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Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

*Late City Vol. 31 Issue 110
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY APRIL 22, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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0.03% vaccinated get reinfected

For Covaxin, only 0.04% afflicted with coronavirus again after 2nd dose

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday pointed out that more than 21,000 people tested positive for Covid-19 after taking the first dose of either Covishield or Covaxin, manufactured by Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India (SII) while over 5,500 contracted the infection after taking the second dose.

"And the data are not at all worrisome", said Dr Balram Bhargava, ICMR chief, at a routine Press conference here.

"Around 0.04 per cent of 17,37,178 individuals, who received the second dose of Covaxin, were positive for Covid-19, while 0.03 per cent of 1,57,32,754 people, who took the second dose of Covishield, contracted the infection," he said.

Bhargava who presented the data said vaccines reduce the risk of infection and prevent death and severe infection. "After vaccination, if one gets infection then it is known as breakthrough infection," he said.

So far, 1.1 crore doses of Covaxin have been administered. Out of which 93 lakh received the first dose and out of that 4,208 (0.04 per cent) people got the infection which is four per 10,000 individuals. About 17,37,178 people received the second dose of which only 695 (0.04 per cent) tested positive for Covid-19,

Bhargava said. Of Covishield, 11.6 crore doses have been given. Ten crore received the first dose and 17,145 i.e. 2 per 10,000 people contracted the infection. About 1,57,32,754 individuals took the second dose of Covishield and of that 5,014 (0.03 per cent) got infected. Two to four per 10,000 breakthrough infections have occurred, a very small number. This was mainly healthcare workers prone to more occupational hazards, he said.

5,709 people contracted the infection after the second dose of either of the two vaccines. "This is a very small number and not at all worrisome," he said.

NITI Aayog Member (Health) VK Paul noted that there is a risk even after taking vaccination so "we stress people to follow Covid appropriate



A man receives vaccine against Covid-19 at a facility in Srinagar on Wednesday

behaviour even after taking the vaccination."

Amid oxygen shortage in the country, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said 7,500 metric tonnes of oxygen

is being produced in the country per day and 6,600 metric tonnes is being supplied to the States for medical use.

"We have issued instructions that, leaving a few indus-

tries, the supply of industries will be restricted so that more and more oxygen can be made available for medical use. We have allocated 6,600 MT out of 7,500 MT to States," he said.

Covaxin 100% effective against severe Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Covaxin, a vaccine developed by Bharat Biotech, has demonstrated overall interim clinical efficacy of 78 per cent and 100 per cent efficacy against severe Covid-19, the Hyderabad-based company said on Wednesday announcing phase 3 interim analysis results of the vaccine.

The efficacy of Covaxin

was little less at 78 per cent than the 81 per cent reported in March. On Wednesday, Bharat Biotech, in a Press release, announced results from an interim analysis of its phase 3 trial. The efficacy against severe Covid-19 disease was 100 per cent, the company claimed, but that against protecting from asymptomatic Covid-19 infection was 78 per cent.

The analysis was on a data set of 127 Covid positive volunteers.

In a statement here, the company said the safety and efficacy results from the final analysis would be available in June, and the final report will be submitted to a peer-reviewed publication. "Based on the achievement of the success criteria, placebo recipients have now become eligible to

receive two doses of Covaxin," Bharat Biotech said in the statement.

Dr Balram Bhargava, Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, said Covaxin works well against most variants of SARS-CoV-2. "These findings together consolidate the position of our indigenous vaccine in the global vaccine landscape."

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Covid death rate goes up from .5% to .7%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's death rate is showing a steady rise, going up from .5 per cent to nearly .7 per cent. It means from an earlier count of five deaths per thousand patients, now seven patients out of 1,000 are succumbing to the virus. On Wednesday, the country reported record 2,101 deaths against record 3,15,478 cases reported during 24 hours.

This is the first time India has reported more than 3 lakh Covid positive in 24 hours. The surge was driven by Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Karnataka. Several other States, like

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 1,59,24,732 (+3,15,478)

DEATHS: 1,84,672 (+2,101)

RECOVERED: 1,34,49,371 (+1,79,372)

ACTIVE: 22,84,209

MAHARASHTRA: 40,27,827

KERALA: 12,95,060

KARNATAKA: 12,22,202

TAMIL NADU: 10,25,059

DELHI: 9,30,179 (+24,638)

India's daily Covid caseload breaches 3-lakh mark in last 24 hrs



Cremation of a Covid-19 patient at Vasai in Palghar on Wednesday

Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, and Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab, are also trying to catch up with the worst-affected States.

The health authorities in Maharashtra went into a tizzy, as the daily deaths shot to 568, while the State recorded 67,468 infections — the second-highest since the outbreak of the pandemic in March last year.

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Beg, borrow, steal whatever, but boost oxygen supply, HC directs Central Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Issuing unusually strong strictures on the Centre and industries, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered the Government to "forthwith" provide oxygen by whatever means to hospitals facing shortage in treating serious Covid-19 patients, observing it "seems human life is not important for the state."

"You are not exploring all avenues to augment oxygen supply. Beg, borrow or steal," the court told the Centre, and asked why is it not waking up to the gravity of the emergency situation. It also warned that certainly all hell will break loose with the stoppage of medical oxygen to the hospitals.

The court was conducting an urgent hearing on a plea filed by Balaji Medical and Research Centre, which owns and runs various hospitals in the name of Max, stating that if supply of oxygen is not replenished on an immediate basis, the lives of the patients who are critical and on oxygen support will be endangered.

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Covishield for pvt hospitals at ₹600 each dose, States ₹400

SII revises prices; Opp demands uniform pricing for Centre, States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India makes efforts to widen the ambit of its coronavirus vaccination drive beginning May 1, Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) on Wednesday issued fresh prices of its Covishield vaccine — ₹600 per dose for private hospitals and ₹400 per jab for State Governments. Another jab manufacturer Bharat Biotech is yet to come out with its prices list.

Presently, one can get the jab free of cost in the Government set-up while in the private sector, these are available at ₹250 per dose under the national vaccination programme launched from January 16 for those above 45 years of age.

However, under the new liberalised vaccination policy, while the State Governments can acquire the vaccines at a price of ₹400 per dose, the private hospitals will get the vac-



cines at the price of ₹600 per dose, said the SII in a statement here even as it shared data on the comparative prices of jabs being sold in other countries of other makers.

It pointed out that the Covishield shot is cheaper than the international vaccines.

The comparison has revealed that while American vaccines cost ₹1,500 per dose, Chinese and Russian vaccines cost ₹750 per dose. However, meanwhile, the Congress and the Left hit out at the Government over a higher price fixed for the States for Covishield. The parties have demanded uniform pricing for the Covid-19 vaccine for both the Centre and the States.

The SII chief executive Adar Poonawalla said in a statement on Wednesday said the company will serve 50 per cent of the

total production to the Central Government's vaccination programme, and the remaining 50 per cent of the capacity will be for the State Governments and private hospitals.

The SII, the world's biggest vaccine maker, urged the corporate entities and private individuals to access the vaccines through the State facilitated machinery and private health systems and assured that the vaccine will be made available in the open market in around four to five months' time.

Everyone above 18 years of age will be eligible to get vaccinated against Covid-19 from May 1, the Central Government said on Monday as it liberalised the vaccination drive to allow States, private hospitals and industrial establishments to procure the doses directly from manufacturers.

Centre raises Delhi's quota of oxygen by 480 MT: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After the reports of depletion of medical oxygen stock in hospitals in Delhi due to surge in Covid-19 cases, the Central Government on Wednesday increased additional 480 metric tonnes to Delhi's quota of oxygen. However 140 metric tonnes, which Haryana has to supply, is yet to reach Delhi.

The oxygen will come from States like Odisha, West Bengal, Uttarakhnad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. What remains a matter of grave concern is that of the 480 metric tonnes, 100 metric tonne oxygen from Odisha (70 metric tonne) and West Bengal (30 metric tonne) will take almost 72 hours to reach Delhi.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal confirmed the increase in Central quota of oxygen and tweeted: "Central govt has increased Delhi's quota of oxygen. We r very grateful to centre for this."

Earlier in the day, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia accused Haryana of blocking oxygen supply but the later refuted the allegation.

22 Covid patients die in Nashik hospital as oxygen pipe leaks

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a disturbing incident, at least 22 Covid-19 patients who were on ventilators and on oxygen support died at a civil hospital in Nashik in north Maharashtra on Wednesday afternoon following the sudden interruption in liquid oxygen supplies caused by leakage in the pipe carrying the life saving gas from a tank installed at the hospital.

The 22 patients who died were among 23 patients who were on oxygen support. The incident took place at the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC)-run Dr Zakir Hussain Municipal Hospital, after a pipeline carrying liquid oxygen from a 13 kilo litre capacity tank installed at the hospital developed a leak around noon.

The oxygen supplies to the patients came to be suspended for some time to facilitate the replacement of the leaking pipe. The lack of oxygen resulted in the death of 22 patients.

The leakage was noticed when an oxygen tanker arrived at the hospital to replenish the stock in the tank, which had 25 to 30 per cent gas at that time. Before long, the hole developed

Maharashtra Govt orders probe



Medical oxygen gas leaks out from a storage unit, which led to interruption in supply of oxygen to Covid-19 patients at Zakir Hussain Municipal Hospital in Nashik on Wednesday

in the pipe increased and oxygen emanating from the leaking pipe enveloped the hospital premises.

The technicians from a company maintaining the oxygen tank and its supplies came and replaced the leaking pipeline, a task that lasted for nearly 90 minutes. Though there was no confirmation as to how long oxygen supplies to the patients came to be sus-

suspended, unconfirmed reports said that the gas supplies remained suspended for more than half an hour.

Of the 23 Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment on Oxygen support, 22 gasped for breath minutes after the supplies stopped and died.

Nashik District Collector Suraj Mandhare confirmed the development.

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Good Samaritans offer oasis in Covid desert

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

During the coronavirus pandemic, when hospitals have run out of beds, medicines and vaccines are in short supply, and patients are dying of want of oxygen, hundreds of well-meaning citizens have come forward to give a helping hand to fight this virus and help the affected people.

These good Samaritans have either formed groups or taken it upon themselves to help out those in need of food, medicine, blood, oxygen cylinder, or simply transport.

They are also spreading awareness about the availability of plasma, connecting patients with donors, arranging Remdesivir doses for patients, and putting them in touch with emergency services such as ambulances.

Many social media users are also engaged in forwarding message to the authorities about Covid patient needing health emergency or any help.

Taking to Twitter, Riniti Chatterjee said, "For any oxygen related the problem in Lucknow, feel free to tag. I will try my best to arrange."

Former Delhi MLA Jitender Singh Shunty and his team of 18 drivers are offering to pick up bodies of Covid patients in Delhi with all safety protocols & cremating them with dignity & respect.

One Twitter user @desimarthastew tweeted, "If anyone in Goregaon West is Covid positive and is living alone, I can help with errands, groceries, essential supplies and



food. Hit me up!"

To provide home-cooked food to Covid patients in Greater Kailash and New Friends Colony, Puja Bahri on her Twitter handle @Puja_Bahri wrote, "If any Covid +ve patient quarantined at home near New Friends Col or GK2 needs home cooked food delivered to them pls DM me. Have been in the situation myself & know how difficult it is to fend for yourself

in this condition." Surabhi Gupta tweeted, "Any Covid patient in Vasant Kunj in Delhi who needs help with food or medicines or anything else, please let me know."

A team of 27 volunteers from the Youth Welfare Association (Delhi), a non-profit organisation, has started providing home-cooked food to Covid patients in different localities of south Delhi.

For this purpose, the asso-

ciation has started a free "Bhojan Sewa" (food service) for Covid patients with the motto of "Ghar ka khana, hamare ghar se apke ghar tak" (home-cooked food from my home to your home).

A group of young men formed "Tav Prasad Sewa Society", a Delhi-based non-profit, in July last year with the common aim of helping out those in need.

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Opp raps Govt for export of vax, O₂, Remdesivir before 2nd wave

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The export of a huge quantity of oxygen cylinders, vaccines, and life-saving drug Remdesivir before the onset of the deadly second wave of Covid-19 has created an uproar as information tumbles out in the media. The Opposition has alleged that India sold twice as much oxygen to the world during the first 10 months of the financial year 2020-21 as compared to 2019-2020 fiscal. Questions are also being raised about the exports of vaccines and Remdesivir, whose shortage has created panic in the country.

Ironically, while India claims to be one of the biggest manufacturers of Remdesivir,



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has written to Centre to approve his request for importing the antiviral drug from Bangladesh on an urgent basis. In a letter to Cabinet Minister DV Sadanand Gowda, Soren has asked for permission to import 50,000 Remdesivir vials from neighbouring Bangladesh.

Priyanka Gandhi and Digvijay Singh, have blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for exporting or gifting medicines, Covid vaccines over the last few months and jeopardising the health of own nations.

TMC chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too alleged lack of complacency on part of the Modi Government and alleged that in February this year she had sought from Centre vaccines, Remdesivir, oxygen through a letter but the Centre was busy in exporting these health facilities.

Opposition leaders alleged this happened despite the fact that India was one of the three worst-affected nations from the coronavirus pandemic.

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C'garh cops deny Maoists' charge of drone strikes

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Police on Wednesday dismissed as "totally baseless" claims by Maoists that security forces had carried out an air strike using a drone. The allegations "are totally baseless and an outcome of fear and confusion in the rank and file of Maoist cadres", a senior police officer said.

"Security forces in Bastar operate within the legal framework with the single objective of protecting the life and property of the native population of the region," Sundarraj P, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range), said in a statement issued by the government. He

said: "It is the CPI-Maoist cadres who have taken away the lives of thousands of innocent civilians by using IEDs and explosive materials. They haven't even spared children, women and animals during their desperate attempts to harm the security forces by using IEDs."

"Even today in Narayanpur, an ITBP officer was seriously injured and one cow got killed in an IED explosion triggered by the Maoists", he added. Maoists, who are responsible for killing thousands of innocent villagers don't have any moral authority to level such baseless allegation against the security forces, the officer said.

Maha records 67,468 new cases

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The health authorities in Maharashtra went into a tizzy, as the daily Covid-19-triggered deaths shot further to 568 on Wednesday, while the state recorded 67,468 infections—the second highest number of cases since the outbreak of the pandemic in March-April last year.

A day after the pandemic claimed a record 519 and left as many as 62,097 people infected, the Covid-19 wreaked havoc again leaving 568 more people dead, while there were 67,468 infections.

The infections recorded on Wednesday are the second highest record number of cases. Earlier, the state had recorded an all time high of 68,631 infections on Sunday, while there were 67,123 infections on Saturday.

With 568 deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 61,343 to 61,911. Similarly, with 67,468 infections,

the total caseload crossed the 40 lakh mark, as the number of cases in the state increased from 39,60,359 to 40,27,827.

As 54,985 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 32,68,449. The recovery rate in the state for the first time in several days rose from 81.14 per cent to 81.15 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state rose from 6,83,856 to 6,95,747. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.55 per cent to 1.54 per cent.

With 62 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from while the infected cases went up by 7654 to trigger a jump in the infections from 5,94,059 to 6,01,713.

While Pune accounted for a maximum 1,21,284 "active cases" in the state, Mumbai stood second with 83,450, fol-

lowed by Thane (78,473), Nagpur (80,155), Nashik (46,253), Ahmednagar (19,046), Latur (15,504), Chandrapur (17,122), Bhandara (15,283), Aurangabad (15,206), Satara (14,040), Jalgaon (14,190), Nanded (13,908),

Parbhani (13,750), Solapur (12,867), Beed (11,856), Gondia (10,244) and Nandurbar (7,101).

Of the 2,46,14,480 samples sent to laboratories, 40,27,827 have tested positive (16.36 per cent) for COVID-19 until Wednesday.

MAHA CONG ROOTS FOR 'VACCINE AT HOME DRIVE'

Mumbai: The ruling Maharashtra Congress on Wednesday rooted for Covid-19 "Vaccination At Home" campaign - for all eligible people as the eligible people were finding it difficult to reach the inoculation centres owing to the ongoing lockdown restrictions.

In a letter written to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee President Nana Patole said that the common people in rural areas had to travel considerable distances, wait in snaky queues and then get

vaccinated.

"The problem is acute in rural areas owing to the smaller number of vaccination centres and the longer distances, at times over 40 kms, for the people to get their life-saver jab," Patole said. Patole said that these problems could be easily resolved if the state government took the vaccination drive directly to people's homes.

"From May 1, even persons above 18 years of age shall be eligible for the jab.

That being the case, there will be more crowds which will add to the spread of infections," he said.

Oxygen crisis leaves Lucknow gasping for breath

Lucknow: The oxygen crisis in Lucknow is now leaving Covid patients gasping for breath, literally.

Despite assurances from the state government, there is an acute shortage of oxygen cylinders in the state capital.

People have been queuing up at the oxygen refilling plant in Nadarganj industrial area since more than 24 hours now but supply has dried up.

Mahadev Kumar said, "I have been waiting since last night for a refill. My wife is admitted to a private hospital and they have told me to get oxygen myself."

Almost every private medical facility in Lucknow is asking patients' relatives to arrange for oxygen or take their patient home.

The district administration has now deployed police force at the oxygen refilling centres to prevent the situation from turning violent.

A senior doctor in a private hospital, when contacted, said, "Since there is no oxygen available, we are forced to turn away patients. We are clearly asking the relatives that we will treat their patients only if they can arrange for oxygen. We do not want to be blamed for deaths later."

Portable oxygen cans are no longer available in the market.

"There is panic buying and even those who are perfectly healthy, are buying up and storing oxygen cylinders at home. Since the panic situation is prevailing everywhere, the shortage is understandable," said a dealer of medical equipments in Lalbagh area in the state capital.

A government spokesman said that oxygen was being brought to Lucknow by train as well as by road and the situation was likely to ease in the next 24 hours.

19 Covid +ve juveniles run away from hospital, 12 traced

Chapra (Bihar): Out of 19 coronavirus positive inmates of a remand home who had escaped from the hospital isolation ward, 12 have been located and search is on for the others.

Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar said on Wednesday.

All of them had escaped Tuesday night out of fear of the disease, the SP told PTI. Of them 11 who hailed from the Saran district, of which Chapra is the headquarter, have been found at their home, he said, adding the rest 8 were from the neighbouring districts and among them four have been traced.

Among 11 locals, guardians of six have said they would bring back their ward to the sadar hospital.

The rest preferred to stay in home isolation and they will be under watch of the concerned police stations, the SP said.

After clinical examination of all 39 juveniles of a local remand home here, 19 had tested positive on Monday and they were put up in a quarantine centre

of the sadar hospital.

All 19 escaped after removing iron rods of the window of the isolation ward.

The SP said he himself visited the centre during the day and found that policemen on duty there did not had access to the ward on the first floor of the building in the rear side of the campus. "Taking lessons from the event now it has been decided that all those returning to the hospital will be quarantined in an another building under watch of the policemen", the SP said.

The SP said the juveniles in the age category of 14 to 18 had run away out of panic after they were found infected.

They either reached their own home or that of some kins. Bihar is also experiencing second surge of coronavirus.

As per the last health bulletin, total 10,455 new cases were recorded from across the state Tuesday while 51 had succumbed to the disease.

Among the fresh cases, Saran district accounted for 530 infections. **PTI**

Covid-19: Guj banks to run with 50% staff, slashed work hours

Ahmedabad: The Gujarat government has allowed banks in the state to function with 50 per cent staff till April 30, and also reduced their working hours till that period in a bid to reduce the risk of coronavirus infection among the employees.

The government's Finance Department issued a circular on Tuesday night, a day after the State Level Banking Committee (SLBC) urged the state government to take such steps, saying that over 30 employees of banks have died due to the infection in the last one month.

Bank branches can either adopt the alternate work day method or work-from-home mode to ensure that only 50 per cent staff comes to the branches, the circular said.

The state government also curtailed the banking hours for customers by two hours.

The banking business for customers shall be undertaken from 10 am to 2 pm now, it said. The circular added that the bank branches

"shall provide only essential services, such as cash deposit and withdrawal, to customers and preference shall be given to senior citizens".

It also asked the banks to ensure adequate cash in their ATMs and encourage customers to use digital payment modes.

The announcement came a day after the Maha Gujarat Bank Employees Association (MGBEA), a prominent union of bank employees, wrote a letter to Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, claiming that nearly 15,000 employees of banks have tested positive for coronavirus in Gujarat so far and over 30 of them died during the "second wave" in the last one month.

In view of the current situation, the union had put forward several demands, such as reduced cash transaction hours, extra holidays and relaxation in working hours.

The union had sought Rupani's intervention as chief minister is the chairman of the SLBC. **PTI**



Trucks cross a snow-covered valley near Baralacha Pass after a fresh spell of snowfall in Lahaul Spiti district on Wednesday **PTI**

Beg, borrow, steal whatever, but boost oxygen supply, HC ...

From page 1

"Do you want to see thousands of people dying in the country?" a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli asked, as it came down heavily on the Centre for not diverting sufficient oxygen supply from industries to hospitals.

During the extraordinary hearing, the court said the responsibility to ensure oxygen supply lay squarely on the Central government's shoulders and if necessary, entire supply of oxygen to industries including steel and petroleum can be diverted for medical usage.

"Why is the Centre not waking up to the gravity of the situation? We are shocked and dismayed hospitals running out of oxygen but steel plants are running," the court said, and added "how the government can be so oblivious of the reality".

"There is no sense of humanity left or what? This is really really ridiculous and shocking. You are concerned about industries when people are dying. It an emergency you should realise. It seems human life is not important for the State."

The court directed the Central government to protect the fundamental right to life of citizens who are seriously ill and require medical oxygen and to supply the same by whatever means it is required.

"Our concern is not just for Delhi, we want to know what the Central government is doing with regard to oxygen supply across India," it said and added, "what is the Central government doing. If this is the situation in Delhi, we are sure it is the same in other States."

"Do you want to see thousands of people dying in the country? Is running steel plants so important and urgent?", the bench said, and added that today, the country is facing an emergency situation where hospitals are short of oxygen which is also going to end in few hours.

The court said the steel and petrochemical industries are oxygen guzzlers and diverting oxy-

gen from there can meet requirements of hospitals.

"If Tatas can divert oxygen they are generating for their steel plants to medical use, why can't others? This is the height of greed. Is there no sense of humanity left or not?"

The court said transportation of oxygen from the place of production to the place of supply is also a challenge and time consuming activity as it is done only through highways in the normal course.

"The Central Government shall consider ways and means for transportation of oxygen either by creating a dedicated corridor so that the supply lines are not obstructed or even airlift it from the place of production to the place of usage," it said.

The court said heavens are not going to fall if the industries, including steel and petroleum, run on lower capacity till oxygen is imported.

It said certainly all hell will break loose with the stoppage of medical oxygen for hospitals.

"We are constrained to direct the Centre to forthwith implement this order and take over supply of oxygen from steel plants and if necessary also from the petroleum plants, to supply it to hospitals."

The court said such industries will have to stop their productions till the situation in hospitals improves and directed them to increase their oxygen production generated by them and give it to Centre for supply in other states for medical use.

The petition said there are six Max hospitals in the national capital and NCR and are treating 1,400 COVID-19 patients.

The bench was informed by the counsel for M/s Inox, which supplies oxygen to hospitals in Delhi, that certain quantity is on its way from a UP plant to Max Hospital, Patparganj here and will reach in two hours.

On the apprehension that there could be some obstructions and law and order problem, the court directed the Centre that a safe passage be provided to oxygen supply from the place of production to the place of supply.

Covid death...

From page 1

Uttar Pradesh reported 187 deaths, Delhi, Gujarat 125, Karnataka 116, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh 75, and Rajasthan 62.

In the worst-affected Maharashtra, a day after the pandemic claimed a record 519 and left as many as 62,097 people infected, the Covid-19 wreaked havoc again. The infections recorded on Wednesday are the second-highest record number of cases. Earlier, the State had recorded an all-time high of 68,631 infections on Sunday, while there were 67,123 infections on Saturday.

With 568 deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 61,343 to 61,911. Similarly, with 67,468 infections, the total caseload crossed the 40 lakh mark, as the number of cases in the State increased from 39,60,359 to 40,27,827.

In Uttar Pradesh, amid the cry of the paucity of medicine and oxygen the second wave of the corona saw 33,214 fresh cases and the highest ever 187 deaths in the past 24 hours.

Lucknow continued to be the hotspot

with 5,902 fresh cases and 21 deaths. At least 2,269 people were discharged while in Varanasi reported 2,564 fresh cases and 12 deaths. Prayagraj recorded 1,828 cases and 6 deaths and 1,811 fresh cases were reported in Kanpur.

The whole of Uttar Pradesh was gripped with panic as almost all "mohallas" across the State are reporting fresh cases and deaths due to Covid. The scarcity of oxygen cylinders and life-saving drugs has further complicated the scenario.

Many private nursing homes have put up notices asking people to take away their relatives as there is a scarcity of oxygen. In many hospitals relatives have been asked to bring oxygen cylinders. Nitin Sharma bought an oxygen cylinder at Rs 16,000. "I cannot see my father dying in front of my eyes," he said as he wheeled in the oxygen cylinder inside a private hospital.

In Kerala, with the number of new Covid-19 patients reaching 22,414 on Wednesday, Kerala emerged as the epicenter of the dreaded pandemic in South India. The State also saw 22 deaths during the last 24 hours. This was disclosed by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in his media briefing late Wednesday evening.

The Chief Minister said the situation was grave in the State and asked the people to avoid crowding, closed space, and close contact.

As the number of new cases shot up in the State, a new battle has emerged between Kerala and the Centre with the Opposition Congress declaring its support to the CPI(M)-led Government. Vijayan said though the State had informed the Centre about the vaccine shortage in Kerala, the Centre is yet to respond to its plea.

Tamil Nadu diagnosed 11,681 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday while the death toll increased to 53, according to a release by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine. Chennai alone accounted for 3,750 patients on Wednesday while Chengalpattu registered 947 cases.

But Dr Jayanti, head, multi-specialty Covid hospitals told the media on Wednesday that there was no need for the people to get upset with the increasing number of Covid patients.

"We are fully prepared to meet any kind of emergencies. The State has enough stock of vaccines as well as oxygen cylinders," said Dr Jayanti.

Covaxin 100% ...

From page 1

Dr Krishna Ella, Chairman & Managing Director, Bharat Biotech, said, "Efficacy against SARS-Cov-2 has been established. Covaxin has demonstrated an excellent safety record in human clinical trials and in usage under emergency use. Covaxin is now a global innovator vaccine derived from Research & Development from India. The efficacy data against severe Covid-19 and asymptomatic infections is highly significant, as this helps reduce hospitalizations and disease transmission, respectively."

In the nationwide vaccination drive launched from January 26, so far around 11 million doses of Covaxin have been administered, far below the nearly 117 million doses of Covishield. Covaxin is a fully indigenous jab with the viral strain isolated at the ICMR-National Institute of Virology. Though it was granted emergency use authorisation in January, it was done without providing efficacy data.

22 Covid patients...

From page 1

District Collector Suraj Mandhare said: "As per the information we have, 22 people have died due to the interrupted supply of oxygen at the civic hospital. The patients were on ventilators as well as on oxygen support, after an interruption in the gas supply due to a leakage".

According to the hospital administration, 150 patients were undergoing treatment at the hospital at the time of mishap. Of them, 23 patients were on ventilator and Oxygen support.

Expressing his shock and disbelief over the incident, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said: "The deaths caused by Oxygen leakage and consequent interruption in the supplies at the Nashik hospital is not just shocking but is also heart-rending. I have no words to express sorrow over the incident. How can I console the family members of those who died in the mishap? At a time we are waging a war against Covid-19 incident, the Nashik incident has come as a big setback.

The Chief Minister ordered a high-level inquiry into the circumstances to the interruption

in liquid Oxygen supplies to the patients at the Dr Zakir Hussain Municipal +Hospital and the consequent 22 deaths. He also announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the families of each of the patient killed in the mishap.

Describing the incident at Nashik hospital as "heart wrenching", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "The tragedy at a hospital in Nashik because of oxygen tank leakage is heart-wrenching. Anguished by the loss of lives due to it. Condolences to the bereaved families in this sad hour"

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope said: "The Nashik Hospital incident is very tragic. We have no words to console the families of those who died in the mishap. There will be a comprehensive inquiry into the incident. The Chief Minister has already announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to each of the deceased patients". Senior NCP Minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who is also the guardian Minister for Nashik district, rushed to the hospital in the afternoon and took stock of the situation.

Bhujbal said that a three-member committee - comprising an IAS officer, an engineer and a doctor - will look into

Good Samaritans...

From page 1

The team of seven has been offering free oxygen cylinders, oximeters and thermometers at seven centres across Delhi.

One social media user Saral Patel wrote on Twitter, "8657311088 this is toll free number of CIPLA, manufacturer of Remdesivir. Those in need can reach out directly & the company is providing the injections directly to hospital without any dealer etc. Save the number, Share it with people around you in need." Karnika Kohli a growth manager at ScrollStack.com posted on Twitter that any Covid patients in south Delhi could reach her through direct messages and she will deliver them food. "Nothing fancy but I will make dal chawal and sabzi for you and get it to your place. You just take rest, quarantine and get well soon," she said.

Taking to Twitter, actor Sonu Sood said his phone had been flooded with calls from all over India with patients looking for hospital beds, medicines, injections and that he had been feeling "helpless" as he had not been able to meet all the requirements.

"Since morning I haven't kept my phone down, thousands of calls from all over India for HOSPITAL BEDS, MEDICINES, INJECTIONS and still not able to provide to many of them. I feel so helpless. The situation is scary, pls stay at home, wear a mask and prevent yourself from infection," he wrote on Twitter.

A group of students and parents from American Embassy School has come out with details of resources available to Covid-19 in Delhi and NCR which include testing centres, hospitals, vaccination centres, plasma resources, isolation centres, nursing homes for Covid patients, Covid meals, medical equipment services including oxygen, x rays, ambulance services, disinfection services and food thalis. "If any person, (willing to #DonateBlood or plasma) is finding it difficult to travel around NCR for blood donation. OR don't have access to good food, I promise to drop you safe (with a smiling face) at a blood bank or provide food at your doorstep," said the founder of blood donation initiative 'Simply Blood'.

Another non-profit organisation working for women's health and empowerment, AAS Foundation, is providing food to over 200 Covid patients for the last fortnight.

Opp raps Govt for export of vax, O2, Remdesivir...

From page 1

Vaccines as well as Remdesivir and Fabiflu were also gifted as a goodwill gesture by the Modi Government.

Taking a dig at the Modi Government over poor medical infrastructure, Priyanka Gandhi on Wednesday asked why India was facing an acute oxygen shortage despite having one of the largest production capacities in the world.

"India's production capacity for oxygen is one of the largest in the world. Then why's there a shortage? You had 8-9 months (between first & second wave), your own Serosurveys indicated that a 2nd wave is imminent, you ignored it," said Priyanka.

She further alleged citing Government data that 1.1 million Remdesivir injections were exported in the last six months and the country is struggling to get even one vial of the emergency injection.

"Govt exported 6 cr vaccines between January-March. During this time 3-4 crore Indians were vaccinated. A huge PR exercise was conducted with photos of vaccines arriving in countries like

Mauritius, Guyana, and Nepal being circulated. Why were Indians not prioritized? Vaccine shortage is due to bad planning, Remdesivir shortage due to no planning, oxygen shortage due to no strategy. It's Govt's failure," Priyanka Gandhi added.

The party's general secretary remarked Government's lack of foresight has compelled India to become an importer of vaccines today.

As per Commerce Department, in the first three quarters of fiscal 2021, 9294 MT of liquid oxygen was exported to Bangladesh. As per data, in the April-January period of Financial Year 2021, exports were more than double that of the previous year. Between April 2020 and January 2021, India exported 9,301 metric tonnes of oxygen across the world generating revenue of Rs 8.9 crore. In contrast, the country had exported only Rs 4,514 crore during the financial year 2019-20, earning merely Rs 5.5 crore.

"During the last fortnight when there has been a massive surge in corona cases, all forms of medical supplies have been

running low leading to a lot of discomfort within the patients and people looking for facilities to battle the disease. This clearly is a case of visionless governance," Rajya Sabha MP and Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi told The Pioneer.

While Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that some hospitals did not have enough oxygen supplies to sustain patients, Goa had to ban the supply of oxygen cylinders outside the State with immediate effect.

Maharashtra, which now accounts for almost half the total Covid cases across the nation had requested Centre to provide more medical oxygen and medicines.

Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and several other regions have reported either short or no supply of oxygen, medicines, beds though the case are surging on an hourly basis.

NCP leader and Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik alleged that the Central Government had asked export companies not to supply Remdesivir medicine to the State.

Kejriwal thanks Centre for raising oxygen quota

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

After the reports on depletion of medical oxygen in private institutions due to surge in Covid-19 cases, the Central Government on Wednesday increased additional 480 metric tonnes Delhi's quota of oxygen however the 140 metric tonnes, which Haryana has to supply is yet to leave for Delhi.

The oxygen will come from States like Odisha, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. What remains a matter of grave concern is that of the 480 metric tonnes, 100 metric tonne oxygen from



Odisha (70 metric tonne) and West Bengal (30 metric tonne) will take almost 72 hours to reach Delhi.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal confirmed and took to micro blogging platform where he thanked the Centre and tweeted: "Central govt has increased Delhi's quota of oxy-

gen. We r very grateful to centre for this."

Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Nodal Officer said, "This morning, several Delhi hospitals ran out of oxygen because it was supposed to come from a plant in Faridabad, Haryana. However, a district official

reached the plant and stopped the life-saving oxygen vehicles from entering Delhi, claiming instead that going forward, this oxygen will stay with Haryana. When the Centre decides on the issue of oxygen,

no state government should have the authority to stop the supply of oxygen."

On Monday and Tuesday, around 240 metric tonnes and 365 metric tonnes of oxygen were supplied to Delhi against the requirement of 700 metric tonnes per day. Since Delhi does not have its own source of oxygen, the capital's supply comes from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

In Draprashta Apollo Hospitals, Delhi noted that currently, it has only 10-12 hours of oxygen supply available for all its patients with no other alternative.

This level is dangerously low, with supply chain disruptions and delays being regularly witnessed over the week.

Similarly, Manipal Hospital, Delhi observed that they have more than 230 COVID patients admitted in their hospital, but an oxygen backup of merely 12 hours. On the other hand, Max Hospital, Patparganj, which has around 262 COVID patients has oxygen for about three hours and the oxygen backup for the 285 COVID patients at Max Shalimar Bagh will last for only about two hours.

The situation remains grim at Delhi government hospitals too. Last night, GTB Hospitals just about managed to avert mass tragedy when it received an emergency supply of oxygen

for the more than 500 patients admitted there.

In last week, the Delhi government has already written to the Centre that 700 metric tonnes per day of oxygen stock should be supplied to Delhi in the wake of increasing COVID cases.

"In fact, several private and government hospitals have issued SOS statements and desperate calls for help, detailing their depleting oxygen supply, which would run out anywhere between two to ten hours. In general, the hospitals should have at least three days' stock with them in advance," a government official said.

Haryana stopped oxygen supply to Delhi: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday alleged the Haryana Government of stopping oxygen supply to the national Capital from a plant in Faridabad.

Sisodia said the Centre decides the quota of oxygen for states and the AAP Govt had been demanding that the Centre increase Delhi's quota of oxygen from 378 metric tonnes to 700 metric tonnes.

The Central Government is yet to take a step in this direction, he said.

"We again demand that the Centre increase our oxygen quota to 700 MT in view of the increased consumption. Patients from several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, are admitted in city hospitals," Sisodia said.



He claimed that an official of the Haryana government stopped oxygen supply from a plant in Faridabad.

A similar incident took place in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday. This led to a crisis in some hospitals, Sisodia said, adding the oxygen supply had been restored now.

The Delhi government demands that states should get their allotted share of oxygen without others interfering into it, he added.

SDMC to convert its primary school buildings, community halls into Covid isolation centres

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In view of increasing number of cases in Delhi, South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) is all set to convert its primary school buildings, community halls into Covid isolation centres.

Education Committee Chairman Mukesh Suryan said that identification of school buildings and community halls where isolation centres can be set has been done.

He said that in order to contain spread of Covid-19, SDMC is ready to work in association with the Delhi Government.

"Though Corporation can start isolation centres but it required permission from Delhi Government besides other requirement," he said.

The Delhi Government will have to ensure proper supply of Oxygen besides other necessary

arrangements/facilities.

All isolation centres will have 30-bedded facility, other required medical equipments and medicines, Oxygen cylinders, oxymeters, infrared thermometers, glucometers, BP machines, wheel chairs, electric steamers, etc. These centres will be linked with major hospitals/Covid health centres so patients could be referred if condition deteriorates, he said.



Hospitals in city don't have enough oxygen: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia requested to the Central Government to increase the quota of 378 metric tonne of oxygen for Delhi to 700 metric tonne as the requirements of Delhi have now reached to this extent.

Sisodia said, "We have been reiterating that the hospitals in Delhi do not have enough Oxygen supply for patients. We have been constant with our communication to the Central Government regarding the same."

"The most important issue is that the quota decided by Central Government for oxygen supply in Delhi is not enough due to the increase in Covid-19 cases," he said.

"Delhi does not make its own oxygen, there is a limited supply of oxygen and State Governments do not have any control over oxygen supply, it is controlled by Central Government. The way Covid-19 cases have increased exponentially in Delhi and many patients from other states have come to Delhi to get treated, there is a greater need for more and more oxygen supply in Delhi," he said.

Sisodia said, "It is a fact that supplying oxygen to people is a collaborative effort of Central and State Governments. We have written time and again to the Central Government that the quota of 378 metric ton of oxygen for Delhi be increased to 700 metric ton of oxygen, as the requirements of Delhi have now reached to this extent," he said.

"We still have not seen the Central Government to take a step in this direction or supply us with adequate oxygen. We have fought this battle against Covid-19 together along with Central Government and no one person or entity can fight it alone. The way Central Government has supported us in the last year in terms of COVID-19, we hope that they support us in the same stride, in our demand to increase oxygen supply in Delhi. All State Governments and Central Government will need to join forces to defeat this virus," he said.

"I have been on several hospital visits myself in the past few days. There are many patients from Delhi, UP, Uttarakhand and various places from North India. This demand for oxygen is not just for the people of Delhi, all the people who have come to Delhi and are reeling with Covid-19 and need oxygen. The entire nation is fighting against this virus. It is our plea to the Central Government to take

stock of this situation and increase oxygen supply in Delhi," he added.

He further said that the second issue is that there was a problem in bringing oxygen to Delhi. "I was reading a report which said that the reason for limited supply of oxygen in many hospitals in Delhi today was because the oxygen that was earmarked for Delhi from a plant in Faridabad was monopolised and directed towards Haryana, by an official from Haryana Government.

Delhi Police sets up three Covid care centres for its personnel, their families

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the surge in Covid-19 cases, the Delhi Police is setting up three covid care centres for its force and their family members. Taking to twitter, Delhi

Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava said that with the help of Hamdard Foundation & Sewa Bharti, the force is setting up three covid care centres in the city.

"The Delhi Police is setting up 3 Covid care centres at Shahdara, Rohini and Dwarka

for police families with the help of Hamdard foundation & Sewa Bharti.

Shahdara is functional with 78 beds (20 oxygen). Rohini will operate soon with 20 beds (10 oxygen), he tweeted from his official Twitter handle.



Police personnel check vehicles during Covid-induced lockdown to curb the spike in coronavirus cases, at CP in New Delhi on Wednesday



Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

'PM address may help stop migrants' mass exodus'

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to nation on Tuesday in which he assured that no lockdown would be imposed, has provided hope to the industries association in Gurugram that the mass exodus of migrant workers will stop.

During his address on Tuesday the PM had urged the labourers and workers to remain relaxed and keep doing their work as there is no need to panic.

The representative of industrial associations in

Gurugram said, that lockdown in Delhi due to sharp spike in Covid-19 cases starting from Monday has panicked the labourers and workers employed in industries and construction work have started leaving fearing a repeat of last year's situation, despite repeated assurances by the state government.

Chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar said on Tuesday that the industry in the state will not be effected like last year and no work would be hamper.

Factory owners in Manesar, Udyog Vihar and Sector-37 said that at least 20 to 25% of workers have left the

city and they expect more to leave, as the decision of the Delhi government to announce a lockdown and the enforcement of a night curfew in Haryana triggered panic among migrants.

It is estimated that thousands of labourers in groups have left for their native places. Huge numbers of people are leaving the city in private buses standard at Rajiv Chowk, Sector-12, Sector-37, Sector-34 and Khandasa to UP, Bihar, Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

"Lockdown in the national capital has triggered panic among the workers. Despite

our assurance the labourers are leaving Gurugram. Several workers from Udyog Vihar and Sector-37 industrial area have left the city fearing lockdown in Haryana. The mass migrant exodus will hamper ongoing production in the industries," KK Gandhi, President Sector-37, Industrial Association said, adding that we hope the prime minister's clearance about no lockdown will provide some confidence among workers and the mass migrant exodus could be stopped."

"Industries are worried about migrant exodus as at export houses maximum

labourers are from Bihar, who are expert in garments. If they are keep going to their places it will surely hit the garments industries hard. The closure of markets in Delhi has already stopped raw material supply and lack of workers will further hit industry badly," said Navdeep Mehta, a garment unit owner in Gurugam.

Pawan Yadav, the president, IMT Industrial Association, said that workers should not aggressive and the industry will support them if a difficult situation arises.

"We have urged the workers not to leave the city. Even we are informing them that the

Haryana government has assured there would be no lockdown in the state. But now after the prime minister's assurance about lockdown we expect that the labourers will keep the PM' word and will stay here," Yadav told The Pioneer.

Taking cognizance of the problems faced by the workers, Khattar, who addressed the people in the state on Tuesday evening, urged migrant workers to not panic and remain calm. He said that the economic activities will not be stopped and has assured that the industries across the state remains operational in all circumstances.

Liaison officer for each of Covid-19 hospitals in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In order to facilitate Delhi Police personnel infected with coronavirus, a liaison officer has been nominated for each of Covid-19 hospitals in national Capital, said police on Wednesday.

According to orders released by the office of Delhi Police Commissioner, S N Shrivastava on Tuesday, the concerned Station House Officers (SHO) and Nodal Officers will liaise with the hospital authorities to address admission related issues in respect of Delhi Police personnel and their immediate family members with the Covid virus.

"The Nodal Officer will also keep a check on the health of admitted police personnel and their family members and will ensure that effective and timely medical treatment is provided to them by the concerned hospitals," the order further stated.

According to the data provided by the police for this year, 73 personnel tested positive for COVID-19 in January, 33 in February, 24 in March and

390 in April.

Earlier, the Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava, through a video had asked the personnel of the force to take adequate precautions, maintain social distancing and wear N-95 or 3-ply surgical masks to protect themselves.

Shrivastava had told his personnel to be extra cautious and follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). In the video, the CP also said that the new wave of coronavirus was far more serious in nature than the previous one.

Stressing that the Delhi Police has played a vital role in fighting COVID-19, the CP said that in the last few days, some police personnel have been found to be coronavirus positive and this number is increasing, which is a cause of worry.

Shrivastava asked the personnel of the force to take adequate precautions while discharging their duty especially during interactions with each other, conducting verification drive, issuing challans, at pick-up duty or during hospital visits, so that the chances of getting infected remains less.

Green corridor for passage of oxygen truck to reach hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday provided green corridor to a truck carrying oxygen container to Jaipur Golden Hospital in Rohini which was running out of supply.

Police said that the Alipur police station received an information at around 9 am that a Haryana bound truck carrying oxygen container was stuck on KMP flyover at Kundli Border.

The vehicle was scheduled to arrive at Jaipur Golden Hospital Rohini at the earliest due to lack of

oxygen cylinders amid the Covid-19 scenario but had not reached yet as it was stuck at the border, police said.

"The Station House Officer (SHO) of Alipur police station along with Emergency Response Vehicle staffs along with motorcycle patrolling team rushed to KMP flyover Kundli Border and found the truck loaded with oxygen container. The team then coordinated with Kundli police, Haryana and facilitated the movement of truck from Singhu Border with oxygen cylinders which was stuck on Kundli Border," said the senior police official.

"A Green Corridor was established for quick movement of Oxygen tanker. Within no time, under police escort provided by Alipur police station, the oxygen tanker was escorted to Jaipur Golden Hospital and it was ensured that the oxygen truck safely reached the concerned hospital in minimum possible time," said Rajiv Ranjan Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outernorth district.

This comes a day after another green corridor was provided by the outer district of Delhi Police.

On Monday night, a green corri-

dor was created by the Delhi Police for two tankers carrying 19,500 litres of liquid oxygen from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana borders to Sri Action Balaji Hospital, an all COVID-19 facility in outer Delhi's Paschim Vihar.

The tankers had to urgently reach

Sri Action Balaji Hospital, where oxygen levels had reached a critical point, but were stuck in a traffic jam but after the hospital authorities informed police, immediately teams were rushed to ensure smooth passage for the containers, according to police.



Let's face 2nd wave jointly, urges Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday made it clear that it was not the right time to deliberate on how India missed the second wave. It said it does not know when the surge will wane even as it asserted that its focus was rather on working with States to fight and overcome the pandemic.

"Today is not the time to go into why did we miss or did we miss, did we prepare. Today is the time to jointly face the pandemic and once we emerge from it successfully, then probably with the advantage of hindsight sitting with you and other experts we would be able to deliberate on this," said Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan. He was replying to a query as to "how did we (India) miss such a huge impending second wave and why it has caught us unawares?"

At a press conference here, he said, "Today all the energies of the Union and the state government are focused in a collaborative manner to tackle this, save precious lives and to ensure our health system is strengthened."

The official shared the status of Covid cases in the country and said that 146 districts reported COVID-19 positivity rate of more than 15 per cent, while 274 districts reported case positivity



between 5 and 15 per cent.

Amid growing fear that the second wave is somehow more powerful and could cause greater havoc, the Government said that 4.03 per cent Covid-19 cases were reported in the first wave in those below 10 years, while 2.97 per cent cases were registered in the second wave.

"In the age group 10-20 years, 8.07 per cent Covid-19 cases were reported in the first wave, while 8.50 per cent cases were registered in the second wave. In the age group 20-30 years, 20.41 per cent cases were reported in the first wave, while 19.35 per cent cases were registered in the second wave," he said.

Bhushan further shared data which showed that in those aged 30 and above, 67.5 per cent Covid-19 cases were

reported in the first wave, while 69.18 per cent cases registered in the second wave.

In the age group 30-40 years, 21.05 per cent Covid-19 cases were reported in the first wave, while 21.15 per cent cases were registered in the second wave while 17.16 per cent cases were reported in the first wave in the 40-50 years age group, 17.50 per cent cases were registered in the second wave.

In the age group 50-60 years, 14.80 per cent cases were reported in the first wave and 15.07 per cent cases in the second wave. In the 60-70 years age group, 9.01 per cent cases were reported in the first wave and 9.99 per cent cases in the second.

At least 4.17 per cent cases were reported in the 70-80 years age group in the first wave, while 4.19 per cent cases were registered in the second wave.

"There are 21,57,000 active cases in India currently i.e. twice the number of maximum active Covid-19 cases last year. More than 13 crore people have been vaccinated in the country so far including 30 lakh doses administered in the last 24 hours," he added.

BJP attributes delay in oxygen supply to Capital to farmers' protest at Delhi borders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday reiterated its allegation that the delay in oxygen supply in the national Capital was caused due to traffic disruptions as a result of the ongoing farmers' protest at the Delhi borders.

After BJP MP Parvesh Verma's charge on Tuesday, BJP's IT Cell head Amit Malviya on Wednesday accused the protestors of "blocking" the highways leading to delay in oxygen supply. He also hit out at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"Delhi is choking for oxygen because national highways leading to the city have been blocked by Andolan-Jeevni, leading to suppliers losing precious time. Kejriwal has been feeding these protests with an eye on Punjab elections next year," Amit Malviya said in a tweet on Wednesday.

The accusation comes as the level of oxygen at Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute at Delhi's Paschim Vihar reached a critical level due to delay in supply through two oxygen containers stuck in traffic jams at Noida and Faridabad borders.

Malviya even alleged "Arvind Kejriwal doesn't care" even though Delhi is suffering.

The hospital had informed that one of the tankers carrying 14,000 litre of oxygen that was supposed to be brought from Pari Chowk in Greater Noida was stuck near the border due to Covid-related restrictions and another one carrying 5,500 litres

of oxygen which was to come from Faridabad, was stuck on the Delhi-Faridabad border

Kisan Morcha denies BJP allegations, says way available for emergency services

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the representative body of several protesting farmer unions, however, rejected the allegations saying they have kept a way open for emergency services since day one of their agitation.

"Not a single ambulance or essential goods service has been stopped. It is the government that has put strong and multilayer barricades (nails), not the farmers.

Farmers are fighting for human rights and they support every human's rights," the morcha said.

"A false propaganda is being spread against farmers that they have blocked the roads and not letting oxygen into Delhi.

"This is completely false news. Yes, we are protesting but not against COVID-19 patients, corona warriors or common citizens.

"We are against the government's discriminatory policy on agriculture," it claimed.

BJP lashes out at Priyanka for criticism of Centre over Covid-19 management

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday came out hard against the Congress and its general secretary Priyanka Gandhi following her scathing attack against the Government over the Covid-19 crisis. The BJP alleged the Congress is "trying to sell its failed product yet again" and it is seeing the pandemic as an opportunity for the same. With its "vulture politics" in this situation of a pandemic the Congress is trying to spread panic in the country, he asserted and alleged that the Opposition party is trying to spread fake news.

"When things shouldn't be politicised, Congress, especially Gandhi family is doing politics. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra gave an interview and Rahul Gandhi tweeted. The nation is watching how they are criticising and it will give them a reply. The arrogance of Gandhi family is being reflected," BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra

said. "Look at their ways, one day the Congress Party wrote a letter, next day they ask former Prime Minister to write a letter, then Sonia Gandhi has written a letter, from morning to evening Rahul Gandhi posts tweets then next day Priyanka gave an interview," he added.

"In this interview, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said they want to give a suggestion but in reality, they just want to take a swipe (tanj) at the government," he said.

Slamming the Maharashtra government, of which Congress is a part, for not handling the COVID-19 situation properly in the state, Patra said, "Every state is important and the Union government is taking care of them. But is it not true that the Maharashtra government has not prepared itself for the pandemic? The Maha Vikas Aghadi has shown insensitivity, and corruption took place. The outcome is that 40 to 50 per cent cases are being

reported in Maharashtra only." The BJP leader said that Congress is not uttering a word over the pandemic situation of the worst-affected state in the country, Maharashtra.

Claiming that several leaders in Maharashtra are indulged in corruption, Patra said, "Priyanka and Rahul Gandhi is not saying a word on the situation of Maharashtra, why? Because they are receiving a portion of corrupted money (vasuli)."

Priyanka had earlier slammed the Centre for showing insensitivity towards people during the COVID-19 pandemic, saying when people are screaming for shortages of medical oxygen, medicines and hospital beds, some are seen laughing during election rallies.

She even said that the Centre can hold talks with Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) but can't talk to Opposition leaders amid the prevailing crisis.



Migrants wait to board trains at Katpadi Railway Station in anticipation of a lockdown due to surge in coronavirus cases in Vellore district on Wednesday

Education Minister Nishank tests positive for Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank on Wednesday tested positive for Covid-19.

Taking to Twitter, Pokhriyal said: "This is to inform you all that I have tested COVID positive today. I am taking medication and treatment as per the advice of my doctors. Request all those who have come in my contact recently to be observant, and get themselves tested."

He, however, assured that the work of the Education Ministry is being conducted normally observing necessary precautions.

"All the work of Education Ministry is being conducted normally observing necessary precautions," he added.

The minister has been digitally addressing students and college events including convocations, and holding meetings with examination board officials.

Pokhriyal had recently held a high-level meeting with officials from the ministry, CBSE, and Prime Minister Modi earlier this week. In the meeting, it was decided that class 10 board exams will be canceled and class 12 boards will be postponed for all CBSE-affiliated schools.

India remain limited in online MBA programmes: QS Quacquarelli Symonds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

QS Quacquarelli Symonds, global business education analysts, released their 2021 list of the world's best Online MBA programmes. The results showed that Indian provision in this space remains limited, with only one of the 57 ranked programmes being offered by an Indian provider.

With students increasingly turning to Online MBA as a more flexible, more cost-effective method of furthering their career development goals, and an increasing number of AACSB-accredited schools adding an Online MBA option, QS's list – the largest ever – offers independent comparative insight on provider quality.

India's only ranked program is Amity Directorate of Distance & Online Education, which is placed 37th globally. For the third year in a row, Amity's Online MBA can boast the world's highest-quality offering, according to QS's metrics and dataset, said Ajit Chauhan, Chairman at Amity University Online.

It has received the good scores of any program for Class Experience and Class Profile which brings the focus on internalisation in education and catering to varied student needs.

"We are proud to have been ranked amongst the top Global Online MBAs by QS, with a top 3 ranking for the quality of our class profile," Chauhan maintained.

PM lauds Tata's move to import 24 containers to transport liquid oxygen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shortly after the Tata Group announced that it will be importing 24 cryogenic containers to transport liquid oxygen and help ease oxygen shortage amid a staggering surge in Covid-19 cases across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday termed it as "compassionate gesture".

The Prime Minister responded to the Tata Group's tweet and praised the conglomerate's newest contribution saying, "Together, the people of India will fight Covid-19."

Earlier, the group said in a social media post: "The Tata group is importing 24 cryogenic containers to transport liquid oxygen and help ease the oxygen shortage in the country. #ThisIsTata."

Lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal on Tuesday to the people in his address to the nation in the wake of the second wave of the

pandemic, the group said it is "committed to doing as much as possible to strengthen the fight against #COVID19".

The import of the cryogenic containers via chartered flights to mitigate the oxygen crisis is one such effort to boost health infrastructure, it added.

In his address to the nation on Tuesday, the Prime Minister called upon all stakeholders, including the pharmaceutical industry, to deal collectively with the immediate challenge of the shortage of oxygen cylinders.

Last year, when the first wave of the pandemic hit India, the Tata Group had imported ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, masks and gloves, as well as COVID-19 testing kits in large numbers from countries including South Korea, the US and China.

The group had also pledged Rs 1,500 crore to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

₹155 cr assets of WB-based Rose Valley Group, Basil Group attached in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth over Rs 155 crore of West Bengal-based Rose Valley Group and Basil Group of companies in a money laundering case related to chit fund schemes.

The ED said it has taken possession of movable and immovable properties worth Rs 155.54 crore of these two groups.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation against the two Groups as it was found that these companies by floating various fake and fictitious schemes had col-

lected huge amount of money from gullible public and defaulted the re-payments.

Money laundering investigation revealed that several properties in Tripura, Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand were acquired in the name of various companies of Basil Group and Rose Valley Group, by illegally diverting the funds collected from the investors.

After due process of investigation, the ED had attached the properties found to have been acquired from the proceeds of crime (amount collected by way of selling fake and fictitious schemes), the agency

said. The provisional attachment of said properties were confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority. ED has also filed its prosecution complaints (chargesheets) against these companies and its Directors before the Special PMLA Court.

A special drive was undertaken by Guwahati Zonal Office of ED to take possession of the properties of Basil Group and Rose Valley Group of companies, which resulted in taking over possession of 12 movable properties worth Rs. 1.54 Crore and 111 immovable properties worth Rs154 crore, it added.

Zojila pass, lifeline of LAC, now opened

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The strategically important Zojila pass connecting Ladakh with Kashmir and the rest of the country was opened for traffic on Wednesday. This pass is the lifeline of the local population and frontline troops deployed on the tense Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The pass is generally closed every year for more than 150 days on an average due to heavy snow. Given the current situation at the LAC in Eastern Ladakh, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) opened the Zojila pass on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh road after 110 days.

The pass is closed in mid-November and is opened for traffic in April. The BRO work force this year worked round the clock to remove snow and make the road traffic worthy, officials said here on Wednesday.

This crucial mountain pass is at a height of 11,650 feet and provides the critical logistical back up to the troops and the local population. Incidentally, the mountain pass was kept open till December 31 last year, they said.

On opening the pass several days ahead of the general dates, they said the renewed focus on infrastructure development of border areas mandated the requirement of keeping the closure of Zojila Pass to the minimum.



THIS CRUCIAL MOUNTAIN PASS IS AT A HEIGHT OF 11,650 FEET AND PROVIDES THE CRITICAL LOGISTICAL BACK UP TO THE TROOPS AND THE LOCAL POPULATION. INCIDENTALLY, THE MOUNTAIN PASS WAS KEPT OPEN TILL DECEMBER 31 LAST YEAR

The Zojila Pass was kept open till 31 December, 2020 and snow clearance operations by the BRO teams braving inclement weather recommenced on February 7, this

year. "The connectivity across Zojila was initially established on 15 February, 2021 and it was planned to open the Pass for Army and civil traffic by end February/early March," the BRO said in a statement.

However, continuous bad weather conditions, poor visibility and heavy snowfall resulted in triggering of avalanches, thus delaying the opening.

Finally, after sustained efforts by the BRO team, the connectivity was reestablished on Wednesday and ten trucks, carrying essential fresh supplies moved across the Zojila Pass towards Kargil, thereby bringing much needed succor to the people of Ladakh.

Director General Border Roads (DGBR) Lieutenant General Rajeev Chaudhry commended the officials of Project Beacon and Vijayak in achieving this feat.

It will facilitate availability of essential goods and supplies for people of Ladakh, who are dependent on air traffic due to closure of the Pass as also easier movement of Army convoys.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May, 2018 laid the foundation stone of a nearly 14 km long tunnel at the Zojila Pass. The tunnel will ensure round the year connectivity of Ladakh with the rest of the country. The project is worth over Rs 6,800 crores.

303 kg of cocaine worth over ₹2K cr seized at Tuticorin port

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Wednesday seized 303 kg of banned drug cocaine worth over ₹ 2,000 crore from a container at Tuticorin port. The consignment was declared to be carrying wooden logs but the contraband was also concealed in it. The container had originated in Panama and transited through Antwerp and Colombo.

"Based on specific intelligence that Cocaine will be concealed in a consignment imported in container reaching V O C Port, Tuticorin, the officers of DRI have intercepted the container declared to be containing wooden logs," the DRI said in

a statement. The suspected container had its origin in Panama and transited through the ports of Antwerp and Colombo before being intercepted in Tuticorin, it said.

On examination by the agency officials, the suspected container was found to contain nine bags concealed between the rows of wooden logs. On opening these bags, 302 white coloured compressed bricks wrapped in multiple layers of packing material were found, the agency said.

The contraband weighed 303 Kg and it is highly suspected to be Cocaine. The contraband along with cover goods, which in this case are wooden logs, were seized

under the provisions of the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.

Further investigation about the origin of the consignment and concealment of narcotic drugs is being carried out, it added. The seizure comes a day after the Indian Navy seized about 300 kg of cocaine worth Rs 3,000 crore from a fishing trawler off the coast of Kerala in the Arabian Sea and the suspected persons and consignment was brought to Kochi seaport.

The Indian Naval Ship Suvarna intercepted the vessel with suspicious movements on Tuesday and conducted a boarding and searching operation which led to the

recovery of the contraband. Along with the consignment and the boat, the crew of at least five were escorted to the nearest post in Kochi by the Navy.

Both the seizures are major drug hauls in recent times.

The illegal narcotics smuggling routes stretch from the Makran coast in the coastal region of Baluchistan to destinations in India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, according to Navy.

Besides adversely impacting human lives through addition of substance abuse, the spoils of narcotics trade also lead to terror funding, radicalization and criminal activities.

TMC's suggestion to club remaining 3 phases of WB polls not implementable: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Wednesday yet again rejected Trinamool Congress's suggestion for clubbing the remaining three phases of West Bengal assembly polls saying it was not implementable.

In a letter to the Trinamool Congress, the poll panel cited election law and various steps it has taken to ensure safety of voters in view of the coronavirus pandemic to rule out any change in the poll schedule for the state.

Phase six of the West Bengal polls is scheduled on April 22 while the seventh and eighth phases are on April 26 and 29.



The results will be on May 2 along with that of Kerala, Assam, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu.

Earlier, TMC supremo and chief minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee had urged the Election Commission to club the remaining three phases of the Assembly polls into one. This was the second time she had pleaded to the electoral watchdog.

She had even alleged that the EC may have decided against clubbing the remaining phases at the behest of the BJP even as she requested the poll panel to prioritise public health.

The TMC, Congress and BJP have all curtailed their poll rallies in view of the alarming Covid-19 surge.

Modi turned Covid 2nd wave into disaster: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee once again hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for converting the second wave of corona pandemic into a disaster by failing to ensure that the country was prepared to fight a resurgence of the disease.

"Modi babu will have to explain as to why medicines are unavailable in the market ... this is because no timely preparation was made to tackle a second wave ... the second wave of the disease is more intense but there is no injection, no vaccine, no oxygen ... there is a scarcity of medicines in the country and you exported them to other countries ... Now you will have to provide the medicines or leave your post ... either control the disease or move out," Banerjee said on Wednesday told an election rally at Balurghat in North

Bengal.

"I would say it is not man made disaster but it is a Modi-made disaster," she added.

She earlier said that she was not opposed to helping the countries but before doing so one should have ensured enough stocks for one's own country. "I am not saying that other country's should not have been helped but that should have been done after ensuring that you have enough stocks for India," she said adding how 65 percent of the drugs produced had been exported to other countries.

Later the Chief Minister questioned the differential pricing system of corona vaccine. Addressing the media at Malda she said "I have heard that the manufacturers priced each vial of vaccine for the State Government at Rs 400 while it is selling the same to the Centre for Rs 150 ... why this discrimination..."

Saying that she would write a strong letter to the Centre Banerjee said that "there will be more occasions to do business ... this is not the time to do business as it is a matter of national security... I will want the vaccines to be supplied for same prices to the Centre and the State."

When asked as to whether her Government was considering a lockdown she said it was immediately not in her mind. "I do not want to hamper the normal life of the people ... A lockdown means tremendous hardship for the people ... particularly the poor people ... they lose their jobs and livelihood ... So we are not thinking of lockdown immediately ... at present we are giving more attention on following other measures like strict implementation of the corona protocols," Banerjee said adding that her Government had till now vaccinated about 93 lakh people.

1 dies in blast ahead of Bengal's 6th phase polls

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Security was tightened ahead of the sixth phase of Bengal Assembly elections on Thursday even as a blast at a house at Titagarh in North 24 Parganas left one person dead and another seriously injured.

The house situated by NH-34 literally caved in after the blast, police said. A large number of steel containers were found inside the house sources said adding, the two persons were making bombs when some of them accidentally went off killing one of them and injuring the other. Titagarh is near BJP MP Barrackpore Arjun Singh's house.

Singh also alleged that bombs were hurled near his house also. "The TMC men are threatening the BJP workers for the past several days. And now they charged bombs near my house ... the police instead of

arresting the culprits are harassing the BJP workers," he alleged.

Elsewhere a sack of bomb was recovered at Kaliaganj in North Dinajpur, police said adding the bomb squad had reached spot to recover the explosives.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of India has made massive security arrangements for the Sixth phase of polling on Thursday. About one lakh security forces would man 14,480 polling stations 43 constituencies.

A total of 1.03 crore voters --- including 50.65 lakh women --- will decide the fate of 306 candidates including 27 women in sixth phase of elections.

While TMC and the BJP are contesting from all the seats, the Left, Congress and Indian Secular Front fighting under the banner of Sanyukta Morcha are contesting in 29, 12 and 2 seats respectively.

KERALA LOGS 22,414 NEW COVID CASES, TN REGISTERS 11,681

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI/KOCHI

With the number of new Covid-19 patients reaching 22,414 on Wednesday, Kerala has emerged as the epicenter of the dreaded pandemic in South India. The State also saw 22 deaths during the last 24 hours. This was disclosed by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in his media briefing late Wednesday evening. The chief minister said the situation was grave in the State and asked the people to avoid crowding, closed space and close contact.

As the number of new cases shot up in the State, a new battle has emerged between Kerala and the Centre with the opposition Congress declaring its support to the CPI(M) led government. Vijayan said though the State had informed the Centre about the vaccine shortage in Kerala, the Centre is yet to respond to its plea.

Tamil Nadu diagnosed 11,681 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday while the death toll increased to 53, according to a

release by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine. Chennai alone accounted for 3,750 patients on Wednesday while Chengalpattu registered 947 cases. But Dr Jayanti, head, multi specialty covid hospitals told the media on Wednesday that there was no need for the people to get upset with the increasing number of Covid patients. "We are fully prepared to meet any kind of emergencies. The State has enough stock of vaccines as well as oxygen cylinders," said Dr Jayanti.

God's Own Country, once known for brotherhood and peace resembled a war zone on Wednesday as hundreds who had queued up in Kottayam, Kozhikode and the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram to get vaccinated fought with officials and among themselves when they were told that vaccines were short in supply and all who had lined up could not be jabbed.

A Vijayaraghavan, the acting secretary of the ruling CPI(M) blamed the Centre for putting Kerala on real trouble

by denying the required dose of vaccines demanded by the State. "We had asked five million doses of vaccines for the State. But the Centre issued just five lakh doses and this has put Kerala in a major crisis. The Centre should provide free vaccines to the State as we are facing severe financial crisis," Vijayaraghavan told reporters on Wednesday.

The CPI(M) secretary came down heavily on union minister V Maraleedharan who asked the State government to procure vaccine from elsewhere. "He is a blot on the face of Kerala. Being a Kerala minister he should have tried to get more vaccine available to the State free of cost," said Vijayaraghavan.

Union Minister Muraleedharan who calls the shots in Kerala BJP, asked Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to explain to the people of the State what happened to the declaration he made on December 13 that the LDF Government would come out with K-Vaccine made by the State itself.

Noted Bengali poet Shankha Ghosh dies of Covid-19

Kolkata: Celebrated Bengali poet and Padma Bhushan awardee Shankha Ghosh passed away on Wednesday morning after a brief illness. He had also tested corona a week ago and had preferred to remain at his house.

The 90-year-old poet who once wrote "we shall meet after the pandemic" in one of his works Shankha Cheel (long before the corona pandemic struck the world) had been suffering from several comorbidities.

Apart from Padma Bhushan Ghosh had won Jnanpith, Sahitya Akademi, Rabindra Purashkar and other awards. Speaking about him noted Bengali writer Sirshendu Mukherjee said "He was a silent listener who indulged and inspired us immensely. He was a pet, a philosopher a writer, a rebel and what not? We have seen him donating his prize money often for good cause."

A contemporary of poets Subhas Mukherjee and Shakti Chatterjee he belonged to the

generation post Jibananda Das and Sukanta Bhattacharya. Passing out from Presidency College, Ghosh spent many years teaching in Delhi University, University of Iowa, Jadavpur University and Visva Bharati. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhanekar and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too expressed their condolences at his death.

"Shri Shankha Ghosh will be remembered for his contributions to Bengali and Indian literature. His works were widely read and admired. Saddened by his demise. Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti," the Prime Minister tweeted.

Banerjee who enjoyed good chemistry with Ghosh said "Bengal and India lost a voice that comes in centuries ... we will all remember him for ages." He was cremated with State honour. "We are not giving gun salute as he did not like that," the Chief Minister said.

J&K to install 36 oxygen plants, 23 by this week

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

As the cases of coronavirus are increasing rapidly across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir the Government is racing against time to operationalise at least 23 oxygen generation plants to meet the growing demand of beds supported by round the clock supply of oxygen.

Due to the influx of a large population of tourists/pilgrims, the government is worried as the positivity rate is rising sharply too.

On April 20, the positivity rate recorded in the UT was 5.2 percent, more than double the previous high of 2.5 percent last year.

With 77 deaths reported so far in the month of April the total number of active positive cases are set to cross 15000 with a growth rate of around 13 percent.

Briefing media persons in Jammu Financial Commissioner Health and Medical Education Department Atal Dulloo said,

"We are in the process of installing 36 oxygen generation plants with 23 to be made functional at the end of the week that will help in adding 2000 more oxygen beds to our kitty". Principal Secretary Information & PDD, Rohit Kansal; Secretary DMRR&R, Simrandeep Singh and Mission Director NHM, Choudhary Yasin also briefed the media during this press conference.

Commenting on the overall efforts being made on ground zero to contain the spread of coronavirus, Dulloo said the situation is challenging but not out of control. He said that J&K has made ample preparations to meet the challenge. He said the department is working on a 5 pronged strategy to restrict the spread of virus.

Commenting on the availability of beds across different hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir, Dulloo said 6000 category-I covid beds are available with the hospitals including 10000 bulk oxygen cylinders and 3500 medium sized cylinders.



He gave out that there are some 600 covid dedicated ventilators around J&K with only 48 occupied currently.

He said that there are around 120 containment zones and effective mechanism of contact tracing in place.

Dulloo said that facilities available with the department are satisfactory with 3 state of the art Cobas-6800 testing machines to be installed in our premier health institutes shortly.

When asked about the availability of the vaccine he said that the department is continuously receiving the tranches of vaccine as per their

requirements. He said that currently more than two lakh doses are available and the supply is going on satisfactorily.

Dulloo said that all the necessary steps would be taken to ensure safety of each individual besides better treatment of the persons affected. He said that more than 17 lakh doses have been inoculated till date with 91,142 (74.56%) health care workers, 2,61,589 (77.51%) front line workers and 11,27,511 (36.76%) 45 years plus citizens already administered their vaccine doses. He said that as per the instructions of the Prime Minister J&K has

made preparations to launch universal adult vaccination drive from May 1.

Explaining further the measures taken by the government it was said that during the previous day some 63,675 tests were performed at more than 1400 sites created for the purpose. He said that it includes 560 Health workers, 2760 front line workers and 60355 (45 years plus) senior citizens.

Principal Secretary Information & PDD, Rohit Kansal gave out that the misconceptions among the people are going away and people are coming forth for receiving the dose of vaccine. He said that

additional check posts have been created at Lakhampur, Samba, Lower Munda enroute National Highway to double check the testing done on incoming travellers besides at Railway Stations and airports. He said that the rate of testing is one of the best in the country and other facilities created are also up to mark as per international requirements and standards.

The Secretary Disaster Management said that from today onwards orders have been issued to ensure occupancy of 50% capacity in all public transport vehicles. He said that police have been instructed to keep a check on violators and impose fine wherever required.

He said that other guidelines have also been issued in respect to holding of gatherings both indoor and outdoor besides for the opening of markets and other public places. He stressed that SOPs should be followed in all places & in all situations without any excuse or laxity.

Couple commits suicide under pressure from debt burden

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

A couple committed suicide in the village Nagla Thekedar, leaving a suicide note behind. The suicide note found near the body of the couple in the village Nagla thekedar has accused the local leaders and the government of neglecting the borrowers. On both sides of the suicide note, the names of many people have been mentioned, expressing their pain, which the couple has said to be the cause of their suicide.

However, when the family asked for a photo copy of the suicide note, the police refused. The deceased's son Akhilesh told the police that he was not aware of the debt owed to the father. The parents never mentioned anything about the atrocities of the borrowers. At the same time, Akhilesh's maternal brother told the police that a few days ago, the couple had asked all the maternal uncle for money, but the demand could not be met. According to the police, the couple had decided that their bodies could be easily found by the family, so returning from the daughter and sister's house, they reached out of their village and committed suicide. A slip of mobile number, suicide note and Aadhaar card of the woman were found from both of them.

Anticipation, excitement in Kerala as counting date nears

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

For the first time in the recent history of Kerala, the possibility of a hung Assembly is staring at major political parties in the State. Discussions in hushed voice are heard from both the CPI(M) and the Congress about the fate of the April 6 election to the State Assembly, the results of which would be known only on May 2.

The winning front should bag 71 seats to get an absolute majority in the House which has an effective strength of 140 members. The only time Kerala faced a hung Assembly was in 1965 when no political parties could score 67 seats on their own in a House, which had a total strength of 133 members. The candidates who won the 1965 election could not be sworn in as members and the House was dismissed without meeting even once.

Since then it was political combinations led by the Congress and the CPI(M) that ruled the State till 2021. The high decibel electioneering and the emergence of the BJP as a third alternative have given a twist to the political skyline of Kerala. "The LDF is sure

to win 81 to 100 seats in this election. There is no confusion about the final tally." A Vijayaraghavan, the acting secretary of the CPI(M) had told after last week's State Committee meeting of the party. He laughed at questions about the eventualities of a hung house.

The Congress leadership too sounded confident as Mullappalli Ramachandran, the KPCC president, claiming that the Congress-led UDF would win more than 80 seats. But there are only 140 seats at stake in the House and how these fronts would manage to bag 80 plus seats is anybody's guess.

Political commentators like P Rajan, former editor of Mathrubhumi during its golden days, is of the view that the performance of the BJP in the 2021 election has to be seen with caution.

"There is no possibility of the BJP and allies winning the minimum number of seats to form a government. It is still years away. But the Hindutwa party has the potential to tilt the balance in favor of the candidates of its choice. That's going to be a major political game in the State," Rajan told The Pioneer.

Hari Kartha, veteran political journalist who has seen many electoral battles in his 45 years of political reporting concurred with Rajan. "Both the CPI(M) and the Congress are worried over the prospect of a hung house. But chances of political uncertainty are remote because Kerala is the only State where the CPI(M) and the Congress fight against each other. In rest of the country, they are alliance partners," said Kartha.

Though vernacular media is full of reports about secret parleys between the CPI(M) and the Muslim League, leaders of both the parties deny such news. It may be noted that Muslim League and the CPI(M) were alliance partners and ruled the State between 1967 and 1969 under E M S Namboodirippadu as Chief minister. Even now, there are many CPI(M) leaders who want to bring in the Muslim League as an alliance partner to the LDF.

Even if the CPI(M) led LDF fails to touch the magic number of 71, support may come from the UDF camp in the form of Kerala Congress or some other fringe parties. The State may see realignment of a different kind, says Kartha.



Hindu devotees immerse "Saakh" in the Tawi River on the occasion of Ram Navami in Jammu on Wednesday

PTI

Goa Cong prez files forgery plaint against 10 BJP MLAs

Panaji: Goa Congress president Girish Chodankar on Wednesday accused 10 BJP MLAs of allegedly committing forgery and fraud while breaking away from the Congress and merging into the BJP in 2019.

In a complaint filed before the Panaji police station, Chodankar has also said that the ten MLAs led by current deputy Chief Minister Chandrakant Kavlekar had allegedly "conspired together and fraudu-

lently created a false document claiming it to be resolution of the Goa Pradesh Congress Committee" before submitting the document to Speaker of the state legislative assembly Raajesh Patnekar.

"I have filed the complaint as the president of the Goa Pradesh Congress Committee and as the overall in-charge and custodian of records, which includes register books which are maintained for recording minutes of the meetings

of the Committee," Chodankar said.

The development comes a day after Speaker Rajesh Patnekar in an oral order dismissed a disqualification petition filed by Chodankar against the ten MLAs.

Chodankar in his petition had argued the split by the 10 Congress MLAs and their subsequent merger into the BJP was illegal and violative of the provisions of Schedule 10 of the Indian Constitution. IANS

6 held for black-marketing Remdesivir injections in Raj

Jaipur: Six accused, including a medical store operator, were arrested in Rajasthan for black marketing Remdesivir injections, much in demand during the second wave of Covid-19, after raids at 48 places across the state, police said on Wednesday.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police Ajaypal Lamba and DCP, Crime, Digant Anand, police had raided 48 places.

"When the team reached Samarth Medical Store and asked for injection, owner Hira Prakash Verma said that the injection will cost Rs 15,000 each. Dalveer Singh brought two injections and gave them

to Verma," the officials said.

Police then took both Verma and Singh in custody and interrogated them. They spilled the name of Vikas Mittal who was arrested as well. Mittal named Basant Jangid who named Vikram Gujjar and Shankar Mali for providing them the injections.

Additional DCP Suresh Chaudhary said that on interrogation, it was revealed that Gujjar and Shankar Mali had bought 725 injections from Gurugram and were selling them at exorbitant prices in Jaipur via agents.

Further investigations are on in the case. IANS

Rajasthan Govt announces summer vacation for all schools from April 22 to June 6

Jaipur: Amid a surge in coronavirus cases in Rajasthan, the state government on Wednesday announced a 45-day summer vacation from April 22 in all government and private schools, according to an official order.

The order of the director of Secondary Education Department said that all state-run and private schools in Rajasthan will have summer vacation from April 22 to June 6.

Those teachers engaged in campaigns to fight COVID-19 will be able to avail vacation only after permission of competent authority such as district collector or sub-divisional magistrate, it stated. The teachers have been asked to remain on alert mode and follow instructions of district administration if they are given duty in emergency situation. School Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasra has tweeted that in view of the rising COVID-19 cases in the state, all schools have been directed to declare summer vacation. PTI

Digital platforms emerge lifelines for people searching for beds, O2

New Delhi: With Covid cases touching new highs, digital platforms — right from Twitter to Tinder — have become lifelines for people looking for hospital beds, medicines and oxygen for the patients.

A total of 2,95,041 fresh infections were registered in a span of 24 hours, while the active cases crossed the 21-lakh mark with a record 2,023 daily fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

"My grandmother needs oxygen machine (5L). She's aged 80. Location: Kalyan, Mumbai. Have tried all numbers that I have seen here, still not able to get," read a tweet. Another one urged people for leads on finding a hospital

bed in Noida. Social media timelines on platforms like Twitter and Facebook are filled with desperate requests by family members and friends of patients for hospital beds and medicines. These posts have been reshared to amplify the reach to a larger audience.

While social media platforms had played a significant role last year too amid the lockdown, the situation is grim this year.

The unprecedented surge in cases has placed tremendous strain on healthcare services and resources across India, and hospitals are running short of beds and medicines. Interestingly, a Twitter user, Sohini Chattopadhyay narrated how a plasma match was found for a friend through a dat-

ing app Tinder. Chattopadhyay went on to add, "Dating app 1, govt 0". While there are calls for help, others are also proactively sharing information on various social media platforms.

Social media posts and WhatsApp messages are aplenty with collated lists of hospitals with available beds, names and phone numbers of distributors of medicines like Remdesivir (used in the treatment of COVID) and even food delivery services for COVID patients. Various actors and social media influencers are also updating their accounts with details of COVID-19 resources.

Some people have gone the extra mile to verify the information,

which is often crowdsourced, to benefit the masses.

Misinformation has been a major challenge for social media platforms in the past. Tech giants Google, Facebook and Twitter have been stepping up efforts to curb misinformation around COVID-19 on their platform.

Facebook, for example, is working with independent third-party fact-checking entities, covering many Indian languages, to identify misinformation around COVID-19. It had also launched a Coronavirus Information Centre to provide the latest news and updates from MyGov Corona Hub, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and global health organisations. PTI

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PAPER WITH PASSION

More trouble

As the number of COVID-19 infections soars, a triple mutant variant has emerged in Bengal

The humankind is facing an unprecedented crisis as the enemy is mightier than us — it frequently changes form and gets increasingly virulent — and arguably can render all our defences, including medicines and vaccines, ineffective. The Coronavirus is an RNA virus and all viruses have an inherent capacity to mutate. Basically, they mutate to stay on; but not all mutations are worrying for humans, save for the lethal ones. The main concern of the scientific community right now is the efficacy of the extant vaccines against the mutants and possible future variants. There is no way to stop the virus from mutating but the spectrum of vaccine effectiveness can be broadened keeping the possible mutations in mind. But as these changes in genes or protein sequencing cannot be predicted accurately, it's next to impossible to gauge the future form of a current strain and therefore to develop an effective vaccine. Even as India struggles with a double mutant Coronavirus, there are reports that a new strain — a triple mutant variant — has been detected and is circulating predominantly in West Bengal, the State where three more phases of Assembly elections are due and which had for long become the favourite hunting ground of politicians of all hues, none of whom cared for COVID-appropriate behaviour either for themselves or the electorate. Is there any end to these mutations, or will these keep haunting us forever?

There are worrying reports that even fully inoculated people have contracted the virus. Probably, they either didn't adhere to COVID-appropriate norms during the interval between the doses, their bodies failed to produce antibodies despite getting vaccinated or the vaccine turned out to be ineffective (improper storage might be a cause). But if it is actually due to a new strain against which the existing vaccines are not working, the scientists and pharmaceutical giants need to put their heads together and find a solution. But scientific studies are data-based and not merely assumptive, while India has a huge sample size with a lot of variations. The onus is on the Government to encourage and adequately fund such studies that will help the scientific community in developing new vaccines. Another problem scientists across the world, and particularly in India, might face is if a person infected with a mutant strain shows symptoms similar to those of the precursor variant. In such a scenario, the existing vaccines will be futile and the variant will not be easily detected as only "genome sequencing" can give exact information about the strain afflicting a person. In a poor country like India, genome sequencing — which costs tens of thousands of rupees — is not an option for the majority. With a clutch of life-and-death questions hovering all around us, these future possibilities are needed to be worked upon in a "vision and mission" mode. Till we hit upon the correct answers, there is no option to wearing masks, sanitising hands and waiting in a queue for the job while observing physical distancing.

PICTALK



Alitalia workers in Rome to discuss with the Government the relaunch of the Italian carrier

PTI

Influencers go blank

In spite of holding sway over millions of followers, many stars ain't promoting anti-virus precautions

The entire country is in the stranglehold of the COVID-19 virus and several of its pesky strains and double and triple mutant variants. The citizenry is unsure of how the future would unravel on various counts — longevity, health, loved ones, business and employment opportunities, economy, curtailed movement, et al. Suddenly, thousands of real and self-proclaimed "doctors" and "experts" have descended upon us to enlighten us with their profound knowledge and wisdom. Then there are crores of others who, without the necessary insight but still resolute to serve humanity in their own humble fashion, feel contented playing the mailman especially with regard to the effusive outflows from the know-all "University of WhatsApp and Twitter". What's a little unsettling to some of us armchair 'look-terati', however, is the calm with which the sultans of the netherworld of social media platforms have greeted the pernicious virus or exhorted their billions of followers to stay composed, follow COVID-appropriate behaviour with sincerity and get vaccinated as soon as their turn comes.

What makes their current conduct especially surprising is that most of these celebrities stay on social media as fish in water. You can expect them to write on any subject under the sun, even outside their field of speciality, and one doesn't think that more than a handful of their followers would ever have been disappointed. But in the current all-hands-on-deck situation, where even a minuscule effort makes a huge difference in saving innocent lives, these super stars are ostensibly numb to the life-and-death issue at hand. Since around April 1, from among social media's regular despatchers, the names of only industrialist Anand Mahindra (April 14, April 19) and Priyanka Chopra (April 20) come to mind off the cuff, advising people to follow the health norms. Actors Amitabh Bachchan (April 1) and Salman Khan (March 24) simply informed the world that they have taken their anti-COVID vaccine while cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar confirmed (March 27) that he had tested positive for the virus. Certain other online gladiators, such as Karan Johar, were so busy promoting their web series or other filmography that a negligible development like Corona assuming more virulent strains escaped their attention. A question for you: Are they really worth loving or emulating?

Training to grow learning horizons



JS RAJPUT

The National Education Policy-2020 rightly accords importance to mentoring as it can offer wide-ranging support to learners

I read with considerable interest the Delhi Government's decision to launch "mentoring" of 1,000 girl students by 250 select senior-level students to help them move towards careers in STEM — science, technology, engineering and maths. Obviously, the move is linked to the importance that mentoring finds in the National Education Policy (NEP-2020): "A National Mission shall be established, with a large pool of outstanding/retired faculty — including those with the ability to teach in the Indian languages — that would be willing to provide short-term mentoring/professional support to the university/college teachers." The policy proposal should have far-reaching and much wider implications than those indicated in the initiative mentioned above. Mentoring, articulated comprehensively, can offer tremendous support to institutional functioning, quality enhancement, stress reduction in the learning environment and critical thinking.

At present, the inadequacy of professionally equipped manpower is a major bottleneck practically at every stage of education. It is the initial stage of teaching and learning that alone prepares a solid foundation for quality research, innovations and entrepreneurship. If children get necessary personal-level guidance and help at this stage, it would be a huge help in future. Learning is no more confined to classrooms, textbooks and the hallowed premises of schools and institutes of higher learning. In times of swiftly increasing availability of digital learning support systems, educational institutions must broaden their horizons and be prepared to take help from outside the formal systems. The times ahead would demand multidisciplinary and holistic education that would prepare the learners for making effective contribution in creating a world of peace. JRD Tata once told youngsters: "Aim for perfection; you will achieve excellence."

This is what education and learning are all about. The pursuit of excellence ought to be the goal of every informed and



thinking individual. The process of growing up deserves to be dynamically oriented accordingly. Apart from the acquisition of life and productive skills, the systematic process of learning must enable every individual to lead a peaceful, harmonious and sublime life. This is best expressed in the essence of "Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram" (Truth, Beauty and Goodness)! And what good is life if society and its institutions permit growing up without internalisation of these ingredients. It must be accepted that our education systems work under the conditions of deficiency of every kind. Sadly enough, it includes financial resources and availability of competent teachers in the right proportion. In a world moving towards knowledge economy and knowledge society, no forward-looking nation can afford dilution of quality in education, which India is suffering from at present. One could get a realistic assessment by visiting just a couple of sarkari schools and colleges, or a State-maintained university. Mentoring can be of help to everyone at every stage of life. It contributes most prominently in the initial stages, and it has a lasting impact. It must come from someone wiser,



THE TIMES AHEAD WOULD DEMAND MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION THAT WOULD PREPARE THE LEARNERS FOR MAKING AN EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION IN CREATING A WORLD OF PEACE. JRD TATA ONCE TOLD YOUNGSTERS: 'AIM FOR PERFECTION; YOU WILL ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE.'

experienced, empathetic, understanding and ready to be a partner in the process of discovery. Everyone learns from someone else: Mostly it would be from parents, friends, an acquaintance or an icon. Formal education/schooling can cater only to a part of growing up, that too if the system is working with full efficacy. Think of Eklavya! He had a virtual mentor, who was his icon. In the current times, every school could identify persons from the community with experience, skills and readiness to support the young ones in their learning needs. This would also require decentralisation of authority. The head teacher must be authorised to seek such support based on her/his judgment and the availability of right persons.

In the 1960s-1970s, teaching in universities never suffered due to academic vacancies as the department heads were authorised to fill up even short vacancies from amongst the research scholars available within the department, or from outside. The senior faculty would help them in every possible manner; an example of perfect mentoring could be seen in practically every university department. On appropriate occasions, help was also sought from the retired faculty.

It was always readily forthcoming as they were not busy with coaching or teaching in private institutes, which is now the order of the day. An example: The head of a university department once asked a brilliant young lecturer how he liked the teaching experience. The young man replied: "I am worried. Shall I be repeating the stuff for the next three-four decades?" The senior answered: "Oh! You are teaching only physics? I help my students grow up. In that, there is no repetition!"

Life is getting more complex and competitive by the day. The generations ahead shall endure a much faster pace of change; the educational institutions therefore must seek support from suitably equipped persons with a vision for future generations. The mentoring force needs to be confined to retired and willing teachers only as the process requires comprehension of the issues of the young on a much larger span. One expects that the importance accorded to mentoring in the NEP-2020 shall bring about a real positive change in the learning environment at every stage.

(The writer works in education and social cohesion. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CENTRE, STATES SHOULD WORK TOGETHER

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Bitter homecoming' (April 21). The unorganised sector workers have been hit the worst by the pandemic. Insecurity, anxiety, the fear of losing their loved ones have created confusion and fear in the minds of migrant workers. However, the exodus from the Capital and other cities is not on such a large scale as last year and may be termed negligible compared to when the lockdown was first enforced last year. This time, the curbs are imposed locally by certain States whereas in 2020, the entire nation was put under lockdown by the Centre. This time, everyone including the labourers have an idea on how to deal with COVID-19, unlike last year when nobody was aware of the perils or the precautions. That said, the respective Governments haven't done anything substantial to control this migration. It simply means that no lessons have been learnt since last year and that the Centre and the States still lack coordination.

In 2020, the Centre and the States woke up late; hopefully, they will do better this time. The key is perfect coordination without animosity and bitterness. Things are likely to turn worse in the coming days and the interests of the migrants must be taken care of. The situation won't improve without coordinated efforts.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

WELCOME DECISION BY THE SC

Sir — The Supreme Court has rightly stayed the Allahabad High Court's directive to impose a week-long lockdown in five districts of UP following what it deemed a failure of the system to deal with the spike in COVID-19 cases. The situation in UP, no doubt, is grave and all systems have been strained. But a lockdown is a call best left to the political executive since its economic and social implications are far-reaching. Moreover, managing a lockdown is based on district-level inputs and the health infrastructure available. The High Court's anguish is under-

The raging pandemic



As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed to the States to focus on micro-containment strategy and resort to lockdown only as the last measure. Lowering the age bracket to 18 years for the job is a welcome step that will help get maximum people inoculated and in developing herd immunity. However, the decision to allow the manufacturers to set the vaccine price themselves for use by the States and in the open market will introduce the element of profit-making at such a crucial time.

Even as the vaccination is going on, other measures are needed to bring the pandemic under control. Wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing are necessary to contain the

standable but a fiat from the Bench is hardly the best way to go about tackling a pandemic. The Government correctly held that a lockdown could cause destruction of livelihoods and accentuate economic distress. However, there are glaring gaps in the State's health infrastructure. Fixing that is a long haul and will require sustained investment and political focus on public health. That's why the State Government may have got relief from the apex court but it will do well to carefully remember the HC's concerns.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

GOVT FAILED TO CONTROL PANDEMIC

Sir — It seems that the Prime Minister has prioritised politics over people's lives. When the virus reared its ugly head again, both the political leadership and the health administration were caught woeful-

ly unprepared to meet the challenge. The Government failed to control mass gatherings, as seen in the Haridwar Maha Kumbh. Its intervention came too late as the damage had already been inflicted. The BJP restricted the audience strength at its public meetings in West Bengal only after the Left, Congress and the TMC had announced such steps. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi needs to be commended for his vision and determination as he cancelled his campaign midway. Besides, had the Centre allowed vaccination for all adults earlier, many more lives could have been saved. It is a pity that the ruling BJP refuses to learn lessons from history. That's why India is currently in a mess.

As many as 22 patients on ventilator support at a Nashik hospital have lost their lives due to the interruption in oxygen supply caused by a leakage in the oxygen tanker. Coronavirus is not going away anytime soon. It is spreading faster in India than anywhere else in the world. We are left to combat it by following COVID-appropriate behaviour, ramping up testing and tracing, increasing the pace of vaccination and improving healthcare facilities.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

ly unprepared to meet the challenge. The Government failed to control mass gatherings, as seen in the Haridwar Maha Kumbh. Its intervention came too late as the damage had already been inflicted. The BJP restricted the audience strength at its public meetings in West Bengal only after the Left, Congress and the TMC had announced such steps. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi needs to be commended for his vision and determination as he cancelled his campaign midway. Besides, had the Centre allowed vaccination for all adults earlier, many more lives could have been saved. It is a pity that the ruling BJP refuses to learn lessons from history. That's why India is currently in a mess.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

SOUND BITE

The Tamil Nadu Government should take steps on war footing to procure necessary drugs and oxygen and prevent COVID-19 vaccine wastage.

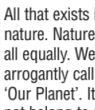


DMK president — MK Stalin



The success of our vaccination programme has demonstrated what the UK can achieve when we bring together our brightest minds.

British Prime Minister — Boris Johnson



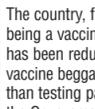
All that exists is nature. Nature loves all equally. We arrogantly call Earth 'Our Planet'. It does not belong to us.

Filmmaker — Shekhar Kapur



The Argentina tour was an important experience for all of us. We were yearning for proper match practice while building up towards the Olympics.

Indian hockey player — Nilakanta Sharma



The country, from being a vaccine leader, has been reduced to a vaccine beggar. Rather than testing patients, the Government is testing people's patience.

Congress leader — Ajay Maken

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

PLAN FOR GOLDEN SUNSET YEARS

The quality of post-retirement life depends on the pre-retirement decisions taken by an individual



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Many individuals do not give adequate attention to proper retirement planning, which leaves them with either no funds post-retirement or with a very less amount that is insufficient to meet their daily needs and give them a respectable life in their sunset years. On the contrary, some people plan carefully and start saving in a retirement fund on a regular basis. Also, there are people who save, though not enough and their savings are eroded due to various conditions. Due to improvements in the healthcare system, an individual can live upto 15-20 years after retirement. Nevertheless, several studies show that people nearing their retirement are not suitably prepared for it.

It is a general belief that the quality of life post-retirement depends on the decisions taken by an individual pre-retirement. Gone are the days when a Government job meant security in the form of a lifelong pension after one's retirement. Now, pension for Government employees is directly proportional to their contributions to the Provident Fund (PF) account. It is generally considered that a decent retirement income is between 70-110 per cent of the current income.



However, this is an area where most people fall short. Only a small proportion of individuals are able to amass assets twice the value of their current income. And this is the cause of concern as the inflationary burden and rising healthcare costs eat into retirement savings. More often than not, the human tendency of procrastination translates into savings that are too little, too late. Researches have shown that factors like income and gender have an impact on retirement planning. The higher an individual's income more is the likelihood of saving for retirement. Similarly, men have been known to actively engage in saving and investment planning as compared to women.

Financial planning is a determinant of financial literacy — having a wide knowledge about financial instruments and related issues and clarity about the retirement goals. These findings can be applied to customise retirement investment plans to suit individual needs based on age, gender, financial literacy and the expectations about post-retirement life. As it is evident, "one-size-fits-all" type of programmes will be failures as they do not provide any tailored solutions based on personality traits, financial and investment knowledge and unique retirement goals. Retirement investment plans would be quite different for young investors with a long-term future perspective as compared to middle-aged investors with a shorter investment horizon.

Retirement planning is much more than just ensuring financial security. It also promotes a sense of satisfaction and helps a person adjust with retired life in a positive way. It also reduces anxiety levels and encourages people to retire early. Even though the benefits of retirement planning are numerous, there is still a lack of precise motivation to secure financial and non-financial well-being by the people. The factors that predict human behaviour skewing towards retirement planning can help organisations identify people who are at risk and develop effective and customised methods to motivate them to start retirement planning. After all, retirement is the biggest coffee-break.

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

Maha mess due to blocked Vohra report annexures

An open discussion on the NN Vohra Committee report in Parliament will reveal the kingpins of the corruption syndicate



PRASHANT TEWARI

Many influential leaders in Maharashtra and Gujarat during the 1990s had allegedly developed ties with underworld don Dawood Ibrahim and his henchman Iqbal Mirchi. This assertion was officially put down on paper when the NN Vohra Committee submitted its 100-page report to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on October 5, 1993, soon after it was established in the aftermath of the Mumbai bomb blasts. The report that was made public in August 1995 in Parliament, was limited to just 11 pages. The rest of the pages that were never made public are as relevant today as they were on the day they were brought into existence.

The report had stated that there was a "definite" nexus between Dawood and a very big Congress leader of Maharashtra and had named a former Chief Minister (CM). Another input that is a part of the annexures of the report, showed how two tranches of ₹5 crore each were given by Dawood in 1992 to a relative of a CM who later became a politician, too. A former top Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer said: "Gujarat-based leaders were prominently mentioned in the annexures. If the Home Minister decides to summon these annexures — if he has not seen them till now — he will find familiar names in them. Every leader comes and makes statements on Dawood and Mirchi. The real test of intent is whether they have the guts to take action on the basis of the findings of the Vohra Committee report that are encompassed in the annexures."

The recent events in Maharashtra have established the fact that the country has learnt nothing from criminalisation of the system even when the report warned of the consequences of political, bureaucratic, criminal syndication so long ago. All the subsequent Governments have conveniently ignored the decay and left the citizens helpless. The recent happenings in Maharashtra, where the Home Minister, Police Commissioner and cops are accused of extortion and daring to threaten India's most famous industrialist, is an eye-opener for all. This leads to the big question of what is left for the common man on the street to safeguard from such people?

The Vohra Committee report and after: The report highlighted the manifold dimensions of the malaise of criminalisation of politics. The demand for money for party funds to contest elections paved the way for political corruption and the scourge of black money. Political corruption acts as the foster mother of administrative corruption as graft has the tendency to percolate and become ubiquitous. When an outcry was raised by some public men about the menace of corruption and its immensity, they were sought to be silenced on the ground that corruption prevails in all countries. The fact that the extent of corruption in our country was much larger was simply brushed under the carpet. As things stand today, corruption has defiled the entire political and administrative apparatus of the country.

The committee's report on the criminalisation of politics in India has been variously described as "a damp squib", because it did not reveal any specific names of politicians but only stated in a general manner what was already widely known and talked about for several years. At the same time, it let the "cat out of the bag" because it was



THE MODI GOVERNMENT HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT, SO THE COMPULSION OF COALITION POLITICS IS NOT THERE TO PREVENT IT FROM TAKING HARSH AND DECISIVE ACTION ON SYNDICATED CRIME

The writer is Editor, Opinion Express. The views expressed are personal.



for the first time that an official report clearly brought out that crime syndicates had developed significant muscle and money power and they were virtually running a parallel Government and pushing the State apparatus into irrelevance. This is a frightening admission to make for an official committee. But it does not state how the situation has to be dealt with and how criminalisation of politics and Government can be overcome and eliminated. All that it suggests is the setting up of a nodal agency which will provide one place where the Intelligence relating to the activities of crime syndicates can be gathered by different agencies.

Sadly, the Maharashtra Government is run and controlled by the mafia. Even the Vohra Committee report tabled in Parliament focused on the Memon brothers and Dawood Ibrahim's powerful network and their synergies with then ruling establishments. This could not have happened without these elements having been protected by the functionaries of the Government departments concerned, especially Customs, the Income-Tax Department, the police force and others.

Accordingly, R&AW monitors the activities of certain organisations abroad only insofar as they relate to their involvement with narco-terrorist elements and smuggling of arms, ammunition and explosives into the country. It does not monitor the activities of criminal elements abroad which are

mainly confined to "normal smuggling without any links to terrorist elements." The current strength of the agency's offices abroad would not permit to enlarge its field of activities. If, however, there is evidence to suggest that these organisations have links with Intelligence agencies of other countries, particularly Pakistan, and that they are being used or are likely to be used by such countries for destabilising our economy, it would become the R&AW's responsibility to monitor their activities.

'Crime Syndicate', a report on the nexus between the Mumbai police and the Mumbai underworld was prepared by the CBI in 1986. It would be useful to institute a fresh study by the CBI, on the basis of what has happened in Maharashtra recently.

The CBI has reported that all over India, crimes syndicates have become a law unto themselves. Even in the smaller towns and rural areas, musclemen have become the order of the day. Hired assassins have become a part of these organisations. The nexus between the criminal gangs, police, bureaucracy and politicians has come out clearly in various parts of the country.

The Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and the Nitish Kumar Government in Bihar have used the might of the State to control the mess left behind by the Mulayam-Mayawati combination in UP and Lalu in Bihar. It has been suggested that the menace has first to be tackled at the local

level where the agencies of the State and the Central enforcement agencies like Customs and excise and the Income-Tax Department would be required to take effective action.

In case where a crime syndicate has graduated to big business, it would be necessary to conduct detailed investigations into its assets, both movable and immovable.

Law and order being a State subject, the central agencies have their task cut out. On the basis of the extensive experience gained by our Intelligence, investigative and enforcement agencies, it is apparent that mafia organisations have established themselves in various parts of the country and developed significant muscle and money power. They have established linkages with Government functionaries, political leaders and others to be able to operate with impunity. And various State Governments tend to take advantage of the constitutional proprietary to patronise the syndicated corruption.

It is a shame for a mature democracy to have political leaders and police officers who resort to extortion and State Governments that shield the culprits in courts to meet their political objectives. Unless the high and mighty are exposed and shamed, this menace is unlikely to vanish from the system. The Modi Government has the advantage of being a majority Government, so the compulsion of coalition politics is not there to prevent it from taking harsh and decisive action on syndicated crime. It is time for it to do so.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

EVEN TODAY THEY'RE BUSY CAMPAIGNING. PEOPLE ARE CRYING FOR HELP, SEEKING OXYGEN, BEDS, AND YOU'RE GOING TO RALLIES AND LAUGHING!

—CONGRESS LEADER

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA



PRIME MINISTER MODI ADDRESSED THE NATION...BUT SADLY WHEN THERE OUGHT TO BE NO POLITICS, THE CONGRESS PARTY IS INDULGING IN POLITICS.

—BJP SPOKESPERSON

SAMBIT PATRA

Innovation is key to climate-proofing infrastructure

Building capacity by leveraging system, technological and financing innovations can better protect the public and critical economic assets

Infrastructure is intrinsic to every aspect of our lives. However, we tend to consider it only as discrete assets such as roads and buildings, as opposed to collective sets of systems and services that must function in continuous synchrony to provide us with food, water, accommodation, energy, transportation, telecommunications, governance, and security. Disruptions to these infrastructural systems can have devastating consequences. A recent glacier burst took dozens of lives and damaged two hydropower projects in Uttarakhand, while a rare Polar vortex in Texas took large swathes of the energy grids offline for days, stranding citizens without electricity, water and heat.

Not only our banks, airports and transport infrastructure are networked but increasingly energy, education, security, health and protective assets are also inter-



ABINASH MOHANTY

SHUVA RAHA

Mohanty is programme lead and Raah, head, New Initiatives, the Council on Energy, Environment and Water. The views expressed are personal.

twined through the cyber domain. Climate-proofing critical and expensive infrastructural assets needs two urgent actions. First, countries must invest in innovation driven by emerging technologies to lower cost, increase resilience, and improve infrastructure management. Second, they must standardise innovations so that they can be deployed at scale across geographies with minimal customisation and cost differences.

System, technological, and financing innovations for disaster-resilient infrastructure (DRI), including climate-resilient infrastructure (CRI) are gaining traction. Several countries have ongoing programmes in traditional R&D centres as well as in start-ups owned by digital-savvy "infra-preneurs" leveraging cutting-edge technologies.

System innovations can help better predict and prepare for adverse climate events. Missing,

weak or redundant policies and non-scientific assumptions are among the biggest challenges to building DRI/CRI. This is especially the case in developing nations, which are also the most vulnerable to climate risk. Integrating progressive administrative frameworks that cater specifically to resilient infrastructural systems with national economic and infrastructure policies, and improving State capacity to predict and respond to adverse climate events, will lead to concerted responses by Governments and communities. System innovations could enhance the monitoring and evaluation of global, national and sub-national policies and actions. The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and its partners are developing a Climate Risk Atlas for India at a 25-km granular resolution to better identify, assess and project chronic and acute



risks such as extreme climate events, heat and water stresses, crop loss, vector-borne diseases and biodiversity collapse.

High-tech DRI/CRI innovations are leveraging rapidly-evolving new technologies such as big data, augmented-reality, remote imaging, drones and unmanned aerial vehicles, nanotechnology, Internet of Things (IoT) and Industry 4.0. They should be standardised to global norms to allow efficient integrations with existing and forthcoming infrastructural systems

across the world, with need-based adaptations for local variables such as geographic features, national priorities, and economic and operational capacities.

The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) should partner with its financing counterparts like the Coalition of Climate Resilient Investment (CCRI) and the World Bank to institute a Unified Innovation CRI Index (UI-CRI Index) comprising a uniform set of parameters to transparently measure innovations on a standardised scale. With the support of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, such an index could rapidly democratise DRI/CRI innovations and encourage private sector participation and financing.

Developing innovative risk financing instruments for DRI/CRI is another pressing need. Current options such as catastrophe bonds used for

infrastructure financing by developing economies like Peru, Chile, Columbia and Mexico, are focused on risk transfer and risk retention for high frequency/high impact events. These bonds are expensive-sometimes costing twice the pay-outs and do not cater to low frequency/low impact events, which need affordable, accessible and localised financing.

Financial innovations that integrate physical climate risks (PCRs) into investment decision-making will help reduce the cost of financing and increase the deployment of such instruments. Tailor-made Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models to finance DRI/CRI projects could offer effective risk transfer mechanisms through sovereign guarantees while providing access to a global investment pool.

On the global stage, India has proactively embraced multi-lateral co-innovation as a

Founder-Member of Mission Innovation and launched the CDRI at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit. At home, the landmark Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy and national missions like Start-up India aim to develop scientific temperament and creativity, and foster a spirit of "infra-preneurship."

This renewed focus on innovation provides the perfect backdrop for greater research and investment in disaster and climate resilience in India, which is estimated to have suffered losses of almost \$80 billion due to extreme climate events in the last two decades. Investing in DRI/CRI and related services and building capacity by leveraging system, technological and financing innovations can better protect not just the public, but also the economic assets critical to national growth and development.

GEORGE FLOYD KILLING Police officer Chauvin found guilty on all 3 charges

Washington: A US grand jury has found former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin guilty on all three charges he faced over the custodial death of African-American George Floyd last year, a chilling incident that sparked worldwide protests against racism and excessive use of force by police. The 12 jurors found Chauvin, 45, guilty of unintentional second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in one of the most closely watched cases in recent memory in the US. Chauvin was filmed kneeling on Floyd's neck during his arrest on May 25 after a convenience store clerk in Minneapolis alleged that Floyd tried to pass a counterfeit USD 20 bill. Chauvin pinned down Floyd, 46, with his knee on the pavement of a south Minneapolis intersection for more than nine minutes. "I can't breathe. I can't breathe," were his last words. Chauvin pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. He

faces up to 40 years in prison, according to US media reports. With only his eyes visible as the rest of his face was hidden behind a surgical mask, Chauvin watched as the verdict was announced. A deputy handcuffed Chauvin and escorted him to a side room. He was later transferred to the Minnesota Correctional Facility. Judge Peter Cahill said sentencing is expected in eight weeks. The City of Minneapolis last month settled a wrongful death lawsuit with Floyd's family for USD 27 million. The verdict prompted celebratory scenes outside the court and in Floyd's home town, where several hundred people cheered as it was announced. The Floyd family's lawyer, Ben Crump and George Floyd's family released a statement following the conviction of Chauvin, saying the verdict goes far beyond this city and has significant implications for the country and even the world.

"Painfully earned justice has arrived for George Floyd's family and the community here in Minneapolis, but today's verdict goes far beyond this city and has significant implications for the country and even the world. "Justice for Black America is justice for all of America. This case is a turning point in American history for accountability of law enforcement and sends a clear message we hope is heard clearly in every city and every state," the statement said. The statement also demanded that the other three officers who played their own roles in the death of Floyd must still be held accountable for their actions. President Joe Biden said it was a murder in the full light of day and it ripped the blinders off for the whole world to see the systemic racism in the country. "The systemic racism is a stain on our nation's soul. The knee on the neck of justice for black Americans. Profound fear and trauma" he said. PTI

Biden says he told George Floyd's daughter, daddy did change the world

Washington: US President Joe Biden on Tuesday narrated a conversation he had with George's Floyd's seven-year-old daughter in which he affirmed that her father's murder had sparked global change. Biden said he met Gianna Floyd at her father's funeral in June last year and "told her how brave I thought she was." "I knelt down and held her hand, I said 'Daddy is looking down at you so proud,'" said Biden. "She said 'no then... 'Daddy changed the world.'" Biden said when he spoke with Gianna again on Tuesday after a US jury found Derek Chauvin, a former police officer guilty of murder of African-American Floyd on a Minneapolis street, he told her, "Daddy did change the world. Let that be his legacy: a legacy of peace, not violence — of justice." Chauvin was found guilty by a federal jury on three charges: second-degree murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter.

"This is the time for this country to come together, to unite as Americans. There can never be any safe harbour for hate in America," he said. Biden described the verdict in the Chauvin trial a rare but "a giant step forward in the march towards justice in America." "Today the jury of Minnesota found the former police officer, Derek Chauvin, guilty on all counts in the murder of George Floyd," said Biden, speaking from the White House. "It was a murder in the full light of day and it ripped the blinders off for the whole world to see... The systemic racism... A stain on our nation's soul, the knee on the neck of justice for Black Americans," the president said. He also called the guilty verdict in the Chauvin trial an indictment on unjust policing. "No one should be above the law, and today's verdict sends that message. But it's not enough," Biden said. PTI

Germany: Deliberations underway for early Afghan withdrawal

Berlin: Discussions are underway among military planners with the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Kabul for a possible withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan as early as July 4, Germany's Defense Ministry said Wednesday. If agreed, the date would move up by more than two months the timeline to bring international troops home. "The Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul are currently considering whether to shorten the withdrawal period," Defense Ministry spokesman David Helmbold told reporters in Berlin. "The 4th of July is now being considered as a pullout date. The ministry informed the (German parliament's) defense committee about this today," NATO agreed earlier this month to withdraw its roughly 7,000 non-American forces from Afghanistan to match US President Joe Biden's decision to pull all American troops from the country starting on May 1. AP

Majority of nations approve suspending Syria's OPCW rights

AP ■ THE HAGUE: In an unprecedented vote on Wednesday, member states of the global chemical weapons watchdog suspended Syria's voting rights at the organisation as a punishment for the repeated use of toxic gas by Damascus. The vote, which required a two-thirds majority to pass, marked the first time a member state of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has been hit with such a sanction. A group of 46 nations called for the step on Tuesday at the organisation's annual meeting of member states. Behind the scenes diplomatic efforts to reach consensus on the proposal failed, leading to a vote Wednesday at which 87 nations voted in favour of suspending Syria's rights and 15 voted against. There were 34 abstentions. In a tweet, the British delegation to the meeting called the decision a "Vital step to maintain credibility of Chemical Weapons Convention." Syria didn't immediately react at the meeting in The Hague. France's ambassador, Luis Vassy, introduced the proposed suspension on Tuesday, saying that Syria's use of prohibited chemical weapons was "irrefutable." Vassy tweeted that Wednesday's vote was a "good day for multilateralism." Syria, which joined the organisation in 2013 after being threatened with airstrikes in response to a chemical attack on the outskirts of the country's capital, denounced the move as a "propaganda tool" and denied using chemical weapons. An investigation mechanism set up by the OPCW has twice blamed Syrian government forces for chemical attacks. Last week, it said it found "reasonable grounds to believe" that a Syrian air force military helicopter dropped a chlorine cylinder on a Syrian town in 2018, sickening 12 people.

US-backed Afghan peace meeting postponed as Taliban balk

AP ■ KABUL: An upcoming international peace conference that was meant to move Afghanistan's warring sides to a power-sharing deal and ensure an orderly U.S. Exit from the country has been postponed, its sponsors announced on Wednesday. They cited a lack of prospects for meaningful progress. As peace efforts stalled, Germany's Defense Ministry suggested NATO military planners were contemplating a possible withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan as early as July 4. That's more than two months ahead of the planned Sept. 11 pullout date. "The Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul are currently considering whether to shorten the withdrawal period," said German Defense Ministry spokesman David Helmbold. "The 4th of July is now being considered as a pullout date. The ministry informed the (German parliament's) defense committee about this today." Still, the latest delay in getting Afghanistan's warring sides to hammer out a peace

deal underscored the difficulties the Biden administration and NATO are facing in orchestrating an orderly exit from conflict-scarred Afghanistan. Both have said they would begin withdrawing their remaining troops — a total of close to 13,000 — from the country on May 1 and complete the pullout by Sept. 11, no matter what. The decision to delay the conference came several days after Taliban insurgents, who are key to peace efforts, dismissed the U.S.-promoted conference in Istanbul as a political spectacle serving American interests. No new date was given for the conference, which was to have started Saturday under the sponsorship of the United Nations, Turkey and Qatar. Turkey's foreign minister said the conference was delayed until after the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which ends in mid-May. Just hours before the postponement, a suicide bomber attacked a convoy of Afghan security personnel.

Chad rebels threaten to depose slain President's son

AP ■ N'DJAMENA (CHAD): Rebels in Chad threatened to depose the son of the country's slain President after he was named interim leader of the central African nation, raising the specter on Wednesday of a potentially violent power struggle. Uncertainty prevailed early Wednesday over how far the rebel column was from N'Djamena, a city of 1 million people, and whether the military would remain loyal to Mahamat Deby Ito no in the aftermath of his father's death after three decades in power. The rebel group that the military blamed for President Idriss Deby Ito's death said late Tuesday that its forces were "heading toward N'Djamena at this very moment." "Chad is not a monarchy," said a statement from the group known as the Front for Change and Concord in Chad. "There can be no dynastic devolution of power in our country." The group's claim of advancing toward the capital could not be independently verified, but it immediately created panic in N'Djamena, which another rebel group attacked back in 2008.

Officials with the Transitional Military Council said the fight was not yet over for control of the country. "The security situation remains highly serious given the persistence and magnitude of the terrorist threat," the council's vice president, Djimadoum Tiraina, said, adding that the military must now "prevent the country from sinking into chaos and anarchy." Chad's military spokesman said Tuesday that the president died during a visit to the front lines of the battle against the rebel group. The rebels were based in neighbouring Libya until earlier this month, when authorities say they crossed over into Chad on the country's April 11 Election Day. Deby ran for a sixth term in that election and faced minimal opposition after several challengers chose not to take part, fearing the vote would be rigged. Over the years, the president had rebelled numerous armed rebellions and managed to stay in power until the insurgency led by the Front for Change and Concord in Chad. The circumstances of Deby's death could not be independently confirmed due to the remote location.

UAE gives \$2bn bailout loan to Pakistan

Islamabad: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has decided to help Pakistan with a \$2 billion bailout package, committing "every possible support to Pakistan". The UAE's support came during the visit of Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to the Gulf nation. Qureshi thanked UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, stating that UAE's help "reflected the warm and brotherly ties between the two countries." "We greatly appreciate the UAE's continued support and cooperation," maintained the Pakistan foreign office. Qureshi has also raised the issue of visa restrictions for Pakistanis in his meeting with the Emirati Minister for Tolerance and Coexistence, Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Bin Ali Al Sayegh. During the visit, Qureshi

also highlighted the contributions made by the Pakistani nationals residing in the UAE for both the countries. "He emphasised the need for nurturing and strengthening people-to-people linkages, as well as removing the impediments that hamper travel between the two countries," maintained the Pakistan foreign office. It is pertinent to mention that the UAE had put a ban on work visas for Pakistani nationals, creating a major impact on Pakistan as it relies on remittances from the Emirates. While the restriction was attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic, many believe that the move came after Pakistan started showing inclination towards the formation of a joint consortium with Turkey and Malaysia to represent the Muslim world, which would be a direct opposing and challenging entity to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), led by the Arab world. IANS

Senior journalist escapes assassination attempt in Islamabad

Islamabad: Pakistan continues to remain as one of the most unsafe countries for journalists, as targeted attacks, abductions, killings and assassination attempts on senior scribes continue unabated. In a latest tragic incident in Capital Islamabad, senior journalist and former chairman of Pakistan Electronic Media Authority (PEMRA), Absar Alam, was shot at in broad daylight by unknown attackers. In a video message shared on social media, Absar Alam could be seen stating that he was shot at outside his house. "I have been shot in my ribs," said Absar Alam while being taken to the hospital after being shot at. "My message to those who did this is that I am not going to be scared by such tactics," he added. Alam was rushed to the hospital immediately where his condition has stabilised. The incident prompted immediate response from the Islamabad Police, which stated that the capital police chief has constituted a special team under the command of the SSP (investigation) to probe the

attempt. Federal Minister for Interior, Sheikh Rasheed, also took notice of the attack and ordered the Islamabad IG to investigate the matter with immediate effect. "Those involved in the firing should be arrested as soon as possible," he said. "Those who fired at Absar Alam will not be able to escape the law. Very soon they will be within the ambit of the law," he added. The deadly attack on Alam attracted condemnation from journalists and politicians alike. "Silencing the voice of dissent is a cancer that has plagued this country for many years. Absar Alam Sahab is the latest victim of this cruel & barbaric crime. May Allah SWT heal his wounds and the wounds of this country. Ameen," tweeted Maryam Nawaz, the Vice President of opposition party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) also lashed out at the government, stating that it seems like the deep state is at large against the journalist community. IANS

Global Covid-19 caseload tops 142.6mn

Washington: The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 142.6 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.04 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Wednesday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global case-

load and death toll stood at 142,621,220 and 3,041,541, respectively. The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 31,792,013 and 568,460, respectively, according to the CSSE. In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 15,321,089 cases. The other countries with

more than two million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (14,043,076), France (5,401,305), Russia (4,665,553), the UK (4,408,644), Turkey (4,384,624), Italy (3,891,063), Spain (3,428,354), Germany (3,182,951), Argentina (2,743,620), Poland (2,704,571), Colombia (2,684,101), Mexico (2,311,172) and Iran (2,286,927), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 378,003 fatalities. Nations with a death toll of over 50,000 are Mexico (213,048), India (180,530), the UK (127,557), Italy (117,633), Russia (104,545), France (101,713), Germany (80,469), Spain (77,102), Colombia (69,177), Iran (67,525), Poland (62,734), Argentina (59,792), Peru (57,954) and South Africa (53,887). IANS

China to produce over 3 bn Covid vax this year

Beijing: China is expected to produce more than 3 billion Covid-19 vaccine doses this year, an official said on Tuesday. The country's current production capacity is around 5 billion vaccine doses annually, said Zheng Zhongwei, head of the working group for vaccine development under the State Council joint prevention and control mechanism against Covid-19, Xinhua news agency

reported. Speaking at a sub-forum of the Boao Forum for Asia annual conference, Zheng said that, when the outbreak happened, China immediately focused on research and development for a Covid-19 vaccine. The country chose to conduct research work on 12 types of vaccines from 10 research units across the country, Zheng said. IANS

Biden says Justice Dept nominee Vanita Gupta spent entire career fighting to advance racial equity, justice

PTI ■ WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has said that he has nominated "eminently qualified and highly respected" Indian-origin lawyer Vanita Gupta to the Justice Department as she has spent her entire career fighting to advance racial equity and justice. If confirmed, 46-year-old Gupta would be the first woman of colour to serve as Associate Attorney General, which is the third-ranking official at the powerful Department of Justice. President Biden, in his remarks on Tuesday on the

verdict in the trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin for the death of George Floyd, said that the State and local government and law enforcement needs to step up, but so does the federal government. "That's why I have appointed the leadership at the Justice Department that I have, that is fully committed to restoring trust between law enforcement and the community they are sworn to serve and protect," he said. Biden said that he has complete confidence in the leadership and commitment of Attorney General Merrick Brian Garland.

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER GUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of Movable assets
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of movable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described movable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Dinesh (Borrower), LAROH00034435594	HYUNDAI MOTORS LTD Xcent Mfg Yr.- 2016 Reg No.- HR46D0050	Rs. 5,77,602/- (as on April 13, 2021)	Rs. 1,20,000/- Rs. 12,000/-	May 05, 2021 From 12 Noon to 1:00 PM	May 14, 2021 From 11:00 AM Onwards

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link-<https://auctions.cardekho.com>) of our auction agency Car Dekho. The Mortgagors/noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till May 13, 2021 before 05:00 P.M. else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) in a sealed envelope that mentions "offer for purchase of property to ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi-110005 or to our marketing agent Car Dekho, Comat Emaar Digital Greens 11th floor tower - B Sector - 61 (Sohna Rd) Baharanpur Naya Gurgaon - 122102 or before May 13, 2021 before 05:00 P.M. The marketing agency has also been engaged as auctioneer for proper conduct of auction. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8584874809/730491763 or Car Dekho on 7412066541. Tenders which are acknowledged by the Bank/e-auction vendor official and registered before the cut-off time with complete details shall only be considered for auction.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date: April 22, 2021
Place: Delhi/ Ncr
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Simple oral hygiene could help reduce Covid-19 severity, study finds

London: Simple oral hygiene measures could help lower the risk of transmission of the novel coronavirus from the mouth to the lungs, and help prevent severe instances of Covid-19, according to a study. The research, published in the Journal of Oral Medicine and Dental Research, shows that there is emerging evidence that specific ingredients of some inexpensive and widely available mouthwash products are highly effective at inactivating the SARS-CoV-2 virus, that causes COVID-19. The researchers noted that the coronavirus could pass into people's lungs from saliva with the virus moving directly from mouth to bloodstream -- particularly if individuals are suffering from gum disease. Evidence shows that blood vessels of the lungs, rather than airways, are affected initially in COVID-19 lung dis-

ease with high concentrations of the virus in saliva and periodontitis associated with increased risk of death. The researchers propose that dental plaque accumulation and periodontal inflammation further intensify the likelihood of the SARS-CoV-2 virus reaching the lungs and causing more severe cases of the infection. Experts say this discovery could make effective oral healthcare a potentially lifesaving action -- recommending that the public take simple, but effective, daily steps to maintain oral hygiene and reduce factors contributing to gum disease, such as the build-up of plaque. Initial observations of lung CT scans from patients suffering from COVID-19 lung disease led to a collaboration between medical and dental researchers on the potential entry route into the bloodstream. "This model may help us understand why some individ-

uals develop COVID-19 lung disease and others do not," said study co-author Iain Chapple, Professor at the University of Birmingham in the UK. "It could also change the way we manage the virus -- exploring cheap or even free treatments targeted at the mouth and, ultimately, saving lives," Chapple said. The researchers noted that gum disease makes the gums leakier, allowing microorganisms to enter into the blood. Simple measures -- such as careful toothbrushing and interdental brushing to reduce plaque build-up, along with specific mouthwashes, or even saltwater rinsing to reduce gingival inflammation -- could help decrease the viral concentration in saliva. This can also help mitigate the development of lung disease and reduce the risk of deterioration to severe COVID-19. PTI

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General Public is hereby informed that an one male fully decomposed dead body was found at Haiderpur Water treatment Plant, Sector-13 dated 13.04.2021. In this regard a vide DD No. 58A, dated 13.04.2021, has been registered at P.S. K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for identification at BSA Mortuary, Rohini, Delhi for 72 hrs. The description of the dead body is given as under Name: Unkonwn, S/o: Unkonwn, R/o: Unkonwn, Age: About 30-35 years, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Decomposed, Face: Swollen, Hair: Normal Small Black, Wearing : Without clothes. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.

SHO
P.S. K. N. Katju Marg, Delhi
Ph. : 011-27571162, 8750870327

DP/811/RD/2021



FMCG firms see spike in sanitiser demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic sweeps across India, leading FMCG companies are witnessing a strong surge in demand for their health and hygiene products, including hand sanitiser, hand wash, disinfectant spray and germ protection wipes.

Companies such as ITC, Himalaya Drug Company and Patanjali said they have ramped up their production capacity to address spurt in demand, assuring that their hygiene products are available to the consumers.

The companies had witnessed a slowdown in the consumption pattern of these items in the past 2-3 months. Now, they have reviewed their production plans as per the current

situation and are rapidly scaling up and have streamlined their production capacities.

"We are witnessing a strong uptick in demand for our hygiene portfolio across some geographies. The robustness and agility of our supply chains provide the flexibility and enable us to address the emerging demand trends," ITC Divisional Chief Executive (Personal Care Products) Sameer Satpathy told PTI.

Similarly, Himalaya Drug Company Business Director (Consumer Products Division) Rajesh Krishnamurthy said, "We have shored up our logistics, sales priorities and capabilities to cater to the COVID-19-induced business environment."

At Himalaya, he said "production planning is done almost two months in advance



hence we didn't anticipate a surge in cases during late March and early April. We have accordingly reviewed the production plans as per current situation."

Krishnamurthy further said, "We will continue to ensure that product categories like hand wash, hygiene category, home care and sanitisers are made available to the consumers."

Haridwar-based Patanjali Ayurved also said a sudden spike in demand has created supply constraints but it is temporary and the company has streamlined its production capacities. "We are gearing up and soon everywhere these products will be available," Patanjali spokesperson S K Tijarawala said.

The second wave is so spontaneous that none thought

of such massive and mass spread with speed, he added.

"We have focused and streamlined all our production capacities to cater the demand of cononil, Shwasari Vati, Anu Tel, Giloy Ghan Vati, Tulsi Ghanvati, Chavyanprash and Immunogrit, etc, immunity booster, sanitisers, handwash and medications," Tijarawala added.

Edelweiss Financial Services Executive Vice-President Abneesh Roy said that due to the second wave of the pandemic, the home hygiene category will witness enhanced demand.

"Hygiene products will see a positive flip. Products like soaps, masks, surface cleaning products, sanitisers and possibly mosquito repellants will see a rebound," he said.

According to him, com-

panies such as HUL, Godrej Consumer Product Ltd and ITC will benefit from this.

However, he also added that although products like hand sanitisers are coming back but are likely to be short-lived due to the shift towards the use of soaps/hand wash.

"In the first four months of 2019-20, sanitisers saw a mad rush with even liquor, paint and many non-FMCG companies launching the product."

"However, in the next two quarters, demand for sanitisers plunged which led to most new entrants exiting the category. Sanitisers are making a comeback due to rising covid cases," he said.

The segment will consolidate in favour of companies like Reckitt and HUL, which have a much stronger brand equity in this space, he added.

Consumer confidence weakens amid Covid crisis

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

As India battles the acute Covid crisis, the monthly Refinitiv-Ipsos Primary Consumer Sentiment Index (PCSI) for India, in April, has shown a downward slide of 1.1 percentage points, over March 2021.

The monthly PCSI is driven by the aggregation of the four weighted sub-indices.

An Ipsos said that the PCSI Employment Confidence Sub-Index is down by 0.6 percentage points, the Current Personal Financial Conditions Sub-Index has fallen by 1.5 percentage points.

The Investment Climate Sub-Index has declined by 0.9 percentage points and the Economic Expectations Sub



Index is down by 0.8 percentage points.

Amit Adarkar, CEO, Ipsos India, said: "The second wave of the corona virus is in full swing and it is already starting to impact normalcy and livelihoods."

He noted that businesses had started recovering post the first wave and now the new wave has already started to negatively impact the sentiment around jobs, finances for daily running of households, savings and investments and the economy.

Boris Johnson denies lobbying breach over text messages to Dyson

PTI ■ LONDON

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday hit back at Opposition allegations of "sleaze" within government ranks after a text message exchange between him and vacuum cleaning giant founder James Dyson came to light.

During the weekly Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons, Johnson was asked about text messages seen by the BBC in which the UK Prime Minister promised Sir James Dyson that he would "fix" tax changes in return for the supply of ventilators for the National Health Service (NHS) required at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic.

The texts were sent in March 2020 to the Singapore-based engineering firm boss, who reportedly sought assurances that his staff members would not have to pay extra taxes if they came to Britain to work on the project.

"I make absolutely no apol-

ogy at all for shifting heaven and earth and doing everything I possibly could, as I think any Prime Minister would in those circumstances, to secure ventilators for the people of this country," Johnson told the members of parliament.

He also expressed his willingness to share "all the details" of the messages with Parliament. But the Opposition Labour Party dubbed the revelations as "jaw-dropping" and something that was emerging as a "pattern" for the government, amid recent allegations around lobbying of ministers.

"Every day there are new allegations about this Conservative government: dodgy PPE (personal protection equipment) deals; tax breaks for their mates; the health secretary owns shares in a company delivering NHS services.

Sleaze, sleaze, sleaze, and it's all on his watch," said Labour leader Keir Starmer.

In the text exchanges covered by the BBC, Johnson mes-

saged Dyson saying: "UK Chancellor) Rishi (Sunak) says it is fixed!! We need you here."

When the businessman sought further reassurance for the tax status of the firm and "senior individuals", Johnson replied: "I am First Lord of the Treasury and you can take it that we are backing you to do what you need."

Dyson, a donor to the ruling Conservative Party, did invest in work to create ventilators but they didn't go into full production in the end.

"When the Prime Minister rang me to ask Dyson to urgently build ventilators, of course, I said yes," the business chief told the BBC.

He said: "Our ventilator cost Dyson 20 million pounds, freely given to the national cause, and it is absurd to suggest that the urgent correspondence was anything other than seeking compliance with rules, as 450 Dyson people - in UK and Singapore - worked around the clock, seven days a week to build potentially life-saving equipment at a time of dire need.

Farm exports up 16.88 pc in Apr-Feb FY21

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India exported agricultural commodities worth ₹2.74 lakh crore till February of the 2020-21 fiscal, up by 16.88 per cent from ₹2.31 lakh crore in the year-ago period, notwithstanding the pandemic, the agriculture ministry said on Wednesday.

Similarly, imports of agriculture and allied commodities increased by 3 per cent to ₹1,41,034 crore during April-February period of 2020-21 from 1,37,014 crore in the year-ago period.

Despite Covid-19, balance of trade in agriculture has favourably increased to ₹1,32,579.69 crore from ₹93,907.76 crore in the said period.

"India has consistently maintained trade surplus in the agricultural products over the years. ...Even during the difficult time of the pandemic, India took care not to disturb

the world food supply chain and continued to export," the agriculture ministry said in a statement.

During April-February of the 2020-21 fiscal, the country exported agri-commodities worth Rs 2.74 lakh crore as against Rs 2.31 lakh crore in the same period of the previous year.

Among agri-commodities exported, wheat shipments rose in terms of value to Rs 3,283 crore in April-February from Rs 425 crore in the year-ago period.

On specific demand from countries, NAFED has exported 50,000 tonnes wheat to Afghanistan and 40,000 tonnes to Lebanon under government-to-government arrangement.

In case of non-basmati rice export, the ministry said the shipments increased to Rs 30,277 crore in April-February of 2020-21 from Rs 13,030 crore in the year-ago period.

Transporters suffer ₹1k cr a day losses due to fresh restrictions, lockdowns

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Truckers' body AIMTC on Wednesday said the transporters are suffering losses of around ₹1,000 crore per day due to the fresh restrictions and weekly lockdowns in some of the states, and these losses spike further if certain relief measures are not taken by the government to mitigate the situation.

On April 12 when restrictions were imposed in Maharashtra, the research unit of the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) had assessed daily loss of about ₹315 crore per day, AIMTC said in a statement.

According to fresh assessment, the daily losses to the transport industry have mounted to about ₹1,000 crore per day, which are rising further with intensity and duration of the pandemic-induced lockdowns and curbs, it said.

It sought proactive steps from the govt such as moratorium on equated-monthly instalment (EMI) payments, tax and insurance waiver and

extension in e-way bill validity to avoid imminent financial crisis min the industry.

The lockdown and night curfew has been extended to other states, due to rising number of COVID-19 cases, has disrupted the business and financial delinquencies have hit micro loans, MSME and commercial vehicles' financing segment, it said.

"This is going to further deepen the crisis," the AIMTC said. The intensity and duration of lockdowns and curbs will further hit the sector badly. Therefore, immediate, prudent and proactive steps must be taken by the govt to avoid another crisis in the offing, before it is too late, it warned in the statement. States such as Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and others have also imposed strict restrictions on the movement of non-essential goods, which has resulted in demand for vehicles going down by about 50% and the subsequent increase in idle capital, said the statement.

"If the situation worsens attracting fresh lockdowns and restrictions, then this loss will further augment leading to financial crises in the industry and excessive loss of livelihood," said the AIMTC.

AIMTC said its research unit predicted deterioration of financial situation among various sectors, including transportation sector, where payments are not forthcoming. This is due to low consumption, and demand manufacturers too are not realising their proceeds.

This is going to augment bad loans and default of statutory compliance like taxes, insurance, fees and other statutory compliances like TCS, GSTR returns and TDS, among others, it said.

"We have no resources at the back-end as all payments are stuck. We could foresee worsening of the situation in the very near future. More than 20 crore people associated with the transport sector are forced under greater pressure and multi-fold challenges, leading to untold mental anxiety and financial distress," said the statement.

Samsung tops global smartphone market with 23% share in Q1 2021

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Samsung defended its leading position in the global smartphone market in the first quarter of the year, shipping 77 million smartphones and capturing 23 per cent market share (a growth of over 32 per cent on-year), according to a new report.

Apple shipped 57 million units iPhones worldwide, capturing second place with a 17 per cent volume market share.

Xiaomi held third place in terms of volume of smartphones shipped for the second quarter in a row.

It shipped 49 million smartphones globally and took a 15 per cent market share in Q1 2021, up from 10 per cent one year ago, according to lat-

est research from Strategy Analytics.

The global smartphone shipments were 340 million units in Q1 2021, up over 24 per cent (on-year) representing the highest growth since 2015.

The smartphone market rebound was driven by the healthy demand of consumers with ageing devices and a phenomenal 5G push from Chinese vendors.

"Globally, the top five vendors combined took a 76 per cent market share in Q1 2021, up from 71 per cent one year ago.

Chip shortages and supply side constraints did not have a significant impact in Q1 among the top 5 brands," said Linda Sui, Senior Director, at Strategy Analytics.

DCB Bank acquires 9% equity stake in Techfino Capital

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Private sector lender DCB Bank Ltd on Wednesday said that it has acquired a minority equity stake of around 9 per cent in Techfino Capital Private Ltd (TCPL).

Techfino is a Bengaluru-based Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) which provides customised consumer loans in education and health-care sectors through its modern technology platform. It is present in key metros and tier-II cities across India.

Narendranath Mishra, Head Agri and Inclusive Banking, DCB Bank, said: "DCB Bank & TCPL are delighted to be associated in this manner. We value each other's experience and exper-

ience to build a granular loan portfolio with patience and nuance.

DCB Bank and Techfino complement each other's strengths, and this is an opportunity for both organisations to grow the customer franchise."

Noting that the association with DCB Bank is an important milestone, Jayaprakash Patra, Co-Founder Director, Techfino Capital Private Ltd, said that it shall help in the growth of the business as TCPL goes about providing financing solution to its customers.

"Together, we aim to create a win-win ecosystem, offering our customers a bouquet of customised financial solutions using TCPL's robust technology platform," Patra said.

Brace for hike in petrol, diesel prices post elections

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol and diesel prices may increase soon at the end of the ongoing Assembly elections with oil companies looking to raise the retail price of the two auto fuels between ₹2 and ₹3 per litre in phases and make up for the losses they incurred by keeping the prices at artificially low levels in the run up to the local elections.

Government sources said that oil companies are making losses to the tune of ₹3 and ₹2 per litre on sale of petrol and diesel, respectively, due to rise in global crude prices that also impacted the international product prices.

This would need to be compensated through gradual increase in petrol and diesel

retail prices over few days before the fuel is brought at par with the global market rates.

Petrol and diesel prices have not been raised since February 27, but actually the prices of auto fuels have fallen on four occasions in March and April, bringing petrol prices down by 77 paise per litre and diesel by 74 paise per litre in the national capital. The fall has come even though the average Indian basket crude price stood at around \$61.22 in February, at a lower than average of \$64.73 in March and averaging close to \$66 a barrel in April so far.

Though the retail price of petrol and diesel price is determined on the basis of 15-day rolling average of product price globally.

Future Supply Chain board, lenders approve debt restructuring plan

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Future Supply Chain Solutions has said that its board of directors and lenders have approved a debt restructuring plan. In a regulatory filing, the company said that its board of directors approved the plan on Tuesday. The board of directors of Future Supply Chain Solutions Limited at its meeting held on April 20, 2021, has approved a resolution plan to restructure its existing financial debt as permitted under the Resolution Framework for Covid-19-related Stress announced by the Reserve Bank of India, it said.

The said resolution plan has been in-principle agreed by the lenders to the existing debt of the company after assessing

the viability of resolution plan.

As part of the resolution plan, the debt raised through the non-convertible debentures issued by the company under Series-I and Series-II (NCDs) are also part of the existing debt and are proposed to be restructured.

The company has received consent of 100 per cent of the holders of the NCDs and the debenture trustee to amend the terms and conditions of the NCDs as per the resolution plan approved by other lenders of the existing debt.

"The board took these consents on record, in the aforementioned board meeting, and approved the restructuring of the NCDs in line with the resolution plan agreed by the other lenders of the Existing Debt," it said.

I-T refunds worth ₹5,649 cr issued during April 1-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department on Wednesday said it has issued refunds of over ₹5,649 crore to 7.39 lakh taxpayers during April 1-19, 2021-22.

Of this, personal income tax refunds worth ₹3,073 crore were issued in 7.23 lakh cases and corporate tax refunds of ₹2,577 crore were issued to 15,206 taxpayers.

"CBDT issues refunds of over ₹5,649 crore to more than 7.39 lakh taxpayers between 1st April, 2021 to 19th April, 2021," the I-T department tweeted.

In the previous fiscal year, the department issued ₹2.62 lakh crore worth refunds to more than 2.38 crore taxpayers. The I-T department did not specify for which financial year the refunds have been issued. However, it is believed that the refunds are for tax returns filed for 2019-20. The refund issued in last financial year is 43.2 per cent higher than Rs 1.83 lakh crore issued in 2019-20.



Government of Jammu & Kashmir UT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B)
PROJECT CIRCLE DIVISION 1ST, SRINAGAR
 Opposite Masjid Ibrahim, Hyderpora Srinagar PIN No.190014
 E-mail:- pcd.bypass@gmail.com, pcd.bypass@jk.gov.in
 Phone- FAX:- 0194-2435218

CORRIGENDUM-IV

Subject: Construct flyover at Bemina Junction including its Approaches, Km 299+145 to Km 300+027 (Length 0.882 Kms) of four lane with paved shoulders of NH-44 at Srinagar in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir on Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) mode.

Reference: 1) This office Fresh NIT No. NIT No PCD-RnB-75 of 2020-21 Dated:25/02/2021 issued Vide endorsement No PCD-Ist/NIT/9690-99Dated: 25-02-2021.
 2) This office Corrigendum-I No. NIT/Corr/10372-77 dated:- 20/3/2021.
 3) This office Corrigendum-II No. NIT/Corr/178-84 dated:- 08/04/2021
 4) This office Corrigendum-III No. NIT/Corr/289-95 dated:- 12/04/2021

Critical Dates
 Due to some unavoidable circumstances the critical Dates are hereby modified as under:-

5. Last date of Request for BID :-28-04-2021 up to 04.00 PM
 6. BID Due Date :-28-04-2021 at 04.00 PM
 7. Online Submission of Bid Securing Declaration/POA etc :-28-04-2021 at 04.00 PM
 8. Opening of Technical BIDs at venue 2.11.4 (i) :-30-04-2021 at 11.30 AM in the Office of the Chief Engineer PW(R&B) Department Kashmir
 9. Declaration of eligible / qualified :-Later On
 10. Opening of Financial BID :-Later On
 11. Letter of Acceptance (LOA) :-Later On
 12. Return of signed duplicate copy of LOA :-Later On
 13. Validity of BID :- 120 days from BID Due Date
 14. Submission of Performance Security (PS) and Additional Performance Security (APS), if any :- The provision of Performance Security (PS) and Additional Performance Security (APS), will be as per Latest office Memorandum of Ministry of Finance Department of Expenditure procurement Policy Division vide their No.F.9/4/2020-PPD dated:- 12/Nov/2020 (The bidder has to provide 3% of PS within 30 days of receipt of LOA)
 15. Signing of Agreement :- Within 10 days from the receipt of Performance Security.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
 R&B Project Circle Division 1st, Srinagar.

No:-NIT/Corr/381-89
 Dated:-19-04-2021

No. DPKK-654/21
 Dated:-20.04.2021

PARADIP PORT TRUST
 1st Corrigendum to e-Tender Call Notice No. : MID/AC/CS-WR-N-5/2019/246 Dt. 05.03.2021

Name of the work : "Operation and Maintenance of Oil Spill Response(OSR) Facility at North Oil Jetty". Estimated Cost : Rs. 2,62,68,000/- Plus GST. With reference to above e-tender call notice, the date and time are extended as follows : Bid Submission end date : 10.05.2021 at 15:30 Hrs. Tender Opening date(Technical Bid) : 11.05.2021 at 15:30 Hrs. For details, please log on to the website : https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app. Deputy Conservator PPT/PR/17/21-22 Date :21.04.2021

PUBLIC NOTICE
 Be it known to all my client S Amrit pal singh Teji S/O S J S Teji and Mrs Ranjit kaur Teji,W/O S Amritpal singh Teji resident of WZ 42 Street no 1 Srinagar Delhi 110034 both have disowned their son S Amanpreet singh Teji and Daughter in law Avneet kaur/W/O S Amanpreet Singh Teji as she is disrespectful and has rude behaviour towards both senior citizen and their son not able to control her.They are both debarred from inheriting all their immovable and movable assets outstanding in client names .Any body dealing with them shall be doing so at their own risk and responsibility Sd/- Vijay Kumar Tiwari Advocate Supreme Court of India

ICICI Bank
 Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET
 [See proviso to rule 8(6)]
 Notice for sale of Movable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of movable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described movable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Ravinder Kumar (Borrower) LAROH00035177651	MARUTI UDYOG LTD WAGON R LXI Mfg Yr.-2016 Reg No.- HR46E5117	Rs. 644,813/- (as on April 13, 2021)	Rs. 1,40,000/- Rs. 14,000/-	May 17, 2021 From 12 Noon to 1:00 PM	June 07, 2021 From 11:00 AM Onwards

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link-https://auctions.cardekho.com) of our auction agency Car Dekho The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till June 05, 2021 before 05:00 P.M else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) in a sealed envelope that mentions "offer for purchase of property to ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi-110005 or to our marketing agent Car Dekho, Comat Emaar Digital Greens 11th floor tower - B Sector - 61 (Sohna Rd) Baharanpur Naya Gurgaon - 122102 or before June 05, 2021 before 05:00 P.M. The marketing agency has also been engaged as auctioneer for proper conduct of auction. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8584874809/7304914763 or Car Dekho on 7412066541 Tenders which are acknowledged by the Bank/e-auction vendor official and registered before the cut-off time with complete details shall only be considered for auction.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date: April 22, 2021
 Place: Delhi/ Ncr

Authorized Officer
 ICICI Bank Limited



On the occasion of Earth Day, designers shine a light on sustainable practises that they have incorporated in their workspace to help reduce waste and hope for a day when fashion and earth can co-exist.
 By TEAM VIVA

PAUSE AND INTROSPECT



From recycling and reusing leftover fabric, elevating slow style to incorporating cruelty-free items in their products, the fashion business is putting forth an attempt to make a sound connection between fashion and earth. The second wave of COVID-19 has hit us, and it feels like 2020 all over again. In these times of pain, aside from remaining protected and avoiding potential risk for ourselves, we need to focus on the climate too. On the occasion of Earth Day, fashion designers shine a light on sustainable practises that they have incorporated in their workspace to help reduce waste and hope for a day when fashion and earth can co-exist.

'WORK IS WORSHIP ONLY IF WE REDUCE WASTE'

"Earth Day holds a special place not just in my heart but also at my workplace," says designer Nitisha Jain, founder of Bari India. She believes work can only be considered to be a worship place as long as we make sure we reduce the waste as much as possible.

Changes that matter: At Bari, we try to incorporate the use of *katrans* (left over pieces of cloth) to create minimal wastage. For example, we use the *katrans* to entwine hangers to give that extra grip to hold the garments better. We also use leftover pieces to make the string of *potli* bags and footwear. From stitching and using reusable masks, curtains made from block print fabric on the block printers table to creating mailboxes made from cardboard boxes for our workshop, we ensure we make the most from the waste.

'FASHION AND EARTH CAN CO-EXIST WITHOUT HURTING EACH OTHER'

"I treat every day as Earth Day as each day is a new opportunity to be a responsible citizen. It is high time that the dialogue be changed from fashion vs earth to fashion and earth. And I am for the motion: Fashion and earth can co-exist without hurting each other. Fashion may not always come to mind when one thinks of curbing climate change or helping earth recuperate. But this dynamic industry, its scope and impact, makes a great tool in itself. Fashion and design hold immense promise when it comes to realising a sustainable future for the planet and its people," shares designer Ridhi Mehra.

Changes that matter: We have made sure to associate with manufacturers and fabric producers who prioritise decarbon-

ising material production and processing. We have gone paperless and all our operations are now digital. All our fabric sourcing is organic. We make sure to use high-quality, durable fabrics to craft an ensemble that lasts long, hence, reducing unnecessary waste generation and promoting reusability.

'SLOW FASHION IS THE WAY FORWARD'

Isha says, "Earth Day marks as a reminder for us to pause and introspect our impact on the planet. The fashion industry is responsible for 10 per cent of the world's annual carbon emissions. It's also one of the most polluting, water-intensive and waste-generating industries. Sustainable fashion is a movement which is fostering change to fashion products, leading to ethical fashion, which clearly states fashion and earth can co-exist. We, at Rose Room, believe in the concept of slow fashion and all our products are made keeping it in mind. Today, more than ever, the environment has become the topmost priority for everyone. The textile and apparel industry is no exception and is playing its part in contributing to the current challenge the world is going through."

Changes that matter: We refrain from using animal products and have created a conscious faux leather collection. We take initiatives to make the supply chain and production processes more sustainable, and also strive to lower the consumption of natural resources such as fuel for energy and water. The chemicals used are

bio-degradable and non-hazardous.

'SHIFT TO CONSCIOUS PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION TO SAVE PLANET EARTH'

Sarika Kakrania, owner of Pink City, feels that each one of us have a responsibility to give back to our mother earth, who has given us life on the planet — we proudly call our home. She says, "Earth Day is a time for us to evaluate our year-long efforts in reducing the carbon footprint. Fast fashion could be the death of our planet if we do not take the issue in our hands and work towards a better tomorrow by incorporating the tools of sustainability in whatever way we can. So yes, fashion and earth can co-exist, only if we majorly shift to conscious production, not just as designers, but also as active consumers of fashion."

Changes that matter: As a brand, we say 'no' to mass production and 'yes' to handmade items. We do our best to generate employment and promote the rich Indian crafts like *Bandhej*, *Leheria*, *Gharchola* to name a few. We also keep our production to the bare minimum, focussing on quality over quantity. We make sure each garment we create has a longer shelf life and can be worn in multiple ways.

'OVERSTOCKING IS A WASTE OF PRECIOUS RESOURCES'

Snigdha Shekhar, director at Artisan Luxe, shares that the brand's mantra is — 'buy less but buy well'. She says that they



encourage their customers to invest in good quality clothing that is not season or trend-driven, hence, encouraging them to relook at buying fast fashion.

Changes that matter: From our choice of fabrics, silhouettes to our manufacturing set up, Artisan Luxe is a SEDEX certified socially compliant brand,

which aims at being a sustainable and slow fashion brand. We only keep raw material inventory and make everything at order. We do not stock any clothes at all as overstocking is a waste of precious resources. The biggest difference between other silks and our high-performance silks is that our garments can be hand-washed at home. Dry cleaning leaches toxic chemicals into the soil and ground water and as a brand aspiring towards sustainability, environmental pollution is a big area of concern for us. We use a waterless digital printing technology to print our fabrics.

'ELIMINATION OF FAST FASHION CAN PROMOTE A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FASHION AND EARTH'

Earth Day, for designer Vedika M, is a day to show support towards our precious home. "As Earth Day rolls in, we are reminded once again that sustainability in the fashion industry has become the need of the hour. I feel attention needs to be paid to the entire supply chain process in the industry. Customised clothing, reselling, reusing, sustainable production practices and elimination of fast fashion can promote a healthier relationship between fashion and earth," says she.

Changes that matter: We upcycle our waste or excess fabric to make by-products such as pouches and accessories for daily use. In our printing factory, we have minimised the usage of water that goes into washing the fabrics. For our packaging, we send out our parcels in bags made out of leftover fabric instead of using plastic packages.

'WE WORSHIP THE MOTTO REDUCE-REUSE-RECYCLE'

Designer Kunal Anil Tanna wants to interpret Earth Day as a chance to plan the next year to commit to make our planet a better and a happier place to live on.

Changes that matter: We worship the motto reduce, reuse and recycle. Season after season, we incorporate scraps to rebuild new textures and structures, making it not only cost effective but also eco-friendly in our own small way.

'WE WANT TO KEEP OUR NATURE SAFE FOR THE FUTURE GENERATIONS'

Saloni Panwar, founder of Gulabo Jaipur, feels that the fashion industry has a very negative impact on the environment. "In fact, it is the second largest polluter in the world, just after the oil industry that damages the environment irreversibly. Every day should be Earth Day," says she.

Change that matters: We must find ways to make sure that fashion does not disturb our nature anymore. One way is to reuse your own clothes. Wear them repeatedly with pride. Donate the ones that you don't wear, so others can use them. To ensure minimal carbon footprint, we make sure that we use all leftover fabrics. We donate more than half of our deadstock every few months to the needy and underprivileged. We encourage all our labour to use organic dye so it doesn't damage water bodies around. We make sure that no fabric goes to waste and every inch is used to make something useful.

'Everything depends on the script'

Actor JAIDEEP AHLAWAT says that there is not much discussion in our society around sex, gender, class and patriarchy, which allows fiction to explore these subjects

Jaideep Ahlawat feels there is not much talk around sex, gender, class and patriarchy in our society, which is why there is much to explore in these subjects fictionally.

All of the above subjects find a fascinating mix in Jaideep's new project — the short feature *Majnu*, which is a part of the OTT anthology *Ajeeb Daastaans*. In the story, he plays Babloo, a heartland strongman in a loveless marriage with the daughter of a political bigwig and who, it eventually emerges, is gay.

"Any emotions can be said in so many ways. (While on) These topics (gender, class, patriarchy) or sexuality, we think we have become modern or there is a change in society. We love to think like that but it's not," Jaideep said.

He added, "We are 140 crore people. We are those people who stay in the metros and have the exposure. But there is a bigger population, which is from Babloo's world. There is no talk about that there." "There



is not much talk on these topics and that is why there is more to explore there," he pointed out.

While such subjects are good to

explore, the actor feels everything eventually depends on the script.

"Until and unless a story is not written well, no emotion will work. You have to write it right to reach the audience," he said.

Talking about same-sex love being a hot topic among filmmakers right now, Jaideep said: "People talk about the things that are suppressed — emotions that are suppressed, individualities of people and their likings that are suppressed. (The idea) That people look according to their sexuality is stereotypical thinking."

He shared that his character Babloo from *Ajeeb Daastaans* is different. "Babloo comes from society where legacy and male ego stays on the forefront. So, you wouldn't be able to judge him on the basis of his look or the work he does, on what his take is on love. That is the most interesting thing I thought, a new thing for me. I see this in a very different light. I was lucky to play Babloo," he said.

Actor Tahir Raj Bhasin feels a good about where he has reached in Bollywood today. A total outsider to the industry, he has wooed all with his brilliant performances. He started his journey as a villain in *Mardaani* and now, he is playing the protagonist in three projects — *Loop Lapeta* opposite Taapsee Pannu, *Bulbul Tarang* opposite Sonakshi Sinha and *Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein*, in which he has been paired opposite Shweta Tripathi. He will also be seen in the Ranveer Singh-starrer *83*, in which he plays the role of the legendary Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar.

Tahir beams, "When I was shooting in Ladakh, to go up a steep mountain, we had the option of an SUV or a mule. They're both fast and get you there but there was a third option available — trekking. My journey in Bollywood is like that trek."

He adds, "I value protagonist parts and the projects that I'm doing because I know they only exist due to my earlier performances, which the audience have seen and loved. There's a sense of accomplishment in wearing the self-made tag."

Looking back at his journey, Tahir feels he is finally getting his due. He says, "It's been an incredible journey playing diverse roles

'Incredible journey so far'

Actor TAHIR RAJ BHASIN says that there's a sense of accomplishment in wearing the self-made tag



from Walt, *Mardaani*'s antagonist to the college stud Derek in *Chhichhore*. Working on these epic films and experienced directors

have been the cornerstone of my foundation."

He adds, "With every successive release, I've experienced that

the scripts I get offered have been bigger, more engaging and fulfilling. That's the goal, to keep upping the bar for myself."

Ask him if he thinks about what he wants his legacy to be and he promptly replies, "I think it's too early to be talking of a legacy. I'm just getting started and the plan is to make it a crazy fun ride, so fasten your seatbelts and hold on tight. I strive to be a star who tells great stories that move and entertain. What's important at this point is to operate from a vantage of valuing opportunity and focussing on the process of what goes into creating a memorable hero and sculpting a film."

Tahir hopes the industry jumps back from the pandemic soon. He says, "Every hardship forces change. We can hold on to the positives that the past year has made us consider: The importance of sanitised public spaces, the ability to use technology, operate remotely and to be more economical and environment-friendly."

TRENDBLAZER



NOWHERE TO GO, NOTHING TO DO: RAVEENA

Actor RAVEENA TANDON THADANI struck a pose for the camera on Tuesday at home because she has nowhere to go and nothing to do amid the lockdown.

In the Instagram picture, Raveena wears a white kurta, silver *jhumkas* and basic make-up.

"Hot summer afternoons and nowhere to go and nothing to do... so #strikeapose," she wrote as caption

Raveena will next be seen in *KGF: Chapter 2* starring Kannada superstar Yash.

fairtalk AMAAL MALLIK



'I think I can speak for myself and Armaan (Malik). Most of our music in the last six or seven years, our songs together and some of my songs from Arijit (Singh) were global hits. I get a lot of love from around the world. I have got fan clubs in Mexico and Turkey and I feel very blessed. I think all of us are doing it not to make a dent outside.'

dailytalk B PRAAK



'It feels absolutely amazing as I never thought that I would one day get a National Award. It definitely makes me feel blessed to have got it. It's all due to god's grace. My fans have always been one of my greatest support systems and are my constant inspiration. It's their continued blessings and love that helped me reach such heights.'

EMILIA IN FINAL TALKS TO JOIN SECRET INVASION

Game Of Thrones star EMILIA CLARKE is in final stages of talks to join the forthcoming series *Secret Invasion*. The assignment marks her entry into the Marvel universe, though details of her role are yet to be revealed.

Samuel L Jackson, Ben Mendelsohn, Kingsley Ben-Adir and Olivia Colman have already been announced as cast members.

Secret Invasion is among Marvel's biggest projects for Disney Plus.



DDA holds meeting for MPD-2041

Delhi Development Authority held its meeting through video conferencing under the chairmanship of Anil Baijal, Lt Governor Delhi, attended by Anurag Jain, IAS, Vice Chairman, DDA and other members of the authority. Following major decisions were taken:

MASTER PLAN FOR DELHI 2041

The authority has given preliminary approval for drafting the master plan for Delhi 2041. The draft will now be placed in public domain for inviting objections/suggestions from the public. It is a statutory document that facilitates Delhi's development by assessing the present condition and guiding how to achieve the desired development. Implementation of the plan is the collective responsibility of all agencies involved in the development of Delhi.

The first master plan was promulgated in 1962 under the Delhi Development Act 1957, followed by the master plans of 2001 and 2021, each of which is an extensive modification of the respective previous plan document. These plans were prepared for 20 years' perspective periods and provided a holistic framework for planned development of Delhi. The Draft MPD-2041 is also an extensive modification of the previous plans. However, this is positioned as a 'strategic' and 'enabling' framework to guide future growth of the city.

Draft Master Plan for Delhi-2041 (MPD-2041) has been divided into two volumes and nine sections which contain 22 chapters. The vision is to foster a sustainable, liveable and vibrant Delhi by 2041.

Structure of MPD 2041 document:



Volume 1: Vision 2041 and Enabling Policy Framework comprises of an introduction providing an overview of Delhi in present times, its global and regional positioning, estimates of population and projections for 2041. Along with vision and objectives of MPD-2041, six sections covering major policies of environment, economy, transport and mobility, heritage, culture, public spaces, shelter, social infrastructure and physical infrastructure are incorporated.

Volume 2: Spatial Development Strategy and Action Plan is divided into three sections. The first section contains strategies and specific norms for guiding future spatial development of Delhi, covering both green field and brown field development in the city (land pooling, green development area, regeneration of planned and unplanned areas, transit-oriented development).

The second section provides the plan monitoring and evaluation framework with key performance indicators to monitor progress, including an implementation framework for facilitating

periodic review and course correction.

The third section comprises of development control norms.

Salient features of the plan:

The draft master plan is prepared based on extensive citizen and stakeholder engagement, and inputs garnered. The primary goals of the draft plan are to make Delhi an environmentally responsible, future-ready city focussing on ease of living, good quality, affordability, cleanliness, efficient mobility options for all, and attracting talent. The key features are:

- ★ The master plan will be a people-friendly document, which is easy-to-read and understand by the general public apart from professionals.
- ★ GIS-based plan will be developed which shall enable citizens of Delhi/ stakeholders to know the exact policies/provisions of the draft master plan.
- ★ Development control norms have been simplified to meet future developments and people's needs.
- ★ Provision of good quality green-blue areas for active/passive recreation and

leisure.

★ Enhance Delhi's preparedness for climate change impacts and in tackling pollution.

★ Focus on rental and small format housing (particularly close to mass transit) with incentivising new formats like serviced apartments, condominiums, hostels, student housing, worker housing, etc.

★ Compact and sustainable development through TOD-based projects to bring jobs and homes closer to mass transit.

★ Regeneration in the old and dilapidated areas, re-densification of areas by providing incentives for planned redevelopment and/or retrofitting of areas, improve area-level safety and disaster resilience.

★ Improving social infrastructure in existing areas, particularly dense areas like urban villages and unauthorised colonies.

★ Flexibility in FAR loading and vertical mixing of uses to create innovative layouts that meet people's needs.

★ Introduction of Special Green Economic Uses having low FAR and larger green areas, which can provide a good environmental buffer for the city.

No mask, no movement: Gehlot

Asok Gehlot, Chief Minister of Rajasthan, said that the state government will go a step ahead to control the second deadly wave of COVID-19 and vigorously carry out a 'no mask, no movement' campaign in the state. He said that along with this campaign being run by the state government, public representatives of urban bodies, sanitation workers and all the personnel of these institutions have an important role in COVID management.

He called for timely registration of more and more people in the Chief Minister Chiranjeevi Health Insurance Scheme brought by the state government to free the state from the worry of treatment.

The CM said that many countries have been successful in stopping the wave due to application of masks, social distancing and strict adherence to the protocol. Several studies also suggest that masks, social distancing and vaccines are the most effective ways to prevent contraction. In such a situation, people should cooperate fully in the implementation of the stringent steps taken by the state government. He said that without discipline, we cannot break the chain. This may cause inconvenience to people for some time, but it's important in order to save lives.



Gehlot said that in the first peak of Corona, the maximum numbers were around nine thousand in one day, while in the second wave till now, this figure has increased three times to two lakh 73 thousand. He added that in order to face this situation, public representatives will have to step in.

Urban Development Minister, Shanti Dhariwal, said that as per the wish of the Chief Minister, all measures are being taken for the prevention of the virus. Medical Minister, Dr Raghu Sharma, said that every section of the society should play their role with full commitment. "In Rajasthan, the facility of vaccination is available to seven lakh people every day. Our effort is to get more people vaccinated as soon as possible," added he.

While giving the presentation, the Government Secretary Medical and Health, Siddharth Mahajan, said that due to the rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 patients, the consumption of oxygen in the state has also increased. For its availability, there is constant contact with the local government as well as the local resources. He informed that senior officers have been given the responsibility to ensure bed management, oxygen supply and check posts.

Government Secretary, Autonomous Government, Bhavani Singh Detha, informed that the facility of providing free food to COVID patients through Indira Rasoi has started. Sodium hypochlorite is being sprayed in public places. The unclaimed dead bodies are being cremated with respect. Also, awareness campaigns are being given more momentum.

The Vice Chancellor of RHUS, Dr Rajababu Panwar, Principal of SMS Hospital, Dr Sudhir Bhandari and Medical Specialist Dr Virendra Singh also expressed their views on public discipline fortnight, COVID protocol and treatment.



Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham has become the only Indian university to have scored a set in the top 100 global institutes in the Impact Ranking 2021 released by THE World University Ranking. It has got the 81st spot globally.

Uninterrupted electricity supply

Amid the resurgence of the Coronavirus crisis, Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL) has made necessary arrangements to ensure uninterrupted power supply to all its consumers. The company is monitoring the situation closely and is steadfast in its support to employees and consumers in these challenging times.

Dedicated field crew of the company is also working round-the-clock with complete COVID-19 safety protocols to restore customer supply in case of any interruptions. Advance and robust operation technologies like ADMS, Grid & Distribution Automation in addition to the flexible network have enabled the company to undertake remote operation and monitoring of critical power delivery assets to ensure reliable power supply. Preventive and predictive maintenance of all power substations, including those powering critical/essential services like hospitals, water treatment plants, street lights etc, have been undertaken to ensure quality power supply.

Considering the estimated rise in the power demand in the coming summer months, the company has made adequate power arrangements of more than 2,500 MW against the anticipated peak demand of 2,150 MW. It is to avoid any shortfall and ensure reliable supply to all essential services and comfort to its consumers during their extended work from home due to the pandemic-induced restrictions. In addition, the company has set up state-of-the-art Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) at two locations — Rohini and Rani Bagh — to ensure supply availability during any unforeseen exigency. These storage systems can provide emergency supply to essential services like hospitals, Delhi Jal Board etc.

Commenting on the initiatives, Ganesh Srinivasan, CEO, TATA Power-DDL, said, "We are committed towards ensuring the safety and convenience of our consumers, especially in these unprecedented times. We urge our consumers to stay indoors and make the most of the digital mediums to avail our services and to make bill payments. Our team of power victors is working round-the-clock to ensure uninterrupted power supply to you all. We are also working closely with the Delhi Government to power all essential services in this hour of need."

Tata Power-DDL has also launched a slew of online services for the convenience of its consumers. Consumers can now access all services through the company's mobile app (TPDDL Connect), website, chatbot (Roshni) or toll free helpline number 19124. For accessing bills and making timely payments, consumers are requested to use the company's mobile app, Whatsapp services (7303482071) from the comfort of their homes.

Consumers will also be sent Self-Meter Reading SMS alerts on their registered mobile numbers as per their billing cycle. The link in the SMS will redirect them to the company's official website, which makes the process extremely safe and secure.

Comprehensive Mansar Rejuvenation, Development Plan a breakthrough

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office, Dr Jitendra Singh, in presence of Baseer Ahmad Khan, Advisor to Lieutenant Governor Power Development, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction, Culture, Tourism, Floriculture, Planning Development and Monitoring, Industries & Commerce Department and Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary to Government Tourism Department, kickstarted VIP parking upgradation work and also inspected the floating jetty, which are both sub-components of prestigious Comprehensive Mansar Lake Rejuvenation/Development Plan.

Mansar and Surinsar are the most sought after tourist destinations. It is in the close vicinity from Katra, holy town of Mata Vaishno Devi where more than one crore pilgrims from all parts of the country and abroad visit on a yearly basis. Besides being the most scenic attraction due to vast Mansar lake and its wildlife sanctuary abundant with rich flora & fauna, Mansar is of immense importance from pilgrimage as well as heritage point of

view. The prestigious project comprises of sub-project/components like establishment of tourist facilitation centre, development of wellness/maturopathy centre, restoration of Mansar haveli and Narsingh temple, ornamental entrances, development of pathway/drainage channel along the banks of the lake as per the wild life norms and much more. This project is a step forward to preserve religious, cultural and environmental significance of the lake.

The chief guest for the occasion, Dr Jitendra, said that this project is a breakthrough in development of tourism in the region. He pointed out that Udhampur is possibly the only district in the country which has on the lines of Namami Ganga and Ganga cleaning project, received two similar rejuvenation and renovation projects, one for River Devika and the other being for Mansar lake. As the first phase of the project was initiated, he advocated the local people to reap benefits from it.

Speaking on the occasion, Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer said that the project will stimulate new economic activity in a sustained manner thus maximising benefits for conservation of this natural heritage and local communities as a whole.

LIC collects highest new premium

LIC continues its impressive new business performance despite the highly challenging environment due to the pandemic. In the just concluded financial year 2020-21, the company has achieved its highest ever First Year Premium Income of ₹56,406 crores under Individual Assurance Business with a 10.11 per cent growth over last year. It has also procured an impressive 2.10 crore policies, out of which 46.72 lakh were procured in the month of March alone, with a growth of 298.82 per cent over last year for the corresponding month.

The market share garnered by the company comes to 81.04 per cent in number of policies for the month of March 2021 and 74.58 per cent for the year. For First Year Premium, the market share is 64.74 per cent for March and 66.18 per cent for the whole year.

LIC's Pension and Group Schemes Vertical also created a new record by clocking its highest ever new business premium income of ₹1,27,768 crore over a huge base of ₹1,26,749 crore in the previous year. With the addition of 3,45,469 agents, the corporation now has a strong sales force of 13,53,808 agents. This year, LIC has created 16,564 MDRT qualifiers, the highest ever. Also, the corporation has created 26,997 centurion agents. LIC's B&AC channel has procured 2,46,910 policies and



1862.73 crore premium in 2020-21 with a growth of 0.58 per cent and 23.46 per cent respectively.

LIC has come back strongly into the ULIP arena with its two new products — SIIP and Nivesh Plus — completing more than 90,000 policies and garnering more than ₹800 crore premium in the process.

The corporation has adopted various digital initiatives in its con-

tinuous endeavour to improve the customer experience. Payment of renewal premium, repayment of loan and loan interest can be done online through internet banking, credit or debit cards, UPI, Paytm, PhonePe, Google Pay, Amazon Pay, Mobikwik etc. All payment channels are free of charge for customers. Premium payment can also be done through NACH, direct debit etc. LIC has also pro-

vided online options for applying for loan, address change, NEFT mandate registration, updating details of PAN etc. In addition to physical policy bonds, without any extra cost, e-policies are also being sent to customers who have provided their email ID. Through a mobile application LICdocQ app, the company has introduced a revival facility, which allows revival from satellite offices also.

Tata Power-DDL lab recognised as in-house R&D unit

Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL) has received the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research's (DSIR) accreditation for its Smart Grid Lab. The lab has been accredited as the 'in-house R&D unit'.

It is for the first time that any DISCOM has been awarded with such a recognition in the country. DSIR is a part of the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, and has a mandate to carry out the activities relating to promotion, development, utilisation and transfer of indigenous technology.

The rigorous evaluation process was based on an array of R&D related parameters like new processes/products developed; collaborations and partnerships; R&D related infrastructure of labs; costs of equipment; presence at various forums; patents applied and granted, to highlight a few. The recognition will now allow Tata Power-DDL to benchmark industrial R&D.



The Smart Grid Lab, situated in sector-15 Rohini, provides a testbed to showcase all the information technologies and operational technologies implement-

ed since the inception of the company in the distribution area of Tata Power-DDL. It is primarily divided in two sections: Technology Zone to showcase core tech-

nologies implemented by far and Consumer Experience Zone to demonstrate the benefit of convenience and cost savings.

The lab demonstrates various technologies, products and solutions for power distribution utilities and how these technologies are helping in providing improved connectivity, efficiency and effectively, allowing reliability of a higher magnitude — that is both sustainable and scalable to consumers.

The company will also be able to access grants from DST (Department of Science and Technology) for its R&D related activities post this accreditation.

Speaking about the achievement, Ganesh Srinivasan, CEO, Tata Power-DDL, said, "It is a great distinction for our Smart Grid Lab to be recognised as the 'in-house R&D unit' by Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science & Technology. This commendation reinforces our efforts towards innovation and R&D in the power distribution space to create utilities of the future. We are thankful to DSIR for honoring us."



IT'S IMPORTANT GIVE RESPECT TO THE OPPOSITION. EVERY TEAM HAS BIG HITTERS. I TOLD THEM (TEAMMATES) WE'VE GOOD RUNS ON THE BOARD, BUT WE NEED TO STAY HUMBLE
— MS DHONI



CSK win six-hitting fest

Cummins, Russell's fightback after top-order collapse couldn't help KKR as Faf (95), Deepak (4/29) take Chennai to top of the table with 18 run win

boundarymeter

4s	428
6s	190

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS (220-3)

Rituraj Gaikwad c Cummins b Chakravarthy	64
Faf du Plessis not out	95
Moeen Ali st Karthik b Narine	25
MS Dhoni c Morgan b Russell	17
Ravindra Jadeja not out	6
Extras (b 0, lb 0, w 10, nb 3, p 0)	13
Total (3 wks, 20 Overs)	220

Bowling

Varun Chakravarthy	4-0-27-1
Pat Cummins	4-0-58-0
Sunil Narine	4-0-34-1
Prasidh Krishna	4-0-49-0
Andre Russell	2-0-27-1
Karnesh Nagarkoti	2-0-25-0

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS (202-10)

Nitish Rana c Dhoni b D Chahar	9
Shubman Gill c Ngidi b D Chahar	0
Rahul Tripathi c Dhoni b Ngidi	8
Eoin Morgan c Dhoni b D Chahar	7
Sunil Narine c Jadeja b D Chahar	4
Dinesh Karthik lbw b Ngidi	40
Andre Russell b S Curran	54
Pat Cummins not out	66
Karnesh Nagarkoti c du Plessis b Ngidi	0
Varun Chakravarthy run out (D Chahar/S Curran)	0
Prasidh Krishna run out (D Chahar/Thakur)	6
Extras (b 4, lb 2, w 7, nb 1, p 0)	14
Total (10 wks, 19.1 Overs)	202

Bowling

Deepak Chahar	4-0-29-4
Sam Curran	4-0-58-1
Lungi Ngidi	4-0-28-3
Ravindra Jadeja	4-0-33-0
Sharul Thakur	3.1-0-48-0



Chennai Super Kings pacer Deepak Chahar shakes hands with Kolkata Knight Riders batter Pat Cummins after CSK's win on Wednesday. **IPL20.com**

improbable win for KKR but in the end they were all out for 202 in 19.1 overs. Needing 190 runs from 15 overs, Russell first revived KKR's chase with a blistering 54 (3x4, 6x6) before being cleaned up by Sam Curran. But it was not over for KKR as yet. Batting at No 8, KKR pace spearhead Cummins displayed some sensational powerhitting in his 34-ball 66 not out (4x4, 6x6) but they simply did not have enough batting left to keep the show going. Cummins smashed Curran for 30 runs with four sixes and one boundary in the 16th over to keep the run-chase alive, even as they kept losing wickets. It was down to 20 runs with one wicket in hand in the last over. But Prasidh Krishna was run out in the first over of the final over. The win took CSK to the top of the table with six points from four matches, while KKR slipped to sixth. Chahar, who had wrecked

havoc against Punjab Kings the other day, was at his ominous best once again as he swung the match in CSK's favour to leave KKR tottering at 31 for 5 inside the powerplay. Chahar, who grabbed 4/13 against Punjab Kings, made the ball talk with his swing and variation and snapped the talented Shubman Gill for a golden duck and then had the in-form Nitish Rana (9) in the second over. But Chahar's biggest wicket came in the next over in the form of skipper Eoin Morgan (7) when the left-hander nicked an outswinger with M S Dhoni completing a safe catch to become the first wicketkeeper to complete 150 dismissals in IPL. Earlier, looking for a change of fortunes in their first match at the Wankhede, KKR opted to bowl on flat track but du Plessis blazed his way to a masterclass 95 not out after his opening partner Rituraj Gaikwad's impressive 64 as CSK posted 220 for 3.



Sun rises in Chennai

Khaleel, Bairstow guide Orange Army to maiden win of 2021 season



PBKS skipper KL Rahul congratulates Kane Williamson after Sunrisers win. **@IPL**

SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB KINGS (120-10)

KL Rahul c Jadhav b Bhuvneshwar	4
Mayank Agarwal c Rashid b Khaleel	22
Chris Gayle lbw b Rashid	15
Nicholas Pooran run out (Warner)	0
Deepak Hooda lbw b Abhishek	13
Moises Henriques st Bairstow b Abhishek	14
Shahrukh Khan c Abhishek b Khaleel	22
Fabian Allen c Warner b Khaleel	6
Murugan Ashwin c Bairstow b Kaul	9
Mohammed Shami run out (V Shankar/Bairstow)	3
Arshdeep Singh not out	1
Extras (b 9, lb 0, w 1, nb 1, p 0)	11
Total (10 wks, 19.4 Overs)	120

Bowling

Abhishek Sharma	4-0-24-2
Bhuvneshwar Kumar	3-0-16-1
Khaleel Ahmed	4-0-21-3
S Kaul	3-4-0-27-1
Vijay Shankar	1-0-6-0
Rashid Khan	4-0-17-1

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD (121-1)

David Warner c Mayank b Allen	37
Jonny Bairstow not out	63
Kane Williamson not out	16
Extras (b 0, lb 1, w 4, nb 0, p 0)	5
Total (1 wks, 18.4 Overs)	121

Bowling

Mohammed Shami	2-0-16-0
Fabian Allen	4-0-22-1
Arshdeep Singh	3-4-0-31-0
Moises Henriques	1-0-7-0
Murugan Ashwin	4-0-22-0
Deepak Hooda	4-0-22-0

PTI ■ CHENNAI

pacers Jonny Bairstow (63) and David Warner (37) pummelled Punjab into submission, adding 73 runs off 60 balls to set the foundation. Bairstow and Kane Williamson (16) then knocked off the remaining runs as SRH romped home with 8 balls to spare. Bairstow and Warner smashed five boundaries and two sixes during their 50-run stand in the powerplay, while Punjab had managed nine fours and two maximums in their entire innings. After Warner's exit, Bairstow found an able ally in Williamson, who was playing his first match of the season, as they added an unbeaten 48 runs to help SRH log their first win of the season. Earlier, Shahrukh Khan (22) and Mayank Agarwal (22) were the top scorers for Punjab Kings, who came into

the match after two losses. In an innings when clearing the boundary seemed to be a tall task, Khan managed two sixes, while Agarwal, who was dropped on 0 in the very first over by Rashid, hit two fours.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Faf du Plessis' magnificent 95 not out and Deepak Chahar's impressive four-wicket haul outshone dazzling half centuries from Andre Russell and Pat Cummins as Chennai Super Kings beat

Kolkata Knight Riders by 18 runs in their IPL match at Wankhede Stadium on Wednesday. Put in to bat, CSK posted a big total of 220 for 3, riding on du Plessis' 60-ball unbeaten 95 and Rituraj Gaikwad's 64. Chasing a stiff target, KKR

found themselves in deep trouble as they slumped to 31 for 5 inside five overs after a top-order collapse with Chahar wrecking havoc with figures of 4 for 29 from his four overs. Russell (54 off 22 balls) and Cummins (66 not out off 34 balls) raised hopes of an

BATTLE ROYAL

RCB hope to maintain winning run against crisis-hit Rajasthan

KEY PLAYERS

GLENN MAXWELL
Man in form Maxi has shown what he can do when is on song and he will look to carry on that good run

JOS BUTTLER
In absence of Archer and Stokes, Buttler's role as a senior pro is more important now than it was before

VENUE: WANKHEDE STADIUM, MUMBAI

HEAD TO HEAD

Matches	23
Royal Challengers Bangalore	10
Rajasthan Royals	10
No result	03

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Royal Challengers Bangalore defeated Rajasthan Royals by 8 wickets in Abu Dhabi
- Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Rajasthan Royals by 7 wickets in Dubai

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Off to the best possible start with three wins on the trot, a confident Royal Challengers Bangalore will hope to keep the juggernaut rolling when they take on Rajasthan Royals at Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. Both sides have endured contrasting campaigns so far. While RCB head in to the game after three morale-boosting victories, Royals have managed to win only one of their three fixtures and Sanju Samson & his men will be eyeing a second win.

51
Virat Kohli who scored 5949 runs at an average of 37.89 in 187 innings of 195 matches, needs 51 runs to become the first batsman to complete 6000 runs in the history of IPL

1
Sanju Samson who made 119 off 63 balls with 12 fours and seven sixes against Punjab Kings in Mumbai is the only centurion in this IPL

The Royals have struggled to perform as a cohesive batting unit. While Samson led the team to within touching distance of victory with his sensational century against Punjab Kings, it was the South African duo of David Miller and Chris Morris that pulled off a win against the Delhi Capitals. Against CSK, Jos Buttler looked dangerous but the other batsmen failed to provide any valuable contributions. For the former champions to do well, the side must click as a batting unit with Samson and the Englishman playing key roles. The Royals bowling unit has been underwhelming to say the least, apart from the game against Delhi Capitals, the bowlers have leaked runs. In the absence of Jofra Archer, more will be expected out of the likes of Chris Morris and Bangladesh speedster Mustafizur Rahman. For RCB, Ab de Villiers and new-recruit Glenn Maxwell have been the standout players with the willow. While the South African continues to deliver season after season, the Australian all-rounder is proving to be a valuable addition to the middle order.



Kohli has got decent starts in a couple of games but the talismanic skipper will be itching to play a big innings. Young Devdutt Padikkal, who impressed everyone last season, has also looked rusty and is yet to perform to his full potential. The RCB bowling department has been impressive with pacers Harshal Patel and Mohammed Siraj boasting economy rate.

shortpasses

PAK WIN 1ST T20
HARARE: Pakistan held on to win the first T20 against Zimbabwe by managing to defend a modest total of 149-7. Zimbabwe only got 138-7 in reply after Usman Qadir's 3-29 thwarted the home team.

8 INDIAN BOXERS IN FINAL
NEW DELHI: Eight Indian boxers, including seven women, stormed into the finals of the youth world championships in Kielce. Apart from the eight finalists, three others settled for Bronze medals.

INDIA-GBR MATCHES POSTPONED
LAUSANNE: The FIH Hockey Pro League matches between India and Great Britain, scheduled for May 8-9 in London, were postponed following the UK Government's decision to add India to the travel 'red list'.

SCHALKE RELEGATED
BERLIN: Bottom side Schalke 04 was relegated after 30 consecutive years in the Bundesliga and almost exactly ten years since reaching the Champions League's semi-finals. A 1-0 loss at Arminia Bielefeld confirmed a fourth relegation in Schalke's history.

ENG REMOVE NAT'L SELECTOR
LONDON: Chris Silverwood, head coach of the England cricket men's team, is to have overall responsibility for squad selection with national selector Ed Smith's role abolished, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced on Tuesday night.

Atletico, Italian, PL clubs withdraw from Super League

AFP ■ MADRID

Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and AC Milan became the latest clubs to pull out of the European Super League on Wednesday, with the project on the brink of collapse. Only Real Madrid and Barcelona officially remain, after England's 'Big Six' teams were the first to withdraw from the hugely controversial competition. "The Atletico Madrid Board of Directors, meeting this Wednesday morning, has decided to formally communicate to the Super League and the rest of the founding clubs its decision not to finally formalize its adherence to the project," the Spanish side said in a statement. "Atletico Madrid made the decision last Monday to join this project in response to circumstances that no longer exist today. "For the club, harmony is essential between all the groups that make up the rojiblanco family, especially our fans. Atletico are one of three La Liga outfits involved in the breakaway tournament, with Real Madrid and their president Florentino Perez at the heart of the project. But the new league looks dead in the water after Manchester City, Chelsea,

Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Tottenham as well as Inter all pulled out. Italy's AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus on Wednesday followed all six English clubs as well as Atletico Madrid in giving up on the European Super League project while continuing to push for a change in world football. Italian champions Juventus, whose president Andrea Agnelli was one of the driving forces behind the project, said the withdrawal of most of the 12 founding teams made the project unworkable. "Juventus" believes that at present there are limited chances that the project be completed in the form originally conceived," the Turin club said. They added that they "convinced of the soundness of the project's sport, commercial and legal premises (and) remains committed to pursuing the creation of long-term value for the Company and the entire football industry." Like Juventus, AC Milan did not formally withdraw but said they were bowing to a backlash from fans around the world. While Chinese-owned Inter Milan confirmed they were "no longer part of the Super League project".

Bayern on brink of 9th straight title

Munich: Bayern Munich can be crowned Bundesliga champions this weekend after taking a 10 point lead at the top of the table with a 2-0 win at home to Bayer Leverkusen on Tuesday night. Bayern seized control at the Allianz Arena with early goals by Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Joshua Kimmich after second-placed RB Leipzig had earlier suffered a shock defeat at relegation-threatened Cologne. With just four games to go, club world champions Bayern will be guaranteed a ninth German league title in a row with a win at Mainz on Saturday. "I told the team before the game, that we could take a huge step towards the title, which we have done. We want to now also win in Mainz," said Bayern coach Hansi Flick. AFP



OTHER SPORT