authority.

While there had been reports of a fissure between KCR and Rajender for more than three years, the TRS chief took everyone by surprise by ordering a probe against him after a group of farmers from Medak district complained that Rajender grabbed their lands for a poultry unit owned by his family.

The action came when the state was in the grip of a Covid surge and Rajender as the health minister was busy holding meetings with officials to review the pandemic situation. The chief minister himself was recovering from Covid at his farmhouse. As the officials went on record that 66 acres of land was encroached, KCR stripped Rajender of his health portfolio on May 1 and the next day dropped him from the cabinet.

Rajender, a member of the Assembly from Huzurabad constituency in Karimnagar district, hit back at KCR and alleged that there is a conspiracy to defame him.

The former minister faced another probe as KCR formed a committee comprising four IAS officers to investigate encroachments and illegal transactions of Sri Sita Rama Swamy temple land at Devarayamjal village in Shamirpet near Hyderabad. Rajender and his supporters had allegedly encroached 1,521 acres in the village.

Eatala, one of the founding members of the TRS and a six-time MLA,

had entered KCR's bad books a couple of years ago when he took potshots at him on a few occasions.

"The minister's post is not anybody's pittance. We are the owners of TRS who have carried the party flag," Rajender had said at one party meeting.

On another occasion, he remarked that he reached his position not because of his caste but by his sheer hard work.

"I am not here because I am somebody's son," Eatala had remarked in what was believed to be an attack on KCR's son and minister K.T. Rama Rao.

Rajender said he quit the TRS because he did not want to continue as a slave. Alleging there is no freedom for ministers and MLAs to function, he said they are treated like slaves.

"In the past I resigned several times from the Assembly for the sake of self-respect of Telangana. I am resigning again but this time for my self-respect as I can't continue as a slave," he said.

Interestingly, Rajender also claimed that Finance Minister T. Harish Rao too faced humiliation.

Harish Rao is KCR's nephew and there have been reports of a chasm between the two ever since the TRS started projecting his son Rama Rao as his political successor.

"The TRS was born from the movement and is not run like a family party like Lalu Prasad's or Mayawati's parties. Telangana state was achieved with sacrifices of thousands of people and not with a handful of people," Rajender said while targeting KCR for promoting his son and daughter.

Political analysts say by raising the issue of self-respect and KCR promoting his family, Rajender may be encouraging other TRS leaders

unhappy with the leadership to speak out.

The counterattack by TRS on Rajender has been on expected lines.

"He is talking of self-respect after being dropped from the cabinet following allegations of land encroachment. How can he acquire assigned land of the poor which is illegal. He has more respect for his properties than the law of the land," said TRS legislator P. Rajeshwar Reddy.

Now that Rajender has decided to quit his Assembly seat and sail with the BJP, all eyes will be on Rajender's stronghold Huzurabad.

"By joining BJP, Eatala indicated that he needs a safe haven and support of the party in power in New Delhi. He did not show the might to start a party of his own or fight as an Independent to win the seat he currently represents," said political analyst Raghavendra Reddy.

The by-election in Huzurabad will be the fourth in the state in three years and will provide the BJP another chance to prove itself as an alternative to the TRS.

After wresting the Dubbak Assembly seat from the TRS and posting an impressive performance in the elections to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) late last year, the BJP suffered humiliation in recent elections to two graduates' constituencies of the Legislative Council and by-election to Nagarjuna Sagar Assembly seat. Analysts say the BJP may gain in the narrative by projecting itself as the real alternative to the TRS. With Eatala joining its ranks, the BJP will be hoping to garner more votes.

The TRS, which appears to have bounced back after the shock defeat in Dubbak, is likely to go the whole hog in Huzurabad to check both the BJP and Rajender.



brief

MEXICO VOTES IN HISTORIC MID-TERM ELECTIONS



Mexico City: Mexicans voted in the historic midterm elections, with tens of thousands of candidates vying to fill more than 20,000 public posts, according to authorities. On, about 90 million eligible voters cast their ballots at more than 161,000 polling stations throughout the country, reports Xinhua news agency. Electoral authorities inaugurated the elections on Sunday morning at the National Electoral Institute (INE), where the presiding counselor, Lorenzo Cordova, reported that everything was ready for the "historic elections" to be held in the country, saying that everything has been done to prevent "our democracy being another victim of the pandemic". In these elections, 15 governors will be elected, 500 federal deputies, 1,063 local deputies as well as 1,923 mayoral posts, among other positions.

MERKEL'S PARTY LEADS IN STATE ELECTION: EXIT POLL



Berlin: German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) led its rivals in the election in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, a big boost of morale for the conservatives ahead of the September polls. The CDU garnered 36 percent of the votes, up by 6.2 per cent compared to the last state election, while the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) got 22.5 per cent, Xinhua news agency quoted an exit poll by local broadcaster ARD as saying after the election on Sunday.

JORDANIAN MP EXPELLED OVER INSULTING KING



Amman: Jordan's Lower House of Parliament voted to expel MP Osama Ajarmeh over his "insulting statements" against King Abdullah II. The Lower House on Sunday held an emergency session following the riots that occurred in the expelled MP's hometown in Naour on Saturday, Xinhua news agency reported. Four police were injured during the riots as the rioters set several vehicles ablaze and fired live ammunition. During the session on Sunday, 108 out of the 119 MPs voted in favour of expelling Ajarmeh.

2 KILLED IN LEBANON CLASHES AMONG PALESTINIAN FACTIONS



Beirut: Two people were killed and several others injured in clashes among Palestinian factions in the Rashidieh camp in Lebanon. Violent clashes started on Sunday after members of the Fatah movement raided the house of a Palestinian national wanted over drug trafficking, Xinhua news agency reported. It added that a number of people were besieged in their houses in the vicinity of the ongoing clashes inside the second most populous Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. The Rashidieh camp, located on the coast five kilometres south of city of Tyre, houses some 34,584 refugees.

3 DEAD IN US GRADUATION PARTY SHOOTING



Miami: At least three people were killed and multiple others injured during a shooting at a graduation party in Miami-Dade County located in the US state of Florida, police said. A barrage of gunfire broke out in Kendall at around 2 a.m. on Sunday when two cars pulled up into a strip mall where a graduation party was underway at a hookah lounge restaurant, Xinhua news agency quoted Miami-Dade Police director Freddy Ramirez as saying at a news conference later in the day. Someone from inside one of the vehicles opened fire on people leaving the restaurant following the graduation party, he said. A woman and two men were killed while at least six others, three men and three women, were injured, according to the authorities.

36 KILLED IN PAKISTAN TRAIN COLLISION

Islamabad | Agencies

At least 36 people were killed and more than 50 others injured after two passenger trains collided on Monday in Pakistan's Sindh province, authorities said.

A Sir Syed Express Train, which was en route from Lahore to Karachi, collided head on with the Sargodha-bound Millat Express train near Dharki city in Ghotki district.

Divisional Transport Officer of Pakistan Railways in Sukkur division, Sajjad Wagho told Xinhua news agency that the Millat Express was standing still at the railway track after its some compartments were derailed due to a fault at the track, but the message of the track occupation could not reach the approaching the Sir Syed Express which finally hit it. District Police Officer Umar Tufail told the media that five coaches of the Sir Syed Express also derailed and turned turtle after the collision. Speaking to Geo News, Ghotki

Deputy Commissioner Usman Abdullah said that 13 to 14 coaches had derailed in the incident while six to eight were "completely destroyed". Local media quoting hospital official said that the death toll might increase further as several of the injured people were in critical condition. A passenger who was traveling in one of the trains told the media that some people were still trapped in the mangled compartments. Locals and rescue teams rushed to the site, pulled out the bodies and injured and shifted them to nearby hospitals.

The Pakistan Rangers, a paramilitary force, have also rushed to the site with their engineering machinery and were cutting the derailed compartments to search for bodies and the injured. Wagho said a relief train has also reached the nearby station to shift the injured people to hospitals and help other unhurt passengers to go to another railway station to continue their journey. A state of emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic has been imposed in hospitals in the district.



Global Covid-19 caseload tops 173.1 million

Washington | Agencies

The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 173.1 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.72 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Monday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 173,197,944 and 3,726,107, respectively. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 33,362,471 and 597,627, respectively, according to the CSSE. In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with



28,809,339 cases. The other worst countries with over 3 million cases are Brazil (16,947,062), France (5,774,361), Turkey (5,287,980), Russia (5,067,246), the UK (4,532,802), Italy (4,232,428), Argentina (3,955,439), Germany (3,708,782), Spain (3,697,981) and Colombia (3,571,067), the CSSE figures showed. In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 473,404 fatalities. Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (346,759), Mexico (228,754), the UK (128,173), Italy (126,523), Russia (121,171) and France (110,160).

QUEEN DELIGHTED AS PRINCE HARRY, MEGHAN ANNOUNCE BIRTH OF BABY GIRL



London: Britain's royal family has expressed delight over the news of the birth of Prince Harry and Meghan's daughter Lili. Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles and Camilla, and Prince William and Kate have been informed of the birth and are "delighted", a spokesperson for the Buckingham Palace said. Harry and Meghan's press secretary and foundation announced earlier on Sunday that the Duchess of Sussex gave birth to her second child, Lilibet 'Lili' Diana Mountbatten-Windsor, on Friday in California, DPA news agency reported.

Putin signs law to pull Russia out of Open Skies Treaty



Moscow | Agencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a law withdrawing Moscow from the Open Skies treaty, an arms control pact with the US that permitted unarmed surveillance flights over military facilities in both countries. The law went into effect upon publication by the Kremlin on Monday, reports dpa news agency. Putin himself had ordered the withdrawal from Open Skies. The military observation flights were seen as key to building confidence between Russia and the West after the Cold War. The decision to abandon the pact was mutual. The administration of former US president Donald

Trump announced a year ago that Washington would withdraw from Open Skies, alleging Russia had violated its terms. The incumbent Joe Biden administration decided in May to stick to that decision. Russia blamed the US for the end of the agreement. Last week, Russia's upper house of parliament voted to scrap the treaty. Putin's signature was the last legal act to withdraw from the deal, signed in Helsinki on March 24, 1992. It has been in force since 2002. The topic is now expected to be off the table at Putin's summit with Biden on June 16 in Geneva. Only one key arms control agreement remains between the US and Russia -- the New START nuclear disarmament treaty. Shortly before it was set to expire in February, Biden and Putin had agreed on an extension. The New START treaty limits the nuclear arsenals of both countries to 800 delivery systems and 1,550 ready-to-use nuclear warheads.

Harris lands in Guatemala after plane issue

Guatemala City | Agencies

US Vice President Kamala Harris has arrived in Guatemala City for her first foreign trip after taking office in January following a technical issue with her aircraft delayed the departure. Harris was welcomed by Foreign Affairs Pedro Brolo and US Ambassador to Guatemala William Popp at about 6.30 p.m., on Sunday, dpa news agency reported. Less than half an hour after taking off from a military airfield near Washington, the government plane Harris was travelling on had to return to the airport in order to be changed out, according to spokeswoman Simone Sanders. "It is a technical issue. There are no major safety concerns," she said.

Sanders later told reporters that the Air Force Two crew noticed an issue with the landing gear, which was not storing as it should, adding that the plane turned

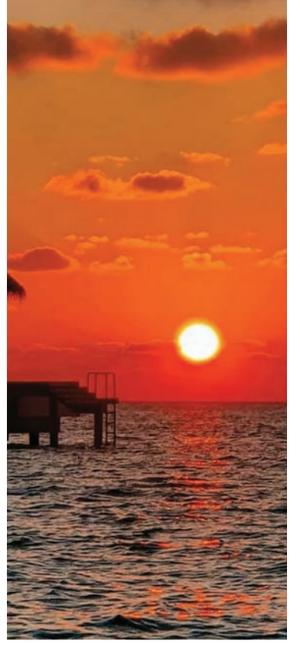


around "out of an abundance of caution". Harris' official visit to Guatemala and Mexico on Monday and Tuesday will focus on migration and economic cooperation. President Joe Biden has tasked Harris with taking the lead on curbing migration to the US.

Maldives Tourism Minister confident of recovering losses in a yr

Male | Agencies

Maldives Minister of Tourism Abdulla Mausoom has said that the heavy losses sustained by the country's tourism sector due to the Covid-19 pandemic can be recovered by the end of the year, local media reported on Monday. Speaking to a local TV channel, Mausoom said: "We can boost our numbers, we can increase the number of bed nights. Thankfully, our rates are good. Data from Maldives' Ministry of Tourism showed that 460,924 tourists visited the country in 2021, compared to 555,494 in 2020 and 1.7 million in 2019, reports Xinhua news agency. The government aims to achieve 1.5 million tourist arrivals by the end of this year. However, Mausoom said that the government's expectation of over 3,000 arrivals per day has been dampened by the third wave of the pandemic. He said that the current arrival rate is half of what was expected. Mausoom said that the UK's red-listing of the Maldives as a travel destination, and the Male government's decision to suspend issuing visas to countries in South Asia, have contributed to a stagnation of arrivals.



COLOMBIA TO REFORM DEFENCE, POLICE SYSTEMS AMID PROTESTS

Bogota: Colombian President Ivan Duque announced the modernisation of the Defence Ministry and a comprehensive reform of the National Police amid the violent nationwide protests. The measures include very strict regulations to limit the commercialisation, carrying and use of weapons, as well as a new system for receiving, processing, and monitoring complaints and reports, Xinhua news agency quoted Duque as saying on Sunday. The President also emphasised the professionalisation of and supervision for the police with the creation of a police university as well as the acceleration of the use of body cameras when officers are on patrol. Duque said that this transformation includes an emphasis on the protection of and respect for the rights of Colombian citizens. The reform has been presented in the midst of a national strike which began on April 28 due to a proposed tax hike that was later rescinded. At least 59 people have died in connection with the demonstrations, according to the national ombudsman's office. Opposition to a health reform, which has also been scrapped, and advocacy for the fragile peace process were then some of the new issues that brought people out onto the streets.

119 people killed in 2 days in Afghanistan

Kabul | Agencies

As the level of violence remains high in Afghanistan despite efforts to jumpstart the stalled peace process, a total of 119 people were killed in clashes and security incident in just two days, June 3-4, an official said here. The official, on the condition of anonymity, said that 196 security personnel were injured also during this period, TOLO News reported on Sunday.

According to the official, 54 people were killed on June 3, while there were 65 casualties the next day. Of the 119 victims, 102 were members of the security forces. There were also 17 civilian casualties in the two days, while 55 were wounded, the official added.



Meanwhile, the Defence Ministry figures revealed that 183 Taliban were killed in

Afghan defensive operations in eight provinces on June 3, and 181 militants were reports

dead across six provinces on June 4. The Taliban has however, rejected the figures. Afghan civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts as more than 2,950 civilians were killed and over 5,540 others wounded due to fighting in the country last year, according to the country's independent human rights commission. The agency has attributed 53 per cent of civilian casualties to the Taliban and 15 per cent to pro-government security forces over the period, while 25 per cent were caused by unknown perpetrators and the rest 7 per cent were blamed on other reasons. Out of total casualties, 330 women and 565 children were killed in separate attacks last year, according to figures of the independent human rights commission.



## ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS: CHHETRI NETS 2-0 IN INDIA'S WIN OVER BANGLADESH

Doha | Agencies

India captain Sunil Chhetri on Monday struck twice in the closing minutes to hand India a 2-0 win over Bangladesh to revive his team's prospects of advancing from Group E of the FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers. The first-half had ended goalless. Chhetri scored in the 79th and 90th minutes to give India their first win in Group E and three points. The win gave a boost to India's hopes of sealing a place in the third round. India are only fighting to qualify for the Asian Cup, as they are out of contention for the 2022 World Cup. India now have six points from seven matches and are placed third in the group. They have lost three matches and three games have ended in draws. Qatar continue to



lead Group E with 19 points from seven matches, thanks to their six wins. Oman have 12 points from five matches and are second. Afghanistan are placed fourth, below India, with five points from six matches and Bangladesh are fifth in the five-team group with two points from seven matches. Bangladesh are the only team to have not won a match. India next play Afghanistan in their last group league match on June 15 at the same venue, Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium. Chhetri

broke the deadlock when he headed in Ashique Kurunian's cross from the left. He then sealed the result by curling in a shot from long range in added time. Coach Igor Stimac made three changes from the Indian side that lost to Qatar in the last match. India looked more threatening at the start against a Bangla side who were playing with Rakib Hossain as a lone striker. India should have done better in the seventh minute when Bipin Singh wasted an

opportunity off Brandon Fernandes' corner. Bangladesh, who came from behind to claim a 1-1 draw against Afghanistan on Thursday, got into the action a minute later after M. Rahmat Mia's long throw-in was flicked on by Hossain inside the danger area but under pressure Tariq Kazi couldn't control the ball. India wasted a golden opportunity to get ahead in the 14th minute when Fernandes sent an intelligent pass to Manvir Singh down the left flank but the forward gave the ball away cheaply in the final third. Bangladesh goalkeeper Anisur Rahman was called into action three minutes later when he made a save following Suresh Singh's close range effort after a swift attacking move which was started by Chinglensana Singh down the centre.

## KOHLI, WILLIAMSON SET TO RENEW CAPTAINCY RIVALRY IN WTC FINAL

London | Agencies

When India captain Virat Kohli and New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson take field for the World Test Championship (WTC) final on June 18, they will renew a captaincy rivalry that goes back 13 years, to the 2008 under-19 World Cup semi-final. Kohli came out winner in that duel, and India eventually won the World Cup by beating South Africa in the final. Since then, however, Williamson has grown in experience and earned accolades for his leadership whereas Kohli has earned honours as well as brickbats at the helm.

The last time the two had faced off in an ICC tournament was in the 50-over 2019 World Cup semi-final. Williamson trumped his India rival as he used his bowlers well to defend a 239-run total. Former Australia speedster Brett Lee has said in an interview with the International Cricket Council (ICC) that the WTC final would be a clash of two styles of captaincy. He said that while Williamson is calm, Kohli is all aggression. On Monday, former India skipper Mohammed Azharuddin echoed Lee's views. "I don't like to compare captains



or players. Both Kohli and Williamson are different and have been successful. Both have done well for their countries," Azharuddin told IANS on Monday. "Williamson has done well for himself and his team with whatever resources he has had. He has got a lot of class. He is magnanimous. Even when he loses the game, he is always generous like we saw in the 2019 World Cup final loss to England. Any other captain would have lost cool and lashed out but he stayed

calm and accepted the defeat," he said. New Zealand lost to England in a thriller during the World Cup final. With even the Super Over ending as a tie, England won the final and trophy on boundary count. England had taken the game to Super Over, thanks to a piece of luck when a throw from Martin Guptill in the last over hit Ben Stokes and was deflected to the boundary for four. Williamson, however, stayed calm and did not lash out in anger after the final.

## Naomi pulls out of Berlin event, question mark over Wimbledon



Berlin | Agencies

World No. 2 Naomi Osaka, who controversially exited the French Open tennis citing mental health issues, has also withdrawn from the Berlin WTA grass court tournament beginning June 14. Tournament organisers said on Monday

that Naomi, who had withdrawn exactly a week ago from Roland Garros, had informed them that she would not start in the Berlin tournament.

The Japanese, winner of three Grand Slam titles, has not made it clear when she would like to get back on court. With the Wimbledon set to commence on June 28 and the Tokyo Olympics beginning on July 23, the Berlin tournament would have been the ideal preparation for the grass-court major and the Olympics.

Naomi, 23, had withdrawn from the French Open last Monday over her stand to speak to the media due to her mental health. Naomi had defeated Romania's Patricia Maria Tig on May 30, but did not turn up to face the media. This prompted the organisers to fine her \$15,000 and be warned that she faced expulsion from Grand Slam tournaments if she continued to do so.

On May 31, she posted a statement on Twitter, saying that she had "suffered long bouts of depression since the US Open in 2018" and that "it was better to exercise self-care and skip the press conferences" because she gets "huge waves of anxiety before". The world No. 2 headed home to Los Angeles after her French Open withdrawal.

## ENGLAND BOARD SUSPENDS PACER ROBINSON FROM INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

London | Agencies

England pace bowler Ollie Robinson, whose Test debut last week was marked by controversy over his eight-year-old racist and sexist tweets, was suspended from all international cricket by England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). "England and Sussex bowler Ollie Robinson has been suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation following historic tweets he posted in 2012 and 2013," said a statement from ECB. "He will not be available for selection for the LV= Insurance second Test against New Zealand starting at Edgbaston on Thursday 10 June. Robinson will leave the England camp immediately and return to his county," added the statement. The 27-year-old Robinson, who plays for Sussex, took seven wickets against New Zealand at Lord's in the first Test that ended in a draw on Sunday. Robinson also scored 42. England skipper Joe Root said after the match. "From a performance point of view, on the field, he has had an exceptional debut. With regards to the stuff that has happened off the field, it is not acceptable within our game -- we all know that. Root added, "He has dealt with a huge array of emotions over this last week and he has got to learn some hard lessons." Robinson had last week apologised for his tweets between 2012 and 2014 that led to controversy.



## ENGLAND FINED 40% OF MATCH FEES FOR SLOW OVER-RATE VS NEW ZEALAND

London | Agencies

The England cricket team have been fined 40 per cent of their match fees for slow over-rate against New Zealand in the first match of the two-Test series at Lord's that ended in a draw on Sunday. International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee, Chris Broad, found Joe Root's side two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration. "In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined 20 per cent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time," the ICC said in a statement. "Root pleaded guilty to



the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. On-field umpires Michael Gough and Richard Kettleborough, third umpire Richard Illingworth and fourth umpire Mike Burns levelled the charge," ICC added. Earlier, the home side,

chasing 273 runs in 75 overs for a win on the final day on Sunday could manage 170 for three wickets in their second innings. Dominic Sibley with 60, scored in over five hours, and Ollie Pope (20 in 66 minutes) remained unbeaten at stumps. Root made 40 in 109 minutes.

## FIRST ENGLAND-NEW ZEALAND TEST ENDS IN A DRAW

London | Agencies

All the efforts of the New Zealand bowlers to dismiss the England batsmen came to nought as the home team preferred to play out time while chasing 273 runs in 75 overs for a win, and it resulted in the first Test ending in a draw here on Sunday.

England were 170 for three wickets in their second innings in 70 overs on the fifth and final day when the match ended at Lord's. Earlier, they were 56 for two wickets at tea, and they probably decided to hang out there and kill time.

Dominic Sibley with 60 (207 balls, 3x4s), scored in over five hours, and Ollie Pope (20 in 66 minutes, 41 balls, 3x4s) remained unbeaten at stumps. Captain Joe Root made 40 in 109 minutes. For New Zealand, Neil Wagner bagged two wickets.

Devon Conway, who scored a superb double century on his Test debut, was declared the man of the Match.

Earlier, chasing the target, England were reduced to 56 for two wickets in 32



overs at the tea, and still needed 217 runs in the final session of play. At the break, Root was batting without a run and Sibley was on 19.

Earlier in the day New Zealand declared their second innings at 169 for six wickets, and asked England to score

an average of 3.64 runs per over for victory. Tom Latham was the top scorer of New Zealand's second innings with 36 while Ross Taylor scored 33. For England, Ollie Robinson was the top wicket taker with three for 26.

## Coco says Q-F entry means a lot to her

Paris | Agencies

American teenager Coco Gauff was relieved after securing a spot in the French Open quarterfinals here on Monday.

The 17-year-old player came up with an inspired display to beat Ons Jabeur of Tunisia 6-3, 6-1, to reach her maiden Grand Slam quarterfinal.

"It means a lot to me. I have lost in the fourth round a couple of times so it feels good to get over that hurdle. Today I played probably my best match so far in the tournament," Coco said at her post-match press conference. Coco has never gone beyond the fourth round in any of the Grand Slams so

far. Her best have been fourth-round entries in 2019 (Wimbledon) and Australian Open (2020). "I feel like all my matches have been -- I don't know how to say it, but straightforward wins, like no crazy three sets and stuff," Coco said, reflecting on her previous encounters here this year. "As we know, I have had a lot of those in the past," Coco said she feels like this has been the most consistent tennis she has played at this level. "I'm definitely still learning (on clay). I'm going to always still be learning no matter how many matches I win. But for me, it's just being patient. And shot selection I think is really important on clay because you're not going to have too many outright winners on clay just because it's slower and gives more time for your opponent to get the ball," she said. "I think clay is probably the surface you can use the whole court the most. I think it's important that I continue to mix up how I play so my opponents don't really know what to expect."

## WOMEN RECURVE ARCHERY TEAM REACHES PARIS, EYES SPOT IN OLYMPICS

New Delhi: A three-member Indian women's recurve archery team, including Olympian Deepika Kumari, reached Paris on Monday to compete in World Olympic qualification tournament beginning June 17.

"Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari have been training hard. We hope they perform well in the last Olympic qualification tournament in Paris to win a team quota place," Pramod Chandurkar, secretary general of the Archery Association of India (AAI), told reporter. Deepika had qualified for the Tokyo Olympic Games in an individual event in November 2019, but the Indian team was off target. In Paris, the top three teams will be allotted quota places for the Olympics. According to Chandurkar, Indian archers will undergo mandatory 10-day quarantine in Paris and get acclimatised for the main event. "We had discussed the issue of training during quarantine with World Archery. We hope the world governing body and the local organising committee will find a solution," added the AAI official. Chandurkar said the compound archery teams would leave for Paris this week.



## Indian men strong contenders for Oly hockey podium finish: Khandker

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian men's hockey team is a strong contender for a podium finish at the Tokyo Olympic Games, former India forward Tushar Khandker said on Monday.

"Definitely, I am excited to watch the Olympics. I feel the way the Indian men's team is doing right now, they are strong contenders for the podium," said the 36-year-old player who was part of the 2012 London Olympics team that finished 12th.

Khandker said that experience had taught players important lessons on what "small mistakes can do" in big-ticket events such as the Olympics.



"We have learnt from each of the Olympic Games. While we didn't qualify in 2008, we finished 12th in London and

raised the level and they have developed a great sense of self-belief that they can do well against top teams. After the slump in 2008-09, it has taken us 10-11 years to climb to this level," said the player who was part of the team that bagged bronze at the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games.

Khandker credited India's growth at the world level to professionalism of the team.

"To make a good team, we need good planning. Over the past 10-12 years, a lot of emphasis has been on scientific approach. Hockey India are not only looking at producing quality players, they are also working on developing quality coaches," he said.

"Likewise, I am sure players who were part of the Rio Olympics will caution the team about the errors they need to avoid in Tokyo."

Khandker, who was the men's team assistant coach between 2014 and 2016, feels the current squad has raised the level in every aspect.

"I feel the current team has

# 'INCREASE IN FOOD, CORE CPI ELEMENTS MAY PUSH UP MAY INFLATION TO 5.7%

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

A widespread increase in food and core CPI components should push CPI inflation up to 5.7 per cent in May, Barclays said on Monday. In a research report focused on India, the investment banker said that after moderating for two quarters and moving closer to RBI's target, the CPI inflation will likely accelerate in the coming months.

"We expect it to rise to 5.7 per cent in May from 4.3 per cent in April. The 140bp increase in headline CPI will likely be driven by the combination of a low base effects and a broad-based sequential increase in prices across major CPI components," Barclays said. The investment banker's assertions on inflation is also based on seasonal factors where in summer months food prices tend to rise sequentially, and in May prices increased across the board for food components.

While the release of buffer stocks could keep price rises for cereals in check, prices of proteins and edi-

ble oils are showing sustained upward momentum. Seasonal factors play a part, pushing up prices of perishables such as vegetables and fruits, and modest gains are likely in prices for milk, eggs and meat, as of transportation and storage costs increase amid rising motor fuel prices will add to handling and freight costs, Barclays said.

After rising for most of 2021, fuel inflation is now expected to inch closer to double digits, and likely stay at elevated levels for the coming few months. Prices of motor fuels are also likely to rise, as retail prices rose following the end of regional election cycle and on the surge in global energy prices. Although the RBI has urged the central and state governments to cut taxes, Barclays said that it sees this move constraining the government's fiscal position, and also only likely to delay inflation.

Also, the core inflation is expected to pick up and rise to 5.9 per cent in May, a 31-month high and up from 5.2 per cent in April. The report said that inflation in the clothing and housing segments will remain high, and while there would be sustained

momentum in education and medical costs.

We expect the rise in gold prices to add

further momentum to core inflation. Inflation could also be exacerbated by disruptions resulting as a number of states imposed movement restrictions through May to control the Covid outbreak, which continue to prevail in June, Barclays said.

Rising input costs and surging wholesale prices, which moved to 10-year highs, will also likely add to the concerns of the RBI's monetary poli-

cy committee. The RBI only modestly increased its CPI projections in its latest MPC meeting.



# SEBI bars 8 entities in Infosys insider trading case, impounds accounts

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has barred eight entities, including individuals and two financial companies, for being involved in insider trading in the scrip of Infosys. The entities are Pranshu Bhutra, Amit Bhutra, Bharath C. Jain, Manish C. Jain, Ankush Bhutra, Venkata Subramaniam V.V., and firms Capital One Partners and Tesora Capital. The investigation found that the total

insider trading was over Rs 3.06 crore. The SEBI has directed the impounding of the bank accounts of those involved and also asked them to create an escrow account jointly and severally and deposit the impounded amount in that account within 15 days from the order. Pranshu Bhutra, a Senior Corporate Counsel of Infosys, being an officer or employee of the software major, is a connected person and was reasonably

expected to have access to the UPSI (unpublished price-sensitive information) and on

preponderance of probability basis, he was in possession of the

UPSI, the order said. Amit Bhutra and

Bharath C. Jain are working partners of Capital One, while, as per a partnership deed of Tesora Capital, Amit Bhutra, Ankush Bhutra and Manish C. Jain are working partners of Tesora. As per the SEBI order, Capital One Partners and Tesora Capital had made illegal gains of Rs 2.79 crore and Rs 26.82 lakh, respectively, by indulging in insider trading while in possession of UPSI, pertaining to the corporate announcement of audited financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2020 made by Infosys.



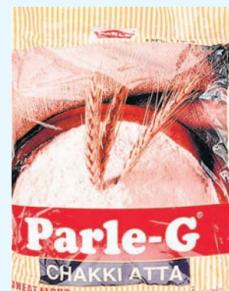
## brief

### DUCATI LAUNCHES BS6 PANIGALE V4, DIAVEL 1260 IN INDIA

**New Delhi:** Luxury motorcycle brand Ducati on Monday announced the launch of the much-awaited Ducati Panigale V4 and Diavel 1260, expanding its BS6 range in India. With the launch of these new models, Ducati has already delivered on 8 of the 12 bike launches promised for India in 2021. Priced at Rs 18.49 Lakh, the Diavel 1260 is available in Total Black while the Diavel 1260 S priced at Rs 21.49 lakh is available in Ducati Red and Thrilling Black. The Panigale V4, is priced at Rs 23.50 lakh whereas the Panigale V4 S is priced at Rs 28.40 Lakh.



### PARLE PRODUCTS ENTERS BRANDED ATTA PORTFOLIO



**Mumbai:** Biscuits, snacks and confectionary manufacturer, Parle Products, is expanding its portfolio by entering into the flour category with the launch of 'Parle G Chakki Atta'. By tapping into the new category, the company aims to capture urban and rural markets with 100 per cent wheat atta. The distribution of atta has already begun in northern and western parts of the country. Branded atta

segment has gained momentum since the pandemic outbreak. With movement restrictions in place, Parle's venture into the new category is in the lines of being agile on marketing strategies while also capitalizing on hygiene and convenience factors that has become a priority in today's environment, a company statement said.

### CASHFREE RAISES FUNDS FROM SBI, TO SCALE PAYMENTS ECOSYSTEM



**Bengaluru:** Digital payments platform Cashfree on Monday announced that State Bank of India (SBI) has made an investment in the organisation for an undisclosed sum. Incubated by payments pioneer PayPal, Cashfree is backed by Apis Partners, Smilegate and Y Combinator. The platform is being used by businesses like Zomato, CRED, Nykaa, Delhivery, Acko and Shell, among others, for e-commerce payment collection, vendor payments and marketplace settlements etc.

### MRF BOARD RECOMMENDS FINAL AND ALSO SPECIAL DIVIDEND

**Chennai:** Tyre major MRF Ltd on Monday said it closed last fiscal with a total income of Rs 16,128.58 crore and a net profit of Rs 1,249.06 crore. The company had closed FY20 with a total income of Rs 16,321.64 crore and a net profit of Rs 1,394.98 crore. The company also said the Board of Directors have recommended a final dividend of Rs 94 (940 per cent) per share with a face value of Rs 10. In addition to the final dividend, the MRF Board has recommended a special dividend of Rs 50 (500 per cent) per share of Rs 10 each in connection with the 60th Annual General Meeting of the Company.



# Flipkart introduces QR-based pay on delivery for consumers

*Flipkart on Monday launched a contactless, QR-code based payment facility for all its pay-on-delivery shipments.*

**Team Absolute** | Bengaluru

Consumers who earlier opted for cash on delivery can now use this facility, scan the QR code attached to their purchase and make a digital payment for their order through any UPI app at the time of delivery, the company said in a statement. "While the pandemic has urged several consumers to make a shift to online shopping, some trust deficit during checkout remains in pockets. With 'pay-on-delivery' technology, we want to ensure that customers have peace of mind with their payments and at the same time can shop within



the safety of their homes," said Ranjith Boyanapalli, Head, Fintech and Payments Group at Flipkart.

The number of UPI-based payments has witnessed a steady rise over the years.

The pandemic has also accelerated the adoption of UPI payments, with 2.64 billion transactions recorded in April this year -- a 100 per cent

increase over the previous year, according to data by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The new QR-based payment facility by Flipkart is expected to further reinforce consumer trust in digital transactions, enhance consumer safety and contribute to an overall increase in the adoption of digital commerce.

# BSE TOUCHES MILESTONE OF OVER 7 CRORE REGISTERED USERS

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

Domestic stock exchange BSE has crossed the milestone of 7 crore registered users based on Unique Client Code (UCC) on Monday (June 7). The exchange also completed the journey from 6 crore to 7 crore users in just 139 days, as compared to 241, 652 and 939 days needed for the previous milestones of 6 crore, 5 crore and 4 crore, respectively. Of the 7 crore users, 38 per cent fall in the 30-40 age bracket, followed by 24 per cent in 20-30 age



bracket, and 13 per cent in the 40-50 age bracket.

The growth has been fuelled by tech savvy young users, with an age

profile of 20-40, who contributed 82 lakh of the 1 crore user additions from 6 crore to 7 crore, the BSE said in a statement.

# ICICI Prudential Life announces Rs 867 cr bonus for policy holders

**Team Absolute** | Mumbai

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has announced an annual bonus of Rs 867 crore for all eligible participating policyholders for FY2021.

The bonus declared is the highest ever by the Company till date and is also 10 per cent higher than the bonus announced in the last fiscal, the company said.

All participating policies in force as of March 31, 2021 are eligible to receive this bonus and will be added to the policyholders' benefits, it added.

A total of 9.8 lakh participating policyholders are expected to benefit from this, taking them closer to their long-term financial goals, especially at the time



of the pandemic.

Bonus is the share of profits generated by the Company's participating policyholder's funds which are added to their guaranteed maturity benefits, thus enhancing the corpus.

This is the 15th consecutive year the Company has declared a

bonus, underscoring its customer-centricity and long-term investment approach to deliver superior risk-adjusted returns to policyholders.

As of March 31, 2021, 96.8 per cent of the fixed income portfolio is invested in sovereign or AAA rated paper.

# 'Rising raw material cost biggest business challenge in Covid 2.0'

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

As the nation tries to fight the second wave of the pandemic, which has brought with it a record number of infections and fatalities, the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry conducted a quick survey to assess the impact of the current situation on industry.

The survey, which was conducted across 34 sectors, revealed that 73 per cent of the respondents were struggling with the rising cost of raw materials as restrictions in many parts of the country have impacted the pace of economic recovery with an uncertain economic environment, disruptions in supply chains and contraction in demand. Other key challenges faced by businesses are availability of working capital (64 per cent), Maintaining price-cost margins/profitability (63 per



cent), Weakening of demand (62 per cent); Retaining of the full workforce (61 per cent), Costs of deployed workforce (60 per cent), Payment of wages/salaries to workers/employees (55 per cent), Repayment of loans/payment of EMIs (53 per cent), Costs of capital (52 per cent) and Costs of compliances (51 per cent).

Although the challenges are multifaceted, the survey found that companies are prioritising vaccination of employees (73 per cent) as one of the key strategic plans/focus areas to tackle the situation. Businesses are also focusing on increasing sales volume (64 per cent), increasing the scale of business operations (64 per cent), enhancing competitiveness of business (64 per cent), cut in costs of business operations (64 per cent), enhancing the price-cost margin (55 per cent), focusing on innovation, research & development (55 per cent),

enhancing business operations in the domestic market (55 per cent), reducing the workforce in business operations (45 per cent), and enhancing business operations in the international market (36 per cent).

"Coronavirus 2.0 induced restrictions in the country have created a difficult time for the industry. The entire economic activity is severely impacted with the closure of offices and shops," said Sanjay Aggarwal, President, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "The supply chain disruptions are causing skyrocketing commodity prices, which have severely impacted the price cost margins of the businesses in the difficult pandemic time of coronavirus". The survey, which was conducted by the PHD Chamber between April and May 2020, involved businesses across the micro, small, medium and large enterprises.



## EVELYN SHARMA SURPRISES FANS WITH WEDDING PHOTOS FROM AUSTRALIA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Model-actress Evelyn Sharma took to social media on Monday to surprise fans with photographs from her wedding. Evelyn tied the knot with long-time beau Tushaan Bhindi in Australia, reportedly last month. The actress shared photographs on Instagram on Monday where she is dressed as a bride with groom Tushaan posing beside her. Evelyn chose a white lace bridal gown and minimal makeup while Tushaan wore a blue suit. "Mr & Mrs Bhindi.. Big big thank you to everyone who made this small wedding the very best day of our lives!" the actress wrote. Evelyn also shared a photo embracing the groom, which she captioned: "Forever". Tushaan is an Australia-based dental surgeon and entrepreneur. Evelyn and Tushaan had got engaged in 2019 and tied the knot last month in an intimate ceremony in Brisbane. A lavish wedding was avoided owing to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. On the work front, Evelyn, who was last seen in Telugu superstar Prabhas' 2019 film "Saaho", will next be seen in the upcoming film "X Ray: The Inner Image".



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Kabir Duhan Singh has essayed negative roles in many South Indian films and he recently played Raavan in the Hindi web series "Ramyug". He says he does not fear getting type-cast. "I have no background in the business of cinema, so for me there is no second thought on whether I should start with a South Indian film or wait for a Bollywood film to happen, whether my debut should be as a hero, a hero's friend or an antagonist.

**Working with Vijay Sethupathi, Nawazuddin Siddiqui is like master class: Kabir Duhan Singh**

For me, it was only work will get me more work. Perhaps that is why I have equal respect for all kinds of film, regional, Bollywood or crossover," said Kabir. He is happy to have worked with several celebrated stars in the South, including the Tamil actor Vijay Sethupathi, as well as shooting with Nawazuddin Siddiqui for the upcoming film "Bole Chudiyana". He isn't worried about starting off as an antagonist in the South. "We have so many examples of actors who started their career in the South like Sonu (Sood) bhaiya, and Vidhut Jammwal, and portrayed negative characters before entering Bollywood and made it big there. I think slowly but surely that attitude towards actors as 'he only plays villain' is changing. These days, thanks to OTT, cross-region casting is also happening. So the fear of getting tagged is not there anymore," said Kabir.

## AJAY DEVGN: NOT SUFFICIENT TO PLAY REVOLUTIONARY BHAGAT SINGH ONCE IN YOUR LIFETIME

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Bollywood star Ajay Devgn posted an Instagram note on Monday to celebrate the release of his film "The Legend Of Bhagat Singh" 19 years ago. The film hit theatres on June 7, 2002. "It is not sufficient to play a revolutionary like Bhagat Singhji, once in your lifetime & career. You need to keep him there constantly... After all, these are those who wrote history with their (blood). #19YearsOfTheLegendOfBhagatSingh #RajkumarSantoshi," wrote Ajay, with a photograph that shows him dressed as Shaheed Bhagat Singh. Ajay won a National Award as Best Actor for his starring role, while the Rajkumar Santoshi directorial also bagged a National Award as Best Feature Film in Hindi.

The historical drama also featured Sushant Singh as Sukhdev, D. Santosh as Rajguru and Akhilendra Mishra as Chandrashekhar Azad, besides Raj Babbar and Amrita Rao. Ajay's upcoming projects are "Maidaan", "Bhuj: The Pride of India", "RRR" and his directorial film "Mayday", and he also appears in "Sooryavanshi" and "Gangubai Kathiawadi".

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Nyra Banerjee

## PREITY ZINTA IS BACK FROM DIGITAL DETOX

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Preity Zinta on Monday shared the best way to come back after a digital detox is to engage in random throwback. Preity posted a throwback picture on Instagram that shows her posing with a friend, when she went out for dinner after 18 months. "Best way to come back after a digital detox -- a throwback picture from a few days ago when we went out to dinner after 18 months. The only thing constant in life is Change and here's to embracing it while trying to social distance #Ting," Preity wrote as caption. Preity's last post on social media was one week ago, where she talked about the Indian Premier League (IPL). She co-owns the IPL cricket team Punjab Kings. On screen, Preity was last seen on screen in the 2018 film, "Bhaiji Superhit". The film marked her comeback after a seven-year break and also stars Sunny Deol, Ameesha Patel, Arshad Warsi and Shreyas Talpade.



**MADHURI DIXIT LIKES 'JAMMING' TO UNWIND**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Madhuri Dixit Nene gave fans a glimpse into what helps her relax on weekends. She shared a picture of herself with husband Sriram Nene on Sunday to give away her favorite pass time.

In the picture, Madhuri and Sriram seem to be enjoying a musical evening as Sriram

played guitar. She captioned the sweet picture uploaded on her Instagram as: "Jamming together. One of my favorite ways to unwind. #weekendvibes #sundaymood."

Currently, Madhuri is gearing up to enter the OTT space with the thriller series "Finding Anamika". She plays a superstar actress who goes missing one day. The show also features Manav Kaul and Sanjay Kapoor.

## DILIP KUMAR IS 'STABLE' AND 'SHOULD BE HOME IN 2-3 DAYS'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The condition of Bollywood legend Dilip Kumar, who was admitted to Hinduja Hospital here on Sunday morning, is stable. A post on his official Twitter page stated the veteran actor should be home in two to three days.

"Don't believe in WhatsApp forwards. Saab is stable. Thank you for your heart-felt duas and prayers. As per doctors, he should be home in 2-3 days. Insh'Allah," says a tweet, on @TheDilipKumar. The actor has been put on oxygen support after he complained of breathlessness.

An earlier tweet on his official Twitter handle on Sunday had stated: "Dilip Sahab has been admitted to non-Covid PD Hinduja Hospital Khar for routine tests and investigations. He's had episodes of breathlessness. A team of healthcare workers led by Dr. Nitin Gokhale is attending to him. Please keep Sahab in your prayers and please stay safe." The 98-year-old actor was hospitalised last month as well. However, he was discharged after two days.



## DJ Aqeel: Remixes today fail to create a connection with audience

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Known for his foot-tapping remixes of Bollywood hits, DJ Aqeel feels remixes today fail to make a connection with the audience. "Remixes today fail to create a connection with the audience. They lack the essence of creating a connection to your soul. That's what I keep experimenting in my album Nostalgia where I remix old songs with today's modern essence, which people like about my music," said Aqeel.

Aqeel shot to fame with remixes like "Keh

du tumhe", "Tu tu hai wahi" and "Shake it daddy mix" in the early 2000s.

How does he look at his journey so far? "It's been a roller coaster ride for me. With all the highs and lows I have always tried to keep my spirits high because I know I want to keep creating for my lovely fans and audience. That's what usually keeps me high. The right music makes all the difference. Yes, I have faced a lot of challenges throughout my journey in this industry. But these challenges have always motivated me to try something innovative, keeping the essence of music alive



in me," he replied.

How has music evolved in all these years right from the time he started off in 2000-2001?

Aqeel replied, "Music has evolved a lot since the time I started my journey in this industry. Earlier, there were just a few deejays but now it's like a hub out there. I have worked hard to reach where I am today. It is also exciting to see fresh talent coming in with unique styles. It has changed dynamically. There's always something new to learn."