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# Kumbh mela ends after Modi's appeal

## After PM's urge, opinion grows in favour of holding rest of Shahi Snans symbolically

PNB ■ HARIDWAR/NEW DELHI

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to keep the remaining part of Kumbh Mela symbolic considering the surging Covid-19 cases, the Juna Akhada Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Avdeshanand Giri on Saturday announced the formal conclusion of the Maha Kumbh for the Akhada.

Panch Dash Nam Juna Akhada is the largest of the 13 Akhad.

Swami Avdeshanand Giri said the remaining Shahi Snan of the Kumbh should be observed symbolically on April 27 and later tweeted that protecting the lives of Indians is "our first priority".

"Considering the rising threat of Covid-19, we have formally invoked the various deities immersed for the Kumbh Mela," he said.

Earlier in a tweet in Hindi, the PM said, "I prayed that two Shahi Snan have taken place and Kumbh (participation) should now be kept symbolic. This will boost the fight against this crisis."

Later, Modi thanks all the sants for cooperation with the administration and expressed his gratitude for their gesture.

Thousands of Kumbh visitors have tested Covid-19 positives and dozens of seers have



Har Ki Pauri Ghat wears a deserted look during Kumbh Mela 2021 following a surge in Covid-19 cases in Haridwar on Saturday

succumbed to the virus during the last two weeks inviting both domestic and international outrage for allowing such massive gathering at the time when the second wave of Covid-19 was spreading like wildfire across the country.

Earlier, addressing the media here, Giri said the PM had telephoned him to enquire about the Kumbh Mela and the health of the seers. The PM had also requested that since the main Shahi Snans have concluded, the remaining Kumbh should be observed symbolically. The Juna Akhada head said he would request devotees from across the nation to visit Haridwar only in small numbers, adding that the remaining Shahi Snan will be observed

only symbolically.

The remaining Snans are to be observed mainly by the Bairagi Akhad. Earlier, the Nanjani Akhada had asked its Sadhus to leave for their respective destinations on April 17 considering the Covid surge. The Anand Akhada had also supported this view.

A majority of the 48.51 lakh people who took part in the last two royal baths (Shahi Snan) held on the occasion of Somwati Amavasya on April 12 and Mesh Sankranti on April 14 were seen openly violating Covid norms like face masks and social distancing.

The Kumbh has already been shortened this year to just one month from April 1 to 30 due to the pandemic.

# Covid test, quarantine to welcome returning devotees back home

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The ordeal of Covid-19 test and quarantine awaits thousands of devotees who are returning home after attending the Maha Kumbh at Haridwar. As India grapples with a devastating second wave of the coronavirus and States imposing lockdown, several States and UTs, including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Gujarat, have made Covid-19 test mandatory for Kumbh returnees. Some States are also keeping the returnees in mandatory quarantine.

Thousands of Kumbh visitors and hundreds of "Sadhus" who attended Kumbh Mela have been found infected from coronavirus. Gujarat on Saturday alone, 175 "sadhus" who attended Kumbh Mela have been found infected from coronavirus.

Gujarat on Saturday declared that all devotees returning to the State from Kumbh Mela will have to undergo a mandatory RT-PCR test before they are allowed to enter their respective cities and villages.

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said those found

infected will be isolated for 14 days.

Maharashtra Minister Anil Parab has announced those coming into the State from Kumbh Mela will be quarantined. Nasik district administration is also taking necessary steps for quarantining those coming from Kumbh.

Earlier, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) mayor Kishori Pednekar claimed on Saturday that the devotees returning from the Kumbh Mela will distribute coronavirus like "Prasad" and said they should be quarantined "at their own cost" on their arrival.

The Madhya Pradesh Government has issued order to put those returning from Kumbh in quarantine or self-isolation.

# 10 lakh new cases in just 7 days in India

## Record over 2.6L cases in a day; Delhi, Maha too see highest rise

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

India added nearly 10 lakh cases in just seven days ending April 17 as the country recorded over 2.6 lakh new Covid-19 infections and a record 1,493 deaths during the last 24 hours on Saturday.

The addition of nearly 25,000 new cases over the previous day count amounts to a rise of nearly 10 per cent, which shows that the growth of Covid-19 has more than doubled during the last two weeks.

Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are registering newer peaks and the situation remaining equally grim in the rest of the country.

The country had 1.52 lakh daily cases on April 10 when the death count stood at 838. A relative comparison shows that the death rate is steadily climbing up vis-a-vis new infections.

Amid the alarming rise in new infections and deaths, the country is battling a paucity of hospital beds, oxygen supply, ventilators, and life-safe anti-



Health workers and family members carry the body of a patient who died of Covid-19 for cremation amid surge in coronavirus cases in Jammu on Saturday

## Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES:	1,47,82,461 (+2,60,533)
DEATHS:	1,77,168 (+1,493)
RECOVERED:	1,28,03,791 (+1,36,853)
ACTIVE:	17,95,278
MAHARASHTRA:	37,70,707
KERALA:	12,21,168
KARNATAKA:	11,41,998
TAMIL NADU:	9,80,728
DELHI:	8,27,998 (+24,375)

# Maha threatens to seize Remdesivir exporting stocks

## CM complains of shortage of liquid oxygen, anti-viral drug

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After a bitter stand-off over the alleged discrimination in the distribution of vaccines, the Maharashtra Government on Saturday flagged the shortage of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir in the State and even threatened to seize the stocks of Remdesivir from the exporting firms and supply them to the needy people.

On a day when Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray charged that he could not speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the immediate requirement of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir vials as the latter

was pre-occupied with West Bengal Assembly elections, senior Minister Nawab Malik accused the Modi Government of not providing adequate treatment to the State over the supply of Remdesivir vials.

Not to be outdone, Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry Prayug Goyal launched a virulent attack on Uddhav whom he accused of indulging in "petty politics" and said "the (the Chief Minister) needs to stop his daily dose of shameless politics and take responsibility."

Earlier in the day, Uddhav said, "Yesterday evening, I dialled him (Modi) but I could not speak to him as he was busy in West Bengal elections." Uddhav said he wanted to discuss the issue of shortage of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir injection vials, both life-savers in case of critical Covid-19 cases. He, however, said the State Government was receiving cooperation from the Centre.

# Remdesivir price drastically cut on Govt intervention

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of increasing demand for anti-viral drug Remdesivir from across the States, the Centre on Saturday urged the injection makers to slash its price considerably. The Union Health Minister in his "Clinical Management Protocols for Covid-19" has recommended the use of Remdesivir in patients in the moderate stages of the illness.

According to a statement from the Government, the Union Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, NPPA - Advisor (Costs) - NI Chowdhury on Saturday ordered all pharma companies to comply with the revised norms with immediate and retrospective effect.

Pharmaceutical companies have reduced the price from 25 per cent to up to 68 per cent. According to the details shared by the NPPA, Cadila



Healthcare has reduced the price of its REMDAX injection to ₹899 from ₹2,800 earlier. Similarly, Syngene International has cut the price of its brand RemWin to ₹2,450 from ₹3,950 earlier. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories has cut the price of REDYX, which used to cost ₹5,400 earlier to ₹2,700 now. Similarly, Cipla has reduced price of its CIPREMI brand to ₹3,000 from ₹4,000 earlier. Jubilant Generics has cut the price of its Remdipin brand to ₹3,400 from ₹4,700 earlier.

# Delhi gasping for oxygen: CM City logs 24,375 cases in 24 hrs; Kejriwal seeks Centre's help

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Termining the situation serious in the national Capital, Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said, "In the last 24 hours, there have been around 24,000 cases. A day before, there was around 19,000 cases. So, the tally spiked only in a matter of 24 hours."

The Delhi Chief Minister said he has spoken to Union Health Minister about the extreme shortage of oxygen beds in Delhi, and added that in November last year, the Central Government allotted the Delhi Government 4,100 beds at a peak of 8,500 cases, however, this time, they have only provided 1,800 beds, even after this wave being three times more fatal than the previous ones.

"Delhi is facing a shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, and Tocilizumab, which must be made available by the Central Government for adequate treatment of corona patients," Kejriwal said.

Meanwhile, the weekend curfew in Delhi and the chain of spiralling coronavirus



A dog trots along a deserted street during a weekend lockdown in New Delhi on Saturday

infections got mixed reactions with many stepping out of their houses for going to offices or market places for daily chores in day time, however by evening there was some semblance of lockdown.

Roads, markets and buses across Delhi were largely empty

from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a majority of the National Capital's residents appeared to have

stayed at home. Police pickets could be seen around the city with police personnel and officials deployed, checking people having valid movement passes and issuing challan to those not following the guidelines.

## CAPSULE

BENGAL: 78.09% POLLING AMID SPORADIC VIOLENCE



Kolkata: West Bengal recorded over 78 per cent turnout in the fifth phase of its Assembly poll amid incidents of violence and attack on a candidate on Saturday after the bloodshed in the previous round of election. An EC official said around 78.09 per cent of the 1.13 crore voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm in 45 seats.

POPULAR TAMIL COMEDIAN VIVEKH DIES

Chennai: Popular Tamil comedian Vivekh who won the hearts of millions of people by his sharp wit and roasts for his social work, promoting environmental protection died on Saturday.

# Resume talks with protesting farmers, Dushyant urges PM

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to resume talks with the farmers protesting against the Centre's control over three farm laws at Delhi borders.

Chautala said a team of three to four Cabinet Ministers may restart discussion with the farmers who have been camping at the Delhi borders for over 100 days. The Deputy Chief Minister wrote the letter days after State's Home Minister Anil Vij's missive to Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, saying talks with peasants should be resumed to resolve the issue.

Vij had said he was concerned as a large number of farmers were sitting on

Haryana's borders amid a surge in Covid-19 cases in the State.

Haryana Chief Minister ML Khattar had also urged the Minister and the Centre to resume talks.

"I would like to bring to your kind attention that our 'Annadattas' are on roads at Delhi border agitating in respect of newly enacted three farm laws of the Central Government. It is a matter of concern that such agitation is going on for more than a hundred days," Chautala wrote in the letter. Chautala said he believes every problem has a solution by way of mutual discussions.

The earlier discussion between the Central Government and farmers' union brought a few solutions to the concerns raised by 'Samyukta Morcha,' he wrote in his letter dated April 15.

# Corona cases decline, recovery up in C'garh: Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government on Saturday said there has been a gradual decrease in Covid-19 positive cases and that the rate of recovery is rising.

On Friday, 14,912 positive cases were reported in the state, down from 15,256 on Thursday, an official press release said.

Every day, around 50,000 Covid tests are being done to curb the infection in the state. On Friday, 49,584 tests were conducted and 53,454 on Thursday.

As many as 5.16 lakh people have tested Covid-19 positive and 3.86 lakh have recovered.

On Friday, 11,807 patients including those confined in their homes were discharged.

# 4 Sikhs among 8 killed in mass shooting in US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The distraught families of Indian-Americans working at a FedEx facility in the US state of Indiana have expressed their anger, fear and anxiety in the aftermath of the latest mass shooting incident in the country that killed eight people, including four Sikhs.

Brandon Scott Hule, 19, a former employee at the facility in Indianapolis, carried out the mass shooting on late Thursday before allegedly committing suicide.

About 90 per cent of the workers at the FedEx delivery service facility are said to be Indian-Americans, mostly from the Sikh community.

On Friday night, the Marion County Coroner's Office and Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) released the names of the victims:

Amarjeet Johal (66), Jasvinder Kaur (64), Amarjeet Skhon (48) and Jasvinder Singh (68). The first three deceased are women. Four others were Karli Smith (19), Samaria Blackwell (19), Matthew R. Alexander (32) and John Weisert (74).

"While we don't yet know the motive of the shooter, he targeted a facility known to be heavily populated by Sikh employees and the attack is traumatic for our community as we continue to face senseless violence," Satjeet Kaur, the Sikh Coalition Executive Director, said in a statement. This is the worst Sikh massacre in the US after the Oak Creek Gurdwara mass shooting in Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, where seven members of the community were killed.

The attack marks at least the 45th mass shooting in the US since the Atlanta-area spa Lulu on bail bond of ₹5 lakh and a personal bond of ₹1 lakh.

# Lalu to walk free after serving half fodder sentence

## Jharkhand HC grants bail in Dumka treasury case; release from jail expected tomorrow

MRITUNJAY KUMAR ■ RANCHI

The Jharkhand High Court on Saturday granted bail to former Bihar Chief Minister and RID Chief Lulu Prasad in a fodder scam case involving illegal withdrawal of funds from Dumka treasury, paving his release from jail on completion of half the sentence period. Lulu is presently being treated at AIIMS, Delhi.

The court granted bail to Lulu on bail bond of ₹5 lakh and a personal bond of ₹1 lakh.



Lalu's lawyer Devarshi Mandat told PTI that they will move Special CBI court in Ranchi after it opens on Monday to seek his release following High Court order. Explaining the release procedure, Mandat said, they have sent an application to Lulu for his signature which will be submitted to the CBI court here on Monday along with the High Court order.

HOMETHEATRE

# Gripping tale of terror from young eyes

**UTOYA: JULY 22**  
**Norwegian with English subtitles**  
**&PriveID**  
**\*Ing: Andrea Berntzen, Aleksander Holmen, Solveig Koløen Birkeland**  
**Rated: 6/10**

There will always be a debate on whether it is appropriate to put out movies of terror attacks and the impact it has on the victims. Some argue it is glorifying the terrorist in some way. Others want documentation. Over and above this debate, *Utoya* is a Norwegian movie which looks at the terror killing on an otherwise peaceful island of Utoya in Norway's 26/11 with many left dead quite without premise. "It is the safest island on Earth, mom" one of the main protagonists says in the opening sequence of this film. The environs she is walking through are green, serene and enchanting which, by the way, is a complete contrast to what the film otherwise centres on with dogged starkness throwing up the real impact of a terror attack and its aftermath on any population in any part of the world.

Here, the movie pans out through the eyes of youngsters and the terrorist is given a grand go-by, being allowed to view the screen only in pitiful scenes with almost an abstract presence to give the audience some shape of the orchestrator. In an English version of this film is set to premiere on Netflix and that promises to take over in starkness, blood and gore from *Utoya*. For now, however, *Utoya* is a powerful story told candidly



even though the director could be faulted for what many may perceive as a story exploiting grim reality to make some noise on the small screen. Nevertheless, a gripping tale which should get a go by because of subtitles.



# A BLACK CAPTAIN AMERICA?

**FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER**  
**Episode 5**  
**Disney+Hotstar**  
**\*Ing: Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Wyatt Russell, Erin Kellyman, Danny Ramirez, Emily VanCamp**  
**Rated: 6/10**

Those who have been following the miniseries would know how episode 4 ended — the Shield — all bloodied. The fallout is felt by the Falcon and Winter Soldier. The Shield, for now is back with Sam just how Steve Rogers had wanted. So are we looking at yet another Captain America? A Black Captain America? Like Isaiah Bradley played by Carl Lumbly says — no self-respecting Black will take up the job. With John Walker stripped of all his duties and the title of Captain America, there is a new person who

makes an entry — Contessa Valentina Allegra de Fontaine. Who is she and what is the agenda? Well, maybe we will get to see more of Walker in episode 6. Meanwhile, Flag Smashers have upped their ante and are preparing for the final count down. Will they succeed? Will the Falcon and Winter Soldier be able to prevent Karil from going full guns ahead? Given that death hangs over Falcon's head, things will come full circle next time. The only thing missing here is the awe-inspiring action. In almost all the episodes, till now, they have been far between. The series has Falcon, Winter Soldier and the now redundant Captain America and yet the action is way below on the makers list. That boggles the mind and wonders if it has all been saved for episode 6 for the wow factor. Definitely something that Avengers fans will be looking forward to. — Shalini Sakseena

# Plan Your Day

Cold Brew Day is on April 20. SUNDAY PIONEER brings you recipes that will surely give you chills without costing too heavy on your pocket

## COLDBREW POPSICLES WITH FRESH MINT

- Ingredients:**
- half and half
  - 1 1/2 cups coffee beans
  - 2-4 tablespoons brown sugar
  - Mint leaves
- Directions:**
- Grind the coffee beans. Place the grounds in a large pitcher or carafe. Add three cups of cold water and stir to combine. Cover and let steep for 12-24 hours.
  - Strain the coffee and add 2-4 tablespoons brown sugar. Stir to combine.
  - Place a few torn mint leaves into each popsicle mold and top with a few tablespoons of half and half. Freeze for 15-20 minutes, until slightly firm.
  - Insert popsicle sticks into each mold and freeze for another 20 minutes until set.
  - Remove the pops from the freezer and top with sweetened

## CARAMEL SURPRISE COLD BREW

- Ingredients:**
- 1-2 cups Coldbrew
  - Handful of ice
  - 1-2 tablespoons coconut milk
  - 1-2 tablespoons caramel syrup
  - Pinch of sweetener of choice (if desired)
- Directions:**
- You can prepare coldbrew at home using French press or in a mason jar using muslin cloth, important is perfect coffee blend for your coldbrew. Keep prepared cold brew coffee in a pitcher or carafe in the refrigerator.
  - Four one cup (eight-ounces) of coffee into a mug, cup or glass jar filled with ice. Stir in coconut milk and caramel syrup. Add sweetener, if desired. Serve immediately.
- Courtesy: Gush Chandra, Beverage Training Manager, Lavazza India*

# TELLY TALE

## IT'S TIME FOR MAHASANGAM



COLORS' Mahasangam episodes have always raised the bar of entertainment with its complete package of drama and musical performances. One such blast of entertainment is the upcoming *Mahasangam* episode where the cast of *Choti Sardarni* and *Udayaarni* will share a screen during Baisakhi celebrations. Tejo (played by Priyanka Chaudhary) and Jasmine (played by Isha Malviya) will invite Jass even after knowing that there is stress going on in Virk family due to Fateh's decision of going to Canada. The celebration will be sparked with singer B Praak's presence as he will sing some of his hit song *Teri Mitti* from *Kesari* and also his recently launched soulful track, *Baarish Ki Jaaye*. In the special episode, Fateh (played by Ankit Gupta) will have his share of dramatic moments as he will get to know that the woman he saved and admitted to the hospital is awake and turns out to be Meher! (played by Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia). In a dramatic turn of events, Fateh will also come face to face with Sarabji (played by Avinash Rakhli). Will he be able to bring together Meher and Sarab? Singer B Praak, who was a part of the dramatic *Mahasangam* episode said: "I am excited to shoot here in Punjab with the cast of two most relevant show. *Choti Sardarni* is my family's favorite and *Udayaarni*'s concept strongly resonates with each one of us. The episode is going to be full of drama, entertainment and of course our beautiful new music track, *Baarish Ki Jaaye*. I had a lot of fun shooting with the cast of the show. They are fun, energetic, and extremely talented."

the viewers on a roller coaster ride and keep them on the edge of their seats. With Rocky (Keshav Sadhana) uniting with Danish to defeat Hero, the forces of the aliens get more robust, and it becomes difficult for Hero to fight them single-handedly. Danish threatening to destroy the planet and cause harm to human beings, leads to the battle of the War of Worlds. Danish launches his attack with the help of Rocky and with each passing moment, it gets tricky for Hero to fight Danish and protect his ring simultaneously. The battle gets fiercer, leading to the heart-breaking moment of Danish beating Hero and conquering the magical ring. Hero's identity as Veer is exposed to Danish and Zara simultaneously. Danish is celebrating after winning over Hero and gaining the magical ring. But little does he know what's in store and what will this end of Hero lead to?



Is Veer Nanda aka Hero dead? What will happen next? Manish Wadhwa, essaying the role of Danish, said: "Danish is very strong and an intense character. He never gives up and attacks back with force. The experience of shooting for this fight sequence has been amazing and it's fun to work with Abhishek. He is very hardworking and we both share great timing. Danish is happy and very delighted with getting hold of the ring, unaware of what will happen next. So, stay tuned to witness exciting twists and turns on the show and join us on this thrilling journey!" Abhishek Nigam, essaying the role of Hero, said: "This is the most intense fight sequence we have shot on the show so far and I was so much into the character that I could feel the same energy. Hero was putting in all the efforts to save the world and protect his ring, but he chooses his loss so that he can save the world. It was a learning experience while shooting for this sequence with Manish Sir. This sequence has come out really well and it will take the viewers on a thrilling never seen before. So, stay tuned and don't miss the fun!" KUMKUM BHAGYA TURNS SEVEN Zee TV's popular fiction show, *Kumkum Bhagya* has been an audience favourite ever since it was launched in 2014. Its intriguing

plot and the authentic portrayal of relatable characters like Abhi (Shobhit Ahluwalia), Pragya (Srihika), Rhea (Pooja Banerjee), Ranbir (Krishna Kaul) and Prachi (Mugdha Chapekar) have kept the audience entertained throughout these past seven years and has helped the show gain countless fans across the globe. Produced by Television's czarina Ekta Kapoor, *Kumkum Bhagya* has witnessed roaring success on the viewership charts every year and has won more than 50 awards till date. But it looks like there is no stopping the show even as the show completed seven years on April 15.

The family drama that explores and brings a range of emotions as well as the deepest intricacies of human relationships has kept the viewers hooked all this while through several interesting twists and turns in its storyline. In fact, the show has also managed to successfully reinstate the belief that opposites do attract by showcasing how despite having contrasting personalities, its lead protagonists are inseparable. As *Kumkum Bhagya* completes seven glorious years, Shobhit Ahluwalia who plays the role of Abhi got nostalgic and said: "It is not just a show, but a feeling for me. I've been associated with it for seven years now, but it doesn't feel like it's been so long. I must say that all these years have been a breeze and the entire unit including the technicians and actors are like a family for me. Generally, you hear people saying this when the show is coming to an end, but our case is different. When you're around the same people for seven years, you know them even better, as you have seen them at their best and their worst. I have to add that the writers and the creative team are fantastic, and they've held all of us together. I've been associated with the producers, Bajaji Telefilms for nearly two decades and they are like a family to me. As we complete seven years, I would like to say Thank You Ekta for believing in me, Shobha aunty for being there always and Jettu uncle, you're a rockstar and always guide us for the best. I also want to thank Zee TV for giving us such a great platform to showcase *Kumkum Bhagya*. Last but not the most important, *Kumkum Bhagya* is what it is today because of all our fans, so thank you so much to all."

# 'I don't regret my choices'

KUNAL JAISINGH, who plays Veer in SET's *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*, tells MUSBA HASHMI the attraction of playing the role, how it has become his priority and his story of giving endless auditions

- **What is your role in *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*?**  
I play Veer, a self-destructive and brooding person who is addicted to alcohol. I am paired opposite Gracy, who plays Amrit in the show. I will be donning a different look. I am extremely excited to be a part of this show and to work with such a lovely production house.
- **What made you take up the role?**  
The show offers beautiful love stories, many action scenes and gives a bit of knowledge to all the viewers about how people's suffering during the partition. Earlier the show managed to depict the pain and sorrow of 1947 perfectly. Now with a leap of four years, the makers are showing the story of the 1951 era and have planned many new things for the viewers. The concept of the show is unique and the overall plot is not only interesting, but intense and heart-wrenching for me. Other than that, I wanted to be a part of the show which stands out from all the other shows I have done in the past.
- **Did you have any apprehensions?**  
No, not at all. I knew I was going to be a part of this story post leap. I was actually excited for it. With a lot of twists and turns ahead in the show, this will be a good start for me.
- **From Mann Kee Awaaz Pratigya to *Kyun Utthe Dil... how has the journey been for you?***  
It has been a great one. I have been able to grow and learn so much in every role I have played. Every character I essayed holds a special place in my heart because with each character my audience and my fans started loving me more. Not only that, I learnt something from every character I played. Those were not only roles, but life lessons. My only goal during all these years has been to make sure that the audience understands the actions and emotions of the characters I play.
- **Omikara Singh Oberoi was a much-loved character...**  
Each show has his trials and a story to tell. *Ishqbaaz* was focused on the story of three brothers, and India's first spin-off was *Dil Bolei Oberoi*. When it comes to Omikara

"I was always passionate about my career, but getting into this space has been difficult, given the fact that the City of Dreams has a lot to offer but the hard way"



he was an artist who was the one balancing factor between the brothers and the family. Omikara has been a special character for me. It earned me a lot of love and support from my fans. I am grateful for all that. The character will always be valuable to me. I feel blessed and lucky and I never thought it would be so popular. The team, of course, was great. We are still like a family. We all have encouraged each other to perform at our best and that was visible in the show.

■ **How did acting happen?**  
I was always passionate about my career, but getting into this space has been difficult, given the fact that the City of Dreams has a lot to offer but the hard way. I have been a part of endless auditions ever since I have come here. I have even stood in an audition line for more than 10 hours. This industry has offered me a platform to project my skills and I am truly humbled by the fact that today I am getting to do that. My experience in the industry has been a roller coaster ride with a lot of ups and downs, but I have learnt that at the end of it, it's all worth it.

■ **Do you have any regrets?**  
Till date, I don't regret anything I have done in life. If I talk about my journey in the industry, it has been beautiful. None of the characters that I have played overlaps each other. We should not regret anything. After all, we do choose the opportunities that we think is right at that time. How things will unfold is not in anyone's hands. Regrets just make you sad and I don't want to feel sad for the choices that I have made. I have surely mellowed with time. I might not do the roles now which I did earlier, but when I look back, I was proud of what I was doing and will always be.

■ **What is there in the pipeline?**  
My pipeline is full with the current show that I am doing. It is my only priority. I am focused and would like to be loyal to it. I believe to make one's work stand out one should focus on a single thing at a time. That is the reason I prefer not to juggle projects.

# Four killed in hospital fire in Raipur

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Four patients were killed when a fire engulfed a private hospital in the Chhattisgarh capital Raipur, said the government press release on Saturday. While Ramesh Sahu succumbed to burn injuries, three others -- Ishwar Rao, Vandana Gajjala and Devika Sonkar -- died due to suffocation, it said. The reason why the fire erupted was not immediately known. Further details of the

tragedy were not available. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel called the disaster 'very unfortunate' and expressed profound grief towards the families of the bereaved, said an official statement. He announced a financial aid of Rs 4 lakh each to the families of the four who died, it added. Raipur Collector Dr. S. Bharathi Dasan and Raipur Senior Superintendent of Police Ajay Yadav reached the spot and oversaw the rescue efforts. It further said.



# Singh Deo concerned over Remdesivir, oxygen supply

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Expressing concern over the Covid-19 crisis, Chhattisgarh Health Minister T.S. Singh Deo on Saturday raised the issue of shortage of Remdesivir injection and about establishment of oxygen plants in the state. In a virtual review meeting, Singh briefed Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan about the grim situation in the state. Dr Harsh Vardhan was reviewing the situation in 11 states. He said there was 100 per cent occupancy of ICU beds.



"We are expending two lakh active cases in the second wave and so we need 40,000 oxygenated beds," he said.

# Self-isolation prevents Bastar tribals from viral infection



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The tribal habitats of Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district are still safe from the virulent Covid-19 virus, thanks primarily to the insular life the tribals largely lead. But Narayanpur's urban areas have registered a few corona cases. Situated in the tribal dominated sprawling Bastar region, Narayanpur district seems all set to contain the virus. District Collector Dharmesh Sahu told

The Pioneer that no case has been detected in the interiors of the district due to the self-isolation of the tribals. Areas in the district headquarters -- in contrast to major towns and cities in Chhattisgarh -- have registered only a few cases. The official admitted that if the virus grips the interiors of the district, the situation will be alarming. "Keeping that in view, active surveillance is planned to be done in the public places and offices in the district headquar-

ters," Sahu said. A lockdown has been imposed in the region from Saturday, he added. Narayanpur has around 1.5 lakh population and the administration has set a target of 350 tests each day from now on to contain the spread of Covid. Till Friday and since the outbreak of the infection, Narayanpur district had 2,137 Covid patients, of which 2,022 have recovered. Only two fatalities were registered -- these also due to comorbidity.

# Lockdown extended in Raipur, Durg till April 26



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

With the Covid-19 situation still deemed serious, authorities on Saturday extended till April 26 the lockdown in Raipur and Durg districts -- the two worst affected districts in Chhattisgarh. The original 10-day lockdown in both places was to end on April 19 morning. Raipur Collector Dr S. Bharathi Dasan said the lockdown has been extended by seven days. A similar order was issued in Durg. Dr Dasan said the surge in

coronavirus cases and fatalities despite a strict lockdown in Raipur district was a matter of concern and it was necessary to extend the lockdown to save human lives. He appealed to the people to cooperate with the authorities in checking the spread of Covid. The borders of the lockdown will remain sealed. All other conditions imposed when the lockdown was announced will prevail. On Friday, 3,813 fresh Covid cases were detected and 61 people died due to Covid in Raipur district.

# Now lockdown in Narayanpur from April 19

STAFF REPORTER ■ NARAYANPUR

Amid a sharp rise in corona cases and fatalities, a lockdown was declared on Saturday in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district. It will begin at 6 am on April 19 and end at the midnight of April 26. The district's boundary will be sealed and only essential services will be allowed during the lockdown, Collector Dharmesh Sahu said in an order. Medical shops and petrol pumps will function with conditional restrictions and only movement of medical emergencies will be allowed. Petrol pumps will only cater to ambulances, ATM vans, medical vehicles, media personnel and press related vehicles besides vehicles from other states.

Milk parlours and bakeries will open between 6 to 9 am and 5 to 7 pm. Newspapers can be delivered during this time. Also, 24x7 home delivery of milk will be allowed, the order said. Vegetable vends and fruit shops can open from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm. All liquor shops, commercial and departmental zones, temples and tourism sites will be shut. All Central, state government, semi government and private offices as well as banks will be closed. Telecom, sanitation, water supply, maintenance and health departments will work. Only 20 people will be allowed in marriages and social gatherings. Narayanpur is among 23 districts where lockdown has been imposed amid a surge in Covid-19 cases and fatalities in Chhattisgarh.



An oxygen production unit started at the Medical College Hospital in Jagdalpur, the divisional headquarters of Bastar region. The unit will help combat the Covid-19 pandemic in Chhattisgarh. Pioneer Photo

# No order issued to postpone Class XII exam

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Board of Secondary Education (CGBSE) on Saturday described as "completely wrong" that it has postponed the Class XII Board examination in the state amid the Covid-19 crisis. CGBSE Secretary V.K. Goyal clarified that no such order has been issued. A reported order which went viral on social media is "totally fake", he said in a press release. On April 9, the CGBSE announced it was postponing the Class X examination that was scheduled to be held from April 15 to May 1 due to a spike in coronavirus cases in the state.



Also, the government last month decided to close all schools, central and private schools and to promote the students of all classes except X and XII without examining them.

# Chhattisgarh enhances health infrastructure

In the last two years, the number of medical college hospitals (MCHs) has risen from six to nine, the number of district hospitals from 26 to 28 and the number of civil hospitals has gone up from 1,359 to 1,818, an official communication said on Saturday. In the last two years, 15 MCH Hospitals with 50 beds and six MCH Hospitals with 100 beds have been set up. During this period, six sub-health centers and a community health center have also been established. As a result of these efforts, the number of medical staff including specialists, doctors and medical officers has shot up from 18,458 to 20,405. Specialist doctors now number 319, up from 175. The number of medical officers has increased from 1,359 to 1,818 and the number of staff nurses has ballooned from 2,580 to 4,091. Under process now is the recruitment of 300 medical officers, 92 staff nurses, 50 medical lab technologists and 146 rural health coordinators (women),

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Effective efforts made by the Chhattisgarh government to make health facilities people oriented are proving more than useful as the state wages a grim battle against a resurgent Covid-19. In the last two years, the number of medical college hospitals (MCHs) has risen

from six to nine, the number of district hospitals from 26 to 28 and the number of civil hospitals has gone up from 1,359 to 1,818, an official communication said on Saturday. In the last two years, 15 MCH Hospitals with 50 beds and six MCH Hospitals with 100 beds have been set up. During this period, six sub-health centers and a community health center have also been established. As a result of these efforts, the number of medical staff including specialists, doctors and medical officers has shot up from 18,458 to 20,405. Specialist doctors now number 319, up from 175. The number of medical officers has increased from 1,359 to 1,818 and the number of staff nurses has ballooned from 2,580 to 4,091. Under process now is the recruitment of 300 medical officers, 92 staff nurses, 50 medical lab technologists and 146 rural health coordinators (women),

the communication said. To provide free health facilities, along with Ayushman Yojana, the Chief Minister Health Insurance Scheme, Sanjeevani Sahayata Kosh, Chief Minister Bal Hriday Suraksha Yojana, Chief Minister Bal Shrawan Yojana and Chirayu Yojana are being operated. All the above schemes have been included in the Dr. Khubchand Baghel Health Scheme, Ayushman Yojana and Chief Minister Special Health Scheme operated by the Chhattisgarh government. The number of Ayushman card holders as of December 2018 was 223,793. This now totals 13,57,441. With this, the benefit of free health facility is being made available to people in the state easily in government and recognized hospitals. The number of government and recognized hospitals has gone up from 1,088 to 1,359 in the last two years.

# COVID doesn't affect brain but still inflicts damage

IANAS ■

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid 19, likely does not directly infect the brain but can still inflict significant neurological damage, a new study suggests. The findings, published in the journal Brain, suggest that the neurological changes often seen in these patients may result from inflammation triggered by the virus in other parts of the body or the brain's blood vessels. "We've looked at more brains than other studies and we have used more techniques to search for the virus. The bottom line is that we find no evidence of viral RNA or protein in brain cells," said researcher James E. Goldman from Columbia University. For the study, the research team examined the brains of 41 patients with Covid-19 who succumbed to the disease during their hospitalization. The patients ranged in age from 38 to 97,



about half had been intubated and all had lung damage caused by the virus. All of the patients had extensive clinical and laboratory investigations, and some had brain MRI and CT scans. To detect any virus in the neurons and glia cells of the brain, the researchers used multiple methods including

RNA in situ hybridization, which can detect viral RNA within intact cells; antibodies that can detect viral proteins within cells; and RT-PCR, a sensitive technique for detecting viral RNA. Despite their intensive search, the researchers found no evidence of the virus in the patients' brain cells.

Though they did detect very low levels of viral RNA by RT-PCR, this was likely due to virus in blood vessels or leptomeninges covering the brain. The tests were conducted on more than two dozen brain regions, including the olfactory bulb, which was searched because some reports have speculated that

the coronavirus can travel from the nasal cavity into the brain via the olfactory nerve. "Even there, we didn't find any viral protein or RNA. Though we found viral RNA and protein in the patients' nasal mucosa and in the olfactory mucosa high in the nasal cavity," Goldman said.

COVID SCARE IN THE REGION

Haryana records highest single-day spike of 7,717 infections

32 MORE DEAD

PNB ■ CHANDIGARH

There was no let-up in the Covid-19 surge in Haryana on Saturday as the State reported a record 7717 new cases of the disease which took its cumulative infection tally to 3,49,794. Thirty two more fatalities due to the viral disease were reported in the State in a span of 24 hours, pushing its overall death toll to 3,386, according to a health department bulletin. Of the fresh cases, Gurugram, the worst-hit district in the state, accounted for 2549, its highest single-day spike so far. Among other districts that reported a big spike are Faridabad (987), Karnal (477), Sonapat (646), Panchkula (349), Hissar (507), Ambala (173), Kurukshetra (201) and Sirsa (231), the bulletin said. On Friday and Wednesday, the State had recorded 6277 and 5858 coronavirus cases respectively.

Among the latest deaths, five each were from Faridabad and Panipat, three were from Hissar, Karnal, Rohtak and two each from Gurugram, Ambala, Panchkula, Patiala and Jind. One each from Fatehabad, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra districts. The number of active Covid-19 cases in Haryana stands at 38558. So far, 3,07,850 people have recovered from the disease, and the state has a recovery rate of 88.01 per cent, the bulletin said. Amid rising COVID-19 cases in the State, the Haryana government has decided to allow officials equal to the rank of under secretary or below to work from home and restrict their physical attendance in offices to 50 per cent. A letter in this regard has been issued by the Chief Secretary's office. Officers of the level of deputy secretary, equivalent and above are to attend offices on a regular basis, it said. According to the order, rusters for employees' attendance are to be prepared by divisional and wing heads and frequented, they can call for more than 50 per cent physical attendance on administrative grounds. Officials who do not attend office on a particular day will make themselves available on phone and other electronic means of communication at all times from their residence and work from home, it said.



served to a record high of 4498 on Saturday, taking the State's cumulative tally to 2,95,138, according to a medical bulletin. The state's previous biggest jump of 4333 Covid-19 cases was reported on April 15 while 3,477 cases on April 12. Punjab's death toll climbed to 7834 as 64 more people succumbed to the disease, the bulletin said. The number of active cases increased to 32499. There are 46 critical patients who are on ventilator support while 401 are on oxygen support, it said. Ludhiana reported the highest number of fresh cases at 835, followed by 790 in SAS Nagar, 449 in Jalandhar, 372 in Patiala and 352 in Amritsar. Of the latest fatalities, 10 were reported from SAS Nagar, seven from Patiala, six each were reported from Amritsar, Ludhiana and Gurudaspur; four each from Tarn Taran and Bathinda. A total of 2615 coronavirus patients were discharged after they recovered from the infection, taking the total number of cured persons to 2,54,805. So far, 65,61, 928 samples have been collected for testing in the state, it added. 431 CASES, 2 DEATHS IN CHANDIGARH Chandigarh on Saturday reported two deaths and 431 cases of coronavirus, taking the infection count to 33,309 in the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana. It had on Friday recorded 481 Covid-19 cases, the highest single-day since global pandemic struck. Last year, on September 13, Chandigarh logged 449 cases. With two deaths, so far, 410 people have died from the infection in the union territory, according to a medical bulletin. The number of active cases stood at 3414. A total of 438 patients were discharged after they recovered from the infection, taking the number of cured persons to 29,485. A total of 3,58,865 samples have been taken for testing so far.

DROUGHT LIKE SITUATION IN HP

HP CS directs agriculture, horticulture depts to prepare action plan

PNB ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Chief Secretary Anil Khachi on Saturday reviewed the preparedness of the officials to deal with drought like situation in the state and instructed the agriculture, horticulture and the allied department to prepare district level action plans to readily mitigate with such situation. In a video conference with the Deputy Commissioners, he said crop weather watch groups must also be constituted besides the agriculture department should prepare a sound database on weather, crop conditions to assist the state disaster management authority (SDMA). He said that presently drinking water supply was normal across the State however as per the information supplied by the districts agriculture sector had been affected due to scanty rainfall during this year. It was disclosed in the meeting that out of total 413,134 hectare cropped area, 146,508 hectares of area had been affected due to less rainfall in State as of now with an estimated loss to the tune of ₹ 10820.57 lakh. As per the preliminary data received, the highest loss had been reported in district Bilaspur where 20280 hectares of land out of total cropped area of 28020 hectares had been affected resulting in loss of ₹3259.37 lakh. In district Chamba, 3571 hectares of land had been reported to be affected causing loss of ₹815.58 lakh. Similarly, all other districts had also been affected due to scanty rainfall. Anil Khachi said that various schemes of Shakti Vibhag had also been affected due to short rainfall. Out of total 9526 schemes of the department, 401 schemes had been affected up to 25 per cent.

ALL-PARTY MEETING

J'Khand Govt aims to normalise situation soon in State: CM

CM seeks everyone's help to curb infection in State

PNB ■ RANCHI

Holding an all-party meeting on virtual mode here on Saturday Chief Minister Hemant Soren appreciated all the political parties for making suggestions in the meeting. "With the cooperation of all, we will be able to prevent the infection of Corona once again. Strict steps will be taken to break the corona chain," he said. At the same time, various political parties told the CM that in this time of crisis, they are with the government. Whatever decision will be taken by the government, they will cooperate. There will be no politics of any kind in this. The CM discussed in detail with representatives of various political parties for effective control over Covid-19. During this time, several important suggestions were made by political parties in relation to prevention and control of Corona. The CM said that the important suggestions that have come up during the deliberations in the all-party meeting are very important. This will help the government to formulate further strategies to deal with Corona. The CM said that he is constantly keeping an eye on preventing the second wave of Corona and providing better treatment facilities to the infected persons. Addressing the representatives of political parties, the CM said, "We are all aware of the present situation in Corona. Every day the number of infected is increasing rapidly and the number of dead is also increasing significantly. In such a situation, the government is working fast in the direction of test, testing and treatment. To speed up the investigation, Kovas machines are being purchased, which will be installed in 10 to 15 days, while six new RTPCR labs are also being set up. Instructions have been given to arrange 50 oxygen-rich beds in each district and 100 additional oxygen-rich beds in the division. Apart from this, medical kits are also being made available in every Anganwadi center. The way the government was successful in stopping the first wave of Corona with limited resources, now it is taking all appropriate steps to stop the second wave as well." The CM said that for the treatment of Covid-19, complaints of shortage and black marketing of some life-saving drugs are constantly being received. In such a situation, the government has started negotiations to buy such medicines directly from its producing companies. He also said that the corona vaccination campaign is constantly being expedited, as vaccine consignments are being received, people are being put in place. On the issue of reducing the age limit for taking vaccine by some political parties, he said that it is a matter of the central government and the center will be requested in this regard. Several important suggestions were given by political party representatives in the meeting, which include helpline numbers in all districts, production of oxygen by local industrialists, availability of life saving drugs, curb on black marketing of medicines, increase in infrastructure and beds in hospitals of State, taking help from Central hospitals, nursing students and doctors, screening of migrant workers returning to State, taking help from political and social organisations, setting up hospitals in indoor stadiums etc. Different political parties gave different opinions on the issue of lockdown. While the Left parties said that lockdown is not a solution to the problem, some parties suggested week-long and some suggested full lockdown. At the same time, all parties agreed to strictly follow the government guidelines regarding Corona.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren during a virtual all-party meeting about the rising infection of coronavirus, in Ranchi on Saturday

Pioneer photo

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CM for providing medical kits to people under home isolation

Asks officials to appoint para medical staff

PNB ■ RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today directed officials to provide medical kit to the corona infected patients living in home isolation. The departmental officers were instructed to provide all the necessary medicines, oximeters and masks etc in the medical kit. The CM said that pulse oximeter should be ensured in all Anganwadis centers in the State. He directed the Health Department to appoint ten youths of the State who have done para-medical courses on contractual basis to overcome the shortage of medical staff in hospitals as per requirements. The CM was holding a high-level meeting held at his residence on Friday. Soren said that to overcome the shortage of medical staff in district hospitals, Covid care centers, etc in the dis-

tricts make an action plan and appoint more staff. He said that every possible effort should be made to increase oxygen-rich beds in hospitals and maintain ICU beds etc in hospitals. He directed that the hospital management should work by preparing a better action plan for the treatment of corona infected patients. The CM said that the hospitals should ensure the provision of Oxygen Plant and Air Separation Unit. He said that constantly

strive for the availability of Redmesivir. The CM said that the number of corona infected patients is increasing daily. So patients should be closely monitored and special vigilance should be taken in the areas where more cases of corona are coming. The CM said that in order to ensure that the infected patients do not face problems, medicines should be fully prepared. In the meeting, the Health Secretary apprised the Chief Minister about the latest status of Corona infected patients and preparations related to the system of treatment. The meeting was attended by the Chief Secretary of the State Sukdesh Singh, Development Commissioner Anur Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Rajeev Arun Ekka, Health Secretary KK Soan, Disaster Management Secretary Anand Prakash, Urban Development Secretary Vinay Choubey, Campaign Director of NRRHM Ravi Shankar Shukla and other senior officials.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren holds a meeting with senior officials in Ranchi on Saturday

Pioneer photo

90% of Covid patients in Himachal in home isolation: CM Jai Ram

PNB ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday said over 90 per cent of the Covid patients in home under home isolation in the state. Presiding over a virtual review meeting of Covid-19 sit-

uation in Sirmour district from Nalagarh, he said special thrust must be laid on increasing the number of tests to detect covid-19 patients besides strengthening the mechanism of home isolation in the State. He said that doctors must ensure proper treatment and regular monitoring of the

patients under home isolation, adding that the health department must regularly monitor health parameters of the patients under home isolation. He said that elected representatives of the panchayati raj institutions must also be involved to keep a watch on the health conditions of those

under home isolation. Thakur said that the industrialists of Kala Amb and Poanta Sahib areas must be asked to ensure that the workers in their units strictly follow the SOPs and guidelines issued by the State Government. He said that focus should be

laid on contact tracing of the covid-19 positive patients. He said that this would go a long way in timely detection of covid-19 cases in the State. He said that every possible effort should be made to increase oxygen-rich beds in hospitals and maintain ICU beds etc in hospitals. He directed that the hospital management should work by preparing a better action plan for the treatment of corona infected patients. The CM said that the hospitals should ensure the provision of Oxygen Plant and Air Separation Unit. He said that constantly

Mask, No Service' policy to check the spread of coronavirus. The Chief Minister said that the district administration must also ensure the social functions such as marriages etc must strictly follow the maximum limit prescribed for such events. He said that action, if

required, could be taken against the violators. He said that district administration must also ensure that adequate arrangements be made to meet out the demand in case of any major surge in the cases. He said that people must be motivated to use face masks and hand sanitizers and also

avoid overcrowding in public places and that effective regulation of devotees must also be ensured in temples and other religious places to avoid overcrowding. Secretary Health Amitabh Awasthi said that the pace of vaccination must be increased as this was an effective tool.

Weekend curfew halts life in Capital

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Life in the national Capital came to a halt after weekend curfew was imposed by the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, amid rise in Covid-19 cases. The CM also appealed to people to adhere to the restrictions. Roads, markets and buses across Delhi were closed from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a majority of the National Capital's residents appeared to have stayed at home. The weekend curfew aimed at breaking the chain of spiralling coronavirus infections were clamped at 10 pm on Friday and will continue till 5 am on Monday. Deputy Police Commissioner, S N Shrivastava also remained in the field and visited several places across the city. Police pickets could be seen around the city with police personnel and officials were deployed, checking people having valid movement passes and issuing chhalla to those not following the guidelines. Since Saturday morning, all the major markets including Sarojini Nagar, Connaught



Delhi police personnel checks passes during weekend curfew in Delhi on Saturday

Ranjana Dimri / Pioneer

Place, Lajpat Nagar, South Extension, Chandni Chowk were closed. Only a few shops providing essential services remain open. These include pharmacies, grocery stores, some food outlets and banks. However, the Municipal services including collection of garbage, watering of plants, and sweeping of the roads continue on Saturday. Food delivery service agents were also seen on roads as restaurants were given permission for continuing the service of home delivery. At some areas across the city some vegetable vendors were also present, as some people flocked to them for the essential supplies. Few numbers of public transport including Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses were also seen on roads while Delhi metro ran at reduced capacity and frequency for those involved in essential services and activities. However, small a little crowd was seen at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Sardarjung hospitals where people had come for treatment or get them coronavirus tested. Several, daily-waggers including rickshaw pullers and auto-rickshaw drivers were also seen on roads that were waiting to get passengers. "There is a curfew but my only source of income is through rickshaw. Our daily needs are fulfilled through it," said a rickshaw puller near Green Park in South Delhi. During the day, Delhi Police Commissioner, Shrivastava also visited several places across the city to take stock of the execution of weekend curfew orders. The areas toured include, inter alia, Samastipur, Picket, Akshardham, Ghaziपुर Crossing, Maharajpur Check Post, NH 24 Anand Vihar,



A vigorous awareness by using public announcement systems and flexi informative boards for the general public at various places were also seen on ground. "All the district deputy commissioners of police are on the ground. The movement of essential goods and services is being facilitated. Police have also placed banners on pickets and outside the gates of residential colonies to inform people about the curfew and asked them not to come outside their houses unnecessarily," said Chinnoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police. Police teams are also monitoring the COVID helpline and assisting people facing difficulty in getting movement passes," said Biswal. The Delhi government and the police have issued a pass-to-be exempted category people who need to go out during the curfew for necessary services and activities like vaccination, going to railway stations, airports, buying grocery, fruits and vegetables.

Modi sending vaccines to Pakistan, Canada when Indians dying here: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the surge in Covid cases across the country, the senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Saturday lashed out at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister (CM) Yogi Adityanath, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah with regards to the dire state the country is in due to coronavirus. "There are dead bodies across the country, at crematoriums, at burial grounds; there is a shortage of vaccines here and people are anxious to get vaccinated. However, before vaccinating the population in India, Narendra Modi is busy sending vaccines to countries like Pakistan and Canada," said Singh. He said both PM and Home Minister appear to care more for elections than for the lives of citizens. "Uttar Pradesh is particularly in bad shape, with no beds available. Family members are running from pillar to post trying their best



to arrange for oxygen, a hospital bed and basic medicines. People are dying in hospitals, but the Yogi Adityanath government, instead of attempting to improve or address the situation, is busy putting up screens in front of crematorium grounds," said Singh. "Yogi Adityanath government has colossal failure in addressing the coronavirus situation in Uttar Pradesh and it's time that the Centre made an immediate intervention. People had to wait for hours to cremate their loved ones. The Yaranis where ModiJai said 'I've been called by Ganga Ma'iyaj saw 125 corpses being cremated at the Harishchandra Ghat on Friday," said Singh. Singh also raised the issue of being unable to get a COVID test in some districts in Uttar Pradesh, referring to a case in

Ambedkarnagar where the patient could not get a ventilator in the medical college despite his lungs having failed. The senior AAP leader also spoke about reports of unavailability of beds, oxygen and ventilators in hospitals of all districts. "The Centre should keep an eye on Uttar Pradesh and make special announcements about the situation in the state," he said. "The Delhi Government has written to the Centre on various issues related to Covid-19, and that the Centre should give an entire account of the PM-Cares Fund to the people of India. The ventilators purchased in Rajasthan from this fund are 90 to 95 per cent defective, which may well lead to large scale corruption," Singh claimed.

# Facing shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, ventilator: States



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Grappling with the surge in Covid-19 cases, various States in a meeting with the Centre on Saturday highlighted the shortage of oxygen cylinders, Remdesivir in hospitals, ventilator stocks and poor supply of vaccine doses.

Eleven States and Union Territories, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, account for 79.32 per cent of the new coronavirus cases in the country were present at the meeting.

The high-level meeting was chaired by Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan with the Health Ministers of 11 States and Union Territories to review measures taken by them for prevention, containment and management of the recent surge in Covid-19 cases.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to meet top officials of several ministries later in the evening to review the overall covid situation and vaccination drive.

Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have been reporting an unprecedented surge in new infections.

In a statement here, the Ministry said "Many of the States" raised the issue of diverting the medical oxygen supply lines and capping of

## US must lift export ban on raw materials for production of vaccines, says CPM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) polit bureau on Saturday said that the United States must lift their export ban on raw materials for the production of vaccines.

In a statement, the Left party pointed out that the export ban by the US is a double-axe, citing US President Joe Biden's assurances in the recently convened Quad Summit.

"The ban on exports of materials used in vaccine production goes completely against the Modi government, which sets

prices of essential drugs like Remdesivir which has been sold in the black market at exorbitant prices.

"Double mutant strain in Maharashtra was a key point of concern. The Delhi Government requested for additional beds in Central Government hospitals as was done in 2020 to help tide over the emergent health crisis," the Ministry said.

The notification of the Home Ministry granting permission to states to utilize up to 50 per cent of their annual allocation of State Disaster

Response Fund, and that of the Union Health Ministry, allowing utilisation of unspent pending balance under National Health Mission as on April 1, 2021 for COVID management purposes, were reiterated, it said.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan informed the states on the steps taken to provide medical grade oxygen and augmenting Remdesivir stocks in the country.

The states were also informed about the issuance of the calendar of medical oxygen supply from different oxygen

manufacturers in the country. The steps taken for unhindered movement of oxygen cylinders from their manufacturing units across states were also detailed, the Ministry said.

Taking note of the active surge in cases witnessed since last February in which most states have now crossed their highest tally, Harsh Vardhan urged the states to give special focus on the prominent five to six cities in their administration and map medical colleges to either these cities or adjoining 2-3 districts. The states were asked to seek out positive

cases of the onset of early symptoms so that prompt and effective treatment checks the deterioration of health in the deceased, the statement said.

Large containment zones for achieving community immunity were also suggested as a strategy. During the meeting, Vardhan assured fresh supply

of the lifesaving machines, saying 1,121 ventilators are to be given to Maharashtra, 1,700 to Uttar Pradesh, 1,500 to Jharkhand, 1,600 to Gujarat, 152 to Madhya Pradesh and 230 to Chhattisgarh.

Detailing the number of beneficiaries vaccinated in each targeted segment of the population, Vardhan also addressed the issue of vaccine shortage.

"The total consumption of vaccines so far (wastage included) has been approximately 12.57 crore doses against the 14.15 crore doses provided by the Centre to the states," he said.

Vardhan said about 1.58 crore doses are still available with the states while another 1.16 crore doses are in pipeline, to be delivered by next week.

Emphasizing that there is no shortage of vaccines, he strongly pushed for further ramping up the vaccination exercise.

## Cong's 14-point attack on Govt over Covid 'mismanagement'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maintaining that India has been caught off guard in its fight against the deadly coronavirus once again despite having a year to prepare, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday urged the Government to ramp up its strategy to tackle the menace as she pointed out to the overwhelmed medical infrastructure and shortage of vaccines and drugs.

Sonia was speaking during the meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, which was attended by former party chief Rahul Gandhi, general secretaries and State in-charges of the party.

She reiterated her insistence on lowering the immunisation age to 25 years and above "as also all younger persons with at-risk health disorders like asthma, ailments, diabetes, kidney & liver diseases and other similar ailments."

The Congress came out with a 14-point attack on Government over grave errors in Covid-19 management.

Sonia also spoke about her letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi after her meeting with chief ministers of Congress-ruled states to take a jibe at the Centre.

Both Sonia and Rahul earlier have written to Modi asking him to expand the country's vaccination drive against Covid-19.

"I have written to the Prime Minister after meeting with them. Our Chief Ministers have spoken to the Prime Minister and written to the concerned minister from time to time pleading for relief. Some of them were left with only a few days of vaccine, no oxygen or ventilators. But there has been thundering silence on the part of the Government. On the contrary some other states have received preferential treatment/relief," she said.

"Instead of listening to the constructive suggestions of the opposition, Union Ministers are pressed into service to attack leaders of opposition for giving those sugges-

tions. This convoluted "me versus you" debate is childish and totally unnecessary," she added.

Sonia said Goods and Services Tax (GST) on all equipment, instruments, medicines and support required to prevent and treat Covid-19 should be made free. "It is a matter of grave concern that life saving drugs like Remdesivir etc. and medical oxygen as also other basic supplements are subjected to GST @ 12%. Even basic equipment like Oxymeters and life saving critical equipment like ventilators are subjected to 20% GST. In the current state of affairs, this is inhuman and untenable," she added.

The Government must provide financial support for the poor in the form of monthly income support and transfer ₹6,000 in the account of every eligible citizen, who have been hit by the partial curbs, especially the closure and lockdowns put in place by authorities, she said in her CWC meeting statement.

"Similarly, with reverse migration of labour which has started, it will be critical to immediately address

their need of safe transportation as indeed their suitable rehabilitation in host as well as home States," Sonia said.

At the meet, she said that the Modi government was unprepared in evaluating and managing the crisis. She added that the Congress believed that fighting the pandemic was national challenge and that should be kept above party politics. She said that the government did not listen to constructive suggestions made by the Opposition on the management of the pandemic, and that it should have kept above party politics. She said that the government did not listen to constructive suggestions made by the Opposition on the management of the pandemic, and that it should have kept above party politics.

"This convoluted 'me versus you' debate is childish and totally unnecessary," Sonia asserted accusing the Centre of giving preferential treatment to some states while maintaining "thundering silence" on the issue of the poor in the Congress and opposition parties.

"As the central and state governments move ahead to control the situation by resorting to partial curbs, travel restrictions, closure and lock downs; we will again be restricting economic activity that will hit the already beleaguered poor, especially the poor and the daily wagers," she said.

Taking on these challenging times as Indians rather than political opponents will be true 'Rajadharma', Sonia stressed.

## Wearing 2 face masks more effective in beating Covid: Study

The CPJ(M) polit bureau on Saturday said that the United States must lift their export ban on raw materials for the production of vaccines.

In a statement, the Left party pointed out that the export ban by the US is a double-axe, citing US President Joe Biden's assurances in the recently convened Quad Summit.

"The ban on exports of materials used in vaccine production goes completely against the Modi government, which sets

prices of essential drugs like Remdesivir which has been sold in the black market at exorbitant prices.

"Double mutant strain in Maharashtra was a key point of concern. The Delhi Government requested for additional beds in Central Government hospitals as was done in 2020 to help tide over the emergent health crisis," the Ministry said.

The notification of the Home Ministry granting permission to states to utilize up to 50 per cent of their annual allocation of State Disaster

Response Fund, and that of the Union Health Ministry, allowing utilisation of unspent pending balance under National Health Mission as on April 1, 2021 for COVID management purposes, were reiterated, it said.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan informed the states on the steps taken to provide medical grade oxygen and augmenting Remdesivir stocks in the country.

The states were also informed about the issuance of the calendar of medical oxygen supply from different oxygen

## Lack of Covid-suitable behaviour, virus mutation cause Covid spurt: AIIMS head

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Wearing two face coverings or masks can nearly double the effectiveness of filtering out SARS-CoV-2 sized particles, preventing them from reaching the wearer's nose and mouth and causing Covid-19, as per a recent study.

The findings published in JAMA Internal Medicine also states that the reason for enhanced filtration is not about adding too many layers of cloth but eliminating any gaps or poor-fitting areas of a mask.

The medical procedure masks are designed to have very good filtration potential based on their material, but the way they fit our faces isn't perfect," said Emily Chen, Bennett, PhD, associate professor of infectious diseases at the UNC School of Medicine and lead author of the study.

To test the fitted filtration efficiency (FFE) of a range of masks, UNC researchers worked with James Samet, PhD, and colleagues in the USEPA Human Studies Facility on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill. There they filled a 10-foot by 10-foot stainless-steel exposure chamber with small salt particle aerosols and had researchers don combinations of masks to test how effective they were at keeping particles out of their breathing space.

A transmission electron microscope image that shows SARS-CoV-2 also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes Covid-19, isolated from a patient in the US, as the Virus particles are shown emerging from the surface of cells cultured in the lab- the spikes on the outer edge of the virus particles give coronaviruses their name, crown-like.

Each individual mask or layered mask combination was fitted with a metal sample port, which was attached to tubing in the exposure chamber that measured the concentration of particles entering the breathing space underneath the researcher's mask. A second tube measured the ambient concentration of particles in the chamber. By measuring particle concentration in the breathing space underneath the mask

of religious activities happen in our country and polls are also underway. We must understand lives are also important. We can do this in a restricted manner so that religious sentiment is not hurt & Covid appropriate behaviour can be followed," said Dr Guleria. He also highlighted that India was witnessing a huge strain in the healthcare system and efforts need to be stepped up to keep increasing our hospital beds/resources for the increasing number of cases.

"We also have to urgently bring down the number of Covid-19 cases, he added. "This is a time when a lot of religious activities happen in our country and polls are also underway. We must understand that lives are also important. We can do this in a restricted manner so that religious sentiment is not hurt & Covid appropriate behaviour can be followed," he said.

His remarks come in the backdrop of the ongoing Kumbh Mela in Uttarakhand, which has attracted people from different parts of the country in large numbers.

Talking about the immunisation drive, Dr Guleria said that India should gradually lift or lower the age bar for beneficiaries to widen the vaccination ambit. "We should gradually lift or lower the age bar so that more and more people get into the pool of people who can be vaccinated. That will happen in the coming few weeks.

"We will have more and more vaccines that will come into the common pool which will allow us to open up the vaccination to a larger population," he said.

## DRDO setting up hosp in Ahmedabad for Covid patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has conveyed to the Gujarat Government that DRDO is establishing a 900-bedded hospital in Ahmedabad to cater to the "alarming surge" in Covid-19 cases there.

The Union Home Ministry has also directed the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) or the Central paramilitary forces to spare 25 doctors, 75 paramedics and ensure that they report by April 21 to man the hospital in Gujarat.

The hospital is being established at the Gujarat University Convention Centre, Ahmedabad to cater to the alarming surge of the Covid cases there," reads an order issued by Additional Director General (Medical) of CAPFs under the Union Home Ministry on Friday.

It has further been decided and conveyed that CAPFs are required to provide and medical officers and 75 paramedics/nursing staff, reads the order.

It is, therefore, requested that the following number of doctors and paramedics/nursing staff be detailed for the purpose please," it said.

The detailed staff should report to the nodal officer (Colonel B Chaubey, DRDO Hospital, Ahmedabad by April

21 positively, it said. Through the order, the ADG (Medical), CAPFs, Dr Mukesh Saxena has also named Devarshi Raval as the nodal officer for making logistical arrangements at Gujarat University.

The letter has been circulated to Inspector General (Medical) of the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB). The BSF will send 10 doctors and 30 paramedics, the CRPF will spare 10 doctors and 25 nursing staff and SSB to chip in with five doctors and 20 paramedics.

Through the communication to the heads of CRPF, BSF and SSB, the Ministry has asked them to send their team on priority and the doctors and paramedics have to report to the nodal officer of the said hospital latest by April 21.

On Friday, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) hospital set to be operationalised by late next week, officials said.

On Friday, the Defence Minister Ravi Singh directed the DRDO to reopen the Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel Covid care hospital here which was set up in July last year. He has also asked the defence body to set up a new facility in Lucknow.

## Kumbh Mela: Plea in SC seeks direction to clear mass gathering from Haridwar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre and others to clear the "mass gathering" from Haridwar amid a surge in Covid-19 cases across the country and prescribe a safety protocol with respect to people returning from Kumbh Mela.

The plea, which referred to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases, has also sought directions to the Centre and the Uttarakhand government to immediately withdraw the advertisements inviting people to Haridwar for Kumbh Mela.

It said that the Election Commission should be asked to issue direction to the authorities in the states where elections are being held to strictly enforce COVID-19 guidelines during the poll process and take appropriate action against the violators.

The plea, filed by Noida-resident Sanjay Kumar Pathak, said that COVID-19 cases are increasing rapidly across the country and the health infrastructure is "crumbling" in many states.

It claimed that hospitals and crematoriums are running out of space and shortage of essential drugs has been reported from many cities.

The petition said that India is currently witnessing its highest surge in COVID-19 cases since onset of the pandemic, but visuals of lakh of devotees crowding in Haridwar for Kumbh Mela and in election rallies in states have surfaced.

"On the one hand, poor common man on the street is often punished and treated violently by the police and executive authorities for individual violations of COVID-19 rules and regulations in the name of strict enforcement, and on the other hand, the authorities are not only permitting but facilitating and promoting congregation of people in the events like Kumbh-2021 and election rallies," the plea has alleged.

It sought the apex court's direction to the Centre, Uttarakhand government and the National Disaster Management Authority to not encourage or promote any gathering or event "inconsistent with the spirit and object of the COVID guidelines" and orders issued by these authorities.

It is axiomatic that the respondents have turned blind eye towards the violation of COVID-19 guidelines at the Kumbh Mela and during election campaigns and rallies and have allowed the convicted become super spreader events but common people on the street is being fined and challans are being issued," the plea has claimed.

The trial court, after considering the evidence on record, acquitted accused Ganesha Singh but convicted accused Boota Singh, Gurdeep Singh and Gurmohinder Singh, under the NDPS Act and sentenced them to rigorous imprisonment for two years.

The accused argued before the top court that the vehicle in question was a private one belonging to accused Ganesha Singh and was not a public conveyance, though it was parked on a public road.

## Private vehicle would not come within expression of public place: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A private vehicle does not come within the expression of "public place" as per the explanation given under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the Supreme Court has said.

A bench comprising justices U U Lalit and K M Joseph made the observation while deciding an appeal challenging an order passed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court affirming their conviction and sentence under the NDPS Act.

Two bags of poppy straw were recovered from the accused while they were sitting in a jeep at a public

place. The trial court, after considering the evidence on record, acquitted accused Ganesha Singh but convicted accused Boota Singh, Gurdeep Singh and Gurmohinder Singh, under the NDPS Act and sentenced them to rigorous imprisonment for two years.

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Myanmar pardons prisoners

Unclear if coup foes among them

AP ■ YANGON

Myanmar's junta on Saturday announced it pardoned and released more than 23,000 prisoners to mark the traditional Thingyan New Year holiday...



A man is embraced by two women outside Insein prison in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday

The releases were announced on state broadcaster MRTV, which said that junta chief Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing had pardoned 23,047 prisoners, including 137 foreigners...

The move comes as daily protests against the February 1 ouster of the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi continue, as does the use of deadly force against them.

Unconfirmed but credible accounts with photos on social media claimed that three people were killed Saturday by security forces in a violent crackdown in the central city of Mogoke, in Myanmar's gem mining region.

The three are members of the Peacock Generation performance troupe were arrested during that year's New Year celebrations for skits that poked fun at military representatives in Parliament and military involvement in business.

Several members were also found guilty of online defamation for livestreaming their performances. It could not be ascertained if all imprisoned members of the troupe were released.

Another freed prisoner was Ross Dunkley, an Australian newspaper entrepreneur sentenced in 2019 to 13 years in a Myanmar prison for drug possession. His release was confirmed by the Myanmar government.

drawn the special wrath of the military because they performed in army uniforms.

Those freed were mostly young people caught in sweeps of the military in 2019 to 2020 who those considered protest leaders were kept locked up.

Other issues like climate change, fight against coronavirus pandemic and North Korea did appear in their talks on Friday, which was the first for Biden with a foreign leader as the president of the United States.

firm by his ex-wife Cynda Johnston, reported The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper.

Dunkley co-founded the The Myanmar Times, an English-language daily, but was forced to give up his share in it. He became well-known for co-founding or acquiring English-language publications in formerly socialist states that were seeking foreign investment as they liberalised their economies, but was sometimes criticised for doing business with authoritarian regimes.

Early prisoner releases are customary during major holidays, and this is the second batch the ruling junta has announced since taking power.

Following the release of more than 23,000 convicts to mark Union Day on February 12, there were reports on social media that some were recruited by the authorities to carry out night raids on the military, especially by setting fires. Some areas responded by setting up their own neighborhood watch groups.

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Troops level may increase in Af before withdrawal: Pentagon

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Before the complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by September 11, there might be an increase in number of soldiers to ensure safe and orderly drawdown, the Pentagon has said.

It is not out of the realm of possibility that for a short period of time, there will have to be some additional enabling capabilities added to Afghanistan, to help effect a safe, orderly and deliberately planned drawdown of every body by the president's deadline, early September, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said at a news conference on Friday.

However, Kirby did not elaborate on the nature of the increase in US troops. "I can't speak today with exactly what that would look like, how many, when they would be going in. But as we transitioned out of Iraq, of course, it's logical to assume that you may need some additional enabling engineering help," he said.

"You may have to add some force protection capabilities, temporarily, just to make sure that the drawdown goes in a safe, orderly, and effective way. Again, we'll know more as we get closer, but that would not be out of the realm of possibility," he said.

Responding to a question, Kirby said that the Department



of Defense is still working out what the future bilateral security relationship is going to be with Afghanistan.

"We're going to transition to a bilateral relationship. So I can't speak with specificity today about what contract support the Afghan security forces are going to need going forward," he said.

The United States, he said, will maintain counterterrorism capabilities to continue to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a launching pad for terrorist attacks on the US.

"We have a vast range of

capabilities available to us and we're not going to speak to the details of exactly how we're going to maintain those capabilities and utilise those capabilities," he said.

During a televised address to the nation earlier in the week, President Joe Biden said that keeping thousands of troops grounded and concentrated just one country at a cost of billions each year made "little sense" to him.

He said all US troops would be withdrawn from the strife-torn country by September 11, end America's longest war that has cost trillions of dollars and the lives of over 2,400 American soldiers.

The US and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29, 2020 to bring lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan and allow US troops to return home from America's longest war.

Worldwide Covid death toll tops a staggering 3m

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

The global death toll from the coronavirus topped a staggering 3 million people Saturday amid repeated setbacks in the worldwide recovery campaign and a deepening crisis in places such as Brazil, India and France.

The number of lives lost, as compiled by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the population of Kyiv, Ukraine; Caracas, Venezuela; or metropolitan Lisbon, Portugal. It is bigger than Chicago (2.7 million) and equivalent to Philadelphia and Dallas combined.

And the true number is believed to be significantly higher because of possible government concealment or the many cases overlooked in the early stages of the outbreak that began 16 months ago in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019. Around the world, the trajectory of the virus and the race to bring it under control vary widely from country to country.

5 workers killed in police firing in B'desh: Reports

AP ■ DHAKA

At least five people working at a under construction coal power plant being built by a Chinese firm in Chittagong were killed and 20 others injured in a clash with the police following a protest by the workers over wage and allowances, Bangladesh media reports said on Saturday.

The incident happened when the protesting workers of the plant clashed with the police, prompting them to open fire in which five workers were killed, the Dhaka Tribune reported. "The violence broke out around 10:30 am at the coal-fired power plant. Five have died while at least 10 others were injured in the clash, including police and local residents," a senior police officer was quoted as saying in the report.

Russia expels Ukrainian consul over classified information

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia said Saturday it expelled a Ukrainian diplomat for allegedly receiving classified information from a database of the country's main security agency.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said Saturday that Alexander Sosnyuk, Ukraine's consul in St Petersburg, was taken into custody on Friday after a meeting with a Russian in which he received "information of a classified nature contained in the databases of law enforcement agencies and the FSB".

US Prez Biden, Japanese PIM Suga discuss Chinese influence over Indo-Pacific

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden and Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, in their first in-person bilateral meeting at the White House, discussed the increasing Chinese influence over the peace and prosperity of the Pacific region and strengthen the QUAD, comprising India and Australia as the other two nations in the grouping.

Other issues like climate change, fight against coronavirus pandemic and North Korea did appear in their talks on Friday, which was the first for Biden with a foreign leader as the president of the United States. "Our alliance has served its role as the foundation of peace and stability for the Indo-Pacific region and the world. In light of the current regional situation and the severe security environment, the importance of our alliance has reached new heights," Suga told reporters at the White House news conference with Biden.

After outcry, White House says Biden will lift refugee cap in May

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Facing swift blowback from allies and aid groups, the White House said President Joe Biden plans to lift his predecessor's historically low cap on refugees by next month, after initially moving only to expand the eligibility criteria for resettlements.

In an emergency determination signed by Biden earlier Friday, he stated the admission of up to 15,000 refugees set by former President Donald Trump this year "remains justified by humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest." But if the cap is reached before the end of the current budget year and the emergency refugee situation persists, then a presidential determination may be issued to raise the ceiling.

Riot declared after police kill man in Oregon protests

AP ■ PORTLAND

Police in Portland, Oregon, said on Saturday they arrested four people after declaring a riot Friday night when protesters smashed windows, burglarised businesses and set multiple fires during demonstrations that started after police fatally shot a man while responding to reports of a person with a gun.

Police said they dispersed the crowd to firefighting could cause fires before they spread in extreme fire hazard conditions. The vandalism downtown came after the police shooting earlier Friday and was also part of vigils and demonstrations already planned for the night in the name of people killed in police shootings. They include 13-year-old Adam Toledo, a Black man in a Minneapolis suburb. Deputy Police Chief said set multiple fires during demonstrations that started after police fatally shot a man while responding to reports of a person with a gun.

Italy's Salvini to stand trial for 2019 migrant standoff

AP ■ ROME

A judge in Sicily on Saturday ordered former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini to stand trial for having refused to let a Spanish migrant rescue ship dock in an Italian port in 2019, keeping the people at sea for days.

Judge Lorenzo Iannelli set September 15 as the trial date during a hearing in the Palermo bunker courtroom, the La Presse news agency reported. Salvini, who attended the hearing, confirmed the outcome and insisted he was only doing his job and his duty by refusing entry to the Open Arms rescue ship and the 147 people it had rescued in the Mediterranean Sea.

Era ends as Raul Castro steps down as Communist Party chief

AP ■ HAVANA

Raul Castro said he is stepping down as Cuban Communist Party leader, leaving the island without a Castro guiding affairs for the first time in more than six decades and handing control of the party to a younger generation.

The 89-year-old Castro made the announcement in a speech Friday at the opening of the eighth congress of the ruling party, the only one allowed on the island. "I concluded my task as first secretary... With the satisfaction of having fulfilled (my duty) and confidence in the future of the fatherland," he said in a typically terse, to-the-point finale that contrasted with the impassioned verbal protechnics of his brother Fidel, who died in 2016.

Prince Philip laid to rest in royal funeral

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II held a small group of senior royals at the ceremonial funeral of her husband and consort Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, at Windsor Castle on Saturday.

After China, US envoy Kerry in S Korea for climate talks

AP ■ SEOUL

US climate envoy John Kerry met with South Korea's foreign minister in Seoul on Saturday for talks ahead of a virtual climate summit of world leaders called by President Joe Biden for next week.

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Advertisement for 'क्यालय नगर निगम, भैरवपुर' (City Office, Bairavpur) with contact information and a list of services.

AMID COVID 2.0

Fiscal package may be on cards to maintain economic recovery

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

A fiscal stimulus package may be on the cards again as the Government looks at ways to prevent the present surge in Covid-19 cases and the ensuing restrictions imposed by the States from derailing the economic recovery.

After last year's lockdowns, which resulted in the country's GDP contracting by (-)23.9 per cent, it was hoped that the economy will grow handsomely in FY22 to register a double digit growth.

For this to happen, the RBI has projected a Q1 FY22 GDP growth of 26.2 per cent. But the recent surge in the pandemic has again raised serious ques-

tions about the health of the economy.

There are some discussions within the government about the need, shape and timing of a fresh fiscal stimulus package.

The idea is to see that the poor and small businesses do not suffer and their livelihood support is not disturbed, said an official source, on condition of anonymity.

The source said that any such package, if finalised, would come up later this month or next month.

The Union Finance Ministry has so far not indicated about any new stimulus to contain the disruptions caused by the fresh Covid-19

wave in the country. Sources said that like last year, the package may include measures by the government as well as compliance relief offered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Already, various ministries are providing inputs to the Centre.

The worry for the government this time round is also about inflation that has seen an increase in the last few months.

This actually means that people are already struggling with higher food prices while their income is dogged with uncertainty.

The RBI will also have to do a balancing act over growth aspirations and containing inflation.

Under its 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' package and the Garib Kalyan Yojana, the government had announced packages worth over Rs 20 lakh crore.

While the economic situation is still much better than last year and the government has indicated against a complete lockdown this year, support measures could just look at the most vulnerable sections of the society and the industry.

Under its 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' package and the Garib Kalyan Yojana, the government had announced packages worth over Rs 20 lakh crore.

DPIIT notifies PLI scheme for ACs, LED lights

MERE ASSEMBLY OF FINISHED GOODS NOT TO BE INCENTIVISED

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) has notified the PLI scheme for ACs and LED lights and said that selection of companies to avail the incentives would

done to support manufacturing of components which are not made in India presently.

It said that mere assembly of finished goods would not be incentivised and companies investing in basic/core components would get a higher priority.

Earlier this month, the government approved a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for white goods - Air Conditioners (ACs) and LED Lights - with a budgetary outlay of Rs 6,238 crore. It will be implemented over 2021-22 to

2028-29. According to the notification of the DPIIT, the Empowered Group of

Secretaries chaired by Cabinet Secretary will monitor the PLI scheme, undertake periodic review of the outgo under the scheme, ensure uniformity of all PLIs and take appropriate action to ensure that the expenditure is within the prescribed outlay.

The group will be empowered to make any changes in the modalities of the scheme within the overall financial outlay of Rs 6,238 crore said

that the incentive per beneficiary will be applicable on incremental sales (net of taxes) of manufactured goods (as distinct from traded goods) over the base year (2019-20) subject to ceilings.

"Mere assembly of finished goods shall not be incentivised. Selection of companies for the scheme shall be done so as to incentivise manufacturing of components or sub-assemblies which are not manufactured in India presently with sufficient capacity," it said.

Indian pharma exports grow at 18% to 24.44 bn USD in FY 21

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Pharma exports from India witnessed over 18 per cent growth to USD 24.44 billion during the last financial year against USD 20.58 billion in FY20. Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexil) said on Saturday.

"We have observed a big leap in our exports in the month of March 2021 which is USD 2.3 billion (figures for March are provisional) and is highest among the exports of all the months of this financial year, the growth rate for this month is 48.5 per cent against the exports in March 2020 (USD 1.54 billion)," Udaya Bhaskar, Director General of Pharmexil said in a release.

Growth rate seems relatively big as the exports of March 2020 was crunched due to lockdown across the world and supply chain disruption, he was quoted as saying.

When the global pharma market is negatively grown by 1-2% in 2020, there is a big surge in demand for Indian made generics owing to its quality and affordability, the official said. Demand for formulations and Biologicals is the second largest Principal commodity being exported by India. The Pharma exports body is expecting big growth in Indian vaccine exports in the coming years and the government policy on PLI (production Linked Incentive) scheme will also help the domestic

pharma to grow by reducing import dependence and develop export potential in the days to come as most of the countries are looking at India for APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredient) he said.

North America is the largest exporting region for Indian pharmaceuticals with more than 34 per cent share.

Country wise exports to the US, Canada and Mexico have recorded a growth of 12.6, 30 and 21.4 per cent respectively. South Africa being the second largest exporting country, recorded a big jump of 28 per cent growth while Europe was the third largest exporting region which has recorded approximately 11 per cent growth over previous year.

Crude to be around \$60 a barrel in 2021

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Global crude oil prices are expected to be in the range of \$60 a barrel over the long term period as OPEC+ decision to cap supply until demand recovers and the pandemic continuing to keep a check on consumption.

In a report, MofSL said that selection of companies to avail the incentives would

matched to ensure supply deficit of 1.3 million barrels of oil per day in calendar year 2021 and keep Brent above \$60/bbl," the brokerage said.

The expectation for the crude was that it may surge in 2021 on the back of economies recovering as vaccinations tamed the spread of Covid-19. But the lockdown again due to fresh surge in Covid cases has delayed demand recovery in Europe.

Also, the probability of US sanctions on Iran oil exports being lifted appears to have increased substantially.

EU and other signatories to the nuclear deal are talking to Iran and US separately to bring

them on the same page and revive the deal.

Indications are that US sanctions on Iran exports may be lifted as early as before Iran's presidential elections due on June 18.

"While OPEC+ capping supply should keep Brent above \$ 60/bbl, delay in demand recovery and US lifting sanctions on Iran exports would cap further rise. We estimate long-term Brent at \$60/bbl," ICICI Securities said.

With regard to gross refining and knitted fabrics, the outlook is modest as capacity addition is expected to exceed refined products demand growth.

Second Covid wave to disrupt fabric demand: Ind-Ra

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The second wave of Covid-19 resurgence can potentially disrupt fabric demand, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

"Woven fabrics production continued to improve mom, though marginally, in January 2021, despite remaining 21 per cent YoY lower," Ind-Ra said.

While incentives for blended and knitted fabrics were quicker, that of woven is expected to be delayed with micro-lockdowns and work-from-home culture."

Besides, export demand for woven fabrics is expected to plunge over Q1FY22 with key destinations like Malaysia grappling with a second wave of pandemic.

"Fabric exports remained muted in January 2021 on a month basis, and 17 per cent YoY lower."

Demand for imported fabrics surged over December 2020-January 2021, led by restocking by retailers. "Imports in value terms doubled between November 2020-January 2021 with higher shipments from China, Bangladesh and Vietnam."

AGEL arm bags 150 MWac solar project

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Green Energy arm AREH Fifteen Ltd (AREH Fifteen L) has bagged a 150 MWac solar energy project capacity from Torrent Power.

Adani Renewable Energy Holding Fifteen Ltd (AREH Fifteen L), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL), participated in a tender issued by Torrent Power Ltd for procurement of power through competitive bidding process, from grid connected solar photovoltaic power projects to be setup in Gujarat.

AREH Fifteen L has been awarded a project capacity of 150 MWac Solar Power Project, a BSE filing said.

The fixed tariff for this project capacity is Rs 2.227/kWh for a period of 25 years.

Operating margins of sugar companies expected to moderate in FY22: ICRA

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The operating margins of sugar companies are likely to moderate in FY22 due to higher production cost and reduced export subsidy, ratings agency ICRA said in a statement.

Adani, besides, benefits from improved distillery performance was also cited by the agency as a factor that might moderate operating margins.

"Given the sugar surplus scenario in the domestic market, any significant increase in the sugar prices is ruled out in the near term. However, the higher diversion of sugar towards ethanol and the remunerative pricing of ethanol is expected to result in an improved distillery performance in FY2022," said Sabyasachi Majumdar, Senior Vice President & Group Head, ICRA.

As per the agency, domestic sugar production is expected to increase by 10 per cent to 30.2 million MT in SY2021 and outstrip consumption by

around 4.2 million MT.

ICRA expects sugar exports at around 5.5 million MT supported by the export policy and the closing stock is likely to remain higher than normative sugar stock levels of 6-6.5 million MT against 9.5 million MT for SY2021 season.

However, the stocks are expected to be lower than the previous season at around 11.0 million MT.

"We expect the set of restrictive measures to impact near-term economic recovery till demand recovers is esti-

Correction an opportunity to add cyclicals: MOFSL

IAN S ■ MUMBAI

Market correction due to Covid resurgence is an opportunity to add cyclical stocks said Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

In a report, MOFSL said resurgence in second wave of Covid-19 has led to elevated market volatility and correction. Lately, both Nifty and Bank Nifty are down 5 and 15 per cent from their recent highs, respectively.

"To contain the pandemic, several states have announced localised restrictions with Maharashtra yesterday unveiling set of broad-based measures for two weeks mini-lockdown."

"We expect the set of restrictive measures to impact near-term economic recovery till demand recovers is esti-

government authorities and policymakers have ruled out a market low.

Consequently, MOFSL recommend that correction should be viewed by the investors as a buying opportunity and advocated adding a balanced mix of growth, cyclicals and defensive stocks in their portfolios. "We continue to be 'OW' on the BFSI, IT, Telecom, Consumer and Capital Goods, Neutral on Consumer, Auto and Pharma while staying 'UW' on Energy, Utility and Infrastructure."

On the bright side, it said that vaccinations are gradually beginning to accelerate.

"As vaccination pick up further with approvals for more vaccines now in place, we expect the focus to shift back to growth, cyclical recovery and fundamentals.0

FICCI writes to 25 CMs on Covid management, urges to avoid lockdown

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body FICCI has written to Chief Ministers of 25 States urging them to avoid imposing partial or total lockdown in the wake of fresh surge in Covid cases.

The industry body also argued that the economy has barely begun to turnaround from the impact of the earlier lockdowns and such decisions now will push the push the economy into downward spiral.

In the letter written to state CMs by FICCI President Uday Shankar, the chamber has acknowledged the need to break the Covid chain but has suggested the strategy to focus more on ramping up covid testing, awareness drive and enforcement of Covid appro-

priate behaviour rather than lockdown.

"The population may be sensitised about the Covid appropriate behaviour like wearing masks, physical distancing and personal hygiene."

Support may be taken by involving volunteers from the schools, colleges and the NGOs. The compliance to Covid protocol may be ensured with suitable penalties for violations," the letter states.

FICCI has represented to the Union Government to open up the vaccination for all the people above 18 years of age to give a massive push to the vaccination drive as there is no shortage of vaccines and the inoculation capacity can be increased with the participation of the private sector.

Petrol, diesel price unchanged for 2nd consecutive day

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Fuel prices in the country remained unchanged on Saturdays as all marketing companies decided to go on a pause mode and analyse the global developments on oil prices before effecting a revision.

Accordingly, pump price of petrol and diesel remained at ₹90.40 a litre and ₹80.73 a litre respectively in Delhi. The price of the two auto fuels had fallen by 16 paise and 14 paise per litre respectively on Thursday after a 15 day break when OMCs kept its prices static.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel price remained unchanged on Saturday but its retail levels varied depending on the level of local levies on respective states.

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**

General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), Name: Ishani @ Pooja D/o Shri Dharam Das R/o H. No. D-153, Vijay Vihar, Ph-II Delhi has been missing since 05.03.2021 from her house in this regard a case vide DD No. 91A dated 27.03.2021 has been lodged at Police Station Vijay Vihar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Age: 20 Years, Height: 5'1", Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Blue colour suit and cream colour leggy and sandal in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi at E-mail id - [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Phone: SHO P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax No: 011-24368639  
DP/781/RD/2021 Ph. No. 011-27061294, 27061295

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**

General Public is hereby informed that a person namely Sachin Mittal S/o Sh. Sajjan Kumar, R/o H.No. B-1/8, Budh Vihar Ph-I, Delhi has been missing since 31.03.2021 from the area of P.S. Vijay Vihar. In this regard a DD No. 107-A Dated 31.03.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. The description of Missing person is as under:-

Name: Sachin Mittal, Father's Name: Sh. Sajjan Kumar, Age: 35 years, Height: 5'9", Face: Long, Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Medium, Wearing: Blue Jeans, White Shirt, Sports Shoes in feet. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.

Website: <http://cic@cbi.nic.in>  
E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax: 011-24368638, 24368641  
DP/781/RD/2021 Ph: 011-27061294, 27061295

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL**

General Public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo) namely Kusum @ Kiran D/o Sh. Ashok R/o Jhuggi No.424, Cow Street, Indira Camp, Sector-03, Rohini, Delhi. Aged 17 Years has been reported missing/kidnapped since 21.03.2021 at about 4 AM from her residence vide FIR No.097/21 u/s 363 IPC Dated 22.03.2021 registered at Police Station South Rohini, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5'2", Face: Long, Built: Thin, ID: KS marked on right hand, Clothing: Green coloured suit, Green coloured salwar.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, South Rohini, Delhi at E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

Tele No: 011-24368638 or 24368641  
Fax No: 011-24368639  
DP/775/RD/2021 SHO, South Rohini, Delhi Tel. 011-27512189, 27510515

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**

The general public is hereby informed that an unidentified person about 75 years of age whose name, residence, and family is unknown had been found dead opposite Kabutar Market, Jama Masjid, Delhi. In this regard, a vide has been registered with DD No. 49-A, dated 12.04.2021 at P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to identify the deceased person, but no clue has come to light so far.

The description of the UIDB is as under:  
Sex: Male, Age: 75 Years, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Oval, Built: Thin, Wearing: White colour kurta and white colour pajama.

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

E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax: 011-24368639  
DP/764/CD/2021 P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi Ph. No. 011-2326977, 2326125

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED BOY**

General Public is hereby informed that one boy (depicted in the photo) namely Neeraj S/o Sh. Shambhu Nath R/o E-86, Ground Floor, Vijay Vihar, Ph-2, Delhi Aged-13 Years has been reported missing/kidnapped since 13.03.2021 at 5 PM vide FIR No.118/21 u/s 363 IPC Dated 20.03.2021 registered at Police Station Vijay Vihar, Delhi. His physical description is as under:-

Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5'5", Face: Long, Built: Thin, Clothing: Cream coloured pant, Blue coloured T-shirt and sport shoes in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped boy, may inform SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi at E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Tele No: 011-24368638 or 24368641  
Fax No: 011-24368639  
DP/762/RD/2021 SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi Ph: 011-27061294-95  
Mob: 8750870329

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (See Section 82 Cr.Pc)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that Pooja Mishra, D/o Divyender Mishra R/o IZ 123, Gali No.5, Narayan Vihar, Prem Nagar 2nd, Kirari Suleman Nagar, North-West Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case CC No.7962/17 S. K. Motor V/s Pooja Mishra u/s 138 NIA Act, P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Pooja Mishra cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Pooja Mishra has absconded (or is concealing herself) to avoid the service of the said warrant.

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Pooja Mishra of CC No.7962/17 S. K. Motor V/s Pooja Mishra u/s 138 NIA Act, P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 24.05.2021.

By Order,  
Ms. Anuradha Sonkar  
Metropolitan Magistrate (N) ACP-08  
Room No.215, 2nd Floor, Dwarika Court, New Delhi

DP/787/RD/2021

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**

General public is hereby informed that a boy Lakhman S/o R/o Aasha Kiran, Home sector-1, Rohini, Delhi has been missing since 03.03.2021 at 04:00 PM from the area of PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard, DD No. 61-A dated 03.03.2021 has been registered at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing boy but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing boy is as under:

Name: Lakhman, Gender: Male, Age: 20 years, Height: 5'1", Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Long, Built: Medium, Wearing: Blue colour jeans, green colour t-shirt and slippers on his feet.

If anyone has any information regarding this missing boy, kindly inform SHO/Vijay Vihar, Delhi.

E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax: 011-24368639  
DP/779/RD/2021 P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi Ph. No. 011-27512194, 27512195

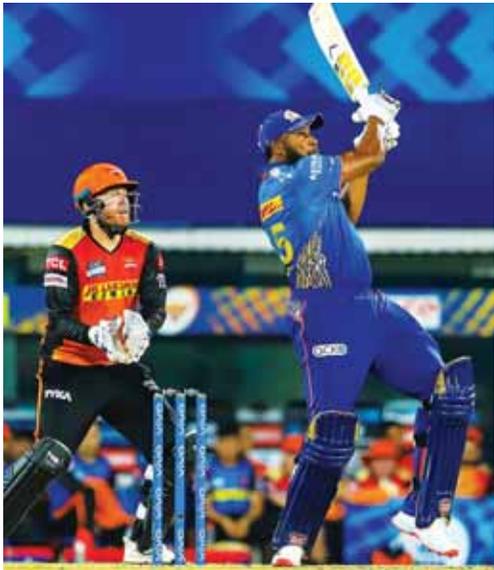
**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED**

General Public is hereby informed that one person Name: Tarsen Lal, S/o: Sh. Durga Das, R/o: H.No. B-7/50, Sec-1, Rohini, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 22.03.2021 from the area of P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard, a case vide DD No. 128-A, dated 22.03.2021 has been registered at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. The description of the missing/kidnapped person is as under: Age: 64 years, Height: 5'8", Face: Long, Built: Thin, Complexion: Shallow, Wearing: Blue colour kurta, pajama and slipper in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing person kindly inform to the following.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>  
E-mail id: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax No: 011-24368639  
DP/772/RD/2021 P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi Ph: 011-27511294, 8750870329

# POLLARD TAKES PALTA TO 150

Windies all-rounder's back to back sixes in last two balls help Mumbai post fighting total



Mumbai Indians batsman Kieron Pollard hits SRH pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar for six during IPL game in Chennai

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Vijay Shankar and Muejeb Ur Rahman shine with the ball as Sunrisers Hyderabad produced a disciplined bowling performance to restrict Mumbai Indians to 150 for 5 in their IPL match at Chepaak on Saturday.

The opening duo of Rohit Sharma (52 off 25) and Quinton de Kock (40 off 39) scored 53 in the powerplay after opting to bat but Vijay (2/19) and Afghanistan spin duo of Muejeb (2/29) and Rashid Khan (0/22) brought the SRH back in the game. Kieron Pollard managed to lift MI to 150 with the help of a 22-ball 35 which included two sixes of the last two balls of the innings.

Earlier, Rohit completed 4000 T20 runs as a

SCOREBOARD	
<b>MUMBAI INDIANS</b>	
Quinton de Kock c (bat) Sachin b Muejeb	40
Rohit Sharma c Virat Singh b Vijay Shankar	32
Suryakumar Yadav c Virat Singh b Vijay Shankar	19
Ishan Kishan c Barstow b Muejeb	12
Kieron Pollard not out	35
Hardik Pandya c Virat Singh b Khaleel Ahmed	7
Krunal Pandya not out	3
EJBRs (0, 16, 6, w, 4, nb 1, p, 0)	150
Total (5 wks, 20 overs)	150
Did not bat: Rahul Chahar, Adam Milne, Jasprit Bumrah, Trent Boult	
Fall of Wickets: 55-1 (Rohit Sharma, 6.3), 71-2 (Suryakumar Yadav, 8.3), 98-3 (Quinton de Kock, 13.5), 114-4 (Ishan Kishan, 16.5), 131-5 (Hardik Pandya, 18.4)	
Bowling	
Bhuvneshwar Kumar	4-0-4-0
Khaleel Ahmed	4-0-24-1
Muejeb Ur Rahman	4-0-29-2
Ahishah Sharma	1-0-5-0
Vijay Shankar	3-0-19-2
Rashid Khan	4-0-22-0

skipper and also surpassed Mahendra Singh Dhoni's record of hitting the most number of sixes by an Indian in the tournament.

The 33-year-old now has 217 sixes in IPL, one ahead of Dhoni. With Rohit and de Kock looking in full flow, it seemed MI will put up a big score.

However, MI soon slipped to 71 for 2 with Vijay Shankar dismissing Rohit and Suryakumar Yadav (10) in his two overs.

While the MI skipper holed out to Virat Singh in the sixth over, Suryakumar was caught and bowled in the 9th over.

Rashid Khan and Muejeb then tightened the screw on MI as the well-set Kock next perished at deep mid-wicket in his pursuit for a big shot.

Pollard then joined Ishan Kishan (12 off 21) in the middle but the scoring remained difficult.

With MI at 107 for 3 in 16 overs, Pollard clubbed one over mid-wicket to break the shackles but Muejeb soon dismissed Ishan with wicket-keeper Jonny Bairstow taking a fabulous catch.

New man Hardik Pandya and Pollard could not produce their trademark hitting as the former holed out to Virat in the deep.

Pollard, who was dropped by Vijay, managed to smash the last two balls of the innings for two sixes as MI reached 150 in the end.

# Dhoni is heartbeat of CSK: Fleming

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming has called skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni the team's heartbeat and said the desire to do well even after playing 200 matches is a testament to his attitude towards the game and the franchise.



Chennai Super Kings captain MS Dhoni cuts the cake to celebrate his 200th game for CSK

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Dhoni has been leading the side since the inaugural edition of the league in 2008. "His longevity has to be mentioned and appreciated... To play 200 games and still have a desire to do well is a testament to his attitude towards the game and franchise," Fleming said after CSK's win against Punjab Kings.

"I think the franchise has grown and MS has grown with it, so it is a great relationship and great fun," the former New Zealand skipper added. "Termining Dhoni's heartbeat of CSK, Fleming said, 'He is the heartbeat of CSK, there's no doubt about it. Whether it's performance, guidance or leadership, you run out of things to say about him.'"

He said the manner in which the team bounced back after the first game was impressive and praised Man of the Match Deepak Chahar for his efforts (4/13).

"Really impressed with the way he bounced back after the first game. Without doubt, when Deepak gets a little bit of swing and a little bit of movement, he is one of the finest around. His ability to swing the ball is one. But his control and skill set is also very high."

"The key is keeping him simple in his plans and just operating in and around the stumps. He is very effective when the ball swings. A great bounce back from a below par performance in the first game."

**boundarymeter**

4s	252
6s	97

PLAYER	RUNS
1. Nitish Rana (KKR)	137
2. Sanju Samson (RR)	123
3. Manish Pandey (SRH)	99

PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	7
2. Andre Russell (KKR)	6
3. Avesh Khan (DC)	5

MOST SIXES	
1. Sanju Samson (RR)	7
2. Deepak Hooda (PBKS)	6
3. Nitish Rana (KKR)	6

## SUMMER SLAM



Rajasthan Royals English all-rounder Ben Stokes bids goodbye to his teammates before he leaves for England to undergo surgery for his fractured left index finger



Chennai Super Kings share throwback picture of Punjab Kings batsman M Shahrulkh Khan

# RCB eye hat-trick of wins

**KEY PLAYERS**

**ANDRE RUSSELL**  
Dre Russ took his maiden IPL tiff against MI in the last match & now he'll be eager to contribute with bat

**AB DE VILLIERS**  
ABD single-handedly won against Mumbai and his 360+ stroke play can turn the match at any point

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The misfiring Kolkata Knight Riders will look to bring their campaign back on track when they take on table-toppers Royal Challengers Bangalore at Chepaak on Sunday.

In the battle between the world's two best white-ball captains, Eoin Morgan and Virat Kohli, the Bengaluru franchise will hold a slight edge over Kolkata after its two wins from as many outings.

Known for his tactical nous and man-management skills, the World Cup-winning England skipper will be keen to bring KKR back on track after a familiar middle-order collapse cost them the game against Mumbai Indians.

After two ordinary seasons, the purple brigade started its campaign in an emphatic fashion, ticking all the boxes against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

But against their nemesis MI, KKR middle-order collapsed in an inexplicable fashion to suffer their 12th loss in 13 matches.

Morgan's astute captaincy in using his bowling resources was the highlight as KKR had bowled out MI for a modest 152.

In his new role of bowling at the death, Andre Russell has taken six wickets at an impressive average of 7.83, but has failed to deliver with the bat.

With 14 runs from two matches, the big-hitting captain has looked a shadow of his past.

Too, will be under pressure to deliver after his painstaking stay in the middle in the last game.

While Nitish Rana has impressed the most in batting, their star opener Shubman Gill has faltered after impressive starts, and KKR would hope the youngster fires in the coming days.

**VENUE: CHIDAMBARAM STADIUM, CHENNAI**

**HEAD TO HEAD**

Matches	26
Royal Challengers Bangalore	12
Kolkata Knight Riders	14

**LAST YEAR'S MATCHES**

- Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 82 runs in Sharjah
- Royal Challengers Bangalore defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 8 wickets in Abu Dhabi

**79**

Eoin Morgan who scored 6921 runs at an average of 1297 in 297 innings of 314 matches, needs 79 runs to become the 4th Englishman and 22nd batsman overall to score 7000 runs in T20 matches

**56**

Virat Kohli who scored 5944 runs at an average of 38.10 in 186 innings of 194 matches, needs 56 runs to become the first batsman to complete 6000 runs in the history

**Factual Features**

Spinner Kuldeep Yadav in place of veteran Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who has bowled just the opening over in each of the two matches.

Boasting a famed batting line-up in Kohli, AB de Villiers, Glenn Maxwell and the talented youngster Devdutt Padikkal, RCB are yet to perform to their full potential.

But it did not matter much as RCB have won both their matches with new signing Maxwell holding fort in the middle and the likes of Shubman Gill and Shubhabz Ahmed and Harshal Patel making up the difference in bowling.

# DC face Punjab in battle of equals

**KEY PLAYERS**

**KAGISO RABADA**  
He was the highest wicket-taker in the 2020 edition and the South African is keen to repeat that feat

**ARSHDEEP SINGH**  
The young pacer has impressed in the first two matches and will look to continue his good form

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant will aim to display better tactical acumen in catch-22 situations against a 'blow-hot-blow-cold' Punjab Kings in what promises to be a battle of brittle middle-orders at Wankhede stadium on Sunday.

Both teams are coming into the Northern Derby of IPL after enduring defeats in their previous games but Delhi Capitals are definitely a better side on paper.

Pant, relatively inexperienced in terms of IPL captaincy, lost the plot in the last game where he didn't finish his best bowler Ravichandran Ashwin's quota and instead used Tom Curran's friendly middle-order pacers.

As coach Ricky Ponting pointed out, he would expect a better "on his feet" thinking from the young captain.

The likely addition of Anrich Nortje in the playing XI will only bolster Pant's bowling attack which lost its bearings during the last match with Curran's lack of pace on a slow track being cannon fodder for Chris Morris and David Miller.

Punjab Kings, on the other hand, suffered an inexplicable batting collapse against Chennai Super Kings with Deepak Chahar's extra bounce and slight seam movement causing the damage.

This was after a healthy 200 plus total in the opening game.

The nature of the Wankhede track is posing a few questions under lights for top-order batsmen as the last two games have shown with underlying moisture aiding quality fast bowling.

So KL Rahul versus Kagiso Rabada and Chris Woakes bowing to Chris Gayle could be as enticing as Pritivi Shaw encountering the guile of Mohammed Shami and Shikhar Dhawan trying to untangle a disciplined Arshdeep Singh.

Both teams are top heavy in batting with DC dependant on Shaw, Dhawan and Pant for doing the bulk of scoring while the same job profile is held by KL Rahul, Chris Gayle and Deepak Hooda in the Punjab line-up.

**VENUE: WANKHEDE STADIUM, MUMBAI**

**HEAD TO HEAD**

Matches	26
Delhi Capitals	11
Punjab Kings	15

**LAST YEAR'S MATCHES**

- Delhi Capitals beat Kings XI Punjab in Super over after match ended in a tie in Dubai
- Kings XI Punjab defeated Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets in Dubai

**62**

KL Rahul who scored 4938 runs in 141 innings of 154 matches, needs 62 runs to become the 11th Indian and 70th batsman overall to score 5000 runs in T20 matches

**1**

Ravichandran Ashwin who took 249 wickets in 246 innings of 249 matches, needs just one wicket to become the third Indian and 23rd bowler overall to take 250 wickets in Twenty-20 cricket

**Factual Features**

bad-patch coupled with Nicholas Pooran's susceptibility to short balls over his shoulder are not great news for Punjab either.

The middle-order's struggles in both the dugouts will make it an engrossing contest with DC bowlers expected to hold sway in Nortje's presence.

In case of Punjab Kings, save Mohammed Shami, the two high-priced pacers — Jhye Richardson and Riley Meredith — haven't exactly set the stage on fire.

Neither has Murugan Ashwin, a mystery spinner who has done nothing of note that would force Pant and Ponting to have sleepless nights.

Anil Kumble and Rahul may like to think of Ravi Bishnoi as an option but they also need to factor in the shorter boundaries in Mumbai, which can devastating for wrist spinners if their length is haywire.

**SAMS JOINS RCB BIO-BUBBLE**

Australian all-rounder Daniel Sams on Saturday joined the RCB's bio-bubble after returning with two negative RT-PCR results more than a week after testing positive for Covid-19. The 28-year-old hand arrived in India on April 3 with a negative Covid-19 report but tested positive during the second test on April 7 and was in quarantine since then.

**JAMIESON IMPRESSED WITH VIRAT**

Virat Kohli's style of leadership complements his thought process, feels RCB all-rounder Kyle Jamieson, who has accepted that bowling on slower Indian tracks requires a different set of skill-sets. "He (Kohli) is such an experienced leader. He is a skilful and the way that he approaches the games certainly complements the way I like to go about things," Jamieson said. "Virat is competitive, aggressive and likes to take the game on, which is something I like to adopt as well," Kyle said.

**BORING TO TALK ABOUT IPL TITLE: AB**

RCB batsman AB de Villiers said on Saturday that "it's getting boring to talk about it (the IPL title)" and "there are things that are more special than winning the trophy." Speaking on RCB's *Bold Diaries*, AB said, "You can't lie, you want to win the trophy. I would love to win the trophy. I don't know how I would react if we do win the trophy one day. (But) it's getting boring to talk about it. At the end of the day, there are things that are more special than winning the trophy. And those are bonding with the team, being part of the IPL."

**FIT NORTJE 'READY TO GO'**

Staying confined to his hotel room for 10 days was "quite a lot" for him and DC pacer Anrich Nortje is hoping to get into the act straightaway against Punjab Kings on Sunday. "Ten days in the room was quite a lot for me. It was nice to get out, run around and bowl a bit. I really enjoyed it and hopefully I can build it up from here on." Nortje said in a press release.

**PADIKKAL IS A GREAT TALENT: LARA**

Devdutt Padikkal's career has run on a few technical threads but Brian Lara is confident that the RCB opener would better his performance during this IPL with a few Man of the Match awards. "He's (Padikkal) such a great talent. Last year, he got a couple of (5) fifties, he batted well, he supported Virat very well." Lara told Star Sports' *Smile! Dugout Live Feed*. "What I want to see in 2021 IPL is for him to go on and get a few Man of the Match and get a couple of triple figures under his belt. Such a great little player," Lara added.

**POINTS TABLE**

	P	W	L	NRR	PTS	
1	RCB	2	2	0	+0.175	4
2	CSK	2	1	1	+0.616	2
3	MI	2	1	1	+0.225	2
4	DC	2	1	1	+0.195	2
5	RR	2	1	1	+0.052	2
6	KKR	2	1	1	-0.000	2
7	PBKS	2	1	1	-0.909	2
8	SRH	2	0	2	-0.400	0