

OPINION 6
LIVES, LIVELIHOOD
STILL FAR FROM SAFE

WORLD 8
AT MOMENT OF PERIL, BIDEN OPENS
GLOBAL SUMMIT ON CLIMATE

SPORT 12
SUPER LEAGUE IS
ON STANDBY: PEREZ

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**STAYING VEGAN
IS MY CHOICE:
MANUSHI
10 VIVACITY**

PM orders steady, ample supply of oxygen to States

Modi cancels poll campaign in Bengal to hold meetings on Covid, O₂ manufacturing today

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a high-level official meeting and ordered the adequate supply of oxygen to all States. Modi cancelled his poll rallies in Bengal to remain here to attend three urgent meetings on Friday in view of an alarming Covid-19 situation in the country, aggravated by oxygen and medicine crunch across the country.

On Friday, the PM will undertake three-key meetings — a high-level Covid review meeting, a meeting with Chief Ministers of worst-affected States, and one with oxygen manufacturers.

For his part, Home Minister Amit Shah too cut short his Bengal poll campaign, cancelling two of his three meetings to return to Delhi for a Covid meeting.

The PM, during the day, was briefed on how oxygen supply to States is "steadily increasing", according to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

"Against the present demand from 20 States of 6,785 MT/day of Liquid Medical Oxygen, Government of India has from April 21 allocated 6,822 MT/day to these States," said a PMO statement.

With a flurry of meetings lined up, Modi cancelled his four poll rallies in Bengal scheduled for April 23.

In a tweet, Modi said he will not be going to poll-bound West Bengal on Friday due to high-level meetings to review



the prevailing Covid-19 situation. "Tomorrow, will be chairing high-level meetings to review the prevailing Covid-19 situation. Due to that, I would not be going to West Bengal," he said.

Instead, he is to address people of Bengal virtually on Friday evening.

India is witnessing an unprecedented surge in Covid-19 cases which is putting enormous pressure on the country's already burdened health-care infrastructure.

Oxygen demand, according to officials, has risen by 55 to 60 per cent in the outbreak of the second wave of coronavirus pandemic.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister spoke about the need to work rapidly on multiple aspects which included "increasing production of oxygen, increasing the speed of distribution & using innovative ways to provide oxygen support to health facilities".

Senior officials informed

the Prime Minister that an elaborate exercise was being conducted in coordination with the States to identify their demand for oxygen and ensure adequate supply accordingly.

He was briefed on how oxygen supply to States is steadily increasing, according to the PMO.

Officials said in the last few days, availability of Liquid Medical Oxygen has been increased by about 3,300 MT/day with contributions from private and public steel plants, industries, oxygen manufacturers as well as through prohibition of supply of oxygen for non-essential industries.

Officers informed the Prime Minister that they are working together with the States to operationalise the sanctioned PSA oxygen plants as soon as possible.

Modi directed the officials to ensure that oxygen supply to various States happen in a smooth, unhindered manner.

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Onus on States for nonstop production, transport of O₂

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Invoking Disaster Management Act, the Centre on Thursday directed States to ensure uninterrupted production and supply of medical oxygen and its transport along inter-State borders and said the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of the district concerned will be held responsible if there is any violation of its order.

The directive under the stringent Disaster Management Act 2005 was issued by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla in the wake of reports that some States blocked supply of medical oxygen to other States amid sudden spike in Covid pandemic and demand for it.

Bhalla said the availability

Centre invokes Disaster Management Act; DM, SP will be held responsible



of adequate and uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen is an important pre-requisite for managing moderate and severe cases of Covid-19 and with the increasing cases, the medical

oxygen supply will need to keep pace with the requirements of the States and Union Territories.

"Therefore, to ensure the uninterrupted supply of med-

ical oxygen across the country for the management of Covid-19 patients, in the exercise of powers conferred under the section of the DM Act, the undersigned, in the capacity as chairperson, National Executive Committee, hereby directs the State and Union Territory Governments and State and Union Territory authorities to ensure the following measures within their areas of jurisdiction," the Union Home Secretary said.

The order said there should be no restriction on the movement of medical oxygen between the States and transport authorities shall be instructed to accordingly allow free inter-State movement of oxygen-carrying vehicles.

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Come up with national plan on Covid management: SC to Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of the "grim" situation created by the massive surge in Covid cases and deaths, the Supreme Court on Thursday said it expects the Centre to come out with a "national plan" to deal with essential drugs.

Observing that oxygen is an "essential part" of treatment, the SC said it seems that a certain amount of "panic" has

been generated due to which people have approached several high courts seeking reliefs related to the prevailing situation.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde, which took suo motu cognisance on the issue of distribution of essential supplies and services, said prima facie it is of the view that the distribution must be done in an "even handed manner" according to the advice of health authorities.

"In these circumstances,

we direct that notices be issued to the Union Government, the State Governments /Union Territories and the parties, who appeared to have approached the High Courts to show cause why uniform orders be not passed by this court in relation to: a) supply of oxygen; b) supply of essential drugs; c) method and manner of vaccination and d) declaration of lockdown," said the Bench.

Continued on Page 2

Centre advises its staff to get themselves vaccinated

New Delhi: The Centre has asked all its employees to get themselves vaccinated so as to effectively contain the spread of Covid-19, a Personnel Ministry order issued on Thursday said.

UAE bans travel from India for 10 days

Dubai: The UAE has banned travel from India for 10 days from Sunday due to the worsening Covid-19 situation in the country. The travel ban will come into effect from 11.59 pm on Saturday, April 24, and is subject to review after 10 days, the Gulf News reported.

2,255 DEATHS, 3.32 L CASES IN 24 HOURS

New Delhi: India on Thursday again saw a rise in number of cases and deaths. In past 24 hours, India registered 2,255 Covid deaths — biggest one-day spike, and over 3,32,175 new cases. The total number of cases now stands at more than 1.62 crore. Active cases have gone above 24 lakh. Whereas, total deaths have reached 1,86,927.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| TOTAL CASES: | 1,62,57,164 (+3,32,175) |
| DEATHS: | 1,86,927 (+2,255) |
| RECOVERED: | 1,36,41,572 (+1,92,146) |
| ACTIVE: | 24,21,970 |
| MAHARASHTRA: | 40,94,840 |
| KERALA: | 13,22,055 |
| KARNATAKA: | 12,47,997 |
| TAMIL NADU: | 10,37,711 |
| DELHI: | 9,56,348 (+26,169) |

HP to provide free vaccines

Shimla: The Himachal Pradesh Government decided to bear the expenses of Covid-19 vaccine for those aged between 18 and 44 years as the vaccination is free for people of 45 years and above.

Vax registration for 18+ from April 28

CoWin portal to book appointments to be ready by April 24: Health Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the vaccination against Covid-19 for those above 18 years will begin across the country from May 1, the registration to book appointments will begin from April 28. The applicants will have to submit documents as required before and there will be no walk-in registration for this age group of people, the Union Health Ministry clarified.

However, the portal for this group of beneficiaries will be made ready by April 24.

"It is clarified that #CoWin portal will be made ready for 18+ beneficiaries by 24th April. Registrations for 18+ citizens to book appointments (from 1st May) will begin on 28th April," the Union Health Ministry said in a tweet.

As per the third phase vaccination policy, from May 1, the present system of private

Covid-19 vaccination centres receiving doses from the Government and charging up to ₹250 per dose will cease to exist and private hospitals will procure shots directly from vaccine manufacturers.

However, according to the Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy, Covid-19 vaccination will continue to be free for eligible population groups comprising healthcare workers, frontline workers and people above 45 years of age in Government vaccination centres, which receive doses from the Government.

Vaccine manufacturers would make an advance declaration of the price for 50 per cent supply that would be available to State Governments in the open market before May 1.

Based on this price, States, private hospitals, industrial establishments may procure



vaccine doses from manufacturers. Private hospitals would have to procure their supplies of Covid-19 vaccine exclusively from the 50 per cent supply earmarked for other than the Government channel. In other words, vaccines will not be sold in pharmacies or chemist shops in the open market.

The price charged for vaccination by private hospitals would be monitored, the Ministry said adding that the present dispensation where private Covid vaccination centres receive doses from the Government and can charge up to ₹250 per dose will cease to exist.

All vaccination (through Government of India vaccination centres and other than the Government of India channel) will be part of the National Vaccination Programme, will follow all existing guidelines, will be captured on the CoWIN platform along with the stocks and price per vaccination applicable in all vaccination centres, will comply with Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) management and reporting, digital vaccination certificate and all other prescribed norms.

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Yechury's son succumbs to Covid-19 after 2-week battle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury's son Ashish died of Covid-19 at a Gurugram hospital on Thursday morning after a two-week battle with the pandemic. The death of the journalist who would have celebrated his 35th birthday on June 9 was announced by Yechury.

"It is with great sadness that I have to inform that I lost my elder son Ashish Yechury to Covid-19 this morning. I want to thank all those who gave us hope and who treated him — doctors, nurses, frontline health workers, sanitation workers and innumerable others who stood by us," Yechury wrote on twitter.

Continued on Page 2

RT-PCR test in Delhi-NCR suffers as lab staff fall sick

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the health-care facilities are under severe strain in Delhi and its adjoining areas owing to the burgeoning number of Covid-19 cases, people with symptoms of the virus are struggling to get RT-PCR test done. Laboratories designated for the tests are unable to collect samples from homes due to the shortage of staff.

Many laboratories in Delhi and NCR are struggling to cope with the skelton staff. An estimated 50 per cent of the staff working with different labs in the national Capital have themselves tested positive, forcing the management to deploy backend staff to meet the demand at collection centre. But, many of these labs are unable to keep pace with the testing demands.

Managers at various labs

said they have been receiving desperate calls from people to collect samples, but unfortunately it has become impossible to even respond to all the calls and collect samples from home in due to staff crunch.

Moreover, test results are getting delayed, much beyond 2 days. Holy Family Hospital in South Delhi has informed the sample givers that they will get reports after three days. Some hospitals have put a cap on number of patients to be tested everyday.

Dr Gauri Agarwal, founder-director of Genestrings Diagnostic Centre, Malviya Nagar, said the lab receives a large number of calls but we are able to collect less than 200 samples from home daily.

"Most of the staff, including data entry operators, tech-



nicians, collection agents and even doctors have tested positive. We are overburdened and my team has not slept for five days. We are trying everything to meet demand," she said. Abhishek Sharma, a 32-year-old student in Laxmi Nagar, said he developed symptoms of Covid-19 three days back and called for sample collection but none turned up.

Continued on Page 2

Calcutta HC raps EC for lapses on Covid norms during polls

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday expressed dissatisfaction with the Election Commission over enforcement of Covid-19 health safety norms during the ongoing Bengal Assembly poll process, including campaigning.

Hearing three PILs seeking enforcement of Covid protocol during the elections, a division bench presided by Chief Justice TBN Radhakrishnan said issuance of circulars and holding meetings on Covid safety were not enough and sought an affidavit by Friday on steps taken to enforce the norms.

The PILs expressed concern that people participating in the ongoing election campaigns were not adhering to Covid norms and expressed apprehension that this may result in a serious spike in Covid-19 cases in West Bengal,

which is currently facing up to a second wave of the pandemic.

Continued on Page 2

EC bans roadshows, rallies, restricts public meets to max 500 people

New Delhi: Expressing anguish that Covid-related safety protocols were being flouted in West Bengal campaigning, the Election Commission on Thursday placed an immediate ban on road shows, 'pad yatras' and vehicle rallies in the State and said public meetings having more than 500 people would not be allowed. Using its constitutional powers, the commission issued an order placing fresh restrictions on physical campaigning in the state where two more phases of elections are due on April 26 and 29.

200 Sikh pilgrims test Covid +ve after returning from Pak

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

As many as 200 Sikh pilgrims among 815 who went to Pakistan to celebrate Baisakhi festival tested positive for the novel coronavirus on their return to Punjab on Thursday. All the Sikh devotees had to undergo mandatory Covid-19 test at the Integrated Check Post (ICP), Attari, upon their return from Pakistan after their 10-day-long pilgrimage.

At the time of filing the report, 200 have been tested positive for the contagion, while the results of other devotees are awaited.

Before going to Pakistan, all 815 pilgrims were tested for Covid and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) had conducted a special two-day camp on its premises as it was mandatory to have a Covid negative report procured 72 hours before departure to another country.



They were granted a 10-day visa by the Pakistan High Commission and were allowed to visit various Sikh shrines besides attending the main event held at Gurdwara Panja Sahib at Hasan Abdal on April 14.

They also visited Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Kartarpur, on April 19 and took out a nagar kirtan from Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib in Narowal district in Pakistan to the Zero Line sharing the border of Dera Baba Nanak on the Indian Side. The State Health Department had stationed as many as four teams for conducting RAT tests on all devo-

385 fliers escape Covid test at Silchar Airport

PTI ■ SILCHAR

As many as 385 passengers, who landed at the Silchar Airport on Wednesday, created disorder and fled the facility to escape mandatory Covid-19 testing, officials said on Thursday, and asserted criminal action will be initiated against them.

Cachar District Additional Deputy Commissioner (Health) Sumit Sattawan said a total of 690 passengers arrived at the airport from various parts of the country aboard six aircraft.

He said they were supposed to undergo swab tests at the airport and the nearby Mahatma Gandhi Model Hospital in Tikal.

Sattawan said hundreds of passengers created chaos at both places, mainly over payment of ₹500 for the tests, the government-fixed rate. The Assam Government has made it mandatory for all air passengers arriving in the

state to undergo a free Rapid Antigen Test and an RT-PCR test for ₹500 even if the report of the RAT comes negative.

Asserting that the passengers had violated the rules, the officer said, "We have their database and will track them. We will initiate criminal action under Section 188 of the IPC (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and other relevant provisions."

The ADC later filed a complaint with the Cachar Superintendent of Police against the violators, seeking initiation of proceedings for flouting government orders and putting the society at risk during the pandemic.

"A total of 385 passengers skipped mandatory testing at Silchar Airport," the Additional Deputy Commissioner said in the complaint, containing the list of the violators with mobile phone numbers received from flight carriers.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

HC DISMISSES WHATSAPP, FB PLEAS AGAINST CCI

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed pleas by social media platforms, Facebook and WhatsApp, challenging India's competition regulator CCI's order directing a probe into WhatsApp's new privacy policy.

CW REPORT FINDS RACISM AGAINST WWI MARTYRS

London: Entrenched prejudices, preconceptions and pervasive racism of contemporary imperial attitudes meant that nearly 50,000 Indian soldiers who died fighting for the British Empire during the World War I were not commemorated the same way as other martyrs, finds a new review released on Thursday.

VIOLENCE MARS SIXTH PHASE OF BENGAL POLLS

Kolkata: Nearly 80 per cent voter turnout marked the sixth phase of polling on Thursday in West Bengal Assembly election, which was marred by sporadic incidents of violence, firing by State police and an assault on a candidate.

COVID-19 Over 13.5cr jabs administered in India, says Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 30,16,085 vaccine doses were given on Thursday (till 8 pm), the 97th day of the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive.

The beneficiaries included 18,33,828 who were vaccinated for the first dose and 11,82,257 who received the second dose, the ministry said, adding that the final report for the day would be compiled by late night.

The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 with HCWs getting inoculated. The vaccination of FLWs started from February 2.

The next phase of the COVID-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 for those above 60 years of age and people aged 45 and above with specified co-morbid conditions.

The vaccination of all citizens aged above 45 started from April 1.

On Monday, the government decided to expand the vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1.

Illegal immigrants actual outsiders in Bengal, vote bank for Mamata: Shah

PTI ■ HARIAMPUR (WB)

Congress.

Banerjee has repeatedly asserted she won't allow Bengal to be ruled by "outsiders" from Delhi or Gujarat, in a reference to the BJP and the prime minister.

Modi, addressing an election rally in Kanthi in Purba Medinipur district last month, had said Bengal was the land of icons like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose, and no Indian is an outsider here.

Shah also accused Banerjee of having no other agenda apart from hurling abuses at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and him.

"She dedicates 10 minutes of her speech in every election rally to abusing the PM and myself... I am the country's home minister, can't I talk to the people? How am I an outsider?" he said at a public meeting in Harirampur constituency in Dakshin Dinajpur district, which goes to polls in the seventh phase on April 26.

"I was born in this country and will be cremated on this holy land after my demise. But, your vote bank of illegal immigrants are the outsiders on whose support you want to rule Bengal," he added.

Shah claimed "these outsiders" were also the vote banks for the Left and the

Long queues at cremation centres in Agra as bodies pile up

PTI ■ AGRA (UP)

Sanjeev Kumar Gupta, in-charge, Shri Chhetra Bajaja committee said, "The situation is worsening these days. Around 35-40 bodies are brought to the electric crematorium at Tajganj everyday these days. Over 50 bodies reach the main crematorium daily."

"In normal days (pre-COVID times), 10-15 bodies used to be cremated at the electric centres, and 10-20 bodies at non-electric centres. The numbers (of bodies) have gone up since the outbreak of coronavirus," he said.

Gupta said the crematoriums are now issuing tokens to people waiting for conducting the last rites of their relatives.

"To avoid inconvenience to family members, we are issuing tokens to them for conducting the last rites. Due to the heavy load, we have to ask the people to wait for two to four hours as there are only four electric furnaces at the electric crematorium at Tajganj," he said.

A caretaker at a crematorium said it was the first time in his life that he had seen such a rush at the cremation centres.

"I have been working here for about 40 years. This is the first time I have seen such a large number of bodies being brought to the cremation centres," he said.

Chief Medical Officer, Agra, R C Pandey, however, said the rising deaths may also be due to non-COVID reasons like heart failure, chest infections, among others.

The management committees of the crematoriums in the city have started issuing coupons and tokens to people to avoid inconvenience to them.

Tajganj cremation centre near Taj Mahal is one of the main crematoriums of Agra where electric and non-electric centres function. Shri Chhetra Bajaja committee manages and takes care of the premises.

Senior Cong leader AK Walia succumbs to Covid

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Former Delhi Government Minister and senior Congress leader AK Walia died of Covid-19 on Thursday.

Walia, 72 who represented the Laxmi Nagar constituency in the Assembly for four terms, was admitted to the hospital a few days ago after testing positive for Covid-19.

Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar condoned the death of the former MLA, saying he died at the Apollo Hospital in the city.

Dr Walia, who has held important portfolios like health, Public Works Department (PWD), higher education and finance in 15 years of government.

Kumar issued a statement saying that the Congress family has suffered irreparable loss by losing a dedicated, soft-spoken, sociable and hard-working leader.

As Health Minister, he opened 21 new hospitals, including five specialized hospitals, he opened 364 dispensaries keeping primary health in mind, he said.

Delhi Cong VP Jai Kishan expresses grief over AK Walia's demise

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress vice president and former MLA Jai Kishan expressed grief over the demise of former Delhi PWD minister Dr Ashok Kumar Walia who is known as 'flyoverman' during the 15 years Congress regime in Delhi. Jai Kishan who used to say "Daddy" to Walia said that Waliaji has played a major role in development of resettlement colonies in Delhi. "I will miss him. Daddyji will be remembered for centuries as

Vikas Purush", he said. As Health Minister, he opened 21 new hospitals, including 5 specialized hospitals, he opened 364 dispensaries keeping primary health in mind.

"As a PWD minister, he constructed five universities, 6 deemed universities, 22 colleges for general education and 23 colleges for professional education during his tenure. As PWD Minister in Delhi, he did all the work including 65 flyovers, 60 foot over bridges / subways, 6240 km of roads," he said.

Vax registration for 18+ from April 28

From page 1

The Government has listed seven photo identity documents such as Aadhaar Card, Passport, Voter ID, among others, to be used for online registration on the CO-WIN app.

The division of vaccine supply, which would mean 50 per cent to the Government of India and 50 per cent to other than the Government of India channels would be applicable uniformly across for all vaccines manufactured in the country.

However, the fully ready to use imported vaccine would be allowed to be utilised entirely in the Government of India channel, it said.

Maha imposes curbs on travel, movement of people as State logs 568 deaths, 67,000 plus infections

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The MVA Government on Thursday night began to enforce more severe Covid-19 restrictions on the movement of people and vehicles across Maharashtra till May 1, even as the State recorded a record 568 deaths and 67,000 plus infections for the second consecutive day.

Among the stringent restrictions the state government enforced from 8 pm on Thursday till 7 am on May 1 were: essential services providers can only travel by public transport, while the government offices - barring emergency services connected directly to pandemic management - could work only with 15 percent capacity or 5 persons, whichever is higher, and marriages could host only 25 guests with a fine of Rs.50,000 for violations.

In the case of the Central government offices in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and the Mantralaya (State Secretariat) in south Mumbai, the department heads will decide on higher staff attendance after taking permission from the State Disaster Management Authority.

The public transport will be used for government staff, medical personnel or those requiring medical treatment. The passes/tickets/authorization shall be issued on the basis of a government-issued I-card only.

"All state and local government public bus services shall be operated with 50 percent capacity, not standees permitted, while inter-city or inter-district travel by trains and buses would be subject to other conditions," State Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte said.

Onus on...

From page 1

No restrictions shall be imposed on oxygen manufacturers and suppliers to limit the oxygen supplies only to the hospitals of the State and the Union Territory in which they are located. There shall be free movement of oxygen-carrying vehicles into the cities, without any restriction of timings, while

also enabling inter-city supply without any restriction, it said.

No authority shall attach the oxygen-carrying vehicles passing through the district or areas for making supplies specific to any particular district or area, it further said. Supply of oxygen for industrial purposes, except those (nine specified industries) exempted by the Government, is prohibited from April 22, 2021 and till further orders, according to the directive. The order said the

States and Union Territories shall strictly abide by the supply plan of medical oxygen prepared by Empowered Group-I and as revised from time-to-time.

The District Magistrates, Deputy Commissioners and Senior Superintendents of Police, Superintendents of Police, Deputy Commissioners of Police will be personally liable for implementation of the above directions, it said.

385 fliers...

From page 1

Of the 690 passengers, 189 were tested and six found infected with the virus. Many were exempted from testing as they were transit passengers on way to neighbouring states like Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, Sattawan said.

In a statement late on Thursday, Silchar airport director said the incident was not reported inside the airport and "no passenger escaped from security checks or from the designated area at the passenger terminal building".

"However, the matter was related to the screening of the

Come up...

From page 1

The bench also comprised Justices L. Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat.

The top court said it is of the opinion that the Centre should respond, including on report on existence or otherwise and requirement of setting up of a coordinating body that would consider allocation of the above resources in a consultative manner (with the involvement of concerned States and Union Territories).

It said the Centre should respond on considering declaration of essential medicines

and medical equipment, including the above articles as essential commodities in relation to Covid and also on coordination of logistical support for inter-state and intra-state transportation and distribution of the above resources.

"The situation in various parts of the country is grim. There seems to be a sudden surge in the number of Covid patients and mortality. Other than vaccination which is prophylactic in nature, Covid can be treated only by some drugs such as Remdesivir. Oxygen to the patients is also said to be an essential part of the treatment," the Bench said.

It noted that drugs, oxygen and vaccination availability

and distribution are being carried out by the Governments, including the Centre, according to the protocols established by the health authorities.

"Nonetheless, it seems that a certain amount of panic has been generated and people have invoked the jurisdiction of several high courts in the country seeking various reliefs such as Delhi, Bombay, Sikkim, MP, Calcutta, Allahabad and Gujarat," it said. The Bench said the High Courts have passed certain orders which may have the effect of "accelerating and prioritising the services to a certain set of people and slowing down the availability of these resources to certain other groups.

Yechury's...

From page 1

Ashish, who studied at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, worked in several publications, including the Times of India in Delhi, before moving to Pune. Journalists who worked with him remembered him as a mild-mannered and warm professional who was knowledgeable and well read.

Calcutta HC raps EC for lapses...

From page 1

"We are not satisfied with the materials on record to state that the Election Commission of India and its officers on ground in West Bengal have enforced their circulars," it said.

The court said the circulars of the ECI show the route map and the protocol for the political parties, their workers, the people at large and responsible management by the officers including the police and other forces under its command.

"Issuance of circulars and holding of meetings by them-

directed that in view of a resurgence of Covid-19 pandemic, all health-related guidelines on campaigning for state assembly elections be enforced in the strictest possible manner.

The bench had said it is in public interest that the administration ensures that all Covid protocols are strictly adhered to by all concerned, including those engaged in election campaigns. It had also directed that stringent measures be taken against persons who fail, neglect or refuse to obey Covid protocols.

RT-PCR test in...

From page 1

"My roommates ran away after noticing symptoms. I called helpline numbers of labs one after another but some were busy and some refused to come at home. Many of them cited staff shortage and asked to come at center. I did not go anywhere and took precaution. I am doing fine," he said.

Dr Rajan Verma Medical Director Onquest Laboratories Ltd, said, "We have been receiving 2,000 booking calls daily. We realise the sensitive nature of the situation and are doing our best to book the tests for all the calls. Despite being overloaded with test bookings, our team is working tirelessly to ensure that the results are delivered timely (i.e. within 24 hours)."

Dr Verma said home collections request have multiplied in the last one week and due to limited slots available we are shifting requests to the next day.

However, he said the labs are facing a plethora of challenges at this point. "Besides being overburdened and stretched, we have to also deal

with the fact that we can contact Covid-19 anytime while testing patients," he said.

Jitendra Sharma of Dr Lal Path Labs agreed that samples are being collected in less quantity but did not cite any reason for it. Sharma avoided to comment why tests are conducted in less quantity. He did not even commented if the staff is tested every day.

"The system of laboratories is deteriorating day by day and it has become hard to meet with demand. Cases are multiplying everyday and hence the demand for tests is also getting faster. We used to do 500 to 600 tests earlier but now it is reduced to less than 300. We have stopped collecting samples from home also due to shortage of staff. Our 70 per cent staff has tested positive and some of them are in home isolation," said a representative of a private lab situated in Noida.

Similarly, Sneha Bansal, a resident of Modal Town frankly called each and every laboratories to get RT PCR tests done for her father who developed fever and body ache but

PM orders steady...

From page 1

He spoke about the need to fix responsibility with the local administration in cases of obstruction.

Various measures are being undertaken to rapidly increase the availability of cryogenic tankers through conversion of nitrogen and argon tankers, import and airlifting of tankers as well as manufacturing them, said PMO statement. The Prime Minister stressed on the need to ensure faster transportation of oxygen to the states. It was discussed that Railways is being used for rapid and non-stop long distance transport of tankers.

First rake has reached from Mumbai to Vizag to transport 105 MT of LMO. Similarly, empty oxygen tankers are also being air-lifted to Oxygen suppliers to reduce one way journey time in oxygen supply. The Prime Minister said the States should come down heavily on hoarding.

The meeting was attended by Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the PM, Home Secretary, Health Secretary & Officials from Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Road Transport, Pharmaceuticals, NITI Aayog. On Thursday, India recorded over 3 lakh new confirmed cases, the highest single-day tally recorded anywhere in the world since the beginning of the pandemic last year.

The Prime Minister was scheduled to address four rallies in West Bengal on Friday. All preparations were done for the rallies in Murshidabad, Malda, Birbhum and Kolkata South. BJP national president JP Nadda declared earlier this week that the party will hold small rallies in West Bengal with not more than 500 people in light of the second wave of Covid-19 infections.

Though it is not clear

whether the Prime Minister would continue campaigning for the last two poll phases, part sources said in view of public sentiments further physical rallies of him in Bengal are unlikely to happen.

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Notice Inviting E-tender

IRCTC invites Open E-Tenders for Renovation, Operation, and Maintenance & Transfer back of Retiring Rooms at various Railway Stations. Last date for submission of Tender is **12.05.2021 upto 1500 Hrs.**

Open E-Tender No.-(i) 2021/IRCTC/CO/RR-01 (ii) 2021/IRCTC/CO/RR-02. Pre-Bid Meeting :- 27.04.2021 at 15:00 Hrs.

Tender document downloading & participation can be done on website- www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC.

Corrigendum/addendum issued on the above will be published only on www.irctc.com and www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC.

Office Add:- IRCTC Ltd. GGM/P&T, 11th Floor, Statesman House, B-148, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110 001. E-Mail: executive@lounge@irctc.com, Tel.011-23311263-64 Fax:011-23311259

Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Limited
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Enterprise)

E-TENDER NOTICES

GMVN invites Tenders from Reputed Travel/Transport Agencies/Owners for the Hiring of Taxi & Maxi for Yatra Office, GMVN at Rishikesh, Distt. Dehradun for the Period of One Year.

Tender details are available at www.uktenders.gov.in and www.gmvnonline.com. Last date of submission of Bid is 07.05.2021, upto 1400 Hrs. Further updates will be available only on these websites therefore interested parties are advised to visit these websites regularly.

Managing Director

GOVT. OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
NORTH EASTERN RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KEONJHAR

O-86

Identification No. PMGSY Online NCB No.303

No. 1774 // Date: 19-04-2021

- Name of the work :- Construction of Road & Bridge works under PMGSY Programme.
- Total No. of Packages :- 06 Nos. individual works.
- Estimated Cost of individual packages :- Varies from Rs.149.51 lakh to Rs.904.37 lakh.
- Period of completion :- 12 calendar months for works more than Rs.5.00 Cr., 11 calendar months for works below Rs.5.00 Cr. upto Rs.3.00 Cr. and 9 calendar months for works below Rs.3.00 Cr. as specified in DTEN.
- Other details :-

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | No. of Works | Availability of tender On-line for bidding | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------|--|---------------------------|
| | | | From | To |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Superintending Engineer, North Eastern Rural Works Circle, Keonjhar | PMGSY Online NCB No. 303 | 06 Nos. | 26/04/2021 at 11.00 A.M. | 10/05/2021 upto 5.00 P.M. |

Further details can be seen from the website: www.pmsgsytenders.gov.in

OIPR-25048/11/0005/2122

Superintending Engineer, N.E.R.W. Circle, Keonjhar.

Making efforts to airlift oxygen from Odisha: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With several hospitals reporting shortage of oxygen in the national Capital due to rising cases of Covid-19, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday that the Delhi Government is making efforts to airlift its enhanced quota of oxygen supply from Odisha.

He also called Haryana Chief Minister and sought support to ensure smooth passage for trucks carrying oxygen. "I spoke to Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana Sh Manohar Lal Khattar ji. Sought his support in facilitating transport of oxygen trucks from Haryana to Delhi. He has assured full support," he tweeted.

Chief Minister Kejriwal said a major chunk of the freshly allotted quota of oxygen from Odisha, which is hundreds of kilometres away, and the Delhi Government is planning to airlift it to save time at this critical juncture in the fight against coronavirus. "Recd a call from Sh Naveen Patnaik ji. He has

assured complete support to Delhi in facilitating lifting of Delhi's quota of oxygen from Orissa. He has put a spl officer on the job. Thank u sooo much Sir. Delhi is indeed grateful," Kejriwal tweeted.

Central government for it. But, he said, more supplies are needed as according to estimates Delhi needs 700 MT of oxygen daily. Delhi received its quota of oxygen as fixed by the Centre from other states, he said, but added; some states stopped trucks headed to the national capital. The chief minister thanked

the Centre and the High Court for their efforts towards raising Delhi's oxygen quota for treating Covid-19 patients, and said the supplies have started reaching the national capital. "Our entire supply of oxygen comes from companies based in other states. The problem that has arisen here is that the states in which these com-

panies are based are not allowing oxygen cylinders to come to Delhi. They say they wish to use the oxygen in their own states. Trucks supplying oxygen are being stopped. We are thankful to the Central government and the Delhi High Court who have aided us in this situation. Trucks have slowly started reaching Delhi," he added.

On the increased oxygen supply for Delhi, Kejriwal said, The newly increased quota of oxygen is going to be supplied primarily from Odisha. "This consentment will take some time to reach New Delhi. We are trying our best to airlift oxygen from Odisha to cut down on the time, said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Join hands in fight against Covid-19, CM urges people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said that people need to come together and unite as human beings to ensure the survival of the people in this hour of corona crisis.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said that people need to come together and unite as human beings to ensure the survival of the people in this hour of corona crisis.

The Chief Minister said that he, along with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Health Minister Satyendar Jain, is constantly in touch with officials trying to ensure the entire process moves smoothly and is working 24x7 to ensure that the resources are made available to the people.

er. We need to unite as Indians, as human beings. We don't want to see news of states stopping trucks coming to Delhi, going to MP etc. We want to see news that shows us how Delhi helped another state overcome their crisis, how Uttar Pradesh helped in doing so. We want to see news of togetherness and unity. This is the only way India can overcome this crisis. The country cannot afford to get divided into states at this point. It is my humble appeal to citizens and state governments of the country, please come together and work together to overcome this pandemic increase," he said.

Kejriwal said that the 6-day lockdown is not a period of rest but a period of activity, which the Delhi government will utilize to overcome the shortage of oxygen, beds, etc in Delhi and strengthen the health infrastructure.

"We have surplus medicines, oxygen, and other supplies. When corona subsides in Delhi and doctors are required in other states, we will send them to other states. Corona does not recognize borders. We will show the world how, despite having the largest number of coronavirus cases in the world, we were able to defeat the virus by coming together," he added.

Addressing the media he said, "With the rise in coronavirus cases in the country, demands for oxygen cylinders, medicines, vaccination etc has increased. "We are also facing an acute shortage of oxygen cylinders. The Delhi government has spent a number of sleepless nights trying to arrange oxygen in hospitals and other Covid care centers to try and ensure that no patient suffers because of its absence." "We need to come togeth-

er. We need to unite as Indians, as human beings. We don't want to see news of states stopping trucks coming to Delhi, going to MP etc. We want to see news that shows us how Delhi helped another state overcome their crisis, how Uttar Pradesh helped in doing so. We want to see news of togetherness and unity. This is the only way India can overcome this crisis. The country cannot afford to get divided into states at this point. It is my humble appeal to citizens and state governments of the country, please come together and work together to overcome this pandemic increase," he said.

UP, Haryana Govts stopping oxygen supply to city: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged that despite the Centre increasing the oxygen quota of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh Governments are stopping the supply of oxygen to the city hospitals.

Delhi only received 177 metric ton of oxygen supply instead of its quota of 378 metric ton till Wednesday, Sisodia said on Thursday, while making an appeal to the Central Government to intervene and stop UP and Haryana Government from "hoarding" and "monopolizing" oxygen supply designated for Delhi.

"Several hospitals in Delhi now see a dearth of oxygen supply. There is no oxygen left anymore. I have received many messages from hospitals such as Saroj Hospital, Rathi Hospital, UK Hospital, Jeevan Hospital etc have informed they do not have oxygen supply left anymore. Delhi Government has been arranging cylinders for these and many other hospitals. Internal arrangements are makeshift arrangements which are not long-term solutions. Government and Private Hospitals in Delhi have very limited supply of oxygen now,"

he added. The Deputy Chief Minister further said, "The question is that if the Central Government increased the quota of oxygen in Delhi and many other States then why are some States like Haryana and UP are behaving as if we are all fighting among each other?"

Even if we do not think about the oxygen quota for a second, Delhi Government's previous oxygen quota was 378 metric ton, as decided by the Central Government. But until yesterday, only 177 metric ton of oxygen could be delivered to Delhi because of the gross misconduct of Haryana and UP Government officials in stopping oxygen delivery to Delhi," he said.

said, adding that police and officials of UP and Haryana Government are stopping trucks, supposed to take oxygen to Delhi, from loading oxygen. "Delhi Government officials have tried speaking to officials from UP and Haryana Government but the situation on ground remains to be the same. Our tankers are standing outside and only tankers from Haryana Government are being allowed to enter oxygen plant in Haryana," he said.

The Minister appealed to the Central Government to stop Jungle Raj of Haryana and UP Governments and ensure a smooth supply of oxygen to Delhi. "I request the Center to ensure its delivery even if the paramilitary force has to be deployed," he said.

Sisodia said, "There is a fight for oxygen supply and this is because, even after increasing the oxygen quote by Central Government, there are some states that are stopping oxygen supply to reach hospitals in Delhi.

Government and Private Hospitals in Delhi have very limited supply of oxygen now," he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister further said, "The question is that if the Central Government increased the quota of oxygen in Delhi and many other States then why are some States like Haryana and UP are behaving as if we are all fighting among each other?"

The reason why there is limited supply of oxygen even today is because Haryana and UP Government have created a Jungle Raj to stop oxygen supply from reaching Delhi, he

he added. The Deputy Chief Minister further said, "The question is that if the Central Government increased the quota of oxygen in Delhi and many other States then why are some States like Haryana and UP are behaving as if we are all fighting among each other?"



A man carrying an oxygen cylinder, filled at a charging station at Mayapuri, for his relative sick with Covid-19 on Thursday
Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

No ICU, ventilator beds available in G'gram, 22 oxygen beds left

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

With the surge in cases, there has been an acute shortage of beds for Covid patients in Gurugram.

Officials, however, have assured that they are making every effort to increase the number of beds in Gurugram district.

bulletin issued by the district health department, the district now has 18,120 active Covid cases, of which 17,068 are in home isolation.

As per the district administration 'covidggn' portal, till 7.33 pm on Thursday, there were no ICU beds and ventilator beds available while only 22 oxygen beds were available in the district.

According to the administration's covidggn.com portal 22 oxygen beds are available at ESI hospital located in Sector-9 Gurugram.

The district's COVID toll has reached 401 including ten deaths on Thursday, the district highest one-day tall so far.

The City's top hospitals, both private and government, have got no ICU, ventilator beds to admit new patients.

Gurugram has recorded its highest-ever single-day spike in Covid cases, with 3,553 people testing positive on Thursday. The number of active cases of the infection has now crossed 18,000.

Officials on Monday, however, said arrangements are being made to increase the bed capacity of the district, and also offered reassurance that both oxygen and Remdesivir are available in sufficient quantities.

Police arrange cylinders for people in need

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the severe shortage of oxygen supply in the national capital, the Delhi Police has come to the rescue of several hospitals and arranged oxygen for these facilities where Covid patients are undergoing treatment. Several hospitals in Delhi were running short on oxygen cylinders and had only an hour back up.

"Police teams were formed and assigned different tasks to each of them. After enquiring from the hospital and its nodal officer, it was found that one tanker was supposed to come to the hospital from Panipat and the other from Modi Nagar. However, the authorities were unable to get any update on their location," said the DCP.

and saved the lives of seven patients who were undergoing treatment at the facility. "On Wednesday night, we were informed by the hospital that there was shortage of oxygen and that it will last only two hours. Our team took empty cylinders from the hospital and rushed to the oxygen filling station in Bawana, a senior police official said.

Kanjhawala, 24 from Sri Action Balaji hospital and 20 from Mayapuri," a senior police official said.

On Wednesday night, SHO Dwarka (south) Inspector Balbir Singh with his team rushed to Faridabad along with Manipal Hospital staff to collect an oxygen tanker after the hospital authorities informed that oxygen cylinders required for patients may not last much.

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"The police somehow managed to contact the drivers of the tankers through the nodal officers and owners of the suppliers," said the DCP. "Meanwhile, a team headed by SHO K M Pur was sent to Mohan Co-operative area in Badarpur with 60 empty oxygen cylinders so that they could be filled while others teams led by SHO Madan Garhi, SHO Neb Sarai and SHO Greater Kailash were sent to escort the tankers bringing oxygen after obtaining their live locations, said the DCP adding that the team managed to restore oxygen supply at the hospital within three hours.

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According to Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, the chief engineer of Batra hospital, R K Baniwal, informed the police that the oxygen at their facility will only last for two hours and they were not sure when their supply will be restored.

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"Police team contacted the company which stated that their tankers were not available at the moment for delivery. After persuading the management, a tanker was made available with liquid oxygen and it reached the Primus hospital on time," said a senior police official.

"With coordination by senior officers at various levels and arrangement from other hospitals in the district, 37 oxygen cylinders were arranged from Bawana, 40 from

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An EDMC worker sprays sanitiser in New Delhi on Thursday
Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

More beds to be added once oxygen crisis resolved: Jain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will increase the number of beds for Covid-19 patients once the "oxygen crisis" in the national capital is resolved, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday.

The Centre increased Delhi's quota of oxygen on Wednesday (from 378 metric tonnes to 480 metric tonnes). However, oxygen is also needed for new Covid centres being operationalised in Delhi, the minister said.

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Jain also said that to deal with rising number of cases, around 800 ICU beds are likely to be added in central government hospitals soon. "We have also demanded that the Centre give us 7,000 beds for two weeks. So far, 2,000 beds have been given," he told reporters. The number of beds are being increased, but Delhi has been facing a "serious problem" with regard to oxygen supply for the last three days, Jain said.

"Beds for Covid patients will be increased in a large number once this crisis ends," the minister said. Jain said hospitals in Delhi grappled with a shortage of oxygen the entire night. "The supply had almost finished in some hospitals. Thereafter, small quantities of oxygen were distributed among hospitals," he said. On Thursday morning, several small hospitals in Delhi struggled to replenish oxygen supply for their patients, even as some big healthcare facilities received fresh stock overnight.

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तीर्थ सिंह रावत
मा0 मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तराखण्ड

राष्ट्रीय पंचायत दिवस 2021

दिनांक 24 अप्रैल, 2021 को राष्ट्रीय पंचायत दिवस के अवसर पर मा0 प्रधानमंत्री जी, भारत सरकार द्वारा प्रातः 12:00 बजे से वेबिनार के माध्यम से देश के समस्त राज्यों के राष्ट्रीय पंचायत पुरस्कार वर्ष 2021 हेतु चयनित पंचायतों को पुरस्कृत कर पुरस्कार राशि का डिजिटल हस्तान्तरण और प्रथम चरण के छः राज्यों में स्वामित्व योजना के अन्तर्गत सम्पत्ति कार्ड का ई-वितरण करते हुए स्वामित्व योजना को देश के सभी राज्यों में लागू किया जा रहा है।

राष्ट्रीय पंचायत पुरस्कार वर्ष 2021 में उत्तराखण्ड राज्य से दीनदयाल उपाध्याय पंचायत सशक्तिकरण पुरस्कार हेतु जिला पंचायत पिथौरागढ़, (श्रीमती दीपिका बोहरा) 02 क्षेत्र पंचायत, जखौली, जनपद रूद्रप्रयाग (श्री प्रदीप थपलियाल) एवं द्वारीखाल, जनपद पौड़ी गढ़वाल (श्री महेन्द्र राणा) तथा 04 ग्राम पंचायतों, ग्राम पंचायत सिमलास ग्रान्ट, विकास खण्ड डोईवाला, देहरादून (श्रीमती पूजा पाल) ग्राम पंचायत मथ, विकास खण्ड पुरोला, उत्तरकाशी, (श्री अरविन्द पवार) ग्राम पंचायत देवजनी, विकास खण्ड मोरी, उत्तरकाशी, (बबीता चौहान) एवं ग्राम पंचायत पुरोहितवाला, विकास खण्ड सहसपुर देहरादून, (श्रीमती मीनू क्षेत्री) का चयन किया गया है। जबकि नानाजी देशमुख राष्ट्रीय गौरव ग्राम सभा पुरस्कार हेतु ग्राम पंचायत दियाडी, विकास खण्ड नौगांव, उत्तरकाशी, (श्रीमती सुषमा देवी) बाल हितैशी ग्राम पंचायत पुरस्कार हेतु ग्राम पंचायत बादामवाला विकास खण्ड सहसपुर देहरादून, (श्री नरेन्द्र सिंह तोमर) एवं ग्राम पंचायत विकास योजना पुरस्कार हेतु ग्राम पंचायत अटकफार्म विकास खण्ड सहसपुर देहरादून, (श्रीमती सुनीता देवी) का चयन किया गया है।

उपरोक्त समस्त त्रिस्तरीय पंचायत पुरस्कार प्राप्त पंचायतों को हार्दिक बधाई एवं शुभकामनाएं।

अतः राज्य के समस्त जिला पंचायत के मा0 अध्यक्षगण, समस्त उपाध्यक्षगण, समस्त सदस्यगण तथा समस्त क्षेत्र पंचायत के माननीय प्रमुखगण, ज्येष्ठ उप प्रमुखगण, कनिष्ठ उप प्रमुखगण, व समस्त क्षेत्र पंचायत सदस्यों व समस्त प्रधानगणों एवं समस्त ग्राम पंचायत सदस्यों के साथ-साथ समस्त ग्रामीण जनता तथा समस्त अपर मुख्य अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत, समस्त जिला पंचायतराज अधिकारी, समस्त खण्ड विकास अधिकारी व समस्त त्रिस्तरीय पंचायतों से जुड़े रेखीय विभागों के अधिकारियों/कर्मचारियों से अनुरोध है कि वह उक्त कार्यक्रम में वेबिनार लिंक <http://pmindiawebcast.nic.in/> से प्रातः 11:30 बजे से आवश्यक रूप से प्रतिभाग करने का कष्ट करें। आप अपने android फोन के माध्यम से उक्त वेब लिंक से जुड़ सकते हैं।

उत्तराखण्ड की समस्त त्रिस्तरीय पंचायतों के प्रतिनिधियों से अनुरोध है कि वे राज्य के समग्र विकास की अवधारणा को धरातल पर साकार करने में अपना उत्कृष्ट योगदान देते हुए राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर अपनी विशिष्ट पहचान बनाये, जिससे आगामी राष्ट्रीय पंचायत पुरस्कार प्राप्त करने में वह अपना स्थान बना सकें।

(हरिचन्द्र सेमवाल)
सचिव/निदेशक
पंचायतीराज, उत्तराखण्ड, देहरादून

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[Department of Panchayati Raj Uttarakhand](https://www.youtube.com/DepartmentofPanchayatiRajUttarakhand)

US climate plan to put India under pressure

Modi calls it 'decade of action' but asserts India's per capita carbon footprint 60% lower than global average

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As US President Joe Biden made a sharp departure from his predecessor Donald Trump to admit that climate change was undeniable and pledged a cut in carbon emissions by 50-52% below 2005 levels by the end of this decade — which would, in turn, mean more pressure on India and China to cut down upon their own — Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that India's per capita carbon footprint is 60 per cent lower than the global average owing to the fact that "our lifestyle is rooted in sustainable traditional practices".

The US, under Trump, had withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement but Biden showed a renewed commitment of more than what was anticipated from him. His pledge is double than the 26% to 28% reduction by 2025 committed by former President Barack Obama at the Paris agreement in 2015. China, US and India are the top three polluters in the world.

"Let us make this a Decade of Action against climate change," Modi said as he pitched for concrete action at a "high speed" and on a large scale to combat climate change. Biden, for his part, termed it a decisive decade.

Addressing a US-hosted



virtual summit of 40 global leaders, Modi also said sustainable lifestyles and guiding philosophy of "back to basics" must be important pillars of the economic strategy for the post-Covid era.

The Prime Minister said he and President Biden are launching the 'India-US climate and clean energy Agenda 2030 partnership'. Humanity is battling a global pandemic right now and this event is a timely reminder that the grave threat of Climate Change hasn't disappeared, he pointed out adding that "together, we will help mobilise investments, demonstrate clean technologies, and enable green collaborations".

President Biden had called for the summit in March saying that the event will reflect the "urgency" to stop climate change.

Modi said India has taken "many bold steps" on clean energy, energy efficiency, afforestation and bio-diversity despite its development challenges.

"For humanity to combat climate change, concrete action is needed. We need such action at a high speed, on a large scale, and with a global scope. We, in India, are doing our part," the Prime Minister said.

"As a climate-responsible developing country, India welcomes partners to create templates of sustainable development in India. These can also help other developing countries, who need affordable access to green finance and clean technologies," he said.

At the summit's opening address, Biden said: "We must try to keep the Earth's temperature to an increase of 1.5C. The world beyond 1.5 degrees means more frequent and intense fires, floods, droughts, heatwaves and hurricanes - tearing through communities, ripping away lives and livelihoods." "The signs are unmistakable, the science is undeniable and the cost of inaction keeps mounting," Biden said in sharp contrast to Trump who had junked the climate change theory.

Govt tells CAPFs to account for weapons' stock to curb pilferage

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

To check pilferage of weapons from the Central Ordnance Depots or other such stores, the Union Home Ministry has asked the Central paramilitary forces and the police forces in the States and the Union Territories to ensure speedy audit and stock verification of their armoury and to destroy all old and condemned weapons through melting after following procedures prescribed in the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on the subject.

The move comes after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) investigation has revealed that the weapons/parts are stolen in cannibalised form from the stores with connivance of working and retired staff and are assembled outside as complete weapons. "Such weapons might finally reach the criminals and anti-national elements. Therefore, it has been directed to issue instructions to all States/ CAPFs to conduct a detailed audit/stock verification of their armoury to ensure that the weapons on the inventory of all depots are checked and the probability of their pilferage is minimised and eventually removed. Similarly, for checking the pilferage of parts of old and condemned arms, it is necessary that such weapons are destroyed through melting," reads the communication sent to the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) or paramilitary forces and police chiefs of all the States and UTs.



After continuous use for over a period of time, all weapons used by police or paramilitary forces become unserviceable or obsolete and are no more of use to these forces

Territories for adoption through a letter on December 4, 2018. A detailed procedure has been laid down in the SOP for declaring the weapons and their associated accessories and spare parts and ammunition which are of no use to the Force as to avoid any pilferage by anti-national elements.

"All CAPFs are accordingly requested to ensure speedy audit and stock verification of their armoury and to destroy all old and condemned weapons through melting after following due procedures as prescribed in the SOP issued by MHA. An action Taken Report in this regard may be submitted to MHA within 60 days from the issue of this letter," reads the recent communication.

Additional Secretary (Home), Principal Secretary (Home), Directors General of

Police and Inspectors General of Police of all States/UTs have also been directed to conduct expeditious audit and stock verification of their respective armoury and destroy the old, obsolete, unserviceable and condemned weapons through melting.

After continuous use for over a period of time, all weapons used by police or paramilitary forces become unserviceable or obsolete and are no more of use to these forces.

"In order to ensure effective inventory management with respect to the weapons and their associated accessories and spare parts and ammunition held by the CAPFs/SPOs, being the controlled stores of security nature and to avoid any pilferage/misuse by anti-social elements, the requirement of an unambiguous procedure for declaring the weapons and their associated accessories and spare parts and ammunition which are of no use to the Forces as unserviceable/obsolete and their disposal thereof," according to the SOP for declaration of weapons and their associated accessories as condemned and their proper disposal.

EC bans road shows, vehicle rallies in next phases of WB polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) has banned roadshows and vehicle rallies with immediate effect for the remaining two phases of polls in West Bengal while no public meeting having more than 500 people would be allowed after reports of Covid safety norms being flouted during campaigning in the State came to the fore.

Issuing an order, the EC has invoked its plenary powers under Article 324 to prohibit roadshows, padyatras, and cycle/bike/vehicle rallies, effective immediately.

The order said the commission has noted "with anguish" that many political parties and candidates are still not adhering to the prescribed safety norms during the public gatherings and this is making it difficult for the state/district election machinery to enforce the guidelines.

All previous orders for rallies and roadshows stand cancelled and only meetings that are attended by not over 500 people, will be allowed, the EC stated. "Now, therefore, in view of aforesaid and taking all materials fact into consideration and in addition to Commission earlier orders, the Commission invoking its power under Article 324 further orders from 7 pm on April 22 in the state of West Bengal," the EC said.

"Permission for road show, cycle/bike/vehicle rally, if granted already stands withdrawn. Permission for public meeting if granted already stands modified to the



extent above," the order said. The EC has also restricted the limit of persons at any public meeting to 500 for the West Bengal assembly polls. Such public meetings will be allowed as per the availability of adequate space with social distancing norms and adherence to Covid-19 guidelines, the EC said. Voting for the two remaining phases of the West Bengal assembly polls will be held on 26 and 29 April.

Earlier on Wednesday, the EC had turned down appeals from TMC leader Derek O'Brien and Congress's Adir Choudhury to club together the remaining three phases of polls.

In its order, it said that it has already issued safety guidelines for Covid-19, cut down on daily campaign hours and extended the "period of silence" -- stopping of the campaign before polls -- from 48 to 72 to 72 hours.

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday pulled up the Election Commission over its handling of the eight-phase election in Bengal in the middle of a lethal Covid second wave. "The Election Commission is empowered to act, but what is it doing about polls in these Covid times? The EC is just passing circulars and leaving it to the people. But the EC has implementing authority," the court said.

Opp seeks free job for all eligible citizens



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders have questioned the Centre's Covid-19 vaccine policy terming it as anti-people and discriminatory and demanded that the vaccination should be free for eligible citizens. While Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi terming the policy as arbitrary and discriminatory and urged him to intervene immediately to reverse it, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too, through a letter, urged the PM to make the vaccine free for all.

In her letter, Sonia alleged that the new vaccine policy implies that the central government has abdicated its responsibility of providing free vaccine to all Indians between 18 and 45 years of age.

"It is surprising that despite the harsh lessons of last year and the pain inflicted on our citizens, the Government continues to follow an arbitrary and discriminatory policy, which promises to exacerbate existing challenges," she said in her letter. This is the second letter with

Scientists develop enrichment tech to meet oxygen demand amid Covid

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

There's good news for the Covid-19 infected patients gasping for breath due to acute shortage of medical oxygen in various hospitals across the country.

Scientists from CSIR-CMERI (Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute), Durgapur, West Bengal, have developed 'Oxygen Enrichment' technology which is capable of delivering medical air in the range of up to 15 LPM (litres per minute) with oxygen purity of more than 90 per cent. This is expected to meet the oxygen demand and minimise the supply chain problem of transportation and storage risks related to oxygen cylinders.

On Thursday, the technology was transferred virtually to Apollo Computing

Laboratories (P) Ltd, Kushaiguda, Hyderabad and the CSIR-CMERI which has already invited Expression of Interest (EOI) from Indian companies / manufacturing agencies/ MSMEs / start ups for manufacturing oxygen enrichment units through technology transfer.

Prof. (Dr.) Harish Hirani, Director, CSIR-CMERI said that the unit requires easily available oil free reciprocating compressor, Oxygen grade zeolite sieves and pneumatic components. "If required, this unit can even deliver up to 70 LPM at a purity of around 30 per cent and can safely be placed in the isolation ward of the hospital for patients who are in dire need of Oxygen.

"This will help the accessibility of Oxygen in the remotest places and widest points of need. The Outreach Factor of Oxygen will be mul-

tiplied through the adoption of this in-situ and decentralised generation of Oxygen," he said.

The Director added that further research is going on to develop a pulse dose mode which is capable of sensing the breathing pattern of a patient and then deliver during the inhalation only. This mode is supposed to reduce the oxygen demand by around 50% when compared with the current version of continuous mode.

Jaipal Reddy of Apollo Computing Laboratories said that the first prototype would be developed within 10 days and the production would be started from the second week of May.

"We have presently the manufacturing capacity of 300 units per day which may be augmented on demand," he said adding that the company is planning to develop the unit both as stand alone as

Oxygen Enrichment Unit as well as with integrated version with 'Swasth Vayu' technology of CSIR-NAL.

Reddy stressed that the unit is essentially required particularly as 'Mini ICUs' at small hospitals and isolation centres and at remote villages and places. By use of Oxygen Concentrators, the optimum utilization of oxygen to the needy patients may also be ensured. If this facility is provided to COVID patients at initial stage, their visits to hospitals and further ventilatory support may be avoided in most of the cases.

It was also felt that the use of such units is also safe and easier considering the recent risk factors involved with the Oxygen Cylinders.

Over the past few weeks, many breathless Covid-19 patients have died due to the unavailability of medical oxygen in hospitals situated in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh besides a few other States. Demand is rising each passing day due to a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases.

Russian Dy PM cancels Indian visit due to Covid surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and UK PM Boris Johnson, it is Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuriy Borisov whose scheduled visit to India later this month has been postponed due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

Borisov was to visit here for the India-Russia intergovernmental commission for trade, economic, cultural, and scientific cooperation. His postponement of the visit is attributed to the Covid-19 surge in India.

Earlier, Suga, who too was scheduled to arrive here in the last week of April, had to postpone his plans to focus on handling the recent surge in coronavirus cases in Japan.

The Japanese government is considering a state of emergency for Tokyo and Osaka as the number of new coronavirus cases increase.

According to Kyodo News, the Japanese government is considering placing Tokyo and three western prefectures of Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo under a state of emergency from Sunday to May 11, covering the country's upcoming

string of holidays, in an attempt to curb surging COVID-19 infections.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is set to finalise the decision at a task force meeting on Friday, as a resurgence of infections puts pressure on the medical system with just three months until the Tokyo Olympics kick off, it said.

For his part, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson cancelled his visit next week in view of the alarming Covid-19 situation in India. He was scheduled to arrive on April 25. He will now hold a 'virtual' dialogue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the coming days.

This is the second time that the British Prime Minister's visit was cancelled. He was invited as the Chief Guest for this year's Republic Day parade. However, he postponed his visit due to the outbreak of corona in the UK then.

Giving details of the latest postponement, the ministry of external affairs said here on Monday Johnson will not visit India next week in view of the coronavirus pandemic. The ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the decision was taken as per mutual agreement by both sides.

ITBP reopens Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre at Chhattarpur



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) is re-operationalising the Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre at Chhattarpur here with an initial capacity of 500 oxygenated beds amid the surge in Covid-19 cases in the national Capital.

The move comes after Delhi Government sought medical officers and para medical staff from the Union Home Ministry to man the Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre at Chhattarpur, which is being re-operationalised.

The Home Ministry has designated ITBP as Nodal Force for operating the facility and the paramilitary can draw medical and paramedical staff from other paramilitary forces if required to run the Centre.

"A deliberation in this regards took place at the Centre this evening by ITBP officials with all stakeholders and the ITBP will try to open it as soon as possible and the target is less than three days to start its functioning," a senior ITBP official said.

The national capital has been witnessing a surge in coronavirus cases with over 24,000 fresh COVID-19 cases and 249 deaths being recorded on Wednesday. The spiral in the cases has led to shortage of oxygen and hospital beds here.

"There will be 500 beds which will be operationalised initially but in future the number of beds may be increased," an official said.

The SPCCC was operationalised in June-July last year and closed on February 23 during which it treated 11,657 coronavirus-infected patients referred from various hospitals during the seven and a half months period when it was operational.

The SPCCC with a capacity of 10,000 was touted to be the country's biggest Covid care center before its closure in February this year.

Centre orders inoculation of its entire staff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday asked all its employees to get themselves vaccinated so as to effectively contain the spread of Covid-19. A Department of Personnel Ministry order said the Government has been monitoring the situation very closely, and it has been decided to vaccinate all the citizens who have attained the age of 18 years and above.

Accordingly, "all central government employees are advised to get themselves vaccinated so as to effectively contain the spread of COVID-19. Further, they may continue to follow COVID protocols, even after vaccination" said the order issued to all the central government departments. There

are estimated 48.34 lakh central government employees, according to an official data. All citizens of 18 years and above will be eligible for COVID-19 vaccine from May 1. At present, those above 45 years and above are eligible for the inoculation.

The Personnel Ministry had earlier this month asked all central government employees of the age of 45 years and above to get themselves vaccinated. They were further advised to continue to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour, even after vaccination, particularly, frequent washing of hands/sanitisation, maintenance of social distancing and masking etc. The employees have also been advised to continue following Covid-appropriate behaviour.

Didi accuses Modi of commercialisation of vax in hour of crisis

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has once again attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi questioning the discriminatory nature of his new corona vaccine policy and accusing his Government of promoting commercialisation of vaccines in an hour of crisis. Questioning why the Centre should be given to purchase vaccines for Rs 150 whereas the same vaccine should be sold to the States for Rs 400 Banerjee said New Delhi's policy was not only discriminatory, anti-federal but it was also "anti-people, anti-poor and anti-federal."

The Chief Minister while addressing an election rally at

benefit of a uniform price for vaccination, Sonia urged Modi to intervene immediately and "reverse this ill-considered decision".

Terming the Centre's new 'liberalised and accelerated

Navy begins search, rescue op for missing Indonesian submarine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy has sent a specialised vessel for search and rescue mission of an Indonesian submarine missing since Wednesday morning with 53 crew members on board. The submarine was taking part in a naval drill off the coast of Bali.

India is one of the few countries in the world which has the specialized vessel called Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel (DSRV) for locating a submarine in distress at sea.

Giving details of the deployment of the DSRV inducted into the Navy in 2018, Navy officials said here it left for Bali on Thursday from Visakhapatnam to support the Indonesian Navy's efforts to locate its diesel-powered submarine.

According to Indonesian authorities, the KRI Nanggala-402, a German-made subma-

rine, went missing during a military exercise around the Bali Strait on Wednesday. It was reportedly engaged in an exercise 25 to 30 km north of Bali. Some other countries besides India like Singapore, Australia and Malaysia are also likely to pitch in for the search and rescue mission.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also spoke to his Indonesian counterpart General Prabowo Subianto and assured him of all support.

"Spoke to the Defence Minister of Indonesia, General Prabowo Subianto over the phone and shared my pain over the news of missing submarine Nanggala and its crew members. India is extending its full support to the ongoing Indonesian rescue efforts," Rajnath tweeted.

He also said India is always committed to assist its strategic partners during times of need and that Subianto has acknowl-

edged and appreciated India's support to his country.

"I have already directed the @indiannavy to move its Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel (DSRV) to Indonesia. I have also tasked the Indian Air Force to see the feasibility of induction of the DSRV intervention system by air," he said.

Under the framework of comprehensive strategic partnership between India and Indonesia, the two navies share a strong partnership of operational cooperation.

Highlighting the features of the Indian DSRV, officials said it is fitted with latest technology and it has a side-scan sonar for locating the position of submarines in distress at sea.

The Indian Navy sent the DSRV following an alert it received through the International Submarine Escape and Rescue Liaison Office (ISMERLO) about the missing Indonesian submarine.

BENGAL POLLS PHASE 6

79% polling amid violence, two injured in police firing

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The sixth phase of polling took place in Bengal on Thursday with 79.09 per cent voters exercising their franchise amid stray violence and police firing that left at least two persons hurt at Bagda in North 24 Parganas. The polling rate was likely to go higher as there were many people standing in the queues when reports last came in at 5 pm.

At Bagda the police had to fire three rounds, Election Commission of India sources said adding the police had to fire to disperse a crowd of about 250 people that had assembled and attacked the sector office. The angry locals were allegedly protesting against the police inaction against the TMC goons who had earlier vandalized a local BJP camp office.

The officer in-charge of Bagda police station and some other policemen had been injured

in the skirmish, the ECI sources said.

Elsewhere at Aushgram in Birbhum a BJP candidate was allegedly beaten up by the TMC men whereas the saffron workers attacked TMC men at Habra in North 24 Parganas.

Similarly a Trinamool office was attacked at North Dum Dum whereas BJP and TMC men fought with bombs at several areas of Bhatpara, Jagaddal and Titagarh, sources said adding however that none was injured in the fight.

At least six persons, including a child, were injured at Titagarh after bombs were hurled indiscriminately police said. A large posse of police personnel and CPF jawans rushed to the area following the incident.

There were intermittent clashes between TMC and ISF workers at Amdanga in North 24 Parganas with each side blaming the other for bombing.

Notwithstanding, sporadic

violence polling was brisk with 77.76 per cent voters turning out at North 24 Parganas. In North Dinajpur 75.94 per cent voters came to vote whereas the polling percentage at

Nadia was 82.67 per cent. In East Burdwan the percentage of polling was 82.15 which was likely to go up further by several percentage points, sources said.

Polling on Thursday was conducted at 14,480 polling stations in 43 Assembly constituencies across parts of North 24 Parganas, Nadia, Uttar Dinajpur and East Bardhaman.

Among the 306 candidates whose political fate will be decided during this phase are heavyweights such as BJP's national vice-president Mukul Roy, TMC ministers Jyotipriyo Mallick and Chandrima Bhattacharya, CPI(M) leader Tanmay Bhattacharya and film director Raj Chakraborty who is fighting on a Trinamool ticket.

Registration for Amarnath Yatra temporarily suspended amid surge in corona cases

PNS ■ JAMMU

Due to worsening Covid-19 situation across different parts of India the Amarnathji Shrine Board on Thursday decided to temporarily suspend registrations for this year's Amarnathji Yatra with immediate effect.

The registration process was launched across different bank branches from April 1 to enable pilgrims to register themselves for this year's pilgrimage beginning June 28.

Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board was anticipating an estimated footfall of around 6 lakh during the yatra period this year. In a statement, spokesman of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board Thursday said, "Considering the evolving situation across the country and Union territory alike, it was decided to defer registrations for the Amarnathji Yatra 2021". It was informed that the situation is being constantly monitored and the registrations will reopen once the COVID spread is reviewed as the situation evolves.

Board had commenced registrations on 1st April, and the arrangements were on track since

February, 2021 for a successful conduct of the pilgrimage which is expected to start from 28th June, 2021. The decision has been taken to check any unnecessary gatherings", the statement read.

Meanwhile, 1965 fresh cases of coronavirus were reported across Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday taking the total tally of active positive cases to 16094. Several senior doctors at Government Medical college hospital in Jammu, IAS officer and spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir government Rohit Kansal tested positive.

Also 08 COVID-19 deaths have been reported, 02 from Jammu Division and 06 from Kashmir Division in the last 24 hours. To contain the spread of the virus, the district magistrate in Jammu notified five more areas as micro containment zones. The district administration in Srinagar and across other district headquarters have been roped in to spread the awareness among the masses regarding appropriate Covid-19 behaviour and adhering to the guidelines besides participating in the ongoing vaccination drive.

Australia to reduce number of flights from India by 30% due to corona spike

Melbourne: Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Thursday announced a 30-per cent reduction in flights coming from high-risk Covid-19 nations like India, following an alarming rise in coronavirus cases in institutionalised quarantine centres in the country.

After a national Cabinet meeting in Canberra, Morrison said: "What we have agreed to -- and this particularly relates to the chartered services we're running into the Northern Territory -- we will be reducing by some 30 per cent the numbers coming through our chartered services in the months ahead."

The reduction would apply to both government-organised repatriation flights and commercial flights into Sydney, ABC News reported.

While the list of high-risk countries was still being finalised, Morrison said the announcement was made keeping in view India's worsening second wave of the coronavirus.

India registered over 3.14 lakh new coronavirus cases on Thursday, the highest-ever single-day count recorded in any country, taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases in the country to 1,59,30,965.

"We will also be limiting the departure exceptions for Australians travelling to high-risk countries ... to India. As time goes on, and the pandemic continues to rage, there are countries that are frankly of greater risk than others," Morrison said. PTI

UK's Heathrow Airport refuses to allow extra flights from India ahead of red list ban

London: Heathrow Airport in London, the UK's largest and busiest airport, has declined requests from at least four international aircraft carriers to land eight extra flights from India on Thursday, ahead of the coronavirus pandemic "red list" travel ban which comes into force from Friday.

The airport said the decision to decline requests for additional flights was taken to ensure that the existing pressures on the border are not "exacerbated", resulting in long queues and crowds at passport control on arrival.

India's addition to the travel "red list" was announced in the House of Commons earlier this week amid 103 cases recorded in the UK of a new variant of coronavirus first detected in India. Health Secretary Matt Hancock told MPs that the decision had been made after studying the data and on a "precautionary basis". PTI

26,995 new corona cases in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

As the number of new Covid-19 patients touched the 27,000 mark on Thursday, the one and only organisation representing the Government Doctors in Kerala came out in the open exposing the shortcomings in the Department of Health and the lacuna in preventive measures that led to the unprecedented hike in the number of patients suffering from the pandemic.

On Thursday, the number of persons diagnosed with Covid-19 reached 26,995 while the Test Positivity Ratio stood at 19.97. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in his late evening media interaction.

Kerala Government Medical Officers Association, the umbrella organization of doctors in Government Service broke silence for the first time in the last 18 months on Thursday and questioned the acts and deeds of the State administration in handling the Covid-19 pandemic.

A letter addressed to the Chief Minister by Dr G S Vijayakrishnan, president and Dr T N Suresh, general secretary of the

KGMOA, on Thursday has categorically stated that Kerala's infrastructure to take care of the Covid-19 pandemic is poor and sub-standard.

The KGMOA, the only service organisation representing all categories of doctors in Health Services and the motto of which is "Save Health Services, Fight for Quality; For the Members and For the Society" has told the chief minister in no uncertain terms that the public health infrastructure in the State is ill prepared to conduct mass tests ordered by the State Government.

Kerala is experiencing an alarming increase in the number of Covid-19 cases since the conclusion of the assembly elections held on April 6. "The RT-PCR Testing Facility in the State is overstretched and it takes days to get the final result. At this juncture, the order by the Government to hike the number of tests is highly dangerous and impractical. We do not have the human resources to carry out Mass Tests. The personnel manning the health services are overworked and overstrained," said the KGMOA letter.

5 Covid patients die at UP hospital, families allege oxygen shortage

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

Five Covid positive patients died in SJD hospital of Aligarh due to lack of oxygen on Wednesday night. The administration has been shaken by the reported death of five patients at SJD Hospital in the city at intervals of few hours. The family members of the dead created a furore, alleging death due to lack of oxygen. Late night the Health Department officials along with the police team have reached the spot.

Looking after the allegations of the relatives, the DM has ordered for inquiry in this case.

Corona patients are undergoing treatment with administrative permission at the 40-bed SJD Hospital near Dhanipur Mandi ahead of Etah Chungi. The death of five patients, one by one, took place at a gap of a few hours on

Wednesday night. The family members of the deceased alleged that there death was due to lack of oxygen. They also created a ruckus in the hospital.

After the information on the death of patients due to lack of oxygen, the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. BP Singh Kalyani has sent ACOMO Dr. Anupam Bhaskar to SJD Hospital late in the night to check the veracity. A large number of police forces was also deployed on the spot. Shyam, the brother of one of the deceased, says that the brother and others died due to lack of oxygen.

The dead included 54-year-old Sarita Rani of Jaiganj, Mukesh, a 30-year-old youth from Akarabad, 50-year-old Anil Kashyap from Mahendranagar as primary teacher in Mathura, 50-year-old Jayveer from Sikandararau and Lalit Prasad.

Half-a-dozen journalists die for want of ventilators in Lucknow

IANAS ■ LUCKNOW

Shortage of ventilators, oxygen cylinders and hospital beds has led to the death of over half-a-dozen journalists in Lucknow in the past 10 days. All these scribes had to struggle for hours to get admitted to the hospitals after they developed Covid symptoms.

Some of them arranged for oxygen cylinders on their own but, could not get ventilator support.

Sachchidanand Gupta of 'Jadeed Amal', an Urdu newspaper, passed away on April 14 because he could not get ventilator support on time.

Vinay Srivastava, a veteran journalist, died tweeting to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath

and his media advisors for medical assistance as his oxygen levels kept going down, but help came only after he passed away.

Tavishi Srivastava, the political editor of 'Pioneer', could not get admitted to a hospital after she complained of breathlessness.

For hours on April 18, her colleagues tried to arrange for an oxygen cylinder and medical aid. Finally, a senior journalist from Delhi managed to get her admitted to the King George's Medical University, but it was already too late as she passed away hours later.

Pawan Mishra, a young journalist, died two days ago. His family claims that he needed ventilator support but never

got one. Ankit Shukla, 32, died earlier this week of Covid while Waseem left for another world on Wednesday.

Pramod Srivastava, 48, the newly elected member of the UP State Accredited Journalist Committee 2021, elections for which were held on March 21, died last month due to Covid.

At least a dozen journalists at present are Covid infected and battling for better medical facilities. More than 20 family members of scribes are also hospitalised at currently.

Journalists' unions are now demanding that beds should be reserved for scribes and the state government should also recognise them as Corona warriors.

Situation grim, health system has collapsed: Raj Thackeray

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Slamming the Centre's decision to control the purchase and distribution of Remdesivir vials, MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Thursday told Prime Minister Narendra Modi in no uncertain terms that "the situation is grim and terrifying", "our health system has collapsed", "this is not the time to indulge in petty politics" and "we must come together and face the situation collectively".

In a letter written to the Prime Minister on the issue of allowing the states to purchase and distribute Remdesivir and other essential drugs and materials required for Covid-19, Raj said: "I fail to understand why the Central Government has decided to control the purchase and distribution of Remdesivir. It is the state government's machinery - its health department, local institutions such as municipal corporations and staff at all levels that are at the forefront of this crisis".

"They (the state government machinery) are working with utmost dedication and facing daily challenges of ensur-

ing right treatment to the patients. Why, then, should the central government control the purchase and distribution of Remdesivir?" the MNS chief asked. Maintaining that it was "heartbreaking" to see the spurt in the death rate while the images of queues of dead bodies awaiting their turn in Gujarat and other states were "very disturbing", the MNS chief said: "The situation is very grim and terrifying. This is not the time to indulge in petty politics. We must come together and face the situation collectively".

"We have not witnessed a health emergency of this magnitude in the history of our country in the last 10-0 years. The challenge we face is a bigger one," the MNS chief said in his letter without mincing words.

"Our health system has collapsed. The speed of testing has slowed, hospitals do not have sufficient beds, essential medicines such as Remdesivir are not available and the life saving supply of Oxygen is disrupted," he said.

"Though much larger population is now eligible for vac-

ination, it is uncertain whether we can ensure availability of vaccines in sufficient numbers to provide for the vaccination of all

those eligible. We need to organise the management of this pandemic very carefully," Raj said.

Maha for 50,000 Remdesivir vials daily against 26,000 vials

Mumbai: Flagging once again the contentious issue of discrimination against Maharashtra in the allocation of Covid 19-related medicines and materials to it, the MVA Government on Thursday roared for the allotment of 50,000 vials of Remdesivir as against 26,000 vials of the life saving injections earmarked to the state.

In a series of tweets put against the Centre over the short supply of Remdesivir vials to Maharashtra by the Centre, Minorities Affairs Minister and senior State NCP leader Nawab Malik said: "Central government has just released the allocation data of #Remdesivir injection to various states in our country. #Maharashtra requires 50,000 injections per day, which our government has been demanding. So far we have

been receiving only 36,000 injections per day and now".

"According to the new allotment, Maharashtra will receive only 26,000 #Remdesivir injections per day and this therefore will create further crisis in our state which has a high number of #Covid cases," Malik said.

"We demand that the central government allot us our requirement of 50,000 injections per day and thus fulfill the requirements of the citizens of Maharashtra," the minister added.

This is not for the first time that Malik has lambasted the Centre for its "discriminatory attitude" towards the Maharashtra government over the supply of Remdesivir vials and also threatened to seize the stocks of Remdesivir from the exporting firms and supply them to the needy people.

31 Covid patients from other States flee Tripura care centre

Agartala: At least 31 Covid positive patients from other states have fled from a temporary care centre in Tripura on Thursday and police launched a massive search to trace them, officials said.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Anirban Das said that these people escaped from the Covid Care Centre at the Panchayat Raj Training Institute at Arundhuti Nagar on the outskirts of Agartala early on Thursday.

"We have alerted all possible places including railway stations and airports. Search is on to locate the fleeing Covid positive patients," Das said.

A health official said that the 31 people from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan came to Tripura recently to attend the interview for recruitment as rifleman in the Tripura State Rifles (TSR). IANS

Children make online group to show extra-curricular passions amid pandemic

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The indefinite close down of educational institutions which has forced them to stay indoors due to the pandemic, a collective of 45 children in the 10-15 age group drawn from the States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are making the maximum out of the lock down period.

While parents, teachers and psychologists burn midnight oil trying to find a solution to any psychological crisis affecting these children, Lakshmi Roy and Swagatha, two students of 12 years of age decided to launch their own on-line group as an avenue to express their extra-curricular passions like reading, acting and of course quizzing.

The result? Every morning at 7 all of them assemble for an on-line session of one hour where they sing, act, recite the poems they like and conduct

quiz shows resplendent with quiz master, scorer and expert members.

On Thursdays and Sundays, they are joined by corporate honchos, teachers, professionals like engineers, lawyers and medical doctors to share with them about the lively experience they had in their careers.

"We do not feel any sense of loneliness or unhappiness as the on-line sessions fill our minds with more than what we get from schools," said Swagatha who along with Lakshmi anchor the shows.

They are guided by Asok, a teacher from the Sainik School at Coorg. "Because of these on-line meetings, a collection of legendary stories in Malayalam authored by Kottarathil Sankunni. The series Parayipetta Panthirukulam, which we learnt from these legendary stories is a new experience

which we would not have got from regular classes," said Lakshmi, an upcoming TV artist.

It is not the children alone who take part in these webinars. "Their parents are equally or more interested in watching live the intellectual prowess of their wards," said Asok, who logs in at sharp 6.55 am in spite of the chilling weather of Coorg.

In addition to quiz competition, the children stage scenes from famous Malayalam plays which has brought them closer to the classical literary works of yester years. "I am sure they will not find wanting when they are probed about their familiarity with the Basics in Malayalam," said Bimal Roy.

Some of the children who were reluctant to wake up in the morning have developed the habit of waking up early to be ready for their little but important webinars.

SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of passengers, Railways have decided to run following Summer Special fully reserved Trains (Single Side Trips) as per schedule given below:-

| 04490 Delhi Jn. - Saharsa Jn. Summer Spl. Exp. 1 Trip | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 04490 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| DELHI JN. | --- | 23:00 |
| SAHARSA JN. | 23:55 | --- |

Days of Run: 04490 Ex. Delhi Jn. on 23.04.2021
 Stoppages: Moradabad Jn., Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Lucknow, Gonda Jn., Basti, Gorakhpur Jn., Deoria Sadar, Bhatni Jn., Siwan Jn., Chhapra, Sonpur, Hajipur Jn., Shahpur Patoree, Barauni Jn., Begusarai, Khagaria Jn., Mansi Jn. and Simri Bakhtiyarpur Stations
 Accommodation: 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

| 04492 Delhi Jn. - Darbhanga Jn. Summer Spl. Exp. 1 Trip | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 04492 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| DELHI JN. | --- | 23:00 |
| DARBHANGA JN. | 23:00 | --- |

Days of Run: 04492 Ex. Delhi Jn. on 24.04.2021
 Stoppages: Moradabad Jn., Rampur, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Lucknow, Barabanki Jn., Gonda Jn., Mankapur Jn., Babhan, Basti, Khallabab, Gorakhpur Jn., Deoria Sadar, Bhatni Jn., Bhatpar Rani, Mairwa, Siwan Jn., Chhapra, Hajipur Jn., Muzaffarpur, Dholi, Samastipur Jn., Haya Ghat and Laheria Sarai Stations
 Accommodation: 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

| 04494 New Delhi - Sitamarhi Jn. Summer Spl. Exp. 1 Trip | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 04494 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| NEW DELHI | --- | 23:55 |
| SITAMARHI JN. | 02:10 | --- |

Days of Run: 04494 Ex. New Delhi Jn. on 24.04.2021
 Stoppages: Moradabad Jn., Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Ahmadnagar, Lucknow, Barabanki Jn., Rudauli, Faizabad Jn., Ayodhya, Goshainganj, Akbarpur Jn., Shahganj Jn., Jaunpur Jn., Varanasi Jn., Varanasi City, Aunrihar Jn., Ghazipur City, Yusufpur, Ballia, Suraimanpur, Chhapra, Daotuhaja, Hajipur Jn. and Muzaffarpur Jn. Stations
 Accommodation: 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

| 04496 Delhi Jn. - Darbhanga Jn. Summer Spl. Exp. 1 Trip | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 04496 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| DELHI JN. | --- | 23:00 |
| DARBHANGA JN. | 23:00 | --- |

Days of Run: 04496 Ex. Delhi Jn. on 25.04.2021
 Stoppages: Moradabad Jn., Rampur, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Lucknow, Barabanki Jn., Gonda Jn., Mankapur Jn., Babhan, Basti, Khallabab, Gorakhpur Jn., Deoria Sadar, Bhatni Jn., Bhatpar Rani, Mairwa, Siwan Jn., Chhapra, Hajipur Jn., Muzaffarpur, Dholi, Samastipur Jn., Haya Ghat and Laheria Sarai Stations
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| 04498 New Delhi - Sitamarhi Jn. Summer Special Exp. 1 Trip | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 04498 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| NEW DELHI | --- | 23:55 |
| SITAMARHI JN. | 02:10 | --- |

Days of Run: 04498 Ex. New Delhi Jn. on 25.04.2021
 Stoppages: Moradabad Jn., Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Ahmadnagar, Lucknow, Barabanki Jn., Rudauli, Faizabad Jn., Ayodhya, Goshainganj, Akbarpur Jn., Shahganj Jn., Jaunpur Jn., Varanasi Jn., Varanasi City, Aunrihar Jn., Ghazipur City, Yusufpur, Ballia, Suraimanpur, Chhapra, Daotuhaja, Hajipur Jn. and Muzaffarpur Jn. Stations
 Accommodation: 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

| 04068 Delhi Jn. - Darbhanga Jn. Summer Special Exp. 1 Trip | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 04068 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| DELHI JN. | --- | 23:00 |
| DARBHANGA JN. | 23:00 | --- |

Days of Run: 04068 Ex. Delhi Jn. on 26.04.2021
 Stoppages: Moradabad Jn., Rampur, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Lucknow, Barabanki Jn., Gonda Jn., Mankapur Jn., Babhan, Basti, Khallabab, Gorakhpur Jn., Deoria Sadar, Bhatni Jn., Bhatpar Rani, Mairwa, Siwan Jn., Chhapra, Hajipur Jn., Muzaffarpur, Dholi, Samastipur Jn., Haya Ghat and Laheria Sarai Stations
 Accommodation: 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

| 04070 New Delhi - Sitamarhi Jn. Summer Special Exp. 1 Trip | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 04070 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| NEW DELHI | --- | 23:55 |
| SITAMARHI JN. | 02:10 | --- |

Days of Run: 04070 Ex. New Delhi Jn. on 26.04.2021
 Stoppages: Moradabad Jn., Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Ahmadnagar, Lucknow, Barabanki Jn., Rudauli, Faizabad Jn., Ayodhya, Goshainganj, Akbarpur Jn., Shahganj Jn., Jaunpur Jn., Varanasi Jn., Varanasi City, Aunrihar Jn., Ghazipur City, Yusufpur, Ballia, Suraimanpur, Chhapra, Daotuhaja, Hajipur Jn. and Muzaffarpur Jn. Stations
 Accommodation: 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

| 01229 Lokmanya Tilak(T)-Gorakhpur Jn. Summer Spl. 1 Trip | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------|
| STATIONS | Train No. 01229 | |
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| LOKMANYA TILAK (T.) | --- | 11:10 |
| LUCKNOW | 16:30 | 16:40 |
| GORAKHPUR JN. | 23:00 | --- |

Days of Run: 01229 Ex. Lokmanya Tilak (T.) on 23.04.2021
 Stoppages: Kalyan Jn., Nasik Road, Bhusaval Jn., Khandwa Jn., Itarsi Jn., Jabalpur Jn., Satna Jn., Banda, Kanpur Central, Lucknow, Gonda Jn. and Basti Station
 Accommodation: 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Faulty figures?

Amid the COVID-19 apocalypse, certain data highlight the efficacy of desi vaccines

People are falling like ninepins to the COVID-19 virus and the situation has exacerbated due to the shortage in oxygen and medicine supply, besides the non-availability of hospital beds. Similarly, crematoriums and graveyards are out of space for the last rites of the dead. The Government's job seems to be limited to just coming out with higher numbers each passing day — of the succumbed, and new and total infections — which, even if much lower than the actual figures as some people are claiming, present a horrifying picture. Amid all this, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) throws up the data that only 0.04 per cent of the 17,37,178 individuals who received the second dose of Covaxin were COVID-19 positive while 0.03 per cent of the 1,57,32,754 people who took the second dose of Covishield were infected. The figures are definitely a shot in the arm for the *swadeshi* vaccines and instil confidence in people. However, looked at minutely, these figures raise a few uncomfortable questions. First, how many individuals in these sets of 17.37 lakh or 1.57 crore people went for testing after the second dose? There must have been many asymptomatic patients (who show no symptoms but are carriers) who didn't go for the RT-PCR or other COVID detection tests. It's now established that most people don't prefer to get tested in the absence of any

symptom but still carry the lethal virus. Then, there must be those who didn't inform the authorities even if they had mild symptoms.

Many people prefer to get treated at home rather than in a hospital, especially since there is a massive shortage of beds, oxygen and medicines. The accuracy of these figures, therefore, is suspect. Further, a study in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *Vaccine breakthrough infections with SARS-CoV-2 variants*, states that in a group of 417 people who had received the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, two women were identified with the vaccine breakthrough infection, at an approximate rate of 0.50 per cent. Interestingly, the ICMR figures of vaccine efficacy, with the sample size in lakhs and crores, show more promising results than the findings in the top journal — with its limited sample size and accurate testing of all individuals. Well, if the sample size is in lakhs and crores, it is not possible to test all the individuals and, therefore, the results are bound to be far from accurate. However, ICMR chief Balam Bhargava has assured that the "data are not at all worrisome". But we still have to take it with a pinch of salt. It's time for the Government and its agencies to concentrate more on plugging the loopholes and not just get buoyed by the figures that are far removed from the actual and seem to serve only the end of the vaccine manufacturers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi might be making all-out efforts to save the country from the pandemic but such misleading figures by the ICMR only undermine his sincere endeavours.

PICTALK



A worker clears water from the cover over a pile of wheat grain after rain in Amritsar

PTI

Don't choke Mars

It's great that NASA has been able to create oxygen on the Red Planet but don't think of colonising it

For those who have grown up watching sci-fi movies like *Species*, *Total Recall*, *The Martian*, *Marvin the Martian* and so on, the Red Planet holds a lot of fascination. It is not just popular culture that is obsessed with Mars, our scientists, too, are consumed with the possibility of humanity being able to live on it one day. This is because

Mars is potentially the most habitable planet so close to us. Many believe that the first manned space flight to Mars is only a matter of time and that it will eventually be followed by its colonisation by humankind. In fact, many countries and private firms are heavily involved in the race to colonise the Red Planet. The US, as usual, is far ahead of the others in the great space race. And, in a landmark development which will have a far-reaching impact on making future manned missions to Mars a reality, Perseverance, NASA's newest six-wheeled robot on the Martian surface, converted some of the planet's thin, carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere into oxygen. A toaster-sized, experimental instrument aboard Perseverance, called the Mars



Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilisation Experiment (MOXIE), accomplished the task. The test took place on April 20, the 60th Martian day since the mission landed on February 18.

While the technology demonstrated by NASA is still in the nascent stage and MOXIE's oxygen production was a meagre five grams, which is equivalent to about 10 minutes worth of breathable oxygen for an astronaut, it is designed to generate up to 10 grams of oxygen per hour. However, NASA is jubilant as this baby step will pave the way for science fiction to become a science fact. In the future, the US could isolate and store oxygen on Mars for its astronauts to live and work there, besides helping power rockets to lift them off the planet's surface. No doubt it is a giant leap for humanity, but what about our Blue Planet? Instead of planning to get our greedy hands on other celestial bodies to ruin them the way we have done the Earth, the time, effort and money would be better spent on finding solutions to the problems created by us here. While it is good to be ambitious in the interest of science, we must not forget that we owe the planet we live on a great debt as we have all but made it inhospitable. Let us look after the Earth, the only planet we call home.

Lives, livelihoods still far from safe

The Government's stand on clamping the lockdown in 2020 and steering away from it this year appears inherently incongruous



ASHISH AHUJA

The 'Great Indian Lockdown' that began on March 25, 2020, spanned 68 days. Initially announced for a period of 14 days, it was repeatedly extended to finally reveal the 'Great Unlock' on June 1, 2020. It was heralded as a pre-emptive masterstroke. Was it one? And is there a case for Lockdown 2.0?

At the first instance, the 'Great Indian Lockdown' was brandished as the ultimate tool that would eradicate COVID-19 from our shores. The citizens were asked for a few weeks, then a few weeks more and then some more to win the war against the virus. So while the obedient citizens believed what was being fed to them, they utilised their time making Dalgona coffee at home. They banged plates, lit candles and sacrificed their daily wages in the belief that they were being protected from the tentacles of a deadly virus. Time spent without social contact would vanquish the virus was the war cry, for some time.

As time passed, reality slowly dawned that the 'Great Indian Lockdown' in no way could extinguish the virus. The Government's narrative conveniently changed to the lockdown being an instrument to prepare the health system to cope. Now, this made sense — a lot of sense. The obedient citizens never questioned this narrative, since it genuinely had a lot of merit to it. For the common man, the changing narrative worked as a convenient explanation. I, for one, hoped that the changed stance truly reflected the Government's intent. Sadly, I was wrong.

Cut to the present. If the Government presumably acted prudently and helped prepare the health system in those 68 days and the ensuing period of another 200+ days since 'Unlock 1', then what explains the current mess? Even for the uninitiated, it simply means that the preparation was grossly inadequate and the forecasting even worse. The time spent in lockdown and the time post-



declared by showing how our country fared so much better than the rest. If the 'Great Indian Lockdown' was about preparing the health system, then shouldn't the nation have been served a graph of additional hospital beds, ventilators, oxygen capacity and the like to keep the citizens informed of the work being done to prepare for the worst? It is hard for normal folk to accept a mistake, and even harder for the Governments to do so. Rather than admitting to an error in judgement, a changed narrative from "let's kill the virus" to "we are preparing the health system" worked as a convenient explanation. I, for one, hoped that the changed stance truly reflected the Government's intent. Sadly, I was wrong.



IF THE 'GREAT INDIAN LOCKDOWN' WAS ABOUT PREPARING THE HEALTH SYSTEM, THEN SHOULDN'T THE NATION HAVE BEEN SERVED A GRAPH OF ADDITIONAL HOSPITAL BEDS, VENTILATORS, OXYGEN CAPACITY AND THE LIKE TO KEEP THE CITIZENS INFORMED OF THE WORK BEING DONE TO PREPARE FOR THE WORST?

lockdown did little to prepare our health infrastructure for the tsunami facing us today. In such a case, what did the lockdown achieve? Very little. It did not vanquish the virus, it did not adequately prepare our health system but it definitely destroyed the livelihoods of millions.

Personally, I have never been an advocate of lockdowns. Each one must evaluate one's own risks and act accordingly by imposing a self-lockdown when required. However, if there is ever a greater reason and logic for a stringent lockdown, it is now. I have constantly maintained that lockdowns simply reduce the pace of spread of the virus. They never completely eradicate it or stop its spread. Thus, a lockdown is unfortunately necessary only and only when the health system is running at capacity. And it is running to more than capacity now. The time to save lives is now, not when our hospital capacity was chugging along at 30 per cent or so, in April 2020. With the hospitals bursting at seams, the Union Government in its wisdom thinks that lockdowns don't help. Really? Wasn't the 'Great Indian Lockdown' presented

as the smartest move last year? Confusing to me.

If the March 2020 lockdown was not a mistake, it definitely cannot be a mistake in April 2021. However, since it does not seem to be a tool for the Government in the current crisis just yet, isn't that an admission that it erred in March last year? The sad part is that they are erring again. However, this time, by not enforcing one. The happenings over the last year remind me of a game we played as children, called "musical chairs". The Government seems to be caught on the wrong side of the chair each time the music stops playing.

As most of us juggle multiple calls for help from family and friends, television grabs of religious ceremonies and election rallies seem to mock us. Do we deserve this? Who is to blame for our predicament? The virus, the Government's response or us who cast our ballots — the 1.4 billion? Think hard about it. Let's hope and pray that lives as well as livelihoods are saved. Sadly, as it is playing out, it seems neither lives nor livelihoods are safe.

(The writer is 'an ordinary concerned citizen'. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LESSONS FOR INDIAN JUDICIARY, POLICE

Sir — In what may be called an era-defining day for the US, police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of the murder of George Floyd, a black security guard who had lost his job during the pandemic. The episode was followed by simmering racial tension across the country, triggering mass protests under the umbrella of 'Black Lives Matter'.

There is an important takeaway for India here. Floyd was killed in May 2020; the country's justice delivery system worked fast. Chauvin was found guilty by a court in less than a year following a trial which was covered widely by the media. For sure, the justice delivery system was helped by ubiquitous mobile phones that captured the last moments in Floyd's life in excruciating detail. The essential fact that justice was delivered quickly. It's a prerequisite to build trust in a system. Contrarily, the Indian judicial system's backlog running into millions of cases builds distrust among its citizens.

Another aspect of the trial that is relevant is the nature of police response. Floyd was picked up following an allegation that he used a counterfeit note of \$20 to buy cigarettes. The sequence of events led to Chauvin kneeling on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds, unmindful of the victim repeatedly saying, "I can't breathe." The prosecution's evidence included a police chief who observed that Chauvin violated protocol. India has often seen custodial deaths and other police excesses. Similarly, in the US, it's hard to get a conviction of police officers who violate norms. We hope the George Floyd trial will catalyse some change here too, to hold the rogue police officers to account.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

LOCKDOWN IS ONLY THE LAST RESORT

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated that lockdown should be the last resort and the focus must be on creation of micro-containment zones. He assured the country that there is enough stock of

A disturbing situation



Quite disturbing are the words of Trupti Gilada, an infectious diseases specialist in Mumbai: "Like many doctors, I am troubled. I don't know what to do. I am heartbroken. Maybe if I tell you what worries me, if I can help you understand, I might be more at peace." These words are reflective of the struggles of the medical fraternity to save lives from the pandemic as the healthcare sector is reeling under a severe crisis.

As another lockdown comes into effect in many parts, the migrant labourers are again under threat of losing their jobs and livelihood.

vaccines, medicines and oxygen to win the battle against the second wave of Coronavirus. The Opposition, including the Congress and the NCP, often get disappointed with Modi's speech, which created a storm on social media as many people were expecting some relief which they didn't get. On the other hand, many Twitter users were relieved that Modi didn't announce a complete lockdown.

He also stated that the Government was putting in all efforts to save lives. The PM was very sympathetic towards all those families who have lost their loved ones to the virus. Further, he assured that the pharma sector is very robust and it has increased the production of medicines manifold. He said he had held detailed discussions with the pharma industry leaders for enhancing drug production. It's good that from May 1, all citizens above 18 years will be eligible for vaccination.

Anshita Rochwani | Ujjain

Fearful of the impending extremity, they have started rushing back to their villages on buses and trains. To be in the queue to get vaccinated is hardly a priority for them. The scenes of their mass exodus last year are still fresh in memory. The plight of these labourers who lost jobs and are in distress, on the roads and in buses and the starving millions in the countryside must also figure alongside the suffering captured in Gilada's words.

It's time for the Government to pool all resources to pull India back from the brink of devastation. There is an urgent need to rope in the States and cooperate with them. Empowered Committees of the Centre and the States, as well as expert committees, should be set up to evolve fresh ideas to make the Corona curve flat, monitor the calamitous situation on a regular basis, manage medical facilities, suggest ways to support the economy, shape schemes to mitigate the misery of migrant labourers and reduce rural poverty.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

SPECIAL CENTRES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Sir — I am aged 71 years and got my first dose of Covaxin at a private hospital on March 24 just to avoid crowds at the Government hospitals where it was being provided free of cost. But now the hospital where I took the jab has been declared a COVID hospital and going there for the second dose is highly risky for senior citizens like me. The situation will deteriorate after the ongoing six-day lockdown in the Capital is lifted.

Arrangements should be made by the authorities concerned to provide the vaccination at homes at least for the senior citizens and other special categories. Also, the Delhi Government should set up separate centres across Delhi for providing the vaccination to senior citizens.

Madhu Agarwal | New Delhi

SOUNDBITE

One day, we will hug again. I have faith in the human spirit, in the Indian spirit. We will heal. We will defeat this virus and we will do it by working together.



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani acknowledged that bilateral relations have improved. We have signed an MoU with Iran to open trade centres.



Pakistan Foreign Minister — Shah Mahmood Qureshi



For me, staying vegetarian was a personal choice that I made long back. I wanted to see how it impacts my overall fitness.

Former Miss World — Manushi Chhillar



I don't have many problems with my game but I must get fitter. The level of badminton will go up a couple of notches if I get remain fitter consistently.

Badminton player — Sai Praneth



The measures taken by the Government have increased the biodiversity and once again brought nature back to life in the State.

Telangana Chief Minister — K Chandrasekhar Rao

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

BRING UP AN ASSET, NOT A LIABILITY

It is vital for parents to understand that producing a child is not a one-time event, but a lifetime responsibility



MANJULA PAL

“He who gives a mouth shall feed it too.” This fatalistic, age-old adage so often used by the poor in the subcontinent conveniently passes the buck to the Almighty as a cover-up for our own inadequacies. Next in line of assault is the establishment for “failing” in its duty towards the country’s underprivileged population. Human rights activists use poor people’s helplessness as a means to achieve their own goals. A photo shoot of a family showing an emaciated mother with an infant in her arms, a sickly husband by the side and a line of malnourished offsprings speaks louder than a thousand words. Still the words, “No, one ever came forward to give us any help either from the Centre or from the State”, go viral and capture the hearts and imagination of the privileged.

A country progresses step by step, but the fruits of progress and development are usurped by the ever-increasing number of mouths to feed and more hands being continuously added to the workforce, looking for employment. As a result, we are back to square one. Man-made advancements in the fields of agriculture and technology ensure mate-



rialistic growth, but it is superseded by the unsustainable population growth. Unfortunately, since the Emergency, family planning has been regarded as a touchy subject and no politician wants to talk about it. Become rational, talk sense and lose the chair! Consequently, the mindset of the establishment, of shying away from addressing the topic aggressively, still has not changed to the extent needed. This is despite the incumbent Government at the Centre being in a majority.

Social, religious or cultural orientation are great impediments in the realisation of the importance and benefits of smaller families. A widespread network of accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers are doing a good job in many States in promoting hospital deliveries against home deliveries, where contraception advice is routinely given. However, an inaccessible maternal healthcare system is still a problem in the remote areas. Fortunately, the country is self-sufficient in the production of food grains and the States are heavily subsidising it for the poor. As the farm land holdings get divided with each generation, urbanisation is inevitable. Therefore, the biggest task before the establishment is sustainable development along with tackling the paramount problem of unemployment through job creation.

One of the steps the Union Government plans to take is emphasising on privatisation and monetisation of some State-owned companies. The aim is to generate ₹2.5 trillion that will be used for developmental purposes, along with job creation. However, it is easier said than done as there are many challenges before the Centre. Already there are several voices and demonstrations against the divestment of State-owned companies and the privatisation of nationalised banks. The insecurity of the employees is palpable and they fear that the number of Government jobs could further decrease with this move.

Ultimately, merit and the skills of the candidate would have the upper hand and, in the times to come, parents would have to invest more money and time that ever before in educating and skilling their children to increase their employability. The more the number of children, the more the burden on the guardians. It is highly imperative for parents to understand that producing a child is not a one-time event, but an additional responsibility of bringing them up properly. The Government gives adequate importance to strengthening the federal structure, thus district-level establishments can be authorised and empowered to implement innovative methods for promoting family planning programmes. The media can play a positive role by highlighting the far-reaching benefits of smaller families and making people aware of their responsibility towards their children and the need to bring them up as an asset to the nation and not a liability.

(The writer is an author. The views expressed are personal.)

Change strategy to eliminate Red terror

A hammer-and-tongs approach is needed to shut the Red Corridor and bring the Maoists to the negotiating table



ANIL GUPTA

Recently, the nation was shocked by the news of mass casualties of policemen who were part of an instant anti-Maoist operation launched in the forests of Bastar in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, a Maoist-infested State. The forces not only suffered large-scale loss of lives but the rebels also managed to escape with weapons, bullet-proof jackets, boots and other personal accessories of the martyred policemen. What is shocking is that such losses occur frequently and we hardly learn lessons from the past failures to ensure that the loss of men and weapons is minimised in future. The bitter fact is that the Maoists have proved more professional, in the sense that they are known to critically analyse each operation by filming the same and carrying out post-operation analysis to draw lessons for the future.

Unfortunately, when security experts analysed the recent anti-Maoist operation, they were sad to note that the mistakes committed in Sukma in 2018 were repeated by the forces. Evidently, our forces have failed to learn from the past, which speaks poorly of the leadership. In fact, senior journalist Shekhar Gupta has observed that, “the first reaction after any such operation is to cover the ba@#side of the senior officers.” How true! Narratives and stories are spun to justify failure by converting it into a well-contested, successful operation. We lack investigative journalism and the media houses also buy the narrative spun by Government agencies.

In order to draw a comprehensive strategy to close the Red Corridor, it is essential to understand the shortcomings and professional errors committed in the conduct of instant operations. It is learnt that the operation was launched on a specific Intelligence input provided by an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). The objective was to trap Hidma (a top-rated Maoist commander known for conducting successful ambushes). A careful analysis of the Intelligence input should have prompted the planners to maintain contact with the high-value target and keep all his activities under surveillance through both Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT).

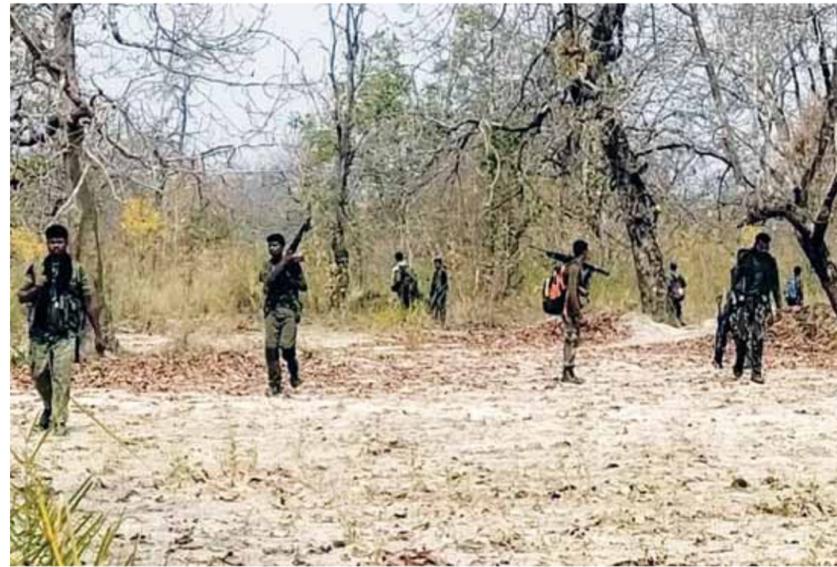
Obviously, it was not done, otherwise how can the ability of Hidma to gather 400 Maoists for the ambush be justified? Hence, inadequate Intelligence assessment and poor Intelligence gathering along with faulty operational planning are the obvious shortcomings, just like the failings noticed in the previous botched-up operations. The conduct and execution of the operation is as good as its planning. This incident reflects poorly on the standard of training, particularly specialised training in jungle warfare.

The other major shortcoming was lack of proper command and control, coupled with the absence of commanders with their respective units and formations. Since four different forces were operating together, a foolproof command and control structure was mandatory. Anti-Maoist operations can’t be treated as routine ones. The troops and commanders need to acquire the skills not only for counter-insurgency operations but for jungle warfare as well. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are good for routine activities and drills but for actu-



TO BEGIN WITH, THERE IS A NEED FOR A THOROUGH OVERHAUL AND SHAKE-UP OF THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE. THIS INCLUDES CREATION OF A SEPARATE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL SECURITY THROUGH RESTRUCTURING OF THE EXISTING MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AND A SEPARATE OPERATIONAL COMMAND FOR THE ENTIRE RED CORRIDOR LED BY A LIEUTENANT-GENERAL. THIS COMMAND SHOULD CUT ACROSS STATE BOUNDARIES AND BE MANDATED TO CONDUCT SEAMLESS OPERATIONS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The author is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator, columnist, security and strategic analyst. The views expressed are personal.



al combat, quick mental reflexes are needed to respond and act as per the emerging tactical or operational situation. That needs immediate availability of the commanders at headquarters and in combat with the troops for on-the-spot decision-making. This is also a frequently-observed drawback. The CRPF must inculcate the habit in its officers of leading from the front in such operations.

Unpredictability is the key to success in unconventional operations. However, a study of the operations carried out by the CRPF leads one to believe that their operations are very predictable and hence afford an opportunity to the Maoists to surprise them. The fact that the troops were lured into a “U-Type” ambush bears testimony to the fact. Proper terrain analysis during the planning stage would have identified the likely ambush sites on the route-in and route-out and plans could have been made to secure these sites before advancing further. Obviously, it was not done.

No tactical operation is ever launched without planning and catering for reserves. In the latest case, lack of reserves was obvious as was the lack of coordination for casualty evacuation and reinforcements using helicopters.

A thorough overhaul of the forces operating against the Maoists is needed. The police cul-

ture must give way to military culture. A patchwork solution will lead us nowhere. To close the Red Corridor which has already shrunk to less than one-third (only 31 affected districts remaining out of the original 200 plus), a synergised approach is needed.

The first and foremost requirement is to regain the confidence of the people and convince them of the Government’s determination and capability to eliminate the Red terror. Its only when the local population is convinced of the Government’s upper hand in the Red Corridor that the much-needed human Intelligence would start flowing.

To begin with, there is need for a thorough overhaul and shake-up of the organisational structure. This includes creation of a separate Ministry of Internal Security through restructuring of the existing Ministry of Home Affairs and a separate operational command for the entire Red Corridor led by a Lieutenant-General. This command should cut across State boundaries and be mandated to conduct seamless operations within the designated geographical area.

The force needs to be provided operational and logistics where-withal tailor-made for conduct of operations as well as for logistics support. Drones, helicopters and UAVs should be totally integrated with this force. The senior officers

of the rank of DIG and above for operations should be replaced by Brigadiers and above on secondment from the Army. The Army has a large number of officers in these ranks with adequate combat experience of counter-insurgency and fighting in the jungle terrain.

The logistics branch can continue to have officers from the police. Only those units of the CRPF or other police organisations which are trained in counter-insurgency and jungle warfare should be “on the order of battle” of this Anti-Maoist Operations Command (AMCOM). The Command should also have specialised units for Psychological Operations and WHAM (Winning Hearts and Minds) operations.

Population-control measures to isolate the Maoists should also be initiated prior to launching full-fledged operations to eliminate them on the pattern of the Sri Lankan Army, which undertook the operations to finish the Tamil Tigers or the LTTE.

The Government will come under tremendous pressure from Maoist sympathisers, so a favourable national opinion will have to be built by highlighting the danger Maoists pose to not only local development but also to national integrity and security. A “hammer and tongs” strategy is needed to eliminate the Red Corridor and bring the Maoists to the negotiating table.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

IS THIS NOT CRIMINAL? AN MP HOARDING MEDICINES AND GIVING IT AS PER HIS WISHES. WHY SHOULD HE NOT GIVE THEM TO THE HOSPITAL?

—AAP LEADER
SOMNATH BHARTI



THOSE WHO ALLOWED REMDESIVIR TO BE BLACK MARKETED ARE CONCERNED OVER A FEW HUNDRED FABIFLU STRIPS THAT ARE BEING GIVEN FOR FREE.

—BJP MP
GAUTAM GAMBHIR

Fires engulf the ecology and livelihoods in Uttarakhand

The most telling impact of this disaster has been on the livelihoods of the local communities that were dependent on the forests and their products

The raging forest fires in Uttarakhand have already consumed over 2,800 hectares of irreplaceable verdant forests, mainly in the higher altitudes, and as many as eight people have lost their lives due to the wildfires. The loss of wildlife is yet to be ascertained, but has to be colossal as these calamitous fires started six months ago. However, thanks to the ongoing pandemic, national as well as State resources have been steadfastly focused on fighting the Coronavirus that seems to be becoming more unmanageable with each passing day.

The Uttarakhand forest department recorded 989 fires between October 2020 and April this year and, to make matters worse, the annual rainfall was scanty also. The period between January and March this year, that usually witnesses 55 millimetres



KOTA SRIRAJ

The writer is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.

(mm) of rainfall, saw a measly 10 mm. This left the forest floor dry as tinder and provided an endless run to the forest fires.

Wildfires are frequent annual incidents all over India and the “Devbhoomi” Uttarakhand, with over 70 per cent of its area under forests, is no exception. But the fact that the State lost 85,000 football fields or 45,000 hectares of woods to forest fires over the past 20 years is a disconcerting reality. The colossal loss of ecology is only rivaled by the immense pollution generated during the course of these fires. The current fires have caused the levels of black carbon to shoot up six times to 12,000 micrograms per cubic metre of air. The most telling impact of this natural disaster has been on the livelihoods of the local communities that are depen-

dent solely on forests and the products that come out of them.

According to the Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology, 80 per cent people are directly or indirectly dependent on forests either for their sustenance or subsistence. Forests provide fodder, firewood, many wild fruits, construction materials and medicines for humans and livestock. Besides, forests also provide the microclimate for the cultivation of several crops that can be grown only on the hills and provide substantial livelihood opportunities for the people living in the forest fringe areas. For instance, the harvesting and processing of the rhododendron — the State flower of Uttarakhand — has been an integral part of the local commerce for centuries. But this very source of liveli-



hood is now being threatened by the increasing scale of forest fires every year.

The bright red flowers, growing at an altitude of 1,200 feet and above on full-sized trees, present a mesmerising visual against the backdrop of snow-clad mountains. Locally called “burans”, the rhododen-

dron blooms are replete with time-tested medicinal properties. The tree has a flowering season between February and April and the locals earnestly look forward to the season so that they can sell these flowers, the juice and the pickle made out of the blooms. Over the last two decades, climate change has had a telling impact on the local crops as rising temperatures and drying glaciers have caused paucity of water resources leading to continuous crop failures.

Owing to the unpredictability of traditional crops, the local communities have started to depend more on harvesting of the rhododendron flowers in order to support their families. But every year the increasing intensity of wildfires during the flowering season and now the restrictions imposed in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic

have dealt a major blow to this small flourishing economy.

The repeated lockdowns and curfews have prevented the local people from going out to collect the leftover flowers that have not been burnt by the forest fires. Last year, the season saw a major drop of 60-70 per cent in the flower harvest, and this year, too, is not promising.

These are difficult times for all but for the population of the hills of Uttarakhand, it is an exceptionally bad time as failing crops, forest fires and a beleaguered tourism industry in the wake of the pandemic means feeding a family has become a challenge.

According to a report by the State Government, these trying circumstances have already led to a mass exodus from the villages to the cities. The report confirms that currently there are a total of

1,065 ghost villages in the State whose population has migrated to the cities in search of better prospects and livelihoods.

The Uttarakhand State Government must set up a task force to investigate the rising scale of forest fires and simultaneously provide the fire department with state-of-the-art equipment including aerial firefighters so that the difficult terrain does not hamper firefighting operations. Similarly, afforestation efforts must be redoubled to compensate for the loss of the green cover. The locals understand the significance of the forest better than anybody else and hence must be given the ownership of the same. The afforestation drives must be carried out at the *tehsil*-level with the involvement of local communities, to expedite the rejuvenation of lost forest cover.

At moment of peril, Biden opens global summit on climate

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Saying the United States and other big economies "have to get this done," President Joe Biden opened a global climate summit on Thursday aimed at getting world leaders to dig deeper on emissions cuts. The United States pledged to cut in half the amount of climate-wrecking coal and petroleum fumes it is pumping out.

"Meeting this moment is about more than preserving our planet," Biden declared, speaking from a TV-style set for a virtual summit of 40 world leaders. "It's about providing a better future for all of us," he said, calling it "a moment of peril but a moment of opportunity."

"The signs are unmistakable. The science is undeniable. The cost of inaction keeps mounting," he added.

Biden's administration is sketching out a vision of a prosperous, clean-energy United States where factories churn out cutting-edge batteries for export, line workers relay an efficient national electrical grid and crews cap abandoned oil and gas rigs and coal

mines. His commitment to cut US fossil fuel emissions up to 52% by 2030 marks a return by the US to global climate efforts after four years of withdrawal under President Donald Trump. Japan, a heavy user of coal, announced its own new 46% emissions reduction target Thursday before the summit opened as the US and its allies sought to build momentum.

The Biden administration's pledge would require by far the most ambitious US climate effort ever, nearly doubling the reductions that the Obama administration had committed to in the landmark 2015 Paris climate accord.

The new urgency comes as scientists say that climate change caused by coal plants, car engines and other fossil fuel use is already worsening droughts, floods, hurricanes, wildfires and other disasters and that humans are running out of time to stave off most catastrophic extremes of global warming. But administration officials, in previewing the new target, dis-

closed aspirations and vignettes rather than specific plans, budget lines or legislative proposals for getting there.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris opened the Earth Day summit from the White House East Room before world leaders, including those from China, Russia, India, Gulf oil states, European and Asian allies and island and coastal nations already struggling against the effects of climate change. Pope Francis was also due to take part.

Biden planned to join a second session of the livestreamed later in the morning on financing poorer countries' efforts to remake and protect their economies against global warming.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the summit was playing out as a climate telethon-style livestream, limiting opportunities for spontaneous interaction and negotiation. The effort opened with a technological glitch — an echo in Harris's and Biden's remarks that was soon fixed.

Xi reiterates carbon emissions pledge at summit



AP ■ WASHINGTON

China's President Xi Jinping reiterated his country's pledge to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

Xi spoke at the global climate summit hosted by the United States on Thursday. He says, "We must be committed to green development. To improve the environment is to boost productivity."

Xi says developed countries, responsible for greater historical carbon emissions, should bear more responsibility for making changes at home and helping developing countries finance their transition to low-carbon economies.

He says, "We must be committed to the principle to common but differentiated responsibilities." Xi emphasises that China is aiming to move from peak carbon to net zero in a short time period -- just 30 years, or the span of one generation.

Senate committee approves China strategic competition Bill, backs enhanced security ties with India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A powerful Senate committee has overwhelmingly approved the key China strategic competition Bill which among other things supports the QUAD grouping and enhances security partnership with India.

Known as the "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the Quad grouping comprises the US, India, Australia and Japan. The representatives for the four-member nations have met periodically since its establishment in 2007. The top leaders of the four countries held a historic virtual summit hosted by President Joe Biden last month.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, following a three hour debate and several amendments voted 21-1 to approve the Strategic Competition Act on Wednesday.

The United States should reaffirm its commitment to the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership with India and further deepen bilateral defence consultations and collaboration with the country, says the bipartisan bill moved by Senators Jim Risch and Bob

Menendez, ranking member and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It urges the US government that in close consultation with India, identify areas where it can provide diplomatic and other support as appropriate for India's efforts to address economic and security challenges posed by China in the region.

The two lawmakers described the legislation as an unprecedented, bipartisan effort to mobilise all American strategic, economic, and diplomatic tools for an Indo-Pacific strategy that enables the US government to compete effectively with China and the challenges it poses to its national and economic security for decades to come.

One amendment moved by Senator Edward Markey, and approved seeks to establish a QUAD Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to connect together lawmakers from the United States, Japan, Australia and India. Markey is chair of the Asia-Pacific subcommittee.

"The Quad Inter-Parliamentary Group will help our four countries diversify cooperation on issues beyond its traditional defence focus such as by delivering alterna-

tives to China's Belt and Road in the Indo-Pacific and delivering on the promise to provide over one billion COVID-19 vaccines to the region," he said.

The bill bolsters the United States diplomatic strategy in addressing challenges posed by the Chinese government and reaffirms America's commitment to its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world, and calls for the United States to reassert its leadership within international organisations and other multilateral fora.

It renews America's commitment to allies and partners by prioritising security assistance for the Indo-Pacific region, and strengthens US diplomatic efforts to address challenges posed by China in the Western Hemisphere, Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Arctic, and Oceania.

The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region for American foreign policy. China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas. Beijing has also made substantial progress in militarising its man-made islands in the past few years.

78 militants killed in Afghanistan in 24 hours

Kabul: At least 78 Taliban militants were killed in various operations conducted by Afghan government forces in the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Defence announced on Thursday.



"Forty-four Taliban militants were also wounded and eight others were arrested as a result of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) operations in Ghazni, Zabul, Herat, Paktika, Balkh, Nimroz, Helmand and Kandahar provinces," the Ministry says in a statement.

The ANDSF also discovered and seized weapons and defused 36 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and landmines during the cited period, Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying.

The statement didn't say if there were any casualties on the side of the Afghan security forces.

The Taliban outfit has not made comments on the Ministry's report so far. IANS

Hong Kong journalist convicted for accessing public records

Hong Kong: A Hong Kong journalist was found guilty on Thursday of making false statements in obtaining information for an investigation into an attack on anti-government protesters, in the latest blow to press freedom in the city as authorities continue their crackdown on dissent.

Choy Yuk-ling, also known as Bao Choy, was arrested in November on charges of falsely declaring why she was obtaining license plate information from a publicly accessible database.

She was attempting to track down the perpetrators of a violent attack by a mob of white-clad men on protesters in a subway station in 2019 for an investigative documentary for public broadcaster RTHK.

Principal Magistrate Ivy Chui said the Road Traffic Ordinance only allows the public to obtain vehicle ownership records for transport or traffic-related matters, legal matters, or for vehicle purchases.

She said Choy declared in her online application that she would use the information for

"other traffic and transport related issues." The application does not provide an option for journalistic research.

Choy, a freelancer affiliated with RTHK, pleaded not guilty. She was convicted on two counts of making false statements and fined 6,000 Hong Kong dollars (USD 775).

The documentary Choy was working on, titled "7.21 Who Owns the Truth," also explored the behavior of Hong Kong police during last year's anti-government protests. Police were accused of not intervening during the attack in the subway station.

Ahead of the court session, supporters of Choy held placards that read "Journalism is not a crime" and chanted slogans.

Media groups are concerned that Hong Kong's new security law, which outlaws secession, subversion and foreign collusion to interfere in the city's internal matters, could be used against journalists reporting on issues considered related to national security. AP

Congress leader urges Biden to take steps against 'increase' in hate crimes against Sikhs in US

Washington: Senior Congress leader Manish Tewari has written to US President Joe Biden expressing concern over "increase" in hate crimes against Sikhs in America, saying last week's Indianapolis shooting has reverberated throughout the community both in India and the diaspora.

Eight people, including four members of the Sikh community, three of whom were women, were killed in a mass shooting at a FedEx location in Indianapolis.

"As we approach the 20th anniversary of the dastardly 9/11 attacks, it is regrettable but needs to be flagged that the aftermath of that catastrophe saw an increase in hate crimes targeting the Sikh community," Tewari said in a letter to Biden that was delivered to the White House on Wednesday.

The Congress leader expressed "deepest condolences" to the aggrieved families of the "horrific and dastardly" tragedy at Indianapolis.

"I represent the constituency of Sri Anandpur Sahib in the Indian Parliament. This constituency is located in the

state of Punjab situated in the North West of India. Punjab is the natural and spiritual home of millions of Sikhs who live across the world," he said.

"This unfortunate outrage in Indianapolis has reverberated throughout the community both in India as well the diaspora. This tragedy is personal for me as it was in Sri Anandpur Sahib that the Sikh faith was consecrated on the 13th of April 1699," wrote the Congress leader.

Tewari highlighted the August 2012 attack on a Sikh temple at Oak Creek in Wisconsin which claimed seven lives. "Members of the Sikh faith once again became victims of a perverse mindset," he said.

"May I on behalf of the over two million people that I represent and the state that the community calls its organic home, appeal to your good self to kindly advise all US state governors and mayors to try and ensure that members of the Sikh faith are protected from such gut wrenching and absolutely senseless attacks," Tewari wrote. PTI

Vanita Gupta scripts history as first Indian American to be US' associate attorney general

Washington: Prominent Indian-American civil rights lawyer Vanita Gupta has been confirmed by the US Senate as associate attorney general, making her the first person of colour to occupy the third highest position at the Department of Justice.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski broke away from her party colleagues to support Gupta (46), giving the Democrats 51 votes to see her through the historic confirmation on Wednesday.

The Senate voted 51-49 to confirm Gupta. Vice President Kamala Harris was present in the Senate to cast her vote in case of a tie. The two parties have 50 members each in the 100-seat United States Senate.

"Congratulations to Vanita Gupta on making history as the first woman of colour to serve as associate attorney general. Now, I urge the Senate to confirm Kristen Clarke. Both are eminently qualified, highly respected lawyers who are dedicated to advancing racial equity and justice," President Joe Biden said.

Gupta is also the first civil rights lawyer to serve at one of the top three positions at the

Department of Justice.

Senate Majority Leader, Senator Chuck Schumer, who played a key role in her confirmation, said Gupta is the first-ever woman of colour and civil rights attorney to serve in the role.

"She will bring a long overdue perspective to our federal law enforcement agency," he said.

The daughter of Indian immigrants who was born and raised in the Philadelphia area, Gupta has had an illustrious career of fighting for civil rights.

She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University and Juris Doctor from New York University.

At the age of 28, she started her career at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund where she successfully overturned the wrongful drug convictions of 38 Black Americans in Tulsa, Texas. While at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), she fought to end mass incarceration and secured a landmark settlement against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on behalf of immigrant children that led to the end of family detention at the facility. PTI

4 killed in Quetta hotel blast

IANS ■ QUETTA:

Four people were killed and over a dozen others injured when an explosive-laden vehicle exploded inside the parking lot of a hotel in Pakistan's Quetta city, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad confirmed.

There was a threat alert in Quetta and other major cities after some suspicious calls were intercepted, and security was on high alert including cities in Balochistan, Rasheed told Xinhua news agency on Wednesday night.

He said that despite the security measures, the vehicle carrying explosives managed to enter the parking lot from the main gate of the Serena hotel, which is a matter of big concern and the responsible people will be taken to task for creating security lapse which gave terrorists a chance to carry out the attack.

Terror group Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility in a text message to journalists saying a suicide bomber launched the attack targeting locals and foreigners, but the claim has not yet been officially confirmed. PTI

Accomplice in 2016 France terror attack arrested in Italy

Rome: Italian police have said they arrested a 28-year-old Albanian man suspected to be an accomplice in the 2016 terror attack in Nice, France, which claimed the lives of 86 people.

Italian police said in a statement on Wednesday that the man, for whom a European arrest warrant was in place, was captured near Caserta, north of Naples, thanks to a coordinated effort between Italian,

Albanian and French authorities, reports dpa news agency.

Eighty-six people were killed on Bastille Day, 2016, when Tunisian-born Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel ploughed a truck through crowds watching a fireworks display on the seaside promenade in Nice, in southern France.

Lahouaiej Bouhlel himself was shot dead by two police officers who chased his truck on foot as it swerved through the crowd.

The 28-year-old Albanian man is suspected of having sold weapons to the attacker, Italian media reported.

The Nice attack was claimed by Islamic State, but while investigators determined that Lahouaiej Bouhlel held extremist views, they did not firmly establish any link with the terror group. IANS

Commonwealth report finds racism against Indian WWI martyrs, UK Govt offers apology

London: Entrenched prejudices, preconceptions and pervasive racism of contemporary imperial attitudes meant that nearly 50,000 Indian soldiers who died fighting for the British Empire during the World War I were not commemorated the same way as other martyrs, finds a new review released on Thursday.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), which commemorates the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars, had created a Special Committee in late-2019 to investigate potential gaps in the commemoration of those who died during and after the World War I.

It found that an estimated

45,000-54,000 casualties, predominantly Indian, East African, West African, Egyptian and Somali personnel, were commemorated unequally.

A further 116,000 casualties, potentially as many as 350,000, were not commemorated by name or possibly not commemorated at all.

"Underpinning all these decisions... were the entrenched prejudices, preconceptions and pervasive racism of contemporary imperial attitudes," notes the 'Review of Historical Inequalities in Commemoration'.

UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace made a formal apology on behalf of the government in the House of Commons in relation to the findings.

"There can be no doubt prejudice played a part in some of the Commission's decisions," the minister told the members of parliament.

"On behalf of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the government both of the time and today, I want to apologise for the failures to live up to their founding principles all those years ago and express deep regret that it has taken so long to rectify the situation. Whilst we can't change the past, we can make amends and take action," he said.

"We are sorry for what happened and will act to right the wrongs of the past," said Claire Horton, Director General of the CWGC.

"Our response today is simple: the events of a century ago were wrong then and are wrong now," she said, adding

that the Commission would now work on actioning the recommendations of the review.

During the World War I (1914-18), India, which at that time included Pakistan and Bangladesh under British colonial rule, sent the largest share of Commonwealth soldiers to the war effort at over 1.4 million.

Shrabani Basu, historian-author of 'For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front, 1914-18' and one of the committee members behind the review, said the most shocking fact that came to light during the research was that nearly 50,000 Indian soldiers had not been commemorated in Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt and the "sheer callousness" with which an Indian Army general had advised the then Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), later changed to CWGC, saying that Hindu and Muslim soldiers placed "no importance" on their names being recorded on graves and therefore they could just be mentioned in memorial tablets.

"From my research, I knew that this was not true at all. They wanted to be remembered," said Basu.

"A Sikh soldier specifically tells his officer that he would understand if he couldn't be cremated and had to be buried, but he would like his name recorded on a headstone. Another Dogra soldier says that if he is to be buried, his shoes should not be put in his grave. PTI

Russia holds major drills in Crimea amid Ukraine tensions

AP ■ MOSCOW

The Russian military on Thursday conducted massive drills in Crimea involving dozens of navy ships, hundreds of warplanes and thousands of troops in a show of force amid tensions with Ukraine.

The maneuvers were described as the largest since Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 and threw its weight behind separatist insurgents in eastern Ukraine.

The exercise comes amid increasing violations of a ceasefire in Ukraine's east and a massive Russian troops buildup on the border with Ukraine that raised Western concerns.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the Crimean maneuvers involve more than 60 ships, over 10,000 troops, around 200 aircraft and about 1,200 military vehicles.

The exercise featured the landing of more than 2,000 paratroopers and 60 military vehicles on Thursday. Fighter jets covered the airborne operation.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu flew in a helicopter over the Opuk firing range in Crimea to oversee the exercise.

Last week, Russia has announced that it would close broad areas of the Black Sea near Crimea to foreign navy ships and state vessels until November, a move that drew Ukrainian protests and raised

Western concerns. Russia also announced restrictions on flights near Crimea this week, arguing that they fully conform with the international law.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba warned Tuesday that the Russian buildup across the border is continuing and is "expected to reach a combined force of over 120,000 troops" in about a week and urged the West to beef up sanctions against Moscow.

Moscow has rejected Ukrainian and Western concerns about the buildup, arguing that it's free to deploy its forces anywhere on the Russian territory and charging that they don't threaten anyone. But at the same time, the Kremlin sternly warned Ukrainian authorities against trying to use force to retake control of the rebel east, where seven years of fighting have killed more than 14,000, saying that Russia could be forced to intervene to protect civilians in the region.

Amid the tensions, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday signed a law allowing the call-up of reservists for military service without announcing a mobilization. The new law will allow to quickly equip the military with reservists, "significantly increasing their combat effectiveness during military aggression," Zelenskyy's office said in a statement.

UJVN LIMITED
H. O. "UJJAWAL" MAHARANI BAGH, GMS ROAD, DEHRADUN-248006
(Tele.: 0135-2763908, Fax: 0135-2763508)
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, website: www.ujvn.com

Corrigendum and Time Extension Notice

Due to unavoidable circumstances the due dates of NIT No.: e-44/EE/M&G/DKN/2020-21 for "Strengthening of perimeter lighting system at Dhakrani Power Station" invited by the Office of Executive Engineer (M&G), Dhakrani is hereby extended as follows:
Last Date for receipt of bid in the portal: **03-05-2021 up to 18:00 Hrs**
Last date of submission of documents in office: **04-05-2021**
Date of opening of bid on the website: **05-05-2021 at 11:00 Hrs**
Also Unit of Item no 1.06 & 1.07 in BOQ will be read as "meter" in place of "Nos".
Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website www.ujvn.com. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://uktdenders.gov.in>.
(Executive Engineer)

पत्रांक सं 306/दिनांक 22/04/2021
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

The general public is hereby informed that an unidentified person about 35-40 years of age whose name, residence, and family is unknown had been found unconscious near Punjabi bagh gol chakkar at about 9:30 pm on 30/03/2021. The unknown patient was admitted to Maharaja Agrasen Hospital in an unconscious state, during the treatment he was declared dead by the doctors. In this regard, a wide has been registered with FIR No: 255/21, u/s 279/337 at PS Punjabi Bagh, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to identify the deceased person, but no clue has come to light so far.

The description of the UIDB is as under:
Sex: Male, **Age:** 35-40 Years, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Oval, **Built:** Strong, **Identification:** A scar on the right leg, **Wearing:** Striped light pink colour shirt, striped light blue colour track pant and blue colour towel.

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

E-mail : cic@cbl.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639

SHO
P.S. Punjabi Bagh, Delhi.
Ph. No. +91 - 8758871124

DP/420/W/2021

Appeal for Identification

General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body **Name:** Unknown, **S/o** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 35 years, **Height:** 5'8", **Complexion:** Fair, **Face :** Oval, **Built:** Thin, **Hair:** Black, & **Bearded Wearing:** Black Shirt & Black Pant bare feet found at Hathi Khana Chowk Chandni Chowk, Delhi In this regard DD No. 40A Dt. 16.04.2021 has been lodged in PS Kotwali, North District, Delhi. The dead body of the deceased has been preserved in Mortuary Subzi Mandi, for identification for 72 hrs.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S., Kotwali, Delhi
Ph. : 011-23977100, 8750870121

DP/1127/N/2021

S&P forecasts 11 per cent growth for India this fiscal

FLAGS 'SUBSTANTIAL' IMPACT OF BROADER LOCKDOWNS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Thursday said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 11 per cent in the current fiscal, but flagged the "substantial" impact of broader lockdowns on the economy.

In its report on Asia-Pacific Financial Institutions, S&P said the control of Covid-19 remains a key risk for the economy. New infections have spiked in recent weeks and the country is in the middle of a second pandemic wave.

"Our forecast growth of 11 per cent for India in 2021 is followed by a 6.1 per cent-6.4 per cent forecast increase for the next couple of years... Some targeted lockdowns have already been implemented and more will likely be needed. The impact of broader lockdowns on the economy could be substantial, depending on their length and scope," it said.

S&P, which currently has a 'BBB-' rating on India with a stable outlook, has forecast an 11 per cent growth in the Indian GDP for the fiscal beginning April 1 on account of a fast economic reopening and fiscal stimulus.

As per official estimates, the Indian economy contracted 8 per cent in 2020-21 fiscal, which ended March 31, 2021.

Last week, another global rating agency Moody's Investors Service had said the second wave of COVID infections presents a risk to India's growth forecast, but double-digit GDP growth is likely in 2021 given the low level of activity last year.

India is in the middle of the second wave of COVID pandemic and has witnessed over 3.14 lakh new infections and 2,104 deaths on Wednesday.

Active COVID cases in the country stand at over 22.91 lakh.

In the report, S&P said credit conditions have improved for Asia-Pacific banks over the past quarter.

Economies are recovering smartly, countries are rolling out vaccinations, and regional financing circumstances remain supportive. And yet, the pandemic has so seriously set back the finances of households and corporates, with deeply negative effects on lenders, S&P said. It expects banks may need years to fully recover.

Public authorities across Asia-Pacific have blunted the economic effects of COVID-19. This includes an unprecedented level of fiscal and monetary policy support for households and corporates and measures to encourage banks to lend and show forbearance toward stressed borrowers.

But for this support, the hit on the Asia-Pacific financial institutions would have been much more significant.

Sensex snaps 2-day losing run; bank, finance stocks advance

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks darted up on Thursday after two sessions of losses as investors piled into banking and finance stocks even as the deteriorating Covid-19 situation remained a concern.

The benchmarks were propped up by bargain-hunting in select frontline counters as well as supportive global cues, traders said.

After skidding 501 points in the opening session, the 30-share BSE Sensex pared all losses to end 374.87 points or 0.79 per cent higher at 48,080.67.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty jumped 109.75 points or 0.77 per cent to finish at 14,406.15.

ICICI Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging 3.60 per cent, followed by HDFC, Bajaj Auto, HDFC Bank, SBI, Kotak Bank, Bajaj Finance and Axis Bank.

On the other hand, Titan, HUL, Asian Paints, Nestle India, UltraTech Cement and

Tech Mahindra were among the laggards, shedding up to 2.75 per cent.

"A persistent rise in COVID-19 cases across the country and enhanced mobility restrictions imposed by number of states are expected to remain as key drags for the market in the near term. This has certainly started posing as a threat to corporate earnings recovery.

"Notably, possibility of supply disruption and increased COVID-19 cases in hinterland area can further hurt economic momentum. We believe market is expected to remain volatile until we see a reversal in COVID-19 cases," said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

India registered over 3.14 lakh new coronavirus cases in a day, the highest-ever single-day count recorded in any country, taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases in the country to 1,59,30,965, as per the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

Rupee drops by 6 paise to 74.94 as Covid caseload surges

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee weakened further by 6 paise to close at 74.94 against the US dollar on Thursday as a persistent rise in Covid-19 cases and enhanced restrictions imposed by states weighed on investor sentiment.

Increased concerns over forex outflows weighed on the local unit, analysts said. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened sharply lower at 75.25 against the greenback and traded in the range of 74.82 to 75.26 during the day. On Tuesday, the rupee had settled down at 74.88 against the American currency.

Vaccinating everyone above 18 yrs to cost just 0.36% of GDP: India Ratings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vaccinating all citizens above the age of 18 years against Covid-19 will cost ₹ 67,193 crore, of which states together will incur ₹ 46,323 crore, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said on Thursday.

As the second wave of Covid-19 sweeps the country with alarming speed and severity, the Government has announced a liberalised and accelerated Phase 3 strategy of Covid-19 vaccination. Under this scheme, all persons above 18 years of age will be eligible to get Covid-19 vaccine doses from May 1. This means that the total size of the population that will now be eligible for vaccination would be 84.19 crore out of the total population of 133.26 crore," it said a note.

India Ratings calculated that this "may cost ₹ 67,193 crore, of which the Union government will incur ₹ 20,870 crore and state governments together will incur ₹ 46,323 crore".

The government has made the pricing, procurement, eligibility and administration of coronavirus vaccines flexible. While the vaccination drive will continue as before, providing free vaccination to priority populations such as healthcare workers, frontline workers and population above 45 years of age, states and Union territories have been allowed to procure additional COVID-19 vaccine doses directly from the manufacturers and open-up vaccination to people above the age of 18 years.

As a result, Indian vaccine manufacturers would now be supplying 50 per cent of their production to the central government and the balance 50 per cent would be available for procurement by the state governments and the open market (private hospitals).

Ind-Ra said the Union government has already spent Rs 5,090 crore on procuring 21.4 crore vaccines from Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech.

Inflows in sustainable funds surge 76 pc to ₹3,686 cr in FY21

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Driven by increased investor interest in environmental, social and governance issues, sustainable funds in India attracted Rs 3,686 crore in the 2020-21, a jump of 76 per cent from the preceding fiscal.

Moreover, the COVID-19-led crisis has only accelerated the demand for sustainable investing.

Sustainable or ESG (environmental, social, and governance) funds in India witnessed an inflow of Rs 3,686 crore in just-concluded fiscal as compared with Rs 2,094 crore in 2019-20, according to Morningstar data.

Such funds offer exposure to themes such as renewable energy, low carbon, green transport and environmental protection.

Morningstar India Director and Manager

(Research) Kaustubh Belapurkar said, "While still early days in India from an ESG funds perspective, the launch of ESG funds has increased investor awareness significantly. Many domestic asset domestic managers are already incorporating ESG principles in their overall investing framework."

He further said corporate India is also increasingly acknowledging the need to effectively manage the ESG factors as means to mitigate business risks as well as attract long-term capital from investors who are increasingly considering ESG factors to make investment decisions.

In addition, domestic regulations are also calling for greater disclosures from companies with respect to their sustainability practices, Belapurkar said.

Winvesta co-founder

Prateek Jain said ESG conscious investing is just starting in India and investors are paying more attention on how socially responsible their portfolio is. "Investors have started embracing the fact that they don't have to sacrifice returns by opting for high ESG stocks, as identified in several studies."

The Indian mutual fund industry witnessed increased interest in ESG Funds, with the launch of several new ESG funds in the second half of 2020-21.

Among the new launches are Aditya Birla Sun Life ESG, ICICI Prudential ESG, Kotak ESG Opportunities, Quant ESG Equity Fund, Invesco India ESG Equity and Mirae Asset ESG Sector Leaders ETF. ICICI Prudential ESG fund raised USD 225 million in assets, making it the most successful new ESG launch in India, Morningstar noted.

BP, Infosys ink pact to develop integrated Energy-as-a-Service offering

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Infosys and bp on Thursday announced that they have signed an MoU under which both companies intend to work together to develop an integrated Energy-as-a-Service (EaaS) offering that will provide end-to-end management of a customer's energy assets and services.

Together, the companies intend to explore opportunities using bp's energy and mobility expertise and Infosys' digital capabilities to manage energy assets, provide low carbon power, low carbon heating/cooling, and low carbon mobility to campuses, driven by an AI-based digital platform, an Infosys statement said.

BP's integrated energy offer draws on technologies and

businesses in solar and wind together with gas for power, fuels, electric vehicle charging, battery swapping and advanced mobility solutions, it said.

"The integrated EaaS solution aims to enable Infosys campuses to access low carbon energy and mobility options, use energy more efficiently, and to optimise supply and demand across multiple users and assets, without having to invest in additional energy infrastructure", the statement said.

Following a pilot at Infosys' Pune campus, the companies intend to extend the offer to other Infosys campuses and explore opportunities to manage energy and reduce emissions at industrial and business parks as well as cities.

HR tech can shape up firm's future

New Delhi: As the Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated remote and flexible working models, the new system calls for the need to incorporate an HR tech tool for organisations to adapt to the shifting work environment while not compromising on the work done. Using digitalisation and automation, HR technology has transformed the paper-cluttered, noisy and manual work dependent department to a simpler and cloud-based system that liberates HR professionals from administrative burdens.

"What was once considered to be a fad is clearly now a necessity. HR tech opened a window of opportunities for companies with its tailored features and efficiency," said Dheeraj Kumar Pandey, chief advisor for HR Systems and processes, Keka Technologies Pvt Ltd.

KIIT Ranked 201+ Globally in Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

RANKED 86TH IN 'REDUCED INEQUALITIES' GLOBALLY

impact of university, every year the Times Higher Education conducts rankings of higher education institutions across the globe. As KIIT has been fulfilling all criteria of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, THE has given 201+ rank to KIIT in the overall Impact ranking. The Impact Rankings of the Times Higher Education evaluates the social responsibility of universities across the world.

Also, It has been ranked 86th in 'Reduced Inequalities' of SDG. For this, it has ranked within 100 universities of the world at least in a single parameter. KIIT has got the rank 101+ in 'Partnership for The Goals' and 201+ in 'Quality Education & Peace and Justice & Strong Institutions' each. It is the only university in eastern India to achieve such an impressive rank. In 2020 KIIT was ranked in 501+ category 'Workplace of the Year' by the Times Higher Education.

Deeds are the best answer to injurious words. That way Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar remains a torch bearer among the fraternity and its achievements don't require a spokesman. KIIT has been placed among the top universities of the world in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings-2021 announced on 21st April 2021. KIIT's commitment to sustainability and Equity gets recognition by THE.

On the yardsticks of community-based university and

WNS Q4 net profit dips 6.7 pc to USD 27.5 mn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Business process management (BPM) major WNS Holdings on Thursday reported a 6.7 per cent decline in net profit at USD 27.5 million (around ₹206.2 crore) for the March 2021 quarter.

As per the general accounting standards, the company had registered a net profit of USD 29.5 million in the year-ago same period, WNS said in a statement.

The company's revenues fell 1.8 per cent to USD 243.9 million in the quarter under review,

from USD 248.3 million in the year-ago period. Sequentially, it increased 2.3 per cent from USD 238.4 million in the December 2020 quarter. "Year-over-year, fiscal Q4 revenue was adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic including lower volume requirements from certain clients and service delivery constraints resulting from the transition to a 'work from home' delivery model," WNS said. These headwinds more than offset the year-over-year revenue growth driven by new client additions, the expansion of existing relationships, and currency movements net of hedging, it added.

Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) on Thursday said that it has appointed Ernst & Young (EY) as its digital consultant.

According to IOB, the digital consultant would help it to stay focussed on leveraging and adopting new technologies and to enhance the service quality and

IOB appoints EY as digital consultant

CIANS ■ CHENNAI

service delivery to its customers.

With this new initiative, the Bank is poised to attract Millennial customers who are tech-savvy.

The bank will now be confident of providing all customers a hassle free and seamless banking experience, said Partha Pratim Sengupta, Managing Director and CEO of IOB.

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The bank will now be confident of providing all customers a hassle free and seamless banking experience, said Partha Pratim Sengupta, Managing Director and CEO of IOB.

WESTERN RAILWAY

IMPROVEMENT OF PIT LINES WITH ELEVATED INSPECTION PATHWAYS

Divisional Railway Manager (WA) Western Railway, 6th Floor, Engg. Deptt., Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400 008, invites E-tender as per details given as follows:

Executive : Sr.DEN(Co)BCT, Tender Notice No.: BCT21-22/19.dtd. 20/04/2021.

Work and Location : Mumbai Central Car Shed - Improvement of Pit Lines 5 & 6 with Elevated Inspection Path Ways, in Mumbai Central Car Shed. Approx. Cost of Work : ₹ 46,89,267.66. EMD : ₹ 0/-.

Date and Time for Submission and Opening of Tenders : On 25/05/2021 till 15.00 hrs. and will be opened on same day at 15.30 hrs. Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document, EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.reps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered.

Follow us on: twitter.com/WesternRly

RBI cancels licence of Bhagyodaya Friends Urban Co-operative Bank

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Thursday said it has cancelled the licence of Bhagyodaya Friends Urban Co-operative Bank Limited (Amravati), as the lender does not have adequate capital and will be unable to pay its present depositors in full.

However, as per the data submitted by the bank, more than 98 per cent of the depositors will receive the full amounts of their deposits from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), the Reserve Bank said. On liquidation, every depositor would be entitled to receive a deposit insurance claim amount of his/her deposits up to a monetary ceiling of Rs 5 lakh from DICGC, subject to the provisions of the DICGC Act, 1961.

Bhagyodaya Friends Urban Co-operative Bank Limited, Warud, ceases to carry on banking business, with effect from the close of business on Thursday.

Giving reasons for cancelling the licence of the bank, the RBI said the lender does not have adequate capital and earning prospects and as such, it does not comply with the various provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Risha Sahni**, D/o Ruby Sahni, R/o RZ-31, Village Sayed, Paschim Vihar, Delhi, Age: 24 years, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Wearing: Dark Blue Kurta-Grey Chuni and brown chappale in her feet has been missing/ kidnapped from the area of P.S. Paschim Vihar West since **07.04.2021**. In this regard a case Vide **DD No. 06A**, dated **08.04.2021** has been registered at **P.S. Paschim Vihar West, Delhi**.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this girl please inform undersigned.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641 **SHO**
Fax : 011-24368639 **P.S. Paschim Vihar West, Delhi**
DP/832/OD/2021 **Ph. : 011-25268394, 25280980**

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED/MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a female (depicted in the photo), **Namely : Surbhi Handa W/o Pankaj Handa R/o H. No. 35/11, 1st Floor, Old Rajender Nagar, Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped from her house since **08.04.2021**. In this regard a case vide **DD No. 34A** dated **08.04.2021** has been lodged at **PS Rajender Nagar, Delhi**. Her physical description is as under:-

SURBHI HANDA

Age : 39 Years, Height: 5'6", Complexion : Shallow, Face : Round, Build : Normal, Identification : Stiches in right foot Thumb, Wearing : White and pink colour T-shirt and Brown colour payjama.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing/kidnapped female, may inform SHO, Rajender Nagar, Delhi E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in, website: <http://cbi.nic.in> **SHO**

Phone: 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S Rajender Nagar, Delhi
Fax No. 011-24368639 **Central District, Delhi**
DP/754/CD/2021 **Ph. No. 011-28742712, 28744012**

PUBLIC NOTICE

"It is to inform to the public at large that my client Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Mr. Raj Kumar, approached Magma Housing Finance Limited for a Home Loan against Flat No. G-1, Ground Floor, Front side, MIG, Plot No. A-1/15, without roof right, area measuring 173.33 Sq. Yards, i.e., 144.92 Sq. Mtrs., situated at DLF Dilshad Extn. II, Block-A, in the area of Village, Brahmपुरa Alias Bhopura, Tehsil and Distt. Ghaziabad, U.P. hereinafter referred to as "the said property" which he is intending to purchase vide Notarized Agreement to sell dated 25.11.2020 executed by Mr. Salveer S/o Mr. Balaram in favour of Mr. Satish Kumar. Mr. Salveer became the owner of the said property vide Regd. Sale Certificate dated 18.07.2019 executed by M/S Can Fin Homes Ltd. through authorized signatory Mr. Sanjay Kumar in his favour. It is hereby declared that said property to be purchased by my client Mr. Satish Kumar from Mr. Salveer is free from all sorts of lien and encumbrances and title of said Property is Valid, clear and marketable. Any person having any type of claim/right/interest over the said property may inform in writing at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 10 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all types of Encumbrances, lien, etc."

[PRASOON LATA] Advocate
SG ASSOCIATES
Unit No 7, Basement Floor, Plot No C 78, Sector 2, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.
E-mail: Sgassociatespl@gmail.com
Mob: 7011127649/71130064

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Jyoti D/o Shripal R/o A-Block, Gali No. 1, 20 Foota Road, Brijpuri, Delhi** has been kidnapped since **26.03.2021** from B-1/252, B-Block, Yamuna Vihar, Delhi. In this regard a **FIR No. 153/21** dated **27.03.2021** has been lodged at **PS, Bhajanpura, Delhi**. The description of kidnapped girl is as under :

Name : Jyoti, Father's Name : Shripal, Age : 14 years, Height : 5'5", Complexion : Wheatish, Built : Medium, Face: Long, Wearing : Firozi Colour Suit, Green Colour Payjama and Chappal in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph : 011-24368639
Fax : 011-24368638, 24368641
Extn No. : 2101
DP/698/NE/2021

SHO
P.S., Bhajanpura, Delhi
Ph. : 011-22561071
8750870725

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one lady namely **Vandna W/o Devender R/o D-67, Manglapuri Village Palam, New Delhi** has been missing with Son namely **Sumit Age 10 years and Daughter Jiya Age - 13 years** from their residence since dated **03.04.2021**. In this regard, a case **DD No. 69A dt. 09.04.2021** has been registered at **P.S. Palam Village, Delhi**. The description of the missing lady is as under.

Age: 30 years, Height: 4' 10", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Built: Normal, Wearing: Red colour suit & Salwar. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out them but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing lady and her Son and Daughter then please inform P.S. Palam Village, Delhi at following Tel No./ e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>, providing clue about the person.

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 **Sd/- SHO**
Fax No. 011-24368639 **Palam Village, Delhi**
DP/628/SW/2021 **PH. 011-25365979,**
25365981, 7065036227

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General public is hereby informed that this female namely **Pooja D/o Sakhi Lal R/o Kendriya Kanya Vidyalaya Complex, A-Block, Defence Colony, New Delhi-24 Permanent Address: Village Bileri, Post Office Bachchon Chauki, P.S. Chandla, Distt. Chhaterpur, Madhya Pradesh Age : 14 years, Height : 5'1", Complexion : Wheatish, Build : Normal, Face : Long, wearing red-pink colour suit, black colour salwar and sleepers in feet, has been missing from her house. In this regard FIR No. 43/21 dated **03.04.2021** u/s 363 IPC has been registered at **P.S. Defence Colony New Delhi**.**

Any person having information or clue about this missing girl may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in **SHO : P.S. Defence Colony,**
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> **New Delhi,**
Fax: 24368639, **Tel.: 24368638/24368641**

UJVN LTD.
H.O. "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun.-248006
Telephones -0135-2763808 Fax: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

Tender Notice

Office of the Executive Engineer, (M&G) Pathri Power House, Bahadradab, Haridwar invites sealed tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tenders are given below:-

Tender No.: 01/EE(Pathri)/2021-22 - Rehabilitation and Modification works of E.O.T Crane of Pathri Power House.

Tender No.: 02/EE(Pathri)/2021-22 - O&M works of Cooling Water System of Pathri Power House during monsoon period.

Estimated Cost: Rs.24,90,000.00 (GST extra) & Rs. 8,46,370/- (GST extra) respectively.

Date of availability of bid document on website: 24.04.2021, from 11.00 Hrs.

Last date for submission of tender: 15.05.2021, up to 16.00 Hrs.

For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "www.ujvn.com"

EO No: 308 dt. 22.04.2021

Executive Engineer (M&G)

"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Signal & Telecom Engineer/Const./Northern Railway, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender for the following work:-

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Name of Work & Place | Outdoor Signalling work in connection with Provision of Loop line with Telecom accessories and shifting of LC-41 at MOZ station including doubling work of MOZ-TPZ in Delhi Division of Northern Railway |
| 2 | Completion Period : | 03 (Three) Months from the date of issue of LOA |
| 3 | Approx. Cost : | ₹ 54,43,637.41 |
| 4 | Earnest Money Amount: | NIL |
| 5 | Last date of upload and Date of Opening of Tender : | Tender documents can be uploaded by the tenderers on IREPS website w.e.f. 04.05.2021 to 18.05.2021 at 11.30 hours. Tender will be opened immediately after close of uploading of tender. |
| 6 | Sale/availability of Tender document on Rly. Website: | Tender documents will be available on IREPS website i.e. www.reps.gov.in from 04.05.2021 to 18.05.2021 upto 11.30 hrs. |

No.570-Sig-PS-Tender-114 Dated: 22.04.2021 900/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General public is hereby informed that this female namely **Pooja D/o Sakhi Lal R/o Kendriya Kanya Vidyalaya Complex, A-Block, Defence Colony, New Delhi-24 Permanent Address: Village Bileri, Post Office Bachchon Chauki, P.S. Chandla, Distt. Chhaterpur, Madhya Pradesh Age : 14 years, Height : 5'1", Complexion : Wheatish, Build : Normal, Face : Long, wearing red-pink colour suit, black colour salwar and sleepers in feet, has been missing from her house. In this regard FIR No. 43/21 dated **03.04.2021** u/s 363 IPC has been registered at **P.S. Defence Colony New Delhi**.**

Any person having information or clue about this missing girl may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in **SHO : P.S. Defence Colony,**
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> **New Delhi,**
Fax: 24368639, **Tel.: 24368638/24368641**



Bollywood
 'Driving the truck in Sardar Ka Grandson was a once in a lifetime experience for me.'
 —Rakul Preet Singh

MINIMISE THE HUMAN TOUCH

K E RANGANATHAN shares the need for high tech-driven bathrooms amid the pandemic

While many would like to flush the year 2020 down the toilet, bathroom tech is a no joke. Today, we live in a rapidly changing, technological world, where technology affects several parts of our lives. As it continues to progress, the way we interact with our environment will likely only grow more and more futuristic — even spaces as personal as our home bathrooms. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic breakout, which requires adequate social distancing and minimal human touch, technology-led products and solutions in bathroom space are much in demand.



Smart in-wash with in-tank WCs: Modern toilets do not require hands or paper. These toilets have temperature-controlled water, spritzing wands and air dryers to clean and sanitize. Giving a unique feeling of cleanliness, the in-wash technology will allow you to customise all washing and drying functions with an intuitive (remote/inbuilt) control panel. To take it a step further, the smart toilet with in-tank integrates the tank into the bowl, removing the cistern from the bathroom space, making it more appealing. It is such a pleasant and transforming comprehensive experience of cleanliness and comfort that it has found its place in many homes.

There is an increased emphasis on products that minimise the human touch and are equipped with sensor technology or products that effectively prevent germ buildup. While bathrooms have traditionally been functional, utilitarian spaces, the latest developments in technology are making bathing an even more luxurious experience. Individuals are opting for ultra-modern bathrooms that are beyond functionality, aesthetic in nature and have a wellness quotient attached to their space. Here is how you can amp up your bathroom experience and make it futuristic.

Furniture unit with bluetooth speakers and internal lighting: Now even furniture units can be one of the elements that adds comfort in the bathroom space with inbuilt bluetooth connectivity speakers, power outlet and internal lighting. With internal compartments for all the toiletries, there will be plenty of room to store almost everything in one place, giving a neater, spacious and smart look to one's bathroom along with a fun element — getting ready on your favourite music beats and perfect lighting.

IoT-based smart shower: With water flowing at the perfect temperature, a smart shower can be used by just a simple gesture through which one can adjust, modify or stop the water flow to lather up and continue enjoying it in the same condition afterward. An advanced design that comes equipped with a colour screen, temperature controls as well as touch buttons with integrated light adds to the look and feel of the bathroom. Its user-friendly technology boosts enjoyment by offering a very intuitive experience, even for children and the elderly. With this installed, bathers who like to sing in the shower can now enjoy this luxury effortlessly.

W+W Revolution: W+W is a state-of-the-art product that combines basin and toilet in one single piece. The basin of the W+W is integrated on the upper part of the tank of the toilet, allowing the reuse of the water we need



to wash in the flush of the cistern. A selective system discards the waste water, while a powerful filtering system keeps the remaining water clean and disinfected. Usage of this innovation can help in the reduction of water usage and allow more space in the bathroom without compromising aesthetics.

LED mirrors: Decorative and innovative mirrors are essential pieces in the bathroom space. To provide maximum comfort, mirrors are now adapting to the new demands with presence sensors to avoid hand contact and LED lights that allow an individual to fully appreciate every detail. With no physical contact required, the motion sensors activate LED lights simply with one hand motion and another sensor activates the demister device that avoids the hassle of wiping the mirror after showering, ensuring it always looks spotless. LED mirrors not just increase brightness in the bathroom but also generate a uniform reflection, with no brilliance or shades.

aim at total safety and hygiene in the bathroom, automatic taps controlled by a sensor are therefore a good alternative for making hand-washing more hygienic. These faucets are equipped with an infrared sensor that activates the water flow when a presence is detected, minimizing direct contact with the faucet, preventing the transmission of microorganisms and maximizing hygiene at home. It's high time to get high-tech with our toilets. Isn't it?

Sensor-based touchless faucets: As we

(The writer is the Managing Director of Roca Parryware.)



Raise your voices

Actor DIA MIRZA has always been vocal about environmental issues. She says that besides making efforts on the personal front, we must hold authorities accountable for changes in the environment too

Actor Dia Mirza has always been vocal about environmental issues. On the occasion of Earth Day on Thursday, she said we must hold authorities accountable for changes in the environment, too, besides making efforts on the personal front. "We need to mobilise greater momentum now than ever before. Of course, personal behaviour change will make a difference, but along with learning to lead more sustainable lifestyles, we also need to hold governments, industry and civil society accountable. We need to imbibe and disseminate scientific facts which are now more accessible than ever before," she said.

and environmental leaders work in synergy with people from all walks of life to protect the earth, a better world will come into being," she said.

She says that the pandemic has taught us a lot about how we are interlinked to the environment.

"The ongoing pandemic has made it abundantly clear that we have to change the way we live, produce, manufacture and consume. Today, the health of every single human being and our collective harmony hangs in the balance and is closely linked with the well-being of mother nature," she said.

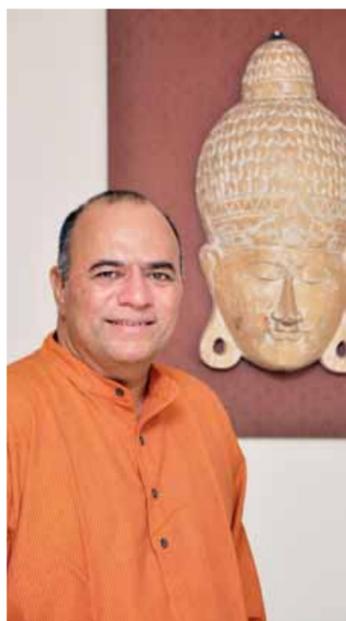
An awareness needs to be spread, asserted Dia, adding:

"What we need to begin with is the dissemination of environmental literacy at all possible levels because we cannot save what we are ignorant about. The theme of Earth Day this year is a clarion call to restore the balance of the natural world on which all of life depends."

'I love to research'

Filmmaker Dr CHANDRAPRAKASH DWIVEDI reveals that his forthcoming film Akshay Kumar-starrer *Prithviraj* is based mainly on an epic by Chand Bardai

Dr Chandraprakash Dwivedi clearly has a fascination to adapt from path-breaking books and create equally brilliant cinema. He has directed some incredibly reviewed projects like *Pinjar*, *Mohalla Assi* and the iconic television show *Chanakya*. The film-maker is busy with his next, *Prithviraj*, starring Akshay Kumar and Manushi Chhillar. On World Book Day, he reveals how an epic *Prithviraj Raso* is the inspiration behind this much-awaited historical.



"*Prithviraj* is based mainly on medieval literature, an epic called *Prithviraj Raso* by the great poet Chand Bardai. Apart from a couple of versions of *Raso*, there are many other literary works on *Prithviraj*, his life and times. In addition to these, there are commentaries on *Raso*," Dr Chandraprakash reveals.

He shares that for *Prithviraj*, he had to deep dive into exhaustive research on the warrior king. He says, "I get involved in exhaustive research as I enjoy the process of entering the unknown and unexplored world of great heroes of India and their times. It is like having a dialogue with these great characters in their times. I am sure most of the writers must have experienced this strange phenomenon."

"Apart from the story, I love to research art, archaeology, costumes, material culture and available historical data. In other words, I love to do archaeological exploration and excavation in the pages of a literary work or historical fiction to recreate the era and personalities of its time. This gives me immense pleasure and satisfaction as an artist who loves to paint cinema's canvas with lights and camera," adds he.

The filmmaker believes that the stories of great warriors like *Prithviraj* is extremely relevant in today's times, where good is constantly locked in a battle with evil. He says, "I do not make characters like *Prithviraj* to make them relevant for young viewers. I choose them as my subject for cinema because I feel they are

relevant for our times and the times to come. They are shining bright stars in the galaxy of great historical characters, which will inspire many generations to come."

The film, produced by YRF, is based on the life and heroism of the fearless and mighty king Prithviraj Chauhan. While Akshay (Kumar) will be seen essaying the role of the legendary warrior, who fought valiantly against the merciless Muhammad of Ghor, Manushi (Chhillar) plays the role of his beloved Sanyogita.

One of the things that always tops the list of our endless beauty concerns has to be dark circles. With our busy lifestyle and imbalanced sleep patterns, dealing or getting rid of the same has become a really difficult task. The endless home remedies and our eye cream stashes do not seem to help either. Dark circles are stubborn and a viable remedy to it seems to be unknown.

However, there's a holy ingredient in the block that is the answer to all your prayers when it comes to dark circles. It is none other than Vitamin C. Loaded with the goodness of antioxidants, Vitamin C is a skin-friendly nutrient that helps you tackle all of your skincare dilemmas, be it dark circles or dark spots, acne scars, pigmentation and more. It has been used since ages to restore skin's natural glow and achieve a radiant-looking skin. While most of us are not aware about its magical properties and it being a one-stop solution to those stubborn dark circles, it indeed works wonders.

The skin around our eyes is very thin and delicate which prompts the need for it to be handled with care. The first signs of ageing such as fine lines and puffiness start appearing around our eyes itself. Vitamin C has been known for its under-eye benefits in the realm of beauty and skincare since the longest time. But is it really worth it? Does it really come off as the best solution when it comes to dealing with dark circles? Let's have a look.

The right concentration of Vitamin C rejuvenates the delicate skin around the eyes without causing any irritation or other side-effects, ultimately helping it curb and deal with fine lines, puffiness and most importantly, dark circles. The goodness of antioxidants helps in skin lightening and the collagen production helps restore skin elasticity. These collectively help in reducing the appearance of dark circles in a very limited time. Vitamin C-based serums and eye creams are extremely effective and

Trend tool Say hi to Vitamin C

With a busy lifestyle and imbalanced sleep patterns, getting rid of dark circles has become a difficult task. Loaded with the goodness of antioxidants, the nutrient helps you tackle all your skincare dilemmas, shares ANUSHKA HAZRA



upon regular application in a well-monitored manner, you will see a difference in less than a week. What's even better is that it not only helps you deal with your dark circles but also prevents the appearance of the same in the future while giving your overall skin a vibrant, rejuvenated and youthful glow. In recent years, most beauty brands have started relying on Vitamin C as a key ingredient for their products, especially for their eye-care ranges. Some striking examples in this regard would be St Botanica, Reëquil, The Derma Co and more. Most Vitamin C-based products have been reviewed to work its wonders in a limited time in the best

way possible and beauty enthusiasts from around the world have remarked it as a holy ingredient, time and again.

Another way in which Vitamin C can be incorporated in our routine to deal with dark circles is by incorporating it into our diet because what we eat definitely reflects on our skin. A healthy diet always adds up to a healthy skin. Eating food rich in Vitamin C such as oranges, lemons, grapefruits and green veggies are a great way to begin. It helps improve the immunity system of our body which boosts the overall functionality, thus, aiding a reduction in the appearance of dark circles and other skin-related concerns. The antioxi-

dants help flush out toxins from the skin and protect it from sun damage and hence, the area of our skin most prone to such vulnerability, i.e the skin around our eyes remains protected too.

Vitamin C is indeed promising and the most viable solution to dark circles. However, for people with sensitive skin, they should try a patch test. Another thing that needs to be taken care of is moderation in application as high doses can cause skin irritation. Those dreaded panda eyes won't seem so dreadful anymore; just say hi to Vitamin C.

(The writer is the lifestyle creator at Trell.)

TRENDBLAZER



'EVERY NEEDY MUST GET VACCINE FOR FREE'

Actor **SONU SOOD** feels the COVID preventive vaccine should be available to the needy for free, and there should be a cap on pricing.

"Every needy should get vaccine for free. Very important to put a cap on the pricing. Corporates and individuals who can afford should come forward to help everyone get vaccinated. Let's do business some other time," Sonu Sood tweeted.

fairtalk



"In these trying times, I don't feel right to release my debut novel, *Mapping Love* on May 21, when there are so many humans affected by this treacherous virus. I have decided to wait as time heals to see bright faces on a normal day and we rejoice the love for all beautiful forms of art once again. Sending love to each and everyone. Take care of yourselves."

dailytalk



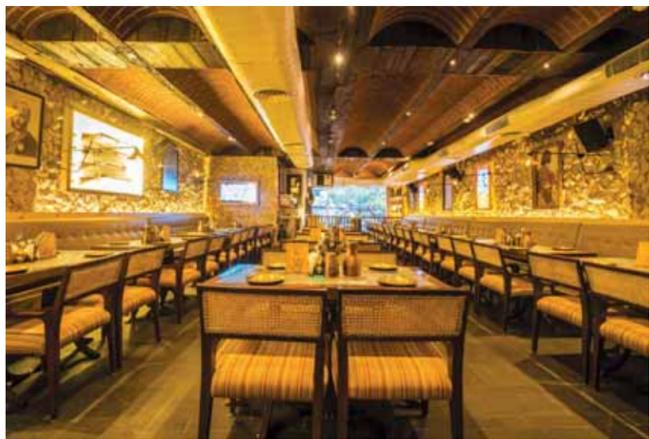
"For me, staying vegetarian was a personal choice that I made long back. I also wanted to concentrate on how that impacts my overall fitness. Food is a personal choice and we must eat what we feel is best for us, but my friends at PETA India and I encourage everyone to give being vegetarian a try if they so choose."

LOVELY HAVING FAMILY HOME: CATHERINE

Actor **CATHERINE ZETA-JONES** found it lovely to have her family at home amid the pandemic because she found it comforting to be with her closed ones.

She said, "I must say it was lovely when we were in a vulnerable and unknowing time to have my peeps, my loved ones around. I had my son home from college and my daughter home from school — she goes to school in Switzerland — so we were all back in our bubble."





Pull through the tough times

Here are four ways to run a restaurant amid the pandemic



It comes as no surprise the sudden surge in COVID cases has stopped many lot sectors in their tracks. The restaurant business is one such industry that has taken a huge hit again. But 2020 having prepared them with such adversity, they feel there still is a glimmer of hope to pull through the tough times. A restaurant which owns its own delivery model can help avoid aggressive commission rates, get direct orders and continue employment of the staff who can pitch in as delivery agents. Ankit Mehrotra, CEO & co-founder, Dineout, shares a few tips on how restaurants can avoid aggregator commissions and still ace the online ordering game.

helps close the gap virtually and lets us deliver our delicacies to our customers doorsteps," says Tushar Dhingra, Director, Defence Bakery 1962. "Customer experience and safety is our foremost priority at the moment. And keeping that in mind we continue to serve our customers without compromising on the delivery experience which is more in our control through our own online ordering platform. Additionally, we also give a personalised service in the form a menu specially curated by our chefs while keeping our customer dietary requirements in mind," says Arun Prasanna, General Manager, Byg Brewski Brewing Company.

and loyalty programmes. **RUN CAMPAIGNS (SMS & EMAIL)** Email and SMSs are one of the ways to bring the audience onto a restaurant's website and social media handles, time and again. This way, restaurants have the ability to communicate directly with their target audience and stay on top of their minds. These could include information regarding their operational time frame, special offers and combos that nudge the customer to make a purchase. inresto campaign is one such product which makes this happen in one click.

HAVE YOUR OWN WEBSITE & E-ORDER NOW WIDGET ON SOCIAL MEDIA Having your own website and social media presence can help restaurants save big and get online orders organically. Powerhouses like Defense Bakery 1962, Sidewok India, La Vie Pizzeria, Byg Breskey & 3000 more are making their business profitable with their own online ordering platform powered by inresto. "Forming our own relationship with customers has been our priority. That's one of the major reasons why they remember us fondly and keep coming back. And in such times when social distancing is paramount, our ordering platform

DELIVERY ONLY MENU The initial concept of a restaurant setup revolved around a dine-in set up with a certain ambience. The food and decor too matched to give the desired results. The same cannot be delivered to someone's doorstep. But a delivery-only menu can be crafted that takes less time to prep and travels well. An easy to browse menu along with enticing visuals can help customers make quick decisions, leaving them with a satisfactory user experience. The solution offers the liberty for restaurants to modify the menu anytime they want. Apart from this, it helps them keep track of the customer data, which later is used for running customer retention campaigns

MARKET YOUR BRAND Most customers are isolating at home, protecting themselves and their families. Staying indoors and listening to grim news can be demoralising, which is why so many are tuning into the latest IPL cricket season for entertainment. And entertainment is incomplete without good food. This is a great opportunity for restaurant businesses to grab those cricket fans' eyeballs through ads and promote their offers. One such platform is cricbuzz, and its partnership with inresto by Dineout lets their restaurant partners stay ahead in the game and get an edge over the competition by promoting their brand on the right platform. —JANS

THE SMELL OF TOGETHERNESS

Ikk Panjab is a history lesson, a living museum and a restaurant rolled into one, says AYUSHI SHARMA

For me, Punjabi food has always been a feast for all the senses. And while entering Ikk Panjab, tucked away in West Delhi, Block J of Rajouri Garden, I wondered just how would this place turn out? Would the restaurant be able to satisfy my cravings? Will it rule over the heart of a food lover like me? Well, in order to get my answers, I stopped wondering and found a comfortable corner spot.

The restaurant, segregated into two levels, honours the undying spirit of the land of five rivers as well as celebrate the food and cultural heritage of the pre-Partition undivided Punjab. While the interiors were modern but the accessories made it seem that it had stepped back in time. Photographs, artefacts and all the bric-a-brac on both floors were from the golden era. It wouldn't be wrong to say that the place is a history lesson, a living museum and a restaurant rolled into one.

Sitting near the open kitchen, I could smell the aroma of several food items wafting out. This had the effect of making me feel even more hungry than I already was. We started with *Rajjeya puijeya paneer tikka*. There came two Rubik's cube-sized pieces of cottage cheese, stuffed with *khoa*, marinated in curd and grilled in a *tandoor* for a smoky flavour. The size was daunting, to say the least, which bothered me. But the taste disappointed me even more. Although, it was grilled to perfection, had a crisp singe on the outside and was tender too, it tasted bland, unlike the traditional *paneer tikka*. Unfortunately, it didn't really make a mark on my tastebuds.

Next, in the starters, came *Motiyan wali makki* and *Tandoori aloo nazakat*. While the former was a combination of cheese and baby corn wrapped on a baby *butte*, cooked in *tandoor*; the latter had pieces of potato, marinated in rich spices, stuffed with dry fruits and *paneer*, and cooked over charcoal. It was topped with pomegranate seeds, which



made it look quite appealing. Properly cooked and roasted, these two tasted just right and elevated my experience, certainly, the stars of the evening. To accompany the dishes, I ordered one mocktail — *Ishq da sharbat*, which included buttermilk, roohafza and fresh watermelon juice, and a whisky-based cocktail — *Garmich sardi da shaasa bunta*, which had lime juice, honey and *masala bunta*. The drinks, perfect for summers, not only satisfied my thirst but also kept my body cool.

Moving on, I tried their *Tandoori bhuni chaat*, which had pineapple, apple, guava, mushroom, sweet potato and bell peppers, all roasted in *tandoor* and dipped in chef's special sauce. I preferred the dish's wholesome taste to its presentation.

By this time, I had had enough *paneer* and *tandoor*. So for the main course, I decided to go with anything but the two of them. The chef suggest-

ed that we should try *Adraki gobhi masala* and *Kadhi pakora* along with *cheese naan*. I must say both the dishes were the delight of the evening and much to my relief, without any marked flavours of the *tandoor*. The *naan* was huge and was filled with cheddar cheese, spring onions and green chillies.

I was pretty near saturation, however, I ordered *Kasore wali phirni* under *mittha*. I have had the dessert at many places but this was just how I like it — less sweet. Made up of milk along with pounded rice, flavoured with cardamom and saffron, it was served in a tiny earthen pot. It grew delicious with each bite.

I realised food is just one component of Ikk Panjab; from the atmosphere, the visual display units to copper tumblers and bell-metal quarter plates, everything portrayed multiple realities of the bygone era of the State.

R E C I P E S

DARK CHOCOLATE & BEETROOT BROWNIE, PUDDING WITH CASSIS CREAM

- WHAT YOU NEED**
- Cocoa solid dark chocolate: 100 gm
 - Egg: 2
 - Muscovado sugar: 125 gm
 - Vanilla extract: 1 tsp
 - Melted butter: 125 gm
 - Cocoa powder: 40 gm
 - Self-rising flour: 40 gm

- Grated and cooked beetroot: 150 gm
 - Double cream: 200 ml
 - Cassis liquor: 2 tbsp
 - Icing sugar (optional)
- METHOD**
- For brownie:**
- Pre-heat the oven to 180 degree C.
 - Lightly grease the ramekins using melted butter and a silicone brush.
 - In a medium-sized bowl, break



the chocolate into small pieces. Place the bowl over a saucepan of hot water to melt. Do not let the

water boil or the bowl touch the water.

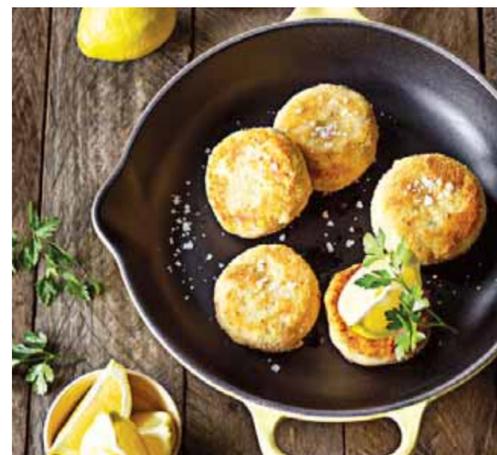
- In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, sugar and vanilla until thick and foamy.
- Use a medium-sized silicone spatula or spatula spoon to stir in the melted chocolate followed by the melted butter. Sift in the cocoa powder and flour. Gently stir.
- Fold in the grated, cooked beetroot.
- Divide the mixture between the

four ramekins and bake for 20 minutes.

The puddings are done when well risen and the surface is cracked. The centre will still be soft.

- For Cassis cream:**
- Whisk the cream until thickened and stir in the cassis liquor.
 - Serve the puddings warm with the cassis cream and a dusting of icing sugar (optional).

Courtesy: Le Creuset.



SMOKED SALMON FISH CAKES

- WHAT YOU NEED**
- Smoked salmon: 400 gm
 - Mashed potatoes: 300 gm
 - Melted butter: 2 tbsp
 - Wholegrain mustard: 2 tbsp
 - Fresh dill (chopped): 1 tbsp
 - Fresh parsley (chopped): 1 tbsp
 - Fresh chives (chopped): 1 tbsp
 - Lemon juice
 - Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 - Flour (seasoned): ½ cup
 - Eggs, beaten: 2
 - Breadcrumbs: 1½ cups
 - Oil: 100 ml

METHOD

- Preheat the oven to 190 degree celsius.
- Place the salmon in a roasting dish, cover with foil

and place in the oven for 15 minutes to heat through.

- Flake the salmon with a fork and place in a large bowl together with the mashed potatoes, butter, and mustard. Mix well.
- Add the dill, parsley, chives, lemon juice and zest. Season well with salt and pepper and mix thoroughly.
- Divide the mixture into 12 portions and form into balls. Flatten each ball to about one cm thick.
- Dip each fishcake in the seasoned flour, then the beaten egg and finally the breadcrumbs to coat each one.
- Fry the fishcakes in two tbsp oil over medium-high heat for five to eight minutes on each side until golden brown and crispy.

Courtesy: Le Creuset.

ALMOND ORANGE CAKE

- WHAT YOU NEED**
- For orange puree:**
- Orange malta: 2
- For cake batter:**
- Caster sugar: 225 gm
 - Honey/Invert sugar: 20 gm
 - Almond flour: 300 gm
 - Egg: 6
 - A pinch of salt
- For sugar syrup:**
- Sugar: 100 gm
 - Water: 100 ml
 - Rosemary sprig: 1
 - Lemon juice
 - Orange juice
- METHOD**
- For the orange puree:**
- Pierce the whole oranges with a knife.
 - Blanch the oranges in water five to six times.
 - Simmer the oranges in sugar syrup of 250 gm sugar and 250 gm water for about two hours. Let cool.
 - Grind into a paste



- For the sugar syrup:**
- Bring all the ingredients to a boil.
- For cake:**
- Whip the eggs and sugar till light and fluffy or till ribbon stage.
 - Whisk in the honey.
 - Mix in the orange puree.
 - Fold in the almond powder and salt.
 - Pour into the mould and bake at 160 degree C for 20 minutes or till golden brown.
 - Remove from the oven and soak in the sugar syrup.
 - Let cool. Garnish with oranges slices.
- Courtesy: Ila Sarwate, Academy of Pastry and Culinary Arts, Mumbai.

GREEK CUCUMBER WALNUT BITES

- WHAT YOU NEED**
- Walnuts, chopped: 1/2 cup
 - English cucumber, ends trimmed: 1
 - Roasted red pepper hummus: 1/2 cup
 - Crumbled feta cheese: 1/4 cup
 - Cherry tomatoes, quartered: 5
- METHOD**
- Pre-heat oven to 180 degrees C and arrange walnuts evenly on a small baking sheet.
 - Bake for eight minutes, check frequently, until toasted.
 - Slice cucumber crosswise into 18, 3/4 inch thick slices.
 - Using a small spoon, gently scoop out and discard the centre of each cucumber slice, leaving the bottom and the sides intact.
 - In a small bowl, stir six tablespoons of chopped



- walnuts and hummus.
 - Spoon walnut-hummus mixture into each cucumber slice and top with two reserved tablespoons of
 - chopped walnuts, feta cheese and quartered tomatoes.
 - Enjoy with delight.
- Courtesy: Chef Sabyasachi Gorai.

GAME ON 2021

IT WAS AN OUTSTANDING INNINGS FROM HIM (PADIKKAL). THERE WAS A LOT OF TALK ABOUT HIM NOT ACCELERATING AFTER GETTING TO 30S. HE'S PUT ALL THAT TO REST — **VIKAS KOHLI**



PERFECT 10

Padikkal's maiden IPL hundred (101) and his unbeaten 181 run opening stand with Kohli maintain RCB's win record with 10 wicket triumph over Rajasthan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Devdutt Padikkal managed to overshadow none other than the great Virat Kohli with an elegant hundred in Royal Challengers Bangalore's successful 178-run chase against Rajasthan Royals, in a virtual cakewalk of an IPL contest at Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.

It hardly happens that someone as brilliant as Kohli, plays a second fiddle, allowing the talented left-hander use his sinewy wrists to caress the balls to all parts of the ground during a mind-blowing maiden IPL century — an unbeaten 101 off 52 balls.

RCB never looked in any tearing hurry and yet the target was achieved in only 16.3 overs with all 10 wickets intact.

Kohli went on the offensive once Padikkal had ensured victory as his contribution was 72 not out off 47 balls in their unbroken opening stand of 181.

The RCB juggernaut continues to roll with their fourth victory on the trot and a strong foundation in the points table going into the third week of the tournament.

Royals, with a team that hardly inspires confidence, are again looking good for bringing up the rear.

The sixes that came off Padikkal's blade was

VIRAT RECORDS

6021 RCB skipper became the first batsman in IPL history to complete 6K runs.

5 Virat has also scored five hundreds in the tournament history, four of which came in the 2016 edition.

more about timing than power as he hit 11 fours and six sixes during his knock.

Picking the length of Mustafizur Rahaman's short ball and getting into the shape to execute a perfect pull-shot for a six showed why experts feel that it's only a matter of time before he dons national colours.

The inside out chip off Riyan Parag over extra cover to complete his half-century off 27 balls, the sweep shots, the slash over backward point and the straight sixes with economy of footwork, were all testimony to his solid technical foundation.

Once Padikkal was in his mid 80s, the RCB skipper chanced his arms including a six over extra cover off Royals' costliest buy Chris Morris.

Kohli's 50 came off 34 balls and was followed by a personal milestone of 6000 runs in IPL as Royals surrendered way before the match officially ended.

Earlier, Rahul Tewatia's impressive death overs hitting ensured a fighting 177 for 9 for Rajasthan Royals after yet another familiar top order no-show.

On a good batting surface, Royals managed a decent total and the credit for that goes to a counter-attacking effort from all-rounder Shivam Dube (46 off 32 balls) which stemmed the rot and big-hits from Tewatia (40 off

quoteunquote

HE (PADIKKAL) IS A GREAT TALENT, ONE TO LOOK FORWARD IN THE FUTURE. I WANT HIM TO BUILD FROM HERE AND REALLY HELP THE TEAM

Virat Kohli, RCB captain

WE NEED TO DO SOME HOMEWORK AND NEED AN HONEST REVIEW ABOUT OUR BATTING. THAT'S WHAT THIS SPORT IS ALL ABOUT. WE KEEP ON FAILING & WE KEEP ON COMING

Sanju Samson, RR captain

23 balls) that helped them get past 175-run mark.

Dube smashed two sixes and five fours and with Riyan Parag (25 off 15 balls) giving him good support, added 66 runs for the fifth wicket off only 6.2 overs to give his team's total some semblance of respectability.

While the giant all-rounder was comfortable playing at 'home', using the pace of deliveries, the profligate top-order of Royals once again flattered to deceive along with their skipper Sanju Samson, who has been 'consistently inconsistent'.

It took Dube's impressive effort to lend some muscle to the Royals' rickety-looking scorecard.

SCOREBOARD

| RAJASTHAN ROYALS | |
|---|----------|
| Jos Buttler b Siraj | 8 |
| Manan Vohra c K Richardson b Jamieson | 7 |
| Sanju Samson c Maxwell b Sundar | 21 |
| David Miller lbw b Siraj | 0 |
| Shivam Dube c Maxwell b K Richardson | 46 |
| Riyan Parag c Chahal b Harshal | 26 |
| Rahul Tewatia c S Ahmed b Siraj | 40 |
| Chris Morris c Chahal b Harshal | 10 |
| Shreyas Gopal not out | 7 |
| Chetan Sakariya c de Villiers b Harshal | 0 |
| Mustafizur Rahman not out | 0 |
| Extras (b 5, lb 0, w 8, nb 0, p 0) | 13 |
| Total (9 wks, 20 Overs) | 177 |
| Fall of wickets: 14-1 (Jos Buttler, 2.3), 16-2 (Manan Vohra, 3.5), 18-3 (David Miller, 4.3), 43-4 (Sanju Samson, 7.2), 109-5 (Riyan Parag, 13.3), 133-6 (Shivam Dube, 15.3), 170-7 (Rahul Tewatia, 18.6), 170-8 (Chris Morris, 19.1), 170-9 (Chetan Sakariya, 19.2) | |
| ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE | |
| Virat Kohli not out | 72 |
| Devdutt Padikkal not out | 101 |
| Extras (b 1, lb 1, w 6, nb 0, p 0) | 8 |
| Total (0 wks, 16.3 Overs) | 181 |
| Bowling | |
| Mohammed Siraj | 4-0-27-3 |
| Kyle Jamieson | 4-0-28-1 |
| Kane Richardson | 3-0-29-1 |
| Yuzvendra Chahal | 2-0-18-0 |
| Washington Sundar | 3-0-23-1 |
| Harshal Patel | 4-0-47-3 |
| Bowling | |
| Shreyas Gopal | 3-0-35-0 |
| Chetan Sakariya | 4-0-35-0 |
| Chris Morris | 3-0-38-0 |
| Mustafizur Rahman | 3-3-34-0 |
| Rahul Tewatia | 2-0-23-0 |
| Riyan Parag | 1-0-14-0 |

boundarymeter

4s 463

6s 206

| PLAYER | RUNS |
|-------------------------|------|
| 1. Shikhar Dhawan (DC) | 231 |
| 2. Glenn Maxwell (RCB) | 176 |
| 3. Jonny Bairstow (SRH) | 173 |

| PLAYER | WKTS |
|------------------------|------|
| 1. Harshal Patel (RCB) | 12 |
| 2. Deepak Chahar (CSK) | 8 |
| 3. Avesh Khan (DC) | 8 |

| MOST SIXES | COUNT |
|-------------------------|-------|
| 1. Jonny Bairstow (SRH) | 10 |
| 2. Glenn Maxwell (RCB) | 8 |
| 3. Sanju Samson (RR) | 8 |

SUMMER SLAM



Royal Challengers Bangalore batsman Mohammed Azharuddeen, right, poses for photo with India and RCB skipper Virat Kohli and his actor wife Anushika Sharma

NATARAJAN SET TO MISS ENTIRE IPL
SRH pacer T Natarajan's knee has been aggravated and he is set to miss out on the remainder of the IPL. The left-arm pacer may be advised not to take further part in the tourney. Sources in BCCI and the ICC have revealed that the pacer could be asked to report back to the NCA.

MORGAN FINED FOR SLOW OVER-RATE
KKR skipper Eoin Morgan has been fined ₹12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate against CSK. As per the IPL guidelines, the captain of the erring team is docked ₹12 lakh on the first instance of slow over-rate. On the second instance during the season, the fine for the captain is doubled (24 lakh) while every other member of the playing XI is penalised with a 25% deduction from the match fee or ₹6 lakh — whichever is lesser.

'WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MORE RUNS'
In a message to MI misfiring middle-order, pacer Trent Boult said the bowlers would like to have more runs on the board in their upcoming IPL matches. "I am sure the middle-order is probably not too pleased with how things are going so far but I know the guys are hungry and desperate to put in the performance in our last game here in Chennai," Boult said ahead of the team's game against Punjab Kings. "We have not had an ideal start, obviously like to have a few more runs on the board. But one of the strengths of this side is fighting till the end and the bowlers have managed to do that. Hopefully, we put runs on the board," he added.

POINTS TABLE

| | P | W | L | NRR | PTS |
|--------|---|---|---|--------|-----|
| 1 RCB | 4 | 4 | 0 | +1.009 | 8 |
| 2 CSK | 4 | 3 | 1 | +1.142 | 6 |
| 3 DC | 4 | 3 | 1 | +0.426 | 6 |
| 4 MI | 4 | 2 | 2 | +0.187 | 4 |
| 5 SRH | 4 | 1 | 3 | -0.228 | 2 |
| 6 KKR | 4 | 1 | 3 | -0.700 | 2 |
| 7 PBKS | 4 | 1 | 3 | -0.824 | 2 |
| 8 RR | 4 | 1 | 3 | -1.011 | 2 |

MI, PBKS look to sort batting issues

KEY PLAYERS

NICHOLAS POORAN
The West Indian is struggling to get runs and has failed to open his account in three of the four matches

HARDIK PANDYA
Everyone know what he can do when he's on song and Pandya would be eager to find his lost form

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Mumbai Indians would be aiming to address their batting woes to achieve consistency while Punjab Kings would be desperate to arrest their overall slide when the two sides clash here at Chidambaram Stadium on Friday.

The Rohit Sharma-led Mumbai crashed to defeat against Delhi Capitals following an inept batting performance and will look for redemption. The skipper shone with the bat, but others could not get going and the misfiring middle-order would be a major concern for the side.

The MI bowlers have more often than not risen to the occasion and won matches for the team.

However, they couldn't do so against Delhi and would like the batters to put up bigger scores for them to do the job.

Rohit looked in good touch against Delhi. However, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan, stars of the team's victorious 2020 campaign, have not been able to make match-winning contributions and that has hurt MI along with middling performances from Kieron Pollard and the Pandya brothers — Hardik and Krunal.

It is still early days in this year's IPL but Mumbai Indians would like its players to find form and consistency and a match against an under-performing Punjab could well be the beginning.

Punjab have flattered to deceive after a winning start. Being shot out for 120 by Sunrisers Hyderabad on Wednesday hinted at bigger problems for the KL Rahul-led team, which has more than one issue to resolve, especially its composition.

The formidable batting unit hasn't hit the straps, save for Rahul and Mayank Agarwal and the bowling has been pedestrian.

Universe Boss Chris Gayle has not been able to boss over proceedings while his fellow West Indian Nicholas Pooran, expected to provide the big shots in the middle, has come a cropper so far.

Three straight losses would have definitely dented Punjab's

VENUE: MA CHIDAMBARAM STADIUM, CHENNAI

HEAD TO HEAD

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Matches | 26 |
| Punjab Kings | 12 |
| Mumbai Indians | 14 |

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Mumbai Indians defeated Punjab Kings (KXIP) by 48 runs in Abu Dhabi
- Punjab Kings (KXIP) beat MI in Super over after match ended in a tie in Dubai

199

Kieron Pollard with 199 fours in 151 innings of 168 matches, needs one more four to become the fourth Mumbai Indians batsman to complete a double century of fours in IPL

981

Mayank Agarwal who scored 981 runs at an average of 25.81 in 39 innings of as many matches, needs 19 runs to become ninth Punjab Kings batsman to complete 1000 runs in IPL

Faisal Features

morale and the team needs to recover quickly or else its play-off hopes would slip fast.

Rahul has got two fifties in four games so far but has lacked support from others. His captaincy has not inspired a lot of confidence and muddled team selection has compounded his woes.

Deepak Hooda showed what he is capable of, but greater consistency would be needed from him if the team has to prosper.

They bet on Australian pace imports Jhye Richardson and Riley Meredith to up the ante but they have proved expensive and already lost their place in the XI.

Punjab may look to bring in the talented Ravi Bishnoi in place of Murugan Ashwin and fit in Chris Jordan in the XI.

IPL's 'Cluster Caravan' format can be used for T20 WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The twin city 'Cluster Caravan' format being used by the BCCI in the ongoing IPL could be the template for the ICC during the T20 World Cup when the country will host in October-November, feels the global governing body's bio-safety head Dave Musker.

An ICC team will be visiting India from April 26 to hold discussions and also inspect the arrangements with regards to all aspects of the global event.

Musker indicated that just like IPL has six venues (Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata) but is being held in only two cities at a given point in time (known as Cluster Caravan) before moving to next set, the template could also be green lighted for the T20 World Cup.

The BCCI has shortlisted nine cities for the T20 World Cup — Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Lucknow, Dharamsala — for the 16-team tournament.



"...The way the IPL is managed, they only have two venues engaged at one time. You haven't got eight venues at one time," Musker told ESPNcricinfo when asked if the number of venues could have been reduced. "If the IPL works with this two-venue caravan model, then it is clearly a good starting point for us to understand how we may stage the men's T20 World Cup," Musker said, dropping broad hints as to how the global body plans to schedule the matches.

Musker added that the manner in which IPL is conducted in India will be an indicator how things will pan out in the coming days amidst a sharp second surge in Covid-19 cases.

"I'm fascinated to see how the IPL works in India over the coming weeks. We will be travelling to India on April 26 to see the arrangements there and are in touch with the BCCI on this. It is on top of our list of priorities.

Musker is, however, confident that there won't be much problem to organise the World Test Championship in Southampton from June 18 to 22 between India and New Zealand, given the United Kingdom's record of delivering big sporting events in the safest bio-bubbles since last year.

shortpasses

AMIT PANGHAL IN SF
NEW DELHI: Olympic-bound Amit Panghal (52kg) was assured of at least a Bronze at the Governor's Cup in St Petersburg after he advanced to the semis but five other Indian boxers bowed out after opening round losses.

BANGLADESH REACH 474-4
PALLEKELLE: Captain Mominul Haque completed a century beside newcomer Najmul Shanto as their 242-run partnership lifted Bangladesh to a commanding 474-4 against SL after two days of the first Test.

REAL MADRID CRUSH CADIZ
PARIS: Three goals in 10 minutes towards the end of the first half helped Real Madrid go top of the La Liga table on head-to-head, above Atletico Madrid.

SUSHIL IGNORED, AMIT PICKED
NEW DELHI: Former Asian champion Amit Dhankar (74kg) replaced national Gold-medallist Sandeep Mann in the Indian wrestling team for the upcoming World Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Sofia from May 6-9, signalling the end of the road for veteran Sushil Kumar.

QUARANTINE CAMPS FOR CLUBS
BERLIN: The 36 clubs in Germany's top two leagues will go into compulsory 'quarantine training camps' for the last two match days of the Bundesliga season, DFL announced on Thursday to ensure the fixture schedule is completed on time.

Super League is on standby: Perez

Madrid: Real Madrid president Florentino Perez insisted Wednesday that the European Super League was not doomed, but merely "on stand-by".

"The project is on stand-by. The project exists, but half of them have left, tired of what they have heard over 24 hours, saying they don't want to continue," said Perez.

His note of defiance came despite all six English clubs as well as Inter Milan, AC Milan and Atletico Madrid turning their backs on the tournament, plans for which were only revealed on Sunday night.

In an interview with Spanish radio station Cadena Ser, Perez was asked if it is wrong to think the breakaway competition is now dead.

"Absolutely," he said. "We are working on it. Something will come out that the world thinks is the best."

Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus are the only three clubs yet to withdraw. Perez said Barcelona are "thinking about it".

"I am sad and disappointed. We have been working on this for three years and fighting against the financial situation in Spanish football," said Perez.

"I have never seen aggression like it, from the president of Uefa and some presidents of the national leagues. It seemed orchestrated, it surprised all of us. It was like nothing I've seen in my career, like we had killed football. We were working on how to save football."

"Uefa made it look like we dropped an atomic bomb. They haven't let us explain. It can't be that those at the top lose money and the rest earn money. The rich now lose a lot of money," he added. AFP

Indian women boxers win 7 Golds at youth world's

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It was raining Gold for India's women boxers at the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland on Thursday with all seven finalists notching up splendid summit victories, making it the country's best ever performance at the marquee event.

Gitika (48kg), Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg), Poonam (57kg), Vinka (60kg), Arundhati Choudhary (69kg), Thokchom Sanamachu Chanu (75kg) and Alfiya Pathan (+81kg) ensured a perfect finish to the campaign for the women's contingent.

While Gitika prevailed 5-0 over Poland's Natalia Kuczewska, Babyrojisana defeated Valeria Linkova of Russia by a similar margin after a close opening round.

Poonam clinched a comfortable 5-0 triumph over France's Stelyne Grosy.

Vinka, on the other hand, out-classed

Zhuldyz Shayakhmetova, forcing the referee to stop the contest midway through the final round.

For Arundhati, local favourite Barbara Marcinkowska hardly posed any challenge as the Indian walked away with a 5-0 triumph in the final.

Chanu came through after an engrossing clash against Kazakhstan's Dana Diday which ended with the Indian prevailing in a split 3-2 verdict.

In the last bout of the evening, Alfiya Pathan (+81kg) completed the gold sweep with a 5-0 hammering of Moldova's Daria Kozorez.

With this, India's women boxers bettered their best ever haul of five Gold medals that was achieved in the 2017 edition in Guwahati.

India can add an eighth Gold to their tally on Friday when the country's lone male finalist — Sachin (56kg) — fights his final bout.



OTHER SPORT