

Companies

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2020



TECH FOR COMMON MAN

RS Sharma, chairman, Trai

We must realise howsoever sophisticated a technology may be, it is useless unless it benefits the common man...We must continue to develop apps that positively impact lives, contribute to employment, open markets, improve skills and living standards of the common man.

Quick View



Zee Ent posts Q1 net profit at ₹29.28 cr

ZEE ENTERTAINMENT Enterprise has reported a consolidated net profit of ₹29.28 crore for the first quarter ended on June. The company had reported a net profit of ₹529.76 crore in April-June quarter a year ago, Zee Entertainment Enterprise (ZEEL) said in a BSE filing.

L&T Fin exits CG Power and Industrial Solutions

L&T FINANCE has divested its entire equity stake of 9.99% in CG Power and Industrial Solutions through open market transactions. L&T Finance has "sold (in open market) 6.26 crore shares of CG Power and Industrial Solutions..." a regulatory filing said.

Mercedes-Benz, Audi mull price hikes

GERMAN LUXURY carmaker Mercedes-Benz is considering increasing prices of its vehicles in India to offset the impact of high currency volatility witnessed in the last six months, according to a top company official. Compatriot Audi is also evaluating such a step, though it has not set any timeline for the same.

Sify regains compliance with Nasdaq price rules

CHENNAI-HEADQUARTERED Sify Technologies has announced receiving a letter from Nasdaq confirming that the company has regained compliance with the minimum bid price rules.

Google brings 'Kormo Jobs' app to India

GOOGLE ON Wednesday said it is bringing its 'Kormo Jobs' Android app to India to help job seekers find and apply for positions across India. The tech giant, which introduced 'Jobs' last year in India as part of Google Pay to connect job seekers with opportunities, said the offering will be rebranded to 'Kormo Jobs'.

Kia starts Sonet bookings from Wednesday midnight

KIA MOTORS India will commence bookings of its upcoming compact SUV Sonet from Wednesday midnight, the automaker said. The compact SUV, which would compete with the likes of Maruti Vitara Brezza and Hyundai Venue, among others, is all set for its debut next month.

Yatra partners Amazon Biz for hospitality partners

YATRA.COM on Wednesday said it has collaborated with Amazon Business to provide its hospitality partners with a wide range of products catering to their needs. Hospitality partners can leverage the Amazon Business marketplace as a one-stop destination to access a wide range of products across categories, Yatra said.

ZOMATO REPORT

Restaurant industry revival to be led by food delivery

Food delivery sector, including restaurants' sites, clocked around 75-80% of pre-Covid GMV

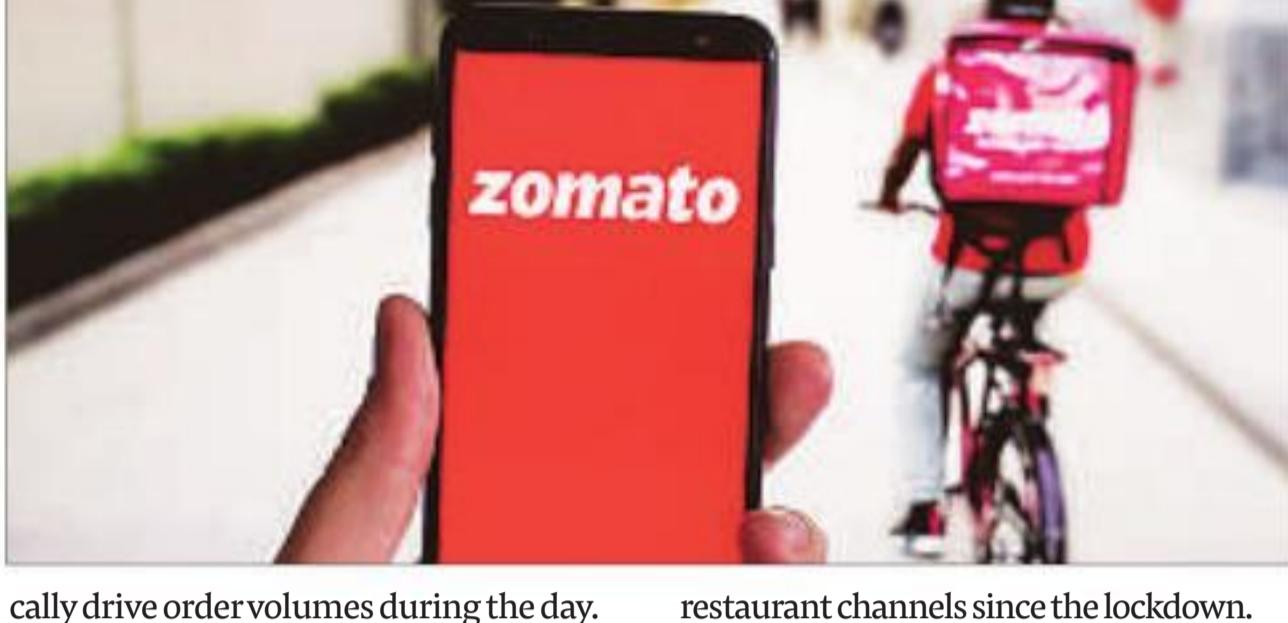
FE BUREAU
New Delhi, August 19

THE REVIVAL OF the Indian restaurant industry will be led by the food delivery segment. A report by Zomato released on Wednesday revealed that the segment was estimated to reach pre-Covid business levels in the next two-to-three months.

The food delivery industry has largely recovered, with the overall sector clocking around 75-80% of pre-Covid gross merchandise value (GMV), founder & CEO Deepinder Goyal stated in the report that assessed the state of the country's restaurant industry in the middle of the pandemic.

The food delivery sector includes the orders to be delivered by restaurants through their own websites and not just those by aggregators like Zomato and Swiggy.

Deliveries are being led by residential areas — Zomato claims they are doing as much as 50% better in residential areas than commercial ones. "Restaurants in and around commercial districts are expected to take the longest to recover," the firm said. Restaurants have lost a considerable percentage of customers as corporates shifted to working from home. Office goers typi-



cally drive order volumes during the day.

Certain pockets in some cities, especially the affluent neighbourhoods that tend to "combine home entertainment with outside food", are clocking higher GMV than before, the report said. Although sporadic lockdowns in some cities continue to disrupt businesses, food delivery volumes bounce back as soon as these lockdowns are lifted, the firm said. Not surprisingly, a sizeable chunk of dine-outs have shown agility to pivot to food delivery. "The number of restaurants offering food delivery are at 70% of pre-Covid levels. Out of this, about 5% restaurants did not offer food delivery services pre-Covid," Zomato said.

The online food aggregator said it had delivered 7 crore food orders since the imposition of lockdown on March 25. The firm estimates that Indians have ordered 20 crore times from food aggregators and direct

restaurant channels since the lockdown.

However, the dining out industry in India is operating at a sluggish 8-10% of pre-Covid levels primarily due to the lockdown and consumers' preference to stay indoors out of the fear of being infected. Of the 83% restaurants that are not open for business, 10% have already shut shops permanently and Zomato anticipates an additional 30% restaurants to not reopen at all. The remaining 43% are closed right now but are likely to open, as and when the situation turns better.

In cities where restrictions have been lifted, only 17% dine-outs are open for business at the moment. "Zomato's dining out transactions in markets like New Zealand, UAE and Portugal are already back to pre-Covid levels. However, recovery in India will be slow and would largely be driven by industry's ability to build back consumer confidence," the firm said.

CCI rejects complaint against WhatsApp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, August 19

THE COMPETITION COMMISSION has dismissed a complaint of alleged unfair business practices by popular messaging platform WhatsApp with respect to the digital payments market in the country.

It was alleged that Facebook-owned WhatsApp has abused its dominance in the 'market for internet-based messaging application through smartphones' to manipulate another segment — 'market for UPI enabled digital payment applications' in its favour.

In a 41-page order, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) said there was no violation of Section 4 of the Competition Act. This section pertains to abuse of dominant position. The complaint was filed by Harshita Chawla (informant), a practising lawyer, against WhatsApp and Facebook.

To assess the complaint, the watchdog considered two relevant markets — 'market for Over-The-Top (OTT) messaging apps through smartphones in India' and 'market for UPI (Unified Payment Interface) enabled Digital Payments Apps in India'.

According to the regulator, the informant has contended that WhatsApp will leverage its dominance in the upstream market to have a competitive edge over existing competitors.

The informant also seems to be distressed by the fact that while the other existing players spent considerable resources to establish themselves in the UPI-enabled digital payment app market, WhatsApp will get users on its platter without making any efforts, CCI said in the order.

"The apprehensions of the informant, according to Commission, does not really



hold much merit... the UPI market is quite established with renowned players competing vigorously. In such a market, it seems implausible that WhatsApp Pay will automatically garner a market share merely on account of its pre-installation," it noted.

More so, given the fact that WhatsApp ecosystem does not involve paid services as such for normal users, it seems unlikely that the consumer traffic will be diverted by the company using its strength in the messenger market, as per the order dated August 18.

At the outset, the Commission said Facebook and WhatsApp are group entities and though they may operate in separate relevant markets, their strengths can be attributed to each others' positioning in the respective markets in which they operate.

Thus, as per the scheme of Section 4 of the Act, WhatsApp's market position has been assessed keeping in consideration its affiliation to Facebook and several other group entities (example Instagram), it added. "... the Commission prima facie finds WhatsApp to be dominant in the first relevant market ie 'market for OTT messaging apps through smartphones in India,'" the order said.

Ruchi Soya Q1 net profit falls 13%; Balkrishna resigns as MD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, August 19

PATANJALI GROUP FIRM Ruchi Soya on Wednesday reported 13% decline in its net profit to ₹12.25 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, and announced the resignation of Acharya Balkrishna as managing director of the company. Its net profit stood at ₹14.01 crore in the year-ago period.

The total income fell to ₹3,057.15 crore during the first quarter this fiscal, from ₹3,125.65 crore in the corresponding period previous year.

"Acharya Balkrishna has resigned from the office of managing director of the company with effect from August 18, 2020, due to his pre-occupation. The board of directors has accepted his resignation," the filing said. Balkrishna has been designated as non-executive, non-independent director, liable to retire by rotation with effect from August 19, 2020, subject to approval of members of the company. He will continue to be the chairman of the board.

Ram Bharat, whole-time director of the company, has been designated as MD of the company with effect from August 19, 2020, till December.

Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Group had acquired edible oil firm Ruchi Soya through an insolvency process.



Balkrishna has been designated as non-executive, non-independent director

INTERVIEW: R RAMACHANDRAN, director of refineries, BPCL

'Exports are alternative option for long-term demand creation'



State-run oil refiner-cum-marketeer BPCL, which is being privatised, has been balancing its refinery and petchem production during a period of demand destruction and looking for export opportunities for higher value creation. R Ramachandran, director of refineries, BPCL, told Vikas Srivastava that the company was evaluating products such as very low sulphur fuel oil (VLSFO) and naphtha for exports and looking at global markets as an alternative opportunity for long-term demand creation. Edited excerpts:

The inventory gains in Q1FY21 were mainly led by huge marketing margins of ₹5/litre, while refining margins were badly depressed. How do you see the marketing and refining margins in the short-to-medium terms? The crude prices appear to be range-bound at around \$40-45/bbl in the short-term. While the gasoline and diesel margins continue to be low, and below the minimum levels for healthy GRMs, they have rebounded from the previous quar-

terlows. The resurrection of demand, especially in the diesel market, coupled with the enforcement of crude oil production cuts by Opec-plus would dictate the medium-term situation.

Covid-19 has impacted demand for petroleum products as there are still various areas under lockdown. What is the current throughput from Mumbai and Kochi refineries and where are the products getting consumed?

Our refineries have been operating in the range of 60 to 75% of their capacities. Besides the traditional lower demand during the monsoon, the lockdown in major urban cities has also impacted the current demand. However, we see a revival happening in relative terms in the smaller cities and rural areas. Gasoline, on the back of enhanced personal mobility, has shown robust demand in the last few months.

What is the ratio of exports to domestic consumption of refined products?

ing for opportunities to export for higher value creation as and when the market is attractive. On the longer term, we are actively looking at exports as an alternative opportunity for demand creation.

Most of the companies have put on hold their capex on low priority expansions. What is BPCL's planned capex for FY21? After the easing of lockdowns, we have revived our projects and the work at various sites are on with the protocols in place. We continue to place value in our strategic projects and our capital expenditure for them is in line with our plan of around ₹8000-9000 crore across our group companies. We have, however, focused on projects with strategic intent and robust returns, including those in our petrochemical forays. Some of these are Aatmanirbhar Bharat projects with complete focus on import substitution.

What is the total crude requirement for Q2FY21 and has there been any

force majeure notices to suppliers in respect of lower demand and throughput rationalisation?

In line with the demand for transportation products, we expect a reduction of around 15-20% in crude requirement over last year. Traditionally, we have been operating with around 60-70% of our crude requirements from term contracts and the rest spot. We have enough flexibility to manage the demand variations through this strategy. Our major crude suppliers have also generally remained flexible in terms of supply during the period. We have not had any force majeure applications with the crude procurement sources.

With crude prices rising from the lows of \$29/bbl to now around \$45/bbl, have the discounts on premium crude fizzled away?

While the discounts we saw in the early parts of the last quarter are no longer existent today, the suppliers are varying the crude prices and premiums or discounts

on month-on-month basis. As such, while the crude prices have gone up from the low levels of April and May, the discount on specific Asian premium, which refineries in India and other Asian countries have been disadvantaged, continue to remain.

Are we renegotiating any long-term contracts with US or West Asia since the spot prices have dropped substantially?

As earlier, with the crude oil demand projected to be lower by at least 10%, we expect the price to be around \$40-45/bbl. Of course, Covid continues to remain the black swan in hazarding a prediction, especially in these volatile market situations.

What is the outlook on demand and crude prices in medium- to long-term for FY21?

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New Delhi

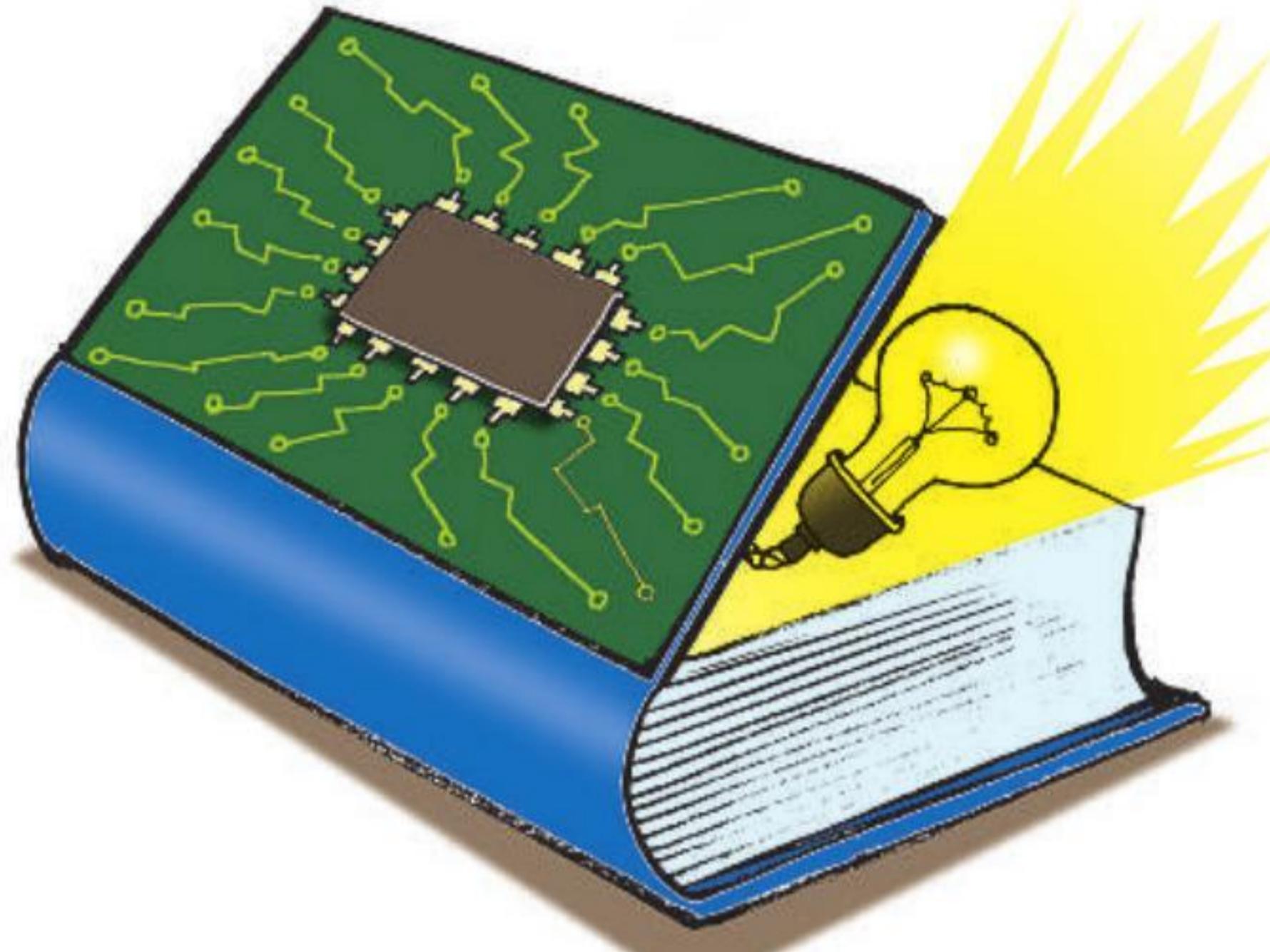


ILLUSTRATION: ROHIT PHORE

**SS
MANTHA**

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NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

Getting it right on implementation

The implementation strategy of the NEP must aim at providing a virtual university environment wherein all universities in India become collaborators

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION Policy (NEP) aims to transform both the intent and the content of the education sector, the prime minister has said. There is nothing to fault on the intent. However, the content needs implementation, and that is the real challenge. Here, we can learn from the corporate sector.

In the modern business history, most corporations have matched their structures to their strategies. While in the 19th century the initial focus of companies was on mass production by centralising key functions such as operations, sales and finance, these firms then

diversified offerings and moved into new regions a few decades later. Corporations such as General Motors and DuPont created business units structured around products and geographic markets. Smaller business units sacrificed turnovers for flexibility and adaptability. Similar models have emerged in education as well.

How can the NEP help? A centralised by function versus relatively decentralised by courses and regions' approach will prove durable, largely because the evolution of education is incremental. A conventional, straitjacketed education structure has remained the dominant model for almost 70

years. It did push the GER to upwards of 25, but fell short of meeting the growing aspirations of a country on the move. As competition intensified in the recent years, problems with dominant models in both education and business became apparent, as both searched for new ways to organise themselves to unlock value. Innovative thinking and execution are needed if a GER of 50 is to be reached.

A strong business process reengineering is must to meet the objectives of the NEP. We have been hearing about 'virtual' and 'networked' institutions operating across traditional boundaries. What we need are 'Velcro institutions' in spirit—capable of being pulled apart and reassembled in new ways to respond to changing opportunities. Setting up online/blended and virtual universities would add meat to the NEP and the '50 GER' goal. Massification of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) and institutionalising it within the education system will provide competency-based skills to the young. Virtual laboratories and simulations add value, but cannot replace the real.

The opportunities and challenges that globalisation affords must make us revisit assumptions about the control and management of both the student learning paradigms and the structures in which they happen. A computer company, for example, can manufacture components in China, assemble these in Mexico, ship these to Europe, and service the purchasers from call centres in India. This dispersal creates demands for new learning models to align internal and outsourced credits within our institutions and those around the world. A credit bank concept provides hitherto unthinkable opportunities for not only making education reach people in the remotest areas, but even allow them to build corporatised degrees.

Imagine the following personalised learning pursuit: A physics course from Panjab University, mathematics from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, chemistry from the Indian Institute of Science, astronomy from the Aryabhata Research Institute of Observ-

Our universities must be modelled on the Max Planck and Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft institutes for basic & applied research with a focus on productisation

national Sciences, and a course in artificial intelligence from IIT Hyderabad—all leading to a career in astrophysics enabled by a virtual university.

Or imagine improving business skills with a course in agile management from Martin Kropp University, a leadership primer from Texas Tech University or our very own IIM Kozhikode, or improving technical skills with courses in data structures and algorithms from the University of California, or learning digital skills with courses in Python, machine learning and big data from IITs. The implementation strategy of the NEP must aim at providing a virtual university environment wherein all universities in India become collaborators, creating their own content or sourcing content from Coursera or EdX or Udemy-like providers. Like the prime minister said, the NEP can ensure that students become global citizens while remaining connected to their roots.

The new (3+2)+3+3+4 school system replacing the existing 10+2 system can lessen the burden of the school bag and lead to real learning. However, this necessitates a change in curriculum outcomes, shifting the focus from 'what to think' to 'how to think'. Traditional learning must transform from memory skills to thinking skills. Experiential learning and flipped classroom models must be seamlessly built into the curriculum. Speaking about schools, it is imperative to convert all primary schools to the secondary level and improve their infrastructure. Examination systems must transform from end-semester/end-year to continuous evaluation.

The NEP envisages empowerment of higher education institutions through autonomy. Today, institutions have to work under a multitude of regulations and regulators, and have no autonomy. That both will give way to a single agency may be welcome, though the individual needs of technical education and others must not be sacrificed at the altar. Also, the autonomy to decide the admission procedure, fee structure and curriculum must not promote commercialisation.

Is complete autonomy a myth? If the vice-chancellor is a towering personality and a leader par excellence, he creates his own space and leads from the front, and then autonomy thrives.

Even the faculty will need to be trained differently, and this calls for new-age skills training. But is it really feasible to provide autonomy to, say, 500 institutions in each of the states and ensure a standard set of "dos and don'ts"? Their performance must strictly be subject to a quality assurance metric. The current provision of a university alone conferring a degree or a diploma must be modified to include all autonomous colleges for this.

Our universities must be modelled on the Max Planck and Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft institutes for basic and applied research with a focus on productisation. The focus must shift from merely publishing papers. That alone can make 'Start-up' and 'Make in India' initiatives come alive with new markets and employment opportunities.

The future universities must be places that coexist with industry and become large multiproduct, multi-process and multifunctional businesses. Industry, too, must be allowed to set up institutions under section 25. Apart from a share in GDP, they would share important perspective as well. They must collaborate on projects that solve real-world problems. The NEP can make us *atmanirbhar*, provided we let it do that.

COVID-19

The resilience of our households

PRABIR KR GHOSH & SUMIT KUMAR

Ghosh is fellow and Kumar is consultant, NCAER

Casual work as primary source of income is linked to distress during the lockdown

FOR RESTRUCTURING the Indian economy, we need to strengthen the household economy. The National Council of Applied Economic Research and the Nossal Institute for Global Health, University of Melbourne, conducted a study called 'Social, Economic and Health Impact of COVID-19 in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Odisha' during June 9–18—the unlock 1 period. It covered 2,100 households from four districts, two each from Uttar Pradesh and Odisha, and assessed the situation on three parameters: before, during and after the lockdown, from economic, social and psychological perspectives.

The economic shock, as a consequence of multiple lockdowns, is deep and wide. The study noted that 79% households reported a fall in income with 29% of them left with literally no source of income. The job market also underwent a concomitant swing, in the form of 11% of the households shifting their occupations.

The economic situation was further aggravated by the emergence of supply shortages and in-migration. About 16% households faced supply shortages of essential items like food, vegetables, milk, eggs and cooking fuel. Surprisingly, about 11% households could not even access medicines during this pandemic. The monthly remittances suffered a severe blow as 11% of the households reported in-migration. The households, caught between dwindling incomes and emerging supply shortages, adopted a diversified coping mechanism to meet expenditures on essential items. While 53% households acknowledged receiving government assistance, 41% of them borrowed money. In addition, 20% of the households even reduced the consumption of essential items.

A closer look at the data establishes the existence of three undercurrents: spatiality, casual employment and the place of agricultural sector in the economy.

Given the diversity of our country, the transmission of Covid-19 and its repercussions have wide spatial variations across almost all the variables, between Uttar Pradesh and Odisha. The proportion of households reporting reduction or even total loss of income and shift in occupation is lower in Odisha as compared to Uttar Pradesh. The proportion of households reporting reduction in income was 81% in Odisha and 76% in Uttar Pradesh. Also, UP households faced supply shortages of food items and vegetables, while for those in Odisha accessing cooking fuel, eggs, meat, fish and medicine was the prominent concern.

Among all the major occupation groups, the households in casual employment account for the highest proportion with respect to reduction or loss of income, shift in occupation (18%) and accumulation of debt (71%). Agricultural households have managed the economic shock better, being second to households with regular salary.

In addition, during the unlock 1 period, as a sign of economic revival, as many as 72% of the households returned to work. The high proportion of casual workers among these households does indicate the possibility of distress-driven resumption of economic activities. Also, 55% of the households expect either improvement or no change in their perception about their financial situation in the next 12 months, but 33% of the households sense a likely deterioration in their financial situation.

Despite these odds, these people have a high degree of trust and confidence in the government. While 95% of the households supported the lockdown strategy, 92% exuded confidence in the government's ability to tackle the crisis. The government continues to be the most reliable brand for the people, especially the poor.

Management of these undercurrents involves actions on three fronts. First, the benefits transfer system must be revamped to incorporate increased coverage and seamless accessibility through integration of portability—as 47% of the households still report non-receipt of any government assistance. Second, effective and institutionalised decentralisation of the governance ecosystem cannot be delayed. Last, to address the menace of casualisation of employment, India must learn to generate enough good-quality jobs. These steps would embolden household economy and feed into the larger structural transformation of the Indian economy.

BANNING PESTICIDES

Make haste slowly

Do these bans and restrictions have a scientific basis?

**VIVIAN
FERNANDES**

The author blogs at smartindianagriculture.in
Views are personal

of these developments, the RC decided in April 2019 to extend the deadline for completion of studies to the end of last December, but then in July it reversed the decision, saying that the agriculture ministry had overruled it.

The reasons cited in the draft gazette notifications betray an eagerness to ban. The list of countries where the chemicals have been prohibited are drawn from the Pesticide Action Network website, an advocacy against chemical pesticides. Some of the countries cited—Syria, Saudi Arabia, Ivory Coast, Chad, Suriname, Mozambique, Palestine, Togo and Senegal—cannot be models for an agricultural major like India. The UK's Pesticide Properties Database, suggested as a reference site by the Indian Agricultural Research Insti-

tute's (IARI) division of agricultural chemicals, says that of the 27 chemicals, 20 are approved for use in Australia and 18 in the US. In the EU, 13 are in use across all the 27 member-countries or in some of them, or they are approved but inactive.

A letter written by RK Chaturvedi, secretary, Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, to the agriculture ministry on June 2 shows little inter-ministerial coordination. He said there should be "wider stakeholder consultations" before further action is taken.

When contacted, Anupam Varma said the RC must "re-review" its decision to ban 27 chemicals.

At a recent online conference, agriculture commissioner SK Malhotra said that the advantages of a plant protection

chemical are known upfront, but their menacing aspects get discovered over time. But old need not mean dirty. All molecules go through a rigorous process of approval. As new knowledge becomes available, the molecules will have to be reviewed. The EU does this every 10 years; the US every 1.5 years. India must also move from ad hoc reviews to 10-year ones, as the Varma committee suggested.

India must also not allow the EU or any country to set its pesticide standards. The EU reduced its maximum residue level (MRL) for triclopyr, a fungicide used for control of neck blast in rice, a hundred-fold to 0.01 parts per million (ppm) or 1 milligram per 100 kg from January 2018. Rice exporters faced rejection of consignments when traces of the chemical were found

and wanted the fungicide banned. The MRL for the fungicide in the US is 3 ppm and in Japan 8 ppm.

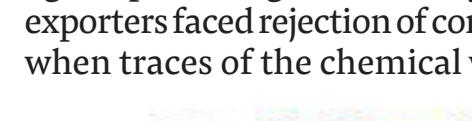
Anupama (no surname), the head of IARI's agricultural chemicals division, says there is a need for global harmonisation of pesticide MRLs through the World Health Organisation (WHO). Ashok K Singh, director, IARI, says nations will assert their right to fix food safety standards. Buyers will dictate terms. In 2017–18, the EU imported 3.35 lakh kg of Indian basmati; the top five West Asian countries bought 2.69 million tonnes. Singh says triclopyr use could perhaps be prohibited only in Sirsa and Fatehabad districts of Haryana, which can meet India's basmati exports to the EU.

The government's restriction on the

use of glyphosate—to be sprayed only by pest control operators—is inexplicable. The RC admits the herbicide is internationally classified as "slightly hazardous."

The WHO's cancer research agency, the IARC, says it is "probably carcinogenic to humans" based on "limited" evidence in humans and "sufficient" evidence in experimental animals. US juries have recently imposed damages on Bayer Crop-Science which sells the chemical under the brand Roundup. Bayer has also agreed to settle the lawsuits for \$10.5 billion, but has not admitted any harm. It is appealing the trial court orders. The US Environment Protection Agency has not banned the product. The EU has approved its use till December 2022. Yet the RC said it is banned in 20 countries citing Sustainable Pulse, a group that is opposed to chemical agriculture and GM crop technology.

Glyphosate is extensively used on crops like cotton, maize and soybean, which are genetically-modified to be resistant to it. In India, only a fifth of the cotton area is, illegally, planted with herbicide-tolerant cotton. Other farmers use it judiciously, unlike in the US or the EU. Pritam Singh, a progressive farmer of Sonipat, Haryana, who produces wheat and rice seed, says he sprays just 8 kg of glyphosate a year to remove weeds on the edges of fields. Milind Damle, a cotton grower of Yavatmal in Maharashtra, says it will cost him ₹6,000 to remove weeds on an acre manually, whereas with glyphosate he can do the job in just ₹1,000.



New Delhi

Gadgets

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2020



NECESSITY PREVAILS

Bill Gates, Co-founder, Microsoft

When disaster strikes, it is human nature to worry only about meeting our most immediate needs, especially when the disaster is as bad as Covid-19.

ASUS ROG PHONE 3

The most powerful phone you can hold

Its specifications are top-of-the-line, its numbers are top-of-the-line, and Asus has squeezed everything into a body that is both sexy and rugged

VIKRAM CHAUDHARY

SOME PRODUCT DESIGNS are iconic: Mini Cooper, Porsche 911, and in the phone world Nokia 3310 and iPhone. Add to that list ROG phones by Asus. In fact, right now, possibly no other phone stands out in terms of design as uniquely as these gaming phones do (the backlit logo itself is magical).

The latest in the series, ROG Phone 3, was recently launched, and I used the unit for about 15 days—in addition to design, it excels in a number of areas, even as there is room for improvement.

Short for Republic of Gamers, ROG Phone 1 was launched in India sometime in late 2018, ROG Phone 2 in late 2019 and now ROG Phone 3. As the name implies, these phones are used primarily for gaming—but that doesn't mean these aren't good daily-use phones.

Where it stands out

Design: Globally, the Nubia Red Magic 5S is making waves. But if you see closely, its



SPECIFICATIONS

- Display: 16.73 cm; 144Hz
- Processor: 3.1GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 865 Plus 5G
- Operating system: Android 10 with ROG UI
- Memory & storage: 8GB/12GB RAM, 128GB/256GB storage
- Camera: 64MP + 16MP (main rear), 13MP 125-degree ultra-wide (2nd rear), 5MP Macro (3rd rear camera), 24MP front camera
- Battery: 6,000mAh
- Estimated street price: ₹49,999

while gaming and the wire doesn't get in the way, there is a carbon chamber cooling system on the side, and air triggers are magical.

Audio quality: It has a Game Mode to enhance in-game sound effects. For regular usage such as watching videos, its dual front-facing speakers positioned at the top and the bottom deliver stunning sound quality.

Where it's average

Camera: It's great in terms of specifications (64MP plus 16MP main rear camera, 13MP second rear camera ultra-wide, and 5MP Macro third rear camera). You also get 8K recording, 4K HDR recording up to 60fps, and the user-friendly Pro Video mode. But in

terms of actual results something is still missing—in good light it shoots very good photos, but not so much in poor light. Also, unlike in ROG 2, in ROG 3 the rear camera is slightly protruded, which feels a bit odd. Mention must be made of the ultra-wide camera; it's really wide, at 125-degrees.

What it lacks

- A few things I found missing are:
- It doesn't have a headphone jack (USB Type-C port doubles as the audio port)
- There is no IP water resistance rating
- It doesn't have wireless charging (probably because it will interfere with the backlit logo).

Overall, in terms of battery and specifications, no phone in the world can beat ROG 3—you see it's not designed for 'normal' telephonic things such as calling, photography, surfing the internet, etc. Its specifications are top-of-the-line, its numbers are top-of-the-line, and the best thing is that Asus has been able to squeeze in everything in a body that looks sexy and is rugged.

In many areas ROG 3 is better than the best iPhones and Android devices from Samsung and multiple Chinese companies. Lastly, in addition to being 'iconic', the design of ROG 3 also comes across as ageless—even in the year 2030, it won't look out of place.

There are two variants available: 8GB/128GB for ₹49,999 and 12GB/256GB for ₹57,999. It's a very customisation-friendly phone, so there are numerous accessories you can buy.

PRESS PRINT

The printed page in the digital age

Parents need to be part of their children's learning process and give them tools to be ahead of the curve



Sunish Raghavan

MUCH OF HOW India lives, works, and learns has been disrupted. Parents are working from home, many schools are implementing new solutions to enable remote learning. Many parents are suddenly finding themselves even more directly involved in their children's education. Most are grappling with the best way to balance their children's daily screen time with non-screen time, and parent WhatsApp groups are buzzing with discussions about how best to balance a physical and digital learning environment for the children.

Last year, HP commissioned the New Asian Learning Experience across seven markets in Asia to provide insights and to help guide parents as they seek to find the optimal learning experience in the new digital world. The study found that while print and digital each have their own strengths, the combination of digital and print was most beneficial in helping children stay focused and engaged while they learn.



Balancing digital and print

As part of the study, the researchers observed how parent and child pairs interacted during learning tasks. And although technology was already second nature for most children, with many playing on tablets before they can even read, the study found that printed materials, such as worksheets, were the most effective format for learning and writing new words. On the other hand, children who used both PCs and printed worksheets were more engaged. They spent up to 12% longer on their tasks, were more likely to ask questions, and less likely to show signs of distraction or boredom. They were also captured smiling more often and for 15% longer when using a digital device for learning, likely due to the bright colours and interactive nature of screen learning.

Print is also a powerful medium for strengthening the bond between parent and child. Learning from printed materials requires both parent and child to actively participate in a way that purely digital or video-based learning does not. When using printed materials, parents are also more involved with exercises and children are more responsive to their parents' guidance.

Although teachers are often seen as the primary educator in a child's learning journey, parents too have an essential role to play. Parents may think education should be left to the experts, but that would be a missed opportunity for parents to equip children with skills while strengthening the parent-child bond. To support young learners, parents and educators must invest in right devices and experiences that bridge printed materials and digital applications to enable agile, dynamic learning anywhere, anytime. Parents need to be part of their children's learning and give them tools to be ahead of the curve.

A transformed future

So, there will be a time when students will go back to their classrooms, and physical meetings may again be the norm. But our tech preparedness should never be discontinued. We need to ensure that we carry forward the learnings into the 'new normal' future. Parents, students, and teachers should continue to communicate and collaborate for newer learning approaches and discuss how technology can enable that. Employees should continue to securely share and print files across geographically dispersed teams to deliver projects on time. A robust devices strategy which includes a reliable, cost efficient and easy to operate printer, can help in the preparedness which will usher in the true digital transformation.

The writer is senior director, Printing Systems, HP India



INTERVIEW: SUMEET WALIA,
Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Tata Communications

Networks are not getting their due importance

The role of network has become crucial as enterprises look for a seamless user experience across diverse infrastructure spanning legacy systems, private and public clouds. According to Sumeet Walia, chief sales & marketing officer, Tata Communications, the notion about network needs to change. "With focus on the quality of network and services, it needs to be at a real enterprise-grade," he tells Sudhir Chowdhary in a recent interaction. Excerpts:

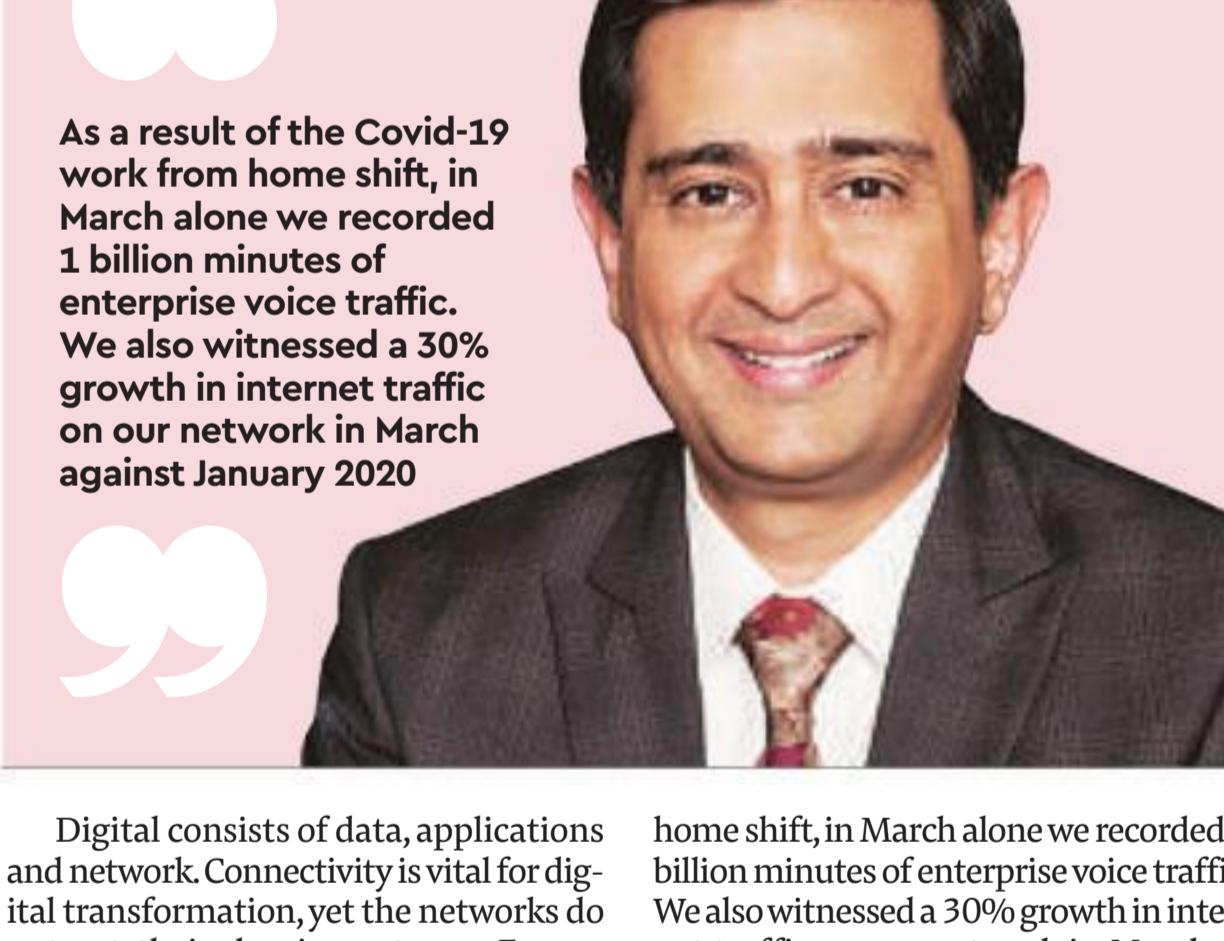
With the surge in bandwidth demand due to work-from-home, what is the role of the network?

The accelerated shift to digitalisation has increased the demand for bandwidth, bringing network to the fore. Our network is the foundation providing mission-critical offerings such as access to emergency services where every single exchange counts. The role of network has become crucial as enterprises look for a seamless user experience across diverse infrastructure spanning legacy systems, private and public clouds.

Our digital infrastructure has successfully enabled tens of thousands of users from large enterprises to switch to new home working realities. Though lesser-known, but under the sea more than 350 fibre optic cables cover about 700,000 miles—enough to spiral the world more than 30 times. Around 99% of data worldwide travels at two-thirds of the speed of light underwater through these subsea cables. We are proud to say that Tata Communications carries nearly 30% of the world's internet routes.

Can you clarify on the significance of network transformation in relation to digital transformation?

As a result of the Covid-19 work from



Digital consists of data, applications and network. Connectivity is vital for digital transformation, yet the networks do not get their due importance. Even a minute of network connectivity disruption can cost up to \$5,000. The notion about network needs to change. With a focus on the quality of network and services, it needs to be at a real enterprise-grade. Those of our customers that we enabled network transformation for were able to respond to the pandemic in an agile manner, seamlessly accelerating to the cloud and shifting their workloads swiftly.

What kind of data activity has Tata Communications been observing during the last few months?

As a result of the Covid-19 work from

ees work from home safely with in-built secure access to their corporate applications wherever they were hosted. Tata Communications' new-age solutions such as NetFoundry are helping set up a secure network over the internet, enabling quick, secure access and performance acceleration to an organisation's applications in any location, from any device.

Walk us through the kind of solutions companies are adopting to suit the new normal.

The new normal has exhibited a shift to remote-first setup and accelerated the adoption of technologies, such as virtual agents to reduce the strain on WFH employees by handling routine inquiries with automated responses and deliver a more personal customer experience during this trying time.

Businesses across retail, automotive, BFSI, IT/ITES, BPOs, travel and hospitality industries are offering a seamless, digital-first and secure collaboration experience by using digital video solutions that can replicate key elements of the buying process and retain a personalised shopping experience. Our Secure Connected Digital Experience proposition will support these enterprises to rebuild and adapt their organisations for a post-Covid world. We intend to meet this growing, worldwide demand for new ways of operating, which includes, higher levels of working from home, rising security risks, a shift to digital commerce and more contactless experiences for employees, customers and supply chain partners.

How do you see the role of the internet evolving in the near future?

The digital economy continues to grow exponentially. Once lockdown restrictions are lifted, 50-60% of users will still continue to work from home. For secure access to applications and data, regardless of location, device or broadband provider, Tata Communications Secure Connected Digital Workplace, will provide a range of services to enterprises looking to safeguard their employee experience. Tata Communications will provide zero-trust network access through a partnership with its subsidiary NetFoundry.

the protection of users' personal information on PCs by introducing new features to its consumer products and developing Kaspersky Security Cloud to adapt to its users' needs. Its Account Check feature automatically checks if email addresses that customers use when logging into their online accounts have been compromised. Additionally, Kaspersky Anti-Virus, Kaspersky Internet Security, and Kaspersky Total Security are now equipped with the advanced ability to detect stalkerware, the commercially available software used to spy remotely on a PC user.

"Despite the popularity of mobile devices, we see a high demand among consumers to protect personal information they store on computers—so it is crucial to secure it properly. For this reason, we have added advanced detection of commercially available spyware known as stalkerware to PCs," said Marina Titova, head of consumer product marketing, Kaspersky.



devices, but PC users as well. In fact, the number of users that encountered stalkerware on a PC grew by 35% to reach over 37,000 in 2019, while spyware tools accounted for 26,620 of those targeted.

Towards this, Kaspersky has enhanced

RIVERSONG WAVE S

Smart & stylish

The band tracks calories burnt, steps taken, distance covered, heart beat, & more

SUDHIR CHOWDHARY

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has made people acutely health conscious. While many of us are staying at home, a good many are out in the open—running, jogging, taking a brisk walk or doing stretching exercises. Doctors stress upon the fact that regular physical activity benefits both body and mind. It can reduce high blood pressure, help manage weight and reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and various cancers—all conditions that can increase susceptibility to the killer virus.

Health tracking is important and at a time like this, fitness bands, trackers and smartwatches are in great demand. RiverSong Wave S, a smart and stylish fitness band that retails for an affordable ₹2,299, is a decent all-day real-time activity tracker to measure your vital health parameters and provide valuable feedback. Be it your steps, distance you have walked or calories you have burnt, it will track it all and make it easy to get closer to your goals each passing day. It also keeps track of your sleep quality and gives you notifications regarding the same.

The Wave S comes with a 0.96-inch TFT colour screen and 2.5D tempered glass. The band monitors changes in the heart rate of the users on a real-time basis, allowing them to track and adjust the intensity of the activity. It also notifies the users about incoming calls, messages, emails, etc., keeping them up-to-date and always connected.

While being sweatproof, Wave S also boasts IP67 water resistance. It comes with the heart rate monitoring feature along with blood pressure and blood oxygen monitoring, helping you to keep track of the routine for a healthier lifestyle. The band has multiple sports mode so that you can choose the mode according to your preferred outdoor activity such as running, walking, swimming, skipping, football, etc. It will track data such as calories burnt, steps taken, distance covered, heart beat, etc. With easy tracking you can work on your performance and boost it.

The Wave S has in-built charging which makes it convenient to charge as no extra accessories are required to charge the tracker; all one needs is to plug in the in-built USB for charging the device.

₹4,299

Stalkerware is a commercially available software used to spy remotely on a PC user

FE BUREAU

A RECENT KASPERSKY report, 'Defending digital privacy: taking personal protection to the next level', says that a third (34%) of consumers have faced incidents

