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# Kumbh ends after Modi's appeal

## After PM's urge, opinion grows in favour of holding rest of rituals symbolically

PNS ■ HARIDWAR/NEW DELHI

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to keep the remaining part of Kumbh Mela symbolic considering the surging Covid-19 cases, the Juna Akhada Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Avdheshanand Giri on Saturday announced the formal conclusion of the Maha Kumbh for the Akhada.

Panch Dash Nam Juna Akhada is the largest of the 13 Akhadas.

Swami Avdheshanand Giri said the remaining Shahi Snan of the Kumbh should be observed symbolically on April 27 and later tweeted that protecting the lives of Indians is "our first priority".

"Considering the rising threat of Covid-19, we have formally immersed the various deities invoked for the Kumbh Mela," he said.

Earlier in a tweet in Hindi, the PM said, "I prayed that two 'Shahi Snan' have taken place and Kumbh (participation) should now be kept symbolic. This will boost the fight against this crisis."

Later, Modi thanks all the sants for cooperation with the administration and expressed his gratitude for their gesture.

Thousands of Kumbh visitors have tasted Covid-19 positives and dozens of seers have



Har Ki Pauri Ghat wears a deserted look during Kumbh Mela 2021 following a surge in Covid-19 cases in Haridwar on Saturday

PTI

succumbed to the virus during the last two weeks inviting both domestic and international outrage for allowing such massive gathering at the time when the second wave of Covid-19 was spreading like wildfire across the country.

Earlier, addressing the media here, Giri said the PM had telephoned him to enquire about the Kumbh Mela and the health of the seers. The PM had also requested that since the main Shahi Snans have concluded, the remaining Kumbh should be observed symbolically. The Juna Akhada head said he would request devotees from across the nation to visit Haridwar only in small numbers, adding that the remaining Shahi Snan will be observed

only symbolically.

The remaining Snans are to be observed mainly by the Bairagi Akhadas. Earlier, the Niranjani Akhada had asked its Sadhus to leave for their respective destinations on April 17 considering the Covid surge. The Anand Akhada had also supported this view.

A majority of the 48.51 lakh people who took part in the last two royal baths (Shahi Snan) held on the occasion of Somwati Amavasya on April 12 and Mesh Sankranti on April 14 were seen openly violating Covid norms like face masks and social distancing.

The Kumbh has already been shortened this year to just one month from April 1 to 30 due to the pandemic.

## Covid test, quarantine to welcome returning devotees back home

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The ordeal of Covid-19 test and quarantine awaits thousands of devotees who are returning home after attending the Maha Kumbh at Haridwar. As India grapples with a devastating second wave of the coronavirus and States imposing lockdown, several States and UTs, including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Gujarat, have made Covid-19 test mandatory for Kumbh returnees. Some States are also keeping the returnees in mandatory quarantine.

Thousands of Kumbh visitors and hundreds of "sadhus" who attended Kumbh Mela in Haridwar have tested positive for the coronavirus disease. On Saturday alone, 175 "sadhus" who attended Kumbh Mela have been found infected from coronavirus.

Gujarat on Saturday declared that all devotees returning to the State from Kumbh Mela will have to undergo a mandatory RT-PCR test before they are allowed to enter their respective cities and villages.

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said those found



infected will be isolated for 14 days.

Maharashtra Minister Anil Parab has announced those coming into the State from Kumbh Mela will be quarantined. Nasik district administration is also taking necessary steps for quarantining those coming from Kumbh.

Earlier, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) mayor Kishori Pednekar claimed on Saturday that the devotees returning from the Kumbh Mela will distribute coronavirus like "Prasad" and said they should be quarantined "at their own cost" on their arrival.

The Madhya Pradesh Government has issued order to put those returning from Kumbh in quarantine or self-isolation.

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# 10 lakh new cases in just 7 days in India

## Record over 2.6L cases in a day; Delhi, Maha too see highest rise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India added nearly 10 lakh cases in just seven days ending April 17 as the country recorded over 2.6 lakh new Covid-19 infections and a record 1,493 deaths during the last 24 hours on Saturday.

The addition of nearly 25,000 new cases over the previous day count amounts to a rise of nearly 10 per cent, which shows that the growth of Covid-19 has more than doubled during the last two weeks.

Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are registering newer peaks and the situation remaining equally grim in the rest of the country.

The country had 1.52 lakh daily cases on April 10 when the death count stood at 838. A relative comparison shows that the death rate is steadily climbing up vis-a-vis new infections.

Amid the alarming rise in new infections and deaths, the country is battling a paucity of hospital beds, oxygen supply, ventilators, and life-safe antiviral drug Remdesivir. A major-



Health workers and family members carry the body of a patient who died of Covid-19 for cremation amid surge in coronavirus cases in Jammu on Saturday

PTI

ity of the State have also complained of a shortage of vaccines and shut down several vaccination centres.

Several States have belatedly imposed lockdown restriction to tackle the surge, but it is too early to see if these are going to work effectively at this stage on the ground.

Delhi and Maharashtra recorded their biggest single-day rise in coronavirus cases since the beginning of the pandemic in January 2020. The national Capital registered over 24,375 new cases, taking its tally to 8,27,998, while Maharashtra's count rose to 3,70,707 with 67,123 new infections. The death count in Delhi rose to 11,960 with 167 new fatalities on Saturday.

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## Covid-19 IN INDIA

**TOTAL CASES:**  
1,47,82,461 (+2,60,533)**DEATHS:** 1,77,168 (+1,493)**RECOVERED:**  
1,28,03,791 (+1,36,853)**ACTIVE:** 17,95,278**MAHARASHTRA:** 37,70,707**KERALA:** 12,21,168**KARNATAKA:** 11,41,998**TAMIL NADU:** 9,80,728**DELHI:** 8,27,998 (+24,375)

# Maha threatens to seize Remdesivir exporting stocks

## CM complains of shortage of liquid oxygen, anti-viral drug

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After a bitter stand-off over the alleged discrimination in the distribution of vaccines, the Maharashtra Government on Saturday flagged the shortage of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir in the State and even threatened to seize the stocks of Remdesivir from the exporting firms and supply them to the needy people.

On a day when Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray charged that he could not speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the immediate requirement of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir vials as the latter was pre-occupied with West

Bengal Assembly elections, senior Minister Nawab Malik accused the Modi Government of meting out "step motherly" treatment to the State over the supply of Remdesivir vials.

Not to be outdone, Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal launched a virulent attack on Uddhav whom he accused of indulging in "petty politics" and said "he (the Chief Minister) needs to stop his daily dose of shameless politics and take responsibility."

Earlier in the day, Uddhav said, "Yesterday evening, I dialled him (Modi) but I could not speak to him as he was busy in West Bengal elections." Uddhav said he wanted to discuss the issue of shortage of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir injection vials, both live-savers in case of critical Covid-19 cases. He, however, said the State Government was receiving cooperation from the Centre.

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# Remdesivir price drastically cut on Govt intervention

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of increasing demand for anti-viral drug Remdesivir from across the States, the Centre on Saturday urged the injection makers to slash its price considerably. The Union Health Ministry in its "Clinical Management Protocols for Covid-19" has recommended the use of Remdesivir in patients in the moderate stages of the illness.

According to a statement from the Government, the Union Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, NPPA - Advisor (Costs) NI Chowdhury on Saturday ordered all pharma companies to comply with the revised norms with immediate and retrospective effect.

Pharmaceutical companies have reduced the price from 25 per cent to up to 68 per cent.

According to the details shared by the NPPA, Cadila



Healthcare has reduced the price of its REMDAC injection to ₹899 from ₹2,800 earlier. Similarly, Syngene International has cut the price of its brand RemWin to ₹2,450 from ₹3,950 earlier. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories has cut the price of REDYX, which used to cost ₹5,400 earlier to ₹2,700 now. Similarly, Cipla has reduced price of its CIPREMI brand to ₹3,000 from ₹4,000 earlier. Jubilant Generics has cut the price of its remdesivir brand to ₹3,400 from ₹4,700 earlier.

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# Delhi gasping for oxygen: CM

## City logs 24,375 cases in 24 hrs; Kejriwal seeks Centre's help

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the situation serious in the national Capital, Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said, "In the last 24 hours, there have been around 24,000 cases. A day before, there was around 19,000 cases. So, the tally spiked only in a matter of 24 hours."

The Delhi Chief Minister said he has spoken to Union Health Minister about the extreme shortage of oxygen beds in Delhi, and added that in November last year, the Central Government allotted the Delhi Government 4,100 beds at a peak of 8,500 cases, however, this time, they have only provided 1,800 beds, even after this wave being three times more fatal than the previous ones.

"Delhi is facing a shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, and Tocilizumab, which must be made available by the Central Government for adequate treatment of corona patients," Kejriwal said.

Meanwhile, the weekend curfew aimed at breaking the chain of spiralling coronavirus



A dog trots along a deserted street during a weekend lockdown in New Delhi on Saturday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

infections got mixed reactions with many stepping out of their houses for going to offices or market places for daily chores in day time, however by evening there was some semblance of lockdown.

Roads, markets and buses across Delhi were largely empty

from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a majority of the National Capital's residents appeared to have

stayed at home.

Police pickets could be seen around the city with police personnel and officials deployed, checking people having valid movement passes and issuing challan to those not following the guidelines.

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## CAPSULE

**BENGAL: 78.09% POLLING AMID SPORADIC VIOLENCE**

**Kolkata:** West Bengal recorded over 78 per cent turnout in the fifth phase of its Assembly poll amid incidents of violence and attack on a candidate on Saturday after the bloodshed in the previous round of election. An EC official said around 78.09 per cent of the 1.13 crore voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm in 45 seats.

## POPULAR TAMIL COMEDIAN VIVEKH DIES

**Chennai:** Popular Tamil comedian Vivekh who won the hearts of millions of people by his sharp wit and noted for his social work, promoting environmental protection died on Saturday.

# Resume talks with protesting farmers, Dushyant urges PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to resume talks with the farmers protesting against the Centre's controversial three farm laws at Delhi borders.

Chautala said a team of three to four Cabinet Ministers may restart discussion with the farmers who have been camping at the Delhi borders for over 100 days. The Deputy Chief Minister wrote the letter days after State's Home Minister Anil Vij's missive to Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, saying talks with peasants should be resumed to resolve the issue.

Vij had said he was concerned as a large number of farmers were sitting on

Haryana's borders amid a surge in Covid-19 cases in the State.

Haryana Chief Minister ML Khattar had also urged farmers and the Centre to resume talks.

"I would like to bring to your kind attention that our 'Annadattas' are on roads at Delhi border agitating in respect of newly enacted three farm laws of the Central Government. It is a matter of concern that such agitation is going on for more than a hundred days," Chautala wrote in the letter. Chautala said he believes every problem has a solution by way of mutual discussions.

"The earlier discussion between the Central Government and farmers' union brought a few solutions to the concerns raised by Samyukt Morcha," he wrote in his letter dated April 15.

# 4 Sikhs among 8 killed in mass shooting in US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The distraught families of Indian-Americans working at a FedEx facility in the US state of Indiana have expressed their anger, fear and anxiety in the aftermath of the latest mass shooting incident in the country that killed eight people, including four Sikhs.

Brandon Scott Hole, 19, a former employee at the facility in Indianapolis, carried out the mass shooting on late Thursday before allegedly committing suicide.

About 90 per cent of the workers at the FedEx delivery service facility are said to be Indian-Americans, mostly from the Sikh community.

On Friday night, the Marion County Coroner's Office and Indianapolis



A body is taken from the scene where multiple people were shot at a FedEx Ground facility in Indianapolis on Friday

AP

Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) released the names of the victims: Amarjeet Johal (66), Jasvinder Kaur (64), Amarjit Skhon (48) and Jaswinder Singh (68). The

first three deceased are women. Four others were Karli Smith (19), Samaria Blackwell (19), Matthew R. Alexander (32) and John Weisert (74).

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# Lalu to walk free after serving half fodder sentence

## Jharkhand HC grants bail in Dumka treasury case; release from jail expected tomorrow

MRITUANJAY KUMAR ■ RANCHI

The Jharkhand High Court on Saturday granted bail to former Bihar Chief Minister and RJD Chief Lalu Prasad in a fodder scam case involving illegal withdrawal of funds from Dumka treasury, paving his release from jail on completion of half the sentence period. Lalu is presently being treated at AIIMS, Delhi.

The court granted bail to Lalu on bail bond of ₹5 lakh and a personal bond of ₹1 lakh.



Lalu's lawyer Devarshi Mandal told PTI that they will move Special CBI court in Ranchi after it opens on Monday to seek his release following High Court order.

Explaining the release procedure, Mandal said, they have send an application to Lalu for his signature which will be submitted to the CBI court here on Monday along with the High Court order.

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HOMETHEATRE

# Gripping tale of terror from young eyes

**UTOYA: JULY 22**  
**Norwegian with English subtitles**  
**& PriveHD**  
**\*Ing: Andrea Berntzen, Aleksander Holmen, Solveig Køløen Birkeland**  
**Rated: 6/10**

There will always be a debate on whether it is appropriate to put out mounts of terror attacks and the impact it has on the victims. Some argue it is glorifying the terrorist in some way. Others want documentation. Over and above this debate, *Utoya* is a Norwegian mount which leaves no stone unturned to look at the terror killing on an otherwise peaceful island of Utoya in Norway executed by a home grown extreme Right group. It was Norway's 26/11 with many left dead quite without premise. "It is the safest island on Earth, mom" one of the main protagonists says in the opening sequence of this film. The environs she is walking through are green, serene and enchanting which, by the way, is a complete contrast to what the film otherwise centres on with dogged starkness throwing up the real impact of a terror attack and its aftermath on any population in any part of the world.

Here, the movie pans out through the eyes of youngsters and the terrorist is given a grand go-by, being allowed to visit the screen only in pithy scenes with almost an abstract presence to give the audience some shape of the orchestrator. An English version of this film is all set to premiere on Netflix and that promises to take over in starkness, blood and gore from *Utoya*. For now, however, *Utoya* is a powerful story told candidly



even though the director could be faulted for what many may perceive as a story exploiting grim reality to make some noise on the small screen. Nevertheless, a gripping tale which should get a go by because of subtitles.



# A BLACK CAPTAIN AMERICA?

**FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER**  
**Episode 5**  
**Disney+Hotstar**  
**\*Ing: Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Wyatt Russell, Erin Kellyman, Danny Ramirez, Emily VanCamp**  
**Rated: 6/10**

Those who have been following the miniseries would know how episode 4 ended — the Shield — all bloodied. The fallout is felt by the Falcon and Winter Soldier. The Shield, for now is back with Sam just how Steve Rogers had wanted. So are we looking at yet another Captain America? A Black Captain America? Like Isaiah Bradley played by Carl Lumbly says — no self-respecting Black will take up the job. With John Walker stripped of all his duties and the title of Captain America, there is a new person who

makes an entry — Contessa Valentina Allegra de Fontaine. Who is she and what is the agenda? Well, maybe we will get to see more of Walker in episode 6. Meanwhile, Flag Smashers have upped their ante and are preparing for the final count down. Will they succeed? Will the Falcon and Winter Soldier be able to prevent Karli from going full guns ahead? Given that death hangs over Falcon's head, things will come full circle next time. The only thing missing here is the awe-inspiring action. In almost all the episodes, till now, they have been far between. The series has Falcon, Winter Soldier and the now redundant Captain America and yet the action is way below on the makers list. That boggles the mind and wonders if it has all been saved for episode 6 for the wow factor. Definitely something that Avengers fans will be looking forward to. — Shalini Saxena

# Plan Your Day

Cold Brew Day is on April 20. SUNDAY PIONEER brings you recipes that will surely give you chills without costing too heavy on your pocket

## COLDBREW POPSICLES WITH FRESH MINT

- Ingredients:**
- half and half
  - 1 1/2 cups coffee beans
  - 2-4 tablespoons brown sugar
  - Mint leaves
- Directions:**
- Grind the coffee beans. Place the grounds in a large pitcher or carafe. Add three cups of cold water and stir to combine. Cover and let steep for 12-24 hours.
  - Strain the coffee and add 2-4 tablespoons brown sugar. Stir to combine.
  - Place a few torn mint leaves into each popsicle mold and top with a few tablespoons of half and half. Freeze for 15-20 minutes, until slightly firm.
  - Insert popsicle sticks into each mold and freeze for another 20 minutes until set.
  - Remove the pops from the freezer and top with sweetened



coffee. Freeze until firm, 30-40 minutes. Enjoy!  
**Half and half:** It's that simple. Half whole milk, half heavy cream. The texture is thicker and more luscious than milk, but less decadent and rich than cream.

## CARAMEL SURPRISE COLD BREW



- Ingredients:**
- 1-2 cups Coldbrew
  - Handful of ice
  - 1-2 tablespoons coconut milk
  - 1-2 teaspoons caramel syrup
  - Pinch of sweetener of choice (if desired)
- Directions:**
- You can prepare coldbrew at home using French press or in a mason jar using muslin cloth, important is perfect coffee blend for your coldbrew. Keep prepared cold brew coffee in a pitcher or carafe in the refrigerator.
  - Pour one cup (eight-ounces) of coffee into a mug, cup or glass jar filled with ice. Stir in coconut milk and caramel syrup. Add sweetener, if desired. Serve immediately.
- Courtesy: Girish Chandra, Beverage Training Manager, Lavazza India

# TELLY TALE

## IT'S TIME FOR MAHASANGAM



COLORS' Mahasangam episodes have always raised the bar of entertainment with its complete package of drama and musical performances. One such blast of entertainment is the upcoming *Mahasangam* episode where the cast of *Choti Saradaarni* and *Udaariyaan* will share a screen during Baisakhi celebrations. Tejo (played by Priyanka Chaudhary) and Jasmine (played by Isha Malviya) will invite Jass even after knowing that there is stress going on in Virk family due to Fateh's decision of going to Canada. The celebration will be sparked with singer B Praak's presence as he will sing some of his hit song *Teri Mitti* from *Kesari* and also his recently launched soulful track, *Baarish Ki Jaaye*. In the special episode, Fateh (played by Ankit Gupta) will have his share of dramatic moments as he will get to know that the woman he saved and admitted to the hospital is awake and turns out to be Meher! (played by Nirmitt Kaur Ahluwalia). In a dramatic turn of events, Fateh will also come face to face with Sarabjit (played by Avinash Rekhi). Will he be able to bring together Meher and Sarab?

Singer B Praak, who was a part of the dramatic *Mahasangam* episode said: "I am excited to shoot here in Punjab with the cast of two most relevant show. *Choti Saradaarni* is my family's favorite and *Udaariyaan*'s concept strongly resonates with each one of us. The episode is going to be full of drama, entertainment and of course our beautiful new music track, *Baarish Ki Jaaye*. I had a lot of fun shooting with the cast of the show- They are fun, energetic, and extremely talented."

## HERO TASTES DEFEAT

Sony SAB's *Hero* — *Gayab Mode On* will take a shocking turn with Dansh (Manish Wadhwa) defeating Hero (Abhishek Nigam) and stands triumphant. The upcoming episodes will send shock-waves to the viewers, with Hero assumed to be dead. At the beginning of the War of Worlds, our beloved Hero is vanquished by Dansh. The intense battle between the two is set to take

the viewers on a roller coaster ride and keep them on the edge of their seats. With Rocky (Keshav Sadhna) uniting with Dansh to defeat Hero, the forces of the aliens get more robust, and it becomes difficult for Hero to fight them single-handedly. Dansh threatening to destroy the planet and cause harm to human beings leads to the battle of the War of Worlds. Dansh launches his attack with the help of Rocky and with each passing moment, it gets tricky for Hero to fight Dansh and protect his ring simultaneously. The battle gets fiercer, leading to the heartbreaking moment of Dansh beating Hero and conquering the magical ring. Hero's identity as Veer is exposed to Dansh and Zara simultaneously. Dansh is celebrating after winning over Hero and gaining the magical ring. But little does he know what's in store and what will this end of Hero lead to?



Is Veer Nanda aka Hero dead? What will happen next? Manish Wadhwa, essaying the role of Dansh, said: "Dansh is very strong and an intense character. He never gives up and attacks back with force. The experience of shooting for this fight sequence has been amazing and it's fun to work with Abhishek. He is very hardworking and we both share great timing. Dansh is happy and very delighted with getting hold of the ring, unaware of what will happen next. So, stay tuned to witness exciting twists and turns on the show and join us on this thrilling journey!"

Abhishek Nigam, essaying the role of Hero, said: "This is the most intense fight sequence we have shot on the show so far and I was so much into the character that I could feel the same energy. Hero was putting in all the efforts to save the world and protect his ring, but he chooses his loss so that he can save the world. It was a learning experience while shooting for this sequence with Manish Sir. This sequence has come out really well and it will take the viewers on a thrilling never seen before ride. So, stay tuned and don't miss the fun!"

## KUMKUM BHAGYA TURNS SEVEN

Zee TV's popular fiction show, *Kumkum Bhagya* has been an audience favourite ever since it was launched in 2014. Its intriguing

plot and the authentic portrayal of relatable characters like Abhi (Shabbir Ahluwalia), Pragya (Sriti Jha), Rhea (Pooja Banerjee), Ranbir (Krishna Kaul) and Prachi (Mugdha Chapekar) have kept the audience entertained throughout these past seven years and has helped the show gain countless fans across the globe. Produced by Television's czarina Ekta Kapoor, *Kumkum Bhagya* has witnessed roaring success on the viewership charts every year and has won more than 50 awards till date. But it looks like there is no stopping the show even as the show completed seven years on April 15.

The family drama that explores and brings a range of emotions as well as the deepest intricacies of human relationships has kept the viewers hooked all this while through several interesting twists and turns in its storyline! In fact, the show has also managed to successfully reinstate the belief that opposites do attract by showcasing how despite having contrasting personalities, its lead protagonists are inseparable.

As Kumkum Bhagya completes seven glorious years, Shabir Ahluwalia who plays the role of Abhi got nostalgic and said: "It is not just a show, but a feeling for me. I've been associated with it for seven years now, but it doesn't feel like it's been so long. I must say that all these years have been a breeze and the entire unit including the technicians and actors are like a family for me. Generally, you hear people saying this when the show is coming to an end, but our case is different. When you're around the same people for seven years, you know them even better, as you have seen them at their best and their worst. I have to add that the writers and the creative team are fantastic, and they've held all of us together. I've been associated with the producers, Balaji Telefilms for nearly two decades and they are like a family to me. As we complete seven years, I would like to say Thank You Ekta for believing in me, Shobha aunty for being there always and Jeetu uncle, you're a rockstar and always guide us for the best. I also want to thank Zee TV for giving us such a great platform to showcase *Kumkum Bhagya*. Last but the most important, *Kumkum Bhagya* is what it is today because of all our fans, so thank you so much to all."



# ‘I don’t regret my choices’

KUNAL JAISINGH, who plays Veer in SET’s *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhor Aaye*, tells MUSBA HASHMI the attraction of playing the role, how it has become his priority and his story of giving endless auditions

## ■ What is your role in Kyun Utthe Dil Chhor Aaye?

I play Veer, a self-destructive and brooding person who is addicted to alcohol. I am paired opposite Gracy, who plays Amrit in the show. I will be donning a different look. I am extremely excited to be a part of this show and to work with such a lovely production house.

## ■ What made you take up the role?

The show offers beautiful love stories, many action scenes and gives a bit of knowledge to all the viewers about how people's suffering during the partition. Earlier the show managed to depict the pain and sorrow of 1947 perfectly. Now with a leap of four years, the makers are showing the story of the 1951 era and have planned many new things for the viewers. The concept of the show is unique and the overall plot is not only interesting, but intense and heart-wrenching for me. Other than that, I wanted to be a part of the show which stands out from all the other shows I have done in the past.

## ■ Did you have any apprehensions?

No, not at all. I knew I was going to be part of this story post leap. I was actually excited for it. With a lot of twists and turns ahead in the show, this will be a good start for me.

## ■ From Mann Kee Awaaz Pratigya to Kyun Utthe Dil... how has the journey been for you?

It has been a great one. I have been able to grow and learn so much in every role I have played. Every character I essayed holds a special place in my heart because with each character my audience and my fans started loving me more. Not only that, I learnt something from every character I played. Those were not only roles, but life lessons. My only goal during all these years has been to make sure that the audience understands the actions and emotions of the characters I play.

## ■ Omkara Singh Oberoi was a much loved character...

Each show has his trials and a story to tell. *Ishqbaaaz* was focused on the story of three brothers, and India's first spin-off was *Dil Boley Oberoi*. When it comes to Omkara

I was always passionate about my career, but getting into this space has been difficult, given the fact that the City of Dreams has a lot to offer but the hard way



he was an artist who was the one balancing factor between the brothers and the family. Omkara has been a special character for me. It earned me a lot of love and support from my fans. I am grateful for all that. The character will always be valuable to me. I feel blessed and lucky and I never thought it would be so popular. The team, of course, was great. We are still like a family. We all have encouraged each other to perform at our best and that was visible in the show.

## ■ How did acting happen?

I was always passionate about my career, but getting into this space has been difficult, given the fact that the City of Dreams has a lot to offer but the hard way. I have been a part of endless auditions ever since I have come here. I have even stood in an audition line for more than 10 hours. This industry has offered me a platform to project my skills and I am truly humbled by the fact that today I am getting to do that. My experience in the industry has been a roller coaster ride with a lot of ups and downs, but I have learnt that at the end of it, it's all worth it.

## ■ Do you have any regrets?

Till date, I don't regret anything I have done in life. If I talk about my journey in the industry, it has been beautiful. None of the characters that I have played overlaps each other. We should not regret anything. After all, we do choose the opportunities that we think is right at that time. How things will unfold is not in anyone's hands. Regrets just make you sad and I don't want to feel sad for the choices that I have made. I have surely mellowed with time. I might not do the roles now which I did earlier, but when back then, I was proud of what I was doing and will always be.

## ■ What is there in the pipeline?

My pipeline is full with the current show that I am doing. It is my only priority. I am focused and would like to be loyal to it. I believe to make one's work stand out one should focus on a single thing at a time. That is the reason I prefer not to juggle projects.



COVID-19

# Officers deployed in hosps for better Covid management: CM

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid high surge in the Covid-19 cases, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday deputed IAS and DANICS officers in Government and private hospitals to ensure better Covid management.

According to the order of Director General Health Services (DGHS), Delhi Government, 15 DANICS officers have been deployed in private hospitals and 24 DANICS probationers were deployed in State Government hospitals to assist the Nodal IAS officers in overall general superintendence.

"The IAS officials shall spearhead and oversee the entire COVID management apart from their regular duties, and will be assisted by DANICS officials, with immediate effect," the order stated.

Arava Gopi Krishna deputed in Lok Nayak Hospital, Vikram Malik in GTB and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, Dr Sonal Swaroop in Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Satendra Dursawat in SRHC, Awanshi Kumar in DCB hospital, Himanshu Gupta in Ambedkar Nagar, Ramesh Verma in Dr BSA and Bupesh Chaudhry in Acharya Shri Bhikshu hospital.

Delhi government's order to depute officers in hospitals

came a day after the capital witnesses highest single – day surge with 19,486 Covid -19 positive cases in 24 hours while the positivity rose to 20 percent.

Delhi government said that these IAS officers, designated as Nodal Officers, will oversee overall management of the COVID-19 hospitals assigned to them, and will exercise general superintendence, and scan the directions and control over the functioning of the hospitals. Additionally, Medical Superintendents and Directors of the respective hospitals would obtain concurrence of all decisions relating to COVID management from the assigned Nodal Officer.

Besides, CM Kejriwal also instructed to Nodal Officers to utilise their staff from the original office to assist them with the operations at the hospital. "The DANICS Officers who have been stationed in private hospitals as Nodal Officers will handhold the management of the hospitals and oversee that the government instructions and orders are being adhered to, and compiled in letter and spirit," he said, "Moreover, the grievance redressal systems, operated via telephone helpline numbers, shall be overseen and examined by the Nodal Officers both in private and government hospitals," he added.

## Government to add 6,000 oxygen beds in 3 to 4 days, says CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To meet the demand of beds amid high surge in corona cases, the Delhi Government will be adding 6,000 oxygen beds in the next three-four days to its health infrastructure, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said.

After a meeting with health officials, Kejriwal said the health infrastructure has its limits; due to rapidly increasing cases in Delhi, we are facing a shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, and Tocilizumab. "Some labs have started taking up more samples than their actual capacity; strict action would be taken against such labs that collect more samples than their actual capacity and do not provide the report within 24 hours," he said. "We have been receiving multiple complaints of hospitals denying beds to patients. Those hospitals that are providing wrong information on the app or on phone calls would have to face strict action, strict instructions to the officials have been given to carry out raids," he added further.

## Govt to provide best medical facilities: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, along with the Health Minister of Delhi Satyendar Jain, visited the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital and GTB Hospital on Saturday to review the situation at the hospitals.

Sisodia inspected the admission system of the hospitals. "Inspected the patient admission system at Rajiv Gandhi Hospital. Our Government is determined to provide the best medical facilities," he tweeted.

AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chaddha who is also an MLA from Rajinder Nagar constituency visited the LNJP Hospital to inspect the triage and casualty area.

The Delhi Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has taken the decision of deputing 10 IAS officers as nodal officers in state government hospitals, 15 'Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Service' (DANICS) officers as nodal officers in private hospitals and additionally 24 DANICS probationers who are currently undergoing financial training in 'Health



and Family Welfare Department'.

The IAS officials shall spearhead and oversee the entire COVID management apart from their regular duties and will be assisted by DANICS officials with immediate effect.

"These officers, designated as nodal officers, will oversee overall management of the COVID-19 hospitals assigned to them and will exercise general superintendence and scan the directions and control over the functioning of the hospi-

tals," the government said in a statement.

Additionally, Medical Superintendents and Directors of the respective hospitals would obtain concurrence of all decisions relating to COVID management from the assigned nodal officer. The nodal officers have also been instructed to utilise their staff from the original office to assist them with the operations at the hospital, it said.

The DANICS officers who have been stationed in private

hospitals as Nodal Officers will handhold the management of the hospitals and oversee that the government instructions and orders are being adhered to, and compiled in letter and spirit, it added.

Moreover, the grievance redressal systems, operated via telephone helpline numbers, shall be overseen and examined by the Nodal Officers both in private and government hospitals.

In a review meeting held on Friday Kejriwal stated, "Not only one, but there should be multiple assistance numbers in the hospitals and nodal persons should be appointed at every helpline number. No urgent calls should be missed or turned down." The respective hospital staff has also been instructed to see that the contact information of the Nodal Officers are displayed in the hospitals at the right spots.

During the review meeting, Kejriwal also said, "Our health teams must reach out to every individual in home isolation and provide oximeters, where in the general public should receive every form of assistance while they are in home isolation."

## 50 inmates get shots in newly opened jab centre in Rohini Jail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Prisons department on Saturday established a Covid vaccination centre in Rohini Jail and vaccinated 50 eligible inmates, officials said. The officials said that a total of 363 inmates vaccinated so far in three jails of Delhi Prisons - Tihar, Mandoli and Rohini.

According to senior prison official, on Saturday, a COVID Vaccination Centre was started in Rohini Jail with the help of District Immunization Officer (DIO), North.

"A total of 50 eligible inmates of Rohini Jail were vaccinated outside to the nearest COVID vaccination centre for the vaccine, under police guard," said Sandeep Goel, the Director General of Prison, Delhi.

Resident Medical Officer Tihar Jails Dr Ajay Dalal and Superintendent of jail number 10, Rohini, Sunder Bora supervised the vaccination drive and encouraged the inmates, he said.

# Weekend curfew halts life in Capital

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Life in the national Capital came to a halt after weekend curfew was imposed by the Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, amid rise in Covid-19 cases. The CM also appealed to people to adhere to the restrictions. Roads, markets and buses across Delhi were largely empty from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a majority of the National Capital's residents appeared to have stayed at home.

The weekend curfew aimed at breaking the chain of spiralling coronavirus infections was clamped at 10 pm on Friday and will continue till 5 am on Monday. Delhi Police Commissioner, SN Shrivastava also remained in the field and visited several places across the city. Police pickets could be seen around the city with police personnel and officials deployed, checking people having valid movement passes and issuing challan to those not following the guidelines.

Since Saturday morning, all the major markets including Sarojini Nagar, Connaught



A Delhi Policeman checks passes during weekend curfew in Delhi on Saturday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Place, Lajpat Nagar, South Extension, Chandni Chowk were closed. Only a few shops providing essential services remain open. These include pharmacies, grocery stores, some food outlets and banks.

However, the Municipal services including collection of garbage, watering of plants, and sweeping of the roads continue on Saturday. Food delivery service agents were also seen on roads as restaurants were given permission for continuing the service of home delivery. At some areas across the city some vegetable vendors were also present, as some people flocked to them for the

essential supplies.

Few numbers of public transport including Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses were also seen on roads while Delhi metro trains ran at reduced capacity and frequency for those involved in essential services and activities.

However, small a little crowd was seen at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Sardarjung hospitals where people had come for treatment or get them coronavirus tested. Several, daily-wagers including rickshaw pullers and auto-rickshaw drivers were also seen on roads

that were waiting to get passengers.

"There is a curfew but my only source of income is through rickshaw. Our daily needs are fulfilled through it," said Rahim (40), a rickshaw puller near Green Park in South Delhi.

During the day, Delhi Police Commissioner, Shrivastava also visited several places across the city to take stock of the execution of weekend curfew orders. The areas toured include, inter alia, Samastpur Picket, Akshardham, Ghaziपुर Crossing, Maharajpur Check Post, NH 24 Anand Vihar,

Jagatpuri, Krishna Nagar, New Usmanpur, Signature Bridge, Majnu Ka Tilla, ISBT Kashmiri Gate, Rajghat and Tilak Marg. Police personnel were found wearing all safety gears.

A vigorous awareness by using public announcement systems and flexi informative boards for the general public at various places were also seen on ground.

"All the district deputy commissioners of police are on the ground. The movement of essential goods and services is being facilitated. Police have also placed banners on pickets and outside the gates of residential colonies to inform people about the curfew and asked them not to come outside their houses unnecessarily," said Chinmoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police.

"Police teams are also monitoring the COVID helpline and assisting people facing difficulty in getting movement passes," said Biswal.

The Delhi government and the police have issued e-passes to exempted category people who need to go out during the curfew for necessary services and activities like vaccination, going to railway stations, airports, buying grocery, fruits and vegetables.

# Modi sending vaccines to Pakistan, Canada when Indians dying here: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the surge in Covid cases across the country, the senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Saturday lashed out at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah with regards to the dire state the country is in due to coronavirus.

Singh also questioned the Centre's decision to send vaccines to various countries. "There are dead bodies across the country, at crematoriums, at burial grounds; there is a shortage of vaccines here and people are anxious to get vaccinated. However, before vaccinating the population in India, Narendra Modi is busy sending vaccines to countries like Pakistan and Canada," said Singh.

He said both PM and Home Minister appear to care more for elections than for the lives of citizens. "Uttar Pradesh is particularly in bad shape, with no beds available. Family members are running from pillar to post trying their best



to arrange for oxygen, a hospital bed and basic medicines. People are dying in hospitals, but the Yogi Adityanath government, instead of attempting to improve or address the situation, is busy putting up screens in front of cremation grounds," said Singh.

"Yogi Adityanath government has colossaly failed in addressing the coronavirus situation in Uttar Pradesh and it's time that the Centre made an immediate intervention. People had to wait for hours to cremate their loved ones. The Varansi where Modiji said 'I've been called by Ganga Maiyya', saw 125 corpses being cremated at the Harishchandra Ghat on Friday," said Singh.

Singh also raised the issue of being unable to get a COVID test in some districts in Uttar Pradesh, referring to a case in

## HE SAID BOTH PM AND HOME MINISTER APPEAR TO CARE MORE FOR ELECTIONS THAN FOR THE LIVES OF CITIZENS

Ambedkarnagar where the patient could not get a ventilator in the medical college despite his lungs having failed.

The senior AAP leader also spoke about reports of unavailability of beds, oxygen and ventilators in hospitals of all districts. "The Centre should keep an eye on Uttar Pradesh and make special announcements given the situation in the state," he said.

"The Delhi Government has written to the Centre on various issues related to COVID-19, and that the Centre should give an entire account of the PM-Cares Fund to the people of India. The ventilators purchased in Rajasthan from this fund are 90 to 95 per cent defective, which may well lead to large scale corruption," Singh claimed.

## WEEKEND CURFEW

# Top cop reviews implementation of measures at places

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner, SN Shrivastava on Saturday visited various parts of the national Capital to take stock of the execution of weekend curfew, imposed by Delhi Government amid rise in coronavirus cases in the city.

The areas the CP visited includes, inter alia, Samastpur picket, Akshardham, Ghaziपुर Crossing, Maharajpur Check Post, National Highway- 24, Anand Vihar, Jagatpuri, Krishna Nagar, New Usmanpur, Signature Bridge, Majnu Ka Tilla, ISBT Kashmiri Gate, Rajghat and Tilak Marg. Police personnel were found wearing all safety gears. \

A vigorous awareness by using public announcement system and flexi informative boards for general public at various places were also seen on ground.

During interaction with the field functionaries, the CP reiterated to enforce the weekend curfew instructions in letter and spirit. The staff was emphasised upon to be firm and polite while checking persons and vehicles.

"Strict action is to be taken



against those found willfully disobeying the weekend curfew instructions," said the CP. However, Shrivastava emphasized that the needy and genuine persons must be dealt with compassionately and their hassle-free movement be facilitated.

The Special Commissioner of Police, Law & Order, Joint Commissioners of Police, all ranges, district Deputy Commissioners Police of the respective areas, who were supervising the police arrangements were accompanied the CP.

The deployment of forces at pickets, patrolling duty, market, mall and other vulnerable places and announcement on public address systems were found to be in action. In addition to local police, Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) was also deployed to bolster the strength of local police and ensure optimal police visibility on the streets.

# Needy finds good Samaritans in police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Beside enforcing the weekend curfew imposed by the Delhi Government in wake of coronavirus, the Delhi Police also extended its hands to the needy across the national Capital.

Police said one Pratiksha, a native of Chhattisgarh, resides alone in Old Rajinder Nagar. She is preparing for the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). She suffered from Covid-19 and was unable to walk. She sent a message to Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Karol Bagh for some medicines and food items.

Thereafter, constable Narendra, on the direction of ACP Karol Bagh, provided her required medicine and other items. She is being looked after by beat staff.

In the north district, 500 immunity booster homeopathy medicine distributed at pickets, police said.

"One Paras Chand admitted in Shanti Mukund Hospital was in need of remdesivir injection but it was not available. The ACP Preet Vihar, Virender Punj, who had worked at a chemist shop in his childhood, use his contacts and got two injections available to the patient," said the senior police official.

In another instance, the police

also helped a senior citizen who was scheduled to be vaccinated for COVID but have no one to take him at the centre.

"A senior citizen, Vijay Bansal informed Station House Officer (SHO) Hauz Qazi, that he have to get vaccinated as no one is there in his family to take him at the centre following which the beat staff took him to Covid center where he got vaccinated and he after getting vaccinated was dropped at his home by the police personnel," said the senior police official.

The city police had on Friday warned that people venturing out without valid reasons, during the weekend curfew, would face arrest and prosecution for not following COVID-19 guidelines.

The weekend curfew aimed at breaking the chain of spiralling coronavirus infection was clamped at 10 pm on Friday and will continue till 5 am on Monday.

The Delhi government and the police have issued e-passes to exempted category people who need to go out during the curfew for necessary services and activities like vaccination, going to railway stations, airports, buying grocery, fruits and vegetables.

Public transport, including DTC, cluster buses and metro trains, are running at reduced capacity.

## Helpline receives over 1,500 calls by Saturday evening

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police Covid helpline, set up on eve of weekend curfew on Friday, at the new Police Headquarters has received over 1,500 calls for facilitation till Saturday evening, said police official.

"The 24x7 Covid Helpline 011-23469900 was started keeping in view the experiences gained during the lockdown period in 2020. It has 10 dedicated lines on which selected personnel of Delhi Police drawn from specialized units have been deployed to attend to calls and resolve the difficulties faced by the public," said Chinmoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police.

"Since 8 PM last night, over 1500 calls have been received till today afternoon which have been addressed properly," said Biswal.

"Majority if the calls relate to queries pertaining to what is allowed and what are not during the day and night curfew on the weekend, apart from issues related to difficulties in e-passes or movement passes and the issuing authorities," said Biswal.

"Several categories of emergencies not listed out for issue of e pass was also the subject of many calls. The citizens are being guided to apply on the dedicated websites and also being conveyed about the various DDMA guidelines which are enforced as on date," Biswal said.

In case of genuine need, issues have been escalated to senior district police officials to resolve specific issues in their jurisdiction to facilitate emergencies for benefit of the needy public," Biswal added.

# Healthcare system has completely collapsed in Capital: LoP Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Declaring present corona situation, a 'medical emergency', the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the legislative Assembly, Rambir Singh Bidhuri, said that the healthcare system has completely collapsed and the Kejriwal Government has failed to deal with the emerging Covid-19 crisis endangering people's lives.

Bidhuri said the Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal had been lying to the people of Delhi about the medical facilities and the capacity of his government to handle the COVID 19 crisis. "The Chief Minister has been constantly lying to the people of Delhi that the situation was under control and thousands of beds in Government hospitals were available. Today he is saying that there are no beds and the government was running out of options. Where are the 4000-odd beds he had talked about two days ago. Why cannot those beds be converted into ICU beds and be made available to the people of Delhi. It is shameful that people are asking for help on social media and not from the government meaning that they had lost faith in the government machinery," he added.

He said the emergence of 24,000 cases in the last 24 hours indicated a serious healthcare crisis in the Capital and the situation was now out of control of the AAP Government which had thrown up its hands. "The Chief Minister at his press conference today

accepted that his government had lost control over the situation and had sought help from the Central Government. This is when only in the last one-week Shri Kejriwal has been telling people that all was well, and everything was under control. The much-applauded healthcare system in the Capital had been thoroughly exposed," he added.

The Chief Minister had also accepted that there was a shortage of medicines, oxygen, and beds in hospitals across the private and public sector. At the same time, the Chief Minister also accepted that a massive black marketing of the COVID 19 medicines was taking place in Delhi but expressed its failure to do anything about it. Why was not a crackdown against the black marketers not undertaken by the State Government when they knew that the situation had taken a turn for the worse. Isn't it being a failure of the administration and the government," he asked?

Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Adesh Gupta also targeted the AAP government and said the Kejriwal government never worked to ensure sufficient hospital beds or stock of oxygen and Remdesivir injections for the capital.

"Delhi is a wholesale market of medicines from where supplies go to all over North India and for the last 15 days everyone knew that black on covid medicines were going on but the Kejriwal government did nothing to stop it," he added.



COVID-19

# PM reviews situation, calls for tapping potential

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Covid-19 cases surging alarmingly in India amid the second wave of the pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday stressed the need to utilise the full potential of India's pharmaceutical industry to meet the rising demand of various medicines. He also directed that additional supply of beds through temporary hospitals and isolation centers should be ensured.

The Prime Minister held a review meeting with top Government officials to take stock of the Coronavirus situation even as States have complained about shortage of vaccines, medicines and oxygen cylinders.

He reiterated that there is no substitute to testing, tracking and treatment and said that all necessary measures must be taken to ramp up the availability of hospital beds for Covid patients.

Local administrations need to be proactive and sensitive to people's concerns, he outlined as he reviewed the status of supply of Remdesivir and other medicines and directed the concerned officers that installation of approved medical oxygen plants should be sped up.

On vaccine, he said the entire national capacity must be used to ramp up the production.

The PMO in a statement said various aspects relating to medicines, oxygen, ventilators and vaccination were discussed during the COVID review meeting chaired by PM Modi.

"The Prime Minister directed that close coordination with States must be ensured in handling the pandemic. The Prime Minister was briefed on actions taken to address the issue of availability of Remdesivir. Through the efforts of the Government, capacity and production augmentation for manufacturing of Remdesivir has been ramped up to provide around 74.10 lakh vials/month in May while the normal production output in January-February being just 27-29 lakh vials/month," the PMO stated.

"Supplies have also increased from 67,900 vials on 11th April going up to over 2,06,000 vials on 15th April 2021 which are being particularly focused on states with high caseload and high demand," it added. Modi took note of the ramped up production capacity, and directed that issues relating to real-time supply chain management to

States must be resolved urgently in coordination with the States. The Prime Minister directed that use of Remdesivir and other medicines must be in accordance with approved medical guidelines, and that their misuse and black marketing must be strictly curbed.

On the issue of supply of medical oxygen, the Prime Minister directed that the installation of approved medical oxygen plants should be sped up. "162 PSA Oxygen plants are being installed in 32 States/UTs from PM CARES. The officers informed that 1 lakh cylinders are being procured and they will be supplied to states soon. The officers briefed the PM that they are in constant supply with 12 high burden states in assessing the current and future requirement of medical oxygen. A supply mapping plan for 12 high burden states till 30th April has also been undertaken," the PMO maintained.

The Prime Minister also reviewed the status of availability and supply of ventilators. The Prime Minister noted that a real time monitoring system has been created, and directed that concerned State governments should be sensitized to use the system proactively.

# 3 different Covid tests mandatory for Kumbh, Char Dham Yatra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking cognisance of the surging Covid-19 cases including that of the new strain across the nation, Uttarakhand's Tourism and Culture Minister Satpal Maharaz said that CBNAAT, RT-PCR and TrueNat tests are mandatory for devotees coming from other States to the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar and the Char Dham Yatra. The Minister has also requested all to get vaccinated.

Maharaz said that devotees coming to the Kumbh or Char Dham Yatra should follow all the Covid guidelines including the wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing while observing religious traditions. Welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to observe the Kumbh Mela symbolically considering the surge in Covid-19 cases, the minister reiterated that CBNAAT, RT-PCR and TrueNat tests will be mandatory for all coming from other states to the Kumbh and Char Dham Yatra. He said, "We welcome the Sadhus who want to observe the complete Kumbh as per tradition. However, I would like to stress here that the Covid regulations should be

followed during the Snans to be held on April 27 and 30 in the Kumbh."

He further said that the Snan of the Dev Dolis in the Kumbh will be held on the designated date with observance of the Covid regulations. Maharaz said that he had talked to the chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat regarding this, adding that wearing of masks, observing social distancing and use of sanitisers will be mandatory on this occasion. The minister averred that the state government is fully prepared for the Char Dham Yatra.

In addition to observance of Covid regulations, three different Covid tests have also been made mandatory. Any person coming from another state will have to get these tests done mandatorily. Online registration will be done for the Char Dham Yatra and approval will be granted after the different necessary tests. Pilgrims will be allowed to undertake the Char Dham Yatra as per the fixed capacity, he added. It is pertinent to mention here that Gangotri and Yamunotri will be reopened to the public on May 14, Kedarnath will be reopened on May 17.

# Govt new action plan to be announced today, says Nitish

**Patna:** At the all-party meeting called by the Governor on Covid situation in Bihar, the BJP and the RJD on Saturday favoured weekend shutdown to break the chain of coronavirus surge during second wave in the State.

Emerging from the meeting, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said they briefed everybody about the steps taken by the State Government to deal with the challenges posed by resurgence of the disease and noted the points of view of all the political parties.

Taking into account the valuable suggestions made at the meeting and after getting the feedback from an interaction with the district officials on Sunday, further steps will be taken to more effectively contain the spread of the virus, Kumar told reporters.

"The newer measures that will be announced tomorrow will not be final and more steps will be taken as the situation unfolds in future," he said. He said the participants were informed about a talk he had with the Chairman of Medanta hospital Naresh Trehan to convert his hospital here as a dedicated centre for COVID for care of the patients.

The chief minister said that the state government was

working to ensure adequate availability of medicines and oxygen for critically ill patients.

He thanked all the parties for coming with important suggestions and made an appeal to work together to minimise the impact of the pandemic in the state.

Senior leaders of the RJD, BJP, Congress, JD(U), CPI(ML) and Hindustani Awam Morcha head Jitan Ram Manjhi among others attended the meeting chaired by Governor Phagu Chauhan in virtual mode.

RJD was represented by leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav, while BJP, Congress and JD(U) state presidents Sanjay Jaiswal, Madan Jha and Umesh Kushwaha respectively put across their parties viewpoints.

Speaking at the meet, Tejashwi Yadav did not forget to score a political point by blaming the state government of "mismanaging" COVID situation and "at the end trying to make everybody party to this."

He, however, said in the interest of the people of Bihar, the party is offering a volley of suggestions to more effectively deal with the situation.

Yadav favoured imposition of weekend curfew.

# Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah to remain closed till April 30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The famous Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah here will remain closed till April 30 in view of the unprecedented surge in Covid-19 cases in the national Capital, its chairman Afsar Ali Nizami said on Saturday.

"We took the decision keeping in view the daily rise in coronavirus cases in the capital. Even though we have been following all Covid-19 protocols, including wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, we thought it best to keep the dargah closed till April 30," said Nizami, chairperson, Dargah Sharif Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.

In case the prevailing situation does not improve, we can extend the dargah's closure date further, he added.

The holy month of Ramadan is currently on and Muslims from across the country come to pay obeisance at the dargah.

During an online briefing on Saturday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the number of COVID-19 cases are rising rapidly with 24,000 fresh cases reported in the last 24 hours.

This is the highest single-day surge in the national capital till date. A day before, 19,486 COVID-19 cases and 141 deaths were reported.

# Uddhav warns of 3rd wave as Maha records a record 67,123 fresh cases, 419 new deaths

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

On a day when Maharashtra logged an all-time high of 67,123 infections and second highest-ever daily Covid toll of 419, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray warned the State of a possible "third wave of Covid-19".

Interacting with some of the leading industrialists and Corporate leaders, Uddhav said: "Currently, we are in dire need of oxygen, and currently the entire production is being utilized for medical purposes. Given the number of new patients coming up daily --around 60,000 daily--, we need a lot more oxygen for which the industries can help out".

The chief minister went on to urge the Industrialists and

Corporate House to collaborate with the Maharashtra government in fighting the current Covid-19 crisis. He also told them that they could contribute immediately by setting up Covid care facilities on their plants and premises and plans 'Covid-compatible workplaces' for the future.

Health Secretary Dr. Pradeep Vyas told the gathering that the state was conducting 3-lakh tests per million population and though the death rate is low, the infections were very high.

Vyas urged the industrialists to start setting up small oxygen plants in their premises to absorb natural oxygen based on new technologies and provide the entire production (oxygen) for medical purposes.

# Lalu to walk free...

From page 1

Mandal said the court has granted bail to him on the basis of depositing a bond of ₹5 lakh and a personal bond of ₹1 lakh. He has also been asked to submit his passport and has been asked not to change his phone number and address. This case is related to RC-38A/96 in connection with the illegal withdrawal from Dumka treasury. There is a case of illegal withdrawal of about ₹3.13 crore.

Mandal said all the formalities are expected to be completed expeditiously and the release in all probability will happen on Monday. Llaui will be freed after 39 months and 25 days of incarceration.

Earlier, taking the plea of the CBI as true, Justice Aparesk Kumar Singh had rejected Lalu's bail plea. Lalu had then once again requested for bail from the Jharkhand High Court.

Lalu was serving jail sentences in four cases of fodder scam. Recently, Lalu's bail plea was filed in the High Court on the basis of completing half of the sentence. According to Lalu's Advocate, on April 9, half of Lalu's sentence in the Dumka treasury case has been completed. Ranchi's CBI Court had sentenced him to seven years in the Dumka treasury case.

However, in the biggest and fifth case of fodder scam of illegal withdrawal from Doranda treasury, hearing is going on in Ranchi's special CBI Court.

# 4 Sikhs...

From page 1

"While we don't yet know the motive of the shooter, he targeted a facility known to be heavily populated by Sikh employees, and the attack is traumatic for our community as we continue to face senseless violence," Satjeet Kaur, the Sikh Coalition Executive Director, said in a statement.

This is the worst Sikh massacre in the US after the Oak Creek Gurdwara mass shooting in Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, where seven members of the community were killed.

The attack marks at least the 45th mass shooting in the US since the Atlanta-area spa shootings on March 16, CNN reported. It is the deadliest shooting since 10 people were killed March 22 at a grocery store in Boulder, Colorado.

"Enough is enough - our community has been through enough trauma," Komal Chohan, granddaughter of one of the deceased-Amarjeet Johal- was quoted as saying by the New York Post.

"I am heartbroken to confirm that my naniji (maternal grandmother), Amarjeet Kaur Johal, is among

those killed in the senseless shooting at the FedEx facility in Indianapolis," Chohan said.

She said that several of her family members work at the particular facility and are traumatised.

"My nani, my family, and our families should not feel unsafe at work, at their place of worship, or anywhere," Chohan said.

Jaswinder Singh, who lost his life in the shooting, was due to get his first paycheck at the facility this month and was working on the night shift to sort out the mail.

"He was a simple man. He used to pray and meditate a lot, and he did community service," said Harjap Singh Dhillon, a relative of Singh, in a New York Times report.

Amarjeet Sekhon, another deceased in the incident who began working at FedEx about six months ago, leaves behind two teenage sons who are yet to come to terms with their mother's death.

Rimpi Girm, Sekhon's niece, said she is struggling to explain her loss of her younger son.

"We can't even think of what to tell him. All of a sudden last night his mom went to work, and she never came back today," she was quoted as saying in the report.

# Delhi gasping for oxygen...

From page 1

People venturing out of homes without valid reasons during the weekend curfew will face arrest and prosecution for violating anti-Covid regulations, the Delhi Police had warned on Friday. The warning was sounded out after the Shrivastava in a video conference with all districts' deputy commissioner police commissioners asked them to implement strictly the weekend restrictions imposed by the Delhi government to curb the rapid spread of infection in the national Capital. Kejriwal said the Central Government has always helped Delhi in its fight against corona and he hoped that this time too, it will help Delhi.

He said the experts don't know how many new cases would arise in the days to come and what will be the peak of corona in Delhi, as Delhi reported 19,500 cases the day before yesterday and 24,000 cases in the last 24 hours.

"We have to vigorously prepare for any kind of situation. We can't be laid back and must work tirelessly, 24 hours, and make the necessary arrangements so that we're one step ahead of corona," he added.

Kejriwal said, "In AIIMS, there are 11,062 beds in total. Out of these, only 23 have been reserved for corona. In the Safdarjung hospital, there are 2,900 beds out of which only 204 have been reserved for corona. I requested him, saying that if at least 50 per cent of beds are reserved for Corona, an additional 3,000-4,000 beds could be made available for the patients.

# Covid test, quarantine to...

From page 1

"District administrations should collect information about those returning to the state after taking part in the Kumbh and ensure that they "self-isolate or are quarantined", said an order issued by Madhya Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajesh Rajora. MP has reported 11,269 new Covid-19 cases (21.4 per cent positivity rate), 6,497 recoveries, and 66 deaths in the last 24 hours.

Karnataka had on Thursday made RT-PCR Test mandatory for the people returning to the State after taking part in the Kumbh Mela at Haridwar. Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar urged those returning from the mela to stay in home quarantine and get themselves tested. The Madhya Pradesh Government has also planned to quarantine kumbh returnees to check Covid-19. According to Haridwar Chief Medical Officer Dr SK Jha, 229 "sadhus" who attended Kumbh mela in Haridwar tested positive for the coronavirus disease including Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad president Mahant Narendra Giri, who is admitted at the All India Institute Of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh. Mahamandaleswar of Maha Nirvani Akhara from Madhya Pradesh, Swami Kapil Dev, who was under treatment for Covid-19 at a private hospital here, died on April 13. On Saturday, 175 "sadhus" who attended Kumbh Mela have found infected from coronavirus. It is estimated that over 2,000 people had tested positive for Covid-19 in the Haridwar Kumbh Mela area from April 10 to 16 confirming fears that one of the world's largest religious gatherings may contribute further to the rapid rise in coronavirus cases.

# Maha threatens to seize Remdesivir exporting stocks

From page 1

Thereafter, NCP chief spokesperson and State's Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik led the charge and lambasted the Centre for its discriminatory attitude towards the Maharashtra Government over the supply of Remdesivir vials and also threatened to seize the stocks of Remdesivir from the exporting firms and supply them to the needy people.

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope flagged the shortage of medical oxygen in the State and asked the Centre to give permission to it for transporting liquid Oxygen in railway containers.

Reproducing a letter written by Food & Drugs Control Administration, Gujarat, asking an exporter to make available Remdesivir vials (meant for exports) for meeting Covid-19 needs in its state, Malik tweeted, "Here is the another proof of step motherly treatment given by Central Government to #Maharashtra. This is the approval letter to one of the export companies to supply stock of #Remdesivir to the state of Gujarat Only. Can these double standards be explained?"

In one of the series of tweets put out on the issue, Malik said, "It is sad & shocking that when the Government of Maharashtra asked the 16 export companies for #Remdesivir, we were told that the Central Government has asked them not to supply the medicine to #Maharashtra. These companies were warned, if they did, their license would be cancelled". In a significant tweet, Malik said, "It is a dangerous precedent and under these circumstances, the Maharashtra Government will have no choice but to seize the stock of Remdesivir from these exporters and supply it to the needy".

He tagged the Prime Minister's Office and Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan in the tweet.


"There are 16 export oriented units in our country that have 20 lakh vials of #Remdesivir, since exports are now banned by the government, these units are seeking permission to sell this medicine in our country but the central government is denying the same," Malik said. "The Government says it should be sold only through 7 companies that are

producing it. These 7 companies are refusing to take responsibility. This is a decision making crisis. While there is a requirement of this medicine and availability too, a quick decision is the need of the hour. This problem must be solved and the vials must be supplied to government hospitals in all States immediately."

Talking to media persons separately, Malik also castigated Modi over the latter's handling of Covid-19 situation in the country. He said if the Prime Minister wanted to take credit for Covid vaccine, he should also take responsibility for deaths too. He said if the vaccination certificates carried Modi's photograph, then the death certificates of the Covid victims should also carry his image.

The way Modi's photo is put on vaccination certificates, we demand that PM's photo should be put on death certificates also. If they are taking credit for Covid-19 vaccination, then, they will have to take responsibility for deaths too," Malik said. "As the number of Covid cases are going up in the country, the number of deaths is also increasing on large scale. The funeral sites are running out of space to accommodate the dead and people are in queues. The Centre is answerable for the present situation arisen due to the circumstances and it cannot run away from answering it," Malik said. Miffed by a full-fledged campaign launched by the Maharashtra Government against the Modi dispensation over the discrimination against the State, Goyal put out a series of tweets contesting the "claims" by the Maharashtra Government over the discrimination in the supply of Oxygen and Remdesivir to the State.

"Saddened to see @OfficeOfUT's gimmicks on oxygen. GoI, with all stakeholders, is ensuring maximum oxygen production in India. We are currently producing 110% of Oxygen generating capacity and diverting all available Oxygen from industrial use to medical use," Goyal said. "Maharashtra has so far received the highest quantity of Oxygen in India. Centre is in daily touch with State Governments to assess their needs & help them in best possible manner," Goyal said.



**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR**

e mail - [serw\\_kpd@yahoo.com](mailto:serw_kpd@yahoo.com)

**No. Tender Online RCK - 04/21**  
**Letter No.- 967**  
**Date - 12.4.2021**

**e-Procurement NDT/CE**

**1. Name of the work**

**2. Class of Contractor**

**3. Time for Completion**

**4. Detail Projects**

**5. Other Details**

: Construction of Periodical maintenance Works in the District of Kendrapara & Jajpur .

: **B & A** Class as specified in the column 6 of the Annexure.

: As specified in the Column-7 of the Annexure.

: As per Annexure attached

:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur	Tender Online RCK - 04 / 21	19.04.2021 at 11.00 AM	04.05.2021 to 5.00 PM	03.05.2021 up to 2.00PM	05.05.2021 at 12.00 PM	12.05.2021 at 12.00 PM

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur

OIPR-25129/11/0001/2122

**Superintending Engineer Rampur Circle, P.W.D Rampur**  
Letter No. 2626 /E-Tender /21-22  
Dated : 8-4-2021

**(E-Tender)**

1. The Superintending Engineer Rampur Circle, U.P.P.W.D. Rampur on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved contractors registered with UP PWD, Class A, B, C (for Building work) The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

2.

SL No	DIST- RCT	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lakhs)	Cost of bid Document	Times of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer of the Executing Work	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Bijnor	Construction of Auditorium at Indira Bal Bhawan Campus in Distt Bijnor FY 2020-21	48.00	4.40 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	235/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	66 Months including rainy season	Provincial Division, P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad

> The Rate adopted in the BOQ all Other taxes but excluding GST Taxes.

> Bid Security and tender cost should be deposited online by Net Banking as per Column 5 and 6 in the table.

> Bids must be download online from 10:00 AM on date 07.05.2021 to 5:00 PM on dated 13.05.2021 and the technical bids will be opened online date 15.05.2021 at 12:30 PM in Office of Superintending Engineer Rampur Circle PWD Rampur and Financial bids of the qualified bidders will be opened on date & time as notified. According to the provisions of Government Order no. 1/2018/307078-2-2018/42 /172017 (22) Date 03-01-2018 after opening of the technical and financial bids, the qualified bidder has to submit original documents personally in department office. In the event of non submission of original documents by the bidder, the appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the provisions of G.O.

All terms & conditions can be seen on website <http://tender.up.nic.in>

(Sunil Sagar) Executive Engineer Provincial Division, P.W.D. Bijnor Ph. 01342 - 262776 Email - [psbjn@rediffmail.com](mailto:psbjn@rediffmail.com)

(Virendra Kumar) Superintending Engineer Rampur Circle, P.W.D. Rampur Ph. 0595 - 2351163 Email - [pwdrampur@gmail.com](mailto:pwdrampur@gmail.com)

UP- 163291 Date 16.4.2021 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट [www.upgovt.nic.in](http://www.upgovt.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध है।



# Facing shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, ventilator: States



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Grappling with the surge in Covid-19 cases, various States in a meeting with the Centre on Saturday highlighted the shortage of oxygen cylinders, Remdesivir in hospitals, ventilator stocks and poor supply of vaccine doses. Eleven States and Union Territories, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, account for 79.32 per cent of the new coronavirus cases in the country were present at the meeting. The high-level meeting was chaired by Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan with the Health Ministers of 11 States and Union Territories to review measures taken by them for prevention, containment and management of the recent surge in Covid-19 cases.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to meet top officials of several ministries later in the evening to review the overall covid situation and vaccination drive.

M a h a r a s h t r a , Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have been reporting an unprecedented surge in new infections.

In a statement here, the Ministry said “Many of them (States) raised the issue of dovetailing the medical oxygen supply lines and capping of



## US must lift export ban on raw materials for production of vaccines, says CPM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) polit bureau on Saturday said that the United States must lift their export ban on raw materials for the production of vaccines. In a statement, the Left party pointed out that the export ban by the US is a double-speak, citing US President Joe Biden's assurances in the recently convened Quad Summit.

“The ban on exports of materials used in vaccine production goes completely against these stated aims. The Modi government, which sets

prices of essential drugs like Remdesivir which has been sold in the black market at exorbitant prices. “Double mutant strain in Maharashtra was a key point of concern. The Delhi Government requested for additional beds in Central Government hospitals as was done in 2020 to help tide over the emergent health crisis,” the Ministry said.

The notification of the Home Ministry, granting permission to states to utilize up to 50 per cent of their annual allocation of State Disaster

much store on the Quad alliance, must ensure that the Biden administration keeps to its committed word and immediately ensures supply of essential vaccine material to India. This is the least that must be done when India is facing vaccine shortage in the face of an unprecedented surge of Covid infections,” said CPI(M). The CPI(M) also pointed out the concerns raised by Serum Institute of India head Adar Poonawala on hampering of production in India due to the US Government's ban on export of raw materials of

manufacturers in the country. The steps taken for unhindered movement of oxygen cylinders from their manufacturing units across states were also detailed, the Ministry said.

Taking note of the active surge in cases witnessed since last February in which most states have now crossed their highest tally, Harsh Vardhan urged the states to give special focus on the prominent five to six cities in their administration and map medical colleges to either these cities or adjoining 2-3 districts. The states were asked to seek out positive

## Cong's 14-point attack on Govt over Covid 'mismanagement'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maintaining that India has been caught off guard in its fight against the deadly coronavirus once again despite having a year to prepare, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday urged the Government to ramp up its strategy to tackle the menace as she pointed out to the overwhelmed medical infrastructure and shortage of vaccines and drugs.

Sonia was speaking during the meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, which was attended by former party chief Rahul Gandhi, general secretaries and State in-charges of the party.

She reiterated her insistence on lowering the immunisation age to 25 years and above “as also all younger persons with at-risk health disorders like asthma, angina, diabetes, kidney & liver diseases and other similar ailments.”

The Congress came out with a 14-point attack on Government over ‘grave errors’ in Covid-19 management.

Sonia also spoke about her letter to Prime Minister



Narendra Modi after her meeting with chief ministers of Congress-ruled states to take a jibe at the Centre.

Both Sonia and Rahul earlier have written to Modi asking him to expand the country's vaccination drive against Covid-19.

“I have written to the Prime Minister after meeting with them. Our Chief Ministers have spoken to the Prime Minister and written to the concerned minister from time to time pleading for relief. Some of them were left with only a few days of vaccine, no oxygen or ventilators. But there has been thundering silence on the part of the Government. On the contrary some other states have received preferential treatment/relief,” she said.

“Instead of listening to the constructive suggestions of the opposition, Union Ministers are pressed into service to attack leaders of opposition for giving those sugges-

tions. This convoluted “me versus you” debate is childish and totally unnecessary,” she added.

Sonia said Goods and Services Tax (GST) on all equipment, instruments, medicines and support required to prevent and treat Covid-19 should be made free. “It is a matter of grave concern that life saving drugs like Remdesivir etc. and medical oxygen as also other basic supplements are subjected to GST @ 12%. Even basic equipments like Oxymeters and life saving critical equipment like ventilators are subjected to 20% GST. In the current state of affairs, this is inhuman and untenable,” she added.

The Government must provide financial support for the poor in the form of monthly income support and transfer ₹6,000 in the account of every eligible citizen, who have been hit by the partial curfews, travel restrictions, closure and lockdowns put in place by authorities, she said in her CWC meeting statement.

“Similarly, with reverse migration of labour already having started, it will be critical to immediately address

their need of safe transportation as indeed their suitable rehabilitation in host as well as home States,” Sonia said.

At the meet, she said that the Modi government was unprepared in evaluating and managing the crisis. She added that the Congress believed that fighting the pandemic was national challenge and that it should be kept above party politics. She said that the government did not listen to constructive suggestions made by the Opposition on the management of the pandemic, and that Union ministers attacked leaders of opposition for giving suggestions.

“This convoluted ‘me versus you’ debate is childish and totally unnecessary,” Sonia asserted accusing the Centre of giving preferential treatment to some states while maintaining “thundering silence” on requests of states ruled by the Congress and opposition parties.

“As the central and state governments move ahead to control the situation by resorting to partial curfews, travel restrictions, closure and lock downs; we will again be restricting economic activity that will hit the already beleaguered people, especially the poor and the daily wagers,” she said.

Taking on these challenging times as Indians rather than as political opponents will be true ‘Rajadharma’, Sonia stressed.

## Wearing 2 face masks more effective in beating Covid: Study



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Wearing two face coverings or masks can nearly double the effectiveness of filtering out SARS-CoV-2-sized particles, preventing them from reaching the wearer's nose and mouth and causing Covid-19, as per a recent study.

The findings published in JAMA Internal Medicine also states that the reason for the enhanced filtration is not about adding too many layers of cloth but eliminating any gaps or poor-fitting areas of a mask.

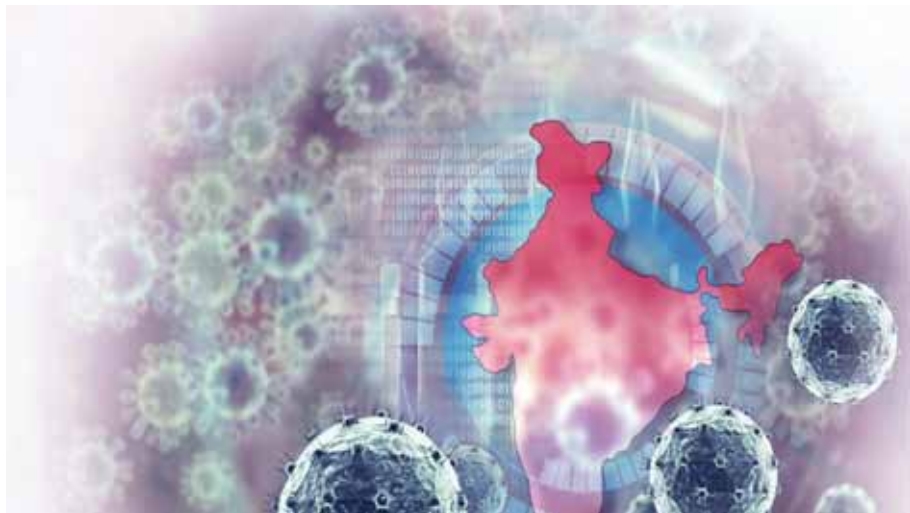
“The medical procedure masks are designed to have very good filtration potential based on their material, but the way they fit our faces isn't perfect,” said Emily Sickbert-Bennett, PhD, associate professor of infectious diseases at the UNC School of Medicine and lead author of the study.

To test the fitted filtration efficiency (FFE) of a range of masks, UNC researchers worked with James Samet, PhD, and colleagues in the USEPA Human Studies Facility on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill. There they filled a 10-foot by 10-foot stainless-steel exposure chamber with small salt particle aerosols and had researchers don combinations of masks to test how effective they were at keeping particles out of their breathing space.

A transmission electron microscopic image that shows SARS-CoV-2 also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes Covid-19, isolated from a patient in the US, as the Virus particles are shown emerging from the surface of cells cultured in the lab- the spikes on the outer edge of the virus particles give coronaviruses their name, crown-like.

Each individual mask or layered mask combination was fitted with a metal sample port, which was attached to tubing in the exposure chamber that measured the concentration of particles entering the breathing space underneath the researcher's mask. A second tube measured the ambient concentration of particles in the chamber. By measuring particle concentration in the breathing space underneath the mask

## Lack of Covid-suitable behaviour, virus mutation cause Covid spurt: AIIMS head



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lack of Covid-appropriate behaviour and mutation of the virus are the two main reasons behind the rapid spread of coronavirus infections in the country, AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria on Saturday said even as he expressed concern over the religious and political activities taking place in a few States, cautioning that they must be done in a restricted manner.

“The cause for the surge ... is multifactorial. But two main causes are that people have stopped following Covid-appropriate behaviour during January-February when the vaccination started and cases went down. Also, at this time, the virus mutated and spread more rapidly,” Dr Guleria said to a news agency.

“This is a time when a lot

of religious activities happen in our country and polls are also underway. We must understand lives are also important. We can do this in a restricted manner so that religious sentiment is not hurt & Covid appropriate behaviour can be followed,” said Dr Guleria. He also highlighted that India was witnessing a huge strain in the healthcare system and efforts need to be stepped up to keep increasing our hospital beds/resources for the increasing number of cases.

We also have to urgently bring down the number of Covid-19 cases, he added.

“This is a time when a lot of religious activities happen in our country and polls are also underway. We must understand that lives are also important. We can do this in a restricted manner so that

religious sentiments are not hurt and Covid-appropriate behaviour can be followed,” he said.

His remarks come in the backdrop of the ongoing Kumbh mela in Uttarakhand, which has attracted people from different parts of the country in large numbers.

Talking about the immunisation drive, Dr Guleria said that India should gradually lift or lower the age bar so that more and more people come into the pool of people who can be vaccinated. That will happen in the coming few weeks.

“We will have more and more vaccines that will come into the common pool which will allow us to open up the vaccination to a larger population,” he said.

altering the fit is about 40-60 per cent effective at keeping Covid-19-sized particles out. A cloth mask is about 40 per cent effective.

Their recent findings on doubling of face masks show that when a cloth mask is placed over a surgical mask, the FFE improved by about 20 per cent, and improved even more with a snug-fitting, sleeve-type mask, such as a gaiter. When layered over procedure masks, cloth masks improve fit by eliminating gaps and holding the procedure mask closer to the face, consistently covering the nose and mouth.

## DRDO setting up hosp in Ahmedabad for Covid patients



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has conveyed to the Gujarat Government that DRDO is establishing a 900-bedded hospital in Ahmedabad to cater to the “alarming surge” in Covid-19 cases there.

The Union Home Ministry has also directed the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) or the Central paramilitary forces to spare 25 doctors and 75 paramedics and ensure that they report by April 21 to man the hospital in Gujarat.

“The hospital is being established at the Gujarat University Convention Centre, Ahmedabad to cater to the alarming surge of the Covid cases there,” reads an order issued by Additional Director General (Medical) of CAPFs under the Union Home Ministry on Friday.

It has further been decided and conveyed that CAPFs are required to provide 25 medical officers and 75 paramedical/nursing staff, reads the order.

“It is, therefore, requested that the following number of doctors and paramedics/nursing staff be detailed for the purpose please,” it said.

The detailed staff should report to the nodal officer (Colonel B Chaubey, DRDO Hospital, Ahmedabad by April

21 positively, it said.

Through the order, the ADG (Medical), CAPFs, Dr Mukesh Saxena has also named Devarshi Raval as the nodal officer for making logistical arrangements at Gujarat University.

The letter has been circulated to Inspector General (Medical) of the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

The BSF will send 10 doctors and 30 paramedics, the CRPF will spare 10 doctors and 25 nursing staff and SSB to chip in with five doctors and 20 paramedical personnel for the DRDO hospital in Ahmedabad.

Through the communication to the heads of CRPF, BSF and SSB, the Ministry has asked them to send their team on priority and the doctors and paramedics have to report to the nodal officer of the said hospital latest by April 21.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) hospital set to be operationalised by late next week, officials said.

On Friday, the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh directed the DRDO to reopen the Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel Covid care hospital here which was set up in July last year. He has also asked the defence body to set up a new facility in Lucknow.

## Kumbh Mela: Plea in SC seeks direction to clear mass gathering from Haridwar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre and others to clear the “mass gathering” from Haridwar amid a surge in Covid-19 cases across the country and prescribe a safety protocol with respect to people returning from Kumbh Mela.

The plea, which referred to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases, has also sought directions to the Centre and the Uttarakhand government to immediately withdraw the advertisements inviting people to Haridwar for Kumbh Mela.

It said that the Election Commission should be asked to issue direction to the authorities in the states where elections are being held to strictly enforce COVID-19 guidelines during the poll process and take appropriate action against the violators.

The plea, filed by Noida-resident Sanjay Kumar Pathak, said that COVID-19 cases are increasing rapidly across the country and the health infrastructure is “crumbling” in many states.

It claimed that hospitals and crematoriums are running out of space and shortage of essential drugs has been reported from many cities.

The petition said that India is currently witnessing its highest surge in COVID-19

cases since onset of the pandemic, but visuals of lakh of devotees crowding in Haridwar for Kumbh Mela and in election rallies in states have surfaced.

“On the one hand, poor common man on the street is often punished and treated violently by the police and executive authorities for individual violations of COVID-19 rules and regulations in the name of strict enforcement, and on the other hand, the authorities are not only permitting but facilitating and promoting congregation of people in the events like Kumbh-2021 and election rallies,” the plea has alleged.

It sought the apex court's direction to the Centre, Uttarakhand government and the National Disaster Management Authority to not encourage or promote any gathering or event “inconsistent with the spirit and object of the COVID guidelines” and orders issued by these authorities.

“It is axiomatic that the respondents have turned a blind eye towards the violation of COVID-19 guidelines at the Kumbh Mela and during election campaigns and rallies which have the potential to become super spreader events but common people on the street is being fined and challans are being issued,” the plea has claimed.

## Private vehicle would not come within expression of public place: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A private vehicle does not come within the expression of a “public place” as per the explanation given under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the Supreme Court has said.

A bench comprising justices U U Lalit and K M Joseph made the observation while deciding an appeal challenging an order passed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court affirming their conviction and sentence under the NDPS Act.

Two bags of poppy straw were recovered from the accused while they were sitting in a jeep at a public

place. The trial court, after considering the evidence on record, acquitted accused Major Singh but convicted accused Boota Singh, Gurdeep Singh and Gurmohinder Singh, under the NDPS Act and sentenced them to rigorous imprisonment for 10 years.

They were also asked to pay a fine of Rs 1 lakh, failing which they were directed to undergo further rigorous imprisonment for two years.

The accused argued before the top court that the vehicle in question was a private one belonging to accused Gurdeep Singh and was not a public conveyance, though it was parked on a public road.



# Didi wanted to polarise certain vote bank: Modi

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

Slamming Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for not sparing even the dead to further her political interests Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that her urge to secure votes by polarizing the population was so much that she would not even mind taking out political rallies with the corpses of people who were killed in CISF firing at Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar last Saturday when fourth phase of polling was under way.

"Her intention was clear ... that she wanted to polarize the voters" by publicly exhibiting the dead bodies, the Prime Minister said referring to the leaked audio clip in which she was purportedly directing a TMC leader to postpone the burial of the dead till the next day so that she could take out a rally with the corpses.

"That Didi relies totally on vote bank politics and not development is clear" from the taped words, Modi said adding "due to this vote bank politics and politics of appeasement no development took place in the State."

That the conversation itself revealed a "deep-rooted conspiracy" was proved by the contents of the tape the Prime Minister said adding the clipping also established her fond-

ness to promote politics of vendetta.

The Chief Minister was however quick to respond attacking the BJP for being so afraid of its defeat that it had started tapping the telephonic conversations of the rival leaders. She threatened legal action against those who taped her phone call.

Referring to how Banerjee's politics was not limited to just political protests but had crossed all the limits of vendetta Modi said the people of Bengal had voted her to power to bring peace and prosperity of the people but her Government not only perpetrated the interests of nephews, extortionists and mafia but victimized the honest and right-minded people.

He was apparently referring to the audio tape in which the Chief Minister was allegedly asking Partho Pratim Roy a TMC leader from Sitalkuchi to employ professional people to draw FIRs against the central forces and also get the local SP and the circle inspector framed in that.

Referring to the alleged ballooning ego of the Chief Minister which stopped her from attending the meetings convened by the Centre on various important issues the Prime Minister said that his Government repeatedly invited her to join important meetings like the ones on reviewing

the corona situation but she skipped them.

"Didi's ego has ballooned so much that she sees nothing beyond it. The Central Government has invited the Chief Ministers to discuss a number of important issues like the pandemic situation ... most of the Chief Ministers attended but she would not come to these meetings on some pretext or the other," the Prime Minister said.

Banerjee had earlier attacked the Prime Minister and the BJP for importing people from outside Bengal to campaign in the elections as a result of which the number of cases in the State was increasing. Saying that though Asansol region was known for its industrial potency it had been continuously neglected by the local powers that be, Modi said that the double-engine BJP Government would convert the place into a national industrial hub.

"This region has the potential to become the industrial centre of India ... you have factories from aluminum to glass from cycle to rail, from paper to steel ... the people used to come here from all across India to work in these factories ... but today these people are migrating ... because of the mafia raj perpetrated by Didi who came to power with the slogan of Ma-Mati Manush," the Prime Minister said.

## Brisk polling, stray violence, no death in phase 5 Bengal polls

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

With no death being reported, the fifth phase of Bengal Assembly elections experienced brisk polling in spite of sporadic violence coming in from various places. The State recorded a cool 78.36 per cent voter turnout across 45 seats that went to polls on Saturday.

Reports of violence came from up market Salt Lake (Bidhannagar) constituency in northern fringes of Kolkata where the supports of TMC and BJP clashed following mutual allegations of rigging. At Gayeshpur in Nadia district the houses of saffron supporters including a BJP booth president were ransacked by alleged TMC men after he reportedly foiled attempts of booth capturing.

While polling was 81.73 per cent at Jalpaiguri, it was 81.72 per cent at Burdwan East till reports last came in at 5 pm. In North 24 Parganas 74.83 per cent voters cast their votes while in Darjeeling the figure was 74.31 per cent. Kampong witnessed the lowest turnout with 69.56 per cent, ECI officials said adding the percentage of voting could go up by five per cent as many people were still standing in queues.

Elections was held in 45 seats in North 24 Parganas, Bardhaman East and Nadia in south Bengal, and Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts in the north.

Incidents of violence and firing were also reported from Shantipur in Nadia district. At De Ganga in North 24 Parganas where villagers claimed that the quick response team of the central forces had fired at them without injuring any one. The local CPF officers however denied any such incident having taken place.

In Siliguri, a scuffle broke out between TMC and CPI (M) supporters outside a polling booth. In Bijpur in North 24 Parganas, TMC and BJP supporters clashed after the opposition party alleged that voters were being prevented from going to the booths.

## Minister, more UP officials test positive for Covid-19 amid surge

**Lucknow:** The coronavirus pandemic is spreading rapidly in Uttar Pradesh with more than 5,000 new cases being reported every day. Sugarcane Development Minister Suresh Rana and Additional Chief Secretary of the Information Department, Navneet Sehgal, have also tested positive for Covid-19. Lucknow District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash has also been infected with the virus.

Cabinet Minister Suresh Rana wrote, "After initial symptoms of Covid-19, I got myself tested for the virus. My Covid test report has come positive. I have been in home quarantine ever since. I have a humble request to all the people who came in contact with me in the past few days, to get themselves tested, too."

Navneet Sehgal had undergone a Covid test on Thursday after showing initial symptoms. His test report came out positive despite taking the first dose of

the corona vaccine with his wife on April 5. At present, he is in home quarantine.

Lucknow DM Abhishek Prakash is also in the grip of the deadly virus with his test report being positive.

Navneet Sehgal is among those officials who was involved in the meetings of the Chief Minister's Team 11. After Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath tested positive for Covid-19, he had also undergone a test for which he tested positive.

The second wave of coronavirus infection is proving to be more dangerous. After many IAS and IPS officials were found to be infected with the virus, now it has reached the door of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). Some other officials including the CM's Officer on Special Duty (OSD), Abhishek Kaushik have been infected with Covid-19.

**IANS**

## Most political parties favour weekend curfew in Bihar

**Patna:** A majority of political parties in Bihar are in favour of a weekend curfew of 62 hours between Friday evening and Monday morning.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, BJP state president Sanjay Jaiswal, among others, suggested the same during an all-party virtual meeting held in Patna under the chairmanship of governor Phagu Chauhan on Saturday.

CM Nitish Kumar also hinted at the same by saying that the decision will be taken soon.

During the all-party meeting RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav put 30 points including weekend curfew on the table and asked the state government to

implement them immediately.

While addressing the governor, Yadav claimed the Constitution of state was under threat. "As you are sitting on constitutional post and you have called the meeting. Hence, I am participating in it.

"The opposition parties have been giving suggestions on Covid management and developing health infrastructure in the state since last one year but unfortunately, the ruling parties have not implemented them. Now that the health infrastructure has completely collapsed in the state, ruling party leaders are trying to blame their failures on opposition parties," said Yadav.

**IANS**

SALE NOTICE			
The under mentioned Assets will be sold through auction on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" for recovery of dues as per court orders, in the following cases:-			
Case Details	Asset Details	Reserve Price	EMD Amount
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Surekha Jagbhushan Arya, Case No- CS (COMM) 1160/19	Vehicle No- UP16BS5585, Make and Model- HYUNDAI EON MAGNA PLUS S, Manu Yr- 2018	Rs.2,80,000/-	Rs.28,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Chand Saifi, Case No- Case No- 6/18.	Vehicle No- UP16ET2968, Make and Model- NISSAN GO T, Manu Yr- 2017	Rs.80,000/-	Rs.8,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Suraj Singh, Case No- CS No. 19678/16	Vehicle No- DL1CS9562, Make and Model- DATSUN GO, Manu Yr- 2015	Rs.80,000/-	Rs.8,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Sachin Nischal, Case No- CS No 3757/18	Vehicle No- DL1RTB3165, Make and Model- MARUTI WAGON R, Manu Yr-2016	Rs.1,60,000/-	Rs.16,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Hari Singh, Case No- CS 86/2015	Vehicle No- HR29AG1403, Make and Model- FIAT PUNTO, Manu Yr- 2014	Rs.1,00,000/-	Rs.10,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Sachin Knowles, Case No- Suit No. 1908/19	Vehicle No- HR51BP3786, Make and Model- MARUTI ALTO K10, Manu Yr- 2017	Rs.1,60,000/-	Rs.16,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Paramjeet Singh, Case No- CS DJ 11495/16	Vehicle No- UP14CH3120, Make and Model- MARUTI WEGON R LXI, Manu Yr- 2014	Rs.80,000/-	Rs.8,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Vikash Kumar Verma, Case No- CS DJ 900/18	Vehicle No- DL12A8496, Make and Model- CHEVROLET SAIL, Manu Yr- 2016	Rs.1,00,000/-	Rs.10,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Sonu Chawara, Case No- CS (COMM) 455/2020	Vehicle No- UP16AX5506, Make and Model- HYUNDAI GRAND I 10 MAGNA, Manu Yr- 2014	Rs.1,20,000/-	Rs.12,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Saksham Kathuria, Case No- CS No. 1791/2018	Vehicle No- UP16DT8933, Make and Model- HYUNDAI XCENT, Manu Yr- 2016	Rs.90,000/-	Rs.9,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Brijesh Sharma, Case No- Suit No. 1772/18	Vehicle No- UP16BF9360, Make and Model- MARUTI ALTO 800 LXI, Manu Yr- 2016	Rs.90,000/-	Rs.9,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Vikram Pal, Case No- Old Suit No. 23/17, New Suit No. 446/17	Vehicle No- DL10CB4740, Make and Model- CHEVROLET BEAT DIESEL LS, Manu Yr- 2013	Rs.20,000/-	Rs.2,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Punit., Case No- CS (Comm) 900/2019	Vehicle No- HR55AA9780, Make and Model- MAHINDRA KUV 100 K4 PLUS D, Manu Yr- 2016	Rs.1,40,000/-	Rs.14,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Meenakshi Singh Kharwar, Case No- CS DJ 6476/18	Vehicle No- UP16ET3403, Make and Model- NISSAN ACTIVE X, Manu Yr- 2017	Rs.1,20,000/-	Rs.12,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Ram Sewak, Case No- CS 68/2020	Vehicle No- UP14FT7944, Make and Model- CHEVROLET BEAT PS PETROL, Manu Yr- 2016	Rs.80,000/-	Rs.8,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Mohd Hanif Ansari, Case No- CS (Commercial) No. 1532/2019	Vehicle No- DL5CL1430, Make and Model- MARUTI UDYOG LTD ZXI, Manu Yr- 2015	Rs.80,000/-	Rs.8,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Subodh Kumar, Case No- Suit No 471/17	Vehicle No- UP14FT7914, Make and Model- MARUTI ECS V9, Manu Yr- 2006	Rs.50,000/-	Rs.5,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Sanjeev Kumar, Case No- CS (COMM) 2338/19	Vehicle No- DL12B2383, Make and Model- CHEVROLET SAIL LS, Manu Yr-2017	Rs.1,30,000/-	Rs.13,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Dinesh Singh, Case No- CS (Commercial) No. 1912/2019	Vehicle No- UP14FT7132, Make and Model- MARUTI LXI CNG, Manu Yr- 2016	Rs.1,20,000/-	Rs.12,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Saurabh Malhotra, Case No- CS (COMM) 923/20	Vehicle No- DL10CJ7651, Make and Model- MARUTI CIAZ ALPHA, Manu Yr- 2017	Rs.4,20,000/-	Rs.42,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Amandeep Singh Chhabra, Case No- CS (COMM) 1146/19	Vehicle No- Unregistered Make and Model- HYUNDAI MOTORS LTD Excent, Manu Yr-2017	Rs.1,20,000/-	Rs.12,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Jaideep Kishor, Case No- CS (COMM) 1106/2020	Vehicle No- DL5CP1041, Make and Model- HYUNDAI MOTORS LTD GRAND I 10 SPORTZ, Manu Yr- 2017	Rs.2,00,000/-	Rs.20,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Akash Sharma, Case No- CS (COMM) No. 735/20	Vehicle No- DL12B7072, Make and Model- XCENT VTVT S, Manu Yr- 2018	Rs.2,00,000/-	Rs.20,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Arjun., Case No- CS (COMM) 16/19	Vehicle No- HR51BH4112, Make and Model- HYUNDAI MOTORS LTD MAGNA, Manu Yr- 2015	Rs.1,60,000/-	Rs.16,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Jagteshwari., Case No- CS (COMM) No. 581/20	Vehicle No- DL2CAU5739, Make and Model- MARUTI UDYOG LTD SWIFT DZIRE ZXI, Manu Yr- 2015	Rs.1,80,000/-	Rs.18,000/-

**Auction Date and time: 27.04.2021; from 11 am to 2 pm.**  
**Venue:** Godara Yard, Khawat No: 166/1, Near Atul Kataria Chock, Behind Gyan Devi School, Sec-17, Sukhrali, Gurugram-122022.  
**Contact Person- Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)**  
**EMD: DD/PO of EMD amount to be made in favour of ICICI Bank Limited, payable at Delhi. And auction of following vehicles will be done at another yard i.e Shriram Automall, Vill- Mamurpur, Pio Maniyari Road Narela, New Delhi**

Case Details	Asset Details	Reserve Price	EMD Amount
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Dharmender Pawar, Case No- CS (COMM) 50/2020	Vehicle No- DL1MA2911, Make and Model- TATA MOTORS LTD LPT 909, Manu Yr- 2019	Rs.10,50,000/-	Rs.1,05,000/-
ICICI Bank Limited Vs Nadeem., Case No- CS (COMM) 2874/19	Vehicle No- UP14HT5899, Make and Model- MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA LTD SUPRO MAXI TRUCK T2 BSIV, Manu Yr- 2018	Rs.2,00,000/-	Rs.20,000/-

**Auction Date: 27.04.2021; from 11 am to 1 PM**  
**Venue:** Shriram Automall, Vill- Mamurpur, Pio Maniyari Road Narela, New Delhi, Narela, Delhi, 110040.  
**Contact Person- Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)**  
**Terms of Sale**

The particulars of the said asset specified herein above have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participant/s are therefore requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself / themselves/ itself with regard to the said asset and other relevant details pertaining to it before submitting the bids. All bidders are required to come at site with original DD/PO of EMD amount along with original KYC proofs to participate in the auction.

Successfully approved bidder shall have to deposit sale amount (Excluding EMD amount) within 5 days from the auction date by the way of pay order/demand draft/RTGS/NEFT. In case if you fail to make the remaining sale amount within 5 days, your EMD amount will be forfeited.

The intending bidders may visit at **ICICI Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, SD Tower, Community Center, Plot No- 7, Rohini Sector- 8, New Delhi- 110085**, for details and inspection of the said hypothecated vehicle.

## DMK complains of unauthorised entry in strongrooms

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI**

The sudden turn around by M K Stalin, DMK president, who had claimed earlier that the alliance led by his party would sweep all the 234 assembly constituencies that went to the polls on April 6 has left his followers and cadre shocked. On Friday, Stalin submitted memorandums to Sushil Chandra, Chief Election Commissioner and Satyabrata Sahoo, Chief Electoral Officer

of Tamil Nadu alleging widespread lapses in security arrangements in the strong rooms all over the State where the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are kept. Meanwhile close relations of DMK leaders are calling on astrologers to know what is in store for Thalapathi (Stalin), young Thalapathi (Udhayanidhi) and Kanimozhi.

Stalin said in his memorandums that though the rules State that no vehicles including that of officials or ministers or

any other political functionaries should be allowed inside the secured campus where the EVMs are stored and alighting points for vehicles should be marked clearly ahead of the outer security perimeter itself, there were open violations of these rules by authorities and ministers.

"Despite these instructions there is a total lack of protocol in many strong rooms in campuses across the State where the polled EVMs are stored. Covered vehicles were brought

inside the premises during midnight in a suspicious manner. Our party cadre objected to these violations. But the officials said the vehicles were mobile toilets for women police officers," said Stalin.

The DMK chief termed these actions as breach of protocol and asked the CEC as well as the CEO to ensure that protocols in strong room premises are not violated.

Saturday saw repolling in one of the polling booths in Velachery assembly con-

stituency, a Chennai suburb. The repolling was ordered by the Election Commission of India based on reports submitted by observers and returning officer who caught three polling staff on duty transporting on a two-wheeler the EVM and the VVPAT machine after the polling hours.

The polling staff were suspended following complaints by the rival MNM and Congress candidates and the subsequent probe by the ECI officials.



Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 330 or the "Harpoons" celebrated its golden jubilee on April 17, 2021. The squadron was commissioned on April 17, 1971 and received their baptism by fire when war between India and Pakistan broke out in December 1971. Initially equipped with Seaking Mk 42 ASW helicopters, acquired from British Westland Helicopters Ltd, the squadron is currently operating the Mk 42 B variant. Named as the "Flying Frigate", the helicopter is among the most potent weapon platforms in the naval inventory capable of launching anti-ship missiles, anti-submarine torpedoes and depth charges. On July 26, 1971, Seaking landed on INS Vikrant for the first time and from that day on the indomitable team of Harpoons and the aircraft carrier Vikrant saw a series of firsts. The first operational ASW mission was flown on 18 Oct 1971. On Nov 30, 1971, the first vectored attack was carried out on a suspected submarine contact



## Striking taxi drivers' demands unreasonable: Goa tourism body

**Panaji:** The tourism and travel industry in Goa have criticised taxi drivers in the State, who have been on strike for more than 10 days, demanding scrapping of an online app-based cab aggregator service. "It is an unreasonable demand. The state government has to remain firm," Nilesh Shah, President of the Travel and Tourism Association of Goa, told reporters on Saturday, even as the state administration denied striking taxi operators the permission to gather at the city square for their daily protest.

"The state transport system has to be reasonable, transparent and on-time. Their demand to scrap the app-based taxi service is unfair at a time when the world is moving the digital way," he said.

The Goa-based unit of the Confederation of Indian Industry and other trade associations have also urged the state government to not relent to the single point demand of the various striking taxi driver associations, whose members operate nearly 30,000 cabs across the state.

Taxi operators in Goa have gone on strike, demanding an immediate end to GoaMiles, a cab aggregator service, backed by the state tourism development corporation, claiming it impacted the livelihood of nearly 30,000 private tourist taxi operators in the state.

A large section of tourist taxi drivers in Goa have often been accused of overcharging, intimidating and operating in an unregulated environment.

**IANS**

## Jammu-Srinagar highway to remain closed on Sunday

**Srinagar:** The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway will remain closed for vehicular traffic on Sunday in view of the inclement weather and landslides triggered by incessant rain, said the state traffic police.

The traffic police said on Sunday no vehicular movement would be allowed from either side on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in view of the inclement weather, landslides and falling stones at several places and continuous rain on NH-44.

The highway is the lifeline of the Kashmir valley and the main road link connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country. Kashmir-bound trucks laden with essential supplies and other vehicles pass through this highway.

**IANS**

## Over dozen leaders test Covid +ve amid K'taka bypolls

**Bengaluru:** Two days after the public campaign for bypolls to three seats in Karnataka came to an end, nearly dozen political leaders including Janata Dal (S) strongman H D Kumaraswamy and his son Nikhil Kumaraswamy have tested Covid positive on Saturday and most of these leaders have got inoculated first dose of Covid vaccine.

In his tweet, former Karnataka Chief Minister Kumaraswamy said he has tested positive for Covid-19. "I request everyone who came in close contact with me over the last few days to isolate themselves and get tested," the 61-year-old Janata Dal (Secular) leader tweeted.

Kumaraswamy had been campaigning for the party candidate in Basavakalyan, where

polling for the bypoll held on Saturday.

The JD(S) strongman had got himself inoculated with the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine on March 23. Within hours of Kumaraswamy's tweet, his son and JD(S) youth wing state president Nikhil Kumaraswamy too stated, "I request everyone who came in close contact with me over the last few days to isolate themselves and get tested." Nikhil who is also a film actor and for the last couple of weeks he was busy in shooting with his upcoming movie in Ladakh.

Reports stated that Kumaraswamy's wife and Ramanagara MLA, Anita Kumaraswamy had been advised to remain home quarantined with two of her closest relatives testing Covid positive.

**IANS**

## Kerala records highest single-day spike of 13,835 Covid cases

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala on Saturday recorded its highest ever single-day tally of Covid-19 cases at 13,835, after 81,211 samples were sent for testing in the past 24 hours.

The state's test positivity rate surged to a high of 17.04 per cent on Saturday.

Earlier in the day, Kerala Health Minister K.K. Shailaja had given enough hints that the numbers will surge as augmented testing is being conducted for the past two days.

"We are expecting the number of positive cases to go up as around 2.30 lakh tests are expected to take place. Since our health system is quite finetuned to handle the positive cases, there is no need to worry as the hospitals are fully equipped," Shailaja said.

"We now need another 50 lakh doses of vaccine as we are now left with around 5.50 lakh doses only. We are expecting fresh supplies at the earliest," added Shailaja.

Meanwhile, a total 3,654 people recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 11,35,921. Kerala presently has 80,019 active cases.

As many as 27 persons succumbed to the virus in the past 24 hours, mounting the state's Covid death toll to 4,904.

Across the state, 2,18,542 persons are under observation, including 10,539 persons in different hospitals.

**IANS**

## 3 LeT associates arrested in Srinagar

**Srinagar** The J&K Police have arrested three Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist associates and recovered incriminating material from their possession, officials said on Saturday.

The police said in a statement that along with Army's 53 RR, the police arrested three terrorist associates linked to the proscribed terror outfit LeT in Budgam district and recovered incriminating materials from their possession.

The arrested persons have been identified as Adil Ahmad Dar and Tahir Ahmad Bhat, both residents of Narbal, and Ghulam Mohd Gojre from Kawoosa Khalisa "Preliminary investigation has revealed that the arrested terrorist associates were providing shelter, logistics and other material support, including transportation of arms and ammunition, to LeT terrorists in Magam, Narbal and Beerwah areas of Budgam," the police said.

**IANS**

## Request for Proposal (RfP) for Working Plans

Deputy Conservator of Forests, Working Plan Division No. I, Agartala, Tripura has vide F.3-14/WP-1/Prep.W.P/For-2019/5060 dated 26/03/2021 invited online Technical and Financial proposals from eligible Agencies for providing assistance to Working Plan Officer of Tripura Forest Department for preparation of Working Plans of 8 Districts as per National Working Plan Code 2014 under Tripura Forest Department. Interested Agencies may download the complete RIP document from the website [tripuratenders.gov.in](http://tripuratenders.gov.in), or <https://forest.tripura.gov.in>, or <https://tripura.gov.in>. The eligible bidders may submit their bids online at e-tendering portal i.e. <http://www.tripuratenders.gov.in>. Offline bids shall not be accepted. The last date for submitting the online bids is extend on 30th April 2021 up to 03:00 PM. and Pre Bid meeting in Online on 19.04.2021 at 11-00 AM in FHQ. Contact details: Mr Sanjib Das,IFS, Dy. Conservator of Forests, Working Plan Division No. 1, Agartala. E-mail: [defworkingplan1@gmail.com](mailto:defworkingplan1@gmail.com) Phone:0381-2397061.

**Sd/- (SANJIB DAS, IFS) Deputy Conservator of Forests, Working plan Division No.1 Gandhigram D.D.O. Code-09049**

**ICA/C-105/2021-22**



# Myanmar pardons prisoners

Unclear if  
coup foes  
among them

AP ■ YANGON

Myanmar's junta on Saturday announced it pardoned and released more than 23,000 prisoners to mark the traditional Thingyan New Year holiday, but it wasn't immediately clear if they included pro-democracy activists who were detained in the wake of the military's seizure of power in February.

The releases were announced on state broadcaster MRTV, which said that junta chief Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing had pardoned 23,047 prisoners, including 137 foreigners who will be deported from Myanmar. He also reduced sentences for others.

The move comes as daily protests against the February 1 ouster of the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi continue, as does the use of deadly force against them.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests, government forces have killed at least 728 protesters and bystanders since the takeover. The group says 3,141 people, including Suu Kyi, are in detention.



A man is embraced by two women outside Insein prison in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday

AP

Unconfirmed but credible accounts with photos on social media claimed that three people were killed Saturday by security forces in a violent crackdown in the central city of Mogok, in Myanmar's gem mining region.

Detainees released Saturday from Yangon's Insein Prison included at least three political prisoners who were jailed in 2019, said witnesses and local press reports.

The three are members of the Peacock Generation per-

formance troupe where were arrested during that year's New Year celebrations for skits that poked fun at military representatives in Parliament and military involvement in business.

Their traditional style of acting is called Thangyat, a mash-up of poetry, comedy and music with a sharp undertone of satire. Several members of the troupe were convicted under a law banning circulation of information that could endanger or demoralise members of the military. The actors may have

drawn the special wrath of the military because they performed in army uniforms.

Several members were also found guilty of online defamation for livestreaming their performances. It could not be ascertained if all imprisoned members of the troupe were released.

Another freed prisoner was Ross Dunkley, an Australian newspaper entrepreneur sentenced in 2019 to 13 years in a Myanmar prison for drug possession. His release was con-

firmed by his ex-wife Cynda Johnston, reported The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper.

Dunkley co-founded the The Myanmar Times, an English-language daily, but was forced to give up his share in it. He became well-known for co-founding or acquiring English-language publications in formerly socialist states that were seeking foreign investment as they liberalised their economies, but was sometimes criticised for doing business with authoritarian regimes.

Early prisoner releases are customary during major holidays, and this is the second batch the ruling junta has announced since taking power.

Following the release of more than 23,000 convicts to mark Union Day on February 12, there were reports on social media that some were recruited by the authorities to carry out violence at night in residential areas to spread panic, especially by setting fires. Some areas responded by setting up their own neighborhood watch groups.

In March, more than 600 people who were imprisoned for demonstrating against the February coup were released from Insein Prison, a rare conciliatory gesture by the military that appeared aimed at placating the protest movement.

Those freed were mostly young people caught in sweeps of street demonstrations, while those considered protest leaders were kept locked up.

# Troops level may increase in Af before withdrawal: Pentagon

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Before the complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by September 11, there might be an increase in number of soldiers to ensure safe and orderly drawdown, the Pentagon has said.

"It is not out of the realm the possibility that for a short period of time, there will have to be some additional enabling capabilities added to Afghanistan, to help effect a safe, orderly, and deliberately planned drawdown of everybody by the president's deadline, early September," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters at a news conference on Friday.

However, Kirby did not elaborate on the nature of the increase in US troops. "I can't speak today with exactly what that would look like, how many, when they would be going in. But as we transitioned out of Iraq, of course, it's logical to assume that you may need some logistics help, maybe some engineering help," he said.

"You may have to add some force protection capabilities, temporarily, just to make sure that the drawdown goes in a safe, orderly, and effective way. Again, we'll know more as we get closer, but that would not be out of the realm of possibility," Kirby said.

Responding to a question, Kirby said that the Department



of Defense is still working out what the future bilateral security relationship is going to be with Afghanistan.

"We're going to transition to a bilateral relationship, a military relationship that's more akin to the kinds of relationships we have with other countries," he said.

"It will not include a US military footprint on the ground in Afghanistan with the exception of what's going to be required to support the diplomatic mission there. All that's still being worked out. So, I can't speak with specificity today about what contract support the Afghan security forces are going to need going forward," he said.

The United States, he said, will maintain counterterrorism capabilities to continue to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a launching pad for terrorist attacks on the US.

"We have a vast range of

capabilities available to us and we're not going to speak to the details of exactly how we're going to maintain those capabilities and utilise those capabilities," he said.

During a televised address to the nation earlier in the week, President Joe Biden said that keeping thousands of troops grounded and concentrated in just one country at a cost of billions each year made "little sense" to him.

He said all US troops would be withdrawn from the strife-torn country by September 11 to end America's longest war that has cost trillions of dollars and the lives of over 2,400 American soldiers.

The US and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29, 2020 to bring lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan and allow US troops to return home from America's longest war.

# Worldwide Covid death toll tops a staggering 3m

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

The global death toll from the coronavirus topped a staggering 3 million people Saturday amid repeated setbacks in the worldwide vaccination campaign and a deepening crisis in places such as Brazil, India and France.

The number of lives lost, as compiled by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the population of Kyiv, Ukraine; Caracas, Venezuela; or metropolitan Lisbon, Portugal. It is bigger than Chicago (2.7 million) and equivalent to Philadelphia and Dallas combined.

And the true number is believed to be significantly higher because of possible government concealment or the many cases overlooked in the early stages of the outbreak that began 16 months ago in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019. Around the world, the trajectory of the virus and the race to bring it under control vary widely from country to

country. Even as the U.S. And Britain see their vaccination drives hit their stride and they begin to contemplate life after the pandemic, other places both rich and poor — France and India among them — are lagging behind in putting shots in arms and have imposed new lockdowns and other restrictions as cases soar.

Worldwide, deaths are running at over 12,000 per day on average and new cases at more than 7,00,000 a day.

The US toll alone is over 5,60,000, accounting for more than 1 in 6 of the world's Covid-19 deaths, by far the highest reported by any country. The United States is followed by Brazil, Mexico, India and Britain. This month, the US recommended a pause in the use of Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine while authorities investigate extremely rare but dangerous blood clots, and some European countries are putting the vaccine on hold, too.

## 5 workers killed in police firing in power plant in B'desh: Reports

Dhaka: At least five people working at a under construction coal power plant being built by a Chinese firm in Chittagong were killed and 20 others injured in a clash with the police following a protest by the workers over wage and allowances, Bangladeshi media reports said on Saturday.

The incident happened when the protesting workers of the plant clashed with the police, prompting them to open fire in which five workers were killed, the *Dhaka Tribune* reported.

"The violence broke out around 10:30 am at the coal-fired power plant. Five have died while at least 20 others were injured in the clash, including police and local residents," a senior police officer was quoted as saying in the report.

"They attacked police who are on duty, forcing the policemen to retaliate. Four were killed during the incident while three policemen were injured," Chattogram Range Deputy Inspector General Anwar Hossain was quoted as saying by the Daily Star newspaper. **PTI**

## Russia expels Ukrainian consul over classified information

Moscow: Russia detained a Ukrainian diplomat for allegedly receiving classified information from a database of the country's main security agency.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said Saturday that Alexander Sosonyuk, Ukraine's consul in St Petersburg, was taken into custody on Friday during a meeting with a Russian in which he received "information of a classified nature contained in the databases of law enforcement agencies and the FSB".

The FSB statement, reported by Russian news agencies, didn't give further details.

Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said Sosonyuk has been released from custody and is on Ukrainian diplomatic property. It wasn't immediately clear if Russia would move to expel him.

Nikolenko said Ukraine was preparing a response, but didn't elaborate. The detention comes amid escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine amid a Russian military buildup along the border with the eastern Ukraine region. **AP**

## US Prez Biden, Japanese PM Suga discuss Chinese influence over Indo-Pacific

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden and Japan Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, in their first in-person bilateral meeting at the White House, discussed the increasing Chinese influence over the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and ways to strengthen the QUAD, comprising of India and Australia as the other two nations in the grouping.

Other issues like climate change, fight against coronavirus pandemic and North Korea did appear in their talks on Friday, which was the first for Biden with a foreign leader as the president of the United States.

"Our alliance has served its role as the foundation of peace and stability for the Indo-Pacific region and the world. In light of the current regional situation and the severe security environment, the importance of our alliance has reached new heights," Suga told reporters at a White House news conference with Biden.

In addition to the bilateral relationship, Suga said they

discussed the free and open Indo-Pacific.

"We agreed that while Japan and the US will take the lead to promote the vision through concrete efforts. We will also cooperate with other countries and regions, including the ASEAN, Australia, and India," he said.

"We also had serious talks on China's influence over the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and the world at large. We agreed to oppose any attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China Seas and intimidation of others in the region," Suga said.

Beijing claims almost all of the 1.3 million square mile South China Sea as its sovereign territory. China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Beijing has impeded commercial activity like fishing or mineral exploration by countries like Vietnam and the Philippines.

## Italy's Salvini to stand trial for 2019 migrant standoff

Rome: A judge in Sicily on Saturday ordered former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini to stand trial for having refused to let a Spanish migrant rescue ship dock in an Italian port in 2019, keeping the people at sea for days.

Judge Lorenzo Iannelli set September 15 as the trial date during a hearing in the Palermo bunker courtroom, the LaPresse news agency reported. Salvini, who attended the hearing, confirmed the outcome and insisted he was only doing his job and his duty by refusing entry to the Open Arms rescue ship and the 147 people it had rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. **AP**

## After China, US envoy Kerry in S Korea for climate talks

Seoul: US climate envoy John Kerry met with South Korea's foreign minister in Seoul on Saturday for talks ahead of a virtual climate summit of world leaders called by President Joe Biden for next week.

Kerry arrived in South Korea after a four-day visit to China where he held closed-door meetings with senior Chinese officials in Shanghai.

While Kerry's discussions with South Korea's Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong were focused on Biden's climate meeting and another video summit on environmental issues that South Korea will host in May, Chung also conveyed Seoul's "serious concerns" over Japanese government plans to start releasing treated radioactive water from the wrecked

Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea in two years.

Chung also requested US help for South Korea's efforts to secure more coronavirus vaccines as it wrestles with a slow vaccine rollout and a steady rise in infections, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said. The ministry didn't release any specific comments made by Kerry during the meeting.

Chung and Kerry agreed that the countries should cooperate to create "mutual synergy" between the virtual summits hosed by each country in the coming weeks, which would help set up the UN Climate Change Conference scheduled to be held in Scotland in November, the ministry said in a statement. **AP**

## Era ends as Raul Castro steps down as Communist Party chief

AP ■ HAVANA

Raul Castro said he is stepping down as Cuban Communist Party leader, leaving the island without a Castro guiding affairs for the first time in more than six decades and handing control of the party to a younger generation.

The 89-year-old Castro made the announcement in a speech Friday at the opening of the eighth congress of the ruling party, the only one allowed on the island.

"I concluded my task as first secretary ... With the satisfaction of having fulfilled (my duty) and confidence in the future of the fatherland," he said in a typical terse, to-the-point finale that contrasted with the impassioned

verbal pyrotechnics of his brother Fidel, who died in 2016.

Castro didn't say who he would endorse as his successor as first secretary of the Communist Party. But he previously indicated he favors yielding control to 60-year-old Miguel Diaz-Canel, who succeeded him as president in 2018 and is the standard bearer of a younger generation of loyalists who have been pushing an economic opening without touching Cuba's one-party system.

"All processes have a continuity and I think Diaz-Canel should be there now," said 58-year-old driver Miguel Rodríguez. Castro's retirement ends an era of formal leadership that began with his brother Fidel and country's 1959 revolution.

"One has to step aside for the young people," said 64-year-old retiree Juana Busutil, for whom Castro "is going to continue being the leader."

The transition comes at a difficult time for Cuba, with many on the island anxious about what lies ahead.

The coronavirus pandemic, painful financial reforms and restrictions imposed by the Trump administration have battered the economy, which shrank 11% last year as a result of a collapse in tourism and remittances. Long food lines and shortages have brought back echoes of the "special period" that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

# Prince Philip laid to rest in royal funeral

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II led a small group of senior royals at the ceremonial funeral of her husband and consort Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, at Windsor Castle on Saturday.

The funeral incorporated hymns and readings chosen by the late royal himself and focussed on the "unwavering loyalty" of the longest-serving consort in British history to his wife, the monarch, and service



to Britain and the Commonwealth.

The ceremony, which began at St George's Chapel in

Windsor Castle with a national minute's silence at 15:00 local time on Saturday, was a religious one though without any

sermons, as planned by the Duke — who passed away aged 99 last week on Friday.

"The Order of Service for the funeral was agreed with the Duke of Edinburgh during his lifetime, and reflects the Duke's military affiliations, and personal elements of His Royal Highness' life," Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

At the end of the ceremony, the Duke's coffin was carried to his resting place in the royal vault beneath St George's Chapel.

CORRIGENDUM	
Reference to publication of ICICI Bank Limited vs SHISHIR DUTT SHARMA, Case No-Suit No 1967/17., ICICI Bank Limited vs SANJAY KUMAR PANDIT, Case No-Suit no 933/18, ICICI Bank Limited vs KULVINDER SINGH, Case No-FAO 213/2015, ICICI Bank Limited vs MEHKAR SINGH, Case No-CM(M) 549/2020 & CM APPL.27986/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs SUBODH KUMAR, Case No-CM(M) 602/2020 & CM APPL.30659/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs JITENDRA CHATURVEDI, Case No-CM (M) 22/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs MOHD ASIF, Case No-CM(M) 178/2021, ICICI Bank Limited vs ARCHANA RAJ, Case No-CM(M) 573/2020 & CM APPL.29273/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs MOHAMMAD ARIF, Case No-CSSCJ.1871/19, ICICI Bank Limited vs VIJAY GUPTA, Case No-Suit No. 1088/2018, ICICI Bank Limited vs RAHUL YADAV, Case No-CM (M) 222/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs VIJAY GUPTA, Case No-Suit No. 1088/2018 of April 17, 2021 published in The Pioneer (Eng.) and The Pioneer (Hin.). Due to inadvertent mistake the Auction Date was wrongly mentioned as May 1, 2021 and April 22, 2021 instead of May 06, 2021. We therefore, requesting to read it as May 06, 2021. and remaining content is unchanged.	
Dated: April 17, 2021 Place : Delhi/ NCR	

**Portland:** Police in Portland, Oregon, said on Saturday they arrested four people after declaring a riot Friday night when protesters smashed windows, burglarised businesses and set multiple fires during demonstrations that started after police fatally shot a man while responding to reports of a person with a gun.

Police said they dispersed the crowd so firefighting crews could douse fires before they spread in extreme fire hazard conditions.

The vandalism downtown came after the police shooting earlier Friday and was also was part of vigils and demonstrations already planned for the night in the name of people killed in police shootings nationwide. They include 13-year-old Adam Toledo of Chicago and Daunte Wright, a Black man in a Minneapolis suburb. Deputy Police Chief Chris Davis told reporters a white man in his 30s had been shot and killed in Portland by police. The man was pronounced dead at the scene in Lents Park, a leafy, residential neighbourhood of the city.

Two officers fired a 40mm device that shoots non-lethal projectiles, and one officer — an eight-year veteran — fired a gun, police said in a statement. The officer is on paid administrative leave, and his or her name will be released, authorities said. **AP**

कार्यालय नगर निगम, भरतपुर	
क्रमांक :- न.नि.म. / निगम / 2021-22 / 02-07	दिनांक :- 05.04.2021
<b>ई-निविदा सूचना - 01/2021-22</b>	
नगर निगम, भरतपुर द्वारा नगर निगम, भरतपुर में उपयुक्त श्रेणी में एवं अन्य विभागों के "A" & "AA" श्रेणी में परीक्षित सर्वेक्षकों से निर्धारित प्रश्न में ई प्रोक्वोरमेंट प्रक्रिया से वेबसाइट <a href="http://eproc.raajasthan.gov.in">http://eproc.raajasthan.gov.in</a> पर ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा की महत्वपूर्ण शर्तें एवं विवरण वेबसाइट <a href="http://sppp.raajasthan.gov.in">http://sppp.raajasthan.gov.in</a> एवं <a href="http://eproc.raajasthan.gov.in">http://eproc.raajasthan.gov.in</a> पर देखा जा सकता है।	
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कार्यों की कुल लागत	505.46 लाख
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## AMID COVID 2.0

# Fiscal package may be on cards to maintain economic recovery

■ NEW DELHI

A fiscal stimulus package may be on the cards again as the Government looks at ways to prevent the present surge in Covid-19 cases and the ensuing restrictions imposed by the States from derailing the economic recovery.

After last year's lockdowns, which resulted in the country's GDP contracting by (-) 23.9 per cent, it was hoped that the economy will grow hand-somely in FY22 to register a double digit growth.

For this to happen, the RBI has projected a Q1 FY22 GDP growth of 26.2 per cent. But the recent surge in the pandemic has again raised serious ques-

tions about the health of the economy.

There are some discussions within the government about the need, shape and timing of a fresh fiscal stimulus package.

The idea is to see that the poor and small businesses do not suffer and their livelihood support is not disturbed, said an official source, on condition of anonymity.

The source said that any such package, if finalised, would come up later this month or next month.

The Union Finance Ministry has so far not indicated about any new stimulus to contain the disruptions caused by the fresh Covid-19

wave in the country.

Last year, the government and the RBI came up with a series of announcements to provide relief to the common man and businesses impacted by the Covid-induced lockdown.

Under its 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' package and the Garib Kalyan Yojana, the government had announced packages worth over Rs 20 lakh crore.

While the economic situation is still much better than last year and the government has indicated against a complete lockdown this year, support measures could just look at the most vulnerable sections of the society and the industry.

Sources said that like last year, the package may include measures by the government as well as compliance relief offered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Already, various ministries are providing inputs to the Centre.

The worry for the government this time round is also about inflation that has seen an increase in the last few months.

This actually means that people are already struggling with higher food prices while their income is dogged with uncertainty.

The RBI will also have to do a balancing act over growth aspirations and containing inflation.

## DPIIT notifies PLI scheme for ACs, LED lights

### MERE ASSEMBLY OF FINISHED GOODS NOT TO BE INCENTIVISED

■ NEW DELHI

The department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) has notified the PLI scheme for ACs and LED lights and said that selection of companies to avail the incentives would

done to support manufacturing of components which are not made in India presently.

It said that mere assembly of finished goods would not be incentivised and companies investing in basic/core components would get a higher priority.

Earlier this month, the government approved a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for white goods - Air Conditioners (ACs) and LED Lights - with a budgetary outlay of Rs 6,238 crore. It will be implemented over 2021-22 to

2028-29. According to the notification of the DPIIT, the Empowered Group

of Secretaries chaired by Cabinet Secretary will monitor the PLI scheme, undertake periodic review of the outgo under the scheme, ensure uniformity of all PLIs and take appropriate action to ensure that the expenditure is within the prescribed outlay.

The group will be empowered to make any changes in the modalities of the scheme within the overall financial outlay of Rs 6,238 crore. It said

that the incentive per beneficiary will be applicable on incremental sales (net of taxes) of manufactured goods (as distinct from traded goods) over the base year (2019-20) subject to ceilings.

"Mere assembly of finished goods shall not be incentivised. Selection of companies for the scheme shall be done so as to incentivise manufacturing of components or sub-assemblies which are not manufactured in India presently with sufficient capacity," it said.

## Indian pharma exports grow at 18% to 24.44 bn USD in FY 21

■ HYDERABAD

Pharma exports from India witnessed over 18 per cent growth to USD 24.44 billion during the last financial year against USD 20.58 billion in FY20, Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) said on Saturday.

"We have observed a big leap in our exports in the month of March 2021 which is USD 2.3 billion (figures for March are provisional) and is highest among the exports of all the months of this financial year, the growth rate for this month is 48.5 per cent against the exports in March 2020 (USD 1.54 billion)," Uday Bhaskar, Director General of Pharmexcil said in a release.

Growth rate seems relatively big as the exports of March 2020 was crunched due to lockdown across the world and supply chain disruption, he was quoted as saying.

When the global pharma market is negatively grown by 1-2% in 2020, there is a big surge in demand for Indian made generics owing to its quality and affordability, the official said adding Drug formulations and Biologicals is the second largest Principal commodity being exported by India. The Pharma exports body is expecting big growth in Indian vaccine exports in the coming years and the government policy on PLI (production Linked Incentive) scheme will also help the domestic

pharma to grow by reducing import dependence and develop export potential in the days to come as most of the countries are looking at India for APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredient) he said.

North America is the largest exporting region for Indian pharmaceuticals with more than 34 per cent share.

Country wise exports to the US, Canada and Mexico have recorded a growth of 12.6, 30 and 21.4 per cent respectively. South Africa being the second largest exporting country, recorded a big jump of 28 per cent growth while Europe was the third largest exporting region which has recorded approximately 11 per cent growth over previous year.

## Crude to be around \$60 a barrel in 2021

■ NEW DELHI

Global crude oil prices are expected to be in the range of \$60 a barrel over the long term period as OPEC+ decision to cap supply until demand recovers and the pandemic continuing to keep a check on consumption.

According to a research report by ICICI Securities, Brent has recovered and is over \$ 60/bbl since February, 21 vs April, 20 low of \$ 21/bbl driven by demand recovery from lows and OPEC+ capping supply to ensure supply deficit since July last year.

"OPEC+ capping supply until demand recovers is estimated to ensure supply deficit of 1.3 million barrels of oil per day in calendar year 2021 and keep Brent above \$60/bbl," the brokerage said.

The expectation for the crude was that it may surge in 2021 on the back of economies recovering as vaccinations tamed the spread of Covid-19. But the lockdowns again due to fresh surge in Covid cases has delayed demand recovery in Europe.

Also, the probability of US sanctions on Iran's oil exports being lifted appears to have increased significantly. EU and other signatories to the nuclear deal are talking to Iran and US separately to bring

them on the same page and revive the deal.

Indications are that US sanctions on Iran exports may be lifted as early as before Iran's presidential elections due on June 18.

"While OPEC+ capping supply should keep Brent above \$ 60/bbl, delay in demand recovery and US lifting sanctions on Iran exports would cap further rise. We estimate long-term Brent at \$60/bbl," ICICI Securities said.

With regard to gross refining margin (GRMs) the outlook is modest as capacity addition is expected to exceed to refined products demand growth.

## Second Covid wave to disrupt fabric demand: Ind-Ra

■ NEW DELHI

The second wave of Covid-19 resurgence can potentially disrupt fabric demand, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

"Woven fabrics production continued to improve mom, though marginally, in January 2021, despite remaining 21 per cent YoY lower," Ind-Ra said.

"While recoveries for blended and knitted fabrics were quicker, that of woven is expected to be delayed with micro-lockdowns and work-from-home culture."

Besides, export demand for woven fabrics is expected to plunge over Q1FY22 with key destination countries grappling with a second wave of pandemic.

"Fabric exports remained muted in January 2021 on a mom basis, and 17 per cent YoY lower.

Demand for imported fabrics surged over December 2020-January 2021, led by restocking by retailers."

"Imports in value terms doubled between November 2020-January 2021 with higher shipments from China, Bangladesh and Vietnam."

## AGEL arm bags 150 MWac solar project

■ NEW DELHI

Adani Green Energy arm AREH Fifteen L has bagged a 150 MWac solar energy project capacity from Torrent Power.

Adani Renewable Energy Holding Fifteen L (AREH Fifteen L), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL), participated in a Tender issued by Torrent Power Ltd for procurement of power through competitive bidding process, from grid connected solar photovoltaic power projects to be setup in Gujarat.

AREH Fifteen L has been awarded a project capacity of 150 MWac Solar Power Project, a BSE filing said.

The fixed tariff for this project capacity is Rs 2.22/ kWh for a period of 25 years.

## Operating margins of sugar companies expected to moderate in FY22: ICRA

■ NEW DELHI

The operating margins of sugar companies are likely to moderate in FY22 due to higher production cost and reduced export subsidy, ratings agency ICRA said in a statement.

Besides, benefits from improved distillery performance was also cited by the agency as a factor that might moderate operating margins.

"In the medium term, the government support measures for higher diversion of sugar for ethanol production would reduce the sugar surplus and support in improving the demand supply dynamics of the industry on a sustainable basis," ICRA said.

As per the agency, domestic sugar production is expected to increase by 10 per cent to 30.2 million MT in SY2021 and outstrip consumption by

around 4.2 million MT.

ICRA expects sugar exports at around 5.5 million MT supported by the export policy and the closing stocks are likely to remain higher than normative sugar stock levels of 6-6.5 million MT at around 9.5 million MT for SY2021 season.

However, the stocks are expected to be lower than the previous season at around 11.0 million MT.

"Given the sugar surplus scenario in the domestic market, any significant increase in the sugar prices is ruled out in the near term. However, the higher diversion of sugar towards ethanol and the remunerative pricing of ethanol is expected to result in an improved distillery performance in FY2022," said Sabyasachi Majumdar, Senior Vice President & Group Head, ICRA.

## Correction an opportunity to add cyclical: MOFSL

■ MUMBAI

Market correction due to Covid resurgence is an opportunity to add cyclical stocks said Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

In a report, MOFSL said resurgence in second wave of Covid-19 has led to elevated market volatility and correction. Late, both Nifty and Bank Nifty are down 5 and 15 per cent from their recent highs, respectively.

"To contain the pandemic, several states have announced localised restrictions with Maharashtra yesterday unveiling set of broad-based measures for two weeks mini-lockdown."

"We expect the set of restrictive measures to impact near-term economic recovery till cases stabilise. However, key

government authorities and policymakers have ruled out national lockdown."

Consequently, MOFSL recommend that correction should be viewed by the investors as a buying opportunity and advocated adding a balanced mix of growth, cyclical and defensive stocks in their portfolios. "We continue to be 'OW' on the BFSI, IT, Metals, Cement and Capital Goods, Neutral on Consumer, Auto and Pharma while staying 'UW' on Energy, Utility and Infrastructure."

On the bright side, it said that vaccinations are gradually beginning to accelerate.

"As vaccination pick up further with approvals for more vaccines now in place, we expect the focus to shift back to growth, cyclical recovery and fundamentals."

## FICCI writes to 25 CMs on Covid management, urges to avoid lockdown

■ NEW DELHI

Industry body FICCI has written to Chief Ministers of 25 States urging them to avoid imposing partial or total lockdown in the wake of fresh surge in Covid cases.

The industry body also argued that the economy has barely begun to turnaround from the impact of the earlier lockdowns and such decisions now will push the push the economy into downward spiral.

In the letter written to state CMs by FICCI President Uday Shankar, the chamber has acknowledged the need to break the Covid chain but has suggested the strategy to focus more on ramping up covid testing, awareness drive and enforcement of Covid appro-

priate behaviour rather than lockdown.

"The population may be sensitised about the Covid appropriate behaviour like wearing masks, physical distancing and personal hygiene.

Support may be taken by involving volunteers from the schools, colleges and the NGOs. Strict compliance to Covid protocol may be ensured with suitable penalties for violations," the letter states.

FICCI has represented to the Union Government to open up the vaccination for all the people above 18 years of age to give a massive push to the vaccination drive as there is no shortage of vaccines and the inoculation capacity can be increased with the participation of the private sector.

## Petrol, diesel price unchanged for 2nd consecutive day

■ NEW DELHI

Fuel prices in the country remained unchanged on Saturday as oil marketing companies decided to go on a pause mode and analyse the global developments on oil prices before effecting a revision.

Accordingly, pump price of petrol and diesel remained at ₹90.40 a litre and ₹80.73 a litre respectively in Delhi.

The price of the two auto fuels had fallen by 16 paise and 14 paise per litre respectively on Thursday after a 15 day break when OMCs kept its prices static.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel price remained unchanged on Saturday but its retail levels varied depending on the level of local levies on respective states.

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**



**ISHANI @ POOJA**

General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely: Ishani @ Pooja D/o Shri Dharam Das R/o H. No. D-153, Vijay Vihar, Ph-II Delhi** has been missing since 26.03.2021 from her house. In this regard a case vide DD No. 91A dated 27.03.2021 has been lodged at Police Station Vijay Vihar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

**Age :** 20 Years, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion :** Fair, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Blue colour suit and cream colour leggy and sandal in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi at E-mail Id – [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

**SHO**  
**P.S., Vijay Vihar, Delhi**  
**Rohini Distt., Delhi**  
**Ph. No. 011-27061294, 27061295**

Phone: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax No. 011-24368639  
DP/784/RD/2021

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**



**Sachin Mittal**

General Public is hereby informed that a person namely **Sachin Mittal S/o Sh. Sajjan Kumar, R/o H.No. B-1/9, Budh Vihar Ph-I, Delhi** has been missing since 31.03.2021 from the area of PS. Vijay Vihar. In this regard a **DD No. 107-A Dated 31.03.2021** has been lodged at PS, Vijay Vihar, Delhi. The description of Missing person is as under:

**Name:** Sachin Mittal, **Father's Name :** Sh. Sajjan Kumar, **Age :** 35 years, **Height :** 5'9", **Face :** Long, **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing :** Blue Jeans, White Shirt, Sports Shoes in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.

**SHO**  
**P.S., Vijay Vihar, Delhi**  
**Ph : 011-27061294**  
**27061295**

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>  
e-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax : 011-24368639  
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641  
DP/781/RD/2021

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL**



**Kusum @ Kiran**

General Public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo) namely **Kusum @ Kiran D/o Sh. Ashok R/o Jhuggi No.424, Cow Street, Indira Camp, Sector-03, Rohini, Delhi Aged-17 Years** has been reported missing/kidnapped since 21.03.2021 at about 4 AM from her residence vide **FIR No.097/21 u/s 363 IPC Dated 22.03.2021** registered at Police Station South Rohini, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

**Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 5'2", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **ID:** KS mark on right hand, **Clothing:** Green coloured suit, Green coloured salwar.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, South Rohini, Delhi at E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641  
FAX No. : 011-24368639  
DP/775/RD/2021

Sd/-  
SHO, South Rohini, Delhi  
Tel.: 011-27512189, 27510515

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**



The general public is hereby informed that an unidentified person about 75 years of age whose name, residence, and family is unknown had been found dead opposite Kabutar Market, Jama Masjid, Delhi. In this regard, a vide has been registered with **DD No: 49-A, dated 12.04.2021 at PS Jama Masjid, Delhi**. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to identify the deceased person, but no clue has come to light so far.

The description of the UIDB is as under:  
**Sex:** Male, **Age:** 75 Years, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Oval, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** White colour kurta and white colour pajama.

If anyone has any information about his relatives, kindly inform the SHO/Jama Masjid, Delhi.

E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax : 011-24368639  
DP/764/CD/2021

**SHO**  
**P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi**  
**Ph. No. 011-23269777, 2326125**

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED BOY**



**Neeraj**

General Public is hereby informed that one boy (depicted in the photo) namely **Neeraj S/o Sh. Shambhu Nath R/o E-86, Ground Floor, Vijay Vihar, Ph-2, Delhi Aged-13 Years** has been reported missing/kidnapped since 13.03.2021 at 5 PM vide **FIR No.118/21 u/s 363 IPC Dated 20.03.2021** registered at Police Station Vijay Vihar, Delhi. His physical description is as under:-

**Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 5'5", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Clothing:** Cream coloured pant, Blue coloured T-shirt and sport shoes in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped boy, may inform SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi at E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

Sd/-  
SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi  
Tel.: 011-27061294-95  
Mob.: 8750870329

Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641  
FAX No. : 011-24368639  
DP/762/RD/2021

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**

**(See Section 82 Cr.PC)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that **Pooja Mishra, D/o Ravinder Mishra R/o RZ 123, Gali No.5, Naryan Vihar, Prem Nagar 2nd, Kirari Suleman Nagar, North-West Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **CC No.7962/17 S. k. Motor Vs Pooja Misra u/s 138 NIA Act, P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Pooja Mishra cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Pooja Mishra has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Pooja Mishra of **CC No.7962/17 S. k. Motor Vs Pooja Misra u/s 138 NIA Act, P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **24.05.2021**.

By Order,  
**Ms. Anuradha Sonker**  
Metropolitan Magistrate (NI Act)-08  
**DP/787/RD/2021** Room No.215, 2nd Floor, Dwarka Court, New Delhi

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**



**Lakhan**

General public is hereby informed that a boy **Lakhan S/o Raju, R/o Aasha Kiran, Home sector-1, Rohini, Delhi** has been missing since 03.03.2021 at 04:00 PM from the area of PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard, **DD No. 61-A dated 03.03.2021 has been registered at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing boy but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing boy is as under:

**Name:** Lakhan, **Gender:** Male, **Age:** 20 years, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue colour jeans, green colour t-shirt and slippers on his feet.

If anyone has any information regarding this missing boy, kindly inform SHO/Vijay Vihar, Delhi.

E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax : 011-24368639  
DP/779/RD/2021

**SHO**  
**P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**  
**Ph. No. 011-27521294, 27521295**

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED**



**Tarsen Lal**

General Public is hereby informed that one person **Namely: Tarsen Lal, S/o: Sh. Durga Das, R/o: H.No. B-750, Sec-1, Rohini, Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped since **22.03.2021** from the area of P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **DD No. 126A, dated 22.03.2021** has been registered at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. The description of the missing/ kidnapped person is as under:

**Age:** 64 years, **Height:** 5'8", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Shallow, **ID Mark:** Mentally Disturb, **Wearing:** Blue colour kurta, pajama and slipper in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing person kindly inform to the following.

**Website:** <http://cbi.nic.in>  
**E-mail Id -** [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
**Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641**  
**Fax No. 011-24368639**  
**DP/772/RD/2021**

**SHO**  
**P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**  
**Ph.: 011-27511294, 8750870329**



# VIRUS GETS YOUNGER

Alarm bells have reached a fever pitch with more and more COVID-19 cases being reported in the younger segment, with fatalities. MUSBA HASHMI talks to doctors and experts to see what can be done

The unexplained COVID related deaths in children less than one has rung alarm bells all around the globe. To make things even worse, a heart wrenching video of a woman from Brazil, who lost her toddler to COVID because of the late diagnosis is enough to give you a peek into how alarming the situation really is.

Hospitals full, ICU wards on waiting list and oxygen cylinders running off the shelves, the traumatic situation has left people in distress. Finding a bed in hospital has become a stroke of luck. There's nothing else we could imagine with the nation witnessing not less than 2,00,000 cases a day in the second wave of COVID.

And in the middle of all this chaos, the devastating fact is more and more children are testing positive, as compared to last year, and with increased complications. This has been a cause of worry for parents, who took a sigh of relief thinking that their young ones are immune to the virus. But, experts say this was never the case. Though the positivity rate was extremely low, that was mainly because of children being asymptomatic.

“This has been a wrong perception. Children were never immune. They were asymptomatic. However, their caseload was relatively low, it is hard to speculate why at the moment,” Dr Sisir Paul, Director and Head of Department of Pediatrics, Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, tells you.

With the studies still being at a nascent stage, doctors attribute the mutated strain as one of the main reasons of the high positivity rate in children. Not to mention complacency also has a role to play.

“There's no denying that people have become complacent. However, we speculate that the mutated strain is the reason behind the increased positivity rate. We can't say whether children were immune, but yes cases were relatively low. Last year, we were working with 50 per cent capacity, but now it is full,” Dr Praveen Khilnani, Director — Pediatric Critical Care, Senior Consultant Pediatric Critical Care & Pulmonology, Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, says.

The silver lining, however, is that the mortality rate in the young people is less than 10 per cent. And children, specifically, are experiencing not-so-severe symptoms. “Children are often experiencing fever, cough and cold, sore throat, body ache and, in some cases, faster breathing. The recovery rate, fortunately, is between eight and 10 days,” Khilnani tells you.

However, there is a varied picture now with this episode of the disease. The common symptoms have changed and children are now reporting gastrointestinal issues. “We have seen cases where some children are reporting diarrhoea and vomiting, with no fever or cold. The clinical picture has changed. Even children as young as one are symptomatic now. To know the exact reason, it will require a lot more detail, but on the face of it, yes mutations have taken place and can be the reason behind the increase in cases,” Paul explains.

He adds that the hospital hasn't reported any casualties in children yet, but the situation around the globe is worse. “We have been fortunate enough to have seen moderate cases. Some required ICU, but ventilators were nowhere in the scenario. This gives a ray of hope. However, having said that the situation is grim. Events like elections, malls and theatres opening up and Kumbh Mela hold a possibility to become the reservoirs of the virus. Given such a hard situation, we can't afford to put down our guards,” Paul says.

While many doctors doesn't suggest masking up children below the age of five, what can't be compromised at any cost is following all the other precautions. “Avoid outside contact. Don't let your relatives visit you, more so if you have toddlers at home. Don't call several house helps. Meet and greet sessions can wait, COVID won't. Be on optimum guard. If you see any symptoms, self-isolate, even if its normal flu. Since, there has been a change in weather, children may fall sick. However, don't ignore the symptoms, think of it as COVID,” Paul opines.

Dr Sumit Gupta, Pediatrician, Columbia Asia Hospital, Ghaziabad, agrees with Paul and says that the surge in cases might be because of the mutant virus.

“We have received around 50 per cent rise in cases of COVID in children since the end of March and more than half of them show symptoms. More than 60 per cent of all OPD cases in children are suspected COVID. There is an acute rise in number especially in Ghaziabad. The fact that more children are getting infected in this wave of the disease may have to do with the mutations in the virus, which has brought in many changes in the disease and its manifestations this time. Since many children are showing symptoms, we have to closely monitor them if they develop multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) and toxic syndrome, which may happen in severe cases,” Gupta tells you.

Experts tell you that MIS-C is a post-COVID complication that can result in swelling of joints, rashes, fever, diarrhoea and bloodshot eyes in children.

“About 50 per cent children that have been admitted to our hospital has, at least, one adult in the family who have tested positive. It is very rare that a child alone has tested positive. So, it is not the children, but their family members who got infected first. But having said that, kids have been, unknowingly, spreaders of the virus. Because until last year they were mostly asymptomatic,” Khilnani tells you.



GOLDEN RULES			
■ Keep children indoors	importance, even if you are vaccinated		
■ If an elder tests positive, make sure he isolates himself	■ Avoid taking children out to play, even if you do make sure your child doesn't mix with other children		
■ Avoid inviting your relatives to your place	■ Eat healthy and fresh food		
■ Mask, sanitiser and social distancing still holds as much			

Several data collected from a Chinese study of Covid-19 in children has confirmed that more than half of the children participated in the survey showed mild symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches and sneezing; while around a third showed signs of pneumonia, with frequent fever, a productive cough and wheeze but without the shortness of breath and difficulty breathing as seen in more severe cases.

Dr Manish Mannan, HOD — Paediatrics & Neonatology, Paras Hospitals, Gurugram, tells you that contrary to the prior belief with the rising cases it is clear that the amount of infection in children is the same as in adults. “It's just that when they do get the infection they get much milder symptoms. Children are predominantly affected in their upper airways so they get cold-like symp-

oms. The perception that children are less affected as compared to adults is also because of the fact that the virus needs a protein on the surface of a cell (a receptor) to get into the inside of a cell and start causing problems. A report from BBC stated that the Coronavirus seems to use the Angiotensin converting enzyme II (ACE-2) receptor for infecting others. It may be that the children have less ACE-2 receptors in their lower airways (lungs) than in their upper airways, which is why it is their upper airways that are predominantly affected, causing less severe issues in them. With that being said, the amount of infection in children has risen considerably as compared to the first wave but is still not same as that in adults presently,” Mannan tells you.

Another scary fact is the reports that suggest

IT IS A WRONG PERCEPTION. CHILDREN WERE NEVER IMMUNE. THEY WERE, IN FACT, ASYMPTOMATIC. HOWEVER, THE CASELOAD LAST YEAR WAS RELATIVELY LOW. IT IS HARD TO SPECULATE WHY AT THE MOMENT

— DR SISIR PAUL, DIRECTOR & HEAD OF DEPARTMENT — PEDIATRICS, MADHUKAR RAINBOW CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, MALVIYA NAGAR, NEW DELHI

children under the age of one might be at a higher risk of severe illnesses with COVID.

“Toddlers may be at a higher risk of suffering from severe illnesses because of the immature immune systems. There are chances that they might develop breathing issues. However, as it is being said, it is too early for us to make a statement,” Gupta says.

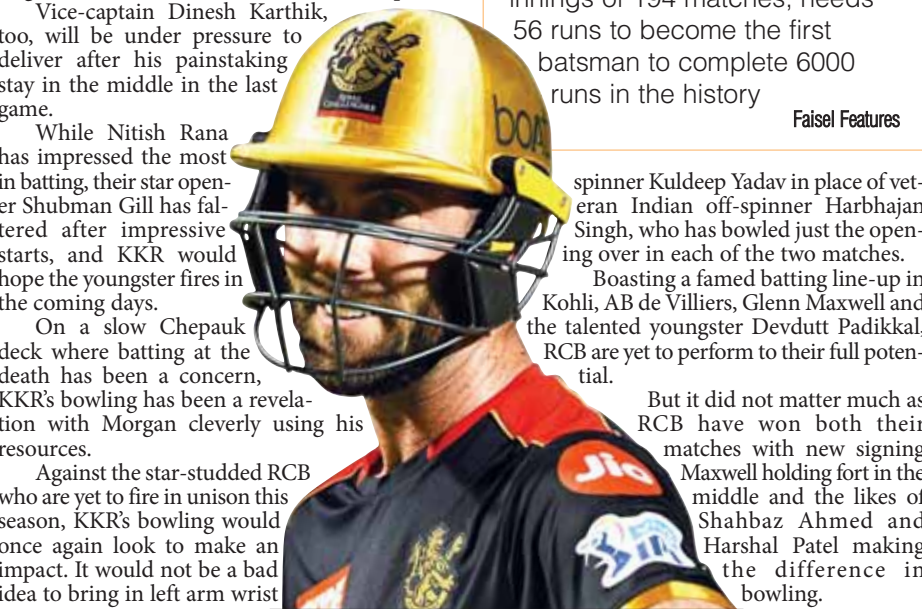
In the absence of a proven vaccine for children, experts emphasise on the fact that there's nothing much one can do except for following the guidelines laid out by the Government.

While, it is not recommended for children below five to wear masks, the World Health Organisation suggest children who are in general good health can wear a non-medical or fabric mask, if at all. This provides source control, meaning it keeps the virus from being transmitted to others if they are infected and are not aware that they are infected. The adult who is providing the mask should ensure the fabric mask is the correct size and sufficiently covers the nose, mouth and chin of the child.

Children with underlying health conditions such as cystic fibrosis, cancer or immunosuppression, should, in consultation with their medical providers, wear a medical mask. A medical mask controls spreading of the virus and protection to the wearer, and is recommended for anyone who is at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

“The only advice to the families is to stay back home and bring back the guard. Even for the older patients who have been vaccinated, we urge them to keep on following the precautions because vaccine alone won't help. You have to be on optimum guard anyway,” Khilnani says.







▶ shortpasses

**NO RONALDO VS ATALANTA**  
**TURIN:** Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo has been ruled out of Sunday's Serie A game against Champions League rivals Atalanta with a flexor muscle issue. Coach Andrea Pirlo said the 36-year-old Portuguese would rest to avoid risking a more serious injury.

**RIJIJU TESTS COVID +VE**  
**NEW DELHI:** Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said that he has tested positive for Covid-19 but is feeling "fit and fine". The 49-year-old posted the development on his Twitter page.

**QUEENSLAND CLOSE TO TITLE**  
**BRISBANE:** Marnus Labuschagne scored 192 runs to put Queensland in a commanding position to win the Sheffield Shield first-class cricket title in Australia. New South Wales was 140-5 in its second innings, still trailing by 106 runs, when bad light stopped play Saturday at Allan Border Field on the third day of the scheduled five-day match.

**STAR RETAIN PKL MEDIA RIGHTS**  
**MUMBAI:** Star India retained the media rights for Pro Kabaddi for five more seasons (season 8 to 12) after emerging as the successful bidder following an online auction conducted by Mashal Sports, the league announced on Saturday. Star India has retained the media rights at an average annual value, which is double of last season's rights fee.

**LEADER LILLE SHARE POINTS**  
**PARIS:** French Ligue 1 leaders Lille needed a spectacular late strike from Luis Araujo to rescue a 1-1 draw at home to Montpellier on Friday with Paris Saint-Germain handed the chance to turn the screw in the title race. Lille moved to 70 points but defending champions PSG can close the gap to just a point if they defeat Saint Etienne on Sunday.

**FANS TO RETURN TO STADIUMS**  
**ROME:** Up to a thousand spectators will be allowed at outdoor events from May 1 when Italy eases its stadium fan ban in regions less affected by the coronavirus. Fans will be allowed to attend football, basketball and volleyball games in Italy's "yellow zones," the Government said.

**ANKIT, MANISH ENTER PRE QF**  
**NEW DELHI:** Asian Silver-medallist Ankit Narwal (64kg) and Manish (75kg) advanced to the pre-quarterfinals of the youth world boxing championships for men and women in Kielce, Poland. Ankit defeated Uzbekistan's Akhmadjon Akhmedov 5-0, while Manish got the better of Israel's Daniel Ilyushonok 4-1.

**WOMEN'S TO RESTART TRAINING**  
**NEW DELHI:** Indian women hockey's core group will return to the national camp in Bengaluru on Sunday to restart the preparations for the Tokyo Games after a 10-day break. The 25-member Olympic core group will undergo mandatory quarantine before the commencement of training.

**MUMBAI MARATHON RESCHEDULED**  
**MUMBAI:** The organisers of Mumbai Marathon on Saturday announced that the 17th edition of the event, which was to take place on May 30, has been rescheduled owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. The new date will be announced in due course after consultations with the Government of Maharashtra and relevant athletic bodies.

# 99th career pole for Hamilton

**Imola:** Lewis Hamilton claimed his 99th career pole position in qualifying on Saturday for the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, with Red Bull's Sergio Perez starting alongside the seven-time world champions Mercedes at Imola.

Max Verstappen, runner-up to Hamilton at the season-opening race in Bahrain last month, will begin third on the grid in the other Red Bull as the top three were separated by less than one-tenth of a second.

"The day's been great obviously," said Hamilton. "I definitely didn't expect us to be ahead of the two Red Bulls. They've been so quick this weekend.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc qualified in fourth ahead of Pierre Gasly, Daniel Ricciardo and Lando Norris, who was heading for second but had his lap time deleted for exceeding track limits.

Hamilton's Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas could only manage eighth, with Esteban Ocon and Lance Stroll rounding out the top 10. Carlos Sainz failed to make it to Q3 and will start in 11th position in the second Ferrari. Two-time former world champion Fernando Alonso was a disappointing 15th, six places behind Alpine teammate Ocon.



# Willock dents West Ham top 4 hopes

**NEWCASTLE**

Newcastle moved closer to Premier League survival after Joe Willock's late goal capped a thrilling 3-2 win against 10-man West Ham that dented the visitors' bid for a top four finish in the Premier League.

Steve Bruce's side had squandered a two-goal lead in the closing stages at St James' Park, but Willock came off the bench to snatch a priceless winner.

Newcastle are nine points clear of the relegation zone with just six games remaining in a turbulent season on Tyneside.

The Magpies had taken control in the first half thanks to Issa Diop's own goal and a blunder from West Ham keeper Lukasz Fabianski for Joelinton's strike.

West Ham defender Craig Dawson was sent off for two



bookings in between those goals.

But the Hammers set up a tense finale when Diop got one back before Jesse Lingard equalised with a penalty 10 minutes from full-time.

On-loan Arsenal midfielder Willock settled a pulsating encounter with his thunderous

# Pak need to build bunch of pacers for T20 WC: Waqar

PTI ■ KARACHI



Pakistan's bowling coach Waqar Younis on Saturday said the team is looking to build a strong pool of pacers ahead of its upcoming assignments, including the T20 World Cup.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India in October-November.

"All the boys got rest after PSL postponement so fatigue is not a problem with them but we will sit down and discuss with them as we monitor every bowler.

"Of course we will try out other bowlers as we need to build a bunch of pacers for upcoming series and tournaments including the World T20," Waqar said.

The fast bowling great said that winning the One-Day and T20 series in South Africa was a big achievement for the team.

He said the team management would look at giving left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi a break from the coming matches in Zimbabwe.

The team has faced criticism for playing Shaheen Shah without a break across formats in recent months.

Asked about the disappearance of young pacer Naseem Shah from Pakistan squad after being touted as a big find two years ago, Waqar

said he was having some injury and fitness issues.

"He is a very promising young fast bowler and we are confident that after playing some more domestic cricket he will come back stronger and better. He is one for the future,"

Waqar also defended the performance of his bowlers in the twin series in South Africa, saying they had shown a lot of energy.

"They are getting better and better."

The former Pakistan captain noted that in modern day white-ball cricket bowlers returning 8 to 10 runs per over was expected because of the flat tracks and the demanding conditions.

"The T20 format is so fast-moving and the type of tracks you get sometimes bowlers suffer. I think it's a mix and match as long as you are

winning matches no need to worry."

Waqar said that if South Africa were without some of their key players for the last ODI and T20 series, this was not Pakistan's problem.

He also made it clear that he was the bowling coach and had no role in the selection of the team.

"That is not my domain, that is the head coach and captain's domain and I don't try

to interfere. I give my feedback and they decide what is best for the team."

**BENCHMARK FOR SELECTION**

Pakistan's batting coach Younis Khan on Saturday said he is not in agreement with the way players are selected for the national team across formats.

Speaking at a virtual press conference, the former Pakistan captain made it clear that a benchmark needs to be set to pick players for the senior team, particularly batsmen.

"Yes we need to have a benchmark. We need to look at how much cricket experience a player has under his belt before considering him for selection. How much responsibility he is willing to take and whether he is a performing player," Younis said.

"I am not in favour of picking players based on limited franchise cricket exposure," he added when asked if picking young players with little domestic experience was counterproductive for Pakistan cricket.

"I agree players must have proper first-class and List A experience behind them before they are considered for selection. You need to see how capable a player is of adjusting to international standards and cricket when he is selected for Pakistan."

# India back to regional competition after Ankita's defeat

PTI ■ JURMALA



Since the tie was already decided, the second reverse singles was not played.

The doubles Indian team of debutant Zeel Desai and Rutuja Bhosale earned a consolation point by winning

6-4, 5-7, 10-2 against Patricija Spaka and Daniela Vismane as Latvia made the cut for Qualifiers with a 3-1 win.

India had earned promotion to the Play-offs for the first time in the history of the tournament.

"Solid first set from Anastasiya. I knew I had to play more solid than yesterday (Friday). I could do that in the second set, had some opportunities but I should have been more aggressive to close the (second) set," said Ankita.

"I did analysis after match (against Jelena Ostapenko), it was great match. Anastasiya did not give anything in first set. I told myself in the second set there is nothing to lose.

"It was nice to be able to play World Group Play-offs. We could not do it last year."

# Tsitsipas vs Rublev in final



AFP ■ MONACO

Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Dan Evans 6-2, 6-1 in the semi-finals of the Monte Carlo Masters on Saturday and will face Andrey Rublev for the title.

Fourth seed Tsitsipas

needed just over an hour to dispatch Britain's Evans, who knocked out world number one Novak Djokovic in the last 16.

Tsitsipas has yet to drop a set in Monte Carlo this week and is through to his third Masters 1000 final.

"I am indeed pleased with the performance," said Tsitsipas.

"I found ways to play at my best. It was really difficult to maintain my level of consistency and I am really happy I managed to deal with all the different moments during the match."

"It's a dream of mine to be playing in the final," he added.

Rublev beat unseeded Norwegian Casper Ruud 6-3, 7-5 to advance to his first Masters 1000 final, ensuring there was no letdown after his elimination of 11-time champion Rafael Nadal in the quarter-finals.

"It is an amazing feeling. It is my first (ATP Masters 1000) final, so I am really happy," said Rublev.

"We will see what is going to happen. I will try to do my best."

# Ravi retains Asian title, Bajrang settles for Silver

PTI ■ ALMATY

Indian wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya retained his Asian Championship title with a solid performance but Bajrang Punia settled for a Silver medal after withdrawing from the much-awaited final against Takuto Otoguro due to an elbow injury, here on Saturday.

Bajrang said he did not want to aggravate the condition of his right elbow. He said he started feeling the pain during the quarterfinal against Korean Yongseok Jeong.

"When I was pulling the Korean, the pain in my right elbow resurfaced. It's the same elbow that I had injured during the World Championship. The coaches advised that I must not take risk so close to the



Olympics, so I withdrew," Bajrang said.

Also finishing on podium were Narsingh Pancham Yadav (79kg), Karan (70kg) and Satywart Kadian (97kg), who won a Bronze each, as all five Indians in action on Saturday returned with medals.

It was Yadav's first International medal in five years as he last won it in July 2015 at Grand Prix of Spain. He served a four-year doping ban which he completed only recently.

# Mirabai creates World Record in clean and jerk

PTI ■ TASHKENT

Former world champion Mirabai Chanu made a splendid return to the weightlifting arena, setting a new World Record in clean and jerk while also bettering her own national record en route winning a Bronze medal at the Asian Championship here on Saturday.

Chanu also confirmed her Tokyo Olympic spot as she has now competed in the six mandatory qualifying events.

The 26-year-old Indian lifted 86kg in snatch and a World Record of 119kg in clean and jerk for a total of 205kg.

While the earlier clean and jerk World Record was 118kg, Chanu's personal best total in 49kg was 203kg (88kg+115kg) at the National Championship in February last year.

The Gold medal went to Hou Zhihui of China who created a new World Record in snatch and total weight with an effort of 213kg (96g+117kg) while her compatriot Jiang Huihua clinched the Silver, lifting 207kg (89kg+118kg) in the Gold level Olympic qualifier.

Chanu was off to a shaky start as she failed to lift 85kg in her first two snatch attempts. The diminutive Manipuri then lifted 86kg in her final attempt. However, she finished fourth best, behind Zhihui (96kg), Huihua (89kg) and Aisah Windy Cantika (87kg) of Indonesia.

Chanu began her clean and jerk with a 113kg and then lifted 117kg successfully for her personal best. The Indian then bettered her own performance, hoisting 119kg, more than twice here body weight.

# Flick wants to quit as Bayern coach

AFP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich head coach Hansi Flick dropped a bombshell on Saturday by saying he wants to leave the club at the end of the season.

Despite Bayern winning six titles over the last 12 months under Flick, he told Sky that he "wants to be released" from his contract, which expires in 2023, after Saturday's 3-2 win at Wolfsburg that left the Bavarians seven points clear at the top of the Bundesliga.

The 56-year-old, who steered Bayern to last season's treble which included

the Champions League title, said his players already knew.

"I told the team that I informed the club during the week that I want out of my contract at the end of the season," Flick said. "It was not an easy decision for me."

The shock news caps a turbulent week for Bayern who were knocked out of the Champions League on Tuesday by Paris Saint-Germain.

Tensions have been simmering behind the scenes between Flick and Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic over player recruitment.

"I have discussed things internally with those responsible. The rea-



sons will remain internal for now," added Flick, who said he made his decision after "careful consideration".

The rift was triggered after Salihamidzic confirmed Jerome Boateng will not be kept on next season. Flick made it clear he wanted to keep the 32-year-old centre-back.

Being released from his Bayern contract would clear the way for Flick to take charge of Germany after Euro 2020.

Flick is one of the main candidates to be Germany head coach after Joachim Loew steps down following the June 11-July 11 tournament.

Flick says taking charge of the German national team is "an option" but he has yet to speak to Germany team director Oliver Bierhoff who will ultimately decide.

Flick was Loew's assistant coach when Germany won the 2014 World Cup title in Brazil.





■ **What is Azamgarh about?**

If one remembers, in 2001, when 9/11 happened, the same year Indian Parliament came under attack. Then in 2008, Mumbai was under attack. The period between 2001 to 2008, if one were to analyse it, one would find that every few months there was a big incident. In 2006, there were several

blasts in Mumbai's suburban railway network. Then Azamgarh connection came to light. I read news about a *maulvi* who used to bring children from Bihar under the pretext of teaching them, brainwash them and send them to Pakistan. He was caught by Delhi Police. Then there was another news about a Muslim boy from UP who ranked among the top three in Class XII exam. I have taken these three real incidents and woven a story around it and made the movie.

■ **What is Delhi Riots: A Tale of Burn & Blame about?**

It is totally about what happened during the Delhi riots last year. The news that came, especially in select international and Indian media and even if one checks Wikipedia, it said that it was the Hindus who killed the Muslims. When such riots take place, one must check facts. Then there was other news that came to light. There was a blame game. But the hurt was being ignored. I felt that there was a need to find the truth. I visited the place and spoke to people. What I found is what this film is about. I have let the survivors and experts speak and tell the story.

**Talktime**

KAMLESH K MISRA

*The writer-director who won the 66th National Film Award for Madhubani: The Station of Colors, is set to debut with Azamgarh which has been selected in three film festivals in the US. He speaks with Shalini Saksena about his film, a docu-film on 2020 North-East Delhi riots and how tough it is to make such films*

**WHEN RIOTS TAKE PLACE, ONE MUST CHECK FACTS. THERE WAS OTHER NEWS THAT CAME TO LIGHT DURING DELHI RIOTS. THERE WAS A NEED TO FIND THE TRUTH. I VISITED THE PLACE AND SPOKE TO PEOPLE. WHAT I FOUND IS WHAT THIS FILM IS ABOUT. I HAVE LET THE SURVIVORS AND EXPERTS SPEAK AND TELL THE STORY**

■ **How tough was this project?**

These projects are really tough to handle. I started my career as a journalist. We, sometimes, feel that there is a need to maintain a balance, even if it is not required. Take an example. If I slap someone and he slaps me back, both can't be wrong or right. One has to see who slapped first. In this film, we have, without trying to blame anyone, put across the point who slapped first. The aim was to find the root cause of the riots.

■ **What is the reason for making short films?**

Making a full-length feature film is an expensive proposition. I am not from the film background nor do I have backing of a big and established production house. I have had to struggle to become a filmmaker. We have to take baby steps. This is when people sit up and look at your work. I had made a short film with Tom Alter — *Kitaab*. It was shown at many film festivals and much appreciated. Then I made *Madhubani...* (in 2018), for which I got the National Award. In between I made *Azamgarh* but it's release got postponed due to lockdown and looking for a fresh date to release it. The focus is to make feature films but if a topic comes my way that needs to be talked about and if

I have the resources, I will make a docu-film on that as well.

■ **How did social work find its way into your filmmaking career?**

I am a bit sensitive to what is happening around me. I feel that if one can take some time out from one's professional and personal life, one must do whatever one can for the less privileged. I have joined an organisation and try to help those in need. We did some work for the people when we were under lockdown.

■ **How did it feel when you won the National Award?**

When I made *Kitaab*, I didn't make it with the intentions of getting an award but after it was completed, I felt that I would definitely get an award. But I didn't. When I made *Madhubani...* and got an award for it. I feel the same for *Azamgarh*. But let's see how things pan out.

■ **What are your upcoming projects?**

I am making a documentary. It is about showcasing Delhi under the lockdown. It is a challenging subject — to recreate the same scenario now. I am putting a lot of hard work here. I draw my inspiration from the journalist that is still inside me and try and tell stories that one doesn't usually get to read.

MUSBA HASHMI catches up with ANAM HASHIM, the only Indian professional street bike freestyle athlete to win an international stunt competition in 2017, about how she fell in love with bikes and the challenges of riding solo

# RIDING INTO THE SUNRISE

Women bike riders are not a surprise anymore. Time and again, women have proved that gender is no bar and there's nothing called a man's job. However, what may flabbergast you is a stunt woman. Of course, there are likes of Reshma Pathan and Geeta Tandon, but they all rule the B-town. Meet Anam Hashim, an Indian professional street bike freestyle athlete, though she isn't a celebrity but what she does is worth mentioning. Hashim is the only Indian stunt athlete to win an international stunt competition in 2017.

If this is not enough, she is also known as the first



woman who rode to Khardung La on a TVS Scooty alone and also led a group of 10 women to Khardung La in 2016 during the Himalayan Highs.

However, it was not as if she woke up and decided to play with bikes. For her, it has been a natural process just like breathing.

"Since childhood, I have been a person who loved to move everything around. I never played with girls. Even my choice of toys included trains, aeroplanes and bikes. I remember maneuvering the handle of my father's scooter. So, in a way, I was fond of

vehicles as long as I can remember. It has been a natural process for me," Hashim tells you.

Stunt riding and offloading is what that excites Hashim above everything. Not that, she doesn't like motorcycling, but the former offers more challenges and that is what she is on a lookout for.

"There is a constant urge that I need to learn new techniques and things. I have done wheelies so much that it is normal. That's why I started doing Cross country rally racing because it is challenging. It requires a lot of speed. It is thrilling, exciting and

**The challenge, in our country, is the lack of infrastructure. It is hard to find a washroom when you are riding. The other thing is if you are riding solo, you will be troubled by men**

dangerous also, but this is what I love doing," she says.

Human minds, she says are more negative than positive. And as a result, judgments on the basis of gender and religion never parted ways from her.

"It is never ending. I have stopped focusing on that because there is nothing much I can do about it. As long as something makes me happy, I will continue to do it," Hashim asserts.

Performing stunts is like a cup of tea for Hashim. There are no challenges that she faces as such. However, the problem lies with the men and

the infrastructure. "I have been performing stunts for more than nine years. It's like a daily routine for me. I have learnt to tackle my fears. The challenge, in our country, is the lack of infrastructure. It is hard to find a washroom while you are on solo rides. When you are riding on Himalayas, there is nothing you will find. The other thing is if you are riding solo, you will be troubled by men.

"Even if I am riding a scooter in my city, there are boys who try to zip around just to get your attention. It's rare that somebody actually appreciates you because they don't know who is inside the helmet, but the moment they figure out they will be around to trouble you," she tells you.

However, back when she started, there were times when she just left her bike in panic. "Initially, I used to panic a lot. But then, with time I learnt to deal with it. There is no solution to eliminating fears but to keep practicing," Hashim says.

There is always a trial and error approach that one can follow in everything one does, however what Hashim does, doesn't allow her to do so.

"There's never been a time when a stunt had gone wrong. I never do anything that can harm others. Also, I have been doing it for so long now that I even know how to crash.

It is the basic one should know — how to land and crash. This is how you can manage to perform the stunts. I know a lot of men who have hit people so hard that they died on the spot. Why? Because they didn't know how to land properly," she tells you.

Travelling to Khardung La on her own, she says, was one of the best and challenging times of her life. "The whole event was a company's idea who approached me and I immediately said yes to the adventure.

I was learning stunt riding then. Back then, I was pushing myself to explore things. It was my first big thing apart from stunt riding that I did back in 2015. And because of that event, I have become an explorer now who is ready to take on challenges," Hashim, who is also featuring in &TV's music video *Awesome In Disguise*, explains.



## 'I do out-of-the-box and refreshing songs'

Indi pop singer ANAMIKA, who started her musical journey from New York with a band, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about her journey and her latest single, Ferrareee

■ **How did your musical journey begin?**

Besides learning Indian classical I have learnt western classical as well since I was studying in New York. Then home beckoned and I came back to India and saw the trend here. My first song was *Catwalk*, it was a fun song too. Then I realised that I had to get into music and started doing other songs like *Intezaar* and *Kala Sha Kala*. Indian classical helped me because of my strength on stage; western classical helped me in the power of the voice. So you can give me any song — international or Punjabi or Hindi — I can sing all since I can modulate my voice accordingly.

■ **What is Ferrareee about?**

It is about the car — Ferrari — as the name of the song suggests. This car has always been on my bucket list; it is my favourite. The brand, for me, is larger than life and so has been my vision. I have always wanted something out-of-the-box, something that takes away from the usual and breaks the monotony. There have always been songs about boys chasing girls. This time I wanted to do a song about a girl chasing a boy, something different, something refreshing. Then I wrote my lyrics accordingly and hence they are fun. The words are not complicated, they are very next door and relate to the song. The moment people will hear it, they would want to sing with it.

■ **Does this mean that the song is for a particular segment?**

Not at all. All my songs are for every generation. This is one thing that I always keep in mind, that I will not do a song just for teenagers or youngsters. No. Songs that I do are for people of all ages. Once you hear this song and see the video, you will relate to it.

■ **How long did you work on this song?**

I started working on it much before the lockdown last year, in January. We were scheduled to release the song in October 2020. But due to COVID-19 protocol we had to defer it. We did the video in November and ready it in December. But choose to wait and release the song on Mahashivratri and it is my mother's birthday. I just wanted to thank her.

■ **You had a band in NY. What made you come to India?**

Yes, I worked with a band called Yankees. I came back to India due to my responsibility towards my mother and father. They were very lonely. So, I wanted to be back home. Also, it was never in my mind to do an album or anything like that. I am a live band singer. I formed a band called Temptations and used to sing at the Le Meridien. From there, I got spotted and here I am.

■ **You are the only Indi pop singer who sings in Punjabi and English. How did you end up doing this?**

I also sing in Hindi and Spanish as well. It just happened and that is how versatile I want to be. I don't want to stick to one genre or style of music. This is where I stand out when I do my performances. I do a lock of English covers and rock music. My band plays a lot of retro. Depending on where we are, we perform accordingly.

■ **Over the years you have delivered many hits. Did you think they would still be popular today?**

It feels great that people still remember. At that time, I was just doing music. It is my passion. But these songs so big like *Intezaar...* *Kala Sha Kala* is a wedding anthem. We were probably thinking 10 years ahead when we did these songs. This song, that I have just done, will carry on for another couple of years. My idea is to sustain.

■ **Have you had to change your style a bit due to changing musical tastes of the people today?**

I am one person who goes with the trend. I adapt to what is happening in the present. I move with the time. I tell everybody that my idol is JLo (Jennifer Lopez). I follow her to the T. She is always going with the time. I want to do the same and keep going till I can. I have good support.

■ **What next?**

My next song *Sha La La La* I ready. Then there is another song, *Chak De Dhol*. I have done an international song for world peace. Due to lockdown it got postponed.

## LET THE DUST SETTLE

Dust allergies are common in the country triggering reactions among people. But now, a liquid-based anti-pollution product aims to cure all dust and air pollution problems. SHALINI SAKSENA tells you more

Last year, Delhi's average annual concentration of PM2.5 was 84.1 microgram per cubic meter, more than double the level of Beijing which averaged 37.5 g/m3 during the year, according to a report by a Swiss group that measures air quality levels based on the concentration of the lung-damaging fine particles. This leads to dust allergies. But this could soon be a thing of the past.

A liquid-based anti-pollution product aims to reduce the PM levels up to 65 per cent in seven days. All one has to do is add 70 ml of the liquid — Curol+ — to 10 litres of water and mop the floor with this mix or spray the same onto the carpet. The coating creates a safety net, the floor becomes a giant air filter and the pollutants, dust mites and virus carrying dust are attracted to the floor. The mopping cycle removes the dust from the floor and creates a new coating. On day seven, there is a 65 per cent reduction in air pollution in the

treated surface.

Dhruv Bhatnagar, CEO, DB Life Science LLP tells you that the main cause of worry in a country like ours is not so much as the carbon levels but the PM levels. "You mix 70 ml of this product in water and mop the floor with it. The dust particles get attracted to the floor, they settle down and the next day, you mop the floor again and the settled PM gets removed and the cycle continues," Bhatnagar says.

He tells you that just like one would eat a medicine for a lifelong illness, this liquid needs to be applied daily. "It is safe, 100 per cent organic, food safe, 100 per cent water soluble, biodegradable and PH neutral. Unfortunately, if one were to stop using it, the pollution levels will start rising again," Bhatnagar says.

For the liquid to be effective, one can't use any other product on the floor. This, he tells you, will bring down the efficacy of the liquid to zero. But all



those who have been mopping their floors with sanitisers to keep COVID-19 away from their homes, need not worry. All they have to do is mop the floor twice — in the morning, using Curol+; in the evening using sanitiser with an eight to nine-hour window between mops.

Whether mopping the floor with sanitiser works or not is difficult to ascertain, there is need for more research, Bhatnagar says. "There was a research done, over a period of time, by Harvard University, US, that wherever, the PM levels were higher — indoors and outdoors — in those

areas transmission and fatality rates were higher. Our guarantee on paper, to anybody using our product, is that the liquid can reduce PM levels by 50-60 per cent within seven days," Bhatnagar says. He is quick to point out that if people are using his product, ideally, they don't need to use any other disinfectant.

"The advantage of this liquid is that this product has been made in such a way that it does the work of a normal disinfectant available in the market. One doesn't really need to use anything else on the floor. Our aim here is to tell people that our product reduced PM levels. The fact that it cleans the floor as well, is an added benefit, not the end goal," Bhatnagar says.

For outdoors, since the PM is there all the time and multiplying every day, it can't be removed but there is a solution. "This is where our expertise comes in. We don't remove the pollution. We reduce the effects of it. We spray the area





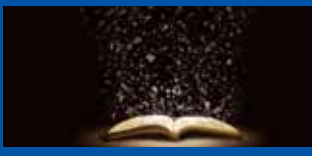
# the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

## Lokas 2: What Exists Above

To move from the *Bhulok* to *Bhuvalok* (Astral Plan), from *Tamas* to more *Rajas*, we need to work on controlling our senses

2



4

## Of learning and wisdom

Every seeker must undergo a mandatory grooming process before being allowed exposure to the particular subject of learning

I personally think that if you deny something or if you hide something you're inadvertently admitting it's wrong  
— Amber Heard



# TELLING THE TALE OF HERITAGE

Stories are an excellent mode of keeping the history of heritage alive, writes SUTAPA BASU, as she shares her impressions on the importance of making heritage a part of contemporary storytelling

Stories have disseminated consciousness of our past cultures since times immemorial. Whether through cave paintings or oral narrations, the earliest mode of passing traditions, history, customs, and rituals through generations has been only through storytelling. Before written language was discovered, even certain work skills were passed from father to son through stories. The reason is simple, anything woven into a story is unforgettable. Storytelling is a powerful tool that has massive lasting impact. When we listen to stories or read them, they boost our feelings of trust, compassion, empathy and positively influence our social behaviour. Storytelling has a unique ability to build connections. When we hear a well-told story, your brain reacts as if we are experiencing it ourselves. We respond to stories because they cultivate a sense of togetherness. Thus, stories that tell us about our past or what we have inherited from our ancestors make us feel, we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

### WHAT IS HERITAGE?

Heritage is the complete scope of inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture. Most significantly, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings, and behaviour that we draw from them. Heritage includes, but is much more than just preserving, excavating, displaying, or restoring a collection of old things. Heritage is tangible as well as intangible. Monuments, artifacts, books, archived records of events are tangible while traditions, lifestyles and mannerisms are some of the intangible elements that we inherit. We can explore heritage through excavations, conservation, restoration and display of concrete objects. However, history of songs, recipes, cuisine, nuances of language, dances, dress and other conventions of legacy need to be perceived and appreciated. An excellent mode of keeping the history of heritage alive, generation after generation, is through stories. For what is history but story telling? Let's see how some of the palpable as well as abstract elements of heritage have benefited through telling stories.

### ARCHITECTURE

Old forts and castles, mansions and monuments are natural source for stories, myths, and tales. When I visited Chittorgarh fort, one of the myths I heard was about how the religious fervour of Meera Bai, the Princess of Mewar, had kept intact her chamber in the huge palace though the rest of the royal residence had been flattened. Obviously, I went back and read up everything available about the history of the palace and fort. I discovered more such myths. In *The Pillars of the Earth*, author Ken Follet

describes in great detail how a 12th century cathedral is built. He makes a tale of its unusual architecture, politics and weaves civil war, famine and religious strife around it. Bimal Mitra's Bengali novel *Saheb, Bibi, Golam* made into the famous film, *Sahib, Bibi Aur Ghulam* is set in a *zamindari* mansion that resonates with the culture of the period. His entire story is about the feudal and patriarchal traditions which emanate from the mansion. Another story like that is *Shatranj Ke Khilari* about the *nawabi* culture that has been filmed in the old palaces of Lucknow.

### CUISINE

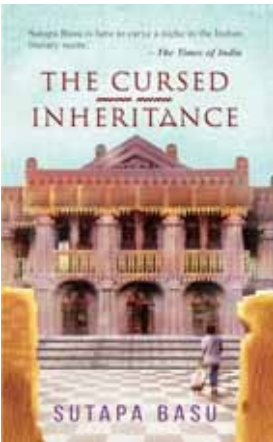
An amazing story that revolves around food, its concoction, history and influence is *Like Water For Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel. Tita, the tragic protagonist of the story, is only able to express herself when she cooks. The chapters even carry recipes. They fascinated me and I even cooked some of them. The stories about food gave me a wonderful view of regional cuisine. Another book that has enamoured me is *The Flavour of Spice* by Marryam H Reshi that gloriously celebrates spices. Reading her book, I embarked upon a delightful foray into the heritage of Indian cooking as she traces history of spices as far back as possible.

### WAY OF LIFE

Reading *Gone With The Wind* by Margaret Mitchell gives the reader an excellent insight into lifestyles, dresses, social customs and attitudes prevalent in southern parts of USA during the American Civil War in the 1800s. The book has become a reference point for scholars of that period. Vikram Seth's novel *A Suitable Boy* brings us the perfume of courtesans and old-world charm of the pre-independence period. It gives us a peep into lifestyles, notions and sentiments of a bygone culture.

### DRESS

Dramas written by playwrights such as Shakespeare, Kalidas or Anton Chekov, when staged, are a feast for costume designers. They display the fashions worn during a specific period in a certain parts of the world where the dramas are set. However, stories are created not only by writers but are also told by raconteurs. When the *Ramcharitra Manas* or *Meghdoot* is recited there are vivid descriptions of garments, headdresses and weapons which make them come alive through mental visuals for the listeners. History and heritage of dresses come alive only through these descriptions. We can then compare them and find out what of that heritage still remains in our fashions today.



“WE RESPOND TO STORIES BECAUSE THEY CULTIVATE A SENSE OF TOGETHERNESS. THUS, STORIES THAT TELL US ABOUT OUR PAST OR WHAT WE HAVE INHERITED FROM OUR ANCESTORS MAKE US FEEL, WE ARE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN OURSELVES”

### MEANS OF TRANSPORT

Read *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and we find out about chaises, stagecoaches, barouches, phaetons, and curricles. What about *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne to know about submarines or fictional wonder vehicles such as the muggle car from the *Harry Potter* series? *Pather Panchali* by written by Bibhutibhusan Bandhopadhyaya and put on celluloid by Satyajit Ray shows its protagonist's obsession with the train that passes his village. Since his only travel experience had been on a bullock cart, the speeding train enthralled him.

### TRADITIONS

Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is a wonderful cameo on the traditional Christmas spirit. Similarly, *Sense and Sensibility* by Austen profiles the Victorian custom of older men marrying young girls. Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* is all about how social class creates conflicts among its characters. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *Namesake* and *The Lowlands* are excellent profiles of traditions and rituals in different parts of India. Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* gives insights into class disparities of an India of a decade ago. Chitra Divakaruni's *Palace of Illusions* takes the reader back to the rituals of the *Mahabharata* period of Indian history while *Before We Visit the Goddess* is about multi-generational bonds, that rise from the countryside of Bengal, India and sweep into the streets of Houston, Texas.

### NUANCES OF LANGUAGE

Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is a wonderful study of the use of dialect by different social classes in nineteenth century America. In fact, introducing dialect into literary writing goes back to Chaucer. Non-standard spellings and slang are used often in literature to delineate characters and give them identity. Evolving language is one of true measures of heritage. Do you remember Eliza Doolittle in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*? If only learning the correct dialect could make a flower girl into a lady of consequence, how important can language be in the reconstruction of society? Ruskin Bond often uses regional nuances and dialect to create atmosphere and build his characters. Many of his stories are set in the terai of the Himalayas and his villagers often use words in their own dialect in dialogues. With such eminent authors to light up my path, I have included many features of heritage in my books to build ambience, build characters and bring authenticity to my storytelling. In all

my historical fiction books, I create the historical period through visual pen pictures of the dress, cuisine and traditions of the period and place. In *The Curse of Nader Shah*, I have exposed Nader Shah's obsession with the colour red on his garments and his creation of the four-cornered hat, the *kulah-e-naderi*. In *The Legend of Genghis Khan*, I have described the wide range of knives that the Mongols always carried on their belts and their varied purpose. *Padmavati* has numerous regional words sprinkled across the story for the sake of authenticity. My latest book, *The Cursed Inheritance* focuses on the city of Kolkata and its cultural nuances. The *zamindari* mansions that dot the city inspired the setting of this cozy mystery inside a dilapidated yet grand mansion of Kolkata, called Sarkar Bari. I describe egg concoctions being cooked that are special to Kolkata as well as a coal stove built inside an iron pail, a common cooking implement in Bengal. Kolkata is one of few cities which still has the hand-pulled rickshaws. Mentioned numerous times in my new book, is Kolkata's iconic vehicle though the protagonist also empathises with the emaciated pullers and their livelihoods. I have chronicled the tradition of celebrating the festival of Durga Puja in the mansions of old *zamindari* families in this novel. Belief in *tantric* practices and demons as guardians of treasures is one the regional features of rural Bengal which has been exploited to the hilt. Stories, narratives, and storytelling are central aspects of all cultures and thus, a part of heritage. For the storytelling to become an effective propagator of cultural history, it must engage the listener or reader, and provide a narrative that is both cognitively and emotionally compelling. People are natural storytellers. They tell narratives about their experiences and the meanings that these experiences have in their lives. All cultures and societies also possess their own stories or narratives about their past and their present, and sometimes about their view of the future. The memories and retelling of the past provide a sense of security in an uncertain world. Stories, both written and verbal, are veritable source for this history. Stories are a thread of timelessness that runs through a rapidly changing environment. Hence, stories revolving around heritage bring a special sense of belonging and of continuity. It reduces global conflict and brings empathy for co-existence. All said and done, storytelling is one of the dominant means of preserving heritage and passing down of values and traditions that make the global social fabric stronger. *The writer is an author and poet. Her book, The Cursed Inheritance, has been recently published*



**HIDDEN**SOULS  
PRAMOD PATHAK

PRAMOD PATHAK

As the second round of Corona scare grips the world as many had predicted, mass hysteria of gargantuan proportions seems to be building up again. Psychologists may call this reaction a paranoia that seems to affect large sections of the people all over the world. And Corona is not the only worry. US is worried about the gun purchases reaching alarming levels as a sizeable section of Asian Americans are in some kind of an insecurity syndrome. Worry and fear are all at the top of the mind as death seems to be lurking round the corner. The situation is eerily similar to the Corona scare round 1 suggesting that experience is not always a good teacher. Rather, it accentuates the past behaviour many times over. Against this backdrop, we once again need to ask the same questions that were raised during the previous round. The responses are of the same trial and error nature. To add to the woes some new questions have cropped up. Is this a different Corona? Does the vaccine has the answer? Difficult to say but history seems to be repeating itself. As the scare mounts and the toll counts rise to alarming levels, there is a need to have a relook at the entire scenario and examine things in totality. And things may not appear to be as simple as they look. Yes, it has impacted lives, ruined families and caused death and destruction of enormous proportions. Yes, it has shattered economies and crashed GDPs. But there is another side of the story. It has raised the number of billionaires in both developed and developing countries and there are some in the queue to graduate to the trillionaire status. It has pushed the growth of commerce companies astronomically while online platforms rose in geometric proportions. Investors now realise that putting money in Pharma stocks yields big dividends, and rather fast, even though there is no sure medicine in sight. It also threw quacks and charlatans in thousands sermonising on dos and don'ts on the social media. YouTube has become the most handy tool for the propaganda brigade who are delivering unsubstantiated pearls of wisdom almost at the same pace as the speed of the spread of the virus. Quite interestingly the biological virus seems to have acquired traits of computer virus. So we are told that this time the vaccine provides immunity for some months rather than a lifetime, as it used to be earlier. The connection between computer and Corona seems interesting as there is an uncanny relationship between people having stakes in computers and Pharma. It is not just the medical angle. An interesting aspect is that one voice of dissent on the social media meets with systemic campaign from troll brigade that makes sure that such voices are lost in the din. That apart, there are many intriguing aspects to ponder. But we must understand that while exercising utmost caution helps us, getting scared helps others who have something to gain from our fear. Fear is a big industry these days and marketing negativities pushes demand of goods and services that are often not required. Making a fast buck is seldom done through fair business. As Mario Puzo wrote in *The Godfather* — *Behind every great fortune there is a crime*. Corona is certainly bad, but cashing in on Corona is rather worse.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at [ppathak.ism@gmail.com](mailto:ppathak.ism@gmail.com).



The latest and one of the greatest was the *Mahaguru* whose *Karma Bhumi* was Gurgaon and afterlife headquarters is Najafgarh. While most prophets came with a small contingent of a few, he brought along hundreds of beings from higher *lokas* to accomplish his mission.

In order to move from the *Bhulok* or Earth plane to '*Bhuvalek*' or 'Astral Plane' or from the *Mooladhara Chakra* to the *Swadisthan Chakra*, from the Earth element to the water element, from the predominantly *Tamas* to more *Rajas* we need to work on controlling our senses.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT ABOVE THE SATYALOK ARE LOKAS LIKE VAIKUNTH, GOLOKA, SHIVALOK ETC. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE BHRAMLOK AND THESE ARE PARALLEL AND VARIABLE DUE TO THE INHERENT NATURE THE BEING HAS EVOLVED INTO

And then *Swarlok* is a place where you can spend your cosmic currency earned and stored. It is a place of immense pleasure and beauty. *Seva* leads to *Swarg* or beyond. It's a place where spiritual understanding and aspirations begin. People learn detachment and how to focus on the purpose of the self. They also prepare for rebirth on *Bhulok* when spiritual assets dwindle. They get born as kings and queens or administrators and dominating personalities maybe as celebrities as well. If they are philanthropic and kind, they retain their *loka* status. If not they catch a snake ride. If they are those who out do expectations, the ethereal ladder appears and the ascent is in order.

So choose wisely in this life and  
in your afterlife.

The writer is the author of Hingori Sutras  
series of spiritual books

We are all trying to climb successive peaks that we see. Any relative comparison among the peers is useless. Glorious peaks for a few could be futile plateaus for others. Within us those subjectively defined heights are measured and more importantly, a climbing process where life is felt and lived.

I saw the peak of a woman, and in her true love, my elixir. The energy that flows in true love is the same, whether it is for God or a person. If I could not be consciously in God's love round the clock, then I needed her love. May be, through her love only, could I hope to reach the higher realms in my spiritual world that was con-



"Krishna, wither those clouds, that hide the next peak, and not my limbs," said I, and continued, "before I leave my pot of earth behind, present yourself Master."

*The writer is the author of book  
Conversations With My Love*

There are two kinds of people in the world — those born with predominantly divine and demonic qualities. (16.6) There is always friction between



The next or higher lot is of good people, who also do public service. For this reason, God does intervene in their cases by protecting them by extricating them from harmful situations, caused by their bad acts done earlier. Remember, these souls must have erred like the rest of us human beings. God has to help out; He does. God does much more for His devotees – the highest category He puts them in – the *yogakshemam* group – (9.22). God helps in getting what one does not have and provides security of what one has. This is how the two higher groups of

Every time a fearful thought comes in the mind then one thinks that he is not alone; God is with him; He will protect. Gradually, the earlier programming will change from negative to positive and life will be much better.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at [spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com](mailto:spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com)



# Importance of behavioural economics during Covid

The coronavirus pandemic has not only grabbed the headlines but has also thrown the global health emergency care in disarray. The ubiquitous virus has not spared anyone, not even the most prosperous economies of the world.

Studies have shown that people living with comorbidity (i.e., concomitant morbidity) are under high risk of falling critically ill or succumbing to coronavirus. They are dying from the in-hospital complications and a high incidence of mortality. The comorbidity is mostly of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, cerebrovascular accident, malignancy, asthma, cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney and obstructive pulmonary diseases, etc.

Moreover, persons with diabetes have been in the lime-light since the inception of the pandemic as the epidemiological data have revealed their high risk of several clinical adversaries (The Lancet, 2020). As per the statistics, 71 per cent of deaths are owing to NCDs globally, 41 million people every year, of which 15 million are under the age of 70 years. Moreover 8.5 million cases are from low and middle income countries.

The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology published its findings based on 61 million individuals in England on their absolute and relative risk of mortality due to Covid-19 and the type of diabetes. It finds that the odd ratio of in-hospital deaths is 3.51, and 2.03 for persons with type-1 and type-2 diabetes, respectively. Information from 1561 Covid-19 patients from two hospitals in Wuhan showed that those with diabetes (9.8%) were more likely to need admission to the intensive care unit or to die, and similar cases are also noted from other parts of the world.

However, despite having a high percentage of diabetes, the



A patient waits inside an ambulance to be admitted to a dedicated Covid-19 hospital in Ahmedabad on April 15, 2021

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reported cases of mortality in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are comparatively low so far. The climatic and geographical factors have some bearing on this low fatality rate in this region. (Apicella et. al., The Lancet, July 17, 2020).

Using the Longitudinal Aging Study in India (LASI, 2017-19) database of the Harvard, IIPS and the University of Southern California on disease and health condition of the popu-

lation aged 45 years and above, we estimated that 18.28 per cent have comorbidity. About 60 per cent of the patients with diabetes have high blood pressure, while 17.32 per cent of patients with high cholesterol levels are suffering from chronic heart diseases. This co-occurrence of more than one disorder in the same individual is a matter of utmost concern during the raging pandemic. Our results also demonstrated that 75 per cent of the indi-

viduals suffering from comorbidity are hardly ever or never engaged in vigorous physical activities. Out of total patients suffering from comorbidity, about one-quarter indulge in substance use. Cases among females are more than males and it increases with the rise in income from the second to fifth income quintile.

The Government's initiative to prioritise the people with comorbidity in this age group on the vaccination list is the

need of the hour and has been followed from March 1 to curb the second wave of covid.

However, the public spending on NCDs is less than 0.5 per cent of GDP in India. The findings of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2015-16 state that obesity has given a steep rise to hypertension among people with BMI more than 30. While 11 per cent of the eligible women (i.e, age 15-49) have hypertension, including 7 per cent having stage-1

hypertension, and stage-2 and stage-3 hypertension at 1 per cent each. On blood pressure parameter, it finds 61 per cent women as compared to 43 per cent men, but only 1 per cent of them take anti-hypertensive medicines.

The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke (NPCDCS) has been executed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to

raise awareness regarding risk factors and establishment of NCD clinics, cardio care centre and screening at primary health-care level. The National Action Plan has also been conceived along the global monitoring framework to reduce the premature deaths from NCDs to 25 per cent by 2025. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has militated against Government's efforts of integrating NPCDCS with National Health Mission and AYUSH to promote a healthy lifestyle and strengthening infrastructure to detect NCDs at an early stage.

The focus of the healthcare system in India at present lies on four important directions -- intervention in maternal and child health, preventive and affordable healthcare, medical infrastructure, and communicable and non-communicable diseases. Under the aegis of Ayushman Bharat Scheme, the Health and Wellness Centres, Primary Healthcare Centres, Community Health Centres are providing free diagnostic services for the NCDs.

Simply designing and implementing policies are not sufficient to weaken the bond between Covid-19 and comorbidity. There is a need to eliminate practical and psychological barriers to healthy behaviour, which is possible by the adoption of a behavioural economics approach. Integration of these idiosyncratic approaches into policymaking will illustrate its ability to improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of policies through well-designed interventions in curtailing the comorbidity, especially during the second of Covid-19.

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**Integration of idiosyncratic approaches into policymaking will illustrate its ability to improve both the effectiveness and the efficiency of policies through well-designed interventions in curtailing comorbidity, especially during the second of Covid-19**



PRATAP C MOHANTY



PRAGYA TANEJA

## PERSPECTIVE

# Takers' total reliance key to vaccination success

**From the early-vaccinated who share their experience with others to the vaccine administrators, local bodies that facilitate the vaccination centres, healthcare community, policymakers and the media, everyone has a role to highlight the need to support and encourage the vaccination drive**



SUBHROJOYOTI BHOWMICK

It is crucial that the world's largest vaccination campaign in India must succeed with more shots being administered because this is the green shoot of hope we have to rebuild our lives and our economy and to build India stronger.

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact in the way we live and work. The lockdown and quarantine protocols also fueled social anxiety as more cases were identified, and reports of deaths due to Covid-19 related complications trickled in.

Every death is a tragic loss; every death impacts people and families in ways that go unreported. With over 1.69 lakh lives already lost to the pandemic, there is urgent need to embrace the nationwide vaccination drive.

The nation's resilience and prompt action has seen it record among the world's lowest number of cases and deaths per million of the population, but we must continue to build on this through the most effective and safe tool that science has developed — prompt vaccination.

After all, vaccines have helped contain several contagious diseases. The fact that we are smallpox free is just one example of how successful vaccination campaigns have enabled the nation to address pressing health-care crises.

While the first dose of smallpox vaccine reportedly arrived in the country in 1802, the country's first national campaign in 1962 enabled us in achieving the desired effect through the tireless efforts of volunteers and a greater awareness among the public on the need to be vaccinated.

We have seen similar success in preventing tuberculosis through the BCG vaccination programme. Further, from being hyperendemic for polio in the early 1990s, India's success in eliminating wild polioviruses is another inspiring example of the success of the children vaccination programme and awareness campaigns. These successful

vaccination campaigns have helped save millions of precious lives.

What is common across all successful vaccination campaigns is the fact there has been strong grassroots acceptance. With no clear sight on when the Covid-19 pandemic will end, and if the world will ever go back to the place as we knew it, it is crucial to take the jab.

Let us take a moment to look back on the same period last year: There was no hope in sight as the pandemic wreaked havoc across the world. Less than a year later, we have hope and confidence in a number of approved vaccines, highlighting the inspiring work of our scientists. With multiple variants of the virus being reported, being vaccinated is important to support humanity's collective effort to contain the pandemic.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned, the country, with its large population of 1.3 billion, stands to face trouble if vaccinations are not taken to prevent new infections. The strategy of the nation to first inoculate front-line workers followed by the elderly and now opening up vaccinations for all over 45 is the right direction as we need to ensure lower mortality, given that the elderly and those with medical conditions are more vulnerable to the complications arising from Covid-19.

With vaccination centres set up in key locations across all States, people have more access to vaccination. More than 10 crore doses of the vaccine have already been administered, including over nearly 1.35 crore people taking both the doses, as of April 14.

My family members and I have taken the jab, and the confidence it brings is enormous. The process was seamless; we visited the vaccination centre near our home. There were trained volunteers who explained to us the process of the vaccination, what to expect, and we were back home in no time.

It is both a privilege and an hon-



A medic prepares to administer a dose of Covid-19 vaccine during the vaccination festival Tilka Utsav, at EDMC Vishwakarma Park Dispensary in New Delhi

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our to get the opportunity to protect oneself, and at the same time, support the safety of the family and community. Being vaccinated, I believe, is the first step to protecting yourself and your family, and thereby the wider community and the nation. While it is important to continue to follow all protocols, vaccine ensures that you are less vulnerable to the disease, which gives you a sense of immense relief.

The Government of India has taken the right steps, by authorising the emergency use of Russia's Sputnik

V Covid-19 vaccine, and also fast-tracking approval for other shots already passed by other major countries. With the rising cases in India, vaccination is the most effective tool in our battle against Covid-19. And as the Government rightly stated, "It is very critical to expand the basket of vaccines for domestic use and hasten the pace and coverage of vaccination".

What is the key to the success of this vaccination mission is that every member of the public plays a key role in contributing to it. From the early-

vaccinated who share their experience with others to the vaccine administrators, local bodies that facilitate the vaccination centres, the healthcare community, the policymakers and the media, everyone has a role in highlighting the need to encourage the vaccination drive.

We have a solution to the unprecedented challenge we faced, and it would be unwise, and in fact a disservice to the nation, to squander this opportunity due to apprehension, uncertainty, or misinformation. India's vaccination drive is

moving in the right direction and we must step up the tempo to enable safety for all our fellow citizens, so that as a country we can focus on our growth and socio-economic and developmental priorities.

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