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ON THE PANDEMIC

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IPL WITH KNEE INJURY

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10 VIVACITY



Hospitals turn theatres of death

Delhi gasps for oxygen; 25 suffocate in Sir Ganga Ram Hospital



Health workers wearing protective suits carry the body of a Covid-19 victim at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in New Delhi on Friday

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid uncertainty about the resumption of adequate supply of oxygen to hospitals in the city, lives of thousands of people infected with Covid-19 are dependent on the mercy of the God as various city hospitals are left with depleting stock that may not last for even hours.

The shortage of oxygen has created chaos in the national Capital as the relatives of patients are trying everything possible to get oxygen cylinder; however, many among them have failed to get it since its supply to private and Government hospitals has been hampered.

Various hospitals in the city kept sending SOS messages

tors, he said.

"Also, we are now shifting the patients to the hospital's central supply of oxygen and again with connectors, sharing one central supply connection with two patients. This should work for now. We are in constant touch with the Government and our suppliers to ensure availability," he said.

Max Healthcare has stopped new admissions in all its hospitals in Delhi-NCR due to low oxygen stocks. "We regret to inform you that we are suspending any new patient admissions in all our hospitals in Delhi-NCR till oxygen supplies stabilise," Max Healthcare said in a statement.

"SOS - Less than an hour's oxygen supplies at Max Smart Hospital & Max Hospital Saket. Awaiting promised fresh supplies from INOX since 1 am. Over 700 patients admitted, need immediate assistance," it said in a tweet.

"We have received emergency supplies at Max Saket and Max Smart which will last another 2 hours. We are still awaiting more supplies," it said in another tweet.

Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals, said in a tweet, "Hospitals continue to gasp for breath despite govt orders being issued. It's now becoming an hourly challenge for many hospitals. Every minute of delay on commitments made can cost lives!!".

Sir Ganga Ram Hospital that bore the brunt of this criminal apathy when 25 critical patients died a day before has oxygen left for only half to 45 minutes on Friday.

Shaken by the loss of innocent lives, authorities scrambled a tanker of oxygen to the beleaguered hospital administration.

Dr Kousar A Shah, COO - Aakash Healthcare, Dwarka said that the hospital was left with oxygen for one hr and a half and we had 221 Covid patients out of which 200+ patients require oxygen.

"To save patients, the hospital administration succeeded to manage the time by refilling our oxygen cylinders from various small vendors in Delhi. We have just received a liquid oxygen tanker which will last for 14 hours," he added.

Now, fire in ICU in Palghar kills 14 Covid patients

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Less than 48 hours after a shocking oxygen leakage-triggered mishap claimed the lives of 24 coronavirus patients at a Nashik civic hospital, as many as 14 Covid-19 patients died in the early hours of Friday when a fire swept through an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a pandemic hospital at Virar in Maharashtra's Palghar district.

The fire broke out at 3.15 am at the ICU of Vijay Vallabh Hospital and Medical Research Centre, a designated Covid-19 facility, at Tirupati Nagar at Virar, a bustling township located 65 km away from south Mumbai.

There were conflicting versions as to the cause of the fire. While one version said the fire was caused by a blast inside in an air-conditioner, another version said an electrical short-circuit might have sparked the fire. The local fire brigade personnel, who rushed to the scene shortly afterwards, succeeded in preventing the spread of fire to other wards at the hospital. They extinguished the blaze around 5.30 am.

At the time of mishap, there were 17 Covid-19 patients, 13 died on the spot, one patient identified as Shivaji Veerkar, who had sustained 80 per cent burns, succumbed to the wounds.

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All Ggm hospitals told to reserve 60% beds in general category for Covid

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In view of shortage of hospital beds for Covid patients in Gurugram, Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg has directed hospitals to increase the number of beds reserved for Covid patients to "at least 60%" under general category and 75% of total bed capacity of ICU and ventilator beds.

Moreover, the data of available beds will have to be uploaded on the platform 'onemapggm.gmda.gov.in' of the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority by the hospitals. The order was issued under epidemic diseases Act-1897 and sub-section-2 of the Disaster Management Act-2005.

Detailed report on P3

Pioneer family bereaved

It is with deep sorrow that *The Pioneer* informs its readers about the sudden demise of its accomplished Deputy News Editor **Ajay Kumar Choudhary** in New Delhi on Friday evening. Ajay, 40, had complained of breathlessness around 2 pm on Friday, following which he was rushed to Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital in Rohini where he was declared brought dead.

Ajay, who returned to the national Capital on Thursday night after 10-day stay with his ailing grandfather in his hometown Darbhanga, had been having mild fever for the last 10 days, his wife said. The sad news has left his family members and colleagues shell-shocked as they are unable to accept the fact that a convivial face has left for the heavenly abode. Ajay is survived by his wife and a 5-year old daughter.



Covid daily count passes 3.4L mark Record 2,600 deaths reported



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's daily Covid-19 count went past 3.4 lakh mark on Friday with several States registering new peaks and death rate steadily picking up.

The crisis in Maharashtra deepened further on Friday as the pandemic claimed a disturbing 773 lives and left 66,836 people infected in various parts of the state.

The country recorded 3,44,949 many cases and 2,620 deaths during the last 24 hours.

While Maharashtra didn't cross the previous day high, States such as Kerala (28,447 new cases), Karnataka (26,962), Uttar Pradesh (36,605), Rajasthan (15,398), Madhya Pradesh (13,590 new case) registered new peaks, clearly indicating that coronavirus continued to spread with the same aggression as before despite lockdown and restrictions.

A day after, Maharashtra recorded 568 deaths for the second consecutive day, the daily

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	1,66,02,456 (+3,44,949)
DEATHS:	1,89,549 (+2,620)
RECOVERED:	1,38,62,119 (+2,20,382)
ACTIVE:	25,43,914
MAHARASHTRA:	41,61,676
KERALA:	13,50,502
KARNATAKA:	12,74,959
TAMIL NADU:	10,51,487
DELHI:	9,80,679 (+24,331)

Waiting list at Capital's crematoriums! Gazipur facility overburdened; bereaved families made to wait for hours

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

With Covid-19 enacting dance of death in Delhi, the crematoriums in the national Capital are unable to cope up with the arrival of body bags. At Gazipur crematorium on Thursday night, bodies were cremated virtually on the road while several others were put on the "waiting" list.

Grief-stricken family members were made to wait for hours for performing the last rites.

The situation is so heart-rending that people coming with bodies at burial grounds, are cremating bodies even without performing last rites.

The North and South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) have increased capacity of all its 21 crematoriums



Multiple funeral pyres of victims of Covid-19 burn on a ground that has been converted into a crematorium for mass cremation, in New Delhi, on Wednesday AP

ground by works department of the Karol Bagh Zone. We have increased pyre from 20 to 40 at Inderpuri crematorium and five more will be added by Saturday hopefully to meet the growing demand," he said.

"The CNG furnaces were operated for 7 to 8 hours earlier but now all furnaces are functioning 24 hours without break. We have used all the empties spaces but still very short," he said.

East Corporation has five burial grounds and all are exhausted. "We have used the unused spaces in all cremation grounds but still very short as the number of bodies is more than the capacity of burial grounds. People have even started cremating bodies in open and vacant areas," said a senior official.

Continued on Page 2

Delhi Govt demands immediate operation of Oxygen Express

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after a meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Chief Ministers of States having high Covid-19 case-loads on Friday, the Delhi Government requested Indian Railways to start operating "Oxygen Express" trains immediately to save Covid-19 patients in need of medical oxygen in the national Capital hospitals.

Railway Board Chairman Sunee Sharma said the railways have received a request from Delhi just now, and the rail network system is planning its movement from Rourkela in Odisha.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal appealed to the Centre to provide medical oxygen to the Delhi which is facing acute shortage of medical oxygen.

Centre opens its coffers to feed poor

5kg free food grains to poor in May, June

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief to the poorer sections of society amid the devastating second wave of coronavirus pandemic, the Centre on Friday announced it will provide free food grains for the months of May and June, 2021 on the same pattern as last year's Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY).

Under the scheme, each beneficiary under National Food Security Act will get 5 kg per person per month for the next two months May and June. This will be over and above their entitlement of 5 kg of rice, wheat and coarse grains at Rs 3, 2 and Re 1 per kg respectively.

Several State Governments including Rajasthan, Kerala and Uttarakhand and MPs, including NCP chief Sharad Pawar and TMC leader Saugata



Yojana (AAY) and Priority Householders (PHH), will be provided with an additional quota of free-of-cost food grains (Rice/Wheat) at a scale of 5 kg per person per month, over and above their regular monthly entitlements under NFSA. The government will bear all expenditure of over Rs 26,000 crore on account of food subsidy and Central assistance to States/UTs on account of intrastate transportation," the Ministry said.

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Plans afoot to meet oxygen requirement, Modi assures CMs



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with Chief Ministers on Covid-19 situations through video conferencing, in New Delhi, on Friday

Criticised for telecasting talks, Kejriwal apologises

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday reviewed the Covid-19 situation with 10 worst-hit States, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi. The PM said all efforts are afoot to fulfill oxygen requirement.

The PM also held meetings with its manufactures to increase oxygen production to reduce its acute crunch in hospitals across the country.

A controversy surfaced on Friday when Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's comments in the meeting went live on the television with the latter alluding to a "big tragedy" which he said could have happened in the national Capital for want of adequate oxygen supply.

Kejriwal reportedly earned displeasure of the Prime Minister, who rebuked him, for telecasting the speech. Kejriwal apologised saying he was not aware that it was not meant for the public.

According to Government sources, the interaction was not for the television and accused Kejriwal of "descending to a new low".

Continued on Page 2

Corona cuts India off world as nations ban Indian fliers

USA and Britain have put India on travel red list as cases burgeon

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The deadly coronavirus has snapped India's link with a large part of the world.

The USA and Britain have put India on the travel red list while Canada, Indonesia, Singapore, and the UAE have restricted travel from India.

As of now, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Canada, and the UAE have already banned travel restrictions.

The USA and Israel have issued advisory warnings to their citizens to avoid travelling to India even if they are vaccinated.

Singapore has further tightened entry norms for visitors from India. Indonesia has decided it will not issue visas to



foreigners who have been in India in the past 14 days. The German Embassy also advised its staff to completely operate from the home office and also asked them to consider leaving for early vacations. The US Embassy in New Delhi has cancelled all in-person visa and interview-waiver till May 9 due to the worsening pandemic situation.

Tightening the entry norms for visitors from India, Singapore decided that all long-term pass holders and short-term visitors who have travelled to India within the last 14 days will not be allowed to enter or transit through from April 24 while countries of European Union are closing monitoring the Covid-19 surge cases.

Continued on Page 2

Don't visit hospitals, caregivers down with Covid, warns doctor

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Amid severe crisis in UP hospitals treating Covid patients, a doctor from a private Covid hospital in Lucknow has asked people not to take their patients to hospitals because there is no one to take care of patients as most of the doctors and paramedics have themselves contracted Covid.

"Please do not admit your patient to the hospital. If you can manage, keep him at home. There is no one to take care of your patient," said Dr PK Sharma of a private hospital designated as a Covid hospital on the outskirts of Lucknow.

The doctor, who retired from the Government service and is working in a private hospital as a consultant physician, has himself tested positive and is in home isolation. "There is no one to take care of your patient. The majority of the doctors and paramedics are down with corona. The ward boy will come once a day and enquire about your patients' health. That is the only service a hospital can provide," he said.

Dr Sharma revealed the stark reality of the hospitals in Uttar Pradesh. According to a rough estimate, 1,123 doctors and paramedics have tested corona positive in the last 21 days. Even the prestigious King George's Medical University and Sanjay Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences in Lucknow are not spared.

Around 300 paramedics of these two institutes have tested positive.

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Scientist: Double, triple mutants of coronavirus one and same; vaccines effective on it

New Delhi: The double and triple mutant strains detected in India are one and the same variant of the coronavirus, and the available vaccines are effective on it, National Institute of Biomedical Genomics Director Soumitra Das said on Friday.

CAPSULE

VIRAFIN APPROVED FOR MODERATE COVID CASES

New Delhi: In a move that is expected to stop black marketing of Remdesivir, the Drugs Controller General of India's (DCGI) has given nod to Zydus Cadila's Pegylated Interferon alpha-2b, 'Virafin' for the treatment of moderate Covid-19 infection in adults. Zydus Cadila had sought the Centre's nod for Virafin, on April 5, claiming it had shown promising results in treating Covid-19. A single dose of Virafin shows significant improvement as 91.15% of patients were tested RT PCR negative by day 7. It also reduces hours of supplemental oxygen in the patients.

Andhra, U'khand, Jharkhand pledge free jobs

Hyderabad/Dehradun/Ranchi: Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand on Friday joined other States which have promised free Covid-19 vaccination to those above 18 years of age. This, even as the BJP announced free vaccination to all in Bengal on the lines of Bihar.

P4

AMID COVID SURGE 180 weekend weddings allowed at Kerala temple

Thiruvananthapuram: Even as Covid cases in Kerala continue to surge, the state authorities under pressure from various quarters decided to allow 180 weddings scheduled at the famed Guruvayoor Sree Krishna Temple near Thrissur district on Saturday and Sunday amid strict Covid-19 protocols.

Following the massive surge in Covid cases across the state, night curfew has been put in place during which all peo-

ple must remain indoors from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Saturday and Sunday will be almost similar to a lockdown.

Consequent to the nod given on Friday by the Thrissur district administration, 40 weddings planned on Saturday and 140 scheduled for Sunday would take place but with all prescribed Covid protocols.

Though the weddings have been allowed, only 12 people would be permitted at each wedding. **IANS**

Maha records 66,836 new infections, 773 deaths

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 crisis in Maharashtra deepened further on Friday, as the pandemic claimed a disturbing 773 lives and left 66,836 people infected in various parts of the state.

A day after it recorded 568 deaths for the second consecutive day, the daily Covid-19 toll shot up to 773, sending the health authorities into a state of acute anxiety. With 774 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 62,479 to 63,252. Similarly, with 66,836 fresh infections reported on Thursday, the total number of cases in the state increased from 40,94,840 to 41,61,676.

As 74,045 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March

last year went up to 34,04,792. The recovery rate in the state for the first time in several days rose from 81.34 per cent to 81.81 per cent. The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 6,99,858 to 6,91,851. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1/53 per cent to 1.52 per cent.

With 72 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 12,583 to 12,655, while the infected cases went up by 7199 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,09,080 to 6,16,279.

While Pune accounted for a maximum 1,16,602 "active cases" in the state, Mumbai stood second with 81,174, followed by Thane (77,793), Nagpur (80,862), Palghar (14,720), Nashik (43,848), Ahmednagar (20,937), Latour (18,055), Chandrapur (19,814), Raigad (14,021) Bhandara (12,959), Aurangabad (13,581), Satara (14,974), Jalgaon (14,036),

Nanded (11,585), Parbhani (9,636), Solapur (14,889), Beed (11,146), Gondia (11,223) and Nandurbar (6,387).

MAHA CM ROOTS FOR ADDL OXYGEN, REMDESIVIR, VACCINES FROM CENTRE

Mumbai: Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday asked the Centre for 250 to 300 metric tons of additional medical oxygen, 70,000 vials of Remdesivir every day as against the daily allocation of 27,000 vials and 12 crore doses of vaccination to cater to 18 years to 44 years' age group.

Speaking at a virtual meeting held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uddhav said that Maharashtra required 1,550 metric tonnes of medical oxygen to treat Covid-19 patients every day and about 300 to 350 metric tons was being procured from outside, he said. He urged the Centre to arrange the supply of additional medical

oxygen from neighbouring states. "Empty oxygen tanks should be flown back to refilling plants to save on transportation time if it was not possible to airlift oxygen," the chief minister said.

He asked the Prime Minister to provide 13,000 jumbo oxygen cylinders and 1,100 ventilators to Maharashtra.

"We have more than 60,000 patients in the state are on oxygen while there are 76,300 oxygen beds and over 25,000 additional oxygen beds are being arranged.... Given its requirement, Maharashtra should get 250 to 300 metric tons of additional oxygen," the chief minister said.

NIA arrests absconding Maoist cadre in arms, ammunition case of Jharkhand

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday arrested an absconding CPI (Maoist) terrorist in the case of seizure of large scale arms and ammunition in Giridih, Jharkhand in 2018.

The arrested accused Singhai Soren, 55, is a resident of village Akbaitand under Dumri police station of Giridih in a case pertaining to seizure of arms and ammunition.

The arrested accused is being produced before the Special NIA Court, Ranchi, the NIA said.

The case pertains to the seizure of huge cache of arms and ammunition and arrest of 15 armed cadres of CPI (Maoist) at Akbaitand village.

Subsequently, the NIA had re-registered the said case on May 9, 2018 and taken over the investigation of the case.

"Investigation has established that accused Singhai Soren, an armed cadre of CPI (Maoist), a proscribed terrorist organization, had criminally conspired with other members of CPI (Maoist) with the intention to promote their terrorist activities," the NIA said in a statement. Soren was also regularly harbouring the cadres of CPI (Maoist) at his residential premises and was also instrumental in concealing prohibited arms and ammunition and explosives substances, it alleged.

The NIA had filed chargesheet against 10 accused persons, including Soren, on August 31, 2018 and another supplementary chargesheet against seven accused persons on January 8, 2019 in this case. **PNS**

Waiting list in...

From Page 1

The south Corporation has nine cremation grounds and it has increased capacity of all its nine crematoriums and burial grounds coming under its jurisdiction. A senior SDMC official said the decision to escalate platforms and pyres is taken in view increasing number of Covid-19 related deaths in the city. "The capacity of cremating bodies has been augmented to 365 per day from 289 earlier. Out of the total capacity, 289 platforms have been reserved for people died of Covid-19. A number of platforms have also been reserved to ensure funeral of the deceased who died of Covid-19," he said.

Besides, 10 cremation grounds that are run by NGOs and RWAs are also functioning in the city with the total capacity of 308 platforms. Out of it, 230 platforms are being used to

cremate Covid-19 bodies. "All these facilities are running out of space and staffs deployed here are working 24 hours to facilitate cremation one after another." Police teams have been deployed at the crematorium, who are helping people in cremating bodies and even they are performing last rites traditions for those dead bodies who doesn't have any relative or family members at the time of cremation," said RP Meena, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Southeast district.

"Police personnels are deployed at Nigambodh ghat to avoid any kind of untoward incident and they are managing the crowd there. The dead bodies as compared to the facilities for cremation here are more. Relatives, friends and family members coming with these are also in large numbers due to which the crowd can be seen at cremation grounds," said a senior police official.

Corona cuts India...

From Page 1

People who have recently travelled to India and have not completed their 14-day stay-home notice (SHN) by 11.59 pm on Thursday night will have to complete their additional seven-day SHN at a dedicated facility rather than their places of residence in Singapore.

"As per Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore CAAS Circular of April 22, all inbound travellers, (except Singapore citizens or Singapore permanent residents) with recent travel history (including transit) to India within the last 14 days before departure for Singapore, will not be allowed entry into or transfer/transit through Singapore from 2359 hrs of April 23, until further notice. This will also apply to those who had obtained prior approval for entry into Singapore. Further updates will be shared shortly," Air India said.

Canada has suspended all commercial and private flights from India for 30 days. Air travelers who depart India for Canada via an indirect route will need to obtain a negative Covid-19 pre-departure test from a third country before continuing their journey to Canada.

"In view of the restrictions announced by the Regulatory Authority of Canada, flights to Vancouver & Toronto are cancelled. Vancouver flight from Apr 25 to May 21. Toronto flight from April 24 to May 22. Further information on waivers & refund will be updated shortly," Air India tweeted. Air India flies to Vancouver and Toronto under the India-Canada air bubble. Air Canada also operates flight between Toronto and Delhi. The UAE has banned travel from India for 10 days from Sunday. The ban will come into effect from 11.59 pm on Saturday, April 24, and is subject to review after 10 days.

According to Air India, it will operate only two flights (April 27-28 and 29-30) during April 24 to 30 and it will be the sole responsibility of the passengers to ensure his/her eligibility to enter the destination country. "Air India will accept no liability if non-compliance results in denied boarding," it said.

Just hours after the United Kingdom had announced the cancellation of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to India due to a spike in coronavirus infections, the Dawning Street has added India to its Covid-19 travel "red list", which effectively bans all travel from April 24 to April 30 and makes a 10-day hotel quarantine compulsory for UK residents returning home. Last year, India had suspended all flights to and from the UK from December 23 in the wake of the new mutant strain of novel coronavirus found in the UK and South Africa. New Zealand imposed a

restriction on travel from India after it detected 23 Covid-19 cases among passengers flying from outside earlier this month. Of them 17 were positive for the Indian variant of SARS-CoV-2. Hong Kong clubbed India with the Philippines and Pakistan as "high-risk" places for Covid-19 spread and imposed a 14-day travel ban. Pakistan has also put India in the category-C list of the countries over the spike in Covid-19 cases.

Israel issued a travel advisory warning citizens including those who have recovered from or been vaccinated against Covid-19, to refrain from travelling to India, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and Turkey because of high Covid morbidity rates in the seven countries. The USA has also advised its citizens to avoid travelling to India, even if they are fully vaccinated, as there is a "very high level" of Covid-19 in the country.

Plans afoot to...

From Page 1

The part that was on air showed Arvind Kejriwal saying, "A big tragedy could happen because of the oxygen shortage in Delhi hospitals and said to the Prime Minister — Please sir, we need your guidance.

"People in major pain due to oxygen shortage. We fear a big tragedy may happen due to oxygen shortage and we will never be able to forgive ourselves. I request you with folded hands to direct all Chief Ministers to ensure smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to Delhi."

"Will people of Delhi not get oxygen if there is no oxygen-producing plant here? Please suggest whom should I speak to in the central government when an oxygen tanker meant for Delhi is stopped in another state," he stated.

He also said in the meet that oxygen tankers were being stopped by other states from entering Delhi.

Many Chief Ministers, including Maharashtra and Delhi, sought speedy, adequate and smooth transportation of it to their respective states.

Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray asked for airlifting of oxygen, adequate vaccines and allowing for Remdesivir imports.

Maharashtra requires 1,550 metric tonnes of medical oxygen to treat coronavirus patients every day and about 300 to 350 metric tons is being procured from outside, he said.

The PM said empty oxygen tankers should be flown back to refilling plants to save on transportation time if it was not possible to airlift oxygen, Thackeray said. More than 60,000 patients in the state are on oxygen while there are 76,300 oxygen beds and over 25,000 additional oxygen beds were being arranged, the CM informed.

Considering its requirement, Maharashtra should get 250 to 300 metric tons of additional oxygen, Thackeray said.

Speaking on Remdesivir shortages, he said, "It is not known how effective Remdesivir is but it surely reduces the period of hospitalisation. Maharashtra needs 70,000 vials of Remdesivir every day but is getting only 27,000, and it should be allowed to import the medicine, he said.

1,963 new corona cases in J&K

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir on Friday recorded the highest tally of nineteen deaths in one single day while 1,963 fresh cases of coronavirus were reported across the Union Territory. The total number of active positive cases in the region is set to cross 17,000 cases.

Since April 1, 113 patients have succumbed to the virus across J&K. Meanwhile, to cater to the rush of coronavirus positive cases the government agencies have started ramping up dedicated Covid beds with oxygen support. According to the covid-19 bulletin released by the Department of Information and Public Relations, "1937 new positive cases of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), 846 from Jammu division and 1091 from Kashmir division have been reported, thus taking the total number of positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir to 156,344.

"Out of 19 deaths, 13 were reported across Jammu Division and 06 from Kashmir Division". **PNS**

Now, fire in ICU in Palghar...

From Page 1

Another 25 Covid-19 patients, who were undergoing treatment in the general wards of the hospital, were taken to other hospitals at Virar.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who spoke to the local hospital and Palghar district officials and took stock of the situation, ordered an enquiry into the incident. He announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the family of each person killed in the mishap and Rs 1 lakh to those injured in the mishap. Mourning those killed in the Virar hospital fire, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "The fire at a Covid-19 hospital in Virar is tragic. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon." PM @narendramodi has approved an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each from PMNRF for the next of kin of those who have lost their lives due to the hospital fire in Virar, Maharashtra. Rs 50,000 would be given to those seriously injured," the Prime Minister's Office tweeted.

Expressing his sadness over the incident, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari said, "I was extremely saddened to learn about the news of the death of a few corona virus patients in the fire at the ICU of a private Hospital in Virar earlier today. I convey my deepest condolences to the families of the unfortunate victims and wish speedy recovery to the injured patients."

Earlier in the day, there was considerable tension at the Vijay Vallabh Hospital where agitated relatives of those killed in the mishap gheraoed ministers, officials and hospital

staff and demanded answers from them for the death of their nears and dear ones.

Some of them claimed that the air-conditioner at the hospital was faulty and the hospital administration was aware of it. They also claimed that the hospital staff members were sleeping when the fire broke out and patients could not be evacuated in time. "There was some problem with the air conditioner yesterday... I also saw some repair work being done... Since the issue remained unresolved a few fans were installed on a temporary basis," a hospital employee Supriya Deshmukh said.

Several relatives complained to Urban Development Minister Eknath Shinde who rushed to the hospital, along with Palghar district guardian minister Dada Bhuse, who is Guardian Minister of Palghar, about the hospital administration and their attitude towards the patients.

"The State Government has ordered a probe and the guilty will not be spared," Shinde said, seeking to pacify the agitated mob. The bereaved families also sought an explanation from Palghar Collector Dr Manik Gursal and Vasai-Virar Municipal Commissioner Gangatharan Devrajan, who were present on the scene, for the loss of so many lives.

"My sister Shama Mhatre was admitted in the hospital. The fire took place in the wee hours and I was informed at 7.30 am in the morning about her death," her brother Dr Ravi Tandell said, as he broke down while talking to media persons.

Don't visit hospitals caregivers...

From Page 1

"There is a scarcity of trained staff in the Covid wards, but we are holding the fort. So far, so good," said the Health Minister J P Singh.

Himashu Joshi, a senior journalist was admitted to a private hospital after he tested positive. After two days he called up his colleague to say that no one has come to enquire about his health. "My oxygen level is going down. But there is no one to whom I could complain," he told his colleague.

He died the next day.

The situation is the same in other hospitals.

Narendra Nath Saxena's daughter and son-in-law were admitted in a private hospital. Her daughter complained that no one is there to guide them about the treatment. "The hospital is charging Rs 15,000 per room. At least, there should be a doctor to take care of the patient," Saxena said.

The doctors admit that the situation is bad but they cannot help it because of shortage of staff. The situation is so bad that in Ghatampur a ward boy was asked to operate ventilators in the absence of para-medics and electricians.

President of the Uttar Pradesh Provincial Health and Medical Services (PHMS), Dr Sachin Vaish said that over 200

Government doctors have fallen sick in the last three weeks across the State. "At least 25 doctors in the state headquarters including the DG Health were tested positive," he said.

He said there is immense pressure on the doctors as they are working overtime. In some cases, they are working 10-12 hours against the prescribed 6 hours duty.

"If there is a flow of patients you cannot leave them there. Some doctors are working extra hours to arrange oxygen for the patients," Dr Vaish said.

In Etawah, Dr. Abdul Qadir said that besides him, a sweeper and a ward boy are working for over 20 hours. "We have no option. There is an acute shortage of staff and there is a continuous flow of patients," he said.

The PHMS the association has written a letter to the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath saying that "as large numbers of doctors have fallen sick a special ward for the doctors and their family members should be set up in each district."

It takes a minimum 14 days for a person to recover from the Covid. This means that doctors once tested positive, are out of operation for two weeks.

This ultimately affects the working in hospitals.

Centre opens...

From Page 1

About 80 lakh tonne of food grains will be required to meet the demand for two months. The move, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to the poor, will cost the exchequer over Rs 26,000 crore, including on account of interstate transportation of food grains.

"In view of the impact of coronavirus, Rs 26000 crore will be spent to provide five kg of food grains for two months under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna. I congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the same. The move will benefit about 80 crore people of the country. The Modi Government stands with the country at every step in this disaster", Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted while congratulating the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to resume the free food grain to poor.

The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) was announced in 2020 for three months till July and later extended till November to combat the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the poor. Under the PMGKAY last year, over 200 lakh tonne of free food grains were provided amounting to a fiscal outgo of over Rs 75,000 crore, covering 80.96 crores NFSA beneficiaries.

Covid daily count...

From Page 1

Similarly, with 66,836 fresh infections reported on Thursday, the total number of cases in the state increased from 40,94,840 to 41,61,676.

As 74,045 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the State after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 34,04,792. The recovery rate in the state for the first time in several days rose from 81.34 per cent to 81.81 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the State dropped from 6,99,858 to 6,91,851. The fatality rate in the State dropped from 1.53 per cent to 1.52 per cent.

With 72 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 12,583 to 12,655, while the infected cases went up by 7199 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,09,080 to 6,16,279.

Coronavirus infection continued to play havoc in Uttar Pradesh as 199 people died of this infection in the last 24 hours taking the total toll in UP to 10,737.

The Government claims that 37,238 fresh infections were reported in the last 24 hour. It further said there are more

than 2.5 lakh active cases in the state of which 70 per cent of people are in home isolation.

Lucknow, recorded 5,682 new infections in the last 24 hours but 7,165 people have been discharged during the same period.

A report from Gonda said that Covid testing samples at the district hospital were found destroyed by stray animals. A video has gone viral with cardboard boxes strewn around. It is claimed that those boxes contained corona testing samples, but the government officials have refused to confirm this.

A probe has been ordered in this connection by District Magistrate Markandey Sahi. He said such a video was a move to demoralise the health workers who are doing an excellent job to save the lives of the people.

A report from Etawah said eight doctors at Saifai Medical University, have been infected with corona. A total of 191 corona positive cases were found in Etawah on Thursday and of these, 75 cases belong to the staff of Saifai Medical University alone. The Covid-19 cases in Kerala continued unabated on Friday too despite the stringent controls announced by the State administration. Kerala tested 28,447 new Covid cases on Friday while 27 persons suc-

cumbed to the pandemic during the last 24 hours, according to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Vijayan who met media persons on Friday evening quoted from all medical journals and pleaded with the people to cooperate with him in bringing down the Covid curve. I told the Prime Minister this morning that the State needs Rs 1,500 crore to provide Covid-19 vaccine to all the people. The Centre should pay this amount or provide us with free vaccines. It is impossible for the State to buy the vaccines from private companies by paying exorbitant prices," said Vijayan.

The Chief Minister said that during the video conference, he shared his expertise with the Prime Minister. Vijayan turned emotional when he recounted the incident of Subaida, a Muslim woman from Kollam, sending him her life savings of Rs 5,000 to purchase vaccine from the open market. "Last year Subaida had sold her sheep and sent me the money towards the Covid fund of the State. This is the state of financial affairs in Kerala," he said.

Vijayan said though there would not be any lockdown in the State, the next two days (Saturday and Sunday) would see strict measures being followed all over Kerala. "This is to con-

rol crowding by people. Only those people who have to attend to emergency works would be allowed outside. Those who come out of their houses and places of residents should have authorization letters in which the purpose is written and signed by competent authorities," said the chief minister.

There was no let-up in the number of Covid-19 cases in Tamil Nadu as the State diagnosed 13,776 new cases on Friday. The last 24 hours saw the pandemic claiming 78 lives across the State.

Capital city of Chennai continued to be the hot spot as 3,842 new persons were diagnosed with the disease. Neighbouring Chengalpattu registered 985 new cases while Coimbatore, the industrial hub of South India saw the number of patients going up by 889. Thiruvallur, another neighbouring district of Chennai saw the pandemic continuing unabated with 807 new cases.

The State continued with massive testing and on Friday more than 1.25 lakh persons were tested as part of the Mass Test programme.

The Government informed the Madras High Court that the State has sufficient stock of vaccines, oxygen and hospital to take on any emergency measures.

CHANGE OF NAME

My Name is Alok Kumar Mallick, Aged-35, S/o, Shri Dilip Kumar Mallick, R/o. M-28-29, Top floor, Uma Putra Society, Sainik Nagar, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059. This is to declare that my surname "Mallick" was missing in my name, hence I was using "Alok Kumar" as my name but later I got my surname added by producing relevant documents and now in all KYC documents my complete name is updated as "Alok Kumar Mallick".

WESTERN RAILWAY

MANUFACTURE AND SUPPLY OF VARIOUS SLEEPERS

Advised Tender Notice No. 192/E-Tender/P.way/2021 dated 20/04/2021 for tender on E-Procurement mode only, are invited by Chief Administrative Officer (Construction), 1st Floor, Station Building Churchgate, Mumbai: 400 020 for supply of the following items. Tender No. WTR/S&C/17/2021/8195. Short Description: Manufacture and supply of PSC T/ou Special sleeper and Wider sleeper. (a) 1 in 16, T-5691 = 18 Sets. (b) 1 in 12, T-4218 = 600 Sets. (c) 1 in 8.5, T-4865 = 95 Sets. (d) Trap, T-6068 = 38 Sets. (e) Bridge, T-4088 = 3900 Nos. (f) Br. App. T-4089 to 4097 = 99 Sets. (g) SEJ, T-4149 = 880 Nos. (h) Curve, T-4170 to 4173 = 1063 Nos. (i) Br. Sleeper (wider), T-8672 = 5501 No. (j) Br. App. sleeper (wider), T-8672 to 8680 = 52 sets. (k) Curve sleeper (wider), T-8621 to 8624 = 1340 No. (l) LC sleeper (wider), T-8671 = 232 No. Date of opening: 11/05/2021 at 11.30 hrs. Tender Value (approximately): ₹ 42,84,88,660.70. NOTE: For detailed tender conditions/Corrigendum if any please visit www.treps.gov.in and www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in 0043

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New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.) Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & https://etender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

S. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Amount
1.	18 / Manager System / AMC-Computer /2020-21	A.M.C. for Computer, TFT and UPS of HP make, Noida.	Rs. 53,25,399/-

Which can be uploaded by date 03.05.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened / downloaded on date 04.05.2021 at 11.00 AM. **Manager (System)**

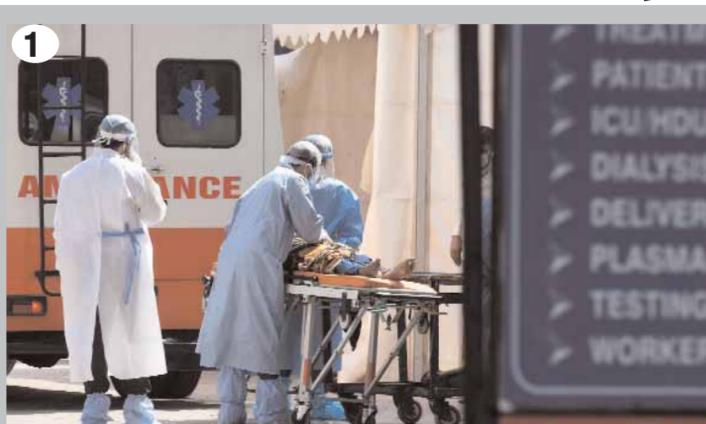
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Help Delhi overcome O2 crisis, CM pleads with PM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a high-level meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal apprised him about the acute shortage of oxygen in hospitals required for the treatment of critically ill Covid-19 patients. Kejriwal said a "big tragedy" could happen because of the oxygen shortage in Delhi hospitals and sought Centre's help and guidance and said oxygen tankers were being stopped from entering the city. "People in major pain due to oxygen shortage. We fear a big tragedy may happen due to oxygen shortage and we will never be able to forgive ourselves. I request you with folded hands to direct all Chief Ministers to ensure smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to Delhi," Kejriwal said. "Will people of Delhi not get oxygen if there is no oxygen-producing plant here? Please suggest whom should I speak to in the central government when an oxygen tanker meant for Delhi is stopped in another state," he added. He also urged PM Modi to facilitate the airlift of oxygen

from West Bengal and Odisha to resolve the shortage in Delhi. "PM Sir, please, make a phone call to the Chief Minister of the state where maximum trucks (tankers carrying oxygen) are being stopped so oxygen can reach Delhi," Kejriwal said and asserted the National Policy on Oxygen. However, his discussion with PM Modi became controversial as the Kejriwal government aired the live feed of the in-house meeting which was not supposed to be shared live as per the protocol. PM Modi objected in between and Kejriwal expressed his regret. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Office (CMO), Delhi government issued a statement later on: Today, the chief minister's address was shared live because there has never been any instruction, written or verbal, from the central government that the said interaction could not be shared live. There have been multiple occasions of similar interactions where matters of public importance which had no confidential information were shared live.



1 Ambulances with critical Covid-19 patients wait outside LNJP hospital, amid the spread of coronavirus countrywide on Friday
2 Relatives react after the death of a family member due to Covid-19 at LNJP Hospital on Friday
3 Covid-19 patient gets oxygen on the spot provided by a Sikh organisation at a Gurdwara in Indrapuram on Friday
4 Migrants prepare to leave the city as coronavirus cases surge in the national Capital on Friday

29-year-old SI dies of Covid-19

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 29-year-old Sub Inspector posted with the Delhi Police died due to Coronavirus at a hospital in Ghaziabad on Friday morning. Police said he was posted at Bharat Nagar police station, which falls under the jurisdiction of Delhi Police's northwest district.



According to a senior police official, he tested positive on April 15 and was admitted to a private hospital in Ghaziabad on April 19 where he had been undergoing treatment. He had severe symptoms of Coronavirus and was in critical condition. A plasma donor was also arranged but his lung was severely affected, the police official said. The deceased had joined Delhi Police in 2015 and is survived by his wife and a two-year-old daughter who live in Wazirabad, the officer said. According to police, around 1,500 Delhi Police personnel tested positive for the coronavirus during the second wave since March end. More than 8,000 personnel of the force have been exposed to the virus. Out of them, around 7,000 have recovered and over 1,000 are still under treatment, police officials said

4,319 fresh Covid cases in Gurugram, 9 deaths

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram district on Friday recorded 4,319 fresh coronavirus cases, the highest number of positive cases in a single day so far. Nine deaths were also reported from the city, the district's Covid toll reached to 410, officials said. The Covid-19 tally in Gurugram has now risen to 96,738 according to the official daily health bulletin. The active cases in the district stand at 20,760 while a total of 19,667 patients currently in home isolation. A total of 75,568 have been cured and discharged, including 1,690 on Friday. The health department said out of 410 deaths, 315 died due to comorbidities and the remaining 95 without comorbidities. "We are registering more than 2,000 plus cases from the last few days. It is a concern for us. We have increased testing but people need to follow covid

instructions. Around 12,000 people are being tested for covid in the district every day and more than 4 lakh people have been vaccinated in Gurugram," said Virender Yadav, CMO Gurugram. A Gurugram Health department official said that a majority of corona cases are coming from containment zones where the situation remains precarious. The district has now 184 containment zones. Apart from this, the district administration on Friday disclosed that in Gurugram, the recovery rate of covid infection patients is 78.19 percent and due to this, the mortality rate is 0.42 percent.

Four held for black marketing of Remdesivir

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Crime Branch of Delhi Police has arrested four persons in two separate raids for indulging in black marketing of the life saving 'Remdesivir' injections in the National Capital. According to Monika Bhardwaj, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Crime Branch, after receiving specific inputs a trap was laid on Wednesday near

Parmanand Chowk, GTB Nagar, Delhi. "Around 1.15 PM, one Talwinder Singh, a resident of Amritsar in Punjab was apprehended and three vials of Remdesivir injections were recovered from his possession," said the DCP. "During interrogation, the accused disclosed that he was selling the injection on higher price as its demand was shooting and there was scarcity of the injection," the DCP said. "Later, 68 more injections were recovered from his possession. The accused supplied the injection across the country through one courier com-



pany based at Chandni Chowk, Delhi. On his instance, raids were conducted at Chandni Chowk area where supplier Jitender Kumar, a resident of Roshanara in Delhi, was also apprehended. He used to charge Rs 2,000 for supply of one vial," said the DCP. "On the basis of the interrogation, teams are sent to Amritsar and other places in Punjab to nab the co-accused,"

the DCP added. Another police team arrested two accused persons from near Batra Hospital, MB Road, Delhi, while they were trying to sell the injections at exorbitant prices. Ten vials of Remdesivir were recovered from the accused persons, she said. The accused persons use to sell these injections in black market on higher prices. They have a set network of persons who supply the injections on demand. A total of 81 vials of Remdesivir injections were recovered in two cases, police said.

Govt gives ₹5K ex-gratia relief to registered construction workers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has disbursed an ex-gratia payment of ₹5,000 to each construction worker, registered under the 'Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board' as an aid in the times of crisis. A total of 2,10,684 construction workers will be granted disbursements under this scheme. At present, the Delhi Government has disbursed ₹52.88 crore to 1,05,750 construction workers and in the coming days, more construction workers will be granted this ex-gratia relief, the Chief Minister's office said in a statement. In order to cater the needs

G'ram reserves 60% beds in general, 75% ventilators/ICU for Covid patients

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In view of shortage of hospital beds for Covid patients in Gurugram, the deputy commissioner, Dr Yash Garg has directed hospitals to increase the number of beds reserved for Covid patients to "at least 60%" of beds under general category and 75% of total bed capacity of ICU and Ventilator beds. Moreover, the data of available beds will have to be uploaded on the platform 'onemapggm.gmda.gov.in' of the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) by the hospitals.

The order was issued under the epidemic diseases Act-1897 and sub-section-2 of the Disaster Management Act-2005. "We have directed all the hospitals to provide services including human resources and logistics ie doctors, paramedical staff, medicine, ICU, ambulance etc. Apart from this information about the number of patients and available beds, etc., will be updated on a daily basis on the GMDA platform," Garg said. However, the district's top hospitals, both private and government, have got no ICU, ventilator beds empty.

Officials, however, have assured that they are making every effort to increase the number of beds in Gurugram district. Recently the deputy commissioner had appointed 22 nodal officers for 41 private/government covid hospitals in across the district to check availability of beds in hospitals. Apart from this, the city had recorded 4,319 fresh coronavirus cases on Friday. The district's COVID toll reached to 410. The active cases in the district stand at 20,760 while a total of 19,667 patients currently in home isolation.

Four held for selling oxygen cylinders for ₹90K, possessing them illegally in G'gram

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

A joint team of Chief Minister's flying squad, crime branch Sector-40 and drugs control department have arrested four persons for selling and illegally possessing 9 oxygen cylinders without a valid licence on Friday. The investigation found that these cylinders valued at ₹12,000 to ₹14,000 were being sold for as high as ₹90,000 per cylinder in black market. Those arrested were identified as Bhupender Yadav of Jind who was the kingpin. His assistants were Rajesh of Mahendergarh, Satyam of Bihar and Dharmender of Rajasthan. "Following a secret information about black marketing of oxygen cylinders, we had prepared police personnel as a decoy customer, who had contacted the miscreants who asked him to meet

them in Sector-38-39. There the accused had fixed a deal for a 48 kg cylinder ₹90,000. Later the decoy customer signalled to the raiding team who overpowered the three culprits along with one cylinder and Maruti Breeze car from the spot," Subhash Boken, spokesperson of the Gurugram police said. Boken further said that on their disclosure the police arrested the kingpin of the gang from flat no 101-102, Awasi Society in Sector-39 and recovered 8 oxygen cylinders from his possession. "During questioning the accused disclosed before the police they have established a firm 'Purani Health Care Solution' at Awasi society. They know that there was a huge demand of oxygen cylinders in the market due to Covid-19. So they started black market of cylinders. On Thursday they had sold one cylinder in Rs 70,000," Boken said.

three oxygen cylinders left at the hospital and their suppliers have expressed inability to supply the cylinder due to shortage. "Thereafter, a team was formed and it was found that one vendor Paramount Cryo Gases in Mundka area was refilling the cylinders. Police went with vacant cylinders there and waited for four hours for their turn. All the filled 40 cylinders have been handed over to the hospital authorities," said Atul Kumar Thakur, the DCP, South district.

राष्ट्रीय पंचायत पुरस्कार 2021

दीन दयाल उपाध्याय पंचायत सशक्तीकरण पुरस्कार

 श्री विरेंद्र सिंह रावत श्री प्रमुख, पंचायत	 श्री प्रदीप सिंह रावत श्री प्रमुख, पंचायत	 श्री मोहं. राजा श्री प्रमुख, पंचायत
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उत्तराखण्ड की समस्त त्रिस्तरीय पंचायतों के प्रतिनिधियों से अनुरोध है कि वे राज्य के समग्र विकास की अकारणता को धरातल पर साकार करने में अपना उत्कृष्ट योगदान देते हुए राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर अपनी विशिष्ट पहचान बनायें, जिससे आगामी राष्ट्रीय पंचायत पुरस्कार प्राप्त करने में वह अपना स्थान बना सकें।

आप सभी से अनुरोध है कृपया राष्ट्रीय पंचायतीराज दिवस के शुभ अवसर पर पंचायतीराज मंत्रालय भारत सरकार द्वारा आयोजित कार्यक्रम में लाईव जुड़ने के लिये <http://pminidiawebcast.nic.in/> से प्रातः 11:30 बजे से अनिवार्य रूप से प्रतिभाग करने का कष्ट करें।

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Police manage to restore O2 supply

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has embarked upon a massive operation to help hospitals to get the supply of oxygen amid its shortage in the national Capital. In the last couple of days, many city hospitals have made SOS calls to various police stations seeking help in arranging oxygen cylinders. In the North district, police received a distress call at 7.15 AM on Friday from Tirath

Ram Shah Hospital near Tis Hazari metro station. The hospital said they have run out of oxygen supply and need immediate help. "Immediately, a police team was sent to Bawana to facilitate the oxygen cylinder. Police escorted the vehicle carrying a total 33 oxygen cylinders to Tirath Ram Shah Hospital before 9 AM by providing a green corridor," said Anto Alphonse, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district.

In the central district, police were informed at 3.12 AM regarding the shortage of oxygen at Jeewan Mala Hospital, Rohtak Road. Police reached Jeewan Mala Hospital and met doctor Naresh who told them that their vehicle was stuck in Mundka and they had oxygen supply for only 30 minutes. Two big oxygen cylinders were arranged and a continuous supply of the gas was ensured. Later, the vehicle of Jeewan Mala Hospital came with 12 more cylinders. Seven more

oxygen cylinders were procured from Naraina and handed over to hospital, police said. At 7.35 AM, the doctors again informed that oxygen backup was for only 30 minutes. Two more cylinders were provided to them. Later, their vehicle arrived with 33 cylinders, police said. Police said that ONCOPLUS Hospital at Bhisam Pitamah Marg has 44 COVID patients were admitted and under treatment. The hospital authorities stated that only

three oxygen cylinders left at the hospital and their suppliers have expressed inability to supply the cylinder due to shortage. "Thereafter, a team was formed and it was found that one vendor Paramount Cryo Gases in Mundka area was refilling the cylinders. Police went with vacant cylinders there and waited for four hours for their turn. All the filled 40 cylinders have been handed over to the hospital authorities," said Atul Kumar Thakur, the DCP, South district.

Forces to import O2 making plants from Germany



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ramping up its efforts in the fight against corona, especially shortage of oxygen, the Armed forces have decided to import 23 oxygen generation plants and containers from Germany. Each plant can generate 2,400 litres of oxygen per hour, thereby, enhancing the capabilities of the hospitals to treat patients. The plants are expected to be in India next week.

In addition, the Defence Ministry has decided to give extension to Short Service Commissioned Doctors in Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) till December 31, 2021. "This will augment the strength of AFMS by 238 more doctors," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Twitter on Friday.

As regards importing oxygen plants, Defence Ministry Spokesperson A. Bharat Bhushan Babu said, "23 mobile oxygen generation plants are being airlifted from Germany. These will be deployed in AFMS hospitals catering to the COVID patients." These oxygen generating plants are

expected within a week.

Elaborating on the capability of the oxygen generation plants, Babu said each plant has a capacity to produce 40 litres of Oxygen per minute and 2,400 litres an hour at which rate it can cater to 20-25 patients round the clock. "The advantage of these plants is that they are easily portable. A total of 23 such plants are being imported as of now," he added.

Stating that the mobile oxygen generation plants being procured will be deployed in static hospitals and provide adequate oxygen to the needy, the official added that a large number of oxygen concentrators are also under procurement.

Besides this step, the Base Hospital in Delhi Cantonment is being converted into a 1,000 bed Covid hospital and should be activated in a week, an Army official said.

In a related development, to meet the pressing requirement for oxygen in hospitals across the country, the IAF has deployed heavy transport aircraft for airlifting big oxygen tankers from filling stations to the required destinations.

Rajnath okays financial free hand to AFMC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday sanctioned delegation of emergency financial powers to Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS). As per the order, emergency financial powers have been delegated to Director General Medical Services (Army/Navy/Air Force), head of Medical Branches at Formation/Command Headquarters of Army/Navy/Air Force/Andaman & Nicobar Command and Joint Staff including Command Medical Officers of Navy and Principal Medical Officers of Air Force (Major General and equivalent/Brigadiers and equivalent). The delegated financial powers are as follows. DGMS (Army/Navy/Air Force) - ₹5 crore, Major General and equivalent - ₹3 crore, Brigadier and equivalent - ₹2 crore. Emergency powers have been delegated up to September 30, 2021 with a provision for revision/extension.

"C-17 and IL-76 aircraft airlifted cryogenic oxygen containers from Air Force Station Hindan to Panagarh for recharging, in support of the fight against Covid-19. Similar

Run Oxygen Express to save patients: Delhi to Rlys

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Minutes after a meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Chief Ministers of States having high Covid-19 case-loads on Friday, the Delhi Government requested Indian Railways to start operating 'Oxygen Express' trains immediately to save Covid-19 patients in need of medical oxygen in the national Capital hospitals.

Railway Board Chairman Suneet Sharma said the railways have received a request from Delhi "just now", and the rail network system is planning its movement from Rourkela in Odisha. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal appealed to the Centre to provide medical oxygen to the Delhi which is facing an acute shortage of it.

Delhi Government is the latest to have lined up for 'Oxygen Express' services, after Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Each tanker of 'Oxygen Express' trains can carry around 16 tonnes of medical oxygen and these trains have been put in to travel



at an average speed of around 65 kmph.

"Andhra Pradesh has asked for oxygen to be moved from Angul in Odisha. We have asked the Delhi Government to keep their trucks ready, and our wagons, ramps are ready in the NCR area," Sharma said at a press conference. He said the demand from Delhi will be

met soon as the logistics are currently being worked out.

Sharma said the 'Oxygen Express' train headed for Uttar Pradesh will reach Lucknow on Saturday, and the one for Maharashtra will reach Nagpur on Friday night and then proceed towards Nashik, from where oxygen will be dispersed to different cities.

Deaths due to the lack of oxygen have been reported from across the country, and it was on the suggestion of the Maharashtra and the Madhya Pradesh governments that the Railways planned a policy to transport liquid medical oxygen in cryogenic tankers to states on request.

The first such train was

pushed into service on April 19, when seven trucks left Mumbai for Vizag to load oxygen. These trucks were loaded on flat wagons and carried to the loading location. Asked why the 'Oxygen Express' trains were taking so long to reach their destinations, Sharma said it was because of the sensitive material they are carrying.

For the 'Oxygen Express', the Railways has issued transportation rates and weight requirements. The rules are valid till October 15. Also, the Railways will not levy any surcharges and will provide five hours' free cargo-handling time. Goods and Services Tax will be levied. Two people, including the driver, can get on the trucks (with second-class tickets) carrying the oxygen.

To facilitate loading and unloading of tankers, a ramp is required which the Railways has constructed in record time.

Sharma also shared that around 93,000 railway beneficiaries have been affected by Covid-19, and 72 railway hospitals and 5,000 beds are dedicated to their care.

airlift tasks are underway across the country," the IAF said. A COVID testing set up load was also airlifted to Leh.

Moreover, Chinook and

Mi-17 helicopters are on stand-by. Tasks undertaken include airlift of doctors and nursing staff from Kochi, Mumbai, Vizag and Bangalore for vari-

ous hospitals at Delhi.

The C-17 and IL-76 aircraft of IAF have started airlifting big empty oxygen tankers from their place of use to the filling

stations across the country to speed up the distribution of much needed oxygen. In addition to this, the C-17 and IL-76 have transported large quanti-

ties of load comprising bio safety cabinets and autoclave machines for setting up of an additional COVID test facility at Leh.

Don't let your guards down against Covid, says study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Even if you have recovered from Covid-19, don't let your guards down. A recent study involving more than 87,000 Covid-19 patients and nearly five million control patients has warned that the survivors of the Coronavirus had a 60 per cent increased risk of death compared with flu survivors, with about 29 excess deaths per 1,000 patients at six months.

The study published in the journal Nature also cautioned that survivors of the pathogens also had a substantially higher risk of long-term medical problems and that the Covid-19 is likely to place a massive burden on the world's population in the coming years.

The study, led by researchers at Washington University's School of Medicine found that after surviving the initial infection (beyond the first 30 days of illness), Covid-

19 survivors had an almost 60 percent increased risk of death over the following six months. At the six-month mark, excess deaths among all Covid-19 survivors were estimated at eight people per 1,000 patients.

Among patients who were ill enough to be hospitalised with Covid-19 and who survived beyond the first 30 days of illness, there were 29 excess deaths per 1,000 patients over the following six months.

"Our study demonstrates that up to six months after diagnosis, the risk of death following even a mild case of Covid-19 is not trivial and increases with disease severity," said Ziyad Al-Aly, Assistant Professor of medicine at the University.

"These later deaths due to long-term complications of the infection are not necessarily recorded as deaths due to Covid-19. As far as the total pandemic death toll, these numbers suggest that the

deaths we're counting due to the immediate viral infection are only the tip of the iceberg," Al-Aly said.

Moreover, despite being initially a respiratory virus, long Covid-19 can affect nearly every organ system in the body, including the respiratory system, nervous system, mental health, metabolism, cardiovascular system, gastrointestinal system, kidney, coagulation regulation, skin, musculoskeletal system, and general health, the researchers noted.

In fact, in an yet another observational study of more than 230,000 patient health records published in The Lancet Psychiatry journal said that one in three Covid-19 survivors received a neurological or psychiatric diagnosis within six months of infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The study looked at 14 neurological and mental health disorders.

Andhra, U'khand, Jharkhand pledge free Covid inoculation

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhhand and Jharkhand on Friday joined other States which have promised free Covid-19 vaccination to those above 18 years of age. This, even as the BJP announced free vaccination to all in Bengal on the lines of Bihar while the state's incumbent Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on April 22 had already promised free vaccines from May 5 onwards.

The Friday announcement came days after the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) said that States will get the Covishield vaccine at Rs 400 per dose, private hospitals at Rs 600 and Centre at Rs 150. However, Bharat Biotech, manufacturer of Covaxin is yet to announce the price list for the States.

Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Sikkim have already announced free vaccination to the target segment, for



which vaccination will start from May 1.

"Andhra Pradesh government has given vaccination top priority from the beginning. To take it closer to the people, vaccinations will be given to those aged 18 to 45 for free. With this decision, across the State, more than 2 crore people between ages 18 to 45 will benefit. This is the most crucial step towards preventing COVID-19 in the state," Andhra Pradesh Health Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani) told the media on Friday. This is likely to cost the State approximately Rs

1,600 crore. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has already directed officials to place orders for Covid-19 vaccines accordingly.

Toeing a similar line, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat-led BJP government also announced that people above the age of 18 years in the State will be administered the Covid-19 vaccine free of cost at all government and private hospitals. His Jharkhand counterpart Hemant Soren, not to be left behind in the race, also announced that all residents of

the State above 18 years of age will be given free vaccination for Covid-19.

"In Jharkhand, the corona vaccine will be provided free of cost to people above the age of 18 by the State Government," Soren said in a tweet on Thursday night.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in his cabinet meeting last week had already announced that people above the age of 18 will be provided vaccine doses for free from May 1. "We have decided to vaccinate all above 18 years free of cost. The State Government will take forward the vaccination programme with its own resources," he had said.

Several Chief Ministers like Chhattisgarh's Bhupesh Baghel and personalities from various walks of life like actor Sonu Sood have already batted for free Covid preventive vaccine to the needy, and demanded a cap on its pricing.

"Every needy should get a 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," Sood had tweeted on Wednesday.

Make Covid jobs available via Jan Aushadhi scheme: IMA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has demanded that the Covid-19 vaccine in the open market be routed through the Jan Aushadhi scheme to make it affordable for people, while requesting the Centre to ensure that the vaccine is given free to all people above the age of 18 in its facilities.

The cost involved for the mass universal vaccination for those above the age of 18 will be much lower than the economic gains achieved by bending the curve of Covid-19 pandemic, the IMA said adding that vaccination for the coronavirus infection should also be the priority of the government.

As vaccination not only enhances individual safety but also the community safety by paving way for herd immunity.

The association also demanded transparency in the vaccine pricing.

"Now as the manufacturers are allowed to fix the price, it is shocking to note the pre-emptive announcement of the Serum institute has predicted the price as ₹600. IMA demands transparency in this and requests the government to ensure the vaccine is given free to all people above the age of 18," the doctors' body said.

The IMA demands that the vaccine in the open market is routed through the Jan Aushadhi scheme, where the vaccine can be made available in the prefixed price to all patients.

"If the price of the vaccine is not capped, and the ₹35000 crore earmarked in the budget is not utilised for giving the free vaccination to all, the good intention of the government will land up in disaster and the country will continue to suffer economic and health care crisis due to this pandemic," the IMA said.

Dr GS Grewal, ex-president of Punjab Medical Council and Dr Arun Mitra, ex-chairman of Ethical Committee of PMC said that the Prime Minister had announced that all the citizens in the country will be given vaccines free of costs. "But now the Government is shying away from its responsibility.

The disparity in prices has exposed the slogan of 'one India, one Mandi and one ration card'," Dr Grewal rued.

Cadila gets nod to supply Virafin under emergency category

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a move that is expected to check the blackmarketing of anti-viral drug 'Remdesivir', the Drugs Controller General of India's (DCGI) on Friday gave its nod to Zydus Cadila's Pegylated Interferon alpha-2b, 'Virafin' for the treatment of moderate Covid-19 infection in adults. The approval has been given under emergency usage category.

Zydus Cadila had sought the Centre's nod for Virafin, on April 5, claiming it had shown promising results in treating Covid-19. A single dose of Virafin shows significant improvement as 91.15 per cent of patients were tested RT PCR negative by day 7. It also reduces hours of supplemental oxygen in the patients.

"A single-dose subcutaneous regimen of the antiviral Virafin will make the treatment more convenient for the patients. When administered early on during COVID-19, Virafin will help patients recover faster and avoid much of the complications," the company said in a statement adding that it has also shown efficacy against other viral infections.

"The fact that we are able

to offer a therapy which significantly reduces the viral load when given early on can help in better disease management. It comes at a much-needed time for patients and we will continue to provide them access to critical therapies in this battle against Covid-19," said Dr Sharvil Patel, Managing Director, Cadila Healthcare Limited.

In its Phase III clinical trials, the therapy had shown better clinical improvement in the patients suffering from COVID-19. During the trials, a higher proportion of patients administered with PegIFN arm were RT-PCR negative by day 7.

The drug ensures faster viral clearance and has several add-on advantages compared to other anti-viral agents, as per the company's statement.

Officials in the Union Health Ministry said that with the availability of one more drug under the experimental drug therapy, the pressure on the other drugs like Remdesivir which is being sold in black market because of its huge demand will be reduced and the doctors will have more choices to offer to the patients for Covid treatment.

Apex Court's interference in Covid mgmt wrong: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday said the Supreme Court's suo motu intervention in the management of Covid-19 in the country was "wrong" and "uncalled for", and alleged that it amounts to over-centralisation of judicial powers. While the Congress also hit out at the government over its handling of the pandemic in the country where there is "shortage" of everything, former party chief Rahul Gandhi questioned the Centre's priority in going ahead with the ₹20,000 crore central vista project in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis.

The Congress said venerable institutions have to realise that their primary job is to protect the lives of citizens of India, not the reputation of the central government and demanded vaccine neutrality just like net neutrality.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said high courts were efficiently upholding the citizens' right to life and holding the government accountable in a more nuanced way on a case-to-case basis and they should have been allowed to carry on their work. "The Supreme Court's intervention on April 22, 2021 is totally uncalled for. Unfortunately, it is wrong, wrong and wrong."

SC supports Salve as lawyers target him in Covid case

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Friday allowed senior advocate Harish Salve to withdraw as amicus curiae for the suo motu case related to distribution of essential supplies and services, including oxygen and drugs, during the COVID-19 pandemic. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, who is demitting office as the CJI Friday itself, rapped some senior advocates for making statements without reading its order passed on Thursday and observed that it did not stop high courts from hearing cases related to COVID-19 management in the country.

The bench, also comprising Justices L N Rao and S R Bhat, granted time to the Centre to file response in the case and posted it for hearing on April 27.

"You have imputed motives to us without reading our order," the bench told senior advocate Dushyant Dave, who was appearing in the matter.

"We are also pained at reading what some senior lawyers have to say on Salve's appointment as amicus in the matter," the bench said, adding that it was a "collective decision" of all the judges at the bench.

Salve said it is a "very sensitive" matter and he did not want the case to be decided under the shadow that he knew the CJI from school and college

People dying due to lack of oxygen: SC

New Delhi: People are dying due to lack of oxygen, the Supreme Court said on Friday while questioning the Tamil Nadu Government as to why it cannot take over Vedanta's Sterlite copper unit at Tuticorin, closed since May 2018 over pollution concerns,

for producing oxygen to treat COVID-19 patients. "We are not interested that Vedanta or A, B or C runs it. We are interested that oxygen should be produced," a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said.

PTI



days. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta requested Salve not to withdraw from the case as the amicus on the ground that no one should succumb to such pressure tactics.

Taking note of the "grim" situation created by the massive

IAF airlifts empty oxygen containers to filling stations across India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force on Friday airlifted empty oxygen containers to various filling stations across the country and deployed its aircraft for transportation of medical personnel and medicines in helping civil authorities deal with surging COVID-19 cases.

The IAF deployed its C-17 and IL-76 heavy-lift aircraft for transportation of oxygen containers to filling stations, officials said.

The oxygen containers will be transported by road or rail to various hospitals once they are refilled, they said.

Containers filled with oxygen are generally not transported on board military aircraft as they are considered combustible and may pose risk to the planes.

"C-17 and IL-76 aircraft airlifted cryogenic oxygen containers from Air Force Station Hindan to Panagarh for recharging, in support of the fight against COVID-19. Similar airlift tasks are underway across the country," the IAF tweeted.

Officials said the IAF has also deployed its aircraft for transportation of medical personnel and medicines to various places across the country as part of its COVID-19 response.

New Govt will ensure Sonar Bangla: Modi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Confident of his party's chances of coming to power in Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that he would personally remain present in the swearing in ceremony after May 2 when the Assembly elections results would be declared.

Once again vouching for the Ashol Poriborton (meaningful change) in Bengal if his Government came to power he said, all-round development -- that had been impeded for several decades in Bengal -- would start taking effect "after the double engine BJP comes to power."

Promising a crime-free State the Prime Minister said

"Bengal has massive potential which will be utilized by the new Government," which would focus on agro-based industries. "As infiltration, syndicate and tolabaji (extortion) impede development" the new Government would work towards getting rid of these menaces, he said.

"We shall bring Ashol Poriborton and ensure a Sonar Bangla (golden Bengal)" he said adding the women's cause would be prioritized in the new scheme of things.

"The first thing the Government will do will be to reduce crime against women and for that a number of fast track courts will be set up," he said.

Averring that his Government would lay stress

on housing schemes for the poor and the middle class the Prime Minister said that the new Government would work together with the Centre to ensure that every citizen of Bengal had a house to live in. "We will ensure housing for all," he said.

Hailing the people of the State for coming out and voting in large numbers ignoring intimidation by some political outfits he said that the people of this State have made up their mind to bring a change for real development and they had been doing that by voting in large numbers.

"Only two phases of elections are left now and in all the earlier phases we have seen the people coming out to vote such large numbers after four

decades ... they are doing so to set up a new government ... they are doing so ignoring fear and intimidation ... they have inspired the entire country men by taking part in voting in such large numbers... this means something ... this means they have made up their minds to bring the BJP to power," Modi said adding it could be his last rally in the State before the ongoing elections end.

The Prime Minister earlier cancelled his four physical rallies scheduled for Friday.

Meanwhile, much in the line of Trinamool Congress president Mamata Banerjee who earlier promised free delivery of ration and free vaccine to the people of the State after she returned to power the

Bengal BJP on Friday tweeted, "As soon as BJP government comes to power in West Bengal, Covid-19 vaccine will be provided free of cost to everyone."

However, reacting to the BJP tweet TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien said, "They promised free vaccines for all during Bihar elections. Election is over, what happened?" adding the BJP was coming out with such promises when there were only 2 phases left.

There were only "2 phases left and BJP says this. Don't believe BJP," he said. The BJP also promised free ration for all.

Earlier Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had urged the Prime Minister to make the vaccine free for all.

Tamil Nadu logs 13,776 new cases, 78 deaths

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

There was no let up in the number of Covid-19 cases in Tamil Nadu as the State diagnosed 13,776 new cases on Friday. The last 24 hours saw the pandemic claiming 78 lives across the State.

Capital city of Chennai continued to be the hot spot as 3,842 new persons were diagnosed with the disease. Neighbouring Chengalpattu registered 985 new cases while Coimbatore, the industrial hub of South India saw the number of patients going up by 889.

Thiruvallur, another neighbouring district of

Chennai saw the pandemic continuing unabated with 807 new cases.

The State continued with massive testing and on Friday more than 1.25 lakh persons were tested as part of the Mass Test programme. The Government informed the Madras High Court that the State has sufficient stock of vaccines, oxygen and hospital to take on any emergency measures.

The Government's move to consider the proposal from Sterlite Ltd at Thoothukudi to reopen its defunct plant to produce oxygen suffered a setback as major opposition parties like the CPI(M), Vaikos

MDMK and Seeman's NTK came out in the open staging protests against the opening of the plant.

Though the district collector who had convened the meeting said that there was an urgent need of oxygen across the country in the backdrop of the ever increasing number of Covid-19 cases, the activists said they were not bothered about what was happening outside Tamil Nadu. "we will not allow the reopening of the Sterlite Plant which had caused havoc with the environment. It is against the nature to think of reopening the plant," said senior activist M Krishnamurthy.

Centre neglecting pandemic, alleges Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday launched a scathing attack on the Centre for neglecting the pandemic and pushing the people of the country in the face of a great disaster.

Addressing a virtual election meeting -- first on her part -- in Burdwan East district the Chief Minister said that the "negligence of the Centre" had complicated the pandemic situation in India.

She alleged that the oxygen suppliers for Bengal were being diverted to UP taking the situation in the State to an alarming level.

Attacking the Narendra Modi Government for starving Bengal of oxygen and diverting the medical oxygen produced in Bengal to BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, the Chief Minister

said, "There is no oxygen available in the market. The Steel Authority of India Limited was meeting our oxygen demands, but that oxygen has been diverted to Uttar Pradesh."

Bengal which would need about 450 MT of oxygen in the coming two weeks time was currently getting only 200 MT of it, sources said.

"Having failed to subdue Bengal politically the BJP now wants to kill us by starving us of oxygen, she said alleging how the Centre was discriminating between Gujarat and other States in terms of providing vaccine.

"Gujarat is getting 60 percent of the total vaccine being produced," Banerjee complained adding how vaccines were being provided to the people from BJP's party office in the western State "whereas in other States" like Bengal and

Maharashtra "we are getting fewer amounts of vaccines and other medicines."

The Banerjee who skipped the Chief Ministers' meeting with the Prime Minister said how she was not invited in the meeting. "We were not invited to take part in the meeting ... so I would not join it ... had we been invited we would definitely have joined in the meeting," she said. The meeting was attended by Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay. Banerjee had earlier skipped a few similar meetings as she was busy campaigning for the ongoing assembly elections.

Earlier the Chief Minister had termed the second wave of corona pandemic "not a man-made but a Modi-made disaster" saying alleging how the Prime Minister and his entire team of ministers

were busy campaigning for Assembly elections neglecting the main work of raising infrastructure for tackling the second wave which had already been anticipated.

"They were concentrating more on winning elections than saving the lives of the people which is why the pandemic has such a serious proportion," the Chief Minister said adding how no experts had been consulted and how oxygen and medicines had not been stocked for the second wave.

"The crisis has assumed such large proportion because of the negligence of the Centre. The BJP wanted to win Bengal at any cost. They sent leaders from all across the country and put the entire country and Bengal in such a critical situation. This is so unfortunate," Banerjee said.

Bengal Rly staff infected, many trains cancelled

Kolkata: Reaching an alarming scale the corona pandemic seems to have forced an undeclared lockdown in the train services of Sealdah and Howrah Division of Bengal.

Such has been the spread of infection that about 125 trains including sub-urban trains have been cancelled both in Sealdah and Howrah division, sources said.

While in Howrah Division 16 passenger trains and 40 local trains have been cancelled, in Sealdah Division 60 local trains have cancelled, a senior Eastern Railway official said adding about 500 staff including motorman, guard and driver had been infected in Howrah Division the number for Sealdah is about 200. Sealdah is one of the busiest railway junctions in Asia ferrying lakhs of daily commuters.

"If this situation aggravates further which in any case is very much possible then the Railway authorities will have to suspend most of the services for want of staff," a senior official said adding how the Railways have started imposing fine on the negligent commuters not wearing masks. PNS

PM to launch distribution of e-property cards under SWAMITVA scheme today

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra

Modi will launch the distribution of e-property cards under the 'SWAMITVA scheme' on Saturday. As many as 4.09 lakh property owners will be given their e-property cards on National Panchayati Raj Day (April 24), which will also mark the rolling out of the SVAMITVA scheme for implementation across the country. Modi will launch the distribution of e-property cards through video conferencing, said PMO in a statement.

The PM will also confer the National Panchayat Awards 2021 on the occasion. Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar will also attend the event. The National Panchayat Awards 2021 are being conferred under the following categories -- Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar to 224 panchayats, Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav

Gram Sabha Puraskar to 30 gram panchayats, Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award to 29 gram panchayats, Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award to 30 Gram Panchayats and e-Panchayat Puraskar to 12 states.

The Prime Minister will transfer the award money (as grants-in-aid) through the click of a button, ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 50 lakh, the PMO said. The amount will be directly transferred to the bank account of the panchayats concerned in real time, it said, adding that this is being done for the first time.

The SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) scheme was launched by the Prime Minister on April 24, 2020 as a central sector scheme to promote a socio-economically empowered and self-reliant rural India. PNS

SUV PLANTING-HIRAN MURDER CASES

NIA arrests one more Mumbai Police officer in twin cases

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In the fifth arrest in the twin explosive laden SUV planting and alleged Mansukh Hiran murder cases, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday took into custody Mumbai Crime branch officer Sunil Mane, after an intensive overnight grilling.

A 1995-batch Maharashtra police service officer who was the in-charge of Unit-11 of the Mumbai crime branch, Mane is the third Mumbai police officer to have been arrested in the twin sensational cases.

Earlier, the NIA had on March 13 arrested Sachin Vaze, an Assistant Police Inspector API heading the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the Crime Branch-CID of Mumbai Police. On April 11, the central agency took into custody Assistant Police Inspector (API) Riyazuddin Kazi, who was directly working under Vaze.

Mane, who was called by the NIA for interrogation on Thursday night, was placed under the arrest in the early hours of Friday. Mane was later in the day produced before a Special NIA court, which remanded him to the investigation agency's custody till April 28. The Special court also extended till May 5 the judicial remand of incarcerated Inspector Sachin Vaze.

In all, there have so far been five arrests in the twin explosive

laden SUV planting and alleged Mansukh Hiran murder cases. Apart from three police officers, convicted Mumbai Police constable Vinayak B. Shinde (51) and a cricket bookie Naresh R. Gaur (31) are two others accused in the two cases.

Shinde, who has been convicted in the case involving the fake encounter of Ramnarayan Gupta alias Lakhan Bhaiya on November 11, 2006, and Gaur are said to be accomplices of Vaze.

Maharashtra's Anti Terrorism -- which initially investigated the circumstances leading to the alleged murder of Hiran -- had on March 21 arrested convicted Shinde and Gaur in connection with Hiran's alleged murder.

The arrest of Shinde and Gaur came a day after the Union Home Ministry asking the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to take over the investigations into the murder of Hiran.

During the investigations that followed, the NIA seized from Shinde and Gaur two mobile phones, one iPhone, 7 SIM cards, a blank cover of SIM card, a note with 14 mobile numbers mentioned including 5 in the name of arrested-suspected cop and private accused Sachin Vaze with 'OK' written (for activation) beside them.

The NIA is looking into Mane's role in the planning of a Gelatin sticks laden Scorpio and a threatening letter inside the vehicle, in the vicinity of Mukesh

Ambani's 27-storey residence "Antilia" on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai on February 25 and the subsequent alleged murder of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiran. Hiran's body was recovered from the marshy Reti-Bunder creek in Mumbai in the neighbouring Thane district on March 5.

Vaze was the first accused to have been arrested by the NIA which registered an FIR in the explosive-laden SUV recovery case on March 8.

Vaze had earlier this month created a sensation by making a written submission before the special NIA Court accusing Deshmukh and another Maharashtra Minister Anil Parab of asking him to Indulge in extortion for them.

Vaze, who was arrested on March 13 in connection with the gelatin sticks laden Scorpio recovery case, was earlier booked under sections 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy) 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 465 (forgery) 473 (making or possessing counterfeit seal) and 506 -2 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 4 (a)(b)(i) of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

Vaze was subsequently booked under sections 16 (Punishment for Terror act) and 18 (Punishment for conspiracy etc) of the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

Covid daily count near 30,000 in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Covid-19 cases in Kerala continued unabated on Friday too despite the stringent controls announced by the State administration. Kerala tested 28,447 new Covid cases on Friday while 27 persons succumbed to the pandemic during the last 24 hours, according to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Vijayan who met media persons on Friday evening quoted from all medical journals and pleaded with the people to cooperate with him in bringing down the Covid curve. I told the Prime Minister this morning that the State needs Rs 1,500 crore to provide Covid-19 vaccine to all the people. The Centre should pay this amount or provide us with free vaccines. It is impossible for the State to buy the vaccines from private companies by paying exorbitant prices," said Vijayan.

The Chief Minister said that during the video conference, he shared his expertise with the Prime Minister.

Vijayan turned emotional when he recounted the incident of Subaida, a Muslim woman from Kollam, sending him her life savings of Rs 5,000 to purchase vaccine from open market.

"Last year Subaida had sold her sheep and sent me the money towards the Covid fund of the State. This is the state of financial affairs in Kerala," he said. Vijayan said though there would not be any lock down in the State, the next two days (Saturday and Sunday) would see strict measures being followed all over Kerala. "This is to control crowding by people. Only those people who have to attend to emergency works would be allowed outside. Those who come out of their houses and places of residents should have authorization letters in which the purpose is written and signed

by competent authorities," said the chief minister.

The all party meeting scheduled for Monday would take a call on how to tighten the control measures, he said. The Chief Minister lambasted the Centre for its indifference towards the requests made by the State for help and assistance.

He evaded questions on the warning sounded by various Islamist organisations in Malappuram district that they would not heed to the control measures announced by the State administration. K Gopalakrishnan, the district collector, in his official order had stated that crowding at any places by five or more persons would not be allowed on account of the high rate at which the Covid-19 spreads. But leaders of the Samastha Kerala Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the intellectual think tank of conservative Muslims in the State that wielded big influence among the community had warned the Collector and the State administration from enforcing such laws and that too during the Ramzan.

"This is a unilateral and dictatorial decision taken by the district collector. It would be ideal for the government to withdraw this law at the earliest," said Syed Mohammed jiffry Muthukoya Thangal, president of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema in a statement on Friday.

Meanwhile the representatives of Kerala Government Medical Officers Association which blamed the LDF Government for the poor handling of the Covid-19 pandemic decided not to react to the chief minister's statement that the medical doctors do not know the reason for the surge in the pandemic.

"Even as we stand by what we said on Thursday, we have decided not to react to Vijayan's comments," said a spokesman of the KGMOA.

Shravan Rathod, of Nadeem-Shravan duo, dies at 66 from Covid-19 complications

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After battling with a Covid-19 infection and comorbidity-related complications, Bollywood music composer and singer Shravan Kumar Rathod of the Nadeem-Shravan duo -- still remembered for iconic songs like "Dheere Dheere Se...," "Nazar Ke Saamne..." "Sochenge Tumhe Pyar..." died at a hospital here on Thursday night.

Sixty-six-year-old Shravan, who was admitted to Mumbai's SL Raheja Hospital, breathed his last late on Thursday night.

Shravan, his wife and elder son Sanjeev were undergoing treatment at the Raheja Hospital, after having tested positive for Covid-19.

Younger son Darshan will perform the last rites.

The duo of Shravan Kumar Rathod and Nadeem Akhtar Saifee had shot into fame with musical hit Aashiqui in 1990.

After a big break by Mahesh Bhatt, the duo followed up with impressive soundtracks in Saajan (1991), Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahin (1991), Sadak (1991), Phool Aur Kaante (1991), Deewana (1992), Hum Hai Rahi Pyar Ke (1993), Dilwale (1994) and Raja Hindustani (1996) among others.

Some of their hit songs are: Dheere Dheere Se (Aashiqui), Nazar Ke Saamne (Aashiqui) Sochenge Tumhe Pyar (Deewana), Dil Ne Yeh Kaha Hai Dil Se (Dhadkan), Aisi Deewangi (Deewana), Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin (Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin), Bahut Pyaar Karte Hain (Saajan), Pardesi Pardesi (Raja Hindustani), Teri Ummid Terah Intezar (Deewana), Do Dil Mil Rahe Hain (Pardes), Mera Dil Bhi Kitna

Pagal Hai (Saajan), Chehra Kya Dekhte Ho (Salaami), Tum Dil Ki Dhadkan Mein (Dhadkan).

Singer Kumar Sanu, one of the most super hit singer for the duo, said: "Very sad news about my dear friend #Shravan ji! Ap apne shaanget ke zariye hum sabki ke dil me hamesa zinda rahenge. RIP Shravan ji."

"God knows what lies in store, I have been reduced to half...my elder brother has left... I spent most of my mornings and evening with Shravan," Sameer, who had teamed up with the duo to give several hits, said.

En veteran singers Mohammed Rafi and Manna Day also sang for them in their film Dhangal and Kishore Kumar in the film Ilaaka. Singers Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle also sang in few albums for the duo.

In their glorious period of nineties, several top singers of the day lent the voice to the duo's music. They included: Kumar Sanu, Alka Yagnik, Udit Narayan, Anuradha Paudwal, Kavita Krishnamurthy, Sadhana Sargam, Poornima, Jaspinder Narula, KS Chithra, SP Balasubrahmanyam, Hariharan, Suresh Wadkar, Pankaj Udhass, Mohammed Aziz, Sudesh Bhosle, Shaileendra Singh, Shabbir Kumar, Nitin Mukesh, Roop Kumar Rathod, Vinod Rathod, Abhijeet, Sonu Nigam, Shaan, KK, Gurdas Maan, Shankar Mahadevan, Babul Supriyo, Manhar Udhas, Bali Brahmabhatt, Jolly Mukherjee, Sapna Mukherjee, Anwar.

After his name came up in the Gulshan Kumar murder case, Nadeem chose self-exile in Dubai and London, and in 1997, the duo fell apart, however, many years later, they collaborated on some projects.

Centre should ensure planned, equitable supply of oxygen, medicines, other resources: Raj CM

Jaipur: Chief Minister Shri Ashok Gehlot has said that the condition of corona infection in the country is becoming increasingly frightening. Despite all efforts, there are complaints of lack of resources from the States. In this time of crisis, the entire country goes beyond politics to set an example of solidarity. He said that for better management of Covid, the Central Government should ensure planned and equitable supply of oxygen, medicines and other resources, keeping life saving paramount.

Gehlot was expressing his views in a meeting held on Friday with the Chief Ministers of states under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on management of Covid. He said that in the present circumstances of Covid many heartbreaking scenes are being seen. In such a situation, there

is a need to increase the confidence of common people.

Such efforts should be made that no person is killed due to lack of oxygen and medicines.

The Chief Minister said all the States were given oxygen and based on active cases Remdesivir medication should be allocated. He said on 21 April, 2021, Rajasthan was allocated only 26 thousand 500 Remdesivir injections in the immediate allocation, while Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh were allocated 1 lakh 63 thousand and 92 thousand 200 Remdesivir injections respectively, despite having

less active cases than Rajasthan. Huh. Similarly, the proportion of active cases was not taken into consideration in the allocation of oxygen. He said that their supply should be done rationally in future so that no state has to face any problem regarding treatment of Covid patients.

Gehlot said that during the treatment of Covid patients, the helpers check in kits such as IL-6, D-dimer, ferritin test etc. have also started to decrease gradually. The central government should also plan to ensure adequate availability of these kits so that they can be supplied smoothly to the states in time.

Admin orders probe into 5 deaths at Aligarh hospital for lack of oxygen

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

In the corona era, the demand for medical oxygen is increasing rapidly. On Wednesday, five corona patients died at SJD Memorial Hospital due to lack of oxygen. The administration has ordered an inquiry into the matter, while everyone knows that the said traumatic incident has occurred due to the delay in the supply of oxygen.

Not only SJD Hospital alone, oxygen crisis is going to happen in almost all the hospitals in the district. In a day or two, this problem can become more difficult, because oxygen is not being supplied according to the demand.

Aligarh receives supplies from Ghaziabad, Kashipur, Greater Noida and Mathura, which are currently stalled. The reason is that there is a tremendous demand for oxygen in the hospitals of Delhi and NCR, the consumption of the same is hardly being met. The remaining oxygen is being given to Agra, Mathura. After this comes the number of Aligarh.

At present, all the entrepreneurs from the oxygen producing plant to the cylinders are tightly guarded by the administration. In such a situation, gas is available only after administrative instructions. Supply is as instructed.

Three plants operating in Aligarh supply only by sourcing gas, but not producing oxygen. Oxygen is produced in a plant in Chherat Road, but due to lack of storage system, the production here is very less. The district currently needs six tonnes of medical, three tonnes of commercial oxygen.

If we get nine tonnes of oxygen, the work of the district can go on, but there is an average supply of six tonnes throughout the week, due to which the shortage is increasing.

About a week later, on Wednesday night, six tons of oxygen was delivered to Radhika Air Product Talamagri, giving oxygen to SJD Hospital and Mithraj Hospital. Even earlier, only six tonnes were supplied in a week. Aligarh got about 12 tonnes of gas in 15 days.

ED files prosecution complaint against three persons in ₹1,500cr money laundering scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said it has filed a prosecution complaint (chargesheet) before PMLA Special Court, Visakhapatnam, against Deepak Agarwal, Ayush Goyal and Pramod Agarwal under money laundering charges involving trade-based money laundering to the tune of Rs 1,500 crore fraudulently to companies outside India.

The ED had initiated investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by Andhra Pradesh Police on the complaint of the Income Tax Department against Vaddi Mahesh and others.

Money laundering investigation revealed that Vaddi Mahesh had floated several firms and shell companies and opened several bank accounts in the name of those firms and shell companies.

Mahesh had remitted huge funds to the tune of Rs 1500 crore to various companies in Singapore, Hong Kong and China in the guise of outward remittances for import of non-existent "customised software" by submitting fake and fabricated documents to the banks, the ED said.

The agency had filed its first prosecution complaint against Mahesh, Bhimendra Kumar Goyal and others on October 29, 2020 before PMLA Special Court, Visakhapatnam in this case.

Investigation further revealed that Deepak Agarwal had acted as the Authorised Signatory for the bank account of United Hill China Limited, Hong Kong, which received proceeds of crime worth Rs 300 crore from the shell companies of Mahesh.

The ED had earlier arrested the kindpin of this international scam, Bhimender Kumar Goyal on September 3, 2020.

Blame game

An alarmed Centre is deflecting towards States the rising public anger over COVID mishandling

Forget good governance. If there is something our politicians are good at, it is shifting blame and shirking responsibility when things turn southwards. However, the behaviour of a ruling party, with an absolute majority and not shackled by coalition politics, should not be governed by the politics of survival but by the dharma of accountability, fair play and cooperative federalism, especially when the nation is facing the biggest global health emergency in living memory. Sadly, the BJP Government at the Centre has been found wanting where the handling of the Coronavirus pandemic's second wave is concerned. To be fair, except for the migrant crisis, most aspects of the first wave were handled by the Centre and the industry with grit and determination; and the result was we did fairly well in ramping up our crumbling healthcare system, creating ventilators, drugs, PPEs, vaccines and so on. But the Centre was certainly not prepared for the second wave and the complacency on many levels has led to the current mess in the country. There is shortage of hospital beds, oxygen, plasma, life-saving drugs, ICUs, respirators, vaccines and people are dying even as the focus of our political leaders is on elections. Now, instead of focusing on handling this health emergency, the BJP is busy saving its own skin. Shaken by adverse ground reports over the Centre's (mis)handling of the second wave, the ruling party has changed tack and started shifting the blame on to the States.

As families, seeing their loved ones turned away from hospitals and dying, direct their anger towards the Government, the BJP has decided to deflect this angst towards the States to ensure against any negative political fallout. Its first step has been to allow half the COVID-19 vaccines to go to the States directly through the open market, instead of centralised distribution as was being done till now. The States — already reeling under financial pressure — will have to buy vaccines at a much higher price than was being paid by the Centre to the Serum Institute of India (SII). While the SII will supply Covishield to States at ₹400 per dose and ₹600 per jab to private hospitals, it was supplying the same at ₹150 per dose to the Centre. As the tussle for oxygen goes on between the States and the Centre, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan recently singled out the non-BJP-ruled States for "politicising" the outbreak and accused them of "not doing enough" to control the virus' spread. He conveniently forgot that Karnataka, a BJP-ruled State, has the third-highest case-load. And what about the dire situation in the BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Goa, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh? There are several indicators on which the BJP-ruled States are performing as bad, if not worse, as the Opposition-ruled States. It is time the Centre realises that playing politics, abdicating responsibility, shifting blame and finger-pointing are not going to get the nation out of the COVID quagmire. Leading from the front and taking strong, quick decisions are.

PICTALK



People queue up for a COVID-19 test, organised by a Sikh organisation in Indrapuram, Ghaziabad

The doublespeak on the pandemic



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

The Government using the lockdowns, curfews and sundry other curbs in the name of public health concerns is just a façade

One swallow doesn't make a summer but one Ambani, Anmol, speaking out against the lockdown makes for an interesting situation. Recently, the son of Anil Ambani lashed out against the Government for imposing a new lockdown while the politicians were busy addressing poll rallies in Bengal and other States. This exposes their doublespeak and begs the question: Does COVID-19 spare the polling States where Narendra Modi and Amit Shah address massive rallies? Thousands of security and election personnel have been moving from district to district, potentially becoming superspreaders themselves. Keep in mind that most of these rallies are attended by people who don't follow any social distancing or wear masks.

Anmol is quite right when he questions the definition of "essential services". A waiter/server or night shift cab/auto driver is also doing essential work for his family; why is their work not essential? They have already been hit hard due to the previous curfews and lockdowns. Why are there restrictions when the mortality rate for India is reportedly about 1.12 per cent? The chances of a family or a person dying from hunger and depression are much higher than the probability of dying from COVID. Besides, these figures don't distinguish people with comorbidities. My own uncle passed away after battling cancer for over a year. His health was at its worst when he got infected with COVID-19 in the hospital. His case was not classified as a cancer death but as COVID-19 death. There are thousands of other cases too that have been reclassified, and the Government is not really being transparent on the real dangers of COVID, or maybe it plans to use the viral disease as a shield for announcing more sinister schemes.

Away from the Ambani High tower, Rakesh Tikait thinks similarly. He has openly stated that the Government



will use lockdowns and curfew to remove the farmer encampments at Delhi's borders. It was also no surprise that days before his rallies in Rajasthan and Gujarat, the States mandated the RT-PCR test as an essential requirement for entry and imposed curfews and lockdowns. The chronology further proves Anmol's point, that lockdowns are being used for political advantage, for "control" and not for "safety" or "health". Tikait has warned the Government that it should not mistake the farmers' agitation for Shaheen Bagh protests. Anmol endorses Tikait's views that "the farmer and his soil are being corporatised and colonised" (using COVID19).

Branching off a bit, why has Delhi imposed a night curfew? Arvind Kejriwal is one of the most respected Chief Ministers and also a technocrat. He ought to know that 10 pm-5 am is the time of least activity and may not have any impact on the COVID numbers, but it will definitely have a deep impact on the livelihoods of lakhs of Delhiites who work night shifts, and the food industry, apart from others. One hopes that Kejriwal sees sense and does not play into the BJP's



TODAY, INDIA HAS MOVED WAY PAST CHINA WHEN IT COMES TO CITIZEN SURVEILLANCE AND DOMESTIC ESPIONAGE. AS YOU READ THIS, THOUSANDS OF IB OPERATIVES ARE REPORTING ON THE FARMERS' AGITATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SENDING IN LIVE FEEDS

hands. The Delhi curfew needs to be lifted; it is directed towards the farmers' revolution and a further "transfer of wealth" and not for the health of Delhiites.

Anmol "dares to be naive", as his Twitter bio states, by speaking out against the great "transfer of wealth" done by looting ordinary people. Keep in mind that his own family is the beneficiary of this "loot", and still he has the courage to speak out. Bravo! Both Adani and Reliance have grown to be economic behemoths during the lockdown and now control everything — from your cooking oil to the airports. Any more lockdowns will only kill small businesses and traders, along with farmers, and taking advantage of the economic meltdown will be the new emperors of India.

His most dire warning, especially coming from an Ambani, should jolt even the most conservative among us: "To control every aspect of your life — a technocracy exactly like China — a totalitarian bio-surveillance fascist State controlled from the outside." But could this really happen? Think for a second about the Arogya Setu app, which even Rahul Gandhi said was a "sophisti-

cated surveillance tool"; now add thousands of CCTV cameras deployed all over our cities, with AI-based Aadhaar-equipped facial recognition systems and newer digital control tools like vaccine app, and so on. Today, India has moved way past China when it comes to citizen surveillance and domestic espionage. As you read this, thousands of IB operatives are reporting on the farmers' revolutions across the country, sending in live feeds for a cloud-based AI to compute and track citizens.

The Modi Government has already built a strong Big Brother State, which is watching you each time you take off your mask or speed past 50kmph. The digital dictatorship is already upon us; Anmol has done a courageous act by exposing it. This step may put his own life at risk, yet he has acted for us all. We must understand this new threat and prepare ourselves to battle COVID-19 and the Government's tyranny together.

(The author writes on agriculture and environment, and is a former Director — Policy & Outreach, National Seed Association of India. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WE WERE NOT PREPARED AT ALL

Sir — It is really unfortunate that as many as 25 "sickest" COVID-19 patients, who were on oxygen at one of Delhi's most reputed hospitals, Sir Ganga Ram, have died probably because of low oxygen pressure. It is cold-blooded murder, for which not only the hospital authorities but both the Centre and the State are responsible.

The big question is that when the scientists and health experts had warned that another big wave could hit us, why did the Centre and States fail to take the required measures on time? The Government did little or nothing about the crowds at election rallies and at the Maha Kumbh, due to which the virus spread like wildfire. India has recorded over 3,32,730 cases in the last 24 hours, and as many as 2,263 people have died of COVID-19. Now is the time for the States and the Centre to cooperate fully and work in tandem to deal with the unprecedented crisis.

It's time to ramp up oxygen production and ensure quick and hassle-free supply. Had Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who chaired a virtual meeting with the Chief Ministers of the 10 worst-hit States and with officials, taken these steps earlier, the situation would not have become "out of control". The situation is dangerous and we all must cooperate with one another. The humanity is facing its worst crisis and our enemy is mightier than us.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

WE MUST HELP ONE ANOTHER

Sir — The pandemic cases are surging in India. We all must do our bit to win this battle against the humankind's worst enemy — Coronavirus. First, we all should exercise caution and stop spreading such news or information that spreads fear and terror among the masses.

Only the President, the Prime Minister or the Chief Ministers should be allowed to present the actual situation to the public through electronic or print media. The Media should mostly telecast positive news to instil confidence among people that they

It's a national emergency



The Supreme Court has aptly and accurately described the COVID-19 situation in the country as "almost a national emergency". Further, it has asked the Centre to formulate a plan to bolster the supply of medical oxygen, drugs and vaccines and to cope with the worsening situation. In broader terms, the pandemic calls for the two-fold response of preventing infections and treating people infected with the virus. The record surge in the fresh infections daily is proof that preventive measures taken so far have failed to provide the desired outcome.

The transmission of COVID-19, a highly infectious disease, is inversely related to

can win the war on Coronavirus. Second, the Government should take all the possible measures to prevent the black marketing of oxygen, Remdesivir and other essential vaccines and drugs. Third, all political rallies must be stopped. We must also contribute by staying in quarantine (if COVID positive) and not go out to any public places. In such cases, we must keep at least a one-metre distance from others, even from our family members. All of us should wear a medical mask to protect others and wash our hands with soap frequently. Those who are positive should stay in a separate room from other family members and, if not possible, wear at least a medical mask. The room should be well-ventilated. In this hour of crisis, we must hold each other's hands.

Anshita Rochwani | Ujjain

COVID-appropriate behaviour. The precedence given to election campaigns over the pandemic fight shows lack of health and safety consciousness and contributed to the unrelenting second wave of the pandemic.

The vaccination drive is going on at a snail's pace, considering the country's huge population. It is hampered and handicapped by vaccine hesitancy and short supply of vaccines, among other factors. Also, how can there be three different prices for the same vaccine? Profiteering or increasing profitability in the time of a pandemic is unethical.

It is clear that we have not adequately invested in healthcare infrastructure. The shortage of medical oxygen, as proved by the SOS calls from hospitals that have run out of it, has aggravated the medical emergency. The shortage is, to some extent, ascribed to not having enough oxygen cylinders and tankers. Medical oxygen is life-saving; it is a critical component in the treatment of COVID-19 patients. The Government must make medical oxygen available to all hospitals treating Coronavirus patients without any loss of time.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

ENSURE SMOOTH SUPPLY OF OXYGEN

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual meeting with the Chief Ministers of the 10 worst-affected States is a late step. Modi chose to take stock of the situation only after it slipped out of control. He cancelled his visit to West Bengal, meeting instead with the Chief Ministers, which is a welcome move. Amid an acute shortage of medical oxygen in many States, the PM asked the Government officials to take urgent steps to increase the production of oxygen and use innovative steps to speed up its distribution to the health facilities. It is high time that the States get oxygen supply smoothly and unhindered.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

SOUNDBITE

Corona can cause a fall in oxygen levels but it's oxygen shortage and the lack of ICU beds which are causing many deaths. GOI, this is on you.

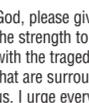


Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



India is using the Afghan soil to meddle in the affairs of Balochistan and carry out terrorism activities there.

Pakistan President — Arif Alvi



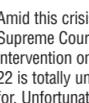
God, please give us the strength to cope with the tragedies that are surrounding us. I urge everyone to ensure that you meet people only when unavoidable.

Singer — Shreya Ghoshal



I won't be surprised if he (Devdutt Padikkal) plays for India in any of the formats because he has got the class and the ability to do that.

Former India captain — Sunil Gavaskar



Amid this crisis, the Supreme Court's intervention on April 22 is totally uncalled for. Unfortunately, it is wrong, wrong and wrong.

Congress leader — Abhishek Manu Singhvi

A matter of life

The Government must quickly address the critical issue of oxygen scarcity in hospitals and elsewhere

With several States, including Delhi, battling a critical shortfall between the demand and supply of medical oxygen, the Centre is taking steps to tackle the situation which is, as Chief Justice of India SA Bobde put it, "almost a national emergency". Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held marathon meetings — with top bureaucrats, with the Chief Ministers of the 10 worst-hit States and with the heads of oxygen-manufacturing companies — to review the preparedness against COVID-19. The results of his efforts can be gauged from the fact that even Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who holds "Modi ji" responsible for everything wrong, thanked him for raising Delhi's medical oxygen quota to 480 metric tonnes. Also, Kejriwal's advice that a "national plan" is needed to tackle the pandemic should be taken seriously as the level of cooperation the States are showing in this hour of crisis is not very encouraging. In the meeting with the PM, Kejriwal suggested that the Centre should take over the oxygen facilities or plants through

the Army and its personnel should be deployed to escort the trucks/tankers transporting oxygen so that it safely reaches its destination. The Delhi Government's complaint — that Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are stopping the tankers carrying oxygen to Delhi — reveals a grim scenario which mocks at "cooperative federalism".

The seriousness of the situation can be assessed from the fact that the Indian Air Force has pressed its C-17 Globemasters and Il-76 heavy lift aircraft to ferry big oxygen tankers to the critical cities. The current situation also raises some pertinent, though uncomfortable, questions: Is politics above the interest of citizens? If it is not a breakdown of cooperative federalism, what else is it? However, the answers to these questions should be best left to the Governments concerned. At this point, it's more important to deal with the existential crisis facing us. It's time for the Government to ramp up the production of medical oxygen manifold by lending whatever support it can to the private manufacturers. Also, it's a critical time to ensure that oxygen delivery takes place directly from the plants to hospitals without any hiccups. It seems that it's a race against time for humanity, and we have no option but to win.

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

WHO CAN BANKS BANK UPON?



SONAM CHANDWANI

One result of a distressed economy is that the Govt may be required to play a major role in the fate of many banks

As the pandemic continues to ravage lives and livelihoods, one unintended victim of the outbreak will be the Indian banking industry. In the new-fangled language of the virus, those with comorbidities will suffer. This includes financial institutions, both banking and non-banking. In the economic sense, public sector banks (PSBs) which entered the pandemic quite fragile are likely to be severely hit. The reason being that the knock-on effects from the worst-hit sectors will flow directly to banks and NBFCs, further exacerbating the problem of non-performing assets (NPAs). Therefore, the Government has provided relief to stimulate the sluggish economy and prevent a fiscal disaster. Last year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had allowed moratoriums, which will pile up and create a negative impact over the course of this year and the next. Fortunately, the RBI permitted a one-time restructuring of loans to companies in the distressed sectors to iron out this problem. Furthermore, the RBI can loosen its prudential norms to the pre-1992 era and not recognise bad loans — a move that is likely to allow banks to operate at a lower pace of credit in the economy, given that Government ownership prevents a run on banks.



Alternatively, recapitalisation of the banks by an extremely cash-strapped Government can be considered by the RBI. However, both options are tough and the gravity of the crisis cannot be wished away. One result of a distressed economy and failing monetary reliefs is that the Government may be required to play a significant role in the fate of many banks. When the Government does intercede, the topic of nationalising banks often arises soon after, and the subject stirs lively debates. While bank nationalisation stood for energising priority sectors, the crumbling and debilitated functionaries and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that were, and to a great extent, still are, in desperate need of well-regulated credit, the recent view on the privatisation of these banks has opted for a rather capitalism-driven approach. There is an emergence of the school of thought that re-privatisation of PSBs finds its roots in the ideologies that are rooted in the advocacy for free-flowing competition in the marketplace, where individuals fend for themselves, adapt, survive and overcome, or succumb to marketplace fiends and concede to stronger competition. To such a school of thought, governmental aid comes as a bail-out option, aimed at keeping the proverbial "ailing and wounded animal" alive rather than putting it out of its misery.

However, amid all the hue and cry, the intent of the Indira Gandhi Government of 1964 should once again be taken into consideration. The concept of wiping out NPAs and bad assets not only warrants the efficient working of the recovery mechanism under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, but also deems the establishment of institutions like Bad Banks, necessary. In essence, the revitalisation of the nationalisation-led movement would require the functioning of Bad Banks, wherein procurement of NPAs, stressed assets and bad loans would further the intent behind revitalisation of the erstwhile intent, while also maintaining a quasi-capitalistic mechanism of banking institutions being run, that emulate the recent privatisation-led ideologies. Furthermore, since the procurement of banks of illiquid assets with credit risks is done, the banks earn incentives from the Government in the form of credit-provisioning subsidies and liquidity increasing tools. Thus a healthy synergy between the banks, the public and the Government, to encourage such banks, may be seen as vital for a reinvigorated credit facilitation system and the India economy at large.

(The writer is Managing Partner KS Legal and Associates. The views expressed are personal.)

It's about time to widen the gender parity debate



MOIN QAZI

It is vital to include men and families in the conversation on gender equality. Men can be allies and activists, and have a powerful role in shaping future generations

India has fallen 28 spots to rank 140th among 156 countries on the World Economic Forum's latest Global Gender Gap index. In 2020, India had ranked 112th among 153 countries on the index. The report said that the estimated earned income of women in India was one-fifth of men's, which put the nation among the bottom 10 countries globally on that indicator. "Within the region, a wide gulf separates the best-performing country, Bangladesh, which has closed 71.9 per cent of its gender gap so far, from Afghanistan, which has only closed 44.4 per cent of its gap," the report said. India is the third-worst performer in the region, after Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Gender remains a critically important but largely ignored lens to view development issues across the world. Gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. India has a larger relative economic value at stake in advancing gender equality. However, despite significant gains, some gaps remain. Although India has narrowed the divide between men and women in the primary education and health sectors, it doesn't measure well in other major development metrics. Gender equality has become a highly publicised development goal, but data show how slow progress has been.

Women face several constraints that are imposed on them by social institutions, that is, laws, norms, traditions, and codes of conduct that exist in societies for centuries. Social institutions are the most important single factor determining women's participation in economic activities outside the household. Hence, empowering women is the solution to many problems on a global level, right from poverty. The new-age mantra is: If you want to lift up humanity, empower women. It is the most comprehensive, pervasive, high-leverage investment you can make in human beings. Societies that take the effort to empower women show better development indices, are better governed, more stable and are less prone to violence. On the other hand, societies that limit women's educational and employment opportunities and stifle their political voices, are poorer and more prone to corruption.

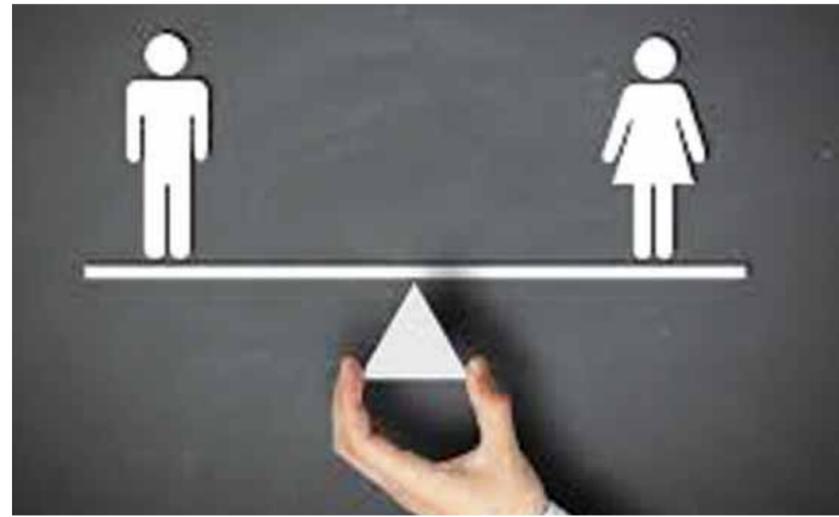
Development is more than just economic growth or poverty alleviation; it's about helping people reach their full potential. Increased economic opportunity and reproductive choices help women, and their families, thrive. Despite broad recognition of this principle, many societies pursue development paths that are disadvantageous to women. It is essential to enable women to fulfil their human capability and for their families and societies to realise their full potential. Improving women's well-being contributes to a cycle of better health and education outcomes. Every safe, educated, healthy and empowered female has the potential to transform her family, community, economy, and society.

Gender discrimination continues to be an enormous problem within Indian society even today. Traditional patriarchal norms have relegated women to a secondary status within the household and workplace. This drastically affects women's health, financial status, education, and political involvement. Women are commonly married young, quickly become mothers, and are then burdened by stringent domestic and financial responsibilities. On average, women spend about twice as



FOR ALL INTERVENTIONS, THE FUNDAMENTAL LOGIC IS PLAIN: IF WE ARE GOING TO END POVERTY, WE NEED TO START WITH WOMEN. THEY ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE THE GRIT TO LIFT FAMILIES OUT OF THE PIT. PEOPLE WHO HAVE PIONEERED SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL PROGRAMMES RECOGNISED THIS POTENTIAL AND SOUGHT TO EVOKE IT

The writer is a well-known development professional of international repute. The views expressed are personal.



much time as men doing the unpaid work that makes life possible for everyone, like cooking, cleaning and caring. As a result, women have no time to finish their education, or learn new skills. The fact that the potential of so many women is going unrealised is a tragedy — but it's also an opportunity. Girls and women aren't just the faces of poverty; they're also the key to overcoming it.

We have for long made paternalistic decisions to "protect" these women, thereby eliminating their ability to solve the issues that they face. Why can't they decide for themselves how to manage their own situation? Why can't we equip them to decide how they can take their own decisions? The key levers for change, from the ground up, are clearly female education and access to income. Women experience barriers in almost every aspect of work, including whether they have paid work at all; the type of work they obtain or are excluded from; the availability of support services such as childcare; their pay, benefits, and conditions of work; insecurity of their jobs and access to vocational training. Women play a critical, though invisible role in the rural economy. Any successful attempt to build sustainable livelihoods cannot leave them behind. When combined with the process of institution-building, women-led institutions have proven that they can support their communities in times of need.

It is essential to recognise that women's vulnerabilities are embedded in social, economic and political

processes. The current gaps in development serve to reinforce them. Sustainable development processes can empower grassroots women to transform the living conditions of their families and communities, and enable them to reverse these vulnerabilities. Economic empowerment is a crucial aspect of any significant push to make women full and equal participants in their communities.

There is a growing recognition among development experts of the need to link economic empowerment to programmes that address women's empowerment in a more fundamental way. Overcoming gender inequality will not result from specific isolated programmes, but from a comprehensive approach that involves multiple sectors and stakeholders. Women work tirelessly to end poverty and hunger in their families. But it can take much more than hard work. They need new tools to create their own paths. They need opportunities that can overcome economic, cultural and gender barriers. Multi-sectoral cooperation is needed to create breakthrough ideas and solutions to break down economic, social and technical barriers.

Women are far more likely than men to spend the money they have under their discretion on the education of their children, the healthcare of their family and on improving their housing. Women usually bear the greater brunt of poverty yet they can be important drivers of growth and progress and powerful agents of change. Providing women with better opportunities to fulfil their social, economic, and political roles is now

deemed so essential for reducing poverty and improving governance that women's empowerment has become a development objective in its own right.

The larger vision must be to put women at the core of the developmental process, from the planning to the implementation level. Social conditions haven't changed much: Girls rarely claim their share of an inheritance and are encouraged to give it to the men in their family. We are still living in a patriarchal society, where men control the resources so as to be able to control women. We need to do much more to prevent them from doing that.

There is now increasing realisation that gender dynamics is not just a women's problem that they should try to fix alone. Engaging women alone is not enough. To make real progress, we need to engage men as well. Society must see the bigger picture, which is to say that by including men in the conversations, we are broadening their understanding and awareness. If we are serious about empowering women, then men must be part of the conversation. It is critical to include men and families in the conversation on gender equality. Men can be role models, allies and activists, and have a powerful role in shaping future generations.

For all interventions, the fundamental logic is plain: If we are going to end poverty, we need to start with women. They are the ones who have the grit to lift families out of the pit. People who have pioneered successful social programmes recognised this potential and sought to evoke it.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

IT IS AGAINST THE PRECEDENT AND PROTOCOL FOR ANY CHIEF MINISTER TO TELECAST IN-HOUSE MEETINGS LIVE.
—PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI



WE WILL TAKE CARE FROM NOW ON. IF I HAVE DONE OR SAID SOMETHING WRONG OR MY BEHAVIOUR IS NOT PROPER, THEN I AM SORRY.
—DELHI CM
ARVIND KEJRIWAL

Reforms in the mining sector need to be reviewed

It is vital to strike a balance so that the country's vision of 200 per cent increase in mineral production is achieved in the next five years

Mining has been a critical economic activity since pre-historic times and is closely linked with the development of human civilisation. In the modern world, mining has become central to the industrial progress of nations. India is a resource-rich country and mineral deposits are found over 17 per cent of the geographic area of the nation. However, the mining of major minerals is spread over only around 3.258 lakh hectares as per the annual report of the Ministry of Mines for 2020.

The growth of industries is linked to the efficiency of our mining operations. The progress in the production of steel, automobiles, the shipping industry, the railways and ports and so on, is directly linked to the productivity of the mining sector. Besides bringing economic progress



VK BAHUGUNA

The writer is Chairman, Centre for Resource Management and Environment. The views expressed are personal.

mining provides employment to a large number of unorganised sector workers and the rural population. It provides direct employment to over one crore people and helps more than five crore earn their livelihood.

However, there are negative impacts of mining as it destroys the soil, causes severe environmental damage and pollutes the water bodies and rivers and adjoining agricultural fields.

The mineral extraction operations have been in the eye of a storm for decades as environmentalists have accused the mining companies of illegal prospecting. The Supreme Court intervened and issued directions to set mining on the right trajectory, especially in the States of Karnataka, Odisha and Goa. The apex court's appointed task force for Environmental

Impact Analysis of iron ore mining in Karnataka during 2011-12, recommended steps for scientifically-sound and environmentally-sustainable mining practices. This included a futuristic plan of action for the next 50 years and the creation of a District Mineral Fund for the development of mining-affected areas.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi soon after coming to power in 2014, declared that mining sector reforms would be the priority of the Government. The emphasis was to increase the contribution of mining to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1.75 per cent to 2.5 per cent. The total value of production of the minerals for 2019-20 was estimated to be ₹1,23,588 crore and 49 per cent of it was for metallic minerals and the rest was for minor minerals. However, in



terms of growth, there is a decline of three per cent over last year's figures of 2018-2019.

For the first time, the Centre has decided through the Mines and Mineral Development and Regulation Amendment Act, 2015, and again in 2020, that all future new mining or old lease renewals will be through auctions. The Government again amended the Act this year with the aim to streamline the renewal and auction process.

This amendment allows captive miners of both coal and other minerals to sell up to 50 per cent of their production after meeting the requirements of the end-use plant and on paying additional royalty to the State Government. These changes were brought about after the Government approved the National Mineral Policy in February 2019.

The auctions of mines has increased the revenue of the States and brought a sense of transparency and competition in the allocation of the mines. To safeguard the interests of existing lease holders the right of "first refusal" has also been introduced. In the coal sector, most of the private operators have welcomed the end of Coal India's monopoly. The Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) which is a confederation of

mine lease holders has, however, criticised auctions on the grounds that this has seriously hampered the growth of the mining sector.

It said: "Auctions have neither served public good nor led to fair allocation of resources, as the sole focus is to maximise revenues for the States. This has adversely affected long-term mineral development in the country and socioeconomic benefits in mining areas. Auctions did not prove to be as transparent or fair as was thought."

Many lease holders are not able to compete with the captive mine owners in terms of resources. The overall impact according to FIMI is loss of production as before 2015 as many as 494 Green Field Mines were in operation but after 2015 only 28 Brown Field Mines are in operation. Today, many working mines

have stopped operations, resulting in loss of jobs and more dependency on imports.

The Government, however, is upbeat about the reforms. They are a mixed bag and have done well in liberating the coal sector, bringing transparency in mines' allocation, mobilising funds for development of villages and have increased revenue for the State Governments.

It is also equally true that poorly-conceived reforms have led to disruption of mining operations, leading to stagnation in the sector. It will be prudent, if the reforms are reviewed and done in such a way that both, the individual mine owners and the captive mine owners, are the winners. It is vital to strike a balance so that the country's vision of 200 per cent increase in mineral production is achieved in the next five years.

China rejects UK spy chief's charge of calling it threat to cyber freedom

Beijing: China, which has built the world's largest internet test facility to push for the development of next-generation innovations in cyber technology, has dismissed as "groundless" the UK spy chief's remarks that freedom and security of the internet was at risk from Beijing and Moscow.

The Director-General of British spy service GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters), Jeremy Fleming said the UK and its allies risk losing control of the internet and the security of future technologies to China and Russia, who

have a different and competing vision of the future.

Unless decisive action is taken, "it is increasingly clear that the key technologies on which we will rely for our future prosperity and security won't be shaped and controlled by the West.

We are now facing a moment of reckoning," Jeremy Fleming was quoted as saying by the British media on Friday.

Reacting to Fleming's remarks, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing that allegations are groundless and unreasonable.

"I want to stress that cyberspace is a highly virtual space with many actors and with their activities difficult to trace," he said.

"When investigating the incidents there must be enough evidence not groundless allegations," he added.

Zhao said that as a matter of fact the US, the UK and other western countries are the true empires of hacking and tapping.

"China is firmly opposed to any institution using cyber security issues to smear China in service of their political agenda," he said.

Fleming's warning came as China announced on Tuesday last that it has opened the world's largest internet test facility backbone network, a move that analysts said will push the development of next-generation innovations mapped out in China's blueprint for the next five years.

The new technologies will ensure the country's internet stability and security, while ending reliance on the US, state-run Global Times reported.

A ceremony was held at Beijing's Tsinghua University to open the high-performance

backbone of the Future Internet Test Infrastructure (FITI), which is also China's first major science and technology infrastructure project in the information field at the national level, the Xinhua News Agency reported on Tuesday.

Powered by FITI, the number of Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) addresses owned by China has jumped to the No 1 ranking in the world in early April, the report said.

IPv6 is the most recent version of the Internet Protocol (IP), communications protocol that provides an identification

and location system for computers on network and route traffic.

It allows much higher theoretical limits on the number of IP addresses than the IPv4 system.

The FITI backbone core nodes are located in 31 Chinese provincial-level regions with 200G of bandwidth between the core nodes.

At the same time, it supports 4,096 large-scale trial networks, achieving interconnection with domestic and international IPv4/IPv6 trial facilities, the report said.

FITI is significant for the

development of next-generation technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), 5G and autonomous driving, Liu Gang, chief economist with the Chinese Institute of New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Strategies, told the Global Times.

"Featuring faster transmission speed and lower latency, the FITI can better accommodate real-time data transmission required by AI," Liu said.

The number of internet connections China has reached 904 million as of March 2020,

according to the China Internet Network Information Centre (CINIC).

As internet connections grew in large numbers facilitating the growth of online social media in the country, China supervises and controls the content through massive firewalls.

While global social media like Twitter, Facebook and Google stands blocked in the country, Beijing also exercises greater supervision over internet media platforms like Weibo, akin to Twitter in China to control the content.

PTI

EU countries agree on technical elements of Digital Green Certificate

Brussels: European Union (EU) members states' representatives have agreed on the technical specifications for the implementation of the Digital Green Certificate, the European Commission said in a press release.

The Commission proposed the creation of the certificate last month, in a bid to ease Covid-19 related travel and movement restrictions for people who can prove that they have either been vaccinated, developed natural immunity, or received a negative test result,

Xinhua news agency reported on Thursday.

The agreed technical specifications cover data structure and encoding mechanisms, including the QR code, which will ensure that all certificates, whether digital or on paper, can be read and verified across the European Union.

The guidelines also describe the European Union gateway which will allow the sharing of electronic signature keys so that the authenticity of the certificates can be verified

anywhere in the bloc.

Describing it as a "further crucial step," the Commission encouraged the member states to deploy the needed technical solutions at a national level to ensure the rollout of the unified system by June.

"We are on track towards our goal of having the certificate in place by June -- to enable Europeans to travel safely this summer with minimum restrictions," said Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice.

IANS

US passes bill granting Washington DC statehood

Washington: The US House voted to pass a bill that would make Washington DC the nation's 51st state, a Democratic priority that will face an uphill battle in the Senate for final passage even as the party controls both chambers of Congress.

H.R. 51, the Washington, DC Admission Act passed in the House in a party-line vote of 216-208 on Thursday. Its fate in the Senate, however, is almost certainly doomed, given that overwhelming Republican opposition will make it next to impossible for the measure to cross the 60-vote threshold for passage, Xinhua news agency reported.

The legislation was introduced by Eleanor Holmes Norton, the sole delegate representing the District in the House who, because the District is not a state, may draft legislation but has no voting right in the chamber. A mem-

ber of the Democratic Party, Norton has long been an advocate for DC statehood.

The Democrats, thanks to whose majority in the House the bill was passed in the lower chamber last year, have framed the long unresolved and controversial issue from the perspective of equal representation and voting rights, arguing that the status of "taxation without representation" for the total of over 700,000 Washingtonians should end.

"Taxation without representation" is on Washington license plates because residents pay taxes but are not represented with a vote in Congress, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi noted during a Wednesday news conference at which she wore a mask with the number "51" on it.

"Washingtonians ... pay taxes, fight in our wars, contribute to the economic life of our country. But for centuries,

they have been denied their right to representation," the California Democrat said.

Republicans, who in the last Congress held a majority in the Senate, blocked the bill's advance in the upper chamber last year by denying a vote on it. They have argued that the legislation amounts to a partisan effort by Democrats to pursue a progressive agenda and tip the scales in Congress in their favour.

If it becomes the State of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth -- as dubbed by the bill to commemorate Frederick Douglass, a 19th century American social reformer -- Washington, DC, whose population is larger than that of Wyoming or Vermont, will have one voting representative in the House and two US senators.

"The Democrats' DC statehood scheme is about two things: consolidating power

and enacting radical policies," House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy said Thursday on Twitter. "The American people see right through this blatant power grab."

The bill will leave places like the White House, the US Capitol, the Supreme Court and the National Mall out of the newly-created state, letting them remain as federal grounds and as the seat of the US government.

bill has already got the backing of the administration of President Joe Biden, whom 92 per cent of DC voters voted for in the 2020 election, compared to just 5 per cent who voted for then-President Donald Trump.

Congress should "provide for a swift and orderly transition to statehood" for DC residents to have full voting representation in the House and Senate, the Office of Management and Budget said

in a statement on Tuesday, formally offering the White House's support for the Democrats' long-shot bid.

Census Bureau data showed 46 per cent of the District's residents are African Americans, potentially making the nation's capital the first state with a plurality Black population. That's why some advocates, including DC Mayor Muriel Bowser -- herself a woman of colour -- view the issue from the angle of racial justice and civil rights.

Noting that DC statehood has strong backing of the White House and that 45 senators have signed off on the legislation, Bowser in a tweet following the House vote urged "the 55 Senators who have not yet signed on in support of #DCStatehood to fulfill their responsibility to build a more perfect union."

IANS

IMF chief urges 'robust' price on carbon to fight climate change

Washington: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva called for a robust price on carbon to fight climate change, warning that without it, "we will not reach our climate stabilization goals."

A robust price on carbon provides "a critical market signal" to producers and consumers in all sectors of the economy, Georgieva made the remarks at the Leaders Summit on Climate, virtually hosted by the United States on Thursday, Xinhua news agency reported.

"It has proven to advance investments in renewable energy, electric mobility, energy efficient buildings, reforestation and other climate friendly activities - with positive impact on growth and jobs, while reducing carbon emissions," Georgieva said.

"Carbon revenues can also help secure a just transition, compensating households for price increases and helping businesses and workers move from high to low carbon intensity activities," she continued.

According to IMF analysis, a mix of steadily rising carbon prices and green infrastructure investment could increase global gross domestic product (GDP) by more than 0.7 per cent per year over the next 15 years, and create millions of new jobs.

Noting that carbon pricing is gaining momentum, the IMF

chief, however, said the average global price needs to rise from the current \$2 a ton to \$75 a ton by 2030 to curb emissions in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Georgieva said the IMF proposes an international carbon price floor among large emitters, such as the Group of Twenty (G20), as focus on a minimum carbon price among a small group of large emitters could facilitate an agreement, covering up to 80 per cent of global emissions.

Georgieva noted that such a price floor has to be "pragmatic" and "equitable," with "differentiated" pricing for countries at different levels of economic development.

Aside from carbon pricing, the IMF chief highlighted green taxonomy and standardized reporting of climate related financial risks, as well as financial support to developing countries.

Climate change "presents huge risks to the functioning of our economies and offers incredible opportunities for transformative investments and green jobs," Georgieva said.

"We will play our part, integrating climate change into our annual economic health checks" of countries and financial systems and actively promoting low carbon and climate resilient growth paths," she added.

IANS

US Senate passes bill targeting anti-Asian hate crimes

Washington: The US Senate voted overwhelmingly to pass a bill combating surging hate crimes against Asian Americans during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Senate approved the bill in a 94-1 vote and sent it to the House on Thursday, which will soon take up their version of the legislation. The lone nay vote was cast by Missouri GOP senator Josh Hawley, Xinhua news agency reported.

"By passing this bill we say to the Asian American community that the government is paying attention to them, has heard their concerns and will respond to protect them," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Democrat from New York, where anti-Asian violence has especially been running high. Sponsored by Hawaii's Democratic senator Mazie Hirono and New York's Democratic congresswoman Grace Meng, the bill requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to designate an official to review coronavirus-related hate crimes. Hirono and Meng are both Asian Americans.

The bill also directs the DOJ and the Department of Health and Human Services to issue guidance raising awareness of hate crimes amid the pandemic, and work with other agencies to establish an online platform for reporting those crimes. Hirono said that the bill's passage "sends a clear and unmistakable message of solidarity" to the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

IANS

Woman, security guard killed, 17 hurt in Dhaka fire

Dhaka: Two persons, including a security guard, were killed and at least 17 including three firefighters were injured in a fire at a six storied building in Dhaka, that was housing a chemical warehouse located in density populated Armanitola area. The incident took place at around 3 a.m. on Friday when the devotees were having food for fasting on Muslim holy month Ramadan. The fire broke out at the

chemical storage on the first floor of the Haji Musa Mansion, Brig Gen Md Sazzad Hussain, Director General of Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence told IANS.

Seventeen units of fire service and civil defence managed to control the inferno after a hard struggle of three hours.

The six-storey building at Armanitola, next to the Babubazar Bridge in old Dhaka, has a chemical storage

and a few shops on the ground floor, while tenants were living in upper floors.

Earlier, on June 3, 2010, 124 people died in a fire at an illegally operated chemical warehouse in Nimtali, Old Dhaka. Besides, on the night of February 20, 2019, at least six people died in a terrible fire from a series of chemical factories in the resident area of Churihatta of Chawkbazar. Then after Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina directly asked to shift the chemical industries from the residential area of old Dhaka, which is denied, and created this calamity.

The body of the security guard was recovered from the building and a woman, who was burned, died on the way to hospital confirmed the official. Other residents of the building rescued with crane cutting the Iron made porch-grill of the building, he said.

IANS

100 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS DROWN OFF LIBYAN COAST
Tripoli: More than 100 illegal immigrants have drowned when their boat capsized off Libyan coast, Eugenio Ambrosi, chief of staff of the International Organization for Migration, revealed later on Thursday.

15 KILLED IN BUS-TRUCK COLLISION IN SOUTH AF
Qalat: A total of 15 people were killed and eight others injured as a mini-bus collided with a truck coming from opposite direction in Afghanistan's southern Zabul province on Thursday, provincial police chief said on Friday.

EAST JERUSALEM CLASHES LEAVE OVER 100 INJURED
Jerusalem: Scores of people have been injured in clashes in East Jerusalem between far-right Jewish activists, Palestinians and Israeli police.

TESLA CAR TO DRIVE ON AUTOPILOT SANS DRIVER
San Francisco: As Tesla faces several fatal crashes in the recent past that has put its Autopilot mode in scrutiny, engineers at Consumer Reports engineers have tricked a Tesla Model Y to drive on the electric carmakers driver assistance feature, without actually anyone in the drivers seat.

HONG KONG'S JOBLESS RATE RETREATS
Hong Kong: Hong Kong's jobless rate declined in the first quarter of this year as the pressure on the labour market began to ease due to an abating Covid epidemic, data showed.

CHINESE MAINLAND SEES 19 NEW COVID CASES
Beijing: The Chinese mainland on Thursday reported 19 new Covid-19 cases, all of which were imported, the National Health Commission said in its daily report on Friday.

Four types of Covid strains circulate in Kyrgyzstan

Bishkek: Four types of Covid-19 strains are circulating in Kyrgyzstan, the country's Ministry of Health said.

Kyrgyzstan sent samples to the World Health Organization reference laboratory in Russia on March 26, the report said. The lab found four types of Covid-19 strains circulating among patients in Kyrgyzstan.

The country's Ministry of Health called on the public to strictly observe preventive precautions and consult a doctor if symptoms appear, but not to self-medicate, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The total number of Covid-19 cases in Kyrgyzstan reached 93,278 after 272 new cases were registered on Friday, according to the Republican Headquarters for Combating Covid-19.

Meanwhile, 163 people recovered during the past 24 hours, taking overall recoveries to 87,717.

IANS

Thailand's daily Covid cases hit record high, total surpasses 50K

Bangkok: Thailand's total Covid-19 cases have surpassed 50,000 as a record of 2,070 new infections were recorded on Friday, according to the Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA).

The total tally now stands at 50,183, the Xinhua news agency quoted CCSA spokesman Taweesin Visanuoythin as saying.

Of the new cases, 2,062 were domestic transmissions, including 740 in the capital Bangkok, the epicenter of the recent outbreak, and eight others were imported cases, Taweesin said.

Four new deaths were also reported, raising the death toll to 121, he added.

A total of 30,189 patients have fully recovered and been released from hospitals, while 19,873 others are currently hospitalised. As of Thursday, 964,825 doses of Covid-19 vaccines had been administered across the country, and roughly 130,000 people had been fully vaccinated.

IANS

Japan declares Covid-19 State of emergency in Tokyo, Osaka

IANS ■ TOKYO

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Friday declared a state of emergency over Covid-19 in the national capital Tokyo and the western prefectures of Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo.

The state of emergency, a third of its kind so far declared in the country, will come into effect from Sunday to May 11, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The emergency is aimed at curbing a surge in Covid-19 cases during the upcoming Golden Week holidays.

"We must take strong measures in a focused manner while many people are on holiday during the Golden Week to bring the virus under control," Suga said.

Stricter restrictions, such as asking restaurants and bars not to serve alcohol and shutting down major commercial facilities, will be in place.

Africa's Covid-19 cases pass 4.47 mn: Africa CDC

IANS ■ ADDIS ABABA

The number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Africa has reached 4,476,121 as of Friday noon, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said.

The Africa CDC, the specialised healthcare agency of the 55-member African Union, said that the death toll from the pandemic stood at 119,174, while 4,016,834 patients across the continent have recovered from the disease, the Xinhua news agency reported.

South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia and Egypt are the countries with the most cases in the continent.

In terms of the number of cases, southern Africa is the most affected region, followed by northern Africa and eastern Africa regions, while central Africa is the least affected region in the continent, according to the African health agency.

South Africa has recorded 1,571,348 Covid-19 cases, the most among African countries.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of immovable assets

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Gautam Malik (Borrower), Puneet Malik (Co-Borrower) Loan No. LBDEL00001295071 LBDEL00001295075	H 307, Third Floor, DDA Flat, With Scooter Garage on Ground Floor, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi (110028) With 708 Sq Ft Area	Rs. 8,00,582,08/- as on April 21, 2021.	Rs. 70,30,000/- Rs. 7,03,000/-	May 05, 2021 From 12:00 PM to 01:00 PM	June 10, 2021, From 11:30 AM Onwards

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>) of our auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. The Mortgagors/ notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **June 09, 2021** before **05:00 PM** else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi- 110005** and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before **June 09, 2021** before **05:00 PM** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder (s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh Delhi- 110005** on or before **June 09, 2021** before **05:00 PM**. Earnest Money Deposit DD/IPO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited on 8126013708** or **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited on 9710029933/9810029926/01244233933**

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Props AMC, have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date: April 23, 2021
Place: Delhi NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that services of following Special Express trains will be discontinued due to operational reasons from the dates shown against each:-

Train No. & Name	Dates of Cancellation
09337 Indore Jn. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special	23.04.2021 to 20.05.2021
09338 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Indore Jn. Special	23.04.2021 to 20.05.2021
04101 Kanpur Central - Prayagraj Sangam Special	24.04.2021 & 25.04.2021
04102 Prayagraj Sangam - Kanpur Central Special	24.04.2021 & 25.04.2021

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Russia upholds int'l cooperation to address climate change: Putin

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin said that his country advocates stepping up international cooperation in searching for effective solutions to the problems of global climate change.

The fight against climate change requires united efforts of the entire international community, Putin said in an address to the Leaders Summit on Climate via video link on Thursday, Xinhua news agency reported.

"We believe that universal agreements reached under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) form a solid legal basis for international cooperation to control and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," he further said.

According to Putin, Russia is fulfilling its international obligations in this area with full responsibility, primarily regarding the implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

He considers it significant to establish broad and effective international cooperation in calculating and monitoring emissions of all types of harmful substances into the atmosphere.

IANS

SBI slashes growth forecast to 10.4% on rising lockdowns

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With India topping the global infection list for the third consecutive day and more states imposing restrictions, SBI Research on Friday cut its growth forecast for the current financial year to 10.4 per cent from 11% earlier.

India reported over 3.34 lakh fresh Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours.

The report penned by the bank's Chief Economic Advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh also suggested that faster vaccination is cheaper on the economy than complete lockdowns, pointing out that the total cost of vaccination is much lower at 0.1 per cent of GDP while the lockdowns has already cost 0.7 per cent of GDP.

Now that states are free to buy vaccines directly from the manufacturers from May 1, our estimate for 13 large states shows that the cost of vaccine to inoculate will be only 0.1 per cent of their collective GDP. This is significantly lower than the economic loss in GDP due to lockdown which is already at 0.7% of GDP, Ghosh said.

He further said that given the current circumstances of partial, local and weekend lockdowns in almost all the states, we are revising downwards our growth forecast to 10.4 per cent real GDP and 14.3 per cent nominal GDP in FY22. Total loss arising from the



limited lockdowns is estimated at ₹1.5 lakh crore, of which, Maharashtra, MP and Rajasthan account for 80 per cent and Maharashtra alone at 54 per cent, he said.

Maharashtra is in lockdowns till month-end, its ₹ 29.8 lakh crore economy will see an erosion of ₹81,672 crore.

However, with 15 of districts under weekend lockdown, the economic impact on

MP is seen at ₹21,712 crore of its ₹11.3 lakh crore GDP, and that of Rajasthan, which is also under lockdown till May 3, its ₹12-lakh crore economy will lose ₹17,237 crore.

Ghosh's 0.1 percentage point of GDP loss assessment is based on the fact that this is only 15-20 per cent of these states' health expenditure Budget assuming half of the population in these states will get vaccinated by the Centre.

These 13 states will have to collectively cough out ₹ 1,66,216 crore; of which, UP will have to spend the highest at ₹32,009 crore, given that it has 13.6 crore people above 18 years who are eligible for vaccination.

Ind Ra revises down India's FY22 GDP growth forecast to 10.1 pc

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India Ratings and Research on Friday revised down India's FY22 real GDP growth forecast to 10.1 per cent, from earlier projection of 10.4 per cent, citing the second wave of Covid-19 infections and slower pace of vaccination.

At a time when large parts of the country are experiencing tremendous pressure on

medical infrastructure, the agency said it expects the second wave to start subsiding by mid-May.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank maintained its 10.5 per cent GDP growth estimate, but Governor Shaktikanta Das has flagged the rising cases as the biggest impediment to recovery.

Other brokerages and analysts have also been revising

down their forecasts in the light of the second wave.

The economy is estimated to have contracted by 7.6 per cent in FY21.

India Ratings said the impact of the second wave will not be as disruptive as the first one, despite the daily case load touching three times of the first wave's peak, as lockdowns are set to be localised ones.

RBI restricts American Express, Diners Club from on-boarding new customers from May 1

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The supervisory action, it added, has been taken in exercise of powers vested in RBI under the PSS Act

The Reserve Bank has restricted American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd from on-boarding new domestic customers onto their card networks from May 1 for violating data storage norms.

The order will not impact the existing customers of these two entities, the central bank said in a statement on Friday.

American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd are Payment System Operators authorised to operate card networks in the country under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act).

The RBI has imposed the restrictions on American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International by an order dated April 23, 2021.

"These entities have been found non-compliant with the directions on Storage of Payment System Data," the

RBI said.

The supervisory action, it added, has been taken in exercise of powers vested in RBI under the PSS Act.

In April 2018, all payment system providers were directed to ensure that within a period of six months the entire data (full end-to-end transaction details / information collected / carried / processed as part of the message / payment instruction) relating to payment systems operated by them is stored in a system only in India.

They were also required to report compliance to RBI and submit a board-approved System Audit Report (SAR) conducted by a CERT-In empanelled auditor within the timelines specified.

RBI extends temporary advances limit of ₹51,560 cr for States, UTs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Friday said the existing interim Ways and Means Advances (WMA) limit of ₹51,560 crore for all states and Union Territories will continue up to September 30, 2021, as the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic is still prevalent.

WMAs are temporary advances given by the RBI to the government to tide over any mismatch in receipts and payments.

The RBI said it has revised the WMA Scheme of States and Union Territories (UTs) based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on WMA to state governments. The WMA limit arrived at by the Committee based on total expenditure of States/ UTs, works out to Rs 47,010 crore.

"As the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is still prevalent, the existing interim WMA limit of ₹51,560 crore for all States/ UTs shall continue for six months i.e., up to September 30, 2021," it said in a statement.

Forex reserves jump USD 1.193 bn to USD 582.406 bn

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$ 1.193 billion to reach \$582.406 billion in the week ended April 16, RBI data showed on Friday.

In the previous week ended April 9, the forex kitty had surged by USD 4.344 billion to USD 581.213 billion. The reserves had touched a lifetime high of USD 590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021. In the week ended April 16, 2021, the increase in reserves was mainly due to a rise in foreign currency assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves. FCAs rose by USD 1.13 billion to USD 540.585 billion, weekly data by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

SRM bags best outreach program award



Kattankulathur: SRM Kattankulathur Dental College and Hospital has bagged the 'Best outreach programme award' from The Indian Association of Public Health Dentistry (IAPHD). The college has been recognised for its best outreach activity and is honored with U Sumithra & Ramanath Bhat - Best outreach programme award.

The department of Public Health Dentistry at the SRM Kattankulathur Dental College and Hospital participated in this category for the year April 2019 to March 2020. The event which made its entry in this category was the "World Health Day" which was celebrated recently.

India's tax revenue below potential by about 4% of GDP: NK Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

15th Finance Commission Chairman NK Singh on Friday said India's tax revenue potential is lower by 4 per cent of GDP and the country needs to bring in deep reforms in the revenue management system.

He also said an incentive mechanism for states needs to be worked out so that their policies are aligned to those of the central govt. Speaking at the CSEP-IMF event on "Securing Sustainable Finances and Medium-term Fiscal Frameworks: International Experience and Relevance for India", Singh said there is a need to redo direct and indirect taxes and bring about deep reforms in the revenue system.

"At least 4% of GDP is a lost potential in terms of India's revenue and if some part of it could be realised it would help greatly in aligning not only inevitable expenditure needs, pandemic needs."

Sowing of summer crops rises by 21.5%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Due to sharp increase in pulses acreage in West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, sowing of summer crops is 21.5 per cent higher than last year to exceed 73.76 lakh hectares so far against 60.67 lakh hectares during the same period a year ago. According to the ministry of agriculture, the area has increased to 12.75 lakh hectares from last year's coverage of 6.45 lakh hectares. The rise has been reported mainly from Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Gujarat.

According to the ministry, the area under rice has gone up by 15.59% from last year to 39.1 lakh hectare. Similarly, the oilseeds area has also witnessed a rise of 15.66%. The area of coarse cereals like jowar, bajra and ragi has seen mar-

ginal growth.

Oilseeds have increased to 10.45 lakh hectare from 9.03 lakh hectare, which is an increase of around 16 percent. The area has been reported from West Bengal, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. "We are also promoting cultivation of oilseeds as we have to import 57% edible oil to meet our domestic requirement. The government wants to cut down on import bill of edible oil, which has crossed Rs 70,000 crore," officials said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform public in general that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has organized an auction in below mention respect of Vehicles.

VEHICLES FOR SALE

- 1)EICHER 11.10 REG. NO. HR55AB9597-YOM -2017
- 2)TELCON T_210_EXC SERIAL NO. THEDCOLP00000286 YOM -2016
- 3)ASHOK LEYLAND ECOMET 1212 REG. NO. HR74A1718 YOM -2012
- 4)CB_MAHINDRA TRACO 49 REG. NO. UP16ET6955 YOM -2017
- 5)CB_ALECOMET1214 REG. NO. UP25CT6923-YOM-2018
- 6)EICHR_VECVVE1075FB REG. NO. UP45T2205-YOM-2012
- 7)FORCETTFB FORCE REG. NO. DL1VC2104 -YOM-2019
- 8)E_1110CBC EICHR_VECV REG. NO. UP15ET2625 YOM -2019
- 9)EICHR_VECVVE1059FB REG. NO. DL1MA2627 YOM -2019
- 10)TATA MOTORS TATA Xenon REG. NO. HR38Y6433-YOM -2018
- 11)FORCE TTFBP FORCE REG. NO. UP16ET5742-YOM-2017
- 12)FORCE TTFBP FORCE REG. NO. UP16GT7962 YOM -2020
- 13)FORCE TTFBP FORCE REG. NO. UP16DT1585-YOM-2015
- 14)BB 914 BHARAT BENZ REG. NO. UP16FT9819 YOM -2018
- 15)SML SARTAJ REG. NO. DL1LY0901-YOM -2017
- 16)TATA MOTOR LPT 1615 REG. NO. HR38W8897 YOM -2017
- 17)ASHOK_LEY_STYEL_BSVI REG. NO. HR47D4619-YOM-2017

Markets tumble as Covid woes pile up; post weekly losses

Mumbai:Equity benchmarks wilted under selling pressure on Friday as the steady stream of grim news surrounding the Covid-19 crisis in the country sapped risk appetite and raised concerns over the economic recovery forecasts.

A depreciating rupee, which slumped below the 75-mark versus the US dollar, and a negative trend in global equities added to the gloom, analysts said.

After a volatile session, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 202.22 points or 0.42 per cent

lower at 47,878.45. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty dropped 64.80 points or 0.45 per cent to close at 14,341.35.

M&M was the top loser among the Sensex constituents, skidding 2.63 per cent, followed by Dr Reddy's, Tech Mahindra, HUL, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Titan and Infosys.

On the other hand, PowerGrid, NTPC, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, HDFC and Bajaj Finserv were among the gainers, climbing up to 3.51 per cent. PTI

Rupee falls by 7 paise to close below 75 mark against dollar

Mumbai:Falling for the fourth session in a row, the rupee on Friday closed below the 75 mark against the US currency for the first time in nearly two weeks as a record spike in Covid-19 cases and losses in the domestic equities weighed on investor sentiment.

Forex traders said heavy selloff in domestic equities amid fears that a rapid resurgence of Covid-19 cases in the country can disrupt economic recovery kept investors on edge. PTI

Sebi bars two entities, three individuals from securities mkt

New Delhi:Sebi has barred two entities and three individuals from the securities market for providing unauthorised investment advisory services.

A2 Financial Services (A2FS) and its partners - Ashish Jain and Ashutosh Mishra - and Money Booster and its sole proprietor Anurag Singh have been barred from the securities market, as per two separate orders passed on Thursday. They have also been directed to refund the money collected from the investors, in respect of their unregistered investment advisory activities,

within three months from the date of the orders.

In the two separate but similarly-worded orders, the regulator said the entities and individuals have been "debarred from accessing the securities market, directly or indirectly and are prohibited from buying, selling or other-

wise dealing in the securities market, directly or indirectly in any manner whatsoever, for two years from the date of this order or till the expiry of two years from the date of completion of refunds to complainants investors as directed.., whichever is later". PTI

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL



General public is hereby informed that this girl namely Durga Kumari D/o Vishwa Nath F/o Gali No. 5, Vipin Garden, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi Age: 16 years, Height: 4'2", Face: Round, Complexion: Sallow, wearing blue colour jacket and brown colour payjami, has been missing/kidnapped since 10.08.2020. In this regard a FIR No. 621/2020 dated 11.08.2020 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Mohan Garden, New Delhi.

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

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Fax: 24368639, Tel.: 24368638/24368641

SHO : P.S. Mohan Garden, New Delhi Ph. : 011-25351003, 25351004, 8750871029, DP/51/ON/21

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, was found on 19.04.2021 at LBS Hospital Kalyanpuri, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 90A Dated 19.04.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Kalyanpuri, Delhi.

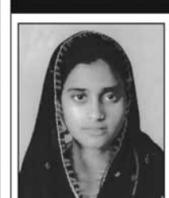
Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

Name: Unknown, Age: 40 Years, Height: 5'7", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Build: Thin, Eyes: Black, Hair: Black and Grey, Wearing: Light Green Shirt only.

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO Police Station, Kalyanpuri, Delhi Ph.: 011-22772251, 8750871830 DP/483/ED/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General public is hereby informed that one girl Name: Noorjahan, W/o: Gulsher R/o: H.No. B-469, Gali No. 9, Vijay Colony Bawana, Delhi Age: 17 Years, Height: 4'8", Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round Build: Medium, Wearing: Green colour Suit, Pink colour Salwar, Red & Green colour chappal in feet has been missing/kidnapped since 31.03.2021 from the area of P.S. Bawana, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 165/21 Dated 02.04.2021, U/s 363 IPC has been lodged at P.S. Bawana, Delhi.

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

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> E-mail id: cic@cbi.gov.in Fax: 011-23011334 Ph.: 011-27751949, 27756090, 7065036321

SHO P.S. Bawana, Delhi DP/954/ON/2021

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED GIRL



General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Halka D/o Madan Lal R/o House No. B-174, House of Papu Gali No. 3 Raja Vihar Badli Delhi. Age: 17 yrs, Height: 4'2", complexion Shallow, Build Medium. Wearing red colour suit-salwar, White Chunni & Sandal in feet has been missing/kidnapped since 31.03.2021 from her house.

In this regard a case FIR No. 179/21 dated: 01.04.2021 U/s 363 IPC has been Registered at PS Samaipur Badli, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far.

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

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Fax: 011-23011334 Ph.: 011-23014046, 011-23015218

S.H.O., P.S. Samaipur Badli, Delhi Ph.: 011-27854757, 27854799 DP/957/ON/21

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:

Name of Work with its location	Replacement of failure prone/old Catenary wire (35Km), 2nd phase over Delhi Division.
Approximate Cost work	₹72,63,874.80
Earnest Money Deposit	₹0
E-tender Bid Online Submission Period	07.05.2021 (00:00 hrs.) to 21.05.2021 (15:00 hrs.)
E-tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	21.05.2021 (15:00 hrs.)
Fund Allocation	29366203
Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in

E-Tender No.: 05-TRD-NDLS-2021-22 Dated: 23.04.2021 909/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

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

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]
Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovables under Assured Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower (s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/	Details of the Secured asset (s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Joginder Kumar (Borrower), Sunita Devi (Co-Borrower) LBBWD00003939712	Flat No.- 3803, Second Floor The Park, Block C Khasra No 200, 201,202, 191,181,192,519/189, 518/1, Village Shahpur, Tehsil Tijara Bhiwadi -301411 Super Builtup Area- 1125 Sq Ft	Rs. 25,14,942/- as on April 21, 2021	Rs. 18,00,000/- To Rs.1,80,000/-	May 3, 2021 From 12 Noon To 1:00 PM	May 27, 2021 From 11:00 AM Onwards

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- <https://disposalhub.com>) of our auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. The Mortgagees/noticees are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till May 25, 2021 before 05:00 P.M. else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before May 25, 2021 before 05:00 P.M. along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, incase prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005 or on or before May 25, 2021 before 05:00 P.M. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8657476284 or M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited on 9710029933/ 9810029926/ 01244233933

Please note that Marketing agencies' M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited . 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Props AMC have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date: April 23, 2021 Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited



SHORTCIRCUITS



KAJOL
 My love for reading is eternal. It provides you knowledge as well as nurtures your language skills. Knowledge gives you wisdom and no wisdom is a waste. It also helps in stress reduction. I have always championed that we should push our children to embrace the habit of reading; it helps throughout life.



ALLU SIRISH
 Allu Arjun's encouragement means the most to me because he is a man of few words. He is not too verbal about appreciation. So, even a smallest thing like an Instagram story coming from him is a big deal for me because I know that unless he really likes something, he doesn't praise it.



SHREYA GHOSHAL
 God please give us the strength to cope with the tragedies that is surrounding us. I urge everyone to ensure you meet people only if unavoidable. It's very important to wear masks properly, and if possible, please wear proper N95 masks. One mistake can cost your life.



DEBINA BONNERJEE
 I urge everyone who has recovered from COVID-19 to check with their doctors and then go ahead and donate your plasma. Plasma donation has proven to be an effective way to combat the virus. This is the least we can do to salvage the current situation and every donation counts.

ELIZABETH OLSEN
 I was 10 and I was curious about auditioning. I realised quickly it wasn't for me as I was missing my sports, my dance class and all the extracurricular activities at school. I didn't want to be associated with (Mary-Kate and Ashley). I guess I understood what nepotism was like inherently as a 10-year-old.



ENCOUNTER

After working with the Coen Brothers on *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Filmmaker Ben Rekhi was hired by George Clooney to shoot the behind-the-scenes of *Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind*. Rekhi's debut feature film — *Waterborne*, a SXSW Audience Award Winner, was about a fictional biological attack on LA's water supply. His follow-up, *The Ashram*, starred Academy Award Winner Melissa Leo and Kal Penn. He then shifted gears and co-directed a documentary series for PBS called *The Hidden Vote*, which profiled minorities who support Donald Trump. His third film — *Watchlist*, set against the drug wars in the Philippines, was co-financed by Bron Studios (*Joker*) and executive produced by XYZ Films (*The Raid*). Produced by Van Jones and Meghan McCain, he recently released his latest — *The Reunited States*. The film, awaited in India for a digital release, is inspired by the book of the same name by Mark Gerzon.

It's a deeply moving portrait of the unsung heroes who have dedicated their lives to depolarisation and are providing solutions for the rest of us to do the same. It urges us to consider that we are all either part of the problem or a part of the solution of our divisions. At a time when America is ripping apart at the seams, *The Reunited States* follows four everyday heroes on the difficult journey of bridging political and racial divides in the US. Susan Bro, who's daughter was killed when a car drove through a crowd of counter-protestors in Charlottesville, dedicates her life to the issues of social justice that her daughter died for. Independent politician, Greg Orman, believes the way to break our gridlock is to run as an independent party politician to break the hold of the two-party system. Steven Olikara, the son of Indian immigrants from Kerala, founded the Millennial Action Project which works tirelessly to build a coalition of bipartisan lawmakers to transform the American government. David Leaverton used to work in Republican politics as an operative fomenting division to win campaigns. Now, he and his wife Erin set off on a journey across all 50



audience. And those stories are the most exciting to me.

Does being an Indian American give you a unique perspective where you can reach out to a wider audience?

I think being an Indo-American has definitely helped me, especially in this film but in reconciling different viewpoints. I grew up going to a *Gurudwara* one weekend and to a Church the next weekend. So from an early age, holding to these two different viewpoints and bridging the divide was something I grew up with. As far as entertainment goes, I do feel like a global citizen. I've worked in India, worked in the US, so telling stories that can speak to humans, wherever you are, is something that is really exciting for me.

Many of your films are journalistic in nature...

I have a deep respect for a journalist. I think that it is an incredibly important role in society — to follow stories and bring them to the forefront of the world. Often, that's how change happens when you become aware of what's going on in the world. A lot of times, journalists are taking great risks to bring these stories forth. As a filmmaker, I have a slightly different role there; I am trying to tell a story that is entertaining but also hopefully informative. So I have worked with a journalist in several different capacities. In the Philippines, I worked with journalists for a few weeks and did write along to research just to understand the world that I am experiencing.

What is the greatest source of your inspiration? What is it that keeps you going?

I have come to the round of edge that stories come to us from places we can't explain and there is a passion about a certain topic or through the spark of an idea that is unexplainable. But there is a responsibility, as an artist, to pursue it because we are simply vessels that bring these ideas into the world. And a lot of times, the mistakes that I used to make earlier in my career while making decisions were based on what I thought the market wanted v/s what I really wanted to say.

What is the biggest thing that you stand for and support as a filmmaker?

There are a lot of things that I stand for. I think there is a room for everything. There is room for big entertainment, a room for a romantic comedy, a room for action and a room for drama. The challenge is reaching the audience. So for me, the most exciting cinema is the one that enabled me to push the envelope or what cinema could do whether it was genre format or dramatic format. I am always excited to see films that are trying something that's never been done before. They make you think different thoughts to feel different feelings and that's what I aspire for.

What are your forthcoming projects?

There are a couple of them. There's one that I am pursuing in the US — a fictional film set in the world of mass shootings. There is a project I am exploring in India that could bring me there soon as later this year. We also looked at TV series to expand on the idea of *The Reunited States*.

BRIDGING DIVIDE

Filmmaker **BEN REKHI** tells **AYUSHI SHARMA** that his latest film — *The Reunited States* — follows four everyday heroes on the difficult journey of bridging political and racial divides in the US

States in an RV to find out what is causing our divisions and how to heal from them. We talk to Rekhi to find out more. Excerpts:

The documentary sheds light upon a very significant theme: Political polarisation. Why do you think it is a threat to Americans? Does your film reflect upon this?

Yes, polarisation is absolutely a threat because it leads to dehumanisation of the other side. It's one thing to have political disagreement but it's entirely another thing to think that the people you disagree with are trying to destroy the country. That gives a much more dangerous framing for these issues, which is that they need to be destroyed. I wouldn't be surprised if that continues then we started to turn things around. Even then, at a more basic level, polarisation prevents anything from getting done. There is policy gridlock that happens and prevents either side from one end to have any kind of progress. So we end up in a place where there are a lot of dangers that come with polarisation.

The film has received such positive reviews in the USA. Do you think it's because of the fact that it has come after the widespread Black Lives Matter movement?

I think the film is definitely inspiring the audience to realise that there is another way, and Black Lives Matter movement is doing the same thing — raising awareness about inequalities that exist in the country since the beginning. One of the biggest reasons to make this film was that beneath the political divisions are a lot of other divisions, especially racial general and social-economic divides. So when we say bridging the divide, it's not just politics. There are a lot of other differences we have as people that we need to wake up to.

Do you think *The Reunited States* as a title is ironic to what the film tries to depict?

The title is definitely catchy and provocative. The title also brought me to the book because it was something I came up with even before I found the book. Later, I googled and found the book. So there was an universe conspiring for the title as well. I would say it could be slightly controversial that there are a lot of communities that don't feel this 'Reunited States' is ever united to begin with, particularly African Americans that have felt not included in the American dreams since the beginning. But, at the same time, they go with the title as to get people's attention and it's doing exactly that.

The story has a huge interconnectedness between the current American political scene, the prevailing racial divide as well as how lawmakers and activists around the States are trying to bring about a change. How did you loop such diverse examples in one film?

It was really important to show multiple people and how they are bridging the divide. This film is less about the government and our politicians than it is about

people and what we can do as a public to heal our divides. We always wanted to make sure that we had many storylines to express the idea; that there are multiple solutions to these problems. There's not just one way of doing it and so it was really important from the beginning. Even when I was approaching Susan Bro to be one of the main characters in the film, she was adamant there asking, "Are you covering other people too?" and "I don't want this to be about me and my grief only." "I'll only do it if you are showing other storylines as well." So the anthology idea was there from the beginning.

How is it relevant for the Indian audience?

India is the world's largest democracy and America is the world's oldest, so we have that in common. We are both massively diverse countries with different religions, languages, populations co-existing. We largely been divided into two major political camps and pitted against each other for the political game. So I think we have a lot to learn from each other. We have been two of the strongest allies in the world and we face similar threats, so India's success is America's success and vice-versa. We hope the theme in this film will feel as relevant to the Indian audience as they are to the American audience.

From *Waterborne*, *Watchlist* to *The Ashram*, and *The Reunited States*, every film has a completely different backdrop. What makes you decide to take up a particular topic?

It really comes down to the story. I am most excited about telling stories that speak to the human conditions and challenge our preconceptions of where we are, how we got here. I never wanted to be pigeonholed in one type of film. I am most excited about exploring different genres, so for me, ultimately, what stands is story and characters.

Stop demarcating music: Sunidhi

Singer Sunidhi Chauhan started her musical journey at a very young age. She was only 12-years-old when she made her debut as a playback singer with the film *Shastra*. Her song *Ruki Ruki Si Zindagi* from the film *Mast* in 1999 won her Filmfare RD Burman Award for New Music Talent. In 2006, she was bestowed with her first Filmfare award for her rendition of the song *Beedi* from *Omkara*. After almost two decades (20 years), Sunidhi returns to the world of independent music with *Ye Ranjishsein*. Speaking about the song, she says, "I am excited to release my new independent track *Ye Ranjishsein*. It has been 20 years as my last independent album, *Sunidhi C*, was released in 2001. I fell in love with the lyrics of *Ye Ranjishsein* the moment I heard/read them. All of us have worked very hard on the song and we are pleased with the outcome of it. I really hope it resonates with all the music lovers. It's an ode to love." The singer has established



her brand name with numerous Bollywood hits, and she feels that people need to stop dividing music into Bollywood music and independent music. Asked if the sudden boom in release of independent music is a result of fewer Bollywood films releasing, Sunidhi has a different way to look at the situation. "Why are we demarcating music? Music is still coming. Film music might not be coming but still there is music

everywhere," she says. Once film business revives after COVID cases reduce, and films start releasing regularly, would it pose a threat to independent musicians? "When business will be back and film music will be back, it will have no connection with single releases. Music that is good will work, be it film music or not. When films were releasing regularly and there was no lockdown, even then single tracks were working," she replies. Numerous single tracks including *Uchi Heels*, *Main Tera Boyfriend* and *Saturday Saturday* have been incorporated in Bollywood films, Sunidhi reminds. "There was a phase that some non-film tracks did so well that films took these, and it became a trend. A non-film track is not situational and comes from the heart, and it can be used in a film but a film track cannot be released independently. We need to change our mentality. Music is music," she sums up.

CONVERSATION

'Reliving moments was not easy'



For actor **DIVYA DUTTA**, losing her mother was what made her pen her thoughts in her debut novel *Me And Ma*

For actor Divya Dutta, losing her mother was what made her pen her thoughts in her debut novel *Me And Ma*. She launched an audiobook version of her work recently. "The audio book is about my first book, *Me And Ma*. It's my journey with my mother, memoirs with her, her presence in my life from childhood and till the time she was with me. I mean she is always with me, but until she passed, how she impacted me to become who I became as a person, as a professional and how I manage situations, everything is in the book," she said. Talking about the thought process, she said

that it was her catharsis from dealing with the pain and trauma of losing her mother. "My biggest fear was losing my mother. When I saw her going, I couldn't deal with it. I needed a catharsis. I needed to share her with the world. I wanted to celebrate a mother who had been a perfect parent and a best friend. I wanted to tell how a good partnership between a parent and a child can make the child who he or she is and I wanted to share this with the world," she added. The actress' association with writing goes way back. "I think everything in our life is not planned. Some things just happen. I have been a columnist for a while and I started writ-

ing in college. I started writing for a few newspapers, my personalised columns and those were taken really well," she said. Divya has been lending her voice to books of other authors, which was what led her to do the same for her book. "I came upon the idea because last year I was recording something for Shobha De's book and I enjoyed it. I thought the idea was so amazing, to read out to the readers. I thought when I am recording for everyone, why don't I do it for myself? My publisher also said let's do the audio book. Everything has its right time. The audio book coming now is great, people are at home right now," she shared.

However, recording it, and reliving those challenging moments in her life, was not easy for Divya. "It was tough as it was a catharsis for me. Some experiences were funny, some were cherished and some were overtly emotional and writing those was hard. It was difficult to relive and write from your heart. I was recording the audio for those two chapters and I broke down. My sound recordist had tears in his eyes and I thought let's take a break, and he said no and that he wanted to keep it like that. We tried to keep it as organic as the book. The feelings are transparent and straight from the heart," she shared.

VERVE

YOU DO YOU

Actor **RANVEER SINGH** believes that there are no failures in life. He says there are only lessons

Bollywood star, youth icon, fashionista, entrepreneur and actor. It's taken Ranveer Singh just over a decade to tick all those boxes and establish himself as an entertainment super brand, who promises a maverick surprise, every time he hits the public gaze, on or off the screen.

Ranveer's success as a celebrity lies in his ability to balance two very different aspects of being a new-age Bollywood star. He is equally at home cutting an impromptu eccentric picture — mostly highlighted by his irreverent sartorial choices for the media glare — as he is while showcasing well-prepared perfection films such as *Bajirao-Mastani*, *Padmaavat* and *Gully Boy*.

Ranveer would tell you it is important for him to draw from life's experiences in order to take his on-screen roles to the point of authenticity.

"For each different character, one has to tap into one's own bank of experiences to make the portrayal truthful, visceral and honest. I deeply empathise with the underdog characters that I have played because I have been through a similar journey in my own life," says the actor.

He finds a special connect with Murad, his character in *Gully Boy*, as well as former Indian cricket captain Kapil Dev in the forthcoming *83*. For Ranveer, playing Kapil, who captained an underdog team to India's first-ever World Cup win in 1983, was about acting out a historic moment of triumph against all odds.

"There is a dialogue in *Gully Boy* that broadly translates from Hindi to, 'I refuse to change my dreams to match my reality, I will change my reality to match my dreams.' I have felt this sentiment deep down in my soul. When these characters have to prove themselves against all odds, I can relate to that struggle at a very profound level. In *Gully Boy*, Murad achieves the impossible. In *83*, Kapil's devils achieve the impossible. I can lend truth to these roles because I've been there in my own journey. I feel their disillusionment, I feel their anger, frustration, grit, all in a very intense way because I've been through it myself. I've felt it for real," he asserts.

Ranveer Singh arrived in Bollywood with the 2010 hit *Band Baaja Baaraat*, and by 2013 he had established his credentials as one of Hindi mainstream's most exciting new-gen stars, playing a modern-day *desi* Romeo in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's superhit romantic tragedy *Goliyon Ki Raseela Ram-Leela* opposite Deepika Padukone. If Ranveer's career has only moved upwards since then, he can afford to look back at his struggling years with a note of contentment.

"At different points and in several instances during my struggling years, I felt like there was no hope. Getting one's foot inside the door of a largely exclusive entertainment industry seemed unachievable. But I persisted. You could say I was both hungry and foolish. More than anything, I believed in my abilities and

in my potential," he recalls.

"Even back then, when I had nothing, the same driven, tenacious and meticulous work ethic was characteristic of my hustle. I was well aware of what a long shot it was. But I was willing to take that leap of faith. When there wasn't a good lead in sight for long periods, the phone wouldn't ring for months, my faith was challenged, but I debunked the idea that what I was trying to achieve was impossible. I stayed focused in the most testing of times. I almost forced the universe into making it happen for me," says the actor.

"My single-mindedness and determination eventually paid off and my dream became my reality. Ever since, every day feels like I am living a dream," he adds.

A decade later, having established himself firmly on solid tinsel terrain, Ranveer is clear about his biggest learning. "When young actors, especially 'outsiders', come up to me seeking advice on how to navigate their hustle, the first and most important thing I tell them is 'do it for the right reasons'. Do it simply because you love performing. I urge them to not be lured towards performing arts or the entertainment business because success in this field comes with fame and money. Those are transient, they are frills — just trappings. So, I say, 'be true to your craft and do it for the love of and for the joy of performing,'" says Ranveer.

"Another thing I learned along the way is that authenticity has the most resonance. If you try being something that you are inherently not, you are doing a disservice to yourself. If you stay true to who you are, if you lose the fear of being judged, only then will you vibrate at a high frequency. 'You do you', I tell them. Be original, be your unique self. And another important thing I've learned is to keep taking risks. The bigger the risk, the bigger the reward. You may falter during that process, but I believe that there are no failures in life, there are only lessons," he adds.

Ranveer acknowledges the importance of getting the right break, and the fact that it can often become the defining factor for success in an unpredictable industry as showbiz, along with passion and hard work.

"One can have the passion and grit and can even prepare endlessly for the moment that one gets to shine. But often, the missing piece of the puzzle is 'opportunity'. My hustle was as difficult as it was because of the sheer lack of opportunities. That's what I wanted to create for fellow dreamers. To provide the opportunity to young creators who were burning with passion. To give them a platform to showcase their talent. It is my way of giving back. It is my way of paying forward the blessings I have received. It is my way of showing gratitude to the universe," concludes Ranveer, who is part of a new campaign for Adidas.

AT DIFFERENT POINTS AND IN SEVERAL INSTANCES DURING MY STRUGGLING YEARS, I FELT LIKE THERE WAS NO HOPE. GETTING ONE'S FOOT INSIDE THE DOOR OF A LARGELY EXCLUSIVE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY SEEMED UNACHIEVABLE. BUT I PERSISTED. I BELIEVED IN MY ABILITIES AND IN MY POTENTIAL



Bollywood mourns demise of Amit Mistry

Bollywood celebrities took to social media on Friday to mourn the untimely demise of actor Amit Mistry, who succumbed to heart attack in the city. Recalling his experience of directing Amit in the web series *Bandish Bandits*, director Anand Tiwari wrote, "*Mera hero, mera dost*, I still can't believe I have lost you. Your songs, your laughter will be in my memories forever."

Actor and *Bandish Bandits* casting director Abhishek Banerjee shared, "Had known him since my early years of casting and recently was fortunate to have cast him in *Bandish Bandits*. Incredible actor and a pure soul. RIP *Amit bhai*."

Ramesh Taurani, producer of Amit's forthcoming film *Bhoot Police*, posted on Instagram, "Devastated to hear about Amit's sudden demise. Had the opportunity to work with him over the years with *Kya Kehna* and as recently as *Bhoot Police*. Cannot believe this has happened. My sincerest condolences to his family and friends. *Shanti*." Sharing a photograph with her *Bhoot Police* co-star, Jacqueline Fernandez wrote on her Instagram story, "Rest in peace @actoramitmistry."

Filmmaker duo Raj and DK, who collaborated with Amit on *99, Shor In the City, A Gentleman* and their forthcoming untitled series, remembered the character that late actor had brought alive in their projects. "Devastated that Amit Mistry is no more! He was very special to us! Kuber (99), Tipu (*SITC*), Jignesh (*A Gentleman*), Prakhaand Pandit (current series)... in every script of ours, we subconsciously wrote a part for him. Heartbroken! Every time we write a script, he will be missed," Raj and DK wrote.

Sumeet Vyas posted, "Brother, I'll always remain a fan of you. God bless you man. #RIP"

Shekhar Suman tweeted, "My co-star in the series *Saath Pheron Ki Here Pheri* (2018) actor Amit Mistry died of a cardiac arrest this morning.

Absolutely shocked to hear this news. A fairly young guy and a gifted actor. Will miss you buddy. Rip."

Tisca Chopra wrote, "Such a lovely guy, totally chill... Deepest condolences to the family. RIP #AmitMistry"

Genelia Deshmukh tweeted, "Shocked to hear about #AmitMistry. Remember shooting together and you were absolutely lovely to interact with. Rest in peace dear Amit."

Actor-comedian Vir Das expressed, "I was ready to start shooting a show that Amit Mistry is an integral part of. His talent, his insight were a thing to behold. We've lost a truly wonderful artist today. Rest in peace."

Singer, lyricist and actor Swanand Kirkire tweeted, "Amit Mistry? No... this is unbelievable. He was an amazing actor and a real happy soul!"

TV actor Gaurav Chopra posted: "May you rest in peace #AmitMistry. #GoneTooSoon. Like thousands of others, didn't get his due, think."

Patralekhaa shared, "As I write this note in utter shock and sadness, my heart is not ready to accept that you are gone our PP. You were such a brilliant and brave actor, always wanting more, always giving your best, always calm, always polite. Now I would never know what my gift was that you got for me. What makes it worse is the world was about to take notice of your brilliance #AmitMistry. I will miss you."

Producer Ashoke Pandit wrote, "I am shattered. Can't believe this. A dear friend, a brilliant actor on stage, tv and cinema, Amit Mistry expired due to cardiac arrest today. This is no age to go Amit. Speechless. My heartfelt condolences to his family. *Om shanti*."

Producer Ritesh Sidhwani tweeted: "The news of Amit Mistry's demise is shocking. It's terribly sad for such a fine person and an amazing actor to leave us so soon. May he rest in peace."

—JANS



STUDIO CHAT

'Will do anything for friends'

The actor-cum-producer **MICHAEL B JORDAN** deconstructs his character John Kelly from his forthcoming film *Without Remorse* and sheds light on how he relates to him

Action-drama films are generally high on punches and often bring with it a host of unbelievable cinematic sequences. But what makes a story special, is the emotion behind the fight sequences and the gut-wrenching motives.

Michael B Jordan's forthcoming film — *Without Remorse* — is one such that will not only be an exciting action thriller but also an emotional roller coaster ride of his character John Clark, aka John Kelly, that one can't help but relate to.

Speaking about his character's humane emotions much like himself, Jordan says, "He's got a big heart and he'll do anything for his friends, and that's how I feel as well. Once he sets his mind to something, he's determined to work at whatever it is until he accomplishes his mission, which describes me too."

Jordan describes Kelly as a man who initially believes in the system of military hierarchy. So much so that he thinks of himself as an extension of his country. But when he discovers his family is killed as part of the conspiracy to engulf a threatening US and Russia war, this elite soldier finds himself ill-equipped to handle it emotionally.

"In his mind, he doesn't have anything left to live for," says the actor. "Everything he cared about is gone, so it sends him down a very dark path. Unfortunately for the people who did this to him, they picked the wrong guy to mess with. He's going to fill the empty hole within himself with as many bodies and as much chaos as he can. He's hurt and heartbroken, so he throws



himself into this wild mission in a very calculated way," adds he.

Identifying with such a relentless drive and determination that takes an unavoidable toll on John Kelly's personal life, the film is going to be a bitter-sweet story that you won't like to miss.

Directed by Stefano Sollima, *Without Remorse* also features Jamie Bell, Jodie Turner-Smith, Lauren London, Brett Gelman among others. It is all set to stream on Amazon Prime Video on April 30.

READER'S CORNER

Finale of grand old party

Is the Modi-era the end of Congress? Author **AMIT BAGARIA** contemplates in his 12th book *Congress-Mukt Bharat*

Author Amit Bagaria's new book — *Congress-Mukt Bharat: Is The Modi Era The End Of Congress?* — is a compelling and multi-dimensional take on the political, ideological and structural downfall of this 135-year-old party and the ascent to power of the Narendra Modi-led BJP. Overall, it aims to ask and answer: Will Congress now be relegated to history books?

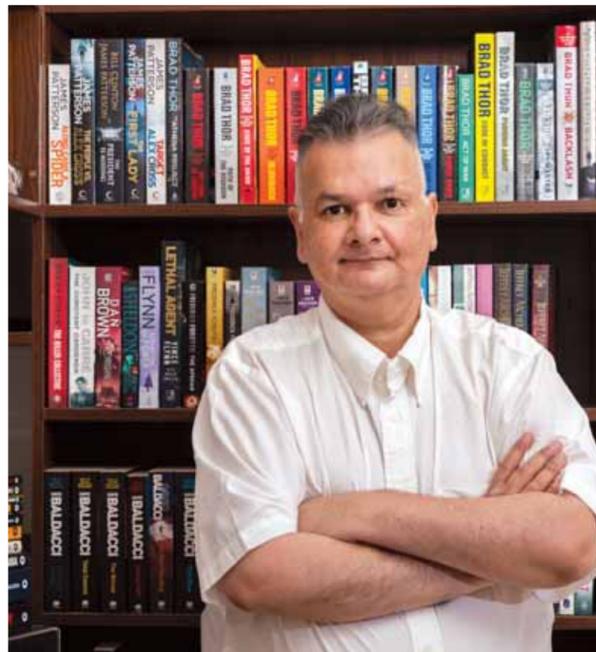
Published by Garuda Prakashan, the book was virtually launched recently by author Ratan Sharda, BJP National Spokesperson Shazia IImi, former DGP of Uttar Pradesh Dr Vikram Singh, CA and Advocate Dr M R Venkatesh and author Binay Kumar Singh.

Taking a leaf from India's history and crunching important data, the book breaks down crucial themes like Congress helmsmanship, family-controlled party leadership, breaking away of senior Congress leaders, loss of vote share and the Congress-led UPA's defeat in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha Elections.

"There is already talk of an anti-BJP alliance led by regional parties in preparation for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, similar to 1977, 1989 and 1996. Some regional leaders were quoted as saying that the Congress can no longer be the 'big brother' of the opposition, and will have to play 'second fiddle' to regional parties in an anti-BJP front. Are we truly headed towards a 'Congress-Mukt Bharat' by 2024?" writes Bagaria in the book.

The opening chapters speak of Congress party's corruption. The fourth chapter quotes from former bureaucrat RVS Mani's book on how Congress falsely spread the narrative of Hindu Terror and Saffron Terror. It includes spine-chilling details on the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack.

The next three chapters analyse the 2019 elections in great detail, followed by one on how the Congress claim of



being the 'natural party of choice' for voters, is completely disproved by the results of the last seven Lok Sabha elections. Two chapters analyse Congress' performance in each state since Sonia

Gandhi became the party president, and how the Left Front fared since 1989.

The next nine chapters are about Narendra Modi, his successes, his fail-

ures and the work he has done in 80 months.

The longest chapter, divided into 14 sections, details the successes and failures of India's 14 prime ministers. The author has given points on a scale of 0 to 10 to each PM, and two Congress PMs, PV Narasimha Rao and Lal Bahadur Shastri, are among the top 4. In his in-depth analysis of the Modi 2.0 ministry, the author gives only 6.56 out of 10. Next is an interesting chapter on revamp of the Central ministries and the author's choice of ministers if he were to be the PM.

"*Is Congress Becoming Anti-India?*" and "*The End of Congress?*" are concluding chapters. The Appendix lays out 'Agenda 2024' for the Congress.

"*Congress-Mukt Bharat...* is a brilliant book based on facts and data alone. It's a must reference book for every household, institution and definitely every newsroom. Find the 'report card' of every PM, policy changes and the new agenda for new India not based on rhetoric but real facts," says Shazia IImi.

"Amit has once again crafted a book, which is a testimony to his strenuous research, felicitous writing and erudition. The book covers PM Modi's innovative and ambitious foreign policy, which is my subject matter. The author has carried out this task with admirable skill and efficiency," shares TP Sreenivasan, IFS, former Ambassador of India to Austria and Slovenia, and former Permanent Representative of India to the UN.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Rahul, Gayle lead way as Punjab Kings snap three-match losing streak with 9 wicket win over Mumbai Indians

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Skipper K L Rahul's solid half-century and a disciplined bowling effort helped Punjab Kings tame Mumbai Indians by nine wickets and snap their three-match losing streak in the IPL here at Chepauk on Friday.

The bowlers, led by Ravi Bishnoi (2/21 in 4) and Mohammed Shami (2/21 in 4), limited Mumbai Indians to 131 for six despite a fine half-century by Rohit Sharma (63 off 52) on a sticky surface.

Though Mumbai are known to defend low totals, Punjab were clinical in the run chase and got the job done in 17.4 overs.

Openers Rahul (60 not out off 52) and Mayank Agarwal (25 off 20) shared a 53-run stand before the skipper got support from Chris Gayle (43 not out off 35).

The win was Punjab's second in five games while Mumbai suffered their third loss in five matches.

Mumbai were able to claw their way back into the game after Agarwal's dismissal but a flying start allowed Rahul and Gayle to take their time in the middle overs before romping home. The duo shared an unbeaten 79-run partnership.

Rahul began by hitting Krunal Pandya for a couple of boundaries and played the anchor's role to perfection. Gayle's knock, comprising five fours and two sixes, was equally important in the context of the run chase.

Rahul fittingly finished the game with a straight six and a four towards third man off Trent Boult.

Earlier, Mumbai struggled to 21 for one in the first six overs, the lowest power-play score this season after being put in to bat.

A 79-run stand between Rohit and Suryakumar Yadav (33 off 27) steadied the ship for the five-time champions but they could not find the final flourish, managing only 34 runs in the last five overs for



Punjab Kings skipper KL Rahul celebrates with teammate Chris Gayle after his team's win IPL20.com

the loss of four wickets. As has been the case so far at Chepauk, batsmen found it extremely difficult to get going early in the innings on a slow pitch. Quinton de Kock perished as early as the second over after he mistimed one off spinner Deepak Hooda to be caught at

quoteunquote

WE DON'T WANT TO GET TOO AHEAD OF OURSELVES. SLOWLY WE ARE COMING TOGETHER AS A TEAM. THE GUYS WE HAVE BACKED ARE SLOWLY COMING THROUGH

KL Rahul, PBKS captain

I STILL FEEL IT (CHEPAUK) IS NOT A BAD WICKET TO BAT ON. YOU SAW HOW PUNJAB KINGS BATTED AND WON THE GAME WITH 9 WICKETS IN HAND. IT IS JUST THE APPLICATION WHICH IS MISSING IN OUR BATTING

Rohit Sharma, MI captain

keep the scoreboard ticking. Left-arm spinner Fabian Allen bowled a high full toss to Rohit in the 10th over and he duly dispatched it over the cow corner for a six to release some pressure.

After Suryakumar joined Rohit in the middle, batting suddenly started looking much easier. A well-set Rohit started playing the ball late and was good with finding the gaps.

Suryakumar, at the other end, got into the groove with a four and six off left-arm pacer Arshdeep. Their partnership ended after Suryakumar failed to execute a reverse sweep to be caught at short third man off Bishnoi's bowling, leaving Mumbai at 105 for three with 23 balls left in the innings.

Some much-needed lusty blows were expected from the likes of Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard in the death overs but Punjab were able to keep them quiet.

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS (131-6)

Quinton de Kock	c Henriques b Hooda	3
Rohit Sharma	c Allen b Shami	63
Ishan Kishan	c Rahul b Bishnoi	6
Suryakumar Yadav	c Gayle b Bishnoi	33
Jayant Yadav	not out	16
Hardik Pandya	c Hooda b Arshdeep	1
Krunal Pandya	c Pooran b Shami	3
Did not bat:	Rahul Chahar, Bumrah, Trent Boult	
Extras (b 4, lb 0, w 2, nb 0, p 0)		6
Total (6 wickets, 20 Overs)		131

Fall of wickets: 7-1 (Quinton de Kock, 1.6), 26-2 (Ishan Kishan, 6.6), 105-3 (Suryakumar Yadav, 16.1), 112-4 (Rohit Sharma, 17.3), 122-5 (Hardik, 18.4), 130-6 (Krunal Pandya, 19.5)

PUNJAB KINGS (132-1)

KL Rahul	not out	60
Mayank Agarwal	c Suryakumar b R Chahar	25
Chris Gayle	not out	43
Did not bat:	Nicholas Pooran, Deepak Hooda, Moises Henriques, Shahrukh Khan, Fabian Allen, Mohd Shami, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh	
Extras (b 0, lb 0, w 3, nb 1, p 0)		4
Total (1 wicket, 17.4 Overs)		132

Fall of wickets: 53-1 (Mayank Agarwal, 7.2)

Bowling

Moises Henriques	3-0-12-0
Deepak Hooda	3-0-15-1
Mohammed Shami	4-0-21-2
Ravi Bishnoi	4-0-21-2
Fabian Allen	3-0-30-0
Arshdeep Singh	3-0-28-1

Bowling

Trent Boult	2-4-0-30-0
Krunal Pandya	3-0-31-0
Jasprit Bumrah	3-0-21-0
Rahul Chahar	4-0-19-1
Jayant Yadav	4-0-20-0
Kieron Pollard	1-0-11-0

boundarymeter

4s 483

6s 216

PLAYER	RUNS
1. Shikhar Dhawan (DC)	231
2. KL Rahul (PBKS)	221
3. Rohit Sharma (MI)	201

PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	12
2. Rahul Chahar (MI)	9
3. Deepak Chahar (CSK)	8

MOST SIXES	COUNT
1. Jonny Bairstow (SRH)	10
2. KL Rahul (PBKS)	10
3. Rohit Sharma (MI)	9

SUMMER SLAM

MOTION PICTURE



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola poses with RCB shirt and thanked skipper Virat Kohli for gifting it @PepTeam

AXAR JOINS DC CAMP

All-rounder Axar Patel has rejoined the Delhi Capitals squad after recovering from Covid-19 and said that getting to meet his teammates after a 20-day quarantine comes a close second to his Test debut as the "best moment" of his life.

'ONE IN TOP 4 HAS TO SCORE BIG'

Rajasthan Royals team director Kumar Sangakkara said one among the top four of his batting line-up will have to score big for the side to bounce back from its current slump. "...You see the ability, there is just need to build those partnerships and one of the top four they need to get a big score," Sangakkara said. The RR top four features the big-hitters like Jos Buttler, skipper Sanju Samson and David Miller. "We need to bat smartly in the powerplay and keep those partnerships going and one or two need to score those big scores."

PADIKKAL CAN PLAY IN ALL FORMATS

RCB opener Devdutt Padikkal has the ability to play for India in all formats of the game, said former India captain Sunil Gavaskar. "I won't be surprised if he plays for India in any of the formats because he has got the class and the ability to do that. He is a heavy scorer in first-class cricket and Ranji Trophy as well gets big hundreds. In 50-overs cricket, he gets lots of runs and hundreds. Here, in the T20 domestic tournaments, he got lots of runs. So, I won't be surprised if he is there sooner rather than later," Gavaskar said on Star Sports.

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	5	2	3	-0.032	4
5	PBKS	5	2	3	-0.428	4
6	SRH	4	1	3	-0.228	2
7	KKR	4	1	3	-0.700	2
8	RR	4	1	3	-1.011	2

KKR, Rajasthan hope to revive campaign

KEY PLAYERS

JOS BUTTLER
Buttler is one of the best batter in white ball format & he has to now play the lead role to keep RR in fray

SHUBMAN GILL
Gill is having a forgetful season so far & he would be eager to get some runs under his belt

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A desperate Kolkata Knight Riders will look to bring their campaign back on track after a hat-trick of defeats when they face a beleaguered Rajasthan Royals here on Saturday. Led by England's World Cup winning skipper Eoin Morgan, KKR has so far failed to come together as a unit and slipped to seventh in the table after starting the tournament on a high against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Facing bottom-placed Rajasthan Royals, who have been the most inconsistent team so far in the season, KKR will be desperate for a turnaround. The rise of Pat Cummins as a batsman in their 18-run defeat to CSK will provide a big boost but it can't paper over the failure of their star batsmen, who have floundered even while chasing even modest target. The seamers too have leaked runs in the death overs.

Having struggled on Chepauk's slow surface, KKR had hoped to return to winning ways at the Wankhede but Faf du Plessis and Rituraj Gaikwad took their attack to the cleaners and amassed a massive 220 for 3 in their previous match.

If that was not all, their famed top-five, including Shubman Gill and Morgan, surrendered inside the Powerplay. Andre Russell and Dinesh Karthik then revived the chase before Cummins produced some sensational powerhitting, slamming a 34-ball 66 not out before running out of partners as KKR finished on 202 after being 31/5 in 5.2 overs.

The other positive has been Russell's return to form. It was his 54 off 22 balls that had set the tone and it would not be a bad play for Morgan to promote the Jamaican up in the order, while Cummins provides late blitz.

The skipper will himself look to get back among runs, while he will be equally concerned about Gill, who once again

VENUE: WANKHEDE STADIUM, MUMBAI

HEAD TO HEAD

Matches	22
Rajasthan Royals	10
Kolkata Knight Riders	12

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Kolkata Knight Riders defeated Rajasthan Royals by 37 runs in Dubai
- Kolkata Knight Riders beat Rajasthan Royals by 60 runs in Dubai

96

Sanju Samson with 96 sixes in 79 innings of 83 matches, needs four more sixes to become the second Rajasthan Royals batsman after Shane Watson (109 in 76 innings) to complete a century of sixes in IPL

28

Andre Russell who scored 5972 runs at an average of 26.78 in 298 innings of 352 matches, needs 28 runs to become sixth West Indian and 46th batsman overall to complete 6000 runs in T20 cricket

failed to convert his starts and he returned with a golden duck against CSK. Rajasthan Royals, on the other hand, are coming into the match after a humiliating 10-wicket loss against RCB. Sanju Samson's men have failed to inspire after posting their only win of the tournament, against Delhi Capitals in their second match. Samson has fizzled out after a blazing 119 against Punjab Kings and the top and middle-order look brittle with Jos Buttler, Manan Vohra and David Miller enduring poor form. Bowling is also a big concern for the inaugural edition champions as their big buy Chris Morris and Mustafizur Rahman have struggled to check runs.

Natarajan out with knee injury



Sunrisers Hyderabad pacer T Natarajan bowls during team's net session @SunRisers

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Australia earlier this year. "I am sad to miss the remaining games (this IPL). Since I played well last season and went on to play for India, my expectations were high. Unfortunately, I have to undergo knee surgery and will miss this season," the yorker specialist said in a video posted by Sunrisers Hyderabad on its official Twitter handle. He, however, did not specify

the surgery will take place. "I have no words to say right now. I wish Sunrisers to go out and win every game this season. Best wishes," added the bowler.

It is understood that he never fully recovered from the injury caused by the heavy workload he endured on the tour of Australia.

shortpasses

ZIMBABWE BEAT PAKISTAN
HARARE: Zimbabwe beat Pakistan for the first time in a T20 when Pak collapsed from 78-3 to 99 all out during 119 run chase on Friday.

DE BRUYNE FIT FOR FINAL
MANCHESTER: Man City's Kevin De Bruyne is fit for League Cup final against Spurs and next week's CL clash with Paris Saint-Germain, Pep Guardiola revealed on Friday.

ATANU, DEEPIKA IN SEMIS
GUATEMALA CITY: Archery couple Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari battled heavy winds to storm into their respective semi-finals of the recurve section as India continued to make giant strides in the World Cup Stage 1.

GREEN BAGS CA CONTRACT
MELBOURNE: All-rounder Cameron Green landed his maiden national contract but big names, including Matthew Wade and Travis Head, missed out as CA on Friday announced a 17-strong list of contracted players.

NAPOLI CRUSH LAZIO
NAPLES: Ten-man Atalanta missed the chance to move second in Serie A with a 1-1 draw against Roma. But Napoli thrashed Lazio 5-2 to boost their hopes of CL return next season.

SRI LANKA 229-3 AT STUMPS
PALLEKELE: Dimuth Karunaratne led Sri Lanka to 229-3 in its first innings at stumps on the third day of the first Test, still 312 runs behind B'desh's mammoth 541-7. Agencies

Bilbao, Dublin dropped as Euro hosts

AFP ■ LAUSANNE

UEFA on Friday dropped Dublin and Bilbao as Euro 2020 hosts over a failure to guarantee fans' attendance.

The four matches destined for Dublin will now be held in St Petersburg and London while Seville steps in to replace Bilbao, UEFA announced.

Munich was confirmed as a venue at the eleventh hour, the German city joining Budapest, Baku, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Glasgow, Copenhagen and Rome. Held over from 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the European Championship will now be held in 11 different countries from June 11-11.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin welcomed being able to "guarantee a safe and festive environment" with fans "at every match".

Dublin and Bilbao lost out after the Irish Government and Basque region officials were unable to assure UEFA of fans despite the pandemic. Dublin's three group matches go to St Petersburg, with Wembley the new venue for its round of 16 game.

Seville gets Bilbao's three matches and round of 16 tie after its regional authority pledged the Estadio La Cartuja could be filled to 30 percent capacity.

Sachin clinches Gold in youth world boxing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Sachin rallied to defeat Kazakhstan's Yerbolat Sabyr 4-1 in a gritty performance by the end of which his confident opponent was left with a bloodied face and exhausted body.

India thus ended their campaign with 11 medals — eight Gold and three Bronze medals to claim the top spot in overall standings.

This was an improvement on two Gold, two Silver and six Bronze medals claimed at the event's 2018 edition.

Sachin is the first Indian male boxer since 2016 to finish on top. It was his namesake Sachin Siwah, now a senior camper, who fetched a Gold in that edition.

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