

OPINION 6
REMEMBERING
JAGDISH KHATTAR**WORLD 8**
US RUSHING ASSISTANCE
TO INDIA: BIDEN**SPORT 12**
BENZEMA RESCUES REAL
AGAINST CHELSEA

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY APRIL 29, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

PANDEMIC
MADE US HELP
PEOPLE: ARJUN
10 VIVACITY

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Maha puts off May 1 vax drive

Vaccine shortage challenge for other States too; CoWIN crashes over huge traffic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A lack of vaccine stocks and their availability in States remains an issue, the Maharashtra Government on Wednesday postponed indefinitely the launch of the third phase of vaccination programme for the 18-45 age group scheduled for May 1.

Earlier in the day, when millions of vaccine aspirants logged in at the Government's CoWin portal and the Aarogya Setu app for registration for Covid-19 vaccination for the 18-45 age group at 4 pm on Wednesday, both the sites crashed briefly amid confusion and chaos, with several ruining on social media that they have got vaccine date as late as July.

Nearly 80 lakh apply for Covid vaccination in 3 hours on a day when new cases rose by over 3.6 lakh, the highest in the world.

In a tweet later, National Health Authority chief RS Sharma said 79.65 lakh people registered for vaccinations on the first day. "We have seen a traffic of 55,000 hits per second.



People wait in a queue to receive Covid-19 vaccine at a centre in Amravati, Maharashtra on Wednesday

PTI

System functioning as expected," he added.

At the same time there was also confusion about the rollout of this phase of drive in several States due to constraints of vaccine availability. While Maharashtra has decided not to roll out the anti-Covid vaccination drive for the 18-44 year age group from May 1, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Kerala had on Sunday said they would also postpone this phase of the vaccination for the same reason.

Under the new guidelines from the Centre, officials said Maharashtra has to arrange for its own procurement and ensure enough stock for vaccinating adults up to 44 years of age — the largest demographic group in the state. Many vaccine seekers complained that they did not receive code number to proceed with the process while yet others lamented that they have not been assigned any hospital or given any date for vaccination despite registration.

However, terming the crash as a minor glitch, the Government said the portal has been fixed for registration for the third phase of the inoculation drive that is scheduled to begin on May 1. Users also pointed out that while registration process got completed, scheduling an appointment was not possible as majority of the locations still required age to be over 45.

Many users were quick to share the hassle they faced on Twitter saying they could either not log in to the portal or were

facing other registration issues. While some said they were seeing error messages while trying to register, a few others complained they were not receiving the OTP required to log in to CoWin on their phones.

However, following the initial trouble, the portal started working after some time. Aarogya Setu tweeted, "Cowin Portal is working. There was a minor glitch at 4 pm that was fixed. 18 plus can register".

At 4.54 pm, a tweet from the same handle stated, "Vaccination appointments for 18 plus will be possible once the State Governments and private vaccination centres schedule vaccination sessions. Registration is happening on cowin.gov.in".

After registration, taking an appointment to get a Covid-19 vaccine jab would be mandatory for those aged between 18 and 44 years as walk-ins will not be allowed initially, officials had said.

Those above 45 years of age can still avail the facility of on-site registration to get vaccinated, they had said.

Continued on Page 2

Sputnik to arrive in India on May 1

New Delhi: Russia will deliver the first batch of Sputnik V vaccine to India on May 1, the day the country expands its covid-19 immunisation drive to cover all adults from 18 years of age to 44. However, it is not clear when the vaccine will be available to the people here.

"The first doses will be delivered on 1 May," Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) chief executive officer Kirill Dmitriev said recently.

However, a spokesperson for the company's partner in India, Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd, said it is not providing a specific date for the launch.

Detailed report on P4

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 1,83,42,110 (+3,53,178)

DEATHS: 2,04,444 (+3,278)

RECOVERED: 1,50,57,818 (+2,49,744)

ACTIVE: 30,71,961

MAHARASHTRA: 44,73,394

KERALA: 14,95,378

KARNATAKA: 14,39,822

UTTAR PRADESH: 11,82,848

Detailed report on P4

No vaccination centre available in Noida for 18-44 age group

New Delhi: One in four people experience mild side effects from Covishield vaccine: Lancet study

Noida: As the mad scramble to register for the Covid-19 vaccine among those in the 18-44

preventive by Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine — known as Covishield in India — with headache, fatigue and tenderness the most common symptoms, according to a study published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases journal.

It seems you want people to die, HC tears into Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a scathing criticism of the Government's amended Covid treatment protocol related to anti-viral drug Remdesivir, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday observed "it appears you want people to die".

As per the amended protocol, the Central Government submitted to the court that now only patients on oxygen support were being given Remdesivir.

"This is wrong. This is a complete non-application of mind. Now people who do not have oxygen will not get Remdesivir either. It appears you want people to die," Justice Prathiba M Singh said.

The court also said it will consider later whether a medical committee should review if the protocols or guidelines for administering Remdesivir need any modification.

"Don't change the protocol only to reduce the shortage. That is wrong. As a result, doctors are not able to prescribe Remdesivir," the court said and added, "This is complete mismanagement."

On the allocation of the drug to Delhi, the Centre told the court that over 52,000 vials, out of the allocated amount of 72,000, were sent to the national capital till April 27. It said the

allocation was being made on the basis of the actual caseload of a State.

The court, however, said the allocation cannot be so low for Delhi. The court also said it was "shocking" that an MP was able to procure 10,000 vials of the medicine from Delhi, transport it to Ahmednagar in Maharashtra via a chartered flight and distributed it there.

"This is shocking the conscience of the court. That is 10,000 vials that could have been given to patients in Delhi. There is complete mismanagement of the quota being received by the State," the court said.

The Centre then said that in the coming days the allocation would increase as there would be a rise in production. The Delhi Government, represented by additional standing counsel Anuj Aggarwal, said they received only 2,500 vials of the over 52,000 sent to the national Capital.

Continued on Page 2

Shift journalist Kappan to Delhi for treatment, SC directs UP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Uttar Pradesh Government to shift journalist Siddique Kappan, suffering from various ailments and arrested last year on way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after being gangraped, to a hospital in Delhi for better medical treatment.

Keeping in mind the basic human rights of an accused, Chief Justice NV Ramana headed bench granted the relief and directed the State to provide medical treatment to the Keral-based scribe.

The bench also comprising Justices Surya Kant and AS Bopanna said that Kappan will be transferred back to Mathura jail after his recovery. The SC, however, granted him liberty to approach an appropriate forum challenging his arrest or for any other relief and disposed of the plea filed by Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) and his wife, seeking his release from alleged illegal detention.

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Facing flak, SII cuts vax price by ₹100 for States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



take a decision on the Government's direction to cut the vaccine prices.

While Serum announced a

price of ₹400 for States and ₹600 for private hospitals, Bharat Biotech set the prices at ₹600 and ₹1,200 a dose. These, according to reports, would mean the highest price at any private hospitals across the world for Covishield — the Indian name for the vaccine developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca.

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PM Cares Fund to ease breathing

Govt to procure 1L oxygen concentrators, 550 oxygen plants to be set up soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday announced the procurement of one lakh portable oxygen concentrators and additional immediate installation of 550 oxygen plants.

PM Cares Fund will be utilised for this purchase and installation and 550 oxygen plants will be based on the technology developed by DRDO.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss the measures needed to improve Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) Supply for Covid management.

The PM instructed that these oxygen concentrators should be procured at the earliest and provided in States with high case burden. "In addition

to the earlier sanctioned 713 PSA plants under PM Cares Fund, 500 new Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants have been sanctioned under PM CARES Fund," said PMO in a statement.

The PSA plants will augment the supply of Liquid Medical Oxygen at hospitals in district headquarters and Tier 2 cities. These 500 PSA plants will be established with transfer of the indigenous technology developed by DRDO and CSIR to the domestic manufacturers.

Establishing PSA plants and procurement of portable oxygen concentrators will greatly augment the supply of oxygen near the demand clusters, thereby addressing the current logistical challenges in transporting oxygen from plants to hospitals, said PMO.

"No candidates or agents will be allowed inside the counting hall without undergoing RT-PCR/RAT test or without having two doses of vaccination against Covid-19

Covid -ve report mandatory to enter counting halls: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After allowing a free for all during the Assembly poll campaigns, the Election Commission on Wednesday made it mandatory for candidates and their agents to show negative RT-PCR test reports or records of having taken both Covid-19 vaccine doses to enter counting centres on May 2.

The EC will allow candidates to name a fresh agent if the first one tests positive for Covid-19. The fresh EC guidelines go beyond the ones issued by the poll panel for the Bihar Assembly elections last year which were being used as a template for polls held during the pandemic. The poll panel has to apprise the high court on April 30 about steps it has taken to ensure a Covid-safe counting process.

"No candidates or agents will be allowed inside the counting hall without undergoing RT-PCR/RAT test or without having two doses of vaccination against Covid-19

and will have to produce negative RT-PCR report or RAT report or vaccination reports within 48 hours of start of counting," the guidelines read.

The EC said that the district election officer (DEO) shall make arrangements of RT-PCR/RAT test for candidates and counting agents before the day of counting. Candidates will need to provide a list of counting agents three days before counting day.

Earlier, the EC had banned any victory procession celebrations on May 2. Counting of votes for Assembly polls in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, besides various other assemblies and Lok Sabha bypolls begins at 8 am on May 2. The final phase of voting in West Bengal will be held on Thursday.

It had also restricted the number of people who could accompany the candidate to collect their election certificate from the returning officer.

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Doctors, nurses flee hospitals to escape bitter truth: Balyan

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 situation in Uttar Pradesh has turned so grim that in some cases doctors, nurses and paramedic staff have "deserted" the hospitals to "escape the reality".

"The cases are continuously multiplying...in Bharat Ayurvedic Medical College here in Muzaffarnagar, paramedical staff and nurses have run away..." said Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan, who is also an MP from Muzaffarnagar.

The Union Minister said he is trying hard to arrange new medical staff for the hospital.

Balyan said oxygen for the hospital is transported from Mangalore to Haridwar, Uttarakhand, but "here too we

Continued on Page 2

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Amid worsening Covid-19 situation across different parts of India, the pilgrim traffic to the Cave Shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi, nestled in the Trikuta hills, has sharply nose-dived.

Incidentally, last year the Government suspended the yatra for a period of five months.

After the lockdown restrictions were imposed across several north Indian cities, around 1,000 pilgrims have been reaching the Katra base camp to perform the yatra.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, a senior Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board officer said, "At present there are no plans to suspend the yatra. The final decision is taken by the UT administration."

The official said they were not receiving more than 1,000

pilgrims for the last couple of days. Each pilgrim is subjected to Covid-19 screening at the Katra railway stations, Banganga or at the yatra ticket counter.

He said emphasis is on

maintaining social distancing and general hygiene of public toilets and other common spaces along the yatra route by using hand sanitisers and wearing masks.

According to official

sources, less than one lakh pilgrims completed the yatra during the nine-day long Navratri between April 13 and 21.

In the past, over 3 lakh

pilgrims used to perform special

prayers

during the

Navratri

from June 28.

The board authorities are closely monitoring the situation

before taking a final decision.

According to the yatra statistics available on the website of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, a little over 5,000 pilgrims performed darshan inside the sanctum sanctorum on April 21. The numbers have declined further in the last couple of days.

The local businessmen, tour operators and hoteliers in Katra are once again staring at an uncertain future in the absence of pilgrim traffic. The local economy in Katra and tourist hotspots located in the close vicinity are solely dependent on the pilgrim traffic for earning their livelihood.

On the other hand, the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, LG Manoj Sinha, had also extended invitations to Akhada Parishes, Acharya Parishes to participate in the yatra along with their disciples. The authorities were making preparations to create better accommodation, toilet and resting facilities for pilgrims along the yatra route between Lakhimpur to yatra base camps at Baltal and Pahalgam.



DOCS SHOULD CALL PATIENTS: KEJRIWAL CM for strengthening Covid care at home

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the city battles the worst ever health crisis and hospitals gasping for breath in wake of oxygen paucity, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday directed health officials to ensure every patient recovering from corona under home isolation receives regular calls from doctors and said the Government is working for strengthening home isolation system in Delhi. Kejriwal convened a meeting with health department officers on the prevailing corona situation in Delhi. Experts have sounded a warning about Covid cases reaching to peak in May month.

The Chief Minister also discussed plans to increase oxygen beds and strengthen home



isolation systems anticipating a further spike in the cases.

Taking to Twitter, Kejriwal said, "Convened a meeting with the officials. Discussed the plan to increase oxygen beds in the coming days, and strengthen the home isolation system in Delhi. Please take all precautions and stay safe."

"We have to expedite the process of adding more oxygen beds across Delhi in the coming weeks," Kejriwal said. "We are noticing that this new strain of Coronavirus is quite dan-

gerous and often leads to respiratory and breathing issues. It has become very important to provide beds to every patient who needs oxygen. We have to expedite the process to add more ICU and oxygen beds in the coming weeks." "Every patient who is recovering from Corona under home isolation should receive regular calls from Delhi government doctors and an oximeter. We have to monitor the daily condition of every patient recovering from Corona in home isolation."

In the last few days, the Delhi government has been increasing the count of ICU and oxygen beds across Delhi on a war footing. Kejriwal visited several hospitals to review the corona preparedness.

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Following the shortage of hospital beds and oxygen supplies in the national Capital, some Covid-19 patients from Delhi who are in need of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and oxygen beds are getting themselves admitted in neighbouring States hospitals. Doctors said Delhi-based Covid patients, many of who need oxygen support, are coming to Haryana and Uttar Pradesh as they could not get hospital beds in the national Capital.

The States, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and even Punjab have around 40 per cent of Covid patients from Delhi. Their attendants are wandering in the cities, staying in hotels and dharamshalas, posing a high threat of spreading Covid among residents.

As per information, in Haryana, the cities including Karnal, Rohtak, Hisar, Jhajjar, Gurugram and Faridabad have their private hospitals 40 per cent filled with the Covid

patients from Delhi while in Punjab, around 30 per cent patients from Delhi have been admitted to hospitals in Patiala, Jalandhar and other places. Uttar Pradesh is also not behind with covid patients in need of oxygen beds and ICU are being admitted in Meerut, Ghaziabad, Noida and Moradabad.

With rise in covid patients and their attendants, the health authorities in Karnal also conducted random sampling in hotels and dharamshalas on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday.

A Civil Surgeon in Karnal, Dr Yogesh Sharma said that after the issue came to their notice that attendants of Delhi patients are staying and roaming in the city, the authorities got random sampling conducted in which four attendants tested positive.

Dr Sharma also appealed to the attendants to get them tested and take necessary precautions to tackle the surge.

Rajesh Kumar, an attendee

at R Hospital in Bahadurgarh said that after his cousin Kuldeep, a resident of Rohini, health got deteriorated he tried a lot of hospitals to get him admitted but no bed was available.

"Finally, we managed to get a bed in ICU at Bahadurgarh with the help of a relative living here," said Rajesh.

A medical officer in Faridabad, who didn't wish to be named, said that around 40 per cent of covid patients in private hospitals across Haryana are from Delhi.

Five people, who were Covid positive, died in Hisar on Tuesday, out five, one was from Mansa in Punjab while another was from Delhi.

"Out of around 1,000 Covid patients admitted to 31 hospitals in Hisar, around 350 are from outside Haryana. Many patients whose relatives are living in Punjab are approaching them to get themselves admitted and as a moral obligation, the hospitals could not refuse treatment to anyone even if they were from outside Punjab,"

said doctors.

Recently following the surge in covid patients coming to hospital in Ghaziabad, the health authorities also increased beds up from 970 to 1,080.

"We have 1,598 beds, including the ones in the government setup, and 44 per cent of the occupied beds are for patients from other districts," said an official in Ghaziabad.

"Till Saturday, around 509 beds were occupied, including 286 beds occupied by patients from Ghaziabad, and 223 from places Delhi, Hapur, Bulandshahr and Baghpat," he added.

"After I was unable to get an ICU bed in Delhi, somehow I managed to get a bed in Meerut for my uncle through my friend circle.

"But unfortunately when we were on the way to Meerut my uncle passed away, as his condition was critical," said Anil Singh, a resident of Dwarka.

"Sudden influx of patients has added more pressure on health facilities in Punjab. Many patients whose relatives are living in Punjab are approaching them to get themselves admitted and as a moral obligation, the hospitals could not refuse treatment to anyone even if they were from outside Punjab,"

is growing more in chaos in this terrible situation.

"It is the constitutional duty of a democratic government to manage proper medical facilities to protect the lives of its citizens.

The State Government has not taken any concrete steps in this direction since the last one year, when the epidemic is spreading rapidly," he added.

"The citizens of the state are splashing for breath at the threshold of hospitals and their families are dying.

This dreadful scene can be witnessed in and around hospitals in the state but the state government is not taking any concrete steps to save the innocent lives," he added.

The Delhi Government

spent crores of rupees on its false publicity but there was no preparation to deal with the epidemic," he said.

The "failure" of health system has forced the people to die on the roads while oxygen gas and medicines are being sold and the government is sitting hand in hand, he said.

Adding that the present scenario proves that the Aam Aadmi Party led Delhi Government has completely failed in discharging its constitutional duties towards the citizens and has deviated from its duties.

Highlighting the law and order situation in the state, he said that the system has completely crumbled and the state

is growing more in chaos in this terrible situation.

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The panelists emphasized wearing of double mask and its proper handling. Immediate isolation for those diagnosed covid positive with medicine at the advice of doctors was emphasized.

sonnel have also been put in service. The panelists doctors acknowledged that since Delhi Police being engaged in fight against the pandemic all along, its role as frontline worker is not less than to the medical staff. However, the virulence and intensity of the current virus is different from the previous one," said Mittal.

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Tejas tech to give breath of fresh air

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a unique method to meet the ongoing shortage of oxygen, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will use the technology used for generating oxygen for Tejas fighter jet for producing it for civilians. The transfer of know how will see more than 550 plants coming up in the next three months all over the country.

Giving details of this innovative way to augment oxygen production, fight corona pandemic, the DRDO officials said here on Wednesday the Medical Oxygen Plant (MOP) technology for On-Board Oxygen Generation for Tejas light combat aircraft (LCA) will now help in fighting the current crisis of oxygen for Covid-19 patients.

The oxygen plant is designed for a capacity of 1,000 litres per minute (LPM). The system can cater to 190 patients at a flow rate of 5 LPM and charge 195 cylinders per day.

Officials said the technology was transferred to Tata Advanced Systems Limited, Bengaluru and Trident Pneumatics Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore. They will be producing 380 plants for installation across various hospitals in the country. Also, 120 plants of 500 LPM capacity will be pro-



duced by industries working with Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun, belonging to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

Medical Oxygen Plant (MOP) technology is capable of generating oxygen with 93±3% concentration which can be directly supplied to hospital beds or can be used to fill medical oxygen cylinders. It utilises Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) technique and Molecular Sieve (Zeolite) technology to generate oxygen directly from atmospheric air.

The MOP technology will be useful to provide oxygen supply during Corona Pandemic in hospitals in urban and rural areas. Hospitals will be able to generate on site medical oxygen, in a cost-effective manner with this oxygen plant rather than depending upon sourcing it from other places.

The installation of this plant helps in avoiding hospital dependency on scarce oxy-

gen cylinders especially at high altitude and inaccessible remote areas. The MOP has already been installed at some of the Army sites in North East and Leh-Ladakh region. The plant complies with International Standards like ISO 1008, European, US and Indian Pharmacopeia. Site preparation for five plants to be installed in Delhi and national capital region (NCR) region has already been initiated.

The DRDO has initiated fabrication of 332 MOP to Tata Advanced Systems Limited, Bengaluru and 48 to Trident Pneumatics Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore with a target of producing 125 plants per month under PM CARES Fund.

In a related development, the Army has augmented the strength of the beds of its covid facility the Base Hospital, Delhi Cantonment for veterans and their dependents. In fact, the entire hospital has been

The transfer of know how will see more than 550 plants coming up in the next three months all over the country

converted into a Covid hospital with comprehensive arrangements for providing critical care to all incoming patients.

At the start of the current Covid wave, the Base Hospital catered for 340 Covid beds of which just 250 beds were oxygenated. This resource was being severely stretched for additional capacities due to exponential rise in Covid cases.

Despite the beds being filled to their capacity, patients over and above this capacity are being treated in the Trauma Centre after obtaining their willingness to wait for beds. A plan was quickly put in place to expand the capacity to 650 Covid beds of which 450 beds will be oxygenated by April 30. The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) is also being enhanced from 12 beds to 35 ICU beds by April 29. Next phase of expansion will see the present capacity being augmented to 900 oxygenated beds by the second week of June, army officials said here on Wednesday.

In another initiative, a Covid tele-consultancy and Information Management Cell under a senior officer is functioning 24 x 7 rendering medical advice as well as information about admitted patients with due sensitivity. On an average, 1200-1300 calls are handled by this cell.

8,665 seek subsidised loan under agriculture infrastructure scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maximum applications have been received from Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) followed by agri-entrepreneurs and individual farmers

Amid pandemic, the Centre has so far received 8,665 applications seeking subsidised loan worth ₹8,216 crore under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) scheme launched to augment post-harvest infrastructure in the country.

Under the AIF scheme, implemented in 2020-21 for ten years, about ₹1 lakh crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with interest subvention of 3 per cent per annum and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises) for loans up to ₹3 crore.

"Agriculture Infrastructure Fund has crossed the ₹8,000 crore mark, after receiving 8,665 applications worth ₹8,216 crore," the Agriculture Ministry said in a statement. Out of this, over ₹4,000 crore has been sanctioned so far, it said.

Maximum applications have been received from Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) followed by agri-entrepreneurs and individual farmers, it said. These investments are for a wide range of projects which will unlock value for farmers across the country. States leading the front are Andhra Pradesh (2,125 applications), Madhya Pradesh (1,830), Uttar Pradesh (1,255), Karnataka (1,071) and Rajasthan (613), it added.

Stating that AIF will bring together the collective power of all stakeholders in the agriculture ecosystem, the ministry said, "While most of these states are leveraging their strong cooperatives network to take the lead, Madhya Pradesh stands out with the highest non-PACS applications."

The ministry is taking several initiatives to accelerate on-ground investments. It has directly reached out to over 150 FPOs and livelihood organisations, along with IFFCO, HAFED, NAFED & others. These initiatives have led to not only an overall increase in applications but an increase in interest in innovative infra projects such as custom hiring centres and farm machinery banks for which 130 applications have been received. About 200 applications are for developing infrastructure for smart and precision agriculture.

The ministry said it has created a portal — <https://agri-infra.dac.gov.in> — for the scheme where stakeholders can submit applications and monitor the progress of the applications.

Rlys ferries 500 metric tonnes of oxygen for Covid patients



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

the Railway has drawn a decentralised plan of action empowering Zones and Divisions to work out their MoU for cohesive action for Isolation Coaches which can be easily moved and positioned at places of demand on the Indian Railways network.

Accordingly, as per States' demand, at present 191 coaches have been handed over to various states for Covid care with a bed-capacity of 2990 beds.

Isolation Coaches are presently utilised at Delhi, Maharashtra (Ajni ICD, Nandurbar), Madhya Pradesh (Tibi near Indore). The Railways has also positioned 50 coaches at major cities of Uttar Pradesh like Faizabad, Bhadohi, Varanasi, Bareli and Nazibabad.

In Delhi, the Railway has catered to demand for 75 Covid Care Coaches with a capacity of 1,200 beds. 50 coaches are positioned at Shakurbasti and 25 Coaches at Anand Vihar stations. 5 admissions were registered as on date. 1196 beds are still available, as per information by the railways ministry.

Madhya Pradesh received its first Oxygen Express carrying more than 64 metric tonnes of liquid medical oxygen on Wednesday morning. These tankers were unloaded at various locations in Madhya Pradesh in cities like Jabalpur (1 Tanker), Bhopal (2 Tankers) & Sagar (3 Tankers).

The fourth Oxygen Express destined for Lucknow was scheduled to reach Lucknow on Wednesday night while another empty rake was on its way (6th) from Lucknow to Bokaro, which will bring another set of oxygen tankers replenishing oxygen supply to Uttar Pradesh.

"Continuous Oxygen Express to Uttar Pradesh is ensuring uninterrupted oxygen replenishment to the residents of UP. So far, Indian Railways has delivered 202 metric tonnes to Uttar Pradesh, 174 metric tonnes to Maharashtra, 70 metric tonnes to Delhi and Madhya Pradesh 64 metric tonnes," said a senior railway official.

To work concurrently with the States and in a bid to reach out as swiftly as possible,

SII CEO gets 'Y' category security

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Wednesday accorded 'Y' category security cover on an all India basis to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the world's largest vaccine manufacturer Serum Institute of India (SII) Adar Poonawalla.

The Ministry has tasked the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to secure Poonawalla. The CRPF has received the order to prepare for the task, sources said.

As part of the security cover, Poonawalla will be pro-

tected by 11 security personnel of the CRPF including one or two trained commandos in personal protection. The security cover will be provided to the protegee at all places across the country, including during transits.

Poonawalla, 40, is one of the key players in the country's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covishield vaccine developed by the Pune-based SII is one of the two anti-Covid jabs, which are currently administered to the beneficiaries across the country.

In the present circumstances, a passenger vehicle user has to take cumbersome steps to re-register a vehicle which includes a No Objection Certificate from the Parent State for assignment of new registration mark in another state; assignment of new registration mark after the road tax on pro-rata basis is paid in the new State and application for refund of the road tax in the parent State on pro-rata basis.

The provision to get refund from the parent State on pro-rata basis is a very cumbersome process, which varies from one State to another. These will be made more simpler with the use of technology and advanced IT solutions," said a MoRTH official.

tered, new registration with the new state registering authority has to be made within 12 months," explained the MoRTH statement.

In the present circumstances, a passenger vehicle user has to take cumbersome steps to re-register a vehicle which includes a No Objection Certificate from the Parent State for assignment of new registration mark in another state; assignment of new registration mark after the road tax on pro-rata basis is paid in the new State and application for refund of the road tax in the parent State on pro-rata basis.

"Station relocation occurs with both, Government and private sector employees. Such movements create a sense of unease in the minds of employees with regard to transfer of registration from the parent state to another state. While a person is allowed to keep the vehicle for 12 months in any state other than the state where the vehicle is originally regis-

Govt, pvt sectors setting up O₂ plants to plug shortage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With unprecedented rise in Covid-19 cases followed by acute shortage of medical oxygen pushing the hospitals across the States to the edge, the Government and the private sectors are stepping forward to set up the oxygen manufacturing plants in their hospitals as a self-reliant strategy.

For instance, anticipating increasing demand of oxygen in the coming days as several migrants are already on the way to their native places, Nawada district Magistrate Yashpal Meena in Bihar is finalising the plan to install an oxygen manufacturing plant at a district hospital while his colleague Nandurbar collector Dr Rajendra Bharadwaj in Maharashtra has already set up a liquid oxygen plant in the district he heads.

Similarly, cooperative majors like IFFCO are establishing three oxygen plants at Aonla and Phulpur in Uttar Pradesh and Paradip in Odisha while Paradeep Phosphate Ltd PPL has decided to install three pressure swing adsorption oxygen generation plants in various health facilities across Odisha.

Joining the race is India Inc. Companies including the industrial majors like Tata Group, Reliance Industries Limited headed by Mukesh

Ambani, JSW Group, Adani, ITC, and Jindal Steel and Power, to name a few, have come forward to help hospitals treating Covid-19 patients by supplying medical oxygen, cryogenic vessels, portable concentrators and generators to hospitals in need.

"We have around 171 oxygen cylinders including jumbo ones in our PHCs and district hospitals. But to meet the emergency if any given that situation is tough and it's like a war like, our plan to set up oxygen plant proposal is in progress. We are already in talks with vendors," said Nawada district Meena, an IAS officer of the 2014 batch, over phone to The Pioneer.

Vaccination is also in a full swing, he said but did not rule out further spurt in the cases. True to his fears, after the second Covid-19 wave hit the state, the district reported around 1500 Covid cases on Wednesday from 627 on April 21, with higher concentration in the town areas. The district in Bihar had seen arrival of 60 thousands migrant last lockdown.

His senior, Nandurbar collector Dr Bharadwaj has already set up the liquid oxygen plant at the district hospital at a cost of ₹85 lakhs. In January and February this year, he set up two more plants, following which the capacity of oxygen plants in the district increased

to 2,400 litres per minute.

In fact, even trusts too are gearing up to ensure seamless supply in state hospitals as Covid cases are increasing exponentially resulting in huge demand for oxygen.

The apex court termed the pandemic situation as "national crisis" and said that being the last Constitutional court, it cannot remain a "mute spectator".

It has made clear however that its suo motu proceeding on devising national policy for COVID-19 management is not meant to supplant high court hearings.

The order, passed on Tuesday by a bench of justices D Y Chandrachud, L Nageswara Rao and S

What's O₂ demand, supply, SC seeks Centre's reply

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of resurgence of Covid-19 cases, the Supreme Court has asked the Centre to apprise it of projected demand of oxygen in the country, how it intends to allocate it to "critically-affected" states and the monitoring mechanism to ensure smooth supply.

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The order, passed on Tuesday by a bench of justices D Y Chandrachud, L Nageswara Rao and S

Ravindra Bhat, was uploaded on the top court's website on Wednesday and dealt in details aspects of its future hearings.

"Supply of oxygen - The Court should be apprised by the Union of India on (a) The projected demand for oxygen in the country at the present point of time and in the foreseeable future;

(b) The steps taken and proposed to augment the availability of oxygen, meeting both the current and projected requirements;

(c) The monitoring mechanism for ensuring the supply of oxygen, particularly to critically affected States and Union Territories as well as the other areas;

(d) The basis on which allocation of oxygen is being made from the central pool; and (e) The methodology adopted for ensuring that the requirements of the States are com-

municated to the Central Government on a daily basis so as to ensure that the availability of oxygen is commensurate with the need of each State or, as the case may be, Union Territory," the order said, specifying issues to be taken up by the court on April 30.

It asked central government to consider framing a policy specifying standards and norms to be observed for admitting patients to hospitals and COVID-19 centres.

The order sought replies from the Centre and states on issues such as "enhancement of critical medical infrastructure, including the availability of beds, Covid treatment centres with duly equipped medical personnel on the basis of the projected requirement of healthcare professionals and anticipated requirements".

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Advanced Python 5 to add muscle to India's air power

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Tejas, India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft, added the fifth generation Python-5 air-to-air missile (AAM) to its air-to-air weapons capability on Tuesday, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said on Wednesday.

"Trials were also aimed to validate enhanced capability of already integrated Derby Beyond Visual Range (BVR) AAM on Tejas," the DRDO said in a statement.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the teams of DRDO, ADA, Indian Air Force, HAL and all involved in the trial.

The test firing in Goa completed a series of missile trials to validate its performance under extremely challenging scenarios. The Derby missile achieved direct hit on a high-speed maneuvering aerial target. The Python missiles also



achieved 100 per cent hits, thereby validating their complete capability.

"The trials met all their planned objectives," the DRDO stated.

Prior to the trials, extensive missile carriage flight tests were conducted in Bengaluru to assess integration of the missile with aircraft systems onboard the Tejas, like Avionics, Fire-control radar,

Missile Weapon Delivery System and the Flight Control System.

The Centre on Wednesday issued a notification of draft rules to make it much easier for those shifting from one State to another to re-register their vehicles with a new series 'IN'. The step comes in the context of several citizen-centric steps and an IT-based solution for vehicle registration taken by the government.

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) has proposed the new system of vehicle registration, wherein allocation would be marked as 'IN' series and this will be on pilot test mode. This vehicle registration facility under 'IN' series will be available to

Defence personnel, employees of Central Government, State Governments, Central/ State PSUs and private sector companies/organizations, which have their offices in five or more States/Union Territories.

In simpler terms, if the vehicle registered in Uttar Pradesh already paid taxes for 15 years has to pay taxes for getting registered in Punjab and then comeback to claim the refund from UP. Now, with the new scheme in place the person seeking to have the IN symbol registration will pay taxes for only two years in UP and then if going to Punjab on transfer will pay for same tenure thus saving the owner from multiple

problems.

"The motor vehicle tax will be levied for two years or in multiple of two. This scheme will facilitate free movement of personal vehicles across any state of India upon relocation to a new state," said a MoRTH Press statement.

According to MoRTH one of the main points in the vehicle registration process that still needed attention was re-registration of a vehicle while moving to another state.

"Station relocation occurs with both, Government and private sector employees. Such movements create a sense of unease in the minds of employees with regard to transfer of registration from the parent state to another state. While a person is allowed to keep the vehicle for 12 months in any state other than the state where the vehicle is originally regis-

tered, new registration with the new state registering authority has to be made within 12 months," explained the MoRTH statement.

In the present circumstances, a passenger vehicle user has to take cumbersome steps to re-register a vehicle which includes a No Objection Certificate from the Parent

BENGAL ELECTION

SECURITY TIGHTENED FOR LAST PHASE

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has made elaborate bandobast for the eighth and final phase of the Assembly elections that will take place on Thursday amid rising number of corona cases.

About 75,000 Central forces would man the polling in 11, 860 polling stations in 35 constituencies across four districts of Birbhum, Murshidabad, Malda and North Kolkata, EC sources said. Out of 35 constituencies 11 each are in Birbhum and Murshidabad, seven are in Kolkata North and six are in Malda.

While 22,400 Central security personnel will guard more than 3,000 booths in Birbhum district which has most num-

ber of super-sensitive polling stations, a little more than 21,000 CAPF jawans would man 11 polling in Murshidabad. About 11,000 forces have been deployed in Malda and 9,500 have been put on duty in North Kolkata, EC sources said.

Incidentally, Birbhum has been one of the most violence prone districts with blocks like Nanoor, Luvpur, Ilambazar, Muhammad Bazaar witnessing maximum electoral violence. With repeated discovery of drums-load bombs and bullets, the ECI has posted six senior police officers at Birbhum apart from appointing Nagendranath Tripathy as its Superintendent of the district. Tripathy supervised the high-voltage polling at Nandigram.

Over 84.70 lakh voters —

43,55,835 male, 41,21,735 women and 158 of the third gender — will decide the political fate of 283 candidates in the eighth phase.

Among the 283 candidates in the fray, 64 have declared criminal cases against themselves.

Out of them 21 are from the BJP, 11 from the Trinamool Congress (TMC), 10 from the Congress Party and seven from the CPI(M). Of the 64 candidates with criminal cases, 50 have declared serious criminal cases against themselves.

The final phase of the elections has 55 "crorepatis" candidates with the net value of their declared assets being Rs 1 crore and beyond. Of the 55 "crorepatis" 28 are from the TMC, 12 from the BJP, five from the Congress and one

from the CPI(M).

Apart from making massive security arrangements the Commission has also taken extra measures to enforce corona guidelines during the eighth phase, ECI sources said, adding social distancing measures have been taken in each booth.

"Besides providing masks and sanitizers to the polling staff measures are also being taken to arrange for the same for the voters who do not carry mask with them," sources said.

However, election staff at Domkol in Murshidabad and English Bazar in Malda said pandemic norms were hardly being followed in the sense that "most of the buses are crammed with election staff," a presiding officer of a Murshidabad booth said.

Free shots for 18-45 group also in Maha
But launch of May 1 vaccination drive deferred

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

ple in due course. We will announce the vaccination programme for people in this age group shortly."

In a separate interaction with the media, State Health Minister Rajesh Tope said: "Though we have decided to give free vaccines to people in the age group of 18-45 years, But the vaccination for this category of people in Maharashtra will not begin from May 1 as announced by the Union government. This is because of the lack of adequate stocks of vaccines at this juncture. An empowered Cabinet sub-committee will chalk out a plan to vaccinate all those in the age group of 19-45 years in the next six months."

Tope said that even if the state government were to procure adequate stocks of vaccines by the end of May, it would not

be able to administer the doses to all the people in the targeted category. "Hence it is my appeal to all the youngsters to exercise patience. Be assured, the vaccines will be given to you free of cost. Though it is compulsory for you to register your names on COWIN App, please don't go to the vaccination centres immediately after registering your names. Because, you will not get jabs immediately."

The minister said that there were as many as 5.71 crore people in the state in the age group of 18-45 years. "An empowered Cabinet sub-committee will chalk out the vaccination programme. We intend to subdivide this age group into three categories - 18 to 25 years, 25 to 35 years and 35 to 44 years.

There are 1, 10, 308 Covid-19 patients across the State as on Wednesday evening.

16,665 new Covid cases in Tamil Nadu

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

There was no let up in the daily count of Covid-19 patients in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday. A release by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine said 16,665 new persons were tested positive for the pandemic in the last 24 hours that ended on Wednesday evening.

The State also saw 98 persons succumbing to the pandemic on a single day that took the fatalities till date to 13,826.

There are 1, 10, 308 Covid-19 patients across the State as on Wednesday evening.

The Capital city of Chennai saw 4,764 new cases while Chengalpattu registered 1,219 patients. The industrial hub of Coimbatore saw 963 new patients.

Maha: Four patients die after fire at Thane private hospital

Mumbai: In the fourth major mishap in a hospital in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) in little over a month, four patients were killed when a major fire broke out at Prime Criticare Hospital at Mumbras's Kausa area in Thane district in the early hours of Wednesday.

The fire broke out at Prime Criticare Hospital at around 4 am. There were 20 patients at the hospital, at the time of mishap. Of them six were undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital.

Though all the 20 patients

After TMC candidate's Covid death, wife files complaint against EC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a bizarre development, the widow of a deceased Trinamool Congress candidate Kajal Sinha who died of corona has filed a police complaint against Election Commission of India and its officials including Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain for causing death of her husband.

Sinha, a 59-year-old candidate from the Kharda Assembly constituency in North 24 Parganas had succumbed to corona infections on Sunday morning.

Sinha's wife Nandita has brought charges under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 120B (criminal conspiracy), Section 269, (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) Section 270 (Malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code.

Quake of 6.4 magnitude strikes Assam

Guwahati/New Delhi: A series of earthquakes jolted Assam and most of the Northeast on Wednesday, causing extensive damage to buildings and forcing people to scamper out of their homes.

There were no immediate reports of deaths, but three people were injured as the first quake of 6.4 magnitude struck Tezpur at 10.39 am. At 12.32 pm, the eighth quake of 2.9 magnitude hit Marigaon.

The impact was felt in almost the entire Northeastern region, parts of West Bengal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The first quake was followed in quick succession by lesser intensity tremors of 4.7, 4,

and two 3.6 magnitudes at 8.03 am, 8.13 am, 8.25 am and 8.44 am. Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) Deputy Director Sanjay O'Neil Shaw said.

Another earthquake of 3.2 magnitude hit Assam's Nagaon district at 10.05 am. A while later, another jolt of 3.4 magnitude hit Tezpur at 10.39 am.

At 12.32 pm, the eighth quake of 2.9 magnitude hit Marigaon.

There were reports of extensive damage to buildings and other structures from across Assam, mostly in the central and western towns of Tezpur, Nagaon, Guwahati, Mangaldoi, Dhekiajuli and Morigaon.

"We have received reports of

three people getting injured in the earthquake. However, there is no death. We are still collecting reports from different districts and assessing the total damage to the properties. It will take some more time," Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) CEO Gyanendra Tripathi told PTI.

Several roads in the region developed wide cracks, affecting traffic. Besides, in many areas fissures were seen in fields with water oozing out, officials said.

The National Centre for Seismology (NCS) said damage to buildings and structures was reported from areas within 100 km radius of the epicentre. PTI

Allahabad HC judge succumbs to Covid

Lucknow: Justice Virendra Kumar Srivastava, a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court, passed away on Wednesday after being afflicted by Covid.

Justice Srivastava was at the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court.

He obtained his law degree in 1986 and completed his post-graduate studies in 1988. He was, thereafter, appointed in the Higher Judicial Service in 2005, and promoted as District and Sessions Judge in 2016. He also served as Principal Secretary, Legislative between 2016 and 2018.

In November 2018, he was appointed as an Additional Judge of the Allahabad High Court and made a permanent Judge in November 2020. IANS

COVIDBRIEFS

GOA HOTELS FACE BOOKING CANCELLATION SPATE

Panaji: The already battered tourism industry in Goa is bracing for a spate of cancellation of hotel bookings after the State goes under severe curbs from Thursday to control the rising Covid-19 cases. The Goa Government on Wednesday announced a "lockdown" in the state beginning April 29 till May 3.

PATNA: FREE CREMATION OF CORONA VICTIMS

Patna: The Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC), which is providing cremation of COVID-19 victims for free, has fixed rates for the last rites of those who did not die of the contagion at three crematoriums here, under its jurisdiction, to help their families escape extortion given the huge rush at the burning ghats, a senior officer of the civic body said on Wednesday.

"Hospitals are refusing to admit patients. Reports of patients dying due to lack of oxygen are pouring in from all over the country. Private hospitals in Delhi had to approach the High Court to get oxygen," he said.

"Prime Minister Modi's self-proclaimed victory over the Covid-19 pandemic at the World Economic Forum had left the global community aghast, particularly as more than 50 countries have banned incoming flights from India. And now we are desperately asking for oxygen and other medical supplies

O₂ crisis: Country is paying for Modi's incompetent leadership, says Chavan

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Holding the BJP-led NDA Government squarely responsible for the current medical oxygen crisis in the country, Maharashtra's former Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan on Wednesday charged that the country was paying for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "incompetent" leadership.

In a statement issued here, Chavan said: "It is clear that the Govt miserably failed to act in time to ensure adequate supplies of oxygen, resulting in an unprecedented oxygen crisis. Desperate calls are being made every minute by hospitals and patients to get oxygen".

"Hospitals are refusing to admit patients. Reports of patients dying due to lack of oxygen are pouring in from all over the country. Private hospitals in Delhi had to approach the High Court to get oxygen," he said.

"Prime Minister Modi's self-proclaimed victory over the Covid-19 pandemic at the World Economic Forum had left the global community aghast, particularly as more than 50 countries have banned incoming flights from India. And now we are desperately asking for oxygen and other medical supplies

plies from those countries," Chavan said.

"Incompetent leadership, complacency and callousness has driven India to this catastrophe.... We are paying a huge price for this incompetent leadership. This complacency and lack of decisive action at the highest level has driven India to this catastrophe," the former Union Minister said.

Chavan said that he was appalled by the Home Ministry's statement on April 26, claiming that there was enough availability of oxygen in the country.

"It shows the government is still in denial mode. Relatives of Covid patients who have died due to lack of oxygen want answers. I demand that the Minister of Health and the others responsible for this tragedy be sacked immediately," the senior Congress leader said.

Chavan said that the Union government was "is fully responsible" for the current oxygen crisis in the country.

The Congress leader said it was evident from the press conference addressed by the Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, on October 20, 2020 about the availability of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) in the country.

Veteran Cong leader Eknath Gaikwad dies of Covid-19

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Congressman and former MP Eknath Gaikwad, a loyalist of the Nehru-Gandhi family, died of Covid-19 here on Wednesday.

He was 81. Late Agaikwad's daughter Varsha Gaikwad is the school education minister in the Shiv Sena-led MVA government.

A former Maharashtra minister and ex-Mumbai Congress president, Gaikwad had been battling with Covid-19 for some days now. He breathed his last at Breach Candy Hospital in south Mumbai at 10 am.

A two-term Lok Sabha and three-time Maharashtra assembly member, Gaikwad had been hospitalised more than a fortnight ago.

"Congress Party's senior leader, Ex-MP, Ex-Minister Eknath Gaikwad Ji passed away today. My deepest condolences to his daughter and Education Minister of Maharashtra @VarshaGaikwad, Gaikwad family and his friends/supporters," tweeted Maharashtra State Youth Congress leader Satyajeet Tambe.

Hailing from an Amedkarite family, Gaikwad had represented the Mumbai South Central Lok Sabha constituency. He had also served as a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly for three terms, as a representative from Dharavi. He was the health, medical education, social justice minister when Vilasrao Deshmukh was the chief minister in the state from 1999 to 2004.

Maha: Man fined ₹50K after over 250 guests attend daughter's wedding

Latur: A man was slapped with a fine of ₹50,000 for allegedly violating the Covid-19 norms by inviting over 250 guests for his daughter's wedding in Maharashtra's Latur district, an official said on Wednesday.

According to the local authorities, Ram Govind Biradar had organised his daughter's wedding in Talegaon (Bho) village of Deoni tehsil on Monday.

Block development officer Manoj Raut and deputy tehsildar Vilas Tarange were inspecting the curfew in Deoni, when they noticed the event, and found 250 to 300 people gathered at the venue, the official said.

As per the COVID-19 curbs, only 25 people are allowed to be present at weddings. The father of the bride was fined ₹50,000 for flouting

Kerala logs highest single-day tally with 35,103 new cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

faced by the State. "Though I had instructed the Prime Minister to make vaccines available to the State at the same rate at which the Centre is getting it from the manufacturers, no action was taken on that suggestion. While the Centre procures vaccines at the rate of ₹150 per dose, the States are charged ₹400 per dose," said Vijayan.

According to Vijayan, the steep hike in the number of Covid-19 patients in the State is on account of the indifference of the Centre towards Kerala. "We in Kerala are doing whatever we could do but the Centre's attitude is not at all helpful," said the Chief Minister who also disclosed that the Test Positivity Ratio in the State on Wednesday was 25.34 per cent.

Ernakulam district which diagnosed 5,287 patients with the pandemic on Wednesday topped the table of districts.

BSES

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi TENDER NOTICE Date: 29.04.2021

NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost ₹	Cost of EMD ₹	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/20-21/SV/RS/RJ/923	SUPPLY OF VARIOUS RATINGS OF MOTORISED RMUs IN BRPL	22.00 Crores	22,00,000/-	20/05/2021 15:30 HRS	20/05/2021 15:45 HRS
CMC/BR/20-21/SV/RS/RJ/924	SUPPLY OF CHEMICAL EARTHING KITS IN BRPL	3.00 Crores	6,00,000/-	20/05/2021 15:30 HRS	20/05/2021 16:00 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 110/-

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FIRST COLUMN

DITCH YOUR POOR FINANCIAL HABITS

Sometimes, the simplest of activities result in bad financial management. These can be easily avoided



NIRAJ BORA

There are some things in life that we do involuntarily, like breathing. Or, for instance, while driving we apply the brakes without even thinking about it. This also applies to our money managing and financial habits. Having good financial habits is a rarity. Sometimes it's the simplest of activities that cause poor financial habits and can be avoided by following a few simple rules.

Save first, spend later: When you are assigned to complete a task within one week, you are most likely to take the entire seven days to finish it. However, if the same task needs to be wrapped up in five days, you will do it anyhow. It's the same with spending money. As soon as you get paid, you tend to start spending it by first paying all your bills and then indulging in shopping. You tend to spend higher than you intended to and this results in fewer savings. Financially-smart people do the exact opposite. So, it's better to put a portion of your earnings into an automated deduction mode for investments. Take care of all your other expenses after you do this.



Needs vs wants: Thinking that making more money is a way to be financially free is a mistake many of us make. Until and unless you don't respect your hard-earned money, your spending will expand to consume all your earnings. No matter how much you earn, your expenses will keep on increasing with your rising income. So, making more money and letting your expenses eat all of them will get you in some serious financial trouble. Saving first and spending later is the way to get financial freedom. Even for rich people, it doesn't stop at a big bungalow, or a luxury car. It will go on to owning a private plane, a yacht, a private island and so on. Do you think there is any amount of money that is sufficient to fulfil unending desires? The answer is an emphatic "no." The key is to differentiate between your needs and wants. Ask yourself, "Do I really need this?" By going after benefits like rewards and discounts that credit cards offer, people end up spending way more than they would have spent otherwise. This just cancels out all the benefits of having these credit cards. Buying something you don't need, even at a discount is an avoidable spend.

Keep track of your money: If you are not sure about how you're spending every month, then it's time to consolidate everything. You can do this in many ways. One of the easiest methods is to use a money management app. There are quite a few of them out there that can help you keep track of your transactions. Organising your finances can be a good start to managing your money better.

Don't compete or compare: Everyone around you has different tastes and budgets. Be it in cars, food, travel, clothing and other accessories. So if you are one of those people who try to keep up with everyone even when their budget doesn't allow them to, then this is going to leave you in debt. Also, don't be fooled by the lavish social media posts of some of your friends that show their exotic lifestyle. Doing things as a status symbol will trap you for the rest of your life.

We live in a society where almost everyone carries a debt on their shoulder. Just because everyone lives with debt doesn't make it normal for you to have it too. Don't make it a habit to get your resources on loans every time. Get them on debt only when necessary and pay it off soon to avoid ongoing interest every time.

Once you begin saving money, set aside a weekend to learn about investing and get started on that path as soon as you can.

(The writer is founder, Surmount Business Advisors. The views expressed are personal.)

Geopolitics trumps geoconomics

The sum total of the U-turn by Prime Minister Imran Khan is that Pakistan is not yet grown up enough to give up its belief of India being an existential threat



ANIL GUPTA

The "thawing process" in Indo-Pak relations which appeared to have begun in February-end with the sudden announcement by the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of both nations of a ceasefire on the Line of Control (LoC) and the desire to implement in letter and spirit the 2003 Ceasefire Agreement, came to an equally sudden end early this month. It happened when Prime Minister Imran Khan's beloved Pakistan enacted a comedy of errors which many refer to as a "flip-flop" or "Khan's U-turn." The statements emanating from Pakistan in the month of March, especially during the stage-managed Islamabad Security Dialogue, raised a ray of hope of some improvement in the extremely bitter relations between the two countries, that were adversely affecting not only bilateral ties but the entire South Asian region as well.

The trigger for all this was provided by the worsening economy of Pakistan which many economists said was "on the verge of collapse." It emerged from the Islamabad Security Dialogue that the neighbouring nation had realised the mistake it made in investing heavily in geopolitics at the cost of geo-economics. It also realised that it was paying a heavy price for its unilateral decision to suspend all trade with India post the events of August 5, 2019 in relation to Kashmir, which has been a bone of contention between the two neighbours for long and has been termed as it's "jugular vein" by a belligerent Pakistan.

It is a well-known fact that anti-India sentiments form the bedrock of Pakistan's internal policy and geopolitics. This sentiment has time and again been exploited to its advantage by the political and military leadership in Pakistan to come out of various adversities faced by the country. "It grows and diminishes with the requirements of Pakistan's foreign policy," says Khurram Husain, a Pakistani business journalist. This India-bashing may have benefitted Rawalpindi, that dictates the nation's India policy rather than Islamabad, but definitely made no economic sense.

Hence it was music to the ears when at the Islamabad Dialogue, Pakistan's Army chief General Qamar Bajwa talked of a shift in Pakistan's strategy from geopolitics to geo-economics. It received support from Imran Khan who talked of making Pakistan a gateway to the Central Asian republic nations' economy and also act as a bridge between the South Asian and Central Asian economies. Realising that his nation's economy was in the doldrums it made better economic sense to Khan to buy goods urgently needed by his country from where they were available at cheaper rates. Hence, the Prime Minister wearing the hat of the nation's Commerce and Finance Minister as well, signed on a note to purchase cotton and sugar from India, thus setting in motion a reversal of his earlier decision not to trade with us.

Hence, Pakistan's newly-appointed Finance Minister Hammad Azhar announced in Islamabad, "In our neighbouring country, in India, the price of sugar is much lower than in Pakistan. So we have decided to open sugar trade with India, to the limit of 5,00,000 tonnes in the



ONE WONDERS FOR HOW LONG CAN PAKISTAN AFFORD TO BEHAVE LIKE AN OSTRICH? AS OF NOW, THE PROPOSED SHIFT FROM GEOPOLITICS TO GEOECONOMICS APPEARS MERELY TO BE LOUD THINKING WITHOUT EVOLVING A CONSENSUS. IT WOULD NEED SERIOUS GROUNDFLOOR TO FRUCTIFY INTO REALITY. TILL PAKISTAN READIES TO WALK THE TALK, IT WOULD MAKE PRUDENT ECONOMIC SENSE TO LET THE 'THAWING PROCESS' CONTINUE AND NOT HOLD IT HOSTAGE TO A SINGLE-POINT AGENDA

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



private sector." He also announced that the ban on the import of raw cotton from India would be lifted "by the end of June." "There is a large demand for cotton in Pakistan right now. Our exports have increased in textiles and the cotton crop was not good last year. So, we allowed imports of cotton from all over the world, but it is not allowed from India and that causes a direct impact on (small and medium enterprises)" he said. Another contributory factor was the ban on Chinese Xinjiang cotton and products thereof by the United States (US) and European Union (EU) nations, which are a major source for the local industry.

Year-on-year, the price of sugar has risen by more than 17 per cent, causing great resentment against the Imran Khan Government.

The announcement was made by Azhar in his capacity as the head of the Economic Coordination Committee which earlier had given a green signal to the proposal. Though there was no official response from the Indian side, for those following the "thawing process" of the hostilities between the two neighbours, it was a welcome decision.

However in a classic case of the "left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing," the announcement was followed by the unfortunate Cabinet decision of deferring the trade and holding it hostage to oft-repeated insistence by Pakistan of "no improvement in Indo-Pak relations till

abrogation of Article 370 is repealed."

The whole episode is termed as a comedy of errors because Imran Khan, during the Cabinet meeting, flayed the Finance Minister and asked Azhar who authorised him to resume trade with India? The beleaguered Finance Minister had no option but to name Imran Khan himself. The "U-turn Khan" lost no time in toeing the line of the hardliners in the Cabinet led by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who felt short-changed for not being consulted by the Prime Minister before allowing such an important measure. Pressure from China, which naturally was pained due to the ban on its cotton, is also believed to be another causative factor.

In the end Azhar was removed from the office of Finance Minister in mid-April, less than a month after his appointment and replaced by ex-Pakistan Peoples Party Minister Shaukat Fayyaz Ahmed Tarin who was also given the additional portfolio of revenue. The flip-flop and the removal of the Finance Minister clearly indicates that Imran Khan hardly wields any power and is incapable of ensuring unanimity even within his Cabinet, let alone a national consensus.

Even more surprising is the audacity of the hardliners to take on the Army chief, a rarity in Pakistani politics. Pakistan Army is very keen for the thaw in relations between the two neighbours because it needs some breathing space and time to rejuvenate the morale of its army which has been badly battered by the Indian Army on the LoC.

The dwindling economy and the burden of repayment of loans is also adversely affecting the army's upgradation and modernisation programme. This explains the army chief's keenness for a shift towards geo-economics, which seems to be more out of compulsion rather than conviction. But certainly, he failed to change the mindset of hardliners in the Pakistan Army or he has lost his clout since he is on extension, a decision that has not gone down well with the other ambitious Generals.

The sum total of the U-turn by Khan is that Pakistan is not yet grown up enough to give up its belief of India being an existential threat. One wonders for how long can Pakistan afford to behave like an ostrich? As of now, the proposed shift from geopolitics to geo-economics appears merely to be loud thinking without evolving a consensus. It would need serious groundwork to fructify into reality. Till Pakistan readies to walk the talk, it would make prudent economic sense to let the "thawing process" continue and not hold it hostage to a single-point agenda. The recent trade U-turn by Pakistan clearly demonstrates how geopolitical considerations — rather than economic considerations or rational thinking — drive policymaking in Pakistan.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

DELHI HAS HARDLY BEEN ABLE TO ARRANGE FOR TANKERS THOUGH MANY DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE CENTRE MADE THE ALLOTMENT OF OXYGEN.

—UNION HOME SECRETARY

AJAY BHALLA



THERE IS SHORTAGE OF TANKERS. WE ARE IMPORTING 18 TANKERS FROM BANGKOK. ONCE THEY ARRIVE, THE PROBLEM IN TRANSPORTING OXYGEN WILL END.

—DELHI CM
ARVIND KEJRIWAL



Independent transition to renewable energy critical for India

In order to counter the growing Chinese dominance in rare earth elements, India must step up its cross-national collaborations and secure mines



KOTA SRIRAJ

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

The oil age was triggered by the invention of kerosene in 1846 and got further consolidated with the development of the oil drilling process in 1859. Both these events accelerated the use of oil which, in turn, fueled global economic prosperity. The period from the end of the second World War to the early 1970s saw an uninterrupted oil boom as the rising oil output matched an ever-increasing oil consumption globally.

But as the oil-fed economies started to see the collateral damage unleashed by fossil fuels in the form of climate change, the popularity of oil started to wane post the 1970s. This also heralded the advent of renewable energy.

Today, renewable energy is steadily gaining momentum and preference over tra-

ditional energy sources such as fossil fuels. Perhaps the biggest energy rush after the great oil boom is the haste to build renewable energy capacity and to harness critical minerals required to manufacture rechargeable batteries in large scale.

This is understandable given the fact that India aims to generate 40 per cent of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2030 and aspires to become a country with 30-40 per cent electric vehicles (EVs). India's overdependence on fossil fuel left the nation at the whims of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in terms of production and prices for a very long time.

But this scenario can change by having control over the critical raw materials needed for building a sus-

tainable renewable energy regime.

However, seeing the current state, India seems to be everything but self-reliant in the renewable energy sector. In 2019-20, India imported about ₹8,500 crore worth of Lithium (Li)-ion batteries. It was the same in 2018-19, which saw a six-fold rise as compared to 2014-15.

India's dependence on global resources, especially Chinese inputs, to feed its renewable energy ambitions is flawed to say the least. Our energy transition cannot take place by simply importing the necessary products.

The recent tension with China and the subsequent constraints in sourcing the renewable energy products and raw material have shown how India's dependence on the OPEC is now merely shifting to Chinese suppliers

who wield a considerable clout in the global market of renewable energy raw materials.

As India is transitioning from a fossil fuel-economy to an electro one, the local production of renewable energy components, especially batteries, assumes unparalleled

significance. As a first step towards gaining self-reliance in the renewable energy sector, India must concentrate on securing control over essential components and critical minerals required for manufacturing batteries on a colossal scale.

Worryingly, China has already developed enviable hegemony over the 17 rare earth elements that play a pivotal role in the making of rechargeable batteries. According to a 2019 working paper of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), eight of the 14 large cobalt mining firms in Congo are now Chinese-owned. Significantly, they account for half of Congo's cobalt output.

Some of the elements such as neodymium, molybdenum, titanium, lithium,

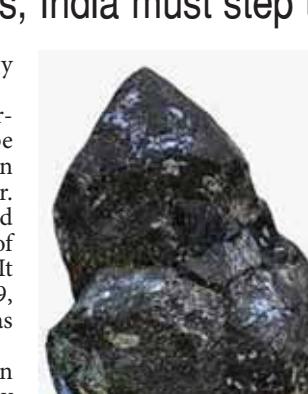
cobalt and vanadium have electrical and magnetic properties that can help store wind, hydel and solar energy. These elements are available across the world only in some geographical pockets and India must have continued availability of these elements for transitioning to a green economy.

In order to counter the growing Chinese dominance over rare earth elements, India must step up its cross-national collaborations and quickly secure the mines through investment and co-ownership, so that the raw material for energising the country's future is safe. Similarly, aggressive and eco-friendly rare earth element prospecting must be taken up to discover new mines in India and elsewhere.

This will not only de-risk the raw material supply chain

but will also foreclose any Chinese strategy to monopolise the global market in rare earth elements. Furthermore, India must also invest in state-of-the-art research that can focus on reducing dependence over rare earth elements such as cobalt on whose availability China is developing a stranglehold.

The coming years will witness a considerable shift from oil to rare earth minerals. This will mark a new chapter in global geopolitics. In the past, developed economies built their prosperity by riding on the fossil fuel boom. This is true even today. India, too, must develop the ability to independently transit to green energy by harnessing the potential of rare earth materials. This will usher in a green economy that is prosperous as well as good for the planet.



US rushing assistance to India: Biden

US Prez again recalled New Delhi's assistance to America when it was in a 'bind' due to pandemic

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US is rushing a whole series of help, including life-saving drugs and machinery, that India needs to combat the massive surge in Covid-19 cases, President Joe Biden has said, as he again recalled New Delhi's assistance to America when it was in a "bind" due to the pandemic.

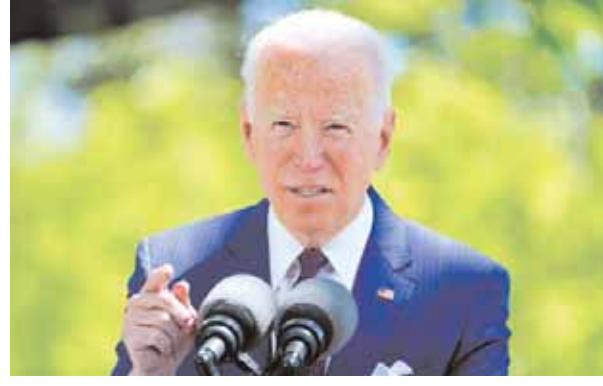
Biden spoke at length with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday and conveyed solidarity with India in its fight against the viral disease.

"We are sending immediately a whole series of help that he needs, including providing for those Remdesivir and other drugs that are able to deal with this," Biden told reporters at a White House news conference on Tuesday.

"We are sending the actual mechanical parts that are needed for the machinery they have to build a vaccine, and that is being done as well," he said.

The president said he had discussed with Prime Minister Modi when the US would be able to send actual vaccines to India.

The Biden administration has come under criticism from several quarters, including from members and supporters



of the Democratic Party, for not releasing surplus COVID-19 vaccines to India when the country is experiencing its worst-ever public health crisis.

"The problem is right now, we have to make sure we have other vaccines like Novavax and others coming on probably, and I think we will be in a position to be able to share vaccines as well as know-how with other countries who are in real need," Biden said.

"I might add when we were in a bind in the very beginning, India helped us," Biden said, referring to India, the largest producer of hydroxychloroquine, lifting the ban on the export of the medicine to the US after then President Donald Trump spoke to Modi on phone last year.

On Sunday Biden had tweeted that "Just as India sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, we are determined to help India in its time of need."

On Monday, Biden assured Modi that the United States and India will work closely together in the fight against COVID-19.

India is currently struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 3,00,000 daily new coronavirus cases being reported in the past few days, and hospitals are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

Biden pledged America's steadfast support for the people of India and neighbouring nations as they fight an uphill battle with COVID. I'm

COVID-19 cases.

In response, the United States is providing a range of emergency assistance, including oxygen-related supplies, vaccine materials, and therapeutics.

Biden and Modi resolved that the United States and India will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the effort to protect our citizens and the health of our communities, the White House said in a readout of the telephonic conversation between Biden and Modi.

Meanwhile, American lawmakers applauded Biden for all the help he was extending to save the lives of people suffering from COVID-19 and urged him to do more.

"The US maintains a moral obligation to assist our ally India as they face severe challenges posed by COVID-19. We must take every necessary step to ensure the Indian people receive the aid and assistance they need to emerge from this crisis," Congressman Brad Sherman, a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said on Tuesday.

"Pursuing vaccine equity doesn't just advance our economic and health security – it's a moral imperative. As a bastion of innovation & champion for marginalized people everywhere, the US must lead efforts to guarantee immunization access to EVERYONE

glad that the White House is providing these life-saving vaccines, but we will need a strong, coordinated global response in the days ahead," Congresswoman Carolyn Boudreau said.

Congressman Michael Waltz Press said India was an essential ally in America's global competition with China.

"Its strength is important to stability in Asia and the United States. We must do what we can to help them curb their new wave of Covid cases," he added.

Congressman Bill Foster said while America continues to make progress in battling this pandemic, the critical situation in India can't be ignored.

Several other American lawmakers have also come out in support of India as its people battle one of the gravest challenges to its public health system. Senator Robert Menendez, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, too came out in support of India.

"My heart goes out to the people of India and neighbouring nations as they fight an uphill battle with COVID. I'm

at home & abroad," Menendez tweeted.

Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said he was pleased the US will be sending its AstraZeneca supply to India and other countries in need of it as he had urged earlier.

Senators Mark Warner and John Cornyn, co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus, in a letter to Biden, said they were watching with growing alarm the unprecedented surge of COVID-19 cases, hospitalisations, and deaths, which have overwhelmed hospitals and the overall health system in India.

The pandemic has devastated populations and nations across the globe, making it very clear that the virus knows no borders. To control its spread globally, saving lives abroad and here at home, the US must do its part to attack the virus where it is most devastating and active, they wrote in the letter dated April 27.

"We write to urge you to accelerate US efforts to support other countries as they work to combat the COVID-19 virus," it said.

Over the weekend, the two jointly made a call to the White House, urging it to consider sending urgent help to India.

US Navy fires warning shots in new tense encounter with Iran



This file photo provided by the US Army shows the USS Firebolt in Manama, Bahrain AP

AP ■ DUBAI

An American warship fired warning shots when vessels of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard came too close to a patrol in the Persian Gulf, the US Navy said on Wednesday. It was the first such shooting in nearly four years.

The Navy released black-and-white footage of the encounter Monday night in international waters of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf near Kuwait, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In it, lights can be seen in the distance and what appears to be a single gunshot can be heard, with a tracer round racing across the top of the water.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

The Navy said the Cyclone-class patrol ship USS Firebolt fired the warning shots after three fast-attack Guard vessels came within 68 yards (62 meters) of it and the US Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranoff.

Navy SEALs to shift from counterterrorism to global threats

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Ten years after they found and killed Osama bin Laden, US Navy SEALs are undergoing a major transition to improve leadership and expand their commando capabilities to better battle threats from global powers like China and Russia.

The new plan cuts the number of SEAL platoons by as much as 30 per cent and increases their size to make the teams more lethal and able to counter sophisticated maritime and undersea adversaries.

And there will be a new, intensive screening process for the Navy's elite warriors, to get higher-quality leaders after scandals that rocked the force and involved charges of murder, sexual assault and drug use.

Rear Adm. Hugh Howard, top commander for the SEALs, laid out his plans in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press.

He said the Navy's special operations forces have been focused on counterterrorism operations but now must begin to evolve beyond those missions.

For the past two decades, many have been fighting in the deserts of Iraq and mountains of Afghanistan. Now they are focused on going back to sea.

Russia rejects Ukraine's push to revise 2015 peace deal

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia's Foreign Minister Slobodan Karic said on Wednesday that relations with the United States are now even worse than during the Cold War times because of a lack of mutual respect.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Moscow stands ready to normalise ties with Washington, but warned that the US should stop posturing like a "sovereign" rallying its allies against Russia and China

state television. "It seems to me there is a deficit of it now."

Earlier this month, the Biden administration slapped Russia with sanctions for interfering in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election and for involvement in the SolarWind hack of federal agencies — activities Moscow has denied.

The US ordered 10 Russian diplomats expelled, targeted dozens of companies and people and imposed new curbs on Russia's ability to borrow money. Russia quickly retaliated by ordering 10 U.S.

Diplomats to leave, blacklisting eight current and former US officials and tightening requirements for the U.S. Embassy operations.

While ordering the sanctions, Biden also called for de-escalating tensions and held the door open for cooperation with Russia in certain areas.

Speaking in an interview with Russian state television, Lavrov noted that Moscow has had a "positive" attitude to U.S. President Joe Biden's proposal to hold a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, but added that Russia still needs to analyze all aspects of the initiative.

Lavrov said he would attend a meeting of top diplomats of the Arctic nations in Iceland set for next month and would be ready to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken if he also joins the meeting.

in eastern Ukraine a Russian troop buildup across the border drew Ukrainian and Western concerns about the potential for large-scale hostilities.

Tensions eased last week after Moscow announced a pullback of its forces following massive drills.

The 2015 deal, which was brokered by France and Germany, marked a diplomatic coup for Russia, obliging Ukraine to offer broad autonomy to the rebel regions and amnesty for the rebels.

Fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists erupted in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, called Donbas, shortly after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. More than 14,000 people have been killed during the seven-year conflict.

In recent weeks, increasing violations of a shaky cease-fire

Russian FM: US-Russia ties worse than during Cold War

AP ■ MOSCOW

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ment of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Generally non-violent marches against military rule continue in many cities and towns, despite the security forces' use of lethal force to stop them.

The Kachin and the Karen have been struggling for decades for greater autonomy from the central government and have their own well-armed and trained military units, whose help the protest movement has been seeking to counter the government's armed might.

Col. Naw Bu, a Kachin spokesman, said fighting against the junta's forces intensified Wednesday, reported 74 Media, an online news service

in Kachin state. It quoted him as saying that since Tuesday, the government has used heavy artillery and fighter jets to attack a Kachin position at the foot of Alaw Bum mountain.

The position had been a government outpost but was seized by the Kachin on March 25.

Naw Bu said heavy fighting has been continuing in the area for five days, causing most civilians to flee.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, clashes between the two sides have escalated since mid-March, with almost 50 armed confrontations. It said both sides have used mortar shelling.

Details of the fighting in

Turkish jets, troops hit PKK targets in new Iraq incursion

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkish warplanes were continuing on Wednesday to strike suspected Kurdish militant targets in northern Iraq, while commando troops were conducting a search and sweep operation, Turkey's defense ministry said, as the military pressed ahead with its latest incursion into the neighbouring region.

Turkey's military on Friday launched a new ground and air offensive against militants of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which maintains bases in northern Iraq and have used the territory for attacks against Turkey.

A defense ministry statement said the operation was continuing "as planned," with suspected PKK targets being struck "from both the air and from the ground."

Myanmar airstrikes on ethnic forces reported on 2 fronts

Both groups confirmed a total of six air attacks involving jets and helicopters

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar Government forces launched airstrikes against ethnic minority guerrillas in two areas of the country on Wednesday, local reports said.

Fighting has been raging daily in northern Myanmar in territory controlled by the Kachin Independence Organization, representing the Kachin minority, and in the east by the Karen National Union, representing the Karen.

Both groups have struck alliances with the popular movement opposing the military junta that seized power in the country in February after ousting the elected government.

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Details of the fighting in

Guests flock to Dutch cafe terraces as lockdown eases

AP ■ UTRECHT (NETHERLANDS)

It was the first Turkish incursion into the region since February, when 13 Turkish citizens, who were abducted by Kurdish insurgents, were found dead in a cave complex in an apparently botched operation to rescue them.

Turkey has conducted numerous cross-border aerial and ground operations against the PKK over the past decades and the latest offensive was centered in northern Iraq's Metina and Avashin-Basyan regions.

A defense ministry statement said the operation was continuing "as planned," with suspected PKK targets being struck "from both the air and from the ground."

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India's GDP to grow at 11% this fiscal: ADB

SECOND WAVE OF COVID A WORRY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ADB on Wednesday said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 11 per cent in the current financial year on the back of the strong vaccination programme, but cautioned that second wave of Covid is worrying.

"India's economy is expected to grow 11 per cent in fiscal year (FY) 2021, which ends on March 31, 2022, amid a strong vaccine drive. However, the recent surge in Covid-19 cases may put this recovery at risk," said the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2021.

Continued economic recovery boosted by increased public investment, domestic demand will trigger this strong rebound, ADB said.

The predictions are based on assumption that there is extensive vaccine deployment

across the country and the second wave of coronavirus is contained.

According to ADB's flagship publication Asian Development Outlook, "the second wave of COVID-19 cases is worrying, especially if vaccine rollout falters or fails to contain it."

Another risk is the further tightening of global financial conditions, which would apply pressure on India's market interest rates and therefore affect economic normalisation, the report added.

Going further, ADB forecasts India's economic growth to moderate to 7 per cent in FY2022, on account of disappearance of base effect.

The economy is expected to have contracted by 8 per cent in FY2020, in line with the government's second advance estimate, it said.

ADB Country Director for India Takeo Konishi said India's economy faced its worst contraction in FY2020 due to the COVID-19 shock.

Second Covid wave will dampen India Inc's recovery: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The ongoing second wave of Covid-19 will dampen the pace of recovery for corporate India and the contact-intensive sectors will be hit the most, a domestic rating agency said on Wednesday.

However, the impact of the second wave on many sectors is set to be lower than the first because the lockdowns are less widespread and stringent as of now as against the strong nationwide lockdown last year which brought all economic activities to a grinding halt, Icra said.

"With the fresh uncertainties wrought by the second wave of the pandemic, and the likelihood of additional support measures being limited, the credit ratio is now likely to stall. The pace of recovery would undoubtedly be arrested by the recent surge in COVID-19 infections and associated localised restrictions," its president Ramnath Krishnan said.

days. Allegations of under-reporting by some states are also rampant, and the country has had to depend on major world powers for help.

The rating agency said it expects only 4 per cent of its rated portfolio to be severely impacted as a result of the second wave as against 17 per cent in the first wave last year.

"With the fresh uncertainties wrought by the second wave of the pandemic, and the likelihood of additional support measures being limited, the credit ratio is now likely to stall. The pace of recovery would undoubtedly be arrested by the recent surge in COVID-19 infections and associated localised restrictions," its president Ramnath Krishnan said.

The country has been reporting alarmingly high cases of infections at over 3 lakh additions and 2,000 fatalities a day, for the last few

Small scale, tiny units want interest waiver to survive Covid impact

IANS ■ CHENNAI

With Covid-19 related lockdown in different parts of the country affecting production and sales, micro and small scale units are pleading for interest waiver, moratorium and lending against credit guarantees.

An official of a public sector bank preferring anonymity told IANS that if the government does not come out with a package, then the non-performing assets (NPA) of the banking sector are set to surge ahead this year.

"Already 40 per cent of our member units are sick for want of working capital and

raw material. Further the increase in raw material prices have hit the units hard," Tamil Nadu Small and Tiny Industries Association (TANSTIA) President S. Anburajan told IANS.

He said many units supply the products to public sector units (PSU) and government utilities and are penalised for delayed supplies.

"We would like the PSUs not to penalise their small sized vendors for delay in supplies during the pandemic period. There should be a moratorium for loans and interest could be waived for the small units," Anburajan added.

Covid-19 to impact housing sales in major cities in April-June quarter: Anarock

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

stamp duty cut) was Rs 2,914 crore, almost the same as in the same period a year ago (at Rs 2,958 crore).

"Latest government data already indicate a drop in property registrations in April 2021 over March 2021 amidst 2nd COVID-19 wave and no stamp duty cuts," Anarock pointed out.

The second COVID-19 wave coupled with the expiry of the stamp duty cut period will impact the monthly growth momentum of Mumbai's housing sector, the consultant said.

During the period of stamp duty cut, there was consistent month-on-month growth in sales. Prashant Thakur, Director and Head – Research, Anarock, said: "Ever since the expiry of the stamp duty cut period, from 1st April onwards, there has been a marked drop in property registration numbers.

Niti Aayog suggests Govt to provide incentives on EV purchase apart from subsidy under FAME-II

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It further pitched for creation of non-financial incentives, including priority lanes and exclusive parking for EVs in commercial complexes.

The Aayog also recommended providing interest subvention on loan taken for EV purchase.

It also said green zones should be demarcated within cities that permit only EVs, and heavy taxes should be charged on conventional fuel vehicles.

"Green corridors should be earmarked on which only e-buses are provided permit to operate," the Aayog said adding that a national-level policy should be formulated for incentivising distribution utilities on investing in development of EV charging infrastructure.

SBI board approves raising up to USD 2 billion via bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest lender SBI said its central board in its meeting on Wednesday has approved raising up to USD 2 billion (around Rs 14,880 crore) through bonds this fiscal.

The Executive Committee of the Central Board in its meeting on April 28, 2021 has approved long term fund raising in single / multiple tranches up to USD 2 billion, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

The funds are to be raised through a public offer and / or private placement of senior unsecured notes in US Dollar or any other convertible currency during FY 2021-22, SBI said.

NABHA POWER LIMITED

Regd. Office: PO Box No. 28, Near Village Nalash, Rajpura, Patiala

Punjab 140401, INDIA, CIN: U40102PB2007PLC031039

Notice Inviting "Expression of Interest for Ash Utilization"

Nabha Power Limited (NPL), wholly owned by L&T Limited, has been successfully operating 2x700 MW supercritical thermal power plant near Village Nalash, Tehsil Rajpura, District Patiala, Punjab (Rajpura Thermal Power Plant), India since 2014. For promoting ash utilisation and its consumption in an environment friendly manner, NPL invites "Expression of Interest" (EOI) for allocation of up to 20% of dry ESP fly ash (fly ash) on free of cost basis from units manufacturing fly ash or clay fly ash bricks, blocks or tiles.

The allocation of fly ash shall be subject to availability and for the remaining period of quarter-1 of the financial year 2021-22. The fly ash allotted from the Rajpura Thermal Power Plant must be utilized and consumed in an environment friendly manner and only for the purpose for which it is obtained, failing which the allocation of fly ash shall be cancelled.

Interested parties are requested to submit their EOI within 7 days from publication of this notice along with details of fly ash requirement and supporting documents such as SSI registration, pollution control

board approval, location plan of existing/proposed unit, existing and previous allocation letters of fly ash (if any), previous production details, income tax & sales tax registration details etc. in hard and soft copies to the Senior Deputy General Manager, Nabha Power Limited, Near Village Nalash, Rajpura-140401, Punjab. Tel. No.: +91-1762-277267 Fax. No.: +91-1762-277251 E-mail: npl@Larsentoubro.com

Parties to whom fly ash will be allocated based on their EOI shall be responsible for the transportation and utilization of the same in an environment friendly manner.

ICICI Bank

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 Assets 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:

Sl. 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.	Prince Mangla (Borrower)/ Kiran Gupta and Prashant Mangla (Co- Borrower) LBDL00002071242	DDA HIG Flat Bearing No. 510, 5th Floor, Pocket D-6, Ganga Block 6, Group 3, Vasant Kunj, Delhi-110070	Rs. 1,15,32,696/- (as on April 21, 2021)	Rs. 1,32,00,000/-	May 12, 2021, From 12:00 Noon to 01:00 PM	May 29, 2021, From 11:00 AM onwards
2.	Chander (Borrower) / Tejal (Co- Borrower) LBDL00002384207	LIG DDA Flat No. 54, 3rd Floor, Sec- 34, Pocket- 2, Block E, Rohini Delhi Area.- 345 Sq. Ft.	Rs. 16,49,991/- (as on April 21, 2021)	Rs. 1,14,400/-	May 11, 2021, From 12:00 Noon to 01:00 PM	May 29, 2021, From 12:00 Noon onwards

The online auction will be conducted on website ([URL Link-https://disposalshub.com](https://disposalshub.com)) of our auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. The Mortgagors/noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till May 28, 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, Plot No. 23, 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 28, 2021 before 05:00 PM 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 to ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor, Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before May 28, 2021 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 02613078 or M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited on 012244233933

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Prop 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.

Date: April 29, 2021 Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited

RBI Committee on ARCs invites views, suggestions from stakeholders by May 31

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI Committee on Asset Reconstruction Companies, which will review the existing legal and regulatory framework applicable to ARCs, on Wednesday invited views and suggestions from stakeholders.

The suggestions could be given to the committee till May 31, 2021.

On April 19, RBI had set up a committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the working of asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) in the financial sector ecosystem and recommend suitable measures for enabling them to meet the growing requirements.

The central bank had constituted the Committee under

Equities rally for 3rd day as earnings eclipse Covid gloom; Bajaj Finance jumps 8 pc

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex soared 790 points while the Nifty vaulted above the 14,850-mark on Wednesday as markets maintained their winning streak for the third session on the trot amid robust corporate results.

A strengthening rupee and short covering ahead of F&O expiry also fuelled the rally, traders said, even as the Covid-19 situation remained an overhang.

The 30-share BSE Sensex surged 789.70 points or 1.61 per cent to finish at 49,733.84.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 211.50 points or 1.44 per cent to 14,864.55.

Bajaj Finance was the star performer in the Sensex pack, surging 8.32 per cent, a day after it posted a 4.2 per cent increase in consolidated net

profit at Rs 1,347 crore for the March quarter.

Bajaj Finserv gained 4.06 per cent after reporting an over four-fold jump in consolidated net profit to ₹979 crore for the fourth quarter.

IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Bank, SBI, Bajaj Auto, HDFC Bank and HDFC were among the other prominent winners, climbing as much as 5.08 per cent.

However, Nestle India, HCL Tech, L&T, TCS, Dr Reddy's and ITC closed with losses of up to 0.96 per cent.

"Continued rebound in financials aided benchmark indices to defy concerns of rising COVID-19 cases. A visible contraction in daily caseload in Maharashtra and Mumbai offered comfort to market. Further, short covering ahead of F&O expiry also contributed to the rally.

Fuel prices remain steady; revisions expected next month

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Fuel prices in the country remained unchanged on Wednesday as oil marketing companies decided to wait for state elections to get over before restarting daily revision of petrol and diesel prices in line with price movement globally.

Sources indicated that price revisions may begin early next month after results to state elections are declared. However, whether price of petrol and diesel would move up or down would depend on average global price in the last fortnight of March. With no price change on Wednesday, pump price of petrol and diesel remained at ₹90.40 a litre and ₹80.73 a litre respectively in Delhi. This is the 14th consecutive day when fuel prices have not been revised.

The price of the two auto fuels had fallen by 16 paise and 14 paise per litre respectively on April 15 after a 15 day break when OMCs kept its prices static. Thereafter revision of fuel prices have been halted.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel prices remained unchanged on Wednesday but its retail levels varied depending on the level of local levies on respective states, it said.

AGRI INFRA FUND

Govt receives 8,665 applications seeking loan worth ₹8,216 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday said it has so far received 8,665 applications seeking subsidised loan worth ₹8,216 crore under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) scheme launched to augment post-harvest infrastructure in the country.

Under the AIF scheme, implemented in 2020-21 for ten years, about ₹1 lakh crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with interest subvention of 3 per cent per annum and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises) for loans up to ₹3 crore.

"Agriculture Infrastructure Fund has crossed the ₹8,000 crore mark, after receiving 8,66

CUSHION THE IMPACT

With the pandemic raging once again, it is time to shift your workout indoors. And this makes it important to choose the right kind of mat says VAIBHAV SOMANI

Being healthy is in fashion. During the last one year we have seen a huge rise in people undertaking some form of physical exercise as a part of their routine to stay fit, irrespective of whether the activities are indoors or outdoors. Though the sporting institutions, clubs and stadiums are shut now due to the second wave of the virus, we are hopeful that this calamity will not last long and people will be able to enjoy sporting events in open air.

Sporting mats, as a category of infrastructure, play a vital role for any sports enthusiast or a novice. Having good quality mat is extremely important to help maintain balance during exercise and help them in getting the right posture.

It has been observed that the percentage of people getting injured due to the non-availability of professional mats and equipment is quite high and some of these injuries are either life-threatening or can lead to physical disability. A professional mat cushions the body to prevent aches and pain, as well as fatal injuries while performing any sports. To prevent such fatalities one must buy a fitness mat best suited for the workout and these tips will help to choose a mat.

MATERIAL USED IN THE MAT

The material of the mat determines the quality of the mat. A good mat doesn't lose its grip even if the mat is wet. This is due to the high quality of Ethylene Vinyl Acetate (EVA) used while making the mat. The grade of the material used to manufacture the mat will determine the stickiness, sponginess and the level of anti-skid properties the mat will possess. Unlike other mats available in the market, the mats made out of good grade of EVA (grade is something which defines the pureness of the material) are totally recyclable, thus creating a positive impact on our environment. After all we must be active and also consciously think about mother nature.

THICKNESS AND DURABILITY

It has been stated that the yoga mats that are thicker last longer than thin mats. Thickness is usually measured in millimetres or mm. If a mat is too thin, certain poses can be hard on your knees and joints. Thick mats are mostly preferred when looking for durability and comfort. You can choose a mat between eight to 12 mm thicknesses, depending upon how intensive your workout is. A good durable mat has a thickness of 10 mm and more. Usually, mats that are 10 mm and more in thickness are suitable for all kinds of yoga and exercise.

But if you are doing an active or balancing pose, you may go for thinner mats with textured surfaces to maintain a better grip.



CHOOSE THE SIZE ACCORDING TO THE BODY TYPE

Selecting the right size of a yoga mat depends on two factors: First, how tall you are and how much padding you want. The standard size of the yoga mat is 6X2 feet. But if you have broad shoulders, then you need a wide mat of 7X2.5 feet. So, choose a mat according to your body type will be an essential prerequisite.

PURPOSE OF CHOOSING A SPECIFIC MAT

You must decide the main purpose of use before choosing an exercise mat. Do you plan to take your mat to the gym? Get a compact one that easily folds up. A large mat that covers more space might be more

suitable for a home gym. If your joints get sore easily, then use a thicker mat. Consider non-slip mats if you do rigorous form of yoga.

Fitness mats come in different shapes and sizes to suit different types of workout, like yoga mats, gym mats, professional mats, foam mats, multi-purpose mats, etc.

HYGIENE AND MAINTENANCE

A good mat is designed to have high dirt resistance and should not absorb any body moisture, ensuring continuous hygiene and cleanliness. A professional mat absorbs very little sweat which maintains proper hygiene while doing any exercise or practice. It can be easily cleaned and

hygiene parameters maintained properly.

When the thickness and size that works best for you, you could consider the added uses some exercise mats come with, like handles for easy carrying or a non-skid texture to help you from slipping. You will also definitely want a mat that is moisture-resistant for easy cleaning, or you might like a waterproof mat for a more gratifying workout.

Any form of exercise is good, and when you couple it with the right sporting equipment the whole journey of physical and mental rejuvenation becomes more rewarding.

—The author is director of a company engaged in the manufacturing of mats



Shutterbug alert

Photoholics should keep these things in mind before shopping



ARE YOU IN LOVE?

Whoof! Some want to keep their love story to themselves while some want to show how madly they are in love. So yes,

while going out to shop you may buy Polo T-shirts and show your sporty spirit. Click yourself in the boxers and show how you are spending your home quarantine, or simply get clicked in pajamas to underline your work from home routine.

WANT TO SHOW OFF YOUR PRECIOUS PHONE?

Today a phone is not just an amenity but a source of showing your interest.

Brands have thus instigated numerous phone covers for almost every popular brand these days. You can pick chic, cool, sophisticated and sweet mobile covers and go ahead with a mirror selfie. The cover will not just be about your phones protection but will also be a part of your self addiction.

IF YOU LOVE YOUR GROUP

Happy pictures of a group together always turn out to be photogenic. To add a little improvisation to the picture you may shop for Group T-shirts as they are all about showing how much you waited for this hangout and how much you want to live the memories by cherishing the pictures snapped on the other day.

THINKING OF INSTAGRAM REELS?

Is Instagram feels your favorite feature these days? Then you should never be short of ideas for making every reel different and unique from one another. For this, you may look out for different locations, situations, dialogues and most importantly different clothing for making it a fine sight for the eye. Instead of the party wear attires that were the need of everyday outings, these comfortable clothes are now being the trend of the season because of the habit of being at home (credits to the lockdown which has locked people in). So, shop for the clothing which will make you the star even when you are at home.

—IANS

Pandemic made us help many people: Arjun Kapoor



Photo: Rohan Shrestha

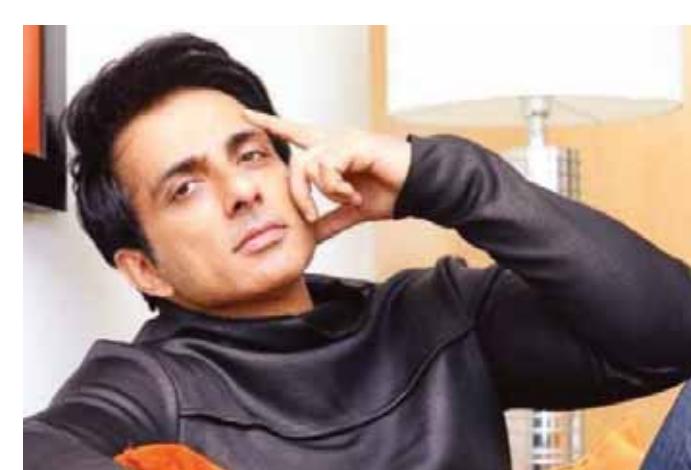
Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor and his sister Anshula Kapoor's online celebrity fundraising platform, Fankind, has been silently working through the pandemic to help as many people as possible across India. The brother-sister duo raised over ₹1 crore and has helped over 30,000 people and their families in need.

Arjun reveals, "The pandemic has made us stare at an abyss of suffering. It has made us all step forward and help as many people as possible in our own, unique way. Anshula and I have tried to contribute through Fankind. I'm happy that we have helped about 30,000 people pan India and raised ₹1 crore to help aid those in crisis."

The actor adds, "From monthly ration kits to hot meals, to cash in hand for migrant workers, to providing hygiene kits for COVID-19 prevention, the initiative has managed to touch the lives of many and hopefully has helped them in a small way to fight the virus and it's far-reaching devastating impact."

Arjun says he is really happy to have lent a helping hand during this crisis. He says, "I had invested my life's savings for this venture and it makes me proud that the platform has supported those in serious need in these desperate and trying times."

Everyone should come forward: Sood



Actor Sonu Sood took to Instagram to urge more people to come forward and help those who are suffering due to Covid.

He posted a screen recording of his phone that shows the actor has been getting messages from people asking for help continuously. He says he is trying to help as many people as possible.

"The speed at which we get requests across the country. Trying my best to reach out to everyone. Everyone...Please come forward. We need more helping hands. Do

your best to the best of your capabilities," he wrote.

The actor tested Covid positive a while back, but was back to helping people as soon as he recovered.

Sonu was appointed brand ambassador of Punjab's Covid vaccination programme by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh earlier this month. Last year, during lockdown, he helped thousands of migrants reach home safely. He also provided e-rickshaws to the unemployed.

—IANS

Theatre is Joy's training ground

Class Of '83 actor Joy Sengupta, who is just as popular in the world of films as that of theatre, says that it is the medium of theatre, if followed properly, that teaches, trains, and polishes one to be a complete performer.

Sengupta, who acts in plays like *Dance Like a Man* and *Ladies Sangeet* by Zee Theatre, believes that theatre is a medium where the actor is the chief interpreter of the text of the play of life.

"An actor creates life and lives out the truth right in front of the audience while they respond to him or her. The faculties of an actor hence have to be at their optimum level of competence. The training has to be near perfect, the craft has to be polished, the technique has to be flawless. That is when truth is lived and communicated and the audience goes back home with lingering questions and comes back to the theatre again and again," Sengupta said.

Theatre serves the audience by enriching their life experience but the service is rendered primarily through the actor, he adds.

Sharing his thoughts on acting on stage versus screen,



course there are camera angles and lenses which interpret an actor's acting in a flattering way."

"So, cinema is a medium where an actor, and even a non-actor can be helped to communicate what the director wants him or her to communicate but in theatre when the actor is on stage there is no one and nothing that can save him or her," he concludes. —IANS

TREND BLAZER

fairtalk

SHWETA SHETTY



Struggle for me is sleeping on a footpath and going for many auditions the next day, with no food to eat. Struggle is when you have to walk miles, because you don't have money for your ticket for an audition, and then be rejected... God has been kind to me. My struggle was only my hard work and the long uncharted route I took, without any shortcuts or godfathers.

dailytalk

MANAN BHARDWAJ



I lost my father when I was 17, I lost him at the very initial stage of learning music. I was left with just a dream. My family supported my dream. I was short of money and applied for loans for my studies in Mumbai, where I persuaded audio engineering. I got rejected many times but finally my loan got approved and I came to Mumbai.

PATRICK DEMPSEY ON GREY'S ANATOMY

I thought it was a beautiful way to close it. The intention was to really give people some hope because they are such an iconic couple. We've lost so many people this year, the thought that we'd have angels hovering around us taking care of us is a good message to send out in such a bleak world that we're living in. So, for all of us, it was a beautiful ending to this story. I'm so grateful that I did it and happy that the fans really loved it.



STELLAR PERFORMANCE BY INDIAN ARCHERS

Indian Archers Deepika Kumari, Atanu Das, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari put up a stellar performance at the recently concluded Archery World Cup (Stage-I) at Guatemala. In Women's and Men's Individual Recurve event Deepika Kumari and Atanu Das won Gold medals in their respective categories.

The Women's Recurve Team comprising Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari won Gold while the Indian Mixed Recurve team comprising of Ankita Bhakat and Atanu Das bagged the Bronze.

NTPC is supporting Archery for all its National and International Tournaments, as a part of its CSR, by partnering with Archery Association of India (AAI). Through this partnership, NTPC Ltd, India's largest integrated energy company, aims to provide platform to Indian youth to showcase their talent and elevate India's reputation in the field of Archery.

With a total installed capacity of 65,825 MW, NTPC Group has 70 Power stations including 26 Renewable projects. The group has over 18 GW of capacity under construction, including 5 GW of renewable energy projects. Uninterrupted supply of electricity



through environment-friendly energy projects at affordable prices has been the hallmark of NTPC.

Strict action to stop infection spread: Gehlot

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the phone and apprised him of the serious situation of Covid-19 in the State. Additionally, the details of the during day-long meetings of the three cabinet ministers of the State with the ministers and officials of the Central and State Government about the current situation were discussed and a demand raised for the speedy transportation of oxygen and an increase the supply of tankers and other essential medicines.

The central authorities understood the requirements of the State and assured it of full supporting,

Chief Secretary Sudhansh Pant were a part of the meeting.

Gehlot said that the visit of the three ministers, during their visit to Delhi, conveyed the ground reality of the spread to the Central Government. He said that this has created a positive atmosphere and now the Central Government will help in providing all the necessary resources by considering the situation of the state more seriously. This would help the state government to better manage the efforts being made to save the lives of the people.

The Chief Minister said that for separate Covid and Non-covid hospitals should be set up in all the districts including Jaipur to ensure timely management of all the resources including oxygen.

He directed that adequate arrangements should be made for the availability of Remdesivir and Tocilizumab medicines to private hospitals so that the family members of the patients do not have to search these.

Gehlot said that the increase in the number of deaths due to the pandemic is a matter of great concern. The district administration prepared an analytical report of all deaths so that the state govern-

ment can strengthen its management accordingly and reduce the death rate effectively. He said that district collectors should ensure uninterrupted supply of resources by intensively monitoring hospitals.

The Chief Minister said that the way this epidemic is taking frightening form and the police as well as the administration should strictly follow the guidelines of 'Public Discipline Fortnight'. Strict action should be taken for any violation.

Gehlot appealed for public cooperation to stop the spread of infection. He said, that if the public does not cooperate, it won't be easy to break this chain irrespective of the resources the state government gathers and manages. He said that in this time of crisis, people should play the role of responsible citizen by keeping masks on and following other protocols including social distancing, to protect themselves and their loved ones.

The group of Ministers gave details of the day-long meetings with Union Ministers and officials in Delhi and said that their visit to Delhi was very meaningful. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Union

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Chemicals, Mansukh Mandavia along with Secretaries of concerned departments discussed in detail Rajasthan's medical oxygen quota, its transport system and supplies of essential medicines.

They made clear and logical demands to the Union Ministers and officials on the requirements of the State for better treatment of patients. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also attended a meeting and also assured help to Rajasthan keeping the grave situation in mind.

Principal Secretary of Home Affairs Abhay Kumar said that after the implementation of 'Public Discipline Fortnight' strictly, the number of positive cases in 23 districts has come to a standstill. He said that if people keep themselves isolated after giving their Covid samples, it would help to prevent the spread.

Director General of Police, ML Lather said that the protocol has been constantly strengthened. Enforcement has been increased to three times as compared to the first wave. Efforts are being made to provide Covid Guidelines at the

rural level also.

Government Secretary Medical and Health, Siddharth Mahajan, gave information about the supply of oxygen and Covid management across the state. The Secretary to Government, Local Self-Government, Bhavani Singh Detha informed that the bodies are being respectfully cremated across the State as per the instructions of the government.

Dr Rajabu Panwar, Vice Chancellor of RHUS, Dr Sudhir Bhandari, Principal of SMS Hospital and Dr Virendra Singh, were the medical experts who expressed their views regarding the management of Covid and prevention of infection.

The Minister of State for Medicine Dr Subhash Garg, Chief Secretary Nirjan Arya, ADG Law and Order, Saurabh Srivastava, Government Secretary Medical Education, Vaibhav Galaria, Director of Information and Public Relations, Purushottam Sharma and high officials were present. Covid - 19 nodal officers employed to control the epidemic, district collectors other superintendents of police and other officers also joined the video conference.

51st Foundation Day of HUDCO

On the occasion of the 51st Foundation Day of Housing & Urban Development Corporation Ltd., officials and stakeholders from across the country joined a live webcast to commemorate years of distinguished service to the nation.

Durga Shanker Mishra, secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Chief Guest, addressed the officials and appreciated HUDCO's stupendous contributions towards nation building. He urged HUDCO to redefine the housing and urban development sector by innovatively addressing the emerging needs of the habitat sector. Mishra stressed the need to plan and design for a new urban India that is capable of addressing the challenges thrown up by the COVID-19 pandemic and meeting the housing needs of people across all sections of society. He



exhorted HUDCO to scale greater and newer heights by seeking a bold new path and reorienting its business plans to respond to the dynamic sectoral requirements. Further, Mishra emphasised the urgency of getting vaccinated and reiterated the responsibility of each person to follow all covid protocols.

Kamran Rizvi, chairman and managing director, HUDCO congratulated the employees for their commitment and dedication to HUDCO's business model of 'profitability with social justice', in a very tough and challenging year.

M Nagaraj, director (corporate planning) welcomed the participants and D Guhan, director (finance) proposed the vote of thanks.

POWERGRID Infrastructure Investment Trust to open IPO

POWERGRID Infrastructure Investment Trust (POWERGRID InvIT or PGInvIT) is issuing Units aggregating up to ₹49,934.84 million (Fresh Issue) and the Selling Unitholder is offering up to such number of Units aggregating up to ₹27,415.08 million in the offer.

The bid/offer opens on April 29, and closes on May 3. The anchor investor bidding date shall be one working day prior to the bid/offer opening date i.e. April 28.

The price band for the offer is from ₹99 to ₹100 per unit.

The bids can be made for a minimum of 1,100 Units and in multiples of 1,100 Units thereafter by Bidders other than Anchor Investors.

The initial public offer in reliance upon Regulation 14(4) of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) regulations, 2014, as amended (the "InvIT Regulations").

The net proceeds from the offer will be utilised towards the following objects: (i) providing loans to the Initial Portfolio Assets for repayment or pre-payment of debt, including any accrued interest, availed by the Initial Portfolio Assets; and (ii) for general purposes.

The lead managers to the Offer are ICICI Securities Limited, Axis Capital Limited, Edelweiss Financial Services Limited and HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Limited.

SUGANDHA MAKES CHHATTISGARH PROUD



It is said that diamonds cannot be hidden anywhere, the jeweler's connoisseur cannot hide from the eyes and this holds true for Sugandha Jain, a resident of Samta Colony in Raipur, who monitored the United Kingdom's University of Oxford by Monroe E-Price Media Law Moot. She was elected to the Judge of the Court of Competition. The final international round-up of the 14th Monroe E-Price Media Law Moot Court Competition was held online at the University of Oxford, UK from April 12 to 16 by the Bonvaro Institute of Human Rights. In this international competition teams from all over the world (France, Germany, Europe, London, a team of 150 colleges from Malaysia and other countries) participated. During the first Eye competition, Sugandha Jain shared the dais as a judge with distinguished scholars including Professor Richard Danbury and Francesca Fanuki from the Cambridge University Research Associate.

Sugandha is an empanelled leader at the Kailash Satyarthi Foundation, the leader of the Bachpan Bachao Andolan, which had received the Nobel Prize.

Sugandha completed the Kalinga Fellowship from the Kalinga University of Social Sciences (KISS) on April 13 in which institutions like IBM Bridge Institute, IJM, Halotrade, Mekong Club, Mission Better tomorrow, Seva

Ashram and more are partners. Several dignitaries from a variety of fields are a part of this fellowship. The Valedictory program of this fellowship is held in June.

Sugandha studied law from Nagpur in 2016 after completing her LLB in Criminology. Due to her strong desire to take Chhattisgarh to new heights, she moved to Delhi, practicing PGDM in International Humanitarian and Refugee Law, International Law and Diplomacy.

Despite coming from a business family, Sugandha chose law to bring awareness.

She is also a member of the State Child Welfare.

She organised sports such as kabaddi, kho-kho, chair race, lemon race, rope jump and more in 2016 in the Saraswati Shishu Mandir at Mathurapura (Raipur) with approximately 500 students.

She has been a judge twice in the online moot court competition by Asian Law College Noida. The competitions were held in July and August last year besides attending a programme on Child Sexual Abuse by Chetna Sanstha Noida.

She was present as an honorable member in the induction program (Guidance of Innovative Students) organised by Kalinga University Raipur and she gave students information about the possibilities in the field, addressed questions and gave them guidance.

She is also a member of the State Child Welfare.

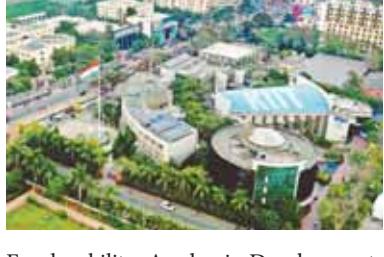
She organised sports such as kabaddi, kho-kho, chair race, lemon race, rope jump and more in 2016 in the Saraswati Shishu Mandir at Mathurapura (Raipur) with approximately 500 students.

She is currently practicing in all courts of Delhi with being and giving free coaching to the children of Judicature in Delhi Advocates' Council.

KIIT FIRST INDIAN VARSITY TO GET FIVE STARS IN QS STAR RATINGS

KIIT deemed to be University has become the first Indian university to achieve the "Five Stars Rating" from the prestigious QS Star Ratings System. The rating results were published on April 27. The QS Intelligence Unit, a division of QS Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd, rated KIIT as a Five Stars institution, the maximum achievable, after rigorous and independent data collection and analysis of performance metrics in a range of indicators across eight categories. The rating will be valid for three years.

Every year the rating exercise evaluated higher education institutions from all over the world against pre-established global benchmarks of excellence across eight categories such as Teaching,



Employability, Academic Development, Internationalization, Online Learning, Innovation, Inclusiveness and Computer Science & Engineering, a specialist criteria. KIIT scored perfect five in four categories and four in the remaining cate-

gories, ensuring the overall rating of Five Stars.

The QS Intelligence Unit also compiles the coveted QS World University Rankings. However, the QS Star rating system evaluates universities across a wider range of important performance indicators as set against pre-established international standards. By covering a broader range of criteria than any world ranking exercise, the system shines a light on both the excellence and the diversity of the rated institution.

Last week, KIIT had achieved a rank of 201+ globally in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2021. Back to back impressive positions in two leading global university ranking and rating exer-

cises have given a boost to the international standing of KIIT Deemed to be University, which has also been accorded the Institution of Eminence tag by the Govt. of India. KIIT is also the winner of 'Awards Asia 2020' in the category 'Workplace of the Year' by the Times Higher Education.

Expressing happiness at the achievement, Dr. Achyuta Samanta, Founder, KIIT & KISS said, "KIIT has been rated as a Five Stars Institution on the basis of its excellence and diversity by the QS Stars rating system, operated by the QS Intelligence Unit, the independent compiler of the QS World University Rankings since 2004. We resolve to continue to do our best".

Also, a total 26 ESI Scheme Hospitals run by State Governments, having 2,023 beds across India are functioning as Covid-dedicated hospitals.

Also, a total 26 ESI Scheme Hospitals run by State Governments, having 2,023 beds across India are functioning as Covid-dedicated hospitals.

Plasma therapy which is shown to save the lives of serious patients has been started in ESIC Medical College & Hospital, Faridabad (Haryana) and ESIC Medical College & Hospital, Sanath Nagar (Telangana).

Alternative arrangements have been made for providing medical services from tie-up hospitals, if an ESIC hospital is declared as a dedicated Covid-19 Hospital. In such cases, ESIC beneficiaries can be referred to tie-up Hospitals for providing prescribed secondary/SST consultation/admission/investigation, during the period for which concerned ESIC hospital functions as a dedicated Covid-19 Hospital. ESIC beneficiaries may also seek emergency/non-

FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN 21 DEDICATED COVID ESIC HOSPITALS (DIRECTLY RUN BY ESIC)

S.NO	FACILITY	STATS
1	COVID BEDS	2,843
2	ISOLATION BEDS	2,397
3	BEDS WITH OXYGEN SUPPLY IN COVID UNIT (Including ICU)	1,556
4	TOTAL ICU BEDS FOR COVID	229
5	ICU BEDS WITH VENTILATOR	163
6	ICU BEDS WITHOUT VENTILATOR	36

FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN 06 COVID + NON COVID ESIC HOSPITALS (DIRECTLY RUN BY ESIC)

S.NO	FACILITY	STATS
1	COVID BEDS	440
2	ISOLATION BEDS	396
3	BEDS WITH OXYGEN SUPPLY IN COVID UNIT (including ICU)	416
4	TOTAL ICU BEDS FOR COVID	53
5	ICU BEDS WITH VENTILATOR	47
6	ICU BEDS WITHOUT VENTILATOR	6

FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN 26 DEDICATED COVID ESIC HOSPITALS (RUN BY RESPECTIVE STATE GOVERNMENTS).

S.NO	FACILITY	STATS
1	COVID BEDS	2,023
2	BEDS WITH OXYGEN SUPPLY IN COVID UNIT (Including ICU)	1,153
3	TOTAL ICU BEDS FOR COVID	81
4	ICU BEDS WITH VENTILATOR	56
5	ICU BEDS WITHOUT VENTILATOR	25

emergency medical treatment from tie-up hospital directly without referral letter, in accordance with his/her entitlement.

Covid Nodal Officers have been nominated at each ESIC hospital for effective coordination with State/Central health authorities.

Instructions have been issued to each ESIC hospital to function with a minimum of 20

per cent of its bed capacity as dedicated Covid beds for ESIC IPs, beneficiaries, staff and pensioners.

In order to ease out the hardship of ESIC beneficiaries in these difficult times, it has allowed purchase of medicines by beneficiaries from private chemists and reimbursements will be made by ESIC subsequently.

Further, ESIC Hospitals are adopting all the updated guidelines being issued by MoH&FW, Govt. of India, on a regular basis for delivering better and prompt medical services. Implementation of all such measures is being regularly monitored at ES

I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAY I BATTED, IT WAS REALLY SLOW, FOUND A LOT OF FIELDERS AND I GOT FRUSTRATED. BUT THE WAY MANISH BATTED, IT WAS EXCEPTIONAL

— DAVID WARNER



GAME IN 2021

TODAY

VS

LIVE FROM
3:30PM IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

LIVE FROM
7:30PM IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

Kiwis may travel to UK for WTC final with Indian players

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand cricketers in the ongoing IPL might travel with the Indian Players for the World Test Championships final in June as they can't come back home and then depart for England due to strict quarantine protocols, the country's players' union chief has indicated.

The likes of captain Kane Williamson, Trent Boult, Kyle Jamieson and Mitchell Santner are among 10 New Zealand players in the different franchises of the IPL.

New Zealand has named a 20-member team for the two-match Test series in England starting on June 2 and the squad will be trimmed to 15 for the WTC final against India, starting on June 18 at Southampton.

"...They can't very well come home, do the two weeks isolation and then go to England, so they're going to have to be there (India) until the round-robin finishes, or the final series," NZ Cricket Players Association chief executive Heath Mills said when asked about the possibility.

"Then we've got other players who are coming home - logically there's not a lot of flights. It's not easy to sort out the logistics. We're working closely with NZ Cricket and they're in touch with the BCCI and the ICC," Mills was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

Not all the 10 players in the IPL are in the New Zealand squad bound for England. Scott Kuggeleijn, Jimmy Neesham, Adam Milne, Finn Allen, Lockie Ferguson and Tim Seifert are not in the team.

Mills said New Zealand Cricket has been in close contact with the players, their respective IPL teams, the BCCI, ICC and also with the England and Wales Cricket Board.

He said the NZ players in the IPL are certainly anxious after the ban on flights from India in the wake of the unprecedented surge in Covid-19 cases, but no one has indicated any desire to return home. The flight ban, which began on April 11, ends Wednesday midnight.

Chennai move to No 1

Ruturaj's best IPL score, 129-run opening stand with Faf (56) set up 7 wicket win

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ruturaj Gaikwad's cool quotient blended beautifully with Faf du Plessis' flamboyance as Chennai Super Kings outsmarted Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets in an IPL match, here on Wednesday.

Gaikwad was calmness personified as he tore apart the Sunrisers attack during his 75 off 44 balls after Du Plessis (56 off 38 balls) launched the initial assault, making a target of 172 looking easier than it actually was.

The win was CSK's fifth on trot which helped them leapfrog Royal Challengers Bangalore to the top of the table while Hyderabad stayed at the bottom.

If Du Plessis shimmied down the track to loft left-arm spinner Jagadeesha Suchith over long-on for a six, Gaikwad would rock back and pull him over deep mid-wicket for a boundary.

If Gaikwad's inside out lofted boundary off Suchith over extra cover was a treat, the use of crease to back-cut the bowler off the very next delivery was equally delectable.

There was a stage at the end of the Powerplay, when Du Plessis had scored double the runs of his younger partner but before one could bat an eyelid, the Pune batsman was on even keel with the former Proteas captain.

And once both crossed 50, Du Plessis enjoyed Gaikwad's repertoire of strokes from the best seat in the house.

The temperament was there for everyone to see and one would understand why MS Dhoni has been bullish about giving the youngster every possible opportunity despite a dry run at the start of the tournament.

A pitch that his skipper Dhoni had termed a bit tacky before the start of the match looked like a batting paradise. The dew did play its part but not on his face.



Chennai Super Kings batsman Faf du Plessis chats with his opening partner Ruturaj Gaikwad during run chase against Sunrisers Hyderabad at Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi on Wednesday @chennailpl

an ounce of credit can be taken away from the batsmen.

By the time Rashid Khan (3/36) quickly accounted for Gaikwad after a 129 run opening stand followed by Moeen Ali and Du Plessis, SRH captain David Warner had a resigned look on his face.

Earlier, after opting to bat, contrasting half-centuries from Manish Pandey and skipper Warner along with a cameo from Kane Williamson ensured a decent 171/3 for SRH.

Warner (57 off 55 balls) and Pandey (61 off 46 balls) added 106 runs for the second wicket at the Kotla but

SCOREBOARD

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD (171-3)

David Warner c Jadeja b Ngidi	57
Jonny Bairstow c D Chahar b S Curran	7
Manish Pandey c du Plessis b Ngidi	61
Kane Williamson not out	26
Kedar Jadhav not out	12
Extras (b 0, lb 2, w 6, nb 0, p 0)	8
Total (3 wkt, 20 Overs)	171

Bowling

Deepak Chahar	3-0-21-0
Sam Curran	4-0-30-1
Shardul Thakur	4-0-44-0
Moeen Ali	2-0-16-0
Lungi Ngidi	4-0-35-2
Ravindra Jadeja	3-0-23-0

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS (173-3)

Ruturaj Gaikwad b Rashid	75
Faf du Plessis lbw b Rashid	56
Moeen Ali c Jadhav b Rashid	15
Ravindra Jadeja not out	7
Suresh Raina not out	17
Extras (b 0, lb 0, w 3, nb 0, p 0)	3
Total (3 wkt, 18.3 Overs)	173

Bowling

Sandeep Sharma	3.3-0-24-0
Khaleel Ahmed	4-0-36-0
Siddarth Kaul	4-0-32-0
Jagadeesha Suchith	3-0-45-0
Rashid Khan	4-0-36-3

it was Williamson's 26 not out off 10 balls and Kedar Jadhav's 12 off 4 balls which ensured a competitive total for SRH.

Lungi Ngidi was the best bowler for CSK, returning figures of 2 for 35 from 4 overs while Sam Curran (1/30) got the other wicket.

Warner, who passed 10,000 T20 runs during the course of his innings, appeared frustrated at times at the inability to force the pace on a track where ball wasn't always coming onto the bat.

boundarymeter

4s 647

6s 275

PLAYER

1. Faf du Plessis (CSK)	270
2. Shikhar Dhawan (DC)	265
3. KL Rahul (PBKS)	240

WKTs

1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	17
2. Avesh Khan (DC)	12
3. Rashid Khan (SRH)	9

MOST SIXES

1. Jonny Bairstow (SRH)	14
2. KL Rahul (PBKS)	11
3. Glenn Maxwell (RCB)	10

SUMMER SLAM

MOTION PICTURE



Punjab Kings batsman Mandeep Singh and his son Rayveer Singh pose for photo with cricket bat. @PunjabKingsPL

WOMEN'S T20 CHALLENGE UNLIKELY

The three-team Women's T20 challenge, which is held during the IPL, is unlikely to go ahead this year given the current restrictions imposed by countries on air travel with India due to the massive spike in Covid-19 cases here. "Getting Indian players quarantined is not an issue even now but no foreign player is keen to travel in the current climate. We can find a window later when things get better," a top BCCI source said.

CLARITY OF MIND, PLANS HELPED JD
RR pacer Jaydev Unadkat said clarity of mind has helped him to make a good start to this IPL season and he wants to build on the momentum going forward. "I feel I've had a good start. I've had clarity of mind and clarity of plans this season, something that has worked for me so far," Unadkat said. "It is only a couple of games for me and is still early days, something I'm looking to build on as we move forward."

ENDING IPL IS NOT ANSWER: CUMMINS

Shutting down IPL is not the answer even as India is struggling to control the Covid-19-induced health crisis, insisted Pat Cummins. "I don't think ending the IPL is the answer," he said. "We are doing everything we can to make sure we don't take any resources out of the front line. I don't think so (it's the solution). Of course there's an aspect that playing every night for three-four hours hopefully contributes to people staying home as it has been a hard routine for them and we can help them get through each day," he said.

POINTS TABLE

	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1 CSK	6	5	1	+1.475	10
2 RCB	6	5	1	+0.089	10
3 DC	6	4	2	+0.269	8
4 MI	5	2	3	-0.032	4
5 KKR	6	2	4	-0.305	4
6 PBKS	6	2	4	-0.608	4
7 RR	5	2	3	-0.681	4
8 SRH	6	1	5	-0.264	2

shortpasses

ZOYA BANNED FOR 6 YRS

DUBAI: Former SL seamer and coach Nuwan Zoysa was banned from all cricket for six years after being found guilty of trying to fix matches and failing to disclose corrupt approaches.

RIZWAN ENTERS TOP-10

DUBAI: Pakistan's Mohammed Rizwan made an entry into top-10 of 120I rankings. The 28-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman's gain five slots to reach 10th position.

GIOKOVIC WITHDRAWS

MADRID: Novak Djokovic has pulled out of the Madrid Open, the tournament organisers announced on Wednesday.

GIGGS DENIES CHARGES

MANCHESTER: Wales manager Ryan Giggs appeared in court on Wednesday and denied assaulting two women, including a former girlfriend who is accused of coercively controlling with violence.

MARSCH TO COACH LEIPZIG

BERLIN: Salzburg's American coach Jesse Marsch has agreed terms to succeed Julian Nagelsmann at RB Leipzig, German media reported on Wednesday.

DECISION DELAY ON LOCAL FANS

TOKYO: 2020 Tokyo Olympics organisers on Wednesday said they won't decide how many spectators — if any — can attend