

OPINION 8
WHAT MODI REALLY MEANS TO PEOPLE

WORLD 11
BIDEN PRESSED ON EMISSIONS GOAL AS CLIMATE SUMMIT NEARS

SPORT 13
SPURS SACK MOURINHO

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

Late City Vol. 157 Issue 106
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY APRIL 20, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



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12 VIVACITY

Alld HC orders week-long lockdown in five UP cities

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Concerned over spread of Corona infection, Allahabad High Court directed to impose lockdown in five big cities, where caseload was high, for the next one week starting Monday night. The cities where lockdown would be imposed are: Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Kanpur and Gorakhpur.

The High Court ordered that the lockdown will commence from Monday night and end on the morning of April 27.

A division Bench comprising Justice Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar passed the order on a PIL filed by different people and organisations on Monday.

The bench came down heavily on the UP government as well as on the State Election Commission for holding Panchayat polls. "Economy, economy and economy is the only tune that the government is all the time harping upon. But if you take bread and butter to a person who needs oxygen and medication, it will be of no use to him. You may have grocery shops full of eatables and industries which produce bikes and cars, but all this won't be of any use if your medical shops run out of stock of life saving drugs like Remdesivir in the current surge of pandemic. It is a shame

UP govt not in favour of lockdown, may move SC

Lucknow (PNS): Despite a clear directive from the Allahabad High Court to impose lockdown in five cities, the UP government clarified that in view of protecting the livelihood of the poor, they would not go for a complete lockdown. In a statement, a government spokesman said here on Monday that the number of Covid cases has gone up and strictness is mandatory to control the spread. "The government has

taken many steps and will take stricter decisions in future," he said.

The spokesman further said: "It is mandatory to save lives but it is equally important to protect the livelihood of the poor and therefore, lockdown will not be imposed in cities. In many sectors, people are willfully closing down their institutions." There are indications

Contd on Page 11

that while the government knew of the magnitude of second wave it never planned things in advance," the judges said in their order.

The bench further said that if hospitals were not able to provide beds and oxygen, they were sure that cities like Prayagraj, Lucknow, Varanasi Kanpur and Gorakhpur could not provide medical aid to even 10 percent of the populations at any given point of time.

If hospitals' staff and medicos go ill for the relentless services to cure people in the pandemic, people would start losing their lives and all pomp and show of development would be of no avail," the order said.

The court that said in such a situation, night curfew in the name of Corona curfew and weekend curfew were nothing else but a mere eyewash.

"It was probably an effort to show that our last order

had been taken care of. We are however, not satisfied at all. We see people are largely not following our order for putting masks on their faces nor, the police could ensure 100 percent masking till date," the order said.

"We must record our displeasure at the way the government and State Election Commission proceeded to hold elections forcing teachers and other government staff to perform duties exposing themselves to the threat of pandemic looming large these days. The police was virtually shifted to polling places giving priority to election above public health," the Judges said while adding that Uttar Pradesh where Corona has taken the form of a pandemic, authorities holding Panchayat elections, were fully in the know of the fact that no activity had to take place where it was not possible to keep people away from each

other.

The Court in its order said, "Let a copy of this order be sent to the Chief Secretary, Government of Uttar Pradesh today itself to enforce our above directions forthwith from the night of April 19, 2021 till April 26, 2021 in the cities of Prayagraj, Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar, and Gorakhpur. Copies of this order shall also be placed before District Magistrates of the concerned districts."

However, the Judges said: "Our above directions are nowhere close to a complete lockdown. We are conscious of the fact that before imposing a lockdown the concerned government has to work out various modalities. In this order, if we have not imposed a lockdown it does not mean that we do not believe in it. We are still of the view that if we want to break the infection chain, a lockdown for a duration of at

least two weeks is a must."

The Court in its orders said that all establishments be it government or private, except financial institutions and financial departments, medical and health services, industrial and scientific establishments, essential services including municipal functions, and public transport, shall remain closed till April 26. All shopping complexes, malls, hotels restaurants, all grocery shops and other commercial shops excluding medical shops, with more than three workers shall remain closed till April 26.

All institutions like educational and others shall remain closed. Court said no social functions and gatherings including marriage functions shall be permitted till April 26. However, in case of already fixed marriages a necessary further permission would have to be taken from the District Magistrate of the concerned district. Gatherings would be limited to 25.

All religious activities and religious establishments are directed to remain closed till April 26. Hawkers including fruits and vegetable vendors, milk vendors and bread vendors, shall go off the road by 11 AM every day till April 26. All public movements on roads would remain restricted completely during this period.

18 + TO GET COVID JABS FROM MAY 1

States can buy Covid doses from makers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major decision, the Union Government on Monday announced that everyone above the age of 18 will be eligible to get a vaccine against Covid-19 from May 1, allowing States, private hospitals and industrial establishments to procure the doses directly from manufacturers.

In other words, the new liberalised vaccine policy will not be the part of the Centre's nationwide vaccination programme that was launched from January 26 wherein healthcare workers, frontline workers and then those above 45 years of age are being given the jab. The decision to scale

up the vaccination wherein State Governments, along with private sector will play a major role in providing the jabs, was taken in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said the Government has been working hard for over a year to ensure that maximum numbers of Indians are able to get the vaccine in the shortest possible time. "India is vaccinating people at world record pace and we will continue this with even greater momentum," he said.

Under the third phase of the vaccination drive commencing next month, the vaccine manufacturers would supply 50 per cent of their monthly Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) released doses to the Central Government and would be free to supply the remaining 50 per cent doses to State Governments and in the open market.

Manufacturers would have to make an advance declaration

of the price for 50 per cent supply that would be available to the State Governments and in the open market before May 1, 2021, an official statement said. Contd on Page 11



Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	1,52,71,432 (+2,13,546)
DEATHS:	1,80,082 (+1,289)
RECOVERED:	1,30,66,927 (+1,17,941)
ACTIVE:	20,18,108
MAHARASHTRA:	38,98,262
KERALA:	12,53,069
KARNATAKA:	11,76,850
TAMIL NADU:	10,02,392
DELHI:	8,53,460 (+25,462)

Manmohan Singh tests +ve, admitted to AIIMS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, 88, tested positive for Covid-19 and was admitted to All India Institute of Medical Sciences

(AIIMS) trauma centre in Delhi with a mild fever on Monday afternoon.

Trauma centre is a dedicated Covid facility, sources said, adding Singh's condition is stable. Contd on Page 11

Britain adds India to Covid-19 travel 'red list'
London: Britain on Monday added India to its Covid-19 travel "red list", which effectively bans all travel from the country and makes a 10-day hotel quarantine for returnees.

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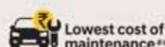
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Highest single-day toll in Uttar Pradesh at 167

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest-ever single-day toll on Monday with 167 deaths during the last 24 hours while a total of 28,287 new cases were reported during that period. However, the only silver lining was 10,978 patients recovering from the disease, which was the highest ever during this second wave.

Officials said here on Monday said that there are 2,08,523 active cases in the state and they are getting treatment either in home isolation or hospitals. "UP carried out 2,00,751 Covid tests on Sunday," an official said.

Lucknow continued to be the hotspot where 5,897 fresh cases and 22 deaths were reported, followed by Varanasi with 2,668 fresh cases and 10 deaths. The total number of active cases in Varanasi is 16,152. There were 1,576 fresh cases and nine deaths in Prayagraj where the total active cases were 15,950 while in Kanpur, 1,365 new cases and 18 deaths were reported.

Meanwhile, Covid crisis is turning out to be a big business for hospitals and chemists across Uttar Pradesh.

An elderly person tested positive and was allotted a private hospital. "On Saturday, I got a call from the hospital that it does not have oxygen and I should arrange for a cylinder. I was aghast. The private hospital which is charging Rs

10,978 patients recover in the state



Officers of department of defence production reach Haj House for inspection in Lucknow on Monday

15,000 per night did not have an oxygen cylinder," his son said. He bought a cylinder for Rs 15,000 from a private company and took it to the hospital so that his father could recuperate.

Son-in-law of Narendra Saxena, a government employee, was admitted in a hospital when he got a call from a doctor that the patient needed Remdesivir injection.

"The injection is out of stock in the market. I bought four vials of the injections at Rs 8,000 per piece. The doctor said they need two more vials. The fifth vial I bought at Rs 11,000 and the sixth at Rs 16,000," he said. The MRP of Remdesivir injection which he bought is Rs

4,500 per vial. Yogesh Dixit bought an oxygen cylinder at Rs 12,000 for his ailing father and he arranged money by selling off his wife's ornaments.

The plight of the patients' relatives is visible everywhere across the state. The patients are not getting beds and many of them have died gasping for

breath outside hospital gates because they were denied entry. Many who managed to get beds are at the mercy of hoarders. "It is a crime against humanity and no one hoarding or black-marketing Covid-19 medicines should be spared," said Kalpana Chaudhry, who was struggling to get Ivermectin tablets.

Remdesivir crunch to be over in the next few days

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

"Jubilant Pharma has supplied 25000 vials of Remdesivir injections today and in the next two to three days, availability of three lakh of Remdesivir injections is scheduled"

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the state government would ensure adequate supply of life saving Remdesivir injection as a fresh batch of 25,000 vials had reached the state and the next batch was expected to arrive in the next two-three days.

"Jubilant Pharma has supplied 25000 vials of Remdesivir injections today and in the next two to three days, availability of three lakh of Remdesivir injections is scheduled," the CM said while meeting with Team-11 in Lucknow on Monday.

Yogi said that a demand for 2,75,000 Remdesivir vials was sent to manufacturing companies like Jubilant Pharma, Cadila, Myelin and Cipla. While Cadila and Cipla would supply 1 lakh vials each, Mylene will supply 25000 vials and Jubilant 50,000 vials.

Sources say that Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Navneet Sehgal was in direct contact with the pharmaceutical companies. He informed that the supply would be ensured in the next

three days. The CM has given clear instructions that they be distributed in a transparent manner.

Yogi stressed that black marketing of life-saving drugs, like Remdesivir, was a major crime and persons involved in such nefarious act be booked under stringent laws like Gangsters Act or National Security Act. He also directed that names of such miscreants should be widely publicized in the society.

Remdesivir injection is being seen as a life-saving drug for serious Covid patients and hence it was being sold by outlets at an exorbitant premium. Yogi also instructed officials to maintain constant touch with patients under home isolation. "Minimum of one week medical kit be provided to people living in home isolation. Integrated Control and Command Centre and CM Helpline should communicate with

patients every day," he said. Not only this, the CM also directed that half the number of 108 Service ambulances be dedicated for Covid patients only and special efforts be made to minimize the response time of ambulances. Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh was entrusted with the responsibility.

The CM directed the Home department to strictly enforce mandatory use of masks throughout the state. For the first time, a fine of Rs 1,000 is to be imposed for not wearing a mask and a fine of Rs 10,000 will be levied for a second-time offence.

At the same time, Yogi also said that in order to keep the spread of infection to a minimum, it was important that the provisions of Containment Zone were strictly implemented and Quarantine Centres were kept functional effectively in all districts.

Akhilesh slams Yogi govt for failing to curb Covid surge



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav slammed the Yogi government for the unabated spread of Corona virus in the state. He charged that the state government remained a mute spectator while the masses were dying and running from pillar to post for beds in hospitals and medicines. He further claimed that the BJP government had lost control over the state machinery.

"Ignoring the advice of doctors and scientists, Yogi Adityanath was busy campaigning for Assembly elections in West Bengal, while his Team 11 went into hibernation resulting in unabated spread of the pandemic in the state. The number of casualties are galloping by the hour and atmosphere of gloom and despair prevails in large number of households. The BJP government is busy completing formalities. The state has never witnessed such an insensitive regime in the past," charged Akhilesh.

The SP chief said that reports pouring in from different parts of the state were very disturbing.

"In Bareilly, the crematorium failed to cope with the rush of dead bodies, while there is anarchy at cremation grounds in Prayagraj where people are forced to shell out exorbitant money for firewood. Similar situations prevail at Ghaziabad, Agra and Kanpur," he said.

Akhilesh said that the situation in Lucknow has gone beyond government control as neither ambulance, beds in hospital or medicines were available and people were dying at stretchers at hospital gates. He said that even as doctors were getting infected, they were not getting adequate facilities and administration was harassing the medics.

Around 60 per cent polling recorded till 5 pm

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

About 60 per cent polling was recorded till 5 pm on Monday for the second phase of the Uttar Pradesh panchayat polls in 20 districts, where 3.48 lakh candidates are in the fray for over 2.23 lakh posts.

While Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded the highest polling percentage of 70.20 per cent, Pratapgarh recorded the lowest at 52.12 per cent, the State Election Commission (SEC) said.

Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav did not exercise his franchise in his native Saifai village in Etawah district following request from family members to keep his safety in mind in view of the pandemic.

According to family sources, the 81-year-old had never missed voting in any election till now.

"We requested Netaji (Mulayam Singh Yadav) not to come to Saifai to cast his vote this time for the panchayat elections in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and he agreed to our request. Netaji is in Delhi," his nephew Dharmendra Yadav told PTI.

BJP MLA from Lambhua in Sultanpur Devmani Dwivedi said he could not cast his vote as his name was not in the voters' list.

"Barring me, names of my other family members, including my mother, who is no more, were in the voters' list," Dwivedi told PTI.

Violence was reported in Etah where Praveen Kumar, husband of a village pradhan candidate, Suman Yadav, from Bhagipur was shot at and injured by unidentified assailants on Sunday night.

SHO of Kotwali police station, Subhash Katheria, said the incident took place near Shikohabad road.

Polling started at 7 am and went on till 6 pm on Monday. Over 3.23 crore voters were eligible to exercise their franchise.

In the second of the four-phase election, polling is being held in Lucknow, Varanasi, Amroha, Azamgarh, Etawah, Etah, Kannauj, Gonda, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Chitrakoot, Pratapgarh, Budaun, Baghpat, Bijnor, Muzaffarnagar, Mainpuri, Maharajganj, Lakhimpur Kheri, Lalitpur and Sultanpur.

For the 787 posts of member of zila



Voters waiting in queue for their turn to cast votes at Pipersand in Lucknow on Monday

Pioneer

Lucknow (PNS): Rivalry claimed three lives during the ongoing panchayat elections Bareilly, Etah and Ghaziabad respectively on Sunday while the husband of another contestant was shot at in Etah over a poll-related dispute.

In Bareilly, a former pradhan died while seven others were injured during a clash between two rival groups. SP City (Bareilly) Ravindra Kumar said that different groups supporting respective candidates came to a head in Vivyapur area of under Bhojipura police station area late on Sunday night. While former pradhan, Narendra

prachayat, there are 11,483 candidates and for the 19,653 seats of kshetra panchayat, as many as 85,232 candidates are in the fray.

As far as the gram panchayats are concerned, there are 1,21,906 candidates for 14,897 posts and for the gram panchayat wards, there are as many as 1,30,305 candidates for 1,87,781 posts.

The candidates are contesting on "free symbols" given by the Election Commission. More than 2.31 lakh poll officials

Three die, several hurt in poll-related strife

(45) was shot and later hacked to death, seven others from both sides were injured in the ensuing firing. The officer said that a police team was rushed to the spot upon learning of the violence and found the injured people from both sides. The injured were shifted to a hospital and a case was registered. Heavy police force was deployed in the area to avert any fresh violence.

Elsewhere in Etah, two candidates and their supporters clashed at Bauxa hamlet of Kotwali Dehat late on Sunday at elections.

Additional Election Commissioner Ved Prakash Verma said three-member teams were formed under the additional district magistrates to ensure that the directives issued by the SEC were being followed.

At the district level, the chief medical officers have been made the nodal officers and stress has been laid on COVID-19 prevention.

Voters will mandatorily have to wear masks and maintain social distancing at

night and attacked each other with sticks and rods while some miscreants also opened fire. Supporters of one of the aspirants, Pradeep Kumar Jain suffered gunshot wounds and later succumbed at a nearby hospital.

In Ghaziabad, a contestant's cousin Lakhan (28) was brutally hacked to death in Kanakapura village of Bhojpur locality on Sunday night. Some children noticed the body and informed the villagers who later called the police. The body was sent for autopsy and a case

was registered against a rival contestant. Further investigations were on.

In another poll-related violence in Etah, Bhagipur pradhan candidate Suman Yadav's husband, Praveen Kumar was shot at by unidentified bikeborne masked riders on Shikohabad Road. The injured was shifted to district hospital and his kin alleged that the incident was fall out of a poll-related dispute with the outgoing pradhan. A case was registered and efforts were on nab the accused.

polling booths. Instructions have also been issued to make circles and maintaining a distance of six feet between voters standing in the queue.

Verma said COVID-19 norms would be followed during the counting of votes and personal protective equipment (PPE) kits would be arranged according to requirements.

The Allahabad High Court had asked the Uttar Pradesh government to conclude the panchayat election process by May 25.



AUCTION NOTICE

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PGV urges CM to do away with CMO nod for admitting Covid patients

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra urged Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to ensure that Covid patients in serious conditions got admission in hospitals without having to wait for permission from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

Citing media reports that several serious patients were not being admitted without a supporting letter from the CMO, Priyanka urged, "Mr. Chief Minister, people are losing their lives while waiting for the CMO's letter. Please put an

end to such rules. Save the lives of people. Make such a system in which serious patients can be admitted to the hospitals easily." Meanwhile referring to inadequate supply of Remdesivir and medical oxygen for treating Covid patients, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati requested the Centre to attach special attention on keeping the supply of oxygen smooth and import medicines so that supply was not disrupted in hospitals.

"In view of the acute shortage of Corona vaccine and oxygen in hospitals in various states, I request the Central

government to pay special attention. If vaccines need to be imported, the Centre should do it," she tweeted. The former Uttar Pradesh CM further said, "Simultaneously, I request people to strictly adhere to Covid guidelines issued by state governments so that the outbreak of the infection can be prevented."

"Apart from it, Corona virus is now affecting the youth as well, which is a matter of concern. Therefore, the BSP demands the Central government to reconsider the age limit for vaccination as soon as possible," she demanded.



Earlier, Mayawati lauded the Centre's move to organise a four-day 'Tika Utsav' (special vaccination drive) from April 11, to ramp up inoculations against the disease. However, she suggested that it would be better if the Centre had vaccinated the poor for free.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting to review preparedness to handle the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The PM directed officials that to ensure that use of Remdesivir and other medicines were in accordance with approved guidelines and their

misuse and black marketing was strictly curbed. On the issue of supply of medical oxygen, the Prime Minister directed that the speedy setting up of approved medical oxygen plants.

A total of 162 PSA Oxygen plants are being installed in 32 states/UTs from PM CARES fund. The officers informed the PM that 1 lakh cylinders were being procured and they would be supplied to the states soon. The PM was briefed that they were in constant touch with 12 high burden states in assessing the current and future requirement of oxygen.

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96 more private hospitals notified as Covid facilities

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In order to meet the rising demand for beds, DM in-charge Roshan Jacob said 96 additional private hospitals in Lucknow have been notified as Covid facilities.

Earlier on April 16, 17 private hospitals were notified as Covid facilities. Jacob said there will be testing, treatment and quarantine facilities at these hospitals, as per ICMR and state government guidelines, and that no funds will be provided to these hospitals by the government. She said treatment charges can be realised by these private hospitals, as per the government guidelines.

"These hospitals should coordinate and contact the Integrated Control and Command Centre to work as the first point of contact, providing high-level care to patients. They will also provide information to the Integrated Control and Command Centre when the patient is admitted and the district administration will cooperate in providing them with the necessary medicines as well as PPE kits," she said. In Lucknow, the additional chief secretary (health) also appointed three additional director-level doctors to monitor the Covid situation in the district.

On Monday, Lucknow recorded 5,897 cases on Monday, taking the tally to 1,51,349 while 22 patients succumbed to the disease.

Meanwhile, Divisional Commissioner Ranjan Kumar said that they are on a spree of hospitals inspections and constantly assessing how the bed capacity can be increased.

On the constant complaints by patients that they are not getting beds, he said there is a proper system in place and several persons have been given responsibilities for different things. He said whenever members of rapid response teams test positive, they are replaced.

Director of Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences Dr AK Singh insisted that the situation has been bad. "Many of our doctors are testing positive and others are



An uprooted tree blocks the path of an ambulance near Balrampur Hospital

Pioneer

5 with ILI symptoms detected by ward nigrani samitis

Lucknow (PNS): The nigrani samitis detected five people having symptoms of cough, fever and cold in the municipal wards on Monday. Municipal Commissioner Ajay Kumar Dwivedi said that ward nigrani samitis carried out inspection of people coming from outside of Lucknow and tested them for ILI (influenza-like illness) symptoms.

He said that in the entire

developing symptoms along with their families. Nearly 25 per cent of the doctors have tested positive," he pointed out. He said the demand for beds is natural in the present scenario. "We have suggested that private sectors should be allowed to carry out tests and increase oxygen supply but this is the national scene and there is little that one can do in this regard," he said.

People should understand that 90 per cent of the patients do not need hospitalisation

ward, inspection of 50 people was carried out and 45 were found to be healthy while only five had ILI symptoms.

He said action was also taken against 99 people for not wearing masks and a total fine of Rs 12,250 was realised from them. He further said that under the large-scale sanitisation work which will be carried out on April 20, it will be done in 60 wards of

the six large containment zones, including Alambagh, Aliganj, Indiranagar, Chinhat, Tudiaganj and Silver Jubilee.

"Under this campaign, sanitisation will be carried out in all empty plots where bleaching powder will be sprayed, anti larvae campaign will be carried in these plots and 3,374 employees will be involved in this work," Dwivedi said.

and can be managed at home, he said. "People start getting their CT scan done and are running for Remediesvir injections on their own," he said, adding that the panic situation is compounding the problems. He said there is a possibility that the number of cases is much larger than what is being reported.

He said doctors also cannot predict what may happen to the patients and how fast the oxygen level may deteriorate. "We try to counsel patients that they

Directive for heads of municipal corpns for fight against Covid

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Urban Development Minister Ashutosh Tandon gave instructions to all the heads of municipal bodies across the state to fight against coronavirus at a high-level virtual meeting on Monday.

He issued guidelines for sanitisation and fogging operations in every ward in the containment zones of all UP districts, fixing the arrangements at cremation sites and eliminating drinking water crisis. He also issued instructions for cleaning of the drainage system before the monsoon sets in.

He also directed the officials concerned to keep the municipal employees involved in sanitation work motivated and provide them essential safety kits to protect them against coronavirus infection.

He said the monitoring committees should be activated in each ward across UP districts. The monitoring committee consist of chairman, government officials, ASHA & Anganwadi workers.

"These monitoring committees should take care of the number of containment zones made in the state and the number of people in home isolation and those down with Covid-19. Those above 45 years



should also be helped in vaccination," the minister said.

Tandon said that the level of sanitisation will be increased on a large scale in the state. Sanitisation should be done by making rosters in every ward, he added.

During the partial lockdown, a massive sanitation drive will also be carried out on Sunday and large carts and fire brigades will be used for sanitisation. Apart from this, the minister also instructed all the municipal commissioners of the state to make proper arrangements at the cremation sites. Tandon said special attention should be given to the frontline sanitisation workers of

municipal corporations and they should be provided PPE kits, sanitisers, masks, gloves etc. He also said that special attention should be on tackling the crisis of drinking water in the summer season.

"Where there is a crisis of drinking water, reboring will be done. Where there is leakage, arrangements should be made where there is a need to install PC pumps. Chlorination should be done regularly for cleaning of water, and water testing should also be done," he said.

During the virtual meeting, all the mayors and municipal commissioners of the state were present.

Psychology dept of university calming nerves of students

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Psychology department of Lucknow University is helping students cope up with the repercussions of the second wave. Dr Madhurima Pradhan, head of the Psychology department, which is also running a 'Happy Thinking Lab', said that the second wave being more severe than the first wave has created panic among students.

"The students are much more worried and stressed with the rising number of cases. The 'Happy Thinking Lab' is orienting the students to keep calm and try to remain relaxed as they do their duty while helping their family members," she said. Dr Pradhan said they tell the students that it is necessary to be strong if they want to help others. "We are trying to make our students resilient and try to tell them that when there is fire all around, one needs to preserve what can be kept intact because all have to fight together and it is not the fight of a single person," she said.

She pointed out that the online classes are impacted because some students or their family members are amongst those affected by the virus.

"In the first wave the stress was on the career and studies, but that is no longer important now. The students feel that this can be handled but what cannot be handled is the loss of a loved one. Most of the families of the students have one or more members facing the disease and we tell them that everyone has to die one day, but the only important thing is to do one's duty," she said. She added that chanting mantras, listening to music and practising art therapy could help the students positively inclined.

Dr Pradhan said that in the anticipation of the idea that there could be a second wave or a third wave, they tell them that anxiety is natural. "It can be replaced with what we can do at present so that we can become action-oriented and do what we can. We should not become overconfident but follow all the Covid protocols like wearing masks and observing social distancing. The second wave came because we became careless," she said.



Shops closed in Chowk due to self-imposed lockdown by traders

Pioneer

106 doctors given postings

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With a view to ramping up doctors' strength, as many as 106 medical practitioners selected from the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission were given postings on Monday. They have been handed Covid duties.

Of these new doctors, 18 were selected in Orthopedic

department, six in TB & Chest, 19 in Paediatrics, five in Ophthalmology, eight in ENT, 12 in Obs & Gyn, 22 in General Medicine, one in Forensic, one in Skin & VD, three in Radiotherapy, five in Epidemiology, five in RHTC and one medical teacher in plastic surgery. They all are currently deployed in Covid treatment. Principal Secretary,

Medical Education, Alok Kumar said the resource crunch would not be there in the fight against Covid.

He said that along with human resource, the number of beds in the hospitals is being increased further. Apart from this, orders have also been issued to purchase additional cylinders to make medical oxygen available, he added.

Body of youth recovered from river

Lucknow (PNS): The body of a youth was recovered from Gomti river around 7:30 am on Monday. The deceased was identified as Ravi Sahu, who was a resident of Murmuri Tola under Thakurganj police station. The identity of the deceased was ascertained by elder brother Sanjay Sahu.

Sanjay told police that Ravi left the house following a tiff with the family on Thursday evening. The family members thought that Ravi would come in a while. However, they became worried when Ravi did not return till Friday morning. They started searching for him and later lodged a complaint at Thakurganj police

station on Saturday afternoon. On Monday morning, a body was spotted in the river by an Irrigating department guard and he informed police. The body was fished out by the divers. Thakurganj police station incharge Manoj Kumar Yadav called Sanjay, who reached the place and identified the deceased as his younger brother. Yadav said the bereaved family did not suspect any foul play and said Ravi ended his life by jumping into the river.

Meanwhile, an elderly person, who was a resident of HIG Group of Houses in Tikaitrai Colony under Saadatganj police station, died after falling

off the terrace of his house on Monday afternoon. He was identified as Jeevan Chandra Joshi. Police said he was flying a kite and he fell down in the process. He was home alone as his wife and daughters had gone to Noida. He was rushed to a private nursing home where he succumbed to injuries.

Meanwhile, a fire broke out near Lokvani Kendra in Sarojininar police station in the wee hours of Monday. Five makeshift shops were gutted but no injuries were reported in the incident. Initially, locals tried to put off the fire but later three fire tenders were pressed into service.

CITYBRIEFS

WEBINAR

The first premier virtual series of national web series on NEP-2020 was hosted by Amazon Web Services (AWS) in association with IEEE-Prakash Bharati (consortium of IEEE Photonics Society Chapters of India), whereby spearheads of distinguished premier universities together with policy-makers and implementers had virtual discussion to extract the best out of NEP that could pave the way for technology-equipped education system and help India march forward towards 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Chief Secretary, Punjab, Vini Mahajan inaugurated the first web series on NEP-2020 while Dr Naresh Chand, associate vice-president of Chapter Relations, IEEE Photonics Society, USA, was the guest of honour. The event was coordinated by Prof Inderpreet Kaur, secretary, Prakash Bharati, India, EXECOM member PES-IAS, Delhi Chapter. Pro-Chancellor, Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Pooja Agarwal stressed on the need of inclusion of technology in education so as to develop a comprehensive persona amongst students who could emerge as global leaders in the time to come.

DRAWING CONTEST WINNER

Akriti Samyak, a talented class IX student of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus I, has brought laurels to the school by winning the first prize in an inter-school drawing competition. A large number of students from various prestigious schools of Lucknow participated in this competition which was organised by Lucknow Development Authority. Akriti participated in the junior category (12-18 years aged group) and called for women empowerment with a strong display of her creativity and artistic abilities with the help of colours and brush. Through her prize-winning piece of art, Akriti conveyed the message that there is a need to educate each girl child as all-round education is the powerful medium of creative change in society. She was given away a trophy and citation.



People boarding a bus to their home town, at Polytechnic crossing

Pioneer

Medical team on way to give medicines to Covid patient attacked in UP; 4 injured

Ballia: Three government medical personnel, including two doctors, and their driver were injured after their car was attacked by a group of people when they had gone to a village here to give medicines to a COVID-19 patient, police said on Monday.

The incident took place at Paswan Chowk village on Sunday and according to a complaint lodged at the Baira police station, the medical team's vehicle was surrounded

by about 60 people and it was attacked, they said.

"The team had gone to the village to give Ghanshyam, a COVID-19 patient, his medicines and check on his home isolation." Additional Superintendent of Police Sanjay Yadav said. In his complaint, medical officer Neeraj Kumar Singh, who was injured in the incident, said "around 60 persons, including women and children, surrounded our government vehicle, and attacked

the team", according to Yadav.

Members of the team somehow managed to escape from there. Dr Neeraj Kumar Singh, Dr Amit Kumar Gautam, lab assistant Upendra Prasad and driver Lal Bahadur Yadav were injured, he said, adding that a man, Jitendra, has been arrested in this case. Ballia District Magistrate Aditi Singh said the administration is mulling to initiate action under the stringent National Security Act (NSA). PTI

CISH developing museum dedicated to mangoes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) is developing a museum dedicated to mangoes so that visitors can learn about the varieties, their medicinal values, history, stamps and facts not much known to a commoner. Mango is the national fruit of India but except for its taste and aroma, many people don't know much about it and its relevance to the culture and

heritage. CISH director Shailendra Rajan said India is considered to be the richest in mango varieties and efforts by different farmers, nurserymen and mango lovers helped in conserving the varieties.

"CISH having a large largest live collection of mango varieties is an attraction for the visitors because after the mango season, one can't see the fruits. The museum will contain more than 800 varieties as

a model or a photograph with interesting descriptions so that people can know much about mangoes. Not only Indian but the varieties dominating the international market will also be displayed. History linked with the varieties and their importance will be also depicted in the museum," he said.

The CISH director said that over a hundred stamps depicting the mangoes have been issued by about 80 countries. "A corner with these

stamps and details will be an attraction for the visitors, mainly those interested in philately," he said.

He pointed out that mango is being considered as one of the most potential trees providing certain anti-viral, antibacterial, anti-carcinogenic bioactive compounds and few of them have been found to be effective in boosting immunity against coronavirus.

"A database containing details of the medicinal prop-

erties of phytochemicals can be accessed in the museum. Not only fresh fruits are enjoyed but also many value-added products made in different parts of the world. A description of important products made from mango and the nutritive value of this king of fruits will also be depicted. A large number of recipes are available in which mangoes are used at raw or ripe stage. One can see the details containing these useful recipes in the museum," he added.

Rajan said being a heritage tree of India, a lot of historical and mythological aspects are associated with mango.

"It is associated with culture, religion and other social aspects of India. A part of the museum will display interesting facts and depict why mango is important for India. The major mango-producing areas of the country and the world, statistics, and other international facts will be depicted with various audiovisuals for explaining its economic importance," the CISH director said.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
KALAHANDI RWS&S DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA.

INVITATION OF BID THROUGH e-TENDERING
Bid Identification No-06/EE/RWS/2021-22 /Bpt Dated: 19.04.2021

01.Name of the work :- As per ANNEXURE - A

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of tender online (for bidding on office bear only)		Date of opening (Technical Bid)
		From	To	
1	2	3	4	5
Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhanwanipatna	06/EE/RWS/2021-22 /Bpt Dated- 19.04.2021	20.04.2021 10.00 AM	10.05.2021 05.30 PM	11.05.2021 10.00 AM onwards

Cost of tender paper to be made online payment system. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>. The original documents should be scanned and uploaded.

Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhanwanipatna

OIPR-25005/11/0005/2122

Panchayat polls pass off peacefully in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

With recording the 65 per cent voting, the election for the Panchayat polls passed off peacefully in Varanasi. The polling at two gram sabha has been cancelled after the death of candidates and the announcement of a fresh schedule for the polling will be announced later on. The counting will be held on May 2 from 8 am onwards.

The voting began at polling booths in eight blocks in the morning at 7 am and continued till 6 pm as per schedule. The voters, who have already lined up in the queue before 6 pm, were allowed for voting even after 6 pm. The polling remained slow during the first three hours but thereafter the voters particularly women started turning up the polling booths in large numbers.

The voting was stopped for some time at polling booth number-72 & 73 in Pratapatti primary school in Harahua block after a candidate complained of fake voting but soon the voting was restarted. Heated exchange took place among supporters of two candidates on the matter of fake voting at a polling booth in Jagatpur Inter College but the police controlled the situation. Tension prevailed at Shahpur primary school after a person manhandled polling officer and the police took him in their custody. At some other polling booths the incident of minor skirmish took place but overall the situation remained in control.

Due to polling, all the business and commercial establishments remained closed and the government and private offices also remained closed as the District Electoral Officer Kaushal Raj Sharma had already announced public holiday.

The number of total voters was 17,53,588 in eight blocks of



Long queue of voters at a polling booth in Panchayat polls

Pioneer

district and of them, 65 per cent cast their votes. The maximum 2,90,650 voters were in Aarajiline Development Block and the minimum 1,65,187 voters in Harahua Block. Besides, 2,50,170, 2,19,550, 2,12,963, 2,08,750, 2,07,482 and 1,98,650 were in Pindra, Cholaapur, Badagaon, Sevapuri, Kashi Vidyapeeth and Chiraigaon block respectively.

A total of 10,749 candidates were in election fray including 554 for 40 members of zila panchayat, 4338 candidates for 694 seats of gram pradhan and 4,530 candidates for 986 members of kshetra panchayat whose fate was sealed in ballot boxes. As many as 1,327 candidates were in election fray for the members of gram panchayat. As many as 4,772 candidates have been elected unopposed on various seats as they were only candidates who submitted the nomination papers for the various seats.

A total of 850 polling centres

were made in eight blocks of the district for the voting of gram pradhan and members for the gram panchayat, kshetra panchayat & zila panchayat including the maximum 145 in Aarajiline and minimum 80 in Kashi Vidyapeeth, while 132, 107, 101, 101, 95 and 89 polling centres in Pindra, Cholaapur, Sevapuri, Badagaon, Chiraigaon and Harahua block respectively. As many as 75 polling centres were identified as the most-sensitive polling centres, while as many as 27 polling centres have been identified as sensitive polling centres.

Similarly, a total of 2,594 polling booths have been made including the maximum 433 in Aarajiline and the minimum 291 in Kashi Vidyapeeth, while 378, 317, 308, 308, 305 and 254 in Pindra, Cholaapur, Sevapuri, Badagaon, Chiraigaon and Harahua block respectively.

The Election Commission had cancelled the polling in Indrapur Gram Sabha in

Pindra block and Oraha Gram Sabha in Sevapuri block after the death of candidate of gram pradhan Vijendra Yadav and Sheela Devi respectively. The fresh schedule of the election process in both gram sabhas will be announced later on. The counting will be held on May 2 from 8 am onwards.

To ensure the peaceful polling, the district administration had appointed eight super zonal magistrates, 31 zonal magistrates and 115 sector magistrates, while 13 magistrates have been kept in reserve. A total of 134 sub inspectors, 1,788 police constables and 2,732 home guards were deployed at the polling centres. In addition, three companies and sections of PAC were also deployed at polling centres. The district was divided into 28 zones and 105 sectors to ensure peaceful and smooth election. A total of 10372 polling personnel including presiding officers were appointed to ensure the smooth polling.

2,416 new Covid cases in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Prayagraj district on Sunday night reported as many as 2,416 new cases of COVID-19, while 14 also succumbed on the same day. However, the relief was also that the number of people who got infection-free was just 20 more on Sunday than the day before. On Saturday, 2,436 patients were found. According to Corona's Nodal Officer, Dr Rishi Sahai, a total of 1,201 people became infection-free on Sunday.

Dr Sahai said that a total corona examination of 9,120

people was conducted on Sunday, in which 2,416 people were found infected. Most of these people are in home isolation. Over 200 people need beds. All are kept in waiting due to lack of space in the hospitals. After the beds are empty, the Health department is asking to get patients admitted.

On the other hand, beds are not empty in many hospitals including SRN, Beli, Railways, United Medicity Hospitals due to the increasing number of corona patients.

Patients are waiting for beds. Some patients are also moaning in ambulances out-

side hospitals for hours. When beds are being arranged in hospitals, then they are able to go inside. Waiting conditions remain in both SRN and Beli hospitals. About 56 patients were also discharged from here on Sunday. In addition, home isolation of 1,145 people was completed.

Those who got infected on Sunday included District Judge, Additional District Judge, Income Tax Commissioner, AGM of Airport, Asha workers of Mauaima and Saidabad CHC, village head of Naribari and Saidabad, engineer of IFFCO

Phulpur, advocate of High Court, clerk in Bank of Baroda in Meja, teachers of Soraon, Chaka, Karchana, Primary School, senior manager of NTPC Meja, treasury officer, loco pilot of Railways, Deputy Commandant of Home Guards, AAO of AG Office, Bench Secretary of High Court, retired engineer of Jal Nigam, Commercial Tax Officer, disabled officer of Koraon, teachers of Arya Kanya Inter College and Primary School Manda, superintendent of Naini Jail, associate professor of Rajarshi Tandon Open University and manager of Gramin Bank.

Sangam city witnessing deserted roads

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

As the second wave of coronavirus continues to spread in the city at an alarming rate, Sangam city is witnessing deserted roads and outstation residents rushing to bus stands to head back to their homes. As more and more people are coming back from different cities of Maharashtra and Gujarat, there is also a mad rush among them to reach their native places through buses, operated by roadways.

Since the last 10 days or so, the number of passengers, including both local students and aspirants of different competitive exams and those returning to the city from various cities of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan etc. has increased manifold. The chunk of these passengers reach Sangam city through different trains and move towards their native places in buses being operated by UP State Roadways Transport Corporation

(UPSRTC).

Although there has been added load on different bus depot operating buses in different directions in the city, there are only a few who seriously follow the precautions suggested by the government. Most of the passengers can be spotted wearing masks only to cover their chin while few others are without masks. The guard on duty at the bus stand seldom asks them to wear the mask, but there is no one to listen to his valuable

advice. Likewise, the numbers in terms of students and aspirants leaving the city too have increased. Despite the threat of the virus, only around 50 per cent of these passengers can be spotted wearing a mask. As the number of Covid positive patients has increased in the city in the past one week, more and more youngsters, who had come to the city from different neighbouring districts for education are leaving the city.

Consumption of oxygen in hospitals increases three times in a week

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The second wave of coronavirus infection is becoming a mountain of trouble for Prayagraj. The situation is becoming such that the 'oxygen level' of the system has started decreasing while meeting the need of oxygen to the infected. The consumption of oxygen in government and private hospitals has increased three times in a week, while the supply is not being able to meet the requirement even after the full capacity is installed from Naini plant. At the same time, some people have started taking unfair advantage of it. Black marketing of oxygen cylinders has also started. At the same time, the demand for Remdecivir injection in hospitals has also increased, whereas it is only getting 10 per cent

after trying it completely. Swaroop Rani Nehru Covid Hospital (SRN) has about 500 patients admitted these days. There is a supply of oxygen on 450 beds, including a total of 50 beds of ICU. RJ Siddiqui, the nodal doctor for oxygen supply, said that consumption has more than tripled since a week. Here earlier, liquid medical gas used to work with 8,000 litres every day, now about 22,000 litres are being consumed. This gas comes in a tanker from Kolkata. Cylinder oxygen consumption has also increased each day. Although oxygen is available in hospitals and no shortage is being allowed here, Dr Siddiqui added. Beli Hospital's Chief Medical Superintendent Dr Kiran Malik said that 160 patients are admitted here.

More than 120 people are being given oxygen. Consumption has increased threefold. The cylinders are being sourced from the Naini plant. On the other hand, due to the high impact of corona on the lungs of infected people in hospitals, the demand for Remdecivir injection has increased. The regime provided 30-30 injections to each Covid Hospital two days ago. The demand for more injections has now been sent. On the one hand, the demand for oxygen has increased in Prayagraj, on the other hand, due to its black marketing, some people are not desisting from making blackmarketing. It is said that an oxygen cylinder which used to be available for Rs 600, is now being charged its arbitrary

price. The 600-litre oxygen cylinder is now available to people for Rs 1,000 to 12,000. The availability of Remdecivir injection in the market is only 10 per cent according to the demand. According to the assurance given by the pharmaceutical companies to the distributors, the situation is expected to be normal by this week. Claims are being made of the availability of fabiflu as required. The chairman of Allahabad Chemist and Druggist Association, Anil Dubey has appealed to the people not to stock fabiflu, otherwise the needy people will have difficulty in getting the medicine. This drug is available in such quantity in the market that everyone will get it according to their need.

Seven more deaths in city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district recorded another big spike with 7 more deaths during the last 24 hours. As many as 2,320 have tested positive on Monday evening increasing the total number to 44,623 crossing the 44K-mark. During the last 24 hours, 1,456 patients have been recovered and all of them in home isolation. The total number of patients cured in the district is 28,347 including 25,333 in home isolation and 3,014 in COVID-19 hospitals. The number of active cases has jumped up to 15,832 crossing the 15K mark.

In the first report of the day, 1,148 positive patients were found out of 2,688 reports received and this figure increased to 2,320 as per report



A beneficiary taking a vaccine at divisional government hospital on Monday

provided by the Health department in the evening increasing the active cases to 15,832. Earlier, in view of finding hundreds of new positive cases,

with 11 new hotspots, the number of active hotspots has increased to 568 with 22 green zones having been converted to red zones by a day ago. Out of

total 2,970 hotspots, 2,402 are green zones and 568 are red zones.

Due to Panchayat polls, there was holiday in the district but despite this, the persons aged above 45 years reached the government hospitals and health centres to take vaccinations.

The management of divisional government hospital has decided to install oxygen plant in its premises with an estimated cost of Rs 1.10 crore. The capacity of proposed plant will be 88 cylinders per day. The hospital management has shot off a proposal regarding this to the district administration. The district administration has sought the similar proposal from the district government hospital and the hospital of BLW.

BJP opens COVID-19 Control Room

VARANASI (PNS): After the meeting with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swung into action and opened COVID-19 Control Room in its parliamentary office in Ravindrapuri, here. The control room numbers are 0542-2314000 and 9415914000.

The PM had virtually held a meeting with the ministers and public representatives who belonged to the district. The senior administrative and police officers had also attended the meeting. In the meeting, the PM had taken stock of information about preparations for the COVID-19 in the light of a surge in the pandemic and given some instructions to both public representatives and officers to face the situation and provide all possible help to needy persons.

Thereafter, the BJP leaders met and decided to open the COVID-19 Control Room in the parliamentary office of the PM. The control room will function for 24 hours and its numbers are 0542-231000 and 9415914000. The control room will help in making the beds available to the patients in the hospitals and also provide consultancy of doctors. The con-

trol room will also help in making the requisite medicines, oxygen, ventilator, etc available to needy persons.

A team of doctors will remain present at the control room for the 24 hours shift-wise. Besides, the four teams of the BJP will also remain present at the control room in the shift-wise to help the patients and needy persons in the present crisis. It is mentioned that the PM had directed for making all possible help to corona patients. It is mentioned that there is a problem of beds in almost all the COVID-19 hospitals despite the tall claim made by the district administration and Health department and the PM had expressed his deep concern over this during the meeting.

It is mentioned that the Kashi Covid Response Centre (KCRC) has been established to ensure the availability of health facilities in a better and well-managed way and it will function for 24 hours. The KCRC has been established with the coordination of the MLC AK Sharma, Divisional Commissioner Deepak Agrawal, Commissioner of Police A Satish Ganesh, District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma and health officers. The people

could also seek help by dialing the telephone numbers-1077, 272005, 222193, 2221941, 2221942 and 18001805567 which have been released by the Health department. The home isolation calling centre has been established in Vikas Bhavan besides making arrangements of 20 separate telephones where the corona patients could seek help.

Apart from this, the COVID-19 Control Command Centre opened at Shahid Udayan in Sigra is also working for the 24 hours where the district administration and Health department are working together with the coordination of other concerned departments. This centre gathers information regarding the COVID-19 and passes the same to concerned departments so as the facilities could be made available at the earliest and with coordinated manner to the beneficiaries.

TEMPORARY HOSPITAL: To face the present crisis due to surge in corona cases, the Defense Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), Ministry of Defence will construct a temporary hospital of 1,000 beds in the stadium of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in coming

two weeks which will be equipped with all the medical facilities.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi had held a meeting with the senior officers of the district administration and police on Sunday which had also been attended by the ministers Dr Neelkanth Tiwari & Ravindra Jaiswal besides other public representatives of the district. The PM had directed for enhancing the medical facilities in the district to face the situation which has turned into the worst with more than 1,500 positive cases recorded on a daily basis for the last few days. An important meeting of senior administrative officers and the officers of concerned departments including DRDO was convened at the meeting hall of Circuit House on Monday with the MLC AK Sharma in the chair. The meeting discussed the present situation of pandemic and decided that the DRDO will construct a temporary hospital of 1,000 beds in the stadium of BHU in two weeks to come which will be equipped with all the medical facilities. The proposed temporary hospital will be constructed with German Hanger and it will function for 24 hours.

RTPCR tests at MNMC badly hit due to acute shortage of staff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In its second wave, the novel coronavirus is taking many more people in its grip, and is hitting key services crucial to combating the COVID-19 menace.

In worrying news amid the rapidly growing infection, the Microbiology department of Motilal Nehru Medical College, the central location where all RTPCR tests are being done, is facing acute shortage of staff due to Covid as 14 out of 30 trained employees of the department have tested positive.

Due to this staff crunch, there is a backlog of over 5,000 samples even as the remaining employees are doing their best.

Moreover, because of the backlog, people who had given samples three-four days back are still awaiting their reports and the treatment of those who may be positive is getting delayed.

If any more lab workers get infected, the RTPCR tests in the district would be severely impacted and may come to a standstill.

'The district administration has to take steps to ensure the backlog is cleared and RTPCR tests are not delayed,' said an employee of the department.

RTPCR tests started in the Microbiology department of medical college on April 10 last year.

Allahabad University and Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology (MNNIT), both have a department of microbiology where research work is going on. The researchers there can be roped in to clear the backlog and increase tests, he added.

Sources said the King George's Medical University in Lucknow has set an example in this regard and has trained a large number of its staff to conduct RTPCR tests. 'The big pool of employees has ensured

there is no staff crunch and testing is not impacted. Our officials should also consider implementing the KGMU formula,' they added.

The head of Microbiology department Dr Monica said, 'We are somehow managing things with depleted staff strength. We are willing to train more hands to increase our team but the problem is there are no volunteers because of the increasing numbers of cases.'

PMC TO SANITISE ALL WARDS: Given the sudden increase in the number of COVID-19 cases being witnessed in the city for the past one week, which has broken all previous records, the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation (PMC) has decided to sanitise all the 100 wards of the city on a war footing.

For this purpose, it has been decided that the vehicles being used by PMC, presently being used for improving the quality of air in the city, like

anti-smog gun, water vehicle and sprinkler and the vehicles used by Jal Sansthan including jetting machines will be used for the sanitisation work. The sanitisation work will be carried out on Saturdays and Sundays.

Altogether 17 vehicles have been pressed into service and the entire 100 wards of the city have been distributed among eight zones. These zones have been given two vehicles each for sanitisation work barring zone one which consists of areas around Khuldabad. This had been the area where the maximum number of patients were reported in the recent spike in the cases. These localities include the Himmatganj, Chuck Niratul, Beniganj, Kareli, Sultanpur Bhava, Karelabagh etc.

According to the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of PMC PK Mishra, the sanitisation work was carried out on Saturday as well in all eight zones of the city.

BJP leader to inspire people to get vaccine administered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Coronavirus infection is steadily increasing. In such a situation, the awareness campaign has been started to get everyone to strictly follow the guidelines related to the prevention of Corona and to get the vaccine administered.

BJP City unit president Ganesh Kesarwani said that all the members of the city unit who are 45 years or above have

got the Corona vaccine administered. Now he will inspire others for this. If there is any message in anyone's mind, he will solve it too.

The BJP City unit President said that this awareness campaign will not be conducted in flocks or in crowds. Each worker will inspire only those around them. Efforts will be made to give information in this regard by calling most people. It will also be

reported that the corona vaccine is safe. It has no side effects. If someone expresses an inability to go to the vaccination centre, then there will be an attempt to take them to the centre.

BJP Yamunapar District President Vibhav Nath Bharti said that this is a very difficult time. At this time, there is no need to tie the politics to any particular party. This is indeed the time to resurrect human sen-

sibilities and work in the interest of the society. It should also be kept in mind that the rules related to COVID-19 should not be violated in public service.

Every worker has to be vigilant. One also has to be ready to help others. All the people of the society will be safe only then politics will also take place. Effort should be made to keep everyone safe, he added.



DM Alok Tiwari inspects the jetting machine sanitisation on Monday.

Pioneer

Mayor supervises sanitisation work

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Mayor, Pramila Pandey carried out sanitisation work under her supervision on Monday. All the jetting machines and the 156 KNN employees with spray machines who took up sanitisation drive on Sunday have been deployed in south city on Monday and took part in the sanitisation work of all the public places. She said in view of COVID-19 spread at a rapid pace all the KNN employees have been given PPE kits and spray machines and constant sanitisation work was being carried out.

The Nagar Swasthya Adhikari, Dr Ajay Sankhwar said all the 156 KNN employees have been given PPE kits and masks which had been made mandatory for those who were carrying out cleaning and disinfection work. He said they have been directed to dispose of the PPE kits after the days use and they need to wash their hands with soap and water immediately after they take off their PPE Kits.

He said masks were effective if worn according to instructions and properly fitted and said masks should be discarded and changed if they become physically damaged. He said all the employees have been directed to ensure they did not exchange their PPE Kits on any condition.

He said they have been given the solution of sodium



House to house sanitisation being done by KNN employees on Monday. Pioneer

hypochlorite liquid bleach 3.5 per cent and one part bleach to 2.5 parts of water. He said the inner parts of public places were more exposed to infection while the outer part was safe due to air circulation and sunlight. Prominent other supervising the sanitisation work were A Rehman, Additional Municipal Commissioner, BP

Singh, Amit Singh and Chandrashekhar.

LIQUOR SHOPS TO REMAIN CLOSED : The Kanpur District Magistrate, City, Alok Tiwari has on Monday informed that as the three-tier panchayat elections were to be held in bordering districts of Kanpur Dehat, Hamirpur, and Unnao in the

third phase on April 26, 2021 for gram panchayat, member gram panchayat, member kshetra panchayat, and member zila panchayat. He said thus it had been decided that as per the Central Excise 1910, Section 59 all the excise shops selling liquor and other material will remain closed till the end of the election.

He said it had also been decided that on April 26, 2021 from 6 pm, till the end of the election all falling in the eight km range shall also remained strictly closed.

He said storing and selling both was being banned and strict action will be taken against those who defy the ban orders. He said movement across the borders is totally banned and will be punishable.

SP MEETING: A meeting of the Samajwadi Party city unit was held on Monday at the party office where the president Dr Imram expressed concern over the rapid increase of COVID-19 pandemic and the large number of deaths. He said it was shocking that admission for positive patients were being done only after the sanction of the CMO.

He alleged that Remdesivir was being sold in black market. He said in view of the apathy of the officials of the district administration it had been decided to hold a dharna outside DM's office from 10 am onwards and seek their reply on the issues.

Pvt hospitals facing oxygen shortage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The LLR Hospital, Chief Medical Superintendent, Dr Jyoti Saxena on Monday informed that although there was a crisis of smaller oxygen cylinder yet the hospital was making arrangements through liquid medical oxygen. She said in view of the dangerous rise in COVID-19 cases even the private hospitals were facing acute crisis. She said even people who were under Home Isolation were facing oxygen crisis.

She said the hospital had decided to use the jumbo oxygen cylinders and added that oxygen supply companies have been asked to speed up their supplies and the maximum cylinders were needed in COVID-19 Maternity Wing and Neuro Science COVID hospital. She informed currently altogether there were 150 patients, while out of the total 70 were critical. She said but the supply to the Neuro Science hospital was through the liquid medical oxygen plant.

It may be mentioned that there were two oxygen plants one was catering to the needs of Emergency and ICU, while the other was near the paediatric hospital. The administration has made wards one to four as holding areas. She said in view of the mad rush for oxygen cylinders quick and long-term arrangements was needed. She said as the COVID-19 cases were spiking there shall be increased need for oxygen in the present situation.

APPEAL: The Retail Chemists Vyapar Manda, chief, Sumit Pahwa has on Monday informed that the mandal was providing over 300 oxygen cylinders to the needy free of cost and this was made available by the Panki plant. He made an appeal to the chemists and druggists and hospital who had dumped cylinders to ensure they give it to the needy at the earliest. He said if one has a spare or half used cylinder it can be given to a critical patient in the vicinity. He said people in need of oxygen can contact on 7860100001.

Courts to hear only urgent matters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

District Judge RP Singh said that Kanpur courts will hear only most urgent legal matters and no adverse order will be passed in any case till April 30. Singh said that he had passed this order in compliance with the directives of the Allahabad High Court which had also been sent to the Kanpur Bar Association and the Lawyers Association. According to directives, only urgent work would be taken up for hearing with minimum presence of advocates.

Following spike in number of Covid cases and in the interest of litigants, the courts will not pass any adverse order till April 30, he said.

General secretary of Lawyers Association Raghendra Pratap Singh said due to surge in Covid cases, the association and the district judge, Kanpur Nagar, have decided that the courts would take up only most urgent matters and would not pass any adverse order in any case. Singh has also appealed to advocates to stay at their homes to keep themselves safe. "Only those advocates should come to the court whose urgent matter is listed for hearing and should leave the court premises after their hearing was over," he said.

TWO ARRESTED WITH ILLICIT GANJA: State STF squad recovered 9.52 quintals illicit ganja and arrested two persons near Haliya turn ahead of Chaparghata bridge in Moosnagar of Kanpur Dehat on Sunday night. They were identified as Aslam son of Alloo of Dhekda, PS Sadar Alwar, District Alwar (Rajasthan) and Zakaria son of Badruddin of Jaytalka, PS Punhana, District. Nuhmewat (Haryana).

Police recovered 9.52 quintal illicit ganja, two aadar card, two driving licences, two ATM, two mobile phones, one truck (RJ 32 GB 7788) with two keys to open truck and truck body and Rs 4,700 cash from them.

Extensive preparations to tackle Covid

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Indian Railways in order to tackle Covid-19 pandemic is constantly ready to work shoulder to shoulder with the state governments and for it the Ministry of Railways has made extensive preparations. According to the instructions issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, coaches have been converted into Covid care ones to deal with the problem of beds for the treatment of Corona-infected patients which will be placed at the stations as per the demand of the state governments. It may be pointed out here that the North Eastern Railway (NER) had converted as many as 217 coaches into Covid care ones last year. On the basis of the demand of states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand served by North Eastern Railway these Covid care coaches will be made available at the respective stations. In view of corona infection the situation is being continuously monitored and reviewed by General Manager, NER, Vinay Kumar Tripathi, and his high-level team. The



GM NER Vinay Kumar Tripathi

availability of medical resources is also being ensured. As per requirement, the process of recruitment of doctors and para-medical staff on contractual basis has been started in railway hospitals. Immunisation work of all railway personnel above 45 years of age and their families is going on continuously. Railway is constantly running special trains on the basis of demand for the convenience of common people. In such difficult times there is an unprecedented contribution of railway per-

sonnel in the smooth and safe movement of trains. In order to encourage them General Manager VK Tripathi has directed that railway personnel doing most outstanding work every week at the division and headquarters level be honoured by being declared 'Corona Warrior' and given a certificate and cash prize.

BOY FOUND: Railway Protection Force (RPF), NER, makes continuous efforts to ensure security of passengers. In the same sequence, the staff of RPF Gorakhpur, during patrolling on the platform of Gorakhpur station found a 14-year-old boy in an unclaimed condition recently. After questioning, he was handed over to Child Line, Gorakhpur. The staff of RPF, Gorakhpur, found a 14-year-old girl in an unclaimed condition during patrolling on the platform of Gorakhpur station. After questioning, she was handed over to Child Line, Gorakhpur. Likewise the staff of RPF, Gonda, found a 10-year-old boy in unclaimed condition during patrolling on the platform of Gonda station. After questioning, he was handed over to Child Line, Gonda.

Wheat crop reduced to ashes

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Wheat crop of 20 bighas was reduced to the ashes in Neebi Gaharwar village under Vindhychal police station on Sunday. On the day in noon the villagers saw the fire in the field and rushed to the spot. It was believed that the fire broke out due to sparking in electric wire passing over the field of Hriday Narain Pandey. Owing to the hard labour of hours of the locals the fire could be extinguished. However, the crop of Ramesh Singh, Munna Singh, Dinesh Singh, Dharm Raj Yadav, Shyam Lal Yadav, Maan Singh and Satyendra Singh was reduced to ashes in the incident. In another case of fire, the crop kept at the threshing ground got burnt in Sikata village under Halia police station. The crop caught fire due to unknown circumstances in which straw, husk and crop of about half-a-dozen farmers were reduced to the ashes.

PLAN CHALKED OUT: Keeping flood during rainy season in mind the adminis-

tration under the direction of District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar, Additional District Magistrate (F&R) UP Singh directed the officials of the Irrigation department to finalise the plan incorporating the suggestions of the Revenue department. He said that the coordination between the departments concerned was a must for carrying out activities, including the relief work during the flood. Executive Engineer (EE) Irrigation Vaibhav Singh apprised that 37 flood outposts had to be set up and they will be operational from June 15 and work round the clock through shift-wise deployment of the staff. He further said that the control room in his office would be operational from June 15 to October 31 and the phone number was 05442-252589 and the phone number of control room situated at Collectorate was 05442-256357. In the meeting Jila Panchayat was directed to make arrangements for motor boat along with boats and Veterinary department was directed to make a plan to

health, energy, nagar palika etc. were asked to make the plan in advance and the related issues were discussed in detail. The meeting was attended by CMO Dr PD Gupta, SDM Sadar Gaurav Srivastava, SDM Chunar Surendra Bahadur Singh and the other officials concerned.

PLAYING KIT MADE AVAILABLE: DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar made available playing kit two Divyang players. The two Divyang players Shashank Gupta, a resident of Ojhala and Jagdeep Singh, a resident of Sadhwada street, Vasliganj, had been selected for wheelchair cricket tournament at the ground of their performance. The tournament is scheduled to be held in Odisha on April 19 and 20. When the matter was brought in the cognisance of the DM, he directed the sports officer to make available the kit in order to encourage them. On Saturday the kit was made available to the Divyang players and the DM has extended his best wishes to them that they could earn laurels for the district. The DM's initiative has earned praise from each section of the society.

ACTION TAKEN: Under the drive to implement the Corona prevention guidelines the police took action against 70 persons in the city circle for not wearing the mask. According to Circle Officer (City) Prabhat Rai, ₹35,000 had been recovered as fine on Friday. He said drive will continue in the larger interest of the society because not wearing the mask was not only risky for that particular person but entire society too. He appealed to people to wear mask while moving out of their houses and avoid the fine.



ADM (F&R) UP Singh chairing the meeting at the Collectorate

tration chalked out a plan with irrigation department on Saturday. Presiding over the

make available the fodder during the flood. The other departments concerned including

Studies of students worst-hit

KANPUR (PNS): In view of the upsurge of COVID-19 more dangerously than last year the studies of the students were the worst-hit. The parents and the school were equally concerned about the studies of the students. It remains to be seen when will it schooling will come back on rails. However in the present scenario much rested on the teachers and the parents to ensure that their children remained linked to studies and they understood the importance of online classes.

Addressing the webinar organised by Heritage International School, Dr Beena Mhatre, Mumbai said there were umpteen advantages to online courses as they allowed one to learn whenever, wherever, and however worked best for one making it easier to earn a degree. She said online classes can present unique challenges, however, if one were not prepared but if one develop skills for effective online learning, one will find the courses can be an excellent alternative to a traditional classroom setting.

She said if one were considering taking online courses then treat an online course like a 'real' course. She said when it came to online classes, one need to have the discipline to sit down on time and mentally be prepared for studies. She said students can certainly be flexible as to when they chose to complete their work during the week. She added that one of the easiest ways to ensure follow through was to remember that one were paying to take online course, just as they did in the past.

Dr Mhatre said treat online

classes the same way one would a face-to-face class and added that one had to hold oneself accountable. She advised students to set goals at the beginning of the semester, and check in with weekly. He said in an traditional classroom setting, one will often receive verbal or visual reminders of an assignment's upcoming due date. She said but without a teacher actively reminding it was up to one to make sure one had allotted enough time to complete the work so one were not starting an assignment the day before it's due.

She said if the students had trouble holding oneself responsible, he or she need to pair up with a fellow classmate, or enlist the help of a spouse or friend to check in as an accountability partner. She said by being organised, proactive, and self-aware, one can get the most from ones online class.

She advised that the students need to practice time management. She said the flexibility to create ones own schedule was often one of the biggest appeals of taking online classes. She said but that freedom can also be detrimental if one did not have solid time management skills. She said without them, one might easily find yourself cramming before classes or handing in subpar assignments. She added that one had to manage ones time well depend on schedule, learning style, and personality.

She advised student to look at the syllabus at the start of the semester and make note of major assignments. She said they need to mark them on a calendar and check regularly so one knew what workload was

coming in the weeks ahead. She said do not forget to factor in prior commitments that may interfere with regular study schedule. She said one need to also create a weekly schedule that one followed, designating certain hours each week to reading, watching lectures, completing assignments, studying, and participating in forums.

Dr Mhatre said commit to making online coursework part of ones weekly routine, and set reminders to complete these tasks. She said when working on assignments, try time-blocking, allotting oneself a certain amount of time for each task before moving on to the next one and setting a timer to keep one accountable. She said students need to check in periodically throughout the term, and look at how they were spending time.

She advised them to create a regular study space and stay organised.

She also advised them to set up a dedicated learning environment for studying. She said whenever one chose make sure there was high-speed internet access so one were not trying to take an online course over a lagging connection. She said one need to have the required books, materials, and software for the course and have headphones for listening to lectures or discussions.

She said once one had established where one will learn, think about when and how you accomplish your best work. She said if one were morning person, make time to study first thing but if habitual of night studies then set aside an hour or two after dinner to

cozy up to your computer. She said not everyone learnt the same way, so think about what types of information helped best grasp new concepts and employ relevant study strategies. She said if one were a visual learner, for example, print out transcripts of the video lectures to review. She said one need to participate in the course's online forum to help better understand course materials and engage with fellow classmates. She said online classes were an excellent option to help further ones knowledge and academics and take up a brighter career. The vote of thanks was delivered by Kiran Bhatia. Over 50 teachers from UP and other states took part in the webinar.

SCIENTIST ADVISES THIAMETHOXAM FOR MANGO PEST MANAGEMENT: Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology's Extension Directorate Dr AK Singh, while addressing a webinar on pest management, said in view of the upcoming crop of mango there was a sudden attack of pests which was likely to damage the fruits and lead to massive losses to the farmers.

He said effective management of the mango crop was essential at this critical juncture. He advised the use of thiamethoxam solution to handle the pests which were damaging the current crops. He said thiamethoxam offered effective broad spectrum pest protection on numerous crops and was a second generation neonicotinoid insecticide belonging to the thianicotinyl subclass and possessed unique chemical properties.

Cong States' doubt on jabs stoked 2nd wave: Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Monday hit back at former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for his "offer of constructive cooperation" on Government's Covid-19 management, saying "history shall be kinder" to the senior Congress leader if his valuable advice was followed by his own party leaders. In fact, Vardhan alleged that the second wave of the pandemic was fuelled by Congress-ruled States as they were busy raising doubts about vaccines rather than vaccinating people.



Vardhan

Vardhan said while Singh understands the importance of vaccination as an important method of fighting the Covid-19 battle, "irresponsible" public pronouncements made by some Congress leaders have resulted in a below national average vaccination coverage of senior citizens and even front-line workers in some of the Congress-ruled States. Vardhan also tweeted his letter to Singh.

Singh on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Modi suggesting five measures to battle the Covid-19 crisis, including ramping up vaccination and boosting supply of medicines.

Vardhan said, "People in responsible positions in your party as well as in the State Governments formed by your party do not seem to share your view."

He expressed shock that senior members of the Congress are yet to utter a single word of gratitude towards scientists and vaccine manufacturers for innovating under trying circumstances and empowering the world with

vaccines. "Let alone thanking our scientists, many Congress members and Congress-ruled state governments have taken extraordinary interest in spreading falsehoods regarding the efficacy of these vaccines, thereby fuelling vaccine hesitancy, and playing with the lives of our countrymen."

"A sitting chief minister of your party created a dubious world record of sorts by being the only head of government directly inciting people against an indigenously developed vaccine! Some Congress leaders even shamed the vaccines in public but took their doses in private, quietly," he charged.

"A word of advice from you to them even if it had been done in private by you may have ensured better cooperation from these people. Knowing your penchant for constructive cooperation, which you have said you always believed in, I would assume that you did advise them and yet, quite clearly, your advice has been in vain," the minister said.

Vardhan said the former PM's advice to not get tempted to go by absolute numbers, but to go by percentage of population covered, is not incorrect. However, he said this is a practice that must be followed uniformly and junior

members of "your party" too must follow your advice.

With due respect, and "irrespective of the negativity that your party spreads", Vardhan said he takes Singh's suggestions at face value and with the belief that they are made keeping national interest in mind.

"However, it does seem that those who drafted your letter or advised you, have done a great disservice to your standing by misleading you regarding material that is already in public domain," he said.

Highlighting the point in the letter on allowing import of vaccines that have already been approved by credible foreign authorities, Vardhan said a decision on this had already been taken a week ahead of "your suggestion", on April 11, 2021.

The same is the case with your suggestion regarding providing funds and other concessions to augment vaccine manufacturing. This decision had also been taken many days before receipt of your letter and multiple vaccine manufacturing entities have been funded by the government to immediately enhance production.

"Anyway, despite such factual inaccuracies, we understand your deep concern for the country and also assure you that we share the same," the minister said.

"We request your continued cooperation in the battle against the pandemic and welcome more such illuminating suggestions. However, as a senior leader, we expect that you shall offer the same advice and wisdom to your own party leaders as well," Vardhan stated.

Doctors upset over VIPs' getting special Covid treatment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Junior doctors of various colleges under the banner of the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), an association of medical professionals, are an anguished lot during the Covid-19 pandemic. Reason? They are unhappy at the preferential treatment given to the VIPs while members of the medical fraternity and the common man suffer in want of timely medical facilities.

The FAIMA also alleged that several politicians have been calling their members to their residence for check-ups and testing.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, they minced no words as they noted that there are separate VIP counters at several Centre-run Government hospitals that offer Covid testing only to politicians and ministers.

"But doctors have no separate counter for testing," as per the letter which is signed by FAIMA President Dr Rakesh Bagdi, Vice-President Dr Amarnath Yadav and General Secretary Dr Subrunkar Datta.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) too have taken up the FAIMA's cause, seeking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention.

In its separate letter addressed to PM Modi, the IMA said: "The working doctors are anguished at the undue stress due to this VIP culture and preferential treatment for politicians, bureaucrats, party work-

No proof of younger people at greater corona risk: ICMR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The earlier claims of younger people getting affected more in the second wave is proving to be false if one goes by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) data from hospitalised Covid-19 patients during the first and the second spell of the pandemic.

Sharing the data, the ICMR on Monday said, "There was no evidence of the younger population being at greater risk in the ongoing wave and that the proportion of death in the hospitalised patients also hasn't changed between the two waves. Rather the studies reflect that there is no change in the age profile, older people are still more prone to this virus. One more thing that is very prominent is the shortness

of breath has increased in the covid positive patients due to which the demand for oxygen cylinders has also increased."

However, what has changed is more hospitalised patients (47.5 pc) reporting shortness of breath in the second wave than in the first (41.7 pc), significantly raising the requirement of supplemental oxygen in the country in the ongoing wave, said the study.

Also more asymptomatic people have been admitted to hospitals in the second wave, of which the ICMR has done interim analysis and larger studies are ongoing.

More than 70 per cent of the hospitalised Covid patients in both waves have been over 40 years old, data from 9,485 patients (6,642 between September and

November 2020 and 1,405 between March and April 2021) shows. Only a marginally higher number of youth (0 to 18 years) have been hospitalised this time — 5.8 per cent as against 4.2 per cent last year despite the opening up of economic activities, Dr Bhargava said citing the study data.

"The proportion of 30- to 40-year-olds has remained static at 21 per cent between the two waves. The conclusion is that there is no overarching extra risk to the youth of becoming COVID positive this time. There has been no shift in the age prevalence of COVID in India. The older people continue to be more vulnerable," Member Health NITI Aayog Dr VK

Paul said today. AIIMS-New Delhi Director Randeep Guleria cautioned people against irrational use of Remdesivir noting that no study in the world had shown it reduced mortality.

"Remdesivir is only to be used in moderately ill COVID patients who are hospitalised, and have very low oxygen levels and lung damage. It is of no use in mild patients. In fact, the UK has only given paracetamol, hydration and multi-vitamins to mild patients and that's the way management," he said, noting that Remdesivir was no magic bullet and this anti-viral injection was not meant to be taken at home.

On plasma therapy, the AIIMS Director said large studies in India had shown it was not useful in COVID patients.

On Tocilizumab, he said it was meant for severely ill COVID patients in whom cytokine storms had set in and no other treatment—steroids, anti-coagulants, etc — was working.

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British PM cancels India visit on corona surge

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI/LONDON

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



Johnson

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

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

"In view of the prevailing Covid situation, it has been decided by mutual agreement that the prime minister of the United Kingdom will not visit India next week," he said.

Bagchi said the two sides will be holding a virtual meeting in the coming days to launch plans for a transformed India-UK relationship.

"In the light of the current coronavirus situation, Prime

Minister Boris Johnson will not be able to travel to India next week," Downing Street said in a joint statement on behalf of the British and Indian governments.

"Instead, Prime Ministers Modi and Johnson will speak later this month to agree and launch their ambitious plans for the future partnership between the UK and India. They will remain in regular contact beyond this, and look forward to meeting in person later this year," the statement said.

Pressure had been mounting on Johnson to call off the visit amid growing concerns of a new variant of COVID-19 detected in the country. Over the weekend, UK Opposition Labour Party joined calls for him to conduct the discussions remotely via Zoom and cancel the physical visit, which had already been shortened to focus on a day-long packed schedule on Monday, April 26.

Both sides were to agree on a "Roadmap 2030" for re-energised India-UK relations across trade and investment and climate action, which is now likely to be signed off remotely later this month.

As part of the UK's post-Brexit Global Britain engagement as a non-member of the European Union (EU), all eyes have been on a proposed Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) with India which will pave the way for a full-fledged Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the future. The ETP was expected to take firm shape during Johnson's visit this month but it remains to be seen how that progresses given the cancellation.

Modi is invited to the G7 Summit in Cornwall in June, with India among the guest countries. That is now likely to be their next face-to-face meeting, if Modi is able to travel for the summit.

Terminating the cancellation as frustrating, Johnson said it was "only sensible" to call off the visit. "Narendra Modi and I have basically come to the conclusion that, very sadly, I won't be able to go ahead with the trip," Johnson told reporters, during a visit to Gloucestershire soon after the Downing Street announcement.

"I do think it's only sensible to postpone, given what's happened in India, the shape of the pandemic there. Countries around the world including our own have been through this — I think everybody's got a massive amount of sympathy with India, what they're going through," he said.

CBI, NIA should go after hoarders of Covid medicines: Cong



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday said the BJP-led Centre should make probe agencies NIA, CBI and the ED go after black-marketeers and hoarders of medicines used for coronavirus treatment in place of "using them to target political opponents".

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra too accused former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis of hoarding Remdesivir, saying a BJP leader holding on to the drug at a time when people are scrambling to arrange it is a "crime against humanity".

Taking to Twitter, Priyanka tagged a video of top Maharashtra BJP leaders, including Fadnavis, arguing with police officials after the Mumbai Police questioned a pharma company director following information that thousands of vials of the

Remdesivir drug, critical in COVID-19 treatment, were to be flown out of the country.

"At a time when people from every corner of the country are requesting for being provided with Remdesivir, and many are struggling to procure a bottle of Remdesivir to save their lives, a BJP leader, who was in responsible position, hoarding Remdesivir is a crime against humanity," Priyanka said.

The Mumbai Police on Sunday said they had information that the Remdesivir stock was going to be flown abroad as air cargo, despite a ban on the export of the drug. Fadnavis claimed the director was picked up because the BJP managed to get permissions in place for the supply of the drug to Maharashtra.

"Strict action should be taken against people hoarding and black marketing vaccines, injections and medicines. The government should bring in

Jaishankar rejects criticism over export of vaccines

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday strongly rejected criticism over India's export of coronavirus vaccines, saying there were global commitments for a variety of reasons, including for procurement of raw materials for production of the doses.

At an online interaction, the external affairs minister said India prioritised vaccination of its people while describing those who questioned why the country was exporting at all as "non-serious" people.

the NIA, CBI and the Enforcement Directorate against black-marketeers and hoarders of injections and vaccines. When you can use them to target your political opponents, why not utilise them sensibly against black-marketeers and hoarders who are today creating all these problems in the country?" former Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan said at AICC Press conference.

The Mumbai police on Saturday night questioned

Several political leaders, including Congress's Rahul Gandhi, slammed the government for exporting over 60 million doses of coronavirus vaccines, saying there were global commitments for a variety of reasons, including for procurement of raw materials for production of the doses.

The government has almost stopped export of the vaccines following a sudden spike in coronavirus infections.

In his address at the national leadership conclave of All India Management Association (AIMA), Jaishankar said as the situation

became tough in India, the government apprised various countries about it and most of them understood.

"Today as the foreign minister, I am pushing other countries, particularly some big countries, saying please keep the raw materials flowing for vaccines to be made in India.

"Why am I doing that because the fact is that there are global supply chains; very few things are made exclusively in one geography, very few societies can say we are autonomous of our reliance on others," he added.

station along with some BJP leaders. Do you want to help the public or the black-marketeers?" Chavan asked.

Chavan also demanded that the Centre spells out a plan on vaccine supplies and be transparent about it.

About former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh writing to his successor Narendra Modi suggesting five measures to battle the COVID-19 crisis, Chavan said the suggestions from the opposition should be taken in a positive way.

DRDO develops Oxygen Delivery System to tackle virus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In its effort to shore up the ongoing effort to face the challenge of Covid pandemic, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed SpO2 (Blood Oxygen Saturation) supplemental Oxygen Delivery System.

Though this is basically for troops deployed at high altitude where oxygen is scarce, the system can also prove to be a boon during the current covid situation, DRDO officials said here on Monday.

Giving details, they said the system developed by Defence Bio-Engineering & Electro Medical Laboratory (DEBEL) delivers supplement-

tal oxygen based on the SpO2 levels and prevents the person from sinking in to a state of Hypoxia, which is fatal in most cases, if sets in.

Hypoxia is a state in which the amount of oxygen reaching the tissues is inadequate to fulfill all the energy requirements of the body. This is exactly the situation that gets replicated in a COVID patient due to the virus infection and has been a leading factor in the current crisis.

The electronic hardware of the system is designed for functioning at extreme altitudes featuring low barometric pressures, low temperatures and humidity. The software safety checks incorporated into the system are critical in

ensuring the functional reliability of the system in field conditions.

The system reads SpO2 levels of the subject from a wrist-worn pulse oximeter module through wireless interface and controls a proportional solenoid valve to regulate the oxygen supply to the subject. The oxygen is delivered from a lightweight portable oxygen cylinder through nasal nares. The system is available in various sizes from one litre and one kg weight with 150 litres of oxygen supply to 10 litres & 10 kg weight with 1,500 litres of oxygen supply which can sustain for 750 minutes with a continuous flow of two liters per min (lpm).

The Lok Sabha Speaker further said that governments are making all necessary efforts at

LS Speaker holds meet of presiding officers on coronavirus status

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker and Chairman, All India Presiding Officers' Conference (AIPOC), Om Birla, chaired a meeting of presiding officers of the Legislative Bodies in India and other Leaders on the subject "Prevailing Covid-19 Situation - Role and Responsibility of Public Representatives".

Apart from the Presiding Officers of State Legislatures, Ministers of Parliamentary Affairs, Chief Whips and Leaders of Opposition in State Legislatures also joined the Virtual Meeting.

Birla observed that after more than a year of the crisis of COVID-19, the pandemic has resurfaced with new challenges. He noted that the new strain of corona infection is spreading more rapidly than last year which is a matter of grave concern.

The Lok Sabha Speaker further said that governments are making all necessary efforts at

their level. But in this hour of crisis, the legislature also has to fulfill its duty more promptly. He exhorted the people's representatives to fulfill their duties in the spirit of solidarity and collectivity and contribute to the society and the country in getting relief from the pandemic.

Birla urged the Presiding Officers to sensitize the public, through the people's representatives of their respective States, to follow the Corona Protocol. He asked the public representatives to create awareness that personal caution is the most potent weapon in the fight against corona infection and any negligence can prove to be extremely dangerous.

Birla also gave suggested that people's representatives may engage with social organizations to check the spread of the pandemic and all representative institutions including the Gram Panchayats and local bodies in urban areas may be motivated to make extensive efforts to reduce the corona infection.

UPSC defers interviews for Civil Services examinations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has deferred interviews for civil services examination 2020 due to a surge in coronavirus cases, according to an official statement issued on Monday. The civil services examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- to select officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

The dates for interviews and recruitment test, when candidates and advisers are required to travel from all parts of the country, will be reviewed from time to time, it said. "Revised schedules of the same will be notified on the website of the UPSC," the statement issued by the Commission said.

In its special meeting, the UPSC considered rapidly changing circumstances,



health considerations, lockdown restrictions including social distancing norms and aggravating situation enforced due to the pandemic on Monday. "The Commission has decided that it will not be possible to conduct examinations and interviews for the present," it said.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EO/AO) Recruitment Test 2020 scheduled to be held on May 9, therefore, stands deferred, the statement said. "The personality tests (interviews) of

the Indian Economic Service/Indian Statistical Service Examination, 2020 (scheduled from 20th-23rd April, 2021); the civil services examination, 2020 (scheduled from 26th April-18th June, 2021) and the recruitment tests are also deferred till further notice," it said.

"As and when dates are decided for the deferred tests/interviews, it will be ensured that candidates are given a notice of at least 15 days," the UPSC said.

EC didn't club polls on BJP wish: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Holding once again the BJP responsible for increasing numbers of corona cases in Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said that she had requested the Election Commission with folded hands to club the last three phases of elections into one but the poll body would not listen because the BJP Government did not want that to happen.

Banerjee who was addressing a rally at Kaliaganj in North Bengal said, "I have requested the Election Commission with folded hands to wrap up remaining three phases of elections on a single day or at least combine the last two phases in one so that at least one day of contamination

is saved but they would not listen to it because the BJP does not want it."

Attacking the saffron outfit and all its national leaders for "camping in Bengal without having any consideration for the surging corona cases," the Chief Minister said "they are bringing lakhs of outsiders for campaigning without checking their health status and infecting the people of Bengal... the voters will definitely take note of this insensitivity."

The Chief Minister had earlier said that she would not conduct big rallies in Kolkata and limit her public meetings to small 30-minute shows. The BJP leadership however said that the Chief Minister's decision to shrink her public programmes in Kolkata only after

the poor attendance in her road-show on Sunday.

"There were only a few hundred people in Mamata didi's road show... she does not want more embarrassment and so she is hiding behind the excuse of corona... had she been so sensitive then why had she been organizing big rallies in earlier phases?" BJP leader JP Majumdar said.

Speaking to the media at Malda, Banerjee also announced early summer vacations for the government schools in Bengal.

"As a precautionary measure we are declaring summer vacations early and further decision would be taken only after the month of June... I would request the private schools to follow suit too," she

said adding her Government was taking all the precautionary measures to contain a second surge of the pandemic.

On the Class X and XII examinations, the West Bengal Chief Minister said "we will soon take a decision about secondary and higher secondary examinations" which are scheduled to take place in May and June.

On the question of lockdown she asked people not to get panicked. "There is no reason to be panicked... we are not thinking of lockdown immediately because it does not solve the situation... instead of force we want to deal the situation tenderly... let the people cooperate and let us cooperate with them."

Reacting to the Chief

Minister's allegations Home Minister Amit Shah said that "the BJP is the not the authority to decide on the modalities of elections... it is for the Commission to decide... it had called an all-party meeting after which they cut down campaigning by a day in every phase... then they gave us some instructions and we are following it... now rest is with the Commission."

Wondering why the Chief Minister would not attend the meetings called by the Centre to discuss the pandemic issue his ministerial colleague Ravi Shankar Prasad said "election is a constitutional obligation undertaken by the Election Commission... whatever directions they have given we are following."

The other officers shifted

EC shifts 4 IPS officers in Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Election Commission on Monday shifted out four senior police officers ahead of the sixth phase of elections in Bengal.

These officers include Nagendranath Tripathi the IPS officer who handled the Nandigram elections. He has been posted as Superintendent of Police Birbhum a districted ill-reputed for violence and political murders. He replaces Miraj Khalid. Birbhum SDPO Abhishek Roy has also been replaced with Nagaraj Devarakonda, OPS.

Incidentally TMC strongman and Birbhum district president Anubrata Mandal recently went on record saying that he did not rule out violence in the elections.

The other officers shifted

Meanwhile, even as political violence continued in Bengal the BJP candidate from Old Malda in North Bengal was shot at by unidentified miscreants on Sunday evening

are Asansol --- also a politically volatile place --- SP Suresh Jain who has been replaced with Mitesh Jain. Similarly Burdwan East SP Bhaskhar Mukherjee has been replaced with Ajeet Kumar Singh IPS.

Meanwhile, even as political violence continued in Bengal the BJP candidate from Old Malda in North Bengal was shot at by unidentified miscreants on Sunday evening.

Saffron candidate Gopal Chandra Saha was shot at from close range and the bullet lodged inside his neck. The condition of the BJP leader was stated to be stable after the doctors at Malda Medical College

conducted a two-and-half-hours' surgery to extract the bullet. The BJP pointed fingers at the Trinamool Congress and staged road blockades even on Monday.

Elsewhere a BJP worker Akil Pramanik was found mysteriously hanging near his home at Kalyanpur village in Kalna sub-division of East Burdwan district. The party men alleged a TMC hand in his death alleging the local Trinamool leaders had been threatening him for thwarting attempted rigging by the TMC men during the fifth phase of polling on April 17.

TMC and BJP workers clashed elsewhere at Duttabad near Bidhanagar in north-eastern fringes of Kolkata too. Reports of violence also came in from parts of Nadia and South 24 Parganas.

Taking no chances, several Delhiites stock liquor before lockdown

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Moments after Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal announced a six day lockdown in national Capital to tackle the raging Covid-19 pandemic, there were long queues at several liquor stores across the city.

As people lined up in queues the social distancing went for a toss. Most of the people were buying boxes of liquor while some bought two to six liquor bottles. Many lost patience as the mercury climbed and some even tried to jump queues, leading to minor disagreements and altercations at some places. An association of liquor companies, meanwhile, came out with a statement urging the Delhi Government to start home delivery of alcoholic beverages in the city, on the lines of Maharashtra, to ease the rush.

"We believe that lockdown will be extended beyond six days and it is time to stock up the liquor at home. Liquor helps keep negative thinking out of your mind. There are many people at the shop, and I will try to buy at least six to eight bottles for myself," said Abhimanyu Singh, while waiting for his turn at Mayur Vihar phase-III liquor shop.

Bharat Sharma, a resident of Dilshad Garden, said the moment he came to know about the lockdown, he reached the local liquor shop along with a friend. "We waited for more than one hour and somehow managed to get three bottles," he added.

With similar reports from across the city, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) issued a statement saying, "What we saw today was a panic reaction from the public, driven by their memory of lockdown extensions last year. For lakhs of people all over India, alcohol is part of a regular consumption basket that they do not wish to be deprived of."

"While we hope that the public and shopkeepers in Delhi adhere to COVID-appropriate behaviour, steps to reassure public would help. Decision of Maharashtra to allow home delivery of liquor, for example, has helped contained panic reaction to lockdown there. We urge the Delhi government to think of such steps," Vinod Giri, CIABC director general, said in the statement.

A lot of people waiting in the queues said they bought liquor at almost double the rates last year and wanted to avoid a similar situation this time.

"During the last lockdown, we bought

liquor bottles at doubled rates from the black market. Now, there is another lockdown, and seeing the current situation, one cannot say for how many days it will last. I will buy six whiskey bottles," said Jagdish Samora of Malviya Nagar while standing in a queue at a liquor shop.

Earlier in the day, Kejriwal announced a six-day lockdown from 10 pm on Monday till 5 am on April 26, which he said was necessary to deal with the rising number of COVID-19 cases, as the city's health system was stretched to its limits.

The national capital's health system is stretched, although it has not collapsed yet, the chief minister said, adding that despite around 25,500 cases coming up every day, Delhi's health system is still functioning.

Of the 863 liquor shops in Delhi, around 475 are run by four government corporations -- the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation, Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation, Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation and Delhi Consumer's Cooperative Wholesale Store. The remaining shops are owned by private individuals. According to an estimate, Delhi earns Rs 6,574 crore each year through excise revenue.

Night curfew in Kerala as fresh cases over 13K

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Even as Kerala Government declared night curfew from Tuesday onwards on account of the grave situation in the State due to Covid-19, a civic body chief has come out in the open for the indifferent and callous approach of the administration towards pandemic control measures.

The Department of Health announced that 13,644 new persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 and 21 deaths were recorded till 6 pm Monday taking the total number of patients in the State to 1.25 lakh, T M Zakeer Hussain, chairman of Perumbavoor Municipal Council lambasted the Kerala Government for its indifference towards covid control measures taken by the civic bodies in the State.

"Though the Municipal Council had prepared a comprehensive pandemic control programme to be implemented from March 5, the Department of Health ordered us to stop all kinds of preventive measures planned by us. They told us that it was the responsibility of the State Government and the civic

bodies need not bother about such responsibilities," said Hussain while addressing a town hall meeting convened by him late Monday evening.

The young Municipal Chairman, who is known for his pro-active measures said that the civic body which he heads was the wealthiest local self-government body in Kerala. "But the concentration of power in certain agencies and refusal of the State Government to cooperate with the civic bodies has resulted in the pathetic position.

The civic bodies had prepared an action plan to control the spread of the pandemic but the intransigence of the State administration from the beginning of the break out of the disease has led to the present scenario," said Hussain, a Congress leader.

The night curfew would be in place for the next 14 days. All private tuition classes have been banned and only on-line classes would be allowed. The Universities in the State have postponed the degree and post graduate examinations following the intervention of Governor Arif Mohammed Khan.

All religious festivals and social gatherings that include the famous Thrissur Pooram would be held only symbolically with no crowd. The Pooram usually features 70 caparisoned elephants resplendent with colorful umbrellas and spectacularly designed fans. The festival attracts at least a million viewers from India and abroad and concludes with magnificent fireworks designed aesthetically by specially trained explosive makers of Thrissur.

Many civic body chiefs like panchayat presidents and block panchayat presidents alleged that the deterioration in Covid-19 in the State was due to the intransigent attitude of the State administration towards the local body governments.

"We do not have any problems in the Chief Minister, Health Minister and the CPI(M) walking away with the entire credit. But they should have incorporated us in the measures devised to counter the pandemic," said Basheer, a former civic body member who opted out of election because of his disappointment with the centers of power in the state.

2 Hizbul Mujahideen ultras killed in J&K

Jammu: Two terrorists belonging to the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist outfit were neutralised by the joint team of security forces in the Zeipora area of Shopian on Monday.

The security forces also recovered one Under Barrel Grenade launcher along with one AK rifle and pistol from the encounter site. According to a police spokesman, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by Police, 34RR and 178 Bn CRPF in Zeipora area of Shopian on the basis of a specific intelligence input.

During the search operation as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given an opportunity to surrender, however, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter.

In the ensuing encounter, two terrorists were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of encounter. They have been identified as Sabzar Ahmad Ganie of Sehpura Kulgam and Amir Ahmad Bhat resident of Malibugh, Imamsahib Shopian. **PNS**

Ramdesivir allocation to Maha must be need based, Bombay HC directs Centre

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Directing the State Government to release 10,000 vials of Remdesivir vials to Nagpur district immediately, the Bombay High Court on Monday told the Centre that if Maharashtra accounted for 40 per cent of Covid-19 infections in the country, "then it is only right to say that 40 per cent of Remdesivir injections are allotted to this state."

Holding that the allocation of Remdesivir vials "has to be need-based and not on any other factors that are not relevant," a Nagpur division bench of the Bombay High Court -- comprising Justices Sunil Shukre and SM Modak -- observed that if Maharashtra accounted for 40 per cent of the cases, then the allocation of Remdesivir injections to the state should also be in the same percentage.

"If contribution towards COVID-19 cases is 40 per cent from Maharashtra, then it is only right to say that 40 per cent of Remdesivir injections are allotted to this state. The allocation has to be need-based and not on any other factors that are not relevant," Justice Shukre said.

The HC bench's observations should be seen in the light of the fact that Remdesivir is listed for use by critical COVID-19 patients and the

Centre's decision to ban the export of the drug last week in view of the sudden surge in the pandemic case and consequent increase in demand for the medicine.

Pulling up the disproportional allocation of Remdesivir vials to various districts in the state, the HC bench noted that the available statistics showed some "arbitrariness" in the district-wise distribution of Remdesivir vials by the State and this is required to be stopped forthwith. Maintaining that it did not understand the logic behind allocating 5,000 vials of Remdesivir for 2,000-odd beds in Thane as against the allocation of just 3,000 vials for more than 8,000 COVID-19 beds in

Nagpur, the HC bench observed: "There appears to be a disparity and some arbitrariness in the distribution of Remdesivir vials to Nagpur district. The vials are not being released in proportion to the requirement."

Noting that while on April 13 and April 18, not a single vial of Remdesivir was allotted to Nagpur, on April 17 only 500 vials were allotted to the orange city, the HC bench said: "This has severely affected the administration of health care to COVID-19 patients in Nagpur. The possibility of mortality because of lack of Remdesivir cannot be ruled out. It is the solemn duty of the state government to save and preserve each precious life."

Maha Deputy CM asks dist officials to set up oxygen plants near hospitals

Mumbai: Keeping in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases and shortage of liquid Oxygen in Maharashtra, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Monday directed the district collectors and municipal commissioners to set up liquid Oxygen manufacturing plants in vicinity of major hospitals across the state. Speaking at a meeting of district collectors and municipal commissioners through video

conferencing, the deputy chief minister asked the top officials in the districts to take steps to start oxygen manufacturing plants next to hospitals in the next two to three weeks. Meanwhile, Pawar asked the officials at the district level to obtain as much as liquid Oxygen as possible from paper, petroleum, fertiliser and refinery companies to meet the immediate needs at various hospitals in the state.

Remove bottlenecks for investment in State, Rajasthan CM tells officers



Jaipur: Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said that new projects should be started in a timely manner by removing the bottlenecks in investment in the state. He said that in the last two years, the state government has implemented many important policies and programs to increase investment in the state. Rajasthan Investment Promotion Scheme (RIPS-2019), Rajasthan Industrial Development Policy - 2019, one-stop shop system and single window system are providing various facilities to entrepreneurs and investors. He instructed the officers that every

possible effort should be made to increase investment in the state.

Gehlot was addressing the first meeting of the Board of Investment (Board of Investment) constituted under the Rajasthan Enterprises Single Window Enablement and License (Amendment) Act, 2020 through video conference at the Chief Minister's residence on Monday. He said that the state government has formulated a tourism policy to promote tourism in the state. This time, an allocation of Rs 500 crore has been made in the budget for the Tourism Development Fund.

J&K logs 1,516 new Covid cases, active cases cross 12K

Jammu: An alarming Covid-19 spread continued in J&K on Monday as 1,516 new cases came to light during last 24 hours and the number of active cases crossed the 12,000 mark. Officials said of the new cases, 768 were from the Jammu division and 748 the from Kashmir division while 813 patients were discharged from different hospitals after recovery. Six patients more succumbed, taking the number of people killed by coronavirus in J&K to 2063. So far, 148,208 people have been infected with coronavirus in J&K out of which 133,981 have recovered. The number of active cases has risen to 12,164 out of which 4,813 are from the Jammu division and 7,351 are from the Kashmir division. **JANS**

REMDESIVIR SHORTAGE ROW

BJP urges Maha Gov to dismiss Min Malik for making allegations against Centre

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Opposition BJP on Monday urged Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari to recommend the dismissal of NCP Minister Nawab Malik from the State Cabinet and registration of an FIR for making baseless allegation against the Union Government regarding Remdesivir vials, floating rumours and creating disaffection in the minds of the people about the Centre.

Upping the ante against the statements made by senior NCP leader and Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik against the Centre for its discriminatory attitude towards the Maharashtra Government over the supply of Remdesivir vials, State BJP president Chandrakant Patil shot off a memorandum to the Governor seeking Malik's dismissal from the State Cabinet and registration of an FIR against him for creating disaffection in the minds of the people about the Centre.

In its memorandum, Patil cited the following tweet put by Malik on April 17, 2021: "It is sad & shocking that when the Government of Maharashtra asked the 16 export companies for #Remdesivir, we were told that the Central Government has asked them not to supply the medicine to #Maharashtra. These companies were warned, if they did, their license would be cancelled."

The State BJP chief said that though Malik had made a serious allegation against, he had not provided any proof to substantiate his allegation. "This tweet has been widely discussed in social media. In my opinion, the minister has committed a crime".

Among other things, Patil charged that the State Minister had made a baseless allegation against the Centre and in the process had created disaffection in the minds of the people in the state about the Union government. He alleged that despite being a state minister, Malik had --through his allegation against the Centre -- had tried to undermine the constitutional machinery in the country.



Workers construct a Covid care centre at Sarusujai Stadium, as coronavirus cases surge, in Guwahati on Monday

PTI

New party takes charge of Tripura tribal autonomous council

Agartala: After a landslide victory, the newly formed 'TIPRA Motha', which in the April 6 elections had defeated the ruling BJP-IPFT alliance, took over the governance of the politically important Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday announced that they would boycott the swearing-in-ceremony of the newly elected members and no leaders of the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura was seen at the event held at the TTAADC headquarters in Khumulwng, 20 km north of Agartala.

TIPRA Motha's ally Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura's (INPT) General Secretary Jagadish Debbarma was elected new Chairman of the TTAADC and Purnachandra Jamatia has been chosen as new Chief Executive Member (CEM).

The CEM and the other Executive Members of the TTAADC would take the oath on Tuesday. The 'TIPRA Motha' chairman and Tripura's royal scion Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barman said that following the principle of 'one man, one post' he opted out of the CEM race.

Amalgamating various local tribal-based parties and leaders and members of other parties, the 'TIPRA Motha' (tribal unity) headed by Deb Barman was formed just a few months ago and scripted a new political history by capturing the 30-member TTAADC.

In the April 6 elections to the TTAADC (result of which declared on April 10), of the 28 elective seats (two nominated by the members), the 'TIPRA Motha' won 18 seats, the BJP secured nine seats while one seat went to an Independent candidate. Two members of different tribal communities were nominated by the governor in the TTAADC on the advice of the state government.

The results of the elections to the TTAADC are a major setback for the BJP-alliance, which wrested power in Tripura in 2018 after defeating the CPI-M led Left parties that ruled the state for 25 years. However, the BJP for the first time won nine seats in the TTAADC though its junior ally IPFT, despite being a major tribal-based party, drew a blank.

Tripura's oldest tribal-based party INPT, a former ally of the Congress, is also a part-

ner of the 'TIPRA Motha', and its two candidates, secured victory in the polls to the TTAADC, which has a jurisdiction on over two-thirds of Tripura's 10,491 sq km area and is home to over 12,16,000 people, of which 90 per cent are tribals.

The opposition CPI-M, which was governing the TTAADC until May 17 last year, has also suffered a setback in the elections though it has a strong base among the tribals ever since the Left movement started in Tripura in the early 40s.

The IPFT has been agitating since 2009 for the creation of a separate state by upgrading the TTAADC while TIPRA Motha had recently raised the demand for a 'greater Tripura land' (greater areas for the indigenous tribals). Both the demands were, however, strongly opposed by all the political major parties, including the BJP, the CPI-M and the Congress.

The TTAADC was constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in June 1985 for the socio-economic development of the tribals, who always played a significant role in Tripura politics. **JANS**

Two bar girls raped in Patna, accused held

Patna: Two bar girls including a minor were allegedly raped by an orchestra organiser in Patna on Sunday, an official said here on Monday. The accused has been arrested. The victims were brought from Chhattisgarh for a dance performance in an orchestra event. The organiser Vipin Giri, a resident of Fatehpur under Naubatpur police station in Patna, promised them a month-long job in the orchestra. The victims contacted the local police on Monday morning and gave written complaints against the accused. Subsequently, a police team raided Giri's house and arrested him.

"As per the statement of victims, the accused allegedly forced them into prostitution in Patna which they resisted. Hence the accused Vipin Giri held them captive in a house. On Sunday, he came in a drunken state and allegedly raped them one by one," said Vimalsh Kumar SI Naubatpur police station.

"We have conducted medical examination of victims which confirms rape. One of the victims claimed that she is below 18 year old. We have booked the accused under POCSO act as well," the officer said. **JANS**



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Faith put to test?

The seers' response to the PM's Kumbh appeal must not be seen as weak-willed or forced

The ongoing pandemic has ravaged everyone alike. It doesn't matter if one is a common citizen, a bureaucrat, politician or a sadhu (seer) or belongs to which gender, the Coronavirus just doesn't discriminate. The virus is spreading like a wildfire and has put to test not only the economies, Governments and the healthcare infrastructure, but also faith and religion. The Maha Kumbh Mela at Haridwar, earlier slated to close on April 30, now wears a deserted look — after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to keep the remaining part of the Mela "symbolic" in the backdrop of the surging COVID-19 cases. With the pilgrims and seers leaving Haridwar, the skeptics may view it any way they like but no one should see it as a defeat of faith. Here, the matter of faith and religiosity needs to be seen through the prism of science — the philosophy as followed and professed by the great Indian monk Swami Vivekananda. The silent exodus from Haridwar proves yet again that for the flag-bearers and followers of the world's most ancient or primordial religious order — the 'Sanatan dharma' — science is as sacrosanct as faith. This is what our seers have done and this is exactly what they have been doing since ages. We should be thankful to the seers for heeding the PM's appeal and deciding to vacate the site. For thousands of 'batuks' (new inductees) and numerous others who must have

been waiting to participate in the major religious event, giving up on the *Shahi Snan* (royal bath) or cutting short their stay is no mean sacrifice.

But they have done so willingly to serve the greater cause of humanity by helping to break the transmission chain. The Kumbh is not only about 'Snan' (holy bath); it is in fact like a universe in microcosm — representing the very idea and soul of existence. But it's always good to surrender one's interests willingly when it's a question of the greater good of humankind. This behaviour is in sharp contrast to the Tablighi Jamaat members' — spitting on policemen and volunteers, urinating/defecating openly inside their quarantine centres and abusing doctors and nurses. It's really for the reader to decide for herself/himself which behaviour is close to fundamentalism and which one is sympathetic, accommodative and humane. After the Prime Minister's appeal, Juna *akhada's* Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Avdhesanand Giri announced the formal conclusion of the Maha Kumbh Mela for their followers, saying that the remaining *Shahi Snan* should be observed symbolically on April 27. Many people assert that COVID-19 is here, and maybe will stay for long, but the Kumbh — which represents the primeval culture and its ethos in a nutshell — certainly has been around much longer. It's a good time to remember the famous lines by poet Iqbal: "*Kuchh baat hai ki hasti mit-ti nahi hamaari, sadiyon raha hai dushman daur-e-zamaan hamara.*" It doesn't matter if that *dushman* (enemy) be as mighty as the Coronavirus. With faith by our side, we shall surely win.

PICTALK



Passengers at the Anand Vihar terminal after the Delhi Government announced a six-day lockdown

What Modi really means to people



PRAFULL GORADIA

Even before becoming the Prime Minister, and ever since, Modi has scaled newer peaks of popularity, both at home and abroad

Member of Parliament from Arunachal Pradesh Tapir Gao, speaking in Parliament on April 1, described Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi as an avatar of God who is taking the country in the right direction. Gao said that Modi's work for tea plantation workers in West Bengal and Assam is "like an avatar of *Bhagwan*". Ladakh's MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal hailed the PM as a *yug purush* (man of the era) for realising BJP ideologue Syama Prasad Mookerjee's dream. Mookerjee had opposed the special status to Jammu & Kashmir.



An ordinary mortal, I am unable to either corroborate or contradict these opinions. All I can do is to quote from the *Gita*. Chapter 4 of the *Bhagwad Gita*, delivered by Krishna to Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, states: "Whenever and wherever there is a decline of the practice of *dharma*, O Bharat (Arjuna), and a predominant rise of *adharm* (evil) — I incarnate Myself. To deliver the pious and annihilate the evildoers, as well as to re-establish *dharma*, I appear, era after era."

From the time I first met Modi by chance at the Vadodra airport in 1991 and had a 15-minute chat, I feel I met someone extraordinary. He was then the general secretary of the Gujarat BJP — the party had yet to come to power in the State. We remained in touch after that and until he became the PM, when I realised that he had flown to another planet and I had remained where I was.

In his first term as the Gujarat Chief Minister, his name and fame had spread across the State to West Bengal and as far as Assam. The Bengali elite, which generally looked down on the BJP as communal, invited Modi to the Calcutta Club for a seminar on the Uniform Civil Code. Years later, in 2006, at Mumbai's Shanmukhananda Hall, Modi addressed a packed audience, speaking about his introduction of new technologies for agriculture in Gujarat. He revealed that earlier, at a

party rally in Guwahati, he had been interrupted by the audience who said they would rather hear about how he was tackling infiltrators from Bangladesh. Modi told the Mumbai audience to tumultuous applause that his reply was that in Assam, people were oppressed by Bangladeshis but, in Gujarat, it was the Bangladeshis who felt oppressed by Modi.

In 2013, Modi was chosen as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate by the RSS without consulting the party's bigwigs; the ambitions of the latter would come in his way. It had never happened before. This was the measure of his popularity having spread throughout the country while he was busy with Gujarat. I was flabbergasted when I saw him on television as the PM for an exclusive lunch with Queen Elizabeth II at the Buckingham Palace and, on the same visit, addressing the British Parliament. Such honour has not been showered on any Indian leader — not even Jawaharlal Nehru. Soon thereafter, Modi addressed the US Congress, which only PV Narasimha Rao had done before. All this for a man who only until a few years ago had been denied a visa by Washington, with London



MODI'S CHARISMA HAS NOT BEEN CIRCUMSCRIBED BY THE BORDERS AND SHORES OF INDIA. THE COUNTRY HAS RISEN IN THE EYES AND MINDS OF THE WORLD. A TELLING EXAMPLE IS INDIA'S RESPONSE TO THE LATEST ROUND OF CHINESE REVANCHISM, PARTICULARLY THE GALWAN INCIDENT

being hesitant. This denotes that Modi has a rare charisma that travels electronically, not merely electrically.

The flash of his charisma has not halted here. As the PM, he made friends with President Barack Obama. The next American President, Donald Trump, went gaga over him, sumptuously demonstrated at the 'Howdy Modi' rally at Houston, Texas, in September 2020. Earlier, Modi had commanded a similar performance in London, when then British PM David Cameron was present and delighted.

Modi's charisma has not been circumscribed by the borders and shores of India. The country has risen in the eyes and minds of the world. A telling example is India's response to the latest round of Chinese revanchism, particularly the Galwan incident on the Ladakh border, wherein China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) stealthily intruded and killed 20 Indian soldiers. Not only did the Indian Army hit back to inflict 40 or more casualties on the Chinese, it also occupied several strategic peaks along the Ladakh border, signalling its intent to escalate the conflict. More importantly, Modi did not issue mere protests from

Delhi, as the previous PMs had done, but landed in Ladakh at our Army's forward base, barely miles from where the PLA is stationed across the Line of Actual Control, sounding India's determination to roll back any Chinese adventurism. Beijing is now talking about the benefits of bonhomie and peace with India.

Pakistan remained a bogey until Modi came to power. Educated Indians would generally caution why New Delhi couldn't be too tough with Pakistan because of the 20 crore Muslims in India! Without harming a single hair of any Indian, Modi has silenced Islamabad to the extent that General Bajwa, Pakistan's *de facto* ruler, has started singing paeans of peace.

Prior to Modi, the behaviour of India's political class made our people equate themselves with Pakistan. India's image in the world alternated between that of a cat and a rat. Modi has made the world believe that India is truly a lion. Readers may assess what this gentleman truly is — a human being, a superhuman or an avatar.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CREMATORIUMS CAN BECOME HOTSPOTS

Sir — It is time to set up makeshift crematoriums and designate more burial grounds for the COVID casualties. With the second wave, the spectre of COVID has become even more frightening for all of us. The catastrophic spike in cases is coupled with a high death toll. The crematoriums and burial grounds are struggling to keep up, as the bodies pile up.

Why are crematoriums and morgues not considered a priority in our country by the policymakers? How many more pandemics do we need to understand the importance of such places? The non-functional morgues and crematoriums in Mumbai were in a pathetic and deplorable condition even before COVID-19 invaded our lives. The tender for the reconstruction of a morgue at St Georges Hospital is yet to be floated. The urgent need for a functional crematorium and morgue in Mumbai is being felt now more than ever, so that every citizen who ends up there can have a semblance of dignity in death.

No less weightage should be given to the dignity of those who have died as compared to the safety of the living. We are facing a shortage of crematoriums and burial grounds. As a result the dead, both COVID and non-COVID victims, and their loved ones have to wait a long time for the last rites. The overcrowding and long wait could turn these locations into virus hotspots. There is also the question of the safety of crematorium and burial ground workers. Is anyone listening?

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

THE ONSLAUGHT OF PANDEMIC

Sir — To say that India is in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic is to state the obvious. The Lancet's COVID-19 Commission forecasts that at the current rate of the run-away infection, there could be 2,300 deaths every day by the first week of June. The situation is so grave that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has again deferred his visit to India. The pandemic has brought about a profound change in our thinking and

Distribute the vaccine fairly



This refers to the editorial 'Fighting blind-folded' (April 19). I concur with the editorial view that the Governments and the scientific community are struggling hard to pin down the virus and the pandemic, but to no avail. However, it has been noticed that Indian vaccine manufacturers are unable to comply with the contractual terms and conditions laid down by the UK — the country that has given the license and technology to manufacture Covishield.

Since the stocks of the domestic vaccine supplies are limited, the imports of vaccines approved by the European Medical Agency (EMA) and US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA)

should be managed accordingly. The Centre and State Governments are not focussing on the percentage of the population that has not been vaccinated yet. It is important to increase the vaccination efforts. Some school teachers, bus, taxi and three-wheeler drivers, municipal and panchayat workers and advocates should be considered for vaccination irrespective of their age.

The Government should also explain how it will ensure the distribution of vaccines among different States in a fair and transparent manner. Since the last one year, COVID-19 has posed a serious challenge to the world and India and has drastically changed our behaviour and the way of life. In the meantime, the lockdown announced by the Delhi Government is a welcome step. Such restrictions are needed in Haryana and other neighbouring States as well. We all have a collective responsibility in our fight against the pandemic. The insouciance on part of any one State can weaken our fight against the Coronavirus.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

understanding of life. The second wave is having a devastating effect on lives and livelihood and is pushing people to live in the shadow of death and despair. The anxiety and suffering caused by the pandemic is a reality for us. Lockdown-like curbs have exacerbated hardships in many parts of the country. The general feeling is that no one can predict what will happen next.

The healthcare system is teetering on the edge of collapse as evidenced by the shortage of medical oxygen cylinders, hospital beds and antiviral drug Remdesivir (its sale in the black market is a shame) and vaccination doses. The Government appears to be floundering helplessly in the face of the inexorable surge in cases. It is difficult to say that it has risen to the challenge.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

attacked our country and we are its helpless victims. It is spreading like wildfire. Many State Governments have imposed restrictions on the movement of people, including night curfews. Vaccination, oxygen and hospital bed scarcity continue to haunt people. They are unable to get vaccinated in the Government facilities due to the shortage of shots. People are reeling under fear. At this point, night curfew seems to be meaningless and does not serve the desired purpose since most of the people are already locked in their houses during night. It should rather have been in the afternoon. Also, police should not deal with people who come out during curfew hours in a high-handed manner.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

POLICE MUST ACT SENSITIVELY

Sir — The double mutant Coronavirus has

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The guides

Rahul and Mamata show the way, curb election rallies in view of the explosion in COVID cases

As the number of COVID-19 cases rises exponentially, in West Bengal that is currently witnessing the Assembly elections as well as elsewhere in the country, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee have taken a major decision in the larger interest of the State's population. While the Congress scion has cancelled all his public meetings in West Bengal, the TMC chief will not campaign in Kolkata anymore. Both the leaders have reportedly taken this decision in view of the rising COVID-19 infections in the State. While voting in three of the eight-phase Assembly elections is yet to be held, the State on Saturday registered its highest single-day spike of 7,713 new COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 6,51,508. The death toll rose to 10,540 after 34 fresh fatalities were reported. Around the same time, 2.6 lakh new COVID-19 patients were detected across India in a single day. While Mamata will hold only one "symbolic" meeting in the State capital on the last day of campaigning, which is April 26, her election rallies in all other districts of the State will not be longer than 30 minutes.

For his part, Rahul — who had only recently reached the State to campaign for the Congress candidates — has suspended all his public rallies there and advised all political leaders to "think deeply about the consequences of holding large public rallies under the current circumstances", understandably inviting plaudits from senior leaders of his party. The Congress leader had earlier taken a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the BJP's star campaigner praised the people of West Bengal for turning up in large numbers for his political rally on Saturday. Rahul's move is certain to create pressure on the other main players in the fray, most notably the BJP and the TMC. While one is free to align with any political party or ideology, nobody is entitled to put the lives of anybody else on the line simply for the sake of amassing votes, especially in these sordid times. In this light, the decision by Rahul and Mamata deserves unregulated praise as, if nothing else, it puts the lives of the people of the State at greater premium than the lust for votes to form the next Government in West Bengal. Needless to say, other leaders would do well to take a leaf out of this sensible development.



SOUNDBITE

The production of Remdesivir is adequate. We have banned exports as a precaution but in panic people are buying in bulk, which is leading to a shortage.

Union Home Minister — Amit Shah

I am in the UAE for a bilateral visit and not an India-specific agenda. My agenda is UAE-Pakistan and not India-Pakistan.

Pakistan Foreign Minister — Shah Mahmood Qureshi

If your script is not good, your acting won't come off well, and I say this even for theatrical releases. Why should you have weaker scripts just because it is in the theatrical space?

Actor — Boman Irani

Hardik Pandya, who hasn't bowled at all in the first three matches of Mumbai Indians, could be bowling in this Indian Premier League (IPL).

Head coach of Mumbai Indians — Mahela Jayawardene

When people are pleading for Remdesivir and struggling for each vial, one BJP leader is hoarding the injection.

Congress leader — Priyanka Gandhi



FIRST COLUMN

GIVE JUSTICE TO WOMEN LAWYERS



KALYANI SHANKAR

Justice has always been represented in a feminine form. Everyone has seen the statue of Lady Justice wearing a blindfold and holding a beam balance and a sword. But unfortunately, women are far from being adequately represented in the judiciary and do not have much of a role to play in our judicial system. Women have become the country's President, Prime Minister, Chief Ministers and Governors. They have occupied other constitutional positions but a woman has never graced the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI). There have been voices calling for the better representation of women in the judiciary. Recently, CJI SA Bobde lamented this gap, just days ahead of his slated retirement on April 23. Let alone being elevated to the post of CJI, many women judges cross their retirement age even before reaching the Supreme Court. In India as in other countries, including the US and Britain, the number of women judges is dismal. It was only in 1981 that US President Ronald Reagan appointed Sandra Day O'Connor as the first-ever woman judge of the Supreme Court, to fulfil his campaign promise.



The International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), a non-governmental organisation with approximately 4,000 members in 100 countries, believes that women judges are unique in advancing women's rights throughout the world. Attorney-General KK Venugopal had also observed that "improving the representation of women in the judiciary could go a long way towards a more balanced and empathetic approach in cases involving sexual violence." In its plea to the Supreme Court, the Women Lawyers Association has said that the representation of women in the apex court was "abysmally low" as it brought to the court's notice that the top court had seen only eight women judges and only one out of 25 High Courts (HC) in the country has a woman Chief Justice (CJ Hima Kohli of Telangana HC). There are only 73 women out of total 661 judges in HCs while there is no single woman judge in five HCs, namely, Manipur, Meghalaya, Patna, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Further, only 12 women have been designated as senior counsels by the top court so far.

The judiciary is a male-dominated field. More importantly, the seniority tradition plays a significant role in choosing the Chief Justice. Naturally, when the number of designated senior women lawyers is disproportionately low, the chances of women becoming judges also remain minimal. There are many reasons for women not getting the top slot. CJI Bobde observed that many women lawyers had declined judgeship citing domestic responsibilities. But women lawyers counter that point saying that many successful men lawyers had also declined to become judges. Further, the income of a successful lawyer is much more than the perks and the salary of a judge, though there is prestige attached to the position.

The problem also trickles down to the lower courts where there are fewer women judges despite no shortage of women entering the legal profession. Some States have a reservation policy for women lawyers in the lower courts but it is missing in the HCs and the Supreme Court. Women comprised 44 per cent of candidates who have qualified the 2019 Common Law Admission Test for National Law Universities. After Justice Indu Malhotra's superannuation from the top court recently, Justice Indira Banerjee is the only woman judge in the apex court, which has the sanctioned strength of 34 judges.

Currently, the Supreme Court has five vacancies. Up till now, only eight women judges have graced the apex court. There is no shortage of brilliant women HC judges and lawyers in the country who, if elevated to the top court on time, can become the CJI. The timely appointment of more women judges is the way forward. For this, the Supreme Court collegium should take the initiative.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Export subsidies face WTO challenge

The leeway to withdraw subsidies was meant for those developing nations which in 1995 had GNI in excess of \$1,000 per capita. It can't be availed by India, which is in a different category



UTTAM GUPTA

The Coronavirus pandemic played havoc with the economy of the country during the first half of last year. However, exports were beginning to look up in March — touching a record \$34 billion which was higher than \$33 billion in March 2019 — and signalling a sharp increase during the current fiscal. But now, the exporters face a triple whammy. First, they have not received export benefits worth approximately ₹35,000 crore under the Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS). Under the MEIS, which was withdrawn on January 1 this year, exporters were eligible for duty credit scrip — a jargon to compensate for their loss on payment of duties — amounting to two-five per cent of the freight-on-board value of the shipment. Against a total approved amount of ₹55,000 crore, the Union Government has released just about ₹20,000 crore (mostly claims for 2019-20) thereby leaving a gap of ₹35,000 crore.

This has led to a liquidity crunch. And, with the Budget provision for export subsidy during 2021-22 being just ₹13,000 crore, the situation is unlikely to improve and will seriously impede the exporters' capacity to ramp up supplies to meet the resurgent demand from key global markets, particularly the US and EU.

Second, the Government has not yet notified the refund rates under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme, which replaced the MEIS in January. Under the RoDTEP, exporters are eligible for reimbursement of various embedded taxes and levies paid on inputs consumed in exports — but not subsumed by the Goods and Services Tax (GST). A committee headed by former Commerce Secretary GK Pillai tasked with determining the refund rates, after an exhaustive exercise involving scrutiny of embedded levies on 8,000-9,000 tariff lines, had submitted its recommendations in March.

However, it will be some time before the Finance Ministry's Revenue Department — currently vetting the recommended tax remission rates — notifies them. The exporters need to factor in these while firming up contracts for supplies to importers. Although, eventually they will get the refunds retrospectively (from January 1) once the rates are notified, not knowing them in advance creates uncertainty with regard to their ability to decide what price to charge. If, the notified rate turns out to be lower than what the exporter has actually built into the offer price, he will be subjected to a loss.

The above two factors i.e. the delay in release of pending dues under the erstwhile MEIS and the delay in notification of refund rates under the RoDTEP, make for a deadly combination hampering the ability of exporters to sustain the tempo of revival in exports, buoyant demand conditions notwithstanding. Add to this a third factor which relates to the vulnerability of the Indian export subsidy regime to challenge at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In early 2018, the US had challenged at least half a dozen of India's export subsidy schemes, including the MEIS. The US Trade Representative (USTR) argued that the schemes provide financial benefits to Indian exporters, creating an "uneven playing field", thereby enabling them to sell goods



MEANWHILE, INDIA HAS ABOLISHED THE MEIS AND LAUNCHED RODTEP. THE OFFICIAL THINK TANK MAY FEEL THAT THE NEW SCHEME IS 'COMPLIANT' WITH THE WTO'S NORMS, BUT DAMOCLES' SWORD STILL HANGS OVER US AS THE US HAS ALREADY ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO EXPLAIN THIS SCHEME AND ITS STRUCTURE, AND MAY EVEN FOLLOW THIS UP BY CHALLENGING IT AT THE WTO

The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.



at a cheaper rate, which was detrimental to the interests of US manufacturers and workers. Even as export subsidies violate the WTO's rules, a limited exception was made for specified developing countries that may continue to provide export subsidies temporarily until they reach a defined economic benchmark of \$1,000 per capita gross national income (GNI). Further, developing countries that had a GNI of over \$1,000 per capita at the time when the WTO was set up in 1995, were allowed eight years to wind up their export promotion schemes. India's GNI being below the \$1,000 per capita-mark, it initially availed of the exemption from no export subsidy obligation. But in 2015, it surpassed the threshold, thereby pushing it into the "no-exemption" zone. The USTR has accused India of not just continuing with subsidies, but further expanding their scope (the MEIS launched in 2015 was rapidly expanded to include more than 8,000 eligible products, nearly double the number of products covered at its inception).

Accordingly, it wanted India to withdraw the subsidies. But the latter insisted on a transition period of eight years that, too, from 2017 when the WTO notified the fact of its crossing the threshold. The Indian stance is anomalous.

India had ample opportunity to plan. It had 20 years available (1995 to 2015) to get adjusted to

a WTO-compatible scenario. That was not done and when the D-day arrived, it wanted more time, which was a totally illogical move. The leeway to withdraw subsisting export subsidies within the eight-year time frame was meant for those developing countries which in 1995 had GNI in excess of \$1,000 per capita. It can't be availed by India which falls in a different category.

The Indian position being untenable, the decision of the WTO Dispute Settlement Panel (DSP) has gone against New Delhi. We appealed against the DSP decision before the appellate authority of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) and a verdict is yet to come. Meanwhile, India has abolished the MEIS and launched RoDTEP. The official think tank may feel that the new scheme is "compliant" with the WTO's norms. But Damocles' sword still hangs over us as the US has already asked the Government to explain this scheme and its structure, and may even follow this up by challenging it at the WTO.

The confidence of Team Modi stems from the fact that the RoDTEP is a scheme only for the reimbursement of duties on exported products; hence, there is no financial support from the Government. The duties considered in fixing the refund rates include all the levies that are not subsumed by the GST. These are taxes on crude oil, natural gas,

petroleum products such as petrol, diesel, ATF, electricity, mandi tax, stamp duty, besides embedded central GST and compensation cess (under GST, the cess is levied on the so-called demerit products in the highest slab of 28 per cent and the proceeds thereof to be used for compensating the States for the shortfall in revenue).

Given the highly complex nature of these duties and the wide variations between the Centre and the States, it may not be easy to justify giving remission for each one of them. A better way of ensuring that exports are not hamstrung is to bring all the aforementioned products under the GST, besides abolishing all local taxes. The compensation cess will anyway go on March 31, 2022 — as per the extant law. As for the embedded central GST, mechanisms are available for its refund under the GST scheme which treats exports as zero rated. This will require a fundamental change in the extant approach of "first burdening exporters with taxes, then refunding" to one whereby "taxes are not levied in the first place or their burden is kept at a bare minimum." While, this transition may take some time, in the interregnum, remission rates under the RoDTEP should be notified without any further delay. All outstanding dues to exporters should be promptly cleared to enable them to ramp up supplies for catering to the resurgent demand.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE MUST RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO LOOK AT THE NUMBERS BEING VACCINATED, AND FOCUS ON THE PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION VACCINATED.

—FORMER PRIME MINISTER
MANMOHAN SINGH



WHILE YOU UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF VACCINATION...PEOPLE IN RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS IN YOUR PARTY DO NOT SEEM TO SHARE YOUR VIEW.

—UNION HEALTH MINISTER
HARSH VARDHAN

Women's participation missing in water resource management

To encourage female participation, the Govt has made it obligatory for each water committee to have 50 per cent women members

Globally, women are increasingly being recognised for their important role in the management of water resources. Every International Women's Day, there is much noise about the inclusion of women in water programmes and the heart-breaking statistics regarding drudgery, school absenteeism and so on. Many platitudes are offered but before the end of March, everything fizzles out, until the next year. The Global Gender Gap Index 2020 ranked India at 112 out of 153 countries, with an overall unemployment rate of 9.1 per cent. Urban unemployment was at 8.8 per cent and unemployment among women was 18 per cent.

Any water supply hurdles lead to a substantial economic and social impact that disproportionately affects females. For instance, the time and



POONAM SEWAK

The writer is vice-president, programme & partnerships, Safe Water Network. The views expressed are personal.

effort spent in water collection hits women's income-generation ability, impacts attendance of girls in schools and interferes with the time required to tend to the sick at home. Therefore, women quickly see the advantages of investing in water treatment infrastructure and often play a crucial role in convincing the community to undertake its construction, operation, maintenance and management.

For decades, studies have examined the role of women in the water sector. They have found substantial improvements in the governance, transparency and sustainability of water supplies when men and women are involved in equal measure than when women are involved only marginally or not at all. Water projects that involve women in design planning and operations are more sustainable than those that do not. Yet, women make up less

than 17 per cent of the water, sanitation and hygiene labour force and only a fraction of policymakers, regulators, management and technical experts.

The participation of women in the water sector is often assumed to be a rural issue. Women are significantly missing in utilities which can draw benefits such as lower levels of non-revenue water losses, improved cash flow and more resources for investment in infrastructure and increasing service quality. This will lead to the engagement of fewer Government subsidies which can be utilised for other essential services. The key to driving user-centred design improvements and reforms across the urban water sector in developing countries is to create conditions that can attract, retain, and promote women in roles in which they can shape the design, construction and reha-



bilitation of new and existing water supply systems.

India has set an ambitious goal, as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission (Rural) to provide functional household tap connections, piped water services to its entire population at an outlay of \$90 billion by 2025. To bridge the gender gap, the Government has tied up with the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Kendra to train women in masonry and impart them skills to become electrical and motor mechanics. To encourage

women's participation, the Government has made it obligatory for each paani samiti (water committee) constituted for water supply management to have 50 per cent women members. Through the situation is changing, the Government should put greater emphasis on building Self-Help Groups into a competitive alternative to private operators. Providing safe drinking water to 1.35 billion people in urban and rural India is a huge challenge. The emergence of COVID-19 has further accentuated the need for clean water. Prioritising women's engagement to regulate water programmes will ensure effective usage of water resources.

In India, where women have been trained and licenced as hand pump mechanics, customers rate female mechanics as more accessible and responsive than their male counter-

parts. As a result, in areas served by women mechanics, there is more preventative maintenance and fewer breakdowns. Many of these women understand that a broken hand pump results in girls/women having to travel greater distances to collect water, losing productive time and increasing risks to their safety.

Initially, society found it futile to train women, but with repeated success, the female workforce not only became active participants but also modified the entire management of community water systems. The work-life balance for women has been significantly disturbed in these challenging times.

However, it has taught women to multitask and manage the household while diligently working from home. With a male-dominated Indian economic system, there is an

urgent need to rectify the gender imbalance by driving awareness, through knowledge-sharing and developing a sense of decision-making and entrepreneurship among women. With successful revenue streams driven by women-led businesses, the Government has also started focusing on promoting women entrepreneurship covering rural, semi and urban geographies.

To bring down the patriarchal barriers and make significant progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, it is essential to create a successful Private-Public-Partnership (PPP) model for upskilling and teaching women groups especially regarding post-work gaps, mentoring and feedback process. Through the bottom-up approach of the PPP model, economic opportunities need to be created to promote the well-being of women.

Markets in tailspin as Covid woes resurface

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex plunged 883 points while the Nifty crashed below the 14,400-level on Monday as the worsening Covid-19 situation in the country triggered an across-the-board selloff.

Fresh lockdowns announced by some states have stoked concerns over the economic recovery, while another sharp drop in the rupee also weighed on risk appetite, traders said.

After crashing over 1,469 points in early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex pared some initial losses to close at 47,949.42, down 882.61 points or 1.81 per cent.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tanked 258.40 points or 1.77 per cent to finish at 14,359.45.

PowerGrid was the top loser in the Sensex pack, slumping 4.17 per cent, followed by ONGC, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Bank, L&T, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints and

M&M.

Only Dr Reddy's and Infos managed to end in the green, rising up to 1.58 per cent.

"Domestic equities, which were looking resilient for last couple of days, fell sharply on sharp spike in COVID-19 cases across the country and enhanced economic restrictions imposed by several states. Announcements of wider mobility restriction by Rajasthan and Delhi governments dented investors' sentiments," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Barring pharma and IT, which remained resilient, all key sectoral indices witnessed sharp correction. Financials and automobiles witnessed steeper correction. Notably, volatility index soared by over 11 per cent, which does not augur well, he added.

Investor wealth tumbled by Rs 3.53 lakh crore on Monday, with the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies standing at Rs 201.77

lakh crore.

India's total tally of COVID-19 cases crossed 1.50 crore with a record single-day rise of 2,73,810 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

Sector-wise, BSE realty, capital goods, power, auto, industrials, finance and telecom indices plunged up to 3.96 per cent, while healthcare index closed higher.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices skidded up to 1.93 per cent. Global equities were in a better shape as investors awaited key corporate earnings. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended on a positive note.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also largely trading with gains in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.25 per cent lower at USD 66.60 per barrel.

₹ tanks 52 paise as fresh lockdown measures unnerve investors

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee plunged by 52 paise to close at 74.87 against the US dollar on Monday as fresh lockdown measures by some states to control spiralling cases of Covid-19 unnerved investors and stoked fears of forex outflows.

Losses in the domestic equity markets also weighed on the rupee which was the worst performer among Asian currencies on Monday, analysts said. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened lower at 74.80 against the greenback and touched a low of 75.05 in day trade. Weakness in the US dollar and losses in crude oil, however, capped the rupee's fall and the local unit recovered some of the losses to close at 74.87, registering a fall of 52 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 74.35 a dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.49 per cent to 91.11.

FIDC seeks inclusion of education in ECLGS

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC) has urged the Government to include the education sector under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

The NBFC body in a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman noted that the business of many NBFCs include education loans to students to finance their higher education expenses in India and abroad and education institution loans

(EIL) for financing education infrastructure growth needs of schools, colleges and universities.

Last week, the government had expanded the scope of ECLGS 2.0 and said that Special Mention Accounts-1 (SMA-1) will now be eligible for credit under the scheme.

SMA-1 borrowers in the healthcare sector and 26 other high stress sectors as identified by the Kamath Committee are now eligible under ECLGS 2.0.

Noted that the education sector was excluded from the scope of ECLGS, FIDC said that all the other sectors have been allowed to operate with significant relaxations whereas educational institutions are still closed.

"It is a well-established fact that educational institutions have a deep social and economic impact and depriving the sector of adequate and timely support will have serious consequences for the nation as a whole."

"We believe that inclusion

of education sector under ECLGS will not only provide regular source of funding to educational institutions enabling them to cope up with short term liquidity problem arising out of closure of schools/colleges etc, but also the cash flows would be more aligned to the elongated repayment term," the letter said.

The lending institutions would also be able to cover the risk of educational infra loan portfolio and it would provide an enhanced business opportunity as well, it said.

'Bitcoin' digital currency being considered by UK: Rishi Sunak

AP ■ LONDON

British authorities are exploring the possibility of creating a new digital currency that Treasury chief Rishi Sunak indicated could be known as "Bitcoin".

The Bank of England and the Treasury said Monday that they will work together to assess the benefits of a central bank digital currency, at a time when cash payments are generally on the decline, partly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The bank said the new currency, if it comes to pass, would be a new form of digital

money for use by households and businesses and would exist alongside cash and bank deposits, rather than replacing them.

Digital currencies, which are only available in digital or electronic form, are already being explored or even implemented in several other countries. With many proponents drawing inspiration from the success of Bitcoin and other so-called cryptocurrencies.

However, digital currencies, like the one being considered in the UK are different in a key sense to Bitcoin as they are issued by state authorities.

New Covid surge may upend fuel demand recovery

New Delhi: Rising coronavirus infections, prompting a slew of local lockdowns across the country, are threatening to slow recovery in fuel demand as stronger containment measures will hit economic activity, officials said on Monday.

After Maharashtra, Delhi and Rajasthan have imposed limited period lockdowns, which will impact travel and business activity. Other states have implemented curfews at different times of the day and of varying durations.

"The first casualty of such measures is mobility and a resultant fuel consumption," a senior official at a public sector oil marketing company said.

A record 2,73,810 coronavirus infections on Monday pushed overall cases to more than 1.5 crore, making India the second-worst affected nation after the US, which has reported more than 3.1 crore infections. India's deaths from Covid-19 rose by a record 1,619 to nearly 1.8 lakh.

Diesel, petrol, jet fuel and LPG demand all declined in the first half of April from a month earlier and the trend is likely to worsen in the second half with more states imposing restrictions. India's most used fuel, diesel consumption slipped 3 per cent over the previous month while petrol sales were down 5 per cent, the official said.

Indian Overseas Bank EGM in May to allot preferential shares to Govt

New Delhi (PTI): Indian Overseas Bank on Monday said it has convened an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) next month to seek shareholders' approval for issuance of preferential shares to government for ₹4,100 crore capital infusion in 2020-21. The EGM will be held on May 12, 2021 through video conferencing.

The meeting will consider and pass the resolution to create, offer and allot up to 246,54,23,932 shares of ₹10 for cash at issue price of ₹ 16.63 per equity share including premium of ₹6.63 aggregating to ₹4,100 crore on preferential basis to Government of India, it said.

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NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY50	14366.60	14382.30	14191.40	14359.45	-258.40	
DRREDDY	889.00	905.00	880.00	904.70	114.45	
CIFLA	94.25	95.00	92.00	95.00	11.95	
BRITANNIA	368.00	375.00	363.00	373.00	33.50	
INFY	1340.00	1379.70	1332.35	1363.00	9.25	
WIPRO	463.00	477.95	461.10	471.50	2.30	
TATASTEEL	889.80	899.00	860.00	886.05	-4.20	
DIVISLAB	381.20	384.95	375.00	380.00	-21.85	
BPL	40.05	41.40	40.00	41.05	-2.85	
SUNPHARMA	64.00	65.10	63.00	64.05	-5.40	
JSWSTEEL	600.00	625.50	595.10	614.20	-5.20	
SIFLIFE	807.20	909.90	888.50	905.90	-8.30	
ITC	20.50	20.60	21.35	20.60	-1.95	
TATACONSUM	66.00	66.80	65.10	66.40	-6.90	
HDFCBANK	1390.00	1417.00	1372.30	1412.60	-16.05	
TCS	3169.00	3189.00	3135.10	3159.15	-36.00	
ICICIBANK	550.00	562.30	534.40	560.40	-6.55	
NESTLEIND	1720.05	1724.00	1699.00	1705.15	-20.15	
TECHM	99.10	100.90	98.30	99.05	-14.25	
RELIANCE	1940.00	1916.40	1890.00	1903.05	-29.05	
HINDUNILVR	240.00	249.70	241.05	241.80	-40.10	
TITAN	1525.00	1532.45	1510.10	1520.60	-28.45	
MARUTI	6500.35	6530.00	6415.00	6515.00	-133.10	
HOCTECH	99.90	102.45	98.75	99.00	-22.75	
IOC	87.95	88.80	86.85	88.05	-2.10	
HINDALCO	358.70	366.00	353.85	361.35	-8.65	
EICHERMOT	2375.00	2386.00	2318.10	2377.00	-57.85	
GRASIM	130.30	133.90	130.25	132.10	-32.20	
UPL	59.10	60.00	58.00	59.50	-15.25	
SHREECEM	3001.05	3049.30	2957.30	3002.95	-798.15	
COALINDIA	125.60	126.00	123.40	124.30	-3.35	
BHARTIARTL	532.25	535.00	522.25	526.60	-14.10	
TATAMOTORS	295.00	304.50	292.80	301.70	-8.30	
SBIN	332.15	332.05	321.30	330.45	-9.45	
HDFC	2474.00	2510.00	2452.00	2501.05	-73.00	
BAFINANCE	445.00	450.40	436.00	447.80	-17.80	
M&M	785.00	807.00	785.00	796.00	-25.65	
AXISBANK	650.00	655.30	631.00	648.00	-21.20	
ULTRACEMCO	6500.00	6569.45	6415.00	6500.90	-214.30	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3525.20	3562.00	3447.00	3518.35	-116.30	
NTPC	100.00	100.00	98.65	99.05	-3.40	
ASIANPAINT	2650.00	2650.00	2566.85	2575.00	-88.70	
ITC	1340.00	1346.20	1306.00	1312.50	-46.65	
HDFCLIFE	682.05	684.45	661.55	666.75	-23.90	
BAJAJFINSV	9055.50	9654.00	9392.60	9485.00	-339.75	
KOTAKBANK	1720.00	1720.00	1675.00	1702.00	-62.10	
INDUSINDBK	829.95	836.55	811.00	831.60	-31.30	
HEROMOTOCO	2761.35	2822.55	2743.10	2788.00	-106.85	
ONGC	103.95	105.95	101.90	103.10	-4.20	
POWERGRID	205.85	207.00	200.00	201.20	-8.65	
ADANIPORTS	715.00	730.90	707.45	719.00	-36.50	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	MRF	80100.00	80199.85	78776.00	79291.15	BERGEPAIN	725.00	727.20	708.90	715.70	OIL	115.50	117.95	115.15	117.00	ARVINDFASN	131.00	131.00	123.20	124.45
TATAMOTORS	292.00	304.55	292.00	300.95	VEDL	225.30	229.50	224.40	227.85	INDUSTOWER	248.55	255.00	248.55	253.35	CRISIL	1790.00	1920.00	1790.00	1858.80	AAVAS	2294.00	2298.00	2222.80	2234.55
WIPRO	463.20	478.60	460.80	472.65	IOC	88.40	88.60	86.90	88.10	FINOLEXIND	140.25	147.40	138.15	144.45	JSLHISAR	140.80	148.30	129.65	144.60	HUCCO	40.95	40.95	39.55	39.95
RELIANCE	1901.00	1916.60	1891.00	1902.55	MEGH	112.30	119.50	112.30	115.40	MAHABANK	24.20	25.00	23.25	23.50	VTIND	3238.90	3240.00	3137.00	3190.25	SJVN	24.55	25.15	24.55	24.85
CIFLA	94.30	95.40	92.45	94.60	FSL	115.00	115.00	110.45	112.95	TVSMOTOR	544.80	544.80	528.70	537.35	JAMNAUTO	62.05	63.20	60.55	61.85	TASTYBIT	14101.80	14732.00	13610.00	14577.05
TATASTEEL	874.70	898.80	854.90	886.95	ASTRAZEN	3430.00	3636.00	3410.00	3590.75	CUB	157.00	160.00	155.65	157.90	GODREJIND	520.00	530.00	511.55	523.20	KALPATPOWER	373.00	373.00	338.00	350.00
ADANIENIT	1060.40	1153.25	1060.40	1136.30	CHOLAFIN	535.00	535.00	505.65	526.80	TRIDENT	13.65	13.65	13.15	13.46	VGUARD	230.00	233.00	224.50	227.80	MRPL	37.00	37.00	33.00	35.70
SBIN	328.00	332.15	321.15	331.25	LICHSGFIN	384.90	384.90	372.75	379.25	MANAPPURAM	146.95	146.95	140.50	142.00	MARICO	424.00	424.00	416.20	419.90	POWERINDIA	1510.00	1510.00	1459.30	1478.00
ADANIEXPORTS	717.95	730.70	707.55	720.65	L&TFH	91.20	91.20	87.00	88.55	VAIBHAVGBL	4088.00	4150.00	3990.80	4034.90	WELSPUNIND	81.10	81.10	76.15	77.95	JMFINANCIAL	77.00	77.90	76.00	76.80
INFY	1344.00	1379.50	1333.05	1362.60	HDFCAML	2899.90	2899.90	2805.00	2822.00	AMARAJABAT	808.80	808.80	780.15	800.15	BLUESTARCO	850.00	850.00	822.05	827.85	SHOPERSTOP	182.55	189.15	180.00	185.20
BAJFINANCE	447.80	450.05	436.10	447.05	BATAINDIA	1323.90	1325.10	1265.00	1286.25	INDIAMART	797.45	797.45	752.50	775.80	ADVENZARCO	340.20	367.55	342.65	360.05	ITI	106.00	106.20	102.20	102.80
ICICIBANK	559.65	562.35	531.00	559.60	BANKINDIA	66.80	66.80	63.80	64.60	OFSS	376.05	339.95	325.05	338.90	DCBANK	92.00	92.00	85.65	87.05	TTKPRESTIG	7300.00	7470.00	7271.70	7447.90
HDFC	2492.00	2510.00	2453.00	2493.75	BHARATFORG	558.05	571.45	555.60	561.00	KPRMILL	1190.00	1274.95	1169.25	1237.95	RELAOX	890.00	890.00	848.00	850.00	SUPRAJIT	265.00	265.00	250.80	260.65
KOTAKBANK	1712.10	1720.20	1675.05	1701.05	HAVELLS	983.00	1006.00	970.80	1000.20	ALKEM	2771.00	2850.90	2725.00	2746.00	SUDARSCHEM	546.25	556.50	526.60	538.20	OBEROIRLTY	543.25	551.25	528.10	539.85

Biden pressed on emissions goal as climate summit nears

Washington: When President Joe Biden convenes a virtual climate summit on Thursday, he faces a vexing task: how to put forward a nonbinding but symbolic goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that will have a tangible impact not only on climate change efforts in the US but throughout the world.

The emissions target, eagerly awaited by all sides of the climate debate, will signal how aggressively Biden wants to move on climate change, a divisive and expensive issue that has riled Republicans to complain about job-killing government overreach even as some on the left worry Biden

has not gone far enough to address a profound threat to the planet.

The climate crisis poses a complex political challenge for Biden, since the problem is harder to see and far more difficult to produce measurable results on than either the pandemic relief package or the infrastructure bill.

The target Biden chooses "is setting the tone for the level of ambition and the pace of emission reductions over the next decade," said Kate Larsen, a former White House adviser who helped develop President Barack Obama's climate action plan.

The number has to be achievable by 2030 but aggressive enough to satisfy scientists and advocates who call the coming decade a crucial, make-or-break moment for slowing climate change, Larsen and other experts said.

Scientists, environmental groups and even business leaders are calling on Biden to set a target that would cut US greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

The 50 per cent target, which most experts consider a likely outcome of intense deliberations underway at the White House, would nearly double the

US to achieve after four years of climate inaction under President Donald Trump, but also for "leveraging other countries," Larsen said.

"That helps domestically in the battle that comes after, which is implementing policies to achieve that target. We can make a better case politically at home if other countries are acting at the same level of ambition as the US?"

The 2030 goal, known as a Nationally Determined Contribution, or NDC, is a key part of the Paris climate agreement, which Biden rejoined on his first day in office. It's also an important marker as Biden

moves toward his ultimate goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"Clearly the science demands at least 50%" in reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, said Jake Schmidt, a climate expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a leading environmental group.

The 50% target "is ambitious, but it is achievable," he said in an interview. It's also a good climate message, he said: "People know what 50% means - it's half."

Whatever target Biden picks, the climate summit itself "proves the US is back in rejoining the inter-

national effort? to address climate change, said Larsen, now a director at the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm.

The summit is "the starting gun for climate diplomacy" after a four-year "hiatus" under Trump, she said. John Kerry, Biden's climate envoy, has been pressing global leaders in person and online ahead of the summit for commitments and alliances on climate efforts.

Nathaniel Keohane, another former Obama White House adviser and now a vice president at the Environmental Defense Fund, said experts have coalesced around the

need to reduce emissions by at least 50 per cent by 2030.

"The number has to start with 5," he said, adding, "We've done the math. We need at least 50%."

The 2030 target is just one in a sometimes overlapping set of goals that Biden has outlined on climate. He also has said he expects to adopt a clean energy standard that would make electricity carbon-free by 2035, along with the wider goal of net-zero carbon emissions economy-wide by 2050.

Biden's climate adviser, Gina McCarthy, acknowledged that the sheer volume of numbers can be confusing. AP

US: Authorities say no one was driving Tesla before deadly crash

Houston: Two people were killed in the fiery crash of a Tesla and authorities say there was no one in the driver's seat, although it is not clear whether the car's driver-assist system was being used. A Harris County constable told television stations in Houston that there was a person in the front passenger seat and another in a rear passenger seat after the wreck in the Houston suburb of Spring.

Harris County Precinct 4 Constable Mark Herman said authorities are certain that no one was driving the car at the time of the crash.

"They feel very confident just with the positioning of the bodies after the impact that

there was no one driving that vehicle," Herman told KHOU-TV. Deputies said the car was traveling fast and failed to navigate a turn before running off the road, hitting a tree, and bursting into flames on Saturday night. The identity of the victims had not been released by Sunday afternoon.

KHOV reported that one was 69 and the other was 59. Tesla did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment. Federal traffic-safety officials are investigating several Tesla crashes in which the vehicle's Autopilot function may have been used, including crashes in which cars drove under tractor-trailers. AP

Banned Pak outfit frees 11 cops

Islamabad: Pakistani Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid on Monday announced that after a successful round of negotiation with Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), the banned outfit had released 11 policemen taken hostage from Lahore a day earlier.

"First round of negotiations have been successful which have led to TLP releasing the policemen it had held hostage. The second round of negotiations will begin after 'sehri,'" The Express Tribune quoted the Minister as saying in a video message.

The 11 hostages included a Deputy Superintendent of Police.

On Sunday, clashes erupted between TLP members and police at Multan road in Lahore, leaving "a few" group

supporters killed and more than 100 injured, according to sources.

For at least three days, TLP protesters have choked Pakistan, staging sit-ins at the main highways.

Angry mobs have had violent confrontations with the security forces, resulting in martyrdom of three police officers, while hundreds others were critically injured due to the torture and assault they suffered in the hands of the TLP protesters.

On April 14, the Pakistan government decided to put a ban on TLP under the anti-terrorism law, the summary of which was later approved by the Prime Minister.

In November last year, the TLP had staged a sit-in in Rawalpindi demanding expul-

sion of the French Ambassador over publication of blasphemous caricatures.

The protest brought the capital Islamabad and other major cities to a complete standstill as highways were blocked by the protesters and violent confrontations with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons were used by security forces to disperse the mob.

However, the group ended the protest after reaching an agreement with the government, claiming that all of its four demands had been accepted.

The government had agreed to involve Parliament to decide the matter of expulsion of French Ambassador within three months. IANS

Chad's Army says 300 rebels killed as capital is on alert

N'djamena (Chad): Chad's military claimed that it has killed some 300 rebels advancing on the capital, N'Djamena, as the Government on Monday deployed tanks and other armed vehicles in the city's streets. The death toll given on state television and radio by army spokesman

Azim Bermendoa Agouna came a day after the military declared that a rebel column had been "decimated" by soldiers. It was not immediately possible to independently confirm the military's claims given the remote location where the fighting took place.

Confusion and fear mount-

ed in the capital as rumours swirled on social media about whether the Chadian rebels still posed a threat after the week-end clashes.

"Five days ago, the government was talking about terrorists in the Faya area, but today we are told that the rebels are in the Mao area," said high school teacher Jean Djimasse, suggesting that the rebels appear to have moved closer to the capital. "We don't know exactly what is going on."

The Government called for calm as residents of the capital lined up to purchase fuel and stocked up on food at markets. AP

Top Hefazat leader sent to 7-day custody for attempt to murder

Dhaka: A Dhaka court on Monday placed radical outfit Hefazat-e-Islam's joint secretary general Mamunul Haque on seven-day remand in a case filed last year at the Mohammadpur police station.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate, Debdash Chandra Adhikary, passed the order after the sub-inspector of the police station, Md Sajedul Haque, submitted the remand prayer before the court.

The police said the militant top leader and the preacher will be interrogated at the DB office on security grounds and for the source of his huge expenses.

A joint team of the Tejgaon division police and the DMP's detective branch had arrested

Mamunul from Jamia Rahmania Arabia Madrasa in Mohammadpur on Saturday afternoon.

In November 2020, Mamunul had called for the government to remove the upcoming statue of the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, claiming that statues were prohibited to Islam. Later, he had clarified that he 'did not mean to disrespect' the Bangabandhu.

Mamunul and his Hefazat colleagues had led a series of protests against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh on March 26-27, leading to violence that claimed several lives.

Following Mamunul's arrest, the Deputy Police Commissioner of Tejgaon zone, Harun-or-Rashid, said that Mamunul and other Hefazat leaders have been accused in several cases, including planned attacks on police stations, which are being investigated.

Rashid said that Mamunul is being monitored for quite some time and the investigation into the 2020 case of vandalism and violence is going on. As many as 17 cases have been filed against Mamunul and other cohorts of the radical outfit in connection with the violence in the Baitul Mukarram area in Dhaka during Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Bangladesh.

NASA launches helicopter on Mars in historic feat

AP ■ WASHINGTON

In a historic feat for humankind, NASA on Monday successfully launched the first powered, controlled flight of its Ingenuity Mars Helicopter on another planet.

The mini helicopter began its flight approximately at 3:45 p.m. (India time) and the data was received at NASA headquarters around 4:25 p.m. (India time). It took off a few feet from the ground, hovered in the air for about 20 to 30 seconds, and landed.

After this feat, the team will now attempt additional experimental flights of incrementally farther distance and greater altitude. After the helicopter completes its technology demonstration, Perseverance rover will continue its scientific mission.

"Every step we have taken since this journey began six years ago has been uncharted territory in the history of aircraft," Bob Balaram, Mars Helicopter Chief Engineer at JPL, said recently.

The mini helicopter flew to Mars while being attached to the belly of NASA's Perseverance rover, which made a February 18 touch down on the Red Planet.

The original flight date of April 11 shifted several times as engineers worked on preflight checks and a solution to a command sequence issue. It also survived its first night alone on Mars' frigid surface.

The sole mission of Ingenuity, a technology demonstration, is to conduct flight tests in the thin atmos-

phere of Mars; the helicopter carries no science instruments.

Within 30 Martian days, or sols (a Martian day is 24.6 hours), on the surface, Ingenuity will complete its testing, and Perseverance's scientific exploration of Jezero Crater will kick into high gear.

The Perseverance rover will provide support during flight operations, taking images, collecting environmental data, and hosting the base station that enables the helicopter to communicate with mission controllers on Earth.

The data returned could benefit future explorations of the Red Planet -- including those by astronauts -- by adding the aerial dimension, which is not available today.

Release detained journalist, Japan urges Myanmar

Tokyo: The Government in Tokyo on Monday called on Myanmar to release a freelance Japanese journalist detained by security forces in Yangon.

Speaking at a news conference here, Government spokesman Katsunobu Kato said Tokyo was asking for the early release of the journalist, who was arrested at home on Sunday evening in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, reports dpa news agency.

Kato did not identify the journalist, but Japanese media named him as Yuki Kitazumi, a former reporter for the Nikkei Business Daily, who now lives in Yangon.

Kitazumi has been under investigation for allegedly disseminating "fake news," Kyodo News reported, citing the Japanese Embassy in Myanmar.

He has been transferred to Insein prison in the city, where many political detainees are incarcerated, according to Kyodo.

In late February, the journalist was also briefly detained by security forces while covering an anti-coup rally, the report said.

On Saturday, the junta granted amnesty to more than

FROM PAGE 1

18 + TO GET COVID JABS FROM MAY 1

Private Hospitals would have to procure their supplies of COVID-19 vaccine exclusively from the 50 per cent supply earmarked for entities other than those coming through the central government channel.

Vaccination will be provided free of cost to the eligible population as defined earlier which include Health Care Workers (HCWs), Front Line Workers (FLWs) and all people above 45 years of age at Government of India (GoI) vaccination centres. The division of vaccine supply 50 per cent to GoI and 50 per cent to other than its channel would be applicable uniformly across for all vaccines manufactured in the country.

Dr. Ashok Seth, Chairman & cardiologist in Fortis Escort Heart Institute, President Asia Pacific Society of Int. Cardiology welcomed the decision as he tweeted, "Vaccine for All" is finally here, from 1st May all above 18yrs can be vaccinated, decentralisation procurement by states directly from manufacturers & incentives for vaccine manufacturers. This is a hugely needed boost for our fight against #COVID19"

Dr Rahul Bhargava, Director-Bone Marrow Transplant Program, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurgaon and Dr Nita Radhakrishnan, associate professor and HOD, Department of Paediatric Haematology-Oncology, Super Speciality Paediatric Hospital and PG Teaching Institute, Noida, echoed similar views saying that they had been constantly calling for vaccination for all and the Government decision will save a large population from getting infected with the Covid-19.

MANMOHAN SINGH TESTS +VE, ADMITTED TO AIIMS

They said Singh had a mild fever in the morning and later tested positive for Covid-19. The doctors are monitoring his condition. Singh had taken both the doses of Covid-19 vaccine. Wishes for the speedy recovery of the Congress veteran poured in following his hospitalisation. Former Union Minister P Chidambaram, Chief Ministers Ashok Gehlot, Amarinder Singh and Mamata Banerjee, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma, TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu and several other leaders expressed concern over Singh's health and voiced hope that he will recover soon. "Wishing you a speedy recovery. India needs your guidance and advice in this difficult time," former Congress president Rahul Gandhi tweeted. "My prayers are with Manmohan Singh ji and his family today, and my deepest respect. May he fight this scourge with all his might and get well soon," Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Twitter Banerjee said, "Just got the news that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Ji has tested positive for Covid. Sir, our thoughts and prayers for a speedy and full recovery."

UP GOVT NOT IN FAVOUR OF LOCKDOWN, MAY MOVE SC

that the state government will move the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

Earlier, during a review meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the government is not in favour of a complete lockdown like Delhi. He said instead of complete lockdown, officials should be instructed to increase the availability of oxygen and take stern action against those violating the Covid protocols.

With the Sunday lockdown in Uttar Pradesh, night curfew is already being imposed in more than 25 cities from 8 pm till 7 am. The officials hinted that there could be a weekend lockdown which could now start from Friday evening instead of Saturday evening.

6-day Delhi lockdown triggers exodus

Delhi CM says Govt will ramp up beds, oxygen availability during this period

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday announced a week-long lockdown in Delhi, starting from 10 pm on Monday till 5 am next Monday (April 26) in the wake of a sharp rise in coronavirus cases in the city, a large number of migrants arrived at Anand Vihar Railway Terminal and ISBTs to leave for their hometowns, scenes reminiscent of early days during the first lockdown.

Despite Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal repeated appeal to labourers not to panic, a large number of migrant workers were seen at several bus stands in Delhi and NCR, with their luggage in a bid to exit Delhi fearing that lockdown would be extended. Photos and videos of people lining up at railway stations and bus stands surfaced on the social media. A migrant labourer in Jamia Nagar said he was heading for home as he, like many others, is not positioned to survive without jobs during the lockdown.

As Delhi reported the highest 240 Covid-19 deaths and 23,686 new cases in 24 hours on

Monday with positivity rate of 26.12 pc, Kejriwal said the health system "has not collapsed but is under great stress."

"If strict measures are not taken now, the health system in Delhi can collapse. The Delhi Government would arrange for a large number of beds and utilise this lockdown to arrange for oxygen and medicines in this period of six days of lockdown," he said.

Also, the CM requested the labourers not to panic and stay in Delhi. He said in this duration, all essential services concerning food, medicine, etc, will continue, a total of 50 people would be allowed to attend weddings for which separate passes will be issued.

He thanked citizens for their cooperation.

He said, "We had understood on the very first day itself that this catastrophe could not be fought single-handedly by the Government."

"The support and cooperation of the citizens are crucial in this struggle. If at any time the citizens are not informed about the truth and all facts are not kept in front of them, it would be impossible to assure their cooperation. Hence,

we provided all information to you," said Kejriwal.

Delhi is conducting the highest number of tests in the world per 10 lakh persons, he said, adding almost 1 lakh corona tests are being conducted in Delhi.

"We did not hide the number of people who lost their lives. The number of ICU beds available and the situation at hand - everything was informed honestly. It is due to this, whenever we took strict decisions, we received the cooperation of citizens," he added.

"As far as the current situation in Delhi is concerned, in the last 24 hours, approximately 23,500 new cases have come up. Prior to that, around 25,500 cases came to light. Hence, from the past 3-4 days we have noticed that around 25,000 cases are coming up on a daily basis and the number of beds in the Delhi hospitals is falling short. There is a shortage of oxygen as well," he said.

"We need to decide on the next step that needs to be taken have to be in light of this situation. The Corona situation in Delhi is very critical. Till now, we managed the health system in Delhi quite well. This is the fourth wave in Delhi.



The first wave was encountered last year in June wherein around 4,500 cases had come up. The second wave was in September. Then the third wave saw around 8,500 cases. There are cities in the most developed countries of the world whose healthcare systems collapsed as they witnessed 6,000 cases," he said.

Kejriwal further said that Delhi encountered 8,500 cases in the third wave, yet our health system did not collapse. On the other hand, we ramped up our preparations but today, with 25,000 cases the health system of Delhi has

reached its limit, he added.

The chief minister further said, "I had a meeting with Lieutenant Governor at 11 AM. today and discussed at length the entire situation at hand and all its aspects. After this, we felt that Delhi's healthcare system would not be able to take in more patients on such a large scale. If we do not impose a lockdown now, we might face a tragedy. We do not want Delhi to face such a situation where patients are lying on the corridors or losing their life on the streets; at any cost," he added.

Modi urges pharma industry to research on future threats

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid unprecedented shortage of oxygen, life saving drugs, ventilators, and hospital beds, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a series of meetings on Monday to accelerate steps to apply brake to the massive surge in Covid cases.

The PM also separately interacted with top doctors and representatives of top pharmaceutical companies online.

Modi urged the leaders of pharmaceutical industry to conduct more researches on threats which can occur in the future along with Covid-19.

Meanwhile, the Centre will extend a credit line worth ₹3,000 crore to Serum Institute of India and ₹1,500 crore to Bharat Biotech to aide their Covid-19 vaccine programmes

Seeking cooperation of the pharma industry, he assured the Government is undertaking

reforms for new drugs and regulatory processes.

Noting the second wave of the virus and rising number of cases, Prime Minister commended the pharma industry for their efforts to increase production of several necessary drugs. He appreciated them for reducing the price of injections like Remdesivir. To keep the supply of medicines and essential medical equipment going smoothly, Modi urged the pharma industry to ensure seamless supply

chains. He also extended Government's support for facilities like logistics and transportation.

In a virtual interaction with the country's leading doctors on the pandemic situation and vaccination progress, he also noted that Covid-19 is spreading rapidly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities this time, and asked them to connect with their colleagues working there and give them online consultations to ensure that all protocols are followed correctly.

Urging doctors to educate people against "rumours" on Covid treatment and prevention, Modi said it is very important in these difficult times to not become a victim of panic, an official statement said. For this, Modi said, along with proper treatment, emphasis must also be on counselling of patients admitted in hospitals. He also encouraged doctors to use tele-medicine for the treatment of other diseases, in case there is no emergency.



Bollywood
 'If your script is not good, your acting won't come off well.'
 —Boman Irani

SHADES OF YELLOW



Whenever we think of summers, the colour instantly pops up in our mind and instills eclecticism with its cheery vibes. How about giving your home a new refreshing look with it

Whether it's your whole house or one room at a time, the summer season is perfect to play around with the cheerful shades of yellow.

With spring officially bidding adieu to the long lazy, hazy and dark days, Summer 2021 is all about welcoming vibrancy and positive energy to our interiors. Whenever we think of summers, yellow colour instantly pops up in our mind and instills eclecticism with its cheery vibes. How about we paint a similar summer season inside our home for a new refreshing look?

BEAT THE HEAT WITH PANTONE
 This year demands the perfect balance of colours around you and what better than Pantone 2021 shades. So as you go about splashing hues of 'Illuminating' and 'Ultimate Gray' in your living area, which is the most



highlighted space of your house, it is important to marry the two colours thoughtfully. Your walls call for a soothing tone like this Sheer Concrete laminate by NewMika from the house of Greenlam Industries Ltd, whose light grey shade will effortlessly lead to comfort, conversation and camaraderie in the room. Now pair the brightness of a yellow armchair against your calming walls to achieve the perfect blend. You can also create a sense of well-being in the room by bringing in the summer breeze with an indoor plant on a wood table.



GOOD MORNING SUNSHINE
 The colours we choose for our walls have a high influence on our mood and energy. Therefore, we need to choose happy, positive and encouraging colours especially for the area dedicated to studying or reading. To infuse vibrancy and serenity at the same time, welcome the magic of sunshine inside your house. Try light mustard yellow for your walls, bringing the sunrises to them, and the freshness of the sky with a light blue cushion for your nook. Amplify the tranquil vibes by placing white

framed artworks on your walls as statement pieces. Lastly, keep your furniture wooden and minimal to complete the look that will help you relax and peacefully enjoy your me-time.

SAY IT WITH YELLOW
 Your bedroom is meant to give you solace after a long tiring day and at the same time kickstart your day every morning making you feel refreshed. Now, that you have enough reasons to rejig your bedroom this summer, we suggest opting for clas-

sic white like Zulfa White by from Greenlam, which will add freshness and bring restfulness to your space. Since this laminate comes with dimensional stability, you can use it in any climatic condition without worrying about replacing it seasonally. To add some distinction in your interiors, a yellow woven cushion can do all the talking while making it very fun and pleasing to your eyes. Remember to keep your bedding wrapped in solid shades and you are all set to enjoy your morning tea or those refreshing summer coolers in your little paradise.



Real, relatable and clutter breaking
 Actor **AYUSHMANN KHURRANA** says that the audience wants to see a different form of heroism on screen

On the ninth anniversary of *Vicky Donor*, actor Ayushmann Khurrana reveals that he was very jittery about the reaction that he would receive from the audience as an unconventional hero in his debut film.

"It's been nine years but it definitely seems like it happened yesterday. I can still feel the rush I felt on the release day nine years back. I was confident of the script but very jittery about the response that I would get from the audience as a lead actor," says Ayushmann.

He adds, "I remember all the phone calls with my family and friends, how they kept telling me that the viewers would welcome me because I have put in my best. I was an outsider just starting to write my own destiny and I was thrilled with the prospect of what life had in store for me. I owe so much to *Vicky Donor*."

Ayushmann credits director Shoojit Sircar for his fantastic debut that became a runaway success at the box office. He says, "I owe everything to Shoojit Sircar for his vision and trust in me as an actor. I owe it to Ronnie Lahiri and Juhi Chaturvedi. It was a film that was trying to change the language of cinema in India and I'm so proud to have been a part of it."

The actor says the success of *Vicky Donor* told him that the audience wants to see a new hero on screen. He says, "It's a film that told me to dream, to be bold, gutsy and risky about content choices, and most importantly told me that the audience wants to see a different form of heroism on screen. They want something real, relatable, endearing and they want to see good cinema that has clutter breaking stories."

"*Vicky Donor's* incredible success helped me stay on course to continuously disrupt the industry narrative with my choice of cinema. I can assure you that I will constantly try doing so through my brand of storytelling," adds Ayushmann.

NO INDUSTRY IS DIFFERENT: RASHMIKA

Actor Rashmika Mandanna started her career with Kannada film and successfully entered Telugu and Tamil films. She is now set to make her Bollywood debut with *Mission Majnu*, followed by her role in the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Goodbye*. Rashmika feels there is no difference when it comes to working in any industry.

"I believe every team, director, crew member work differently. So, if the same cast is working with different team, they become different. So, none of them are the same (individually) but no industry is different. Everyone is just a storyteller," she says.

Rashmika has been leading in the film industry as an actress since her 2016 debut with *Kirik Party*. However, the Hindi debut happened only recently, in Badshah's music video *Top Tucker*.

"I think it's just the time because before COVID hit, I had no time because I was doing so many South films and I didn't feel at that time that I should do Bollywood (films). Once COVID hit and other projects slowed down, I felt it was the right time to do it and that's when *Mission Majnu* and *Goodbye* came. There is no particular reason why I didn't do it earlier even though I had a couple of Hindi film offers but I feel now is the right time," she says.



The last few days have been troubling because of the unfortunate comeback of the second wave of COVID-19, restricting public gathering, meetings, closing of spas and gyms. While staying home to be safe will be your new normal again, giving a hold on your fitness won't be something that you have to worry about as here is a list of indoor exercise cycles, which can help you stay fit and healthy. Choose the best that suits your budget and requirements.

TREAD ONE: An indoor spin bike that combines excellent-quality hardware and software. It enables people to do their daily home-workout. A full HD (1920*1080) rotatable screen allows people to have a seamless life-like workout from the comfort of their homes without regretting not going to gyms. This is built to offer an immersive and comprehensive fitness experience, and act as a perfect one-stop fitness solution for modern-day fitness enthusiasts across diverse ages and backgrounds.

With live streaming, on-demand videos and leaderboards option, this bike is a must to have as your home workout equipment. It is designed to bring holistic and challenging workouts in a more accessible and efficient way.

DOLPHY: This Dolphy

Home sweat home

Second wave of COVID-19 does not have to bring your fitness journey to a halt. Here is a list of indoor exercise bikes, which can help you stay fit and healthy



exercise spin bike stands out as it comes with various specifications that can improve your home workout game. It has self-balanced wide paddles with adjustable straps fit to any size user, adjustable handles to keep your water bottles and comfort-

able pop-pin seat slider with horizontal and vertical adjustments, which help deliver a great fit while working out.

DECATHLON 500 SELF POWERED: This bike is comfortable and easy to mount as it

builds strength and motivates one to work out at home. It has a soft saddle, toe clips and adjustable handlebar that puts one's body at ease while also protecting it from potential injuries an intense workout can cause. The screen on it shows distance

rode, how long you've been riding, current rpm, current speed and calories burned. When you stop, it automatically pauses after a few seconds, then shows average rpm over your ride and average rate. Do you think you need more?

AFTON FU 50: This smart upright bike is the ideal fitness companion for your home. With eight levels of manual resistance, it offers a smooth and comfortable workout. Its attractive design will make this piece of fitness equipment look stunning even if you place it in your living room. By being in front of your eyes, you can make sure you do not skip your fitness regime. It has some amazing console features, which display scan, speed, distance, time cal, rpm, thr, pulse, body fat, recovery, calendar, clock, temperature.

LIFELONG LIF 54 FITPRO: This Lifelong LIF54 FitPro stationary exercise belt bike has six kg Flywheel Adjustable Resistance, which is best for cardio, weight loss and strength training at home. The LCD monitor on it is the best to track your speed, time, calories, distance and heart rate. It can help you understand your exercise situation quickly and effectively. It even has a VR (virtual reality), which helps make your exercise much more fun and engaging.

TREND BLAZER



VIDYUT LAUNCHES HIS BANNER

Bollywood action star **VIDYUT JAMMAL** launched his home production banner, Action Hero Films, on Monday.

"The viewers have embraced and loved me in every character, and this time around I am donning the role of a producer with their blessings. It's my turn to give as good as I got. I see this as an opportunity to empower talented people," said Vidyut, who has completed a decade in the film industry.

fairtalk

KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN



"We went for a holiday to Tuscany and we had all these amazing brick oven pizzas and I came back gaining eight kilos because all I did was watch that chef make pizza's day in and day out. It was like an art, making a pizza is easy but starting from scratch and actually doing it the way they do is an art."

dailytalk

KANGANA RANAUT



"Yesterday was the wedding anniversary of my parents. Growing up they lied to us that it was a conventional arranged marriage. It's only much later *nani* (grandmother) told us they had a raging affair. Papa saw mom at a bus stand returning from college, took that bus every day till she noticed him."

SHARON PLANS A TELL-ALL BOOK

British television personality **SHARON OSBOURNE**, who got into a heated discussion about her friend Piers Morgan with *The Talk* host Sheryl Underwood, says she didn't sign any gagging order and is all set to write a tell-all book about what happened.

A huge uproar ensued after Osbourne expressed support for Morgan on the show, when the latter was heavily ltrolled for criticising Meghan Markle for her opinions about English royalty on Oprah Winfrey's show recently.



Tottenham fires manager Jose Mourinho after 17 months

AP ■ LONDON

Tottenham fired Jose Mourinho on Monday after only 17 months in charge, and just as he was preparing to coach the club in the League Cup final.

Mourinho was hired in November 2019 to replace Mauricio Pochettino, who unexpectedly led the London club to the Champions League final before the team collapsed the following season.

Mourinho failed to get Tottenham back into the Champions League and has overseen another collapse this season. The team was in first place in December but a run of poor results has seen it fall to seventh place.

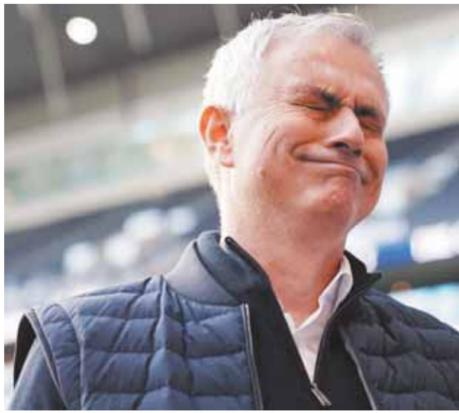
"Jose and his coaching staff have been with us through some of our most challenging

times as a club," Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy said.

"Jose is a true professional who showed enormous resilience during the pandemic. On a personal level I have enjoyed working with him and regret that things have not worked out as we both had envisaged. He will always be welcome here and we should like to thank him and his coaching staff for their contribution.

Mourinho's exits comes two days before a Premier League game against Southampton and with the League Cup final on Sunday against Manchester City. Tottenham, which hasn't won a trophy since the 2008 League Cup, said youth coach Ryan Mason had been put in charge of training.

It is Mourinho's shortest



spell at a club since breaking into the big time with Porto in 2004.

Disgruntlement over his tactics and methods have resurfaced in recent months, with

Tottenham slipping out of the Champions League places and getting eliminated from the Europa League in the round of 16 after a surprising 3-0 loss at Dinamo Zagreb.

Tottenham is five points behind fourth-place West Ham, which occupies the final Champions League qualification place.

The club has won only one of its last five games.

The two teams above Tottenham Chelsea and Liverpool have games in hand.

Tottenham now heads into the League Cup final against City at Wembley Stadium without a manager and probably without its best player, with Harry Kane having hobbled off late in the 2-2 draw at Everton in the Premier League on Friday. That was Mourinho's last game in charge.

Super League informs UEFA of legal action to force breakaway

LONDON: The 12 European clubs planning to start a breakaway Super League have told the leaders of FIFA and UEFA that they have begun legal action aimed at fending off threats to block the competition.

The letter was sent by the group of English, Spanish and Italian clubs to FIFA President Gianni Infantino and UEFA counterpart Aleksander Ceferin saying the Super League has already been underwritten by funding of 4 billion euros (5.5 billion) from a financial institution.

Currently, teams have to qualify each year for the Champions League through

their domestic leagues, but the Super League would lock in 15 places every season for the founding members. The seismic move to shake up the sport is partly engineered by the American owners of Arsenal, Liverpool and Manchester United, who also run franchises in closed U.S. leagues a model they are trying to replicate in Europe.

UEFA warned the Super League clubs, including Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus, that legal action would be taken against them and said they would be barred from existing domestic competitions like the Spanish league, the

Premier League and international competitions.

We are concerned that FIFA and UEFA may respond to this invitation letter by seeking to take punitive measures to exclude any participating club or player from their respective competitions, the Super League clubs wrote to Infantino and Ceferin in a letter obtained by The Associated Press. Your formal statement does, however, compel us to take protective steps to secure ourselves against such an adverse reaction, which would not only jeopardize the funding commitment under the Grant but, significantly, would be unlawful.

PSG scores last-gasp winner; Monaco, Lyon also win

AP ■ PARIS

Defending champion Paris Saint-Germain scored in the last seconds of injury time to beat Saint-Etienne 3-2 and close the gap on league leader Lille to one point.

PSG had just gifted Saint-Etienne an equalizer in the second minute of injury time when Mauro Icardi rose to head home Angel Di Maria's cross three minutes later as the substitutes combined to give PSG a much-needed victory. Kylian Mbappe scored two goals.

There are only five games left after this weekend in one of the closest title races for many years. Third-place Monaco won 3-0 at struggling Bordeaux to stay one point behind PSG and one ahead of fourth-place Lyon, which won 2-1 at Nantes with two goals from Netherlands forward Memphis Depay.

Lyon hosts Lille next Sunday.

Depay latched onto a clever pass from Brazil midfielder Lucas Paqueta to clip the ball over goalkeeper Alban Lafont in the fourth minute, and netted from the penalty spot in the 36th after Lafont fouled forward Karl Toko Ekambi.



Depay moved above Wissam Ben Yedder into second place in the scoring charts with 18 league goals, but still five behind PSG's Mbappe.

At Parc des Princes, Mbappe equalized with a fine finish in the 78th, one minute after striker Denis Bouanga put the visitors ahead, and converted a penalty in the 86th after being fouled by goalkeeper Etienne Green.

PSG gifted the visitors a goal when Bouanga was given too much space down the left and his shot was poorly dealt with by goalkeeper Sergio Rico

with Romain Hamouma in position to tap in.

Earlier, PSG winger Pablo Sarabia struck the post with a free kick after 30 minutes and Green a former club ball boy made his first save five minutes later from Rafinha's low shot.

In between, Saint-Etienne winger Wahbi Khazri had a goal ruled out for offside.

Pochettino made a triple substitution midway through the second half, bringing on midfielder Marco Verratti, Di Maria and Icardi.

Di Maria failed to close down on the left and overlap-

ping full back Miguel Trauco had plenty of time to pick out Bouanga's close-range finish.

But Saint-Etienne was napping at the restart.

Verratti's long ball over the top was expertly controlled by Mbappe with the outside of his foot and he slid it under Green for 1-1.

Pochettino's first game in charge of PSG was also against Saint-Etienne in January and ended in a draw.

He was somewhat fortunate this time, while Claude Puel said his young Saint-Etienne side paid for a lack of

composure.

"It really hurts to concede a goal 15 seconds from time ... We scored a great first goal, but celebrated it far too much and conceded straight after," Puel said.

"We didn't get our reward due to some inexperience. We paid dearly for it, so there are a lot of regrets."

Lille dropped points when it was held 1-1 at home to Montpellier on Friday.

CLINICAL MONACO

Striker Kevin Volland put Monaco ahead in the 28th from strike partner Wissam Ben Yedder's pass, winger Gelson Martins struck just after the break and substitute Stevan Jovetic headed in a late third. Monaco has lost only once in the past 21 games overall.

OTHER MATCHES

Lens drew 1-1 at Brest and is only one point ahead of sixth-place Marseille in the chase for fifth spot, a Europa League place. Last-place Dijon ended a run of 12 league defeats with a 2-0 home win against midtable Nice.

Also, it was: Nimes 1, Strasbourg 1; and Reims 0, Metz 0.

India assured of 4 medals at World Youth Boxing C'ships



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian champion Vinka and Alfiya Pathan were among the four Indian boxers who progressed to the semifinals of the youth world championships for men and women in Kielce, Poland.

Gitika and Poonam are the other two boxers to enter the last-four stage and have secured at least a bronze medal for the country. All the four boxers put up scintillating performances in their respective quarterfinals bouts.

Panipat boxer Vinka blanked her Colombian opponent Camilo Camela 5-0 in the 60kg category, while the 2019 Asian junior champion Alfiya (+81) also won by the same margin against Hungarian boxer Reka Hoffmann.

Playing in the 57kg category, Poonam notched up an easy 5-0 win against Nazerke Serik of Kazakhstan to progress to the semifinals.

Gitika (48kg) produced another strong show as she dominated her opponent, Romania's Elisabeth Ostan, from the word go with precise punches and swift movement that saw the referee stopping the contest after the first round and declaring the Haryana boxer as the winner.

Another Indian woman in action, Khushi (81kg), lost her quarterfinal bout against Busra Isildar of Turkey.

In the men's section, Manish (75kg) and Sumit (69kg) made their way into the quarterfinals in their respective categories with identical 5-0 victories against Jordan's Abdallah Alaarag and Ladislav Horvath of Slovakia respectively. Meanwhile, Akash Gorkha (60kg) and Vinit (81kg) couldn't progress further as they suffered defeats in their respective last-16 bouts.

NRAI requests govt to vaccinate athletes at the earliest

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has requested the government to vaccinate its Olympic-bound shooters at the earliest, taking into account the unprecedented spike in COVID-19 cases.

As per the data updated by the union health ministry, India reported 2,73,810 new positive cases in the last 24 hours, the highest single-day surge taking the country's case-load past the 1.5 crore mark.

As many as 1,619 people succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours.

Considering the grim situation, the NRAI is keen that its athletes be vaccinated soon.

"The federation has been insisting on the athletes getting vaccinated as soon as possible. It has again requested the government to vaccinate its shooters," a source close to the NRAI said.

"We understand that it is a personal choice but if the government takes the lead and is able to convince the athletes, they will probably come forward and get the jobs. With cases rising at such a fast rate, there is no other way around at this time," he added.

The NRAI stepped up its call for vaccination after three of its Olympic-bound shooters contracted the highly contagious virus recently, forcing the federation to cancel the national camp for the rifle team that was to start in the national capital from Tuesday.

It is instead arranging for an training-cum-competition trip abroad, including participation in the European Championships.

The NRAI had announced a 15-member Indian shooting contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Games in the first week of this month.

Keeping the threat posed by the COVID-19 in mind, two reserve shooters for each event have been picked alongside the main team. They will be trained on par with the Olympic-bound shooters and will be kept on standby for the Tokyo Games.

Anirban Lahiri hit by Covid

HILTON HEAD ISLAND: India's top golfer Anirban Lahiri has tested positive for COVID-19, ruling him out of at least a couple of events on the PGA Tour.

Lahiri received his test result on Saturday and has since gone into quarantine.

The 33-year-old ace golfer, who is aiming for a second successive Olympic appearance, was just beginning to show signs of return to form with a fifth place finish at the Valero Texas Open. He will now miss action for at least two weeks.

Lahiri's recent Top-5 finish had catapulted him into the race for one of Olympic berths. Even though he will miss a tournament or two, he could be back for Wells Fargo in mid-April and then the Byron Nelson event.

There are a few more events for him to make a bid for the Olympic spot.

Last week Lahiri missed the cut at RBC Heritage after a modest 71 in the first round and a listless 75 in the second. He was sitting out the week of Zurich Classic of New Orleans, to practice and work on his game.

However, Lahiri will now miss practice and also next week's Valspar Championship.

Taking the unexpected blow on his chin, Lahiri tweeted, Looks like the pandemic caught up with the Lahiri's (sic). Tested positive Saturday morning, isolating and waiting it out. Stay safe everyone."

Lahiri has been on the PGA Tour since 2016 though his last worldwide win came at the Hero Indian Open in 2015. He has however had numerous Top-5 and Top-10 finishes on the PGA Tour.

The current season has been a mixed one for Lahiri, who got to keep his playing rights on the world's biggest tour as the 2020 season was hit by the pandemic and Lahiri was stuck in India.

Archery 'couple' Atanu, Deepika set for new challenge in World Cup

PTI ■ GUATEMALA

All eyes will be on the newlywed archery couple of Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari as India will look to make up for the lost time caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the World Cup Stage 1 which begins here on Tuesday.

It has been more than 18 months since the last circuit trophies were awarded at the World Cup Final in Moscow. The World Cup Stage 1 will be the first global event since the pandemic forced the cancellation of the international calendar in 2020.

For the Indians, the wait was longer as they last took part in a World Cup back in the stage 4 circuit in Berlin in July 2019. Thus, they would look to shake off the rustiness and get back to rhythm.

In the absence of Asian

heavyweights Korea, China, Chinese Taipei and Turkey, the Indian archers led by Atanu and Deepika would look to a strong performance in the build-up to the Tokyo Olympics.

Known for meticulous planning, archery's leading nation Korea has announced it will not shoot at any of the three stages of the 2021 World Cup, all scheduled before the Olympic Games, due to ongoing travel restrictions caused by the pandemic.

Without the big Asian teams, it will be a battle of supremacy between the American and European nations, while the Indians would also hope to make a mark, especially in the mixed and team events.

Having already secured the Olympic quota, it would be the first real test for the trio of Atanu, Pravin Jadhav and vet-



eran Tarundeep Rai.

In the women's section, India has got individual Olympic quota through former world number one Deepika who, along with Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari, would look to the much-needed exposure ahead of the final qualification in Paris.

Reigning under-18 world champion, Komalika has shown a lot of promise in the

recent past and she would look to come out of the shadow of longtime leading archer Deepika.

Realistically, it's the women's team and the mixed pair team which can win medals in the absence of the fancied compound team which was withdrawn under unfortunate circumstances.

The national federation pulled out the compound team

boasting the Asian champions duo of Abhishek Verma and Jyoti Surekha just before their departure after their coach Gaurav Sharma tested "positive" for COVID-19.

The coach was isolated at the SAI Sonepat camp while the team left for Delhi airport but the federation disallowed their entry to "ensure safety" of the recurve archers.

The next day, it came to light that the coach had a "false positive" report in his second test but by then the damage to the compound team had already been done by.

"Absence of the compound team will definitely hurt India's medal chances, who's responsible for this mess," an official said, taking a dig at the Archery Association of India.

Around 150 archers from across the globe will vie for top honours in the World Cup first stage.

4X100m relay team can qualify for Tokyo Olympics: Hima Das

NEW DELHI: Star sprinter Hima Das is confident that the Indian women's 4x100m relay team, of which she is a part, can qualify for the Tokyo Olympics during the World Athletics Relay in Poland next month.

The top eight finishers in the World Relays on May 1 and 2 at Chorzow in Selisia will get automatic berths in the Tokyo Games, which is scheduled to begin on July 23.

Hima, who is yet to qualify for the upcoming Olympics, is set to be a key member of the Indian 4x100m relay quartet, with the other three likely to be national record holder Dutee Chand, Archana Susenndran and S Dhanalakshmi.

Himashree Roy and AT Dhaneshwari are the other members of the 4x100m relay team named by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI).

"Dutee will also be a part of the team, we are confident that we can qualify for the Olympics during the World Relays. We should do it," Hima told PTI in an interview.

"I am in very good shape and the other members are also

doing good and preparing well. We have done really well (in the individual 100m) during the Federation Cup," she added.

The 100m event in the Federation Cup in March was won by Dhanalakshmi in 11.38 seconds while Chand and Suseendran were second and third with 11.58 and 11.76 respectively.

Hima had won one of the preliminary heats in 11.63 but was disqualified in the final race after a false start.

The 21-year-old from Assam, known as the 'Dhing Express', said she will be running mostly 100m and 200m in the training-cum-exposure tour of Turkey planned by the AFI from later this month.

"I will be running 100m and 200m during training. I will also take part in competitions (Olympic qualifying events) in an around Turkey," she said. Hima is the reigning world junior 400m champion and silver medalist in the 2018 Asian Games in the one-lap race but has run only 100m and 200m this season.

Asked if she will run 400m

this season, she said, "It is a decision to be taken by coach (Galina Bukharina) and the AFI. Everybody knows I have some issues in 400m, could not complete in the 2019 Asian Championships."

Hima set a national record of 50.79 seconds in 400m during the 2018 Asian Games but a back injury forced her to pull out midway through the one-lap race at the Doha Asian Championships in April 2019.

She ran two 400m races in the Czech Republic in 2019 but she only clocked 53.07s in her last race in August that year. She missed the 2019 World Championships in September due to the back injury.

Hima, a brand ambassador of Adidas, also spoke about the German sportswear giant's new initiative through a global film series launched on Monday.

Across 20 films, including those of Ranveer Singh, Hima, Beyonce, Paul Pogba, Mo Salah and Siya Kolisi, stories were told through rare footages to show sport culture around the world with tagline 'Impossible is Nothing'.

Atletico increases lead in Spain after Real Madrid draws

AP ■ MADRID

After seeing rivals gradually cut into its lead, Atletico Madrid finally got some breathing room at the top of the Spanish league.

Atletico ended its winless run by routing last-place Eibar 5-0, then saw city rival Real Madrid held 0-0 by Getafe.

Those results gave Atletico a three-point lead over second-place Madrid, and a five-point cushion over third-place Barcelona, which has a game in hand after winning the Copa del Rey final against Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

"When you win, everything becomes easier, you gain some tranquility," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said.

"It has become a very exciting finish to the league and hopefully we can keep improving so it's not a competition in which only Real Madrid or Barcelona can win it."

Madrid had moved within a point of the lead after beating Barcelona in the previous round. Atletico was coming off a loss to Sevilla and a 1-1 draw against Real Betis.

"We will keep fighting,"

Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said. We know that we will need to be at our best. There's still a lot left and we will keep trying. This league is very difficult for everyone."

ATLETICO ROUT

Correa and Marcos Llorente scored two goals each and Yannick Carrasco added another as Atletico routed Eibar at the Wanda Metropolitan Stadium. Simeone's team easily won despite playing without Luis Suarez and Joao Felix because of injuries. Correa, one of the players who came in to replace the injured regular starters, broke the deadlock with a goal from close range in the 42nd minute, then quickly added to the lead after a nice turn to clear a defender inside the area in the 44th.

Carrasco scored the third goal in a breakaway in the 49th, then Llorente got the fourth from inside the box in the 53rd and the fifth from close range in the 68th.

Eibar's winless streak in the league reached 14 consecutive matches. The Basque Country club, which had no shots on target, is four points from safe-



ty. Atletico's next match is on Thursday against Huesca, another team fighting relegation. Huesca lost 1-0 at Alavés on Sunday after conceding in the 85th. Madrid visits Cádiz on Wednesday.

MADRID HELD

Missing some of its top players, Real Madrid struggled against Madrid rival Getafe and needed a good performance by goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois to avoid an even more disappointing result.

After difficult games against Liverpool in the

nearly conceded when Jaime Mata's header hit the post for hosts Getafe, which sit four points from the relegation zone.

SEVILLA RISES

Sevilla won 2-1 at Real Sociedad to move within a point of third-place Barcelona, practically securing the final Champions League spot.

Sevilla has a 15-point gap over fifth-place Villarreal.

Sociedad, which won the postponed 2020 Copa del Rey final two weeks ago, took the lead through Carlos Fernandez in the fifth minute, but Sevilla rallied with goals by Fernando in the 22nd and Yousef En-Nesyri in the 24th.

OTHER RESULTS

Villarreal routed regional rival Levante 5-1, with Nigerian midfielder Samu Chukwueze scoring a pair of second-half goals for the visitors.

Betis drew 2-2 at home against Valencia, while Cádiz and Celta Vigo played to a 0-0 draw. Midtable Osasuna beat relegation-threatened Elche 2-0. There were no league matches on Saturday because of the Copa del Rey final.

Moeen, Jadeja script CSK win

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The spin duo of Ravindra Jadeja and Moeen Ali tormented the Rajasthan Royals batting line-up to ensure a second consecutive win for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL here on Monday.

Cameos from Faf du Plessis (33 off 17), Dwayne Bravo (20 not out off 8), Ambati Rayudu (27 off 17) and Ali (26 off 20) helped CSK post 188 for nine after being put in to bat.

Royals made a promising start in the run chase courtesy Jos Buttler (49 off 35) before the batsmen succumbed to the spinners on the Wankhede pitch which offered more turn than earlier games. CSK won the game by 45 runs after Royals' innings ended at 143 for nine.

Ali (3/7 in 3 overs) picked up three wickets in quick succession to effectively seal the game for his team after Jadeja (2/28 in 4) provided the crucial breakthrough by casting Buttler with a classical away turning delivery. One of the best fielders around, Jadeja also took four catches.

It was another emphatic win for CSK after they outplayed Punjab Kings while Royals suffered their second loss in three games.

Earlier, CSK lost wickets towards the end with the batsmen going for big hits and also in the face of some good bowling by Royals. Bravo smashed a huge six off the last ball of the innings from Mustafizur Rahman (1/37) to ensure the Super Kings got close to 190.

Du Plessis top scored with 33 as the CSK batsmen got starts but couldn't capitalise on them after Young Chetan Sakariya (3/36 from 4) was the best bowler for Rajasthan while Chris Morris finished with 2/33 despite conceding 15 runs in his final over.

M S Dhoni, in his 200th match as CSK captain, came in to bat at No.7 but could not get going as



quickly as he would have liked. He, however, managed two boundaries in his 17-ball 18 before being beaten by an off-cutter by Sakariya only to give a catch to Jos Buttler.

He survived a run-out chance and a few anxious moments in his brief knock.

Rayudu and Suresh Raina (18, 15 balls, 1 four, 1 six) added 45 runs in quick time for the fourth wicket before the former perished going for an attacking shot on the off-side off Sakariya.

Sakariya struck again a few balls later, getting Raina to hit one straight to Morris at mid-off as CSK slipped to 125 for five in the 15th over.

Rayudu hit sixes off successive deliveries in Tewatia's second over, scoring 14 runs as he and Raina

attempted to take advantage of the fifth and sixth bowlers (Tewatia and Riyan Parag) employed by Royals skipper Samson.

Tewatia had begun well by conceding only five runs in his opening over and got ride of Moeen Ali (26 off 20).

Opener Ruturaj Gaikwad's struggles continued as his attempt to hit his way out saw him miscue a pull only to see it loob to Shivam Dube off Rahman. He fell for 10 (13 balls, 1 four) after adding 25 runs for the first wicket with fellow opener du Plessis.

The South African showed intent and waded into Jaydev Unadkat in the fifth over, hammering three fours and one six before an ambitious shot brought his downfall off Morris' bowling.

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Ruturaj Gaikwad c Dube b Mustafizur	10
Faf du Plessis c Parag b Morris	33
Moeen Ali c Parag b Tewatia	26
Suresh Raina c Morris b Sakariya	18
Ambati Rayudu c Parag b Sakariya	27
Ravindra Jadeja c Samson b Morris	8
M S Dhoni c Buttler b Sakariya	18
Sam Curran run out (Mustafizur/Samson)	13
Dwayne Bravo not out	20
Shardul Thakur run out (Samson/Mustafizur)	1
Deepak Chahar not out	0
Extras (b 1, lb 4, w 8, nb 1, p 0)	14
Total (9 wks, 20 Overs)	188
Fall of Wickets: 25-1 (Ruturaj Gaikwad, 3.5), 45-2 (Faf du Plessis, 5.4), 78-3 (Moeen Ali, 9.2), 123-4 (Ambati Rayudu, 13.2), 125-5 (Suresh Raina, 13.5), 147-6 (M S Dhoni, 17.2), 163-7 (Ravindra Jadeja, 18.3), 174-8 (Sam Curran, 19.1), 180-9 (Shardul Thakur, 19.4)	
Bowling	
Jaydev Unadkat	4-0-40-0
Chetan Sakariya	4-0-36-3
Mustafizur Rahman	4-0-37-1
Chris Morris	4-0-33-2
Rahul Tewatia	3-0-21-1
Riyan Parag	1-0-16-0

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Jos Buttler b Jadeja	49
Manan Vohra c Jadeja b Curran	14
Sanju Samson c Bravo b Curran	1
Shivam Dube lbw b Jadeja	17
David Miller lbw b Ali	2
Riyan Parag c Jadeja b Ali	3
Rahul Tewatia c Gaikwad b Bravo	20
Chris Morris c Jadeja b Ali	0
Jaydev Unadkat c Jadeja b Thakur	24
Chetan Sakariya not out	0
Mustafizur Rahman not out	0
Extras (b 1, lb 3, nb 1, w 8)	13
TOTAL (20 Ov, RR: 7.15)	143/9

Fall of (wickets: 1-30 (Manan Vohra, 3.5), 2-45 (Sanju Samson, 5.5), 3-87 (Jos Buttler, 11.1), 4-90 (Shivam Dube, 11.6), 5-92 (David Miller, 12.5), 6-95 (Riyan Parag, 14.1), 7-95 (Chris Morris, 14.3), 8-137 (Rahul Tewatia, 18.6), 9-143 (Jaydev Unadkat, 19.2)

Bowling	
Deepak Chahar	3-0-32-0
Sam Curran	4-0-24-2
Shardul Thakur	3-0-20-1
Ravindra Jadeja	4-0-02-2
Dwayne Bravo	3-0-28-1
Moeen Ali	3-0-07-3

Mayank wasn't stressed about low scores



PBKs batsman Mayank Agarwal plays a shot during his innings. ©PTI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Back in form with a scintillating half-century, Punjab Kings' Mayank Agarwal says he wasn't too stressed about not firing in the first couple of IPL matches and tried to stick to the things that worked for him in the last edition.

Mayank, who had amassed 424 runs in the last season in the UAE, had scored 14 and 0 against Rajasthan Royals and Chennai Super Kings to make a dismal start to the ongoing season.

However, the 30-year-old from Bangalore found his touch on Sunday as he smashed a sizzling 36-ball 69 to help Punjab post 195 for four against Delhi Capitals.

"I wasn't thinking too much, I planned to do and keep the mindset that worked for me last year. I thought last match I had a good ball, I didn't want to stress too much about it and wanted to look forward and so stuck to what worked for me," he said during a virtual press-conference.

"I was batting well in the nets, I was getting into good positions, it was about holding shape and I don't want to live in the previous games and I am happy how I batted." The total, however, didn't prove enough as last year's runners-up Delhi Capitals romped home in 18.2 overs, riding on opener Shikhar Dhawan's 49-ball 92.

"I thought it was a good total. It wasn't as easy in the first innings and I thought dew played a factor coming in the second innings," Mayank said.

"I thought Delhi Capitals batted exceedingly well, also there was a dew factor. Credited to Delhi bowlers how they executed after the 12 overs, they went into death bowling and executed it beautifully."

Asked how can dew be countered to make it an even contest, Mayank said: "I don't think we can do much about it as players. It boils down to execution under pressure and practising that. Those are the things which are under our control."

boundarymeter

4s	346
6s	147

PLAYER	RUNS
1. Shikhar Dhawan (DC)	186
2. Glenn Maxwell (RCB)	176
3. KL Rahul (PBKS)	157

PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	9
2. Rahul Chahar (MI)	7
3. Avesh Khan (DC)	6

MOST SIXES	COUNT
1. Deepak Hooda (PBKS)	8
2. Glenn Maxwell (RCB)	8
3. Sanju Samson (RR)	7

SUMMER SLAM

MOTION PICTURE



Kolkata Knight Riders teammates Prasidh Krishna, left, and Kuldeep Yadav wearing PPE kits pose for photo in flight as the team travel to Chennai for upcoming IPL matches. ©KKRiders

MURALITHARAN DISCHARGED

Sri Lankan legend Muttiah Muralitharan was discharged on Monday after undergoing a coronary angioplasty at a city hospital in Chennai. The former spinner, who is part of the Sunrisers Hyderabad support staff, went for the planned procedure on Sunday. Muralitharan would rejoin the SRH squad after undergoing the mandatory seven-day quarantine period.

PLAY WITH POSITIVE MINDSET: DHAWAN

DC batsman Shikhar Dhawan, who played match winning 92 against Punjab Kings says Delhi Capitals will have to play with a positive mindset against Mumbai Indians. "They (MI) have played three games in Chennai, so they know the conditions there. For us the challenge will be to switch on mentally according to the wicket and prepare our plan. Then we just have to go out there and implement the plan and play with a positive mindset and look to win the game."

'WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY TECHNIQUE'

Prithvi Shaw says he had started "worrying" about his technique after being dropped in Australia before roaring back to form in domestic cricket, thanks to a few technical changes he made in his game. "After getting dropped from the Test side after the first Test in Australia, I started worrying about my technique on why I was getting bowled. Even if it was a minor mistake, I wanted to minimize that. I started working on it there itself," said Shaw.

POINTS TABLE

	P	W	L	NRR	PTS	
1	RCB	3	3	0	+0.750	6
2	CSK	3	2	1	+1.194	4
3	DC	3	2	1	+0.453	4
4	MI	3	2	1	+0.367	4
5	KKR	3	1	2	-0.633	2
6	RR	3	1	2	-0.719	2
7	PBKS	3	1	2	-0.967	2
8	SRH	3	0	3	-0.483	0

Delhi eye revenge against MI Chennai wickets not unplayable: Mahela

KEY PLAYERS

SHIKHAR DHAWAN	Gabbar is in good form and was the highest run scorer in both the matches Delhi's won this season
RAHUL CHAHAR	Rahul was the wrecker-in-chief against KKR and SRH helping MI defend 150 run target with ease

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A battle royale is in the offing as heavyweights Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals cross swords, looking to outsmart each other here on Tuesday.

Up against a resurgent side, defending champions MI will need to address their middle-order woes if they are to go for a third consecutive win.

Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma has got starts and he would be keen to convert it into a big one and so would be Quinton de Kock.

MI have the likes of Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan, Kieron Pollard, Hardik Pandya and his brother Krunal, who can pummel any attack into submission on their day, but they are yet to fire on all cylinders.

The Mumbai bowlers, led by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, have been splendid in the last two games when they successfully defended low scores of 150 and 152 respectively. Strike bowlers Bumrah (3 wickets) and New Zealander Trent Boult (6 wickets) have been exceptional at the death.

Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar, whom bowling coach Shane Bond described as a "wicket-taking bowler", has grabbed seven wickets in last two games.

Meanwhile, for Delhi Capitals, the biggest positive has been the form of Shikhar Dhawan, who is the leading scorer so far in the tournament with 186 runs.

Dhawan and young Prithvi Shaw form a lethal opening combination, but the Mumbaiers need to convert his starts into big scores.

Delhi opted for Australian Steve Smith on Sunday but, as they are next playing on the slow Chepauk track, they might go back to Ajinkya Rahane, who is looking better suited for such tracks.

Skipper Rishabh Pant has the ability to take any attack to the

VENUE: CHIDAMBARAM STADIUM, CHENNAI

HEAD TO HEAD

Matches	28
Delhi Capitals	12
Mumbai Indians	16

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- MI beat Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets in Abu Dhabi
- Mumbai Indians won by 9 wickets against DC in Dubai
- Mumbai Indians defeated Delhi Capitals by 57 runs in Dubai (Qualifier 1)
- Mumbai Indians beat Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets in Dubai (Final)

201

Kieron Pollard with 201 sixes in 150 innings of 167 matches, is the only MI batsman to smash 200 or more sixes in IPL.

194

Rishabh Pant who hit 194 fours in 71 innings of as many matches, needs just six fours to become only second batsman after Virender Sehwag (266 fours in 79 innings) to complete a double century of fours for Delhi Capitals in IPL.

Faisal Features

cleaners. The DC team management would be hoping that the top-order fires in unison against the defending champions, to whom they had lost in the final last year.

Their pace attack is led by South African Kagiso Rabada and Chris Woakes, and the two have been impressive so far. They have an additional option in Anrich Nortje, who has also joined the squad.

Delhi played four pacers in the game against Punjab, but in Chennai, they could play more spinners as the track is conducive for the slower bowlers.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The wickets in Chennai are not unplayable but challenging being on slower side, insisted Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene as teams batting first have dominated the matches played at the Chepauk stadium, so far.

Out of six matches played here, thrice teams managed 150-plus score and five times the team that batted first won the match.

"They are not unplayable wickets. They are good, competitive wickets. And adapting to challenges is always the key for any batsmen or any team. We have been consistent with that approach, it is challenging, but our bowlers have adapted pretty well," Jayawardene said ahead of the team's game against Delhi Capitals.

The 43-year-old former Sri Lanka batsman also said all-rounder Hardik Pandya



Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene during team's nets session. ©mipaltan

has not yet bowled this season due to the niggle he picked up during the ODI series against England.

"We were looking forward for him to be bowling this season but after those matches against England, the last ODI, I believe he picked up niggle, so that is something that we are nursing at the moment."

Jayawardene however exuded confidence that the team would be able to use Hardik's services as a bowler.

"We don't want to risk it, because it is important that we make sure that he (Hardik) is in a position to comfortably come in and bowl. So hopefully in the next few weeks, with a bit of work and all that, we might see him bowling."

"It is not that we are deliberately trying to not bowl him, we would love to have him bowling, but as soon as the niggle is off and he is comfortable, we should be able to use that asset as well," he said.

'Women's cricket should not forget Tests'

NEW DELHI: Women's cricket's focus should be on limited overs formats until 10-15 teams start playing high-quality T-20 matches but Tests should not be forgotten, feel former stars Belinda Clark and Ian Bishop. The International Cricket Council (ICC) has granted Test status to each and every full-member women's team.

Countries like Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Ireland and Afghanistan have joined India, Australia, England, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, West Indies and New Zealand in playing the longest format.

"I think the focus for the women's game needs to continue on the shorter format to 20 and 50 over," former Australia skipper Clark said on Monday. She was speaking during a virtual press conference, organised to launch 100% Cricket Future Leaders Programme -- a mentorship programme for all female future leaders in the game.

"If our objective is to spread the game globally, and

grow depths in the teams that are completely competing internationally, you need a focus and that needs to be directed at certain formats.

"Otherwise, what will happen is everyone will spend a little bit of money on everything, and nothing actually will change. The success we've seen in the last five years has really come from that focus into the shorter format. "I'd be hesitant to move away from that until such time as we've got 10 or 15 nations that are playing high quality T-20," she added. The Indian and England women's team are set to play a historic one-off Test in June in Bristol. While the visiting team will take part in a Test for the first time since 2014, the hosts last played a red-ball game during the 2019 Ashes. Bishop, a former West Indies pace bowler and now a commentator, feels while the focus should be on growing white-ball cricket first, Tests should not be forgotten as many young women aspire to play in the longest format.

De Villiers is on a different level, South Africa you need this man: Yohan Blake

NEW DELHI: A cricket enthusiast, Jamaica's star sprinter Yohan Blake wants AB de Villiers to come out of international retirement and represent the South African national team in its upcoming assignments, including the T20 World Cup.

De Villiers himself is keen to play the T20 World Cup in India later this year, and is supposed to discuss the subject with national team head coach Mark Boucher towards the end of the IPL.

"Wow de Villiers is on a different level. South Africa come on you need this man," Blake tweeted after the versatile South African's breathtaking innings in the IPL in Chennai on Sunday.

Olympic silver medalist Blake, who is also the youngest 100m world champion, had earlier expressed his desire to play for Royal Challengers Bangalore because of Virat Kohli and de Villiers' presence in the side.

"We are lined up to have a chat sometime during the IPL. But yes, we've been talking



about it already," de Villiers, who retired from international cricket in May 2018, said after leading the Royal Challengers Bangalore to victory over the Kolkata Knight Riders.

The 37-year-old added, "If there's no space for me, so be it. If I can slot in there, it will be fantastic if all those things fall in place. Waiting for (the chat with) Bouchy towards the end of the IPL, and we will then plan accordingly."

Recently, after South Africa's 3-1 T20 series defeat to Pakistan, Boucher said he had spoken to de Villiers before

the IPL on a possible comeback. "I did chat to him before he went to the IPL," Boucher had said.

"The conversation is still very much open. AB being the person he is, he wanted to perform very well at the IPL, to prove to himself and everyone else that he is still a very key figure in world cricket and could dominate at that level," Boucher had said.

In May 2018, de Villiers had announced his retirement from international cricket. He had played 114 Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20Is before announcing his surprise retirement.