

Following decision for global tender

2 panels formed for vaccines procurement

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

As the State Government has decided to procure Covid-19 vaccines through a global tender to be floated by the Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL), two committees have been formed for supervision of the process.

While a technical committee has been formed consisting of 10 members headed by the Directorate of Medical Education and Training (DMET), a managerial committee has been constituted with nine members headed by the OSMCL MD for the purpose.

To vaccinate a total of 1,93,69,511 people aged between 18 and 44 years, the State needs to procure 3,87,39,022 doses of vaccines. The two concerned manufacturing companies are supplying Covaxin and Covishield vaccines as per the Centre's allocation. And it will take months to complete the vaccination process if the two manufacturers, Bharat Biotech



International and Serum Institute Life Science Pvt Ltd, continue to supply vaccines at the current pace. Hence, it has been decided to procure the vaccines from the open market through a global tender by the OSMCL, said an official statement.

While OSMCL has placed a purchase order of 10.34 lakh doses of Covaxin for third-phase vaccination, manufacturing company Bharat Biotech International has so far supplied 1.5 lakh doses of the vac-

cine. Similarly, only 1 lakh doses of Covishield have been received from the Serum Institute as against the purchase order of 220 lakh doses of the vaccine. Meanwhile, vaccination of people in 18-44 age category commenced on Tuesday in four municipal corporation areas, Cuttack, Rourkela, Sambalpur and Brahmapur. Vaccination of the same age group beneficiaries had earlier begun in Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) area from May 3.

Vaccination for 18-44 group begins in 4 cities

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Covid-19 vaccination for the 18-44 age group began in the municipal corporation areas of Cuttack, Rourkela, Sambalpur and Brahmapur on Tuesday.

Vaccination for this age group had earlier been launched in the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) area on May 3. The State Government received 1 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine and distributed those

among the four municipal corporations. The State Government has decided to carry out the vaccination for the 18-44 age category in the five municipal corporation areas initially and later in other parts of the State.

It might be mentioned here that a majority of the positive cases are being reported from these urban areas. Registration and slot booking for receiving the vaccine can be done at <https://self-registration.cowin.gov.in/>.



16 more RT-PCR test centres in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

To ramp up Covid-19 testing in view of the rapid spread of the virus in its second wave, the State Government has decided to set up more RT-PCR testing laboratories in 16 districts.

The facilities will be set up at the district headquarters of Bhadrak, Boudh, Bargarh, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kandhamal, Kendrapada, Khordha, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Subarnapur and Sundargarh.

For Rayagada district, though the machine has been ordered by the Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL), all other peripheral equipments, including BioSafety Cabinet Class II A2 and BSL level 2+, will be installed.

As per the current norms, a microbiologist and three laboratory technicians will be recruited on outsourcing basis for operating the labs per shift. The approximate unit cost for establishment of a testing facility with BioSafety Cabinet Class II A2 and BSL level 2+ is around Rs 120 lakh, said an official statement issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Heavy rain hit life in twin city

Woman killed in Balangir; crops damaged in dists

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR



Heavy rains accompanied by strong gusty winds lashed the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar on Tuesday forenoon. A sudden change in weather occurred at around 12 pm in the twin cities and its periphery. Near-darkness prevailed in the twin cities for quite some time, forcing the commuters to scurry for cover.

Later, the thundershowers threw normal life out of gear. Waterlogging was witnessed at several low-lying areas in Cuttack after a spell of heavy downpour. Besides, trees were seen uprooted under the impact of gusty surface wind along the Ring Road in the city.

Other parts of the State also experienced thunderstorm, lightning accompanied by strong surface winds reaching up to 60kmph. Trees were seen ripped apart at many places while house roof sheets were blown up under the impact of

the storm. A woman was killed in lightning strike while one of her relatives was critically injured at Barakani village under Sadar police station in Balangir district. The incident took place while they were taking bath at nearby pond in the village.

The deceased was identified as Panibudi Meswa while her relative Bhumisuta, who sustained critical injuries was admitted to Bhima Bhoi Medical College Hospital.

Standing crops in of farm lands were damaged in several parts of Bargarh district due to the thunderstorm that struck in the morning at around 6 am on the day.

Similar scenes were also witnessed in Boudh and Subarnapur districts where heavy winds and rain took a heavy toll of the standing vegetable crops.

7th Pay scale, service conditions

Hope dims for BG teachers as apathy continues

Corona adds to their woes further

SRIKANTA K TRIPATHY ■ BHUBANESWAR

Corona has increased the financial strains of the Government, but commitments made by it too have a value. It's not acceptable to ignore the most genuine demands of a section of employees under one plea or the other, and this time owing to the corona crisis.

The victims of such long continuing apathy of the State Government are the Block Grant teachers who are being repeatedly harassed on the ground of financial austerity.

The corona pandemic has further dimmed their hope of regularisation of service and implementation of salary as per the 7th Pay Commission recommendations in their favour.

While the State Government employees have been getting higher scale of pay under the 7th Pay Commission since 2016, these teachers getting full GIA in shape of Block Grant as per the GIA policies 2017 and 2018 are still languishing with underpayment and denial of service conditions.

Adding to their woes, the Government is still sitting over a proposal for these benefits even as scores of these teachers and non-teaching staff in the Block Grant institutions have retired without pension and other related benefits.

"This is a vicious cycle we are hardly having any chance to get rid of when the way the Government is brazenly violating provisions of all previous GIA Policies and even the GIA Policies of 2017 and 2018, where it has been clearly mentioned that the employees would be entitled to all financial benefits at par with the reg-

ular Government employees," stated a teacher of a Block Grant High School in Baleswar district. Yet another teacher of Dhenkanal district questioned, "Who will we rely on in this Government when the words of the Chief Minister are not respected by the bureaucracy?"

The CM in 2017 had announced that the Block Grant system was abolished from then State and Grant-in-Aid (GIA) policy was re-implemented in its place.

This had created hope among about 30,000 employees working in Block Grant schools and colleges of getting regular scale of pay and service conditions.

However, the bureaucracy while drafting the GIA orders of 2017 and 2018 did not leave any scope of regularisation of the posts leading to emergence of yet another policy as horrendous as the Block Grant—Grant-in-Aid in shape of Block Grant, he added.

The Government has been promising us to fulfil the demands for service conditions and 7th Pay scale but there is no results. There have been repeated negotiations with the Higher Education and Mass Education Ministers and also with the Secretaries of the two departments.

But the proposals are discarded by the Finance Department. Consequently, thousands of teachers are passing through uncertainty and mental strains, especially those who are nearing their retirements, said a teacher leader.

An educationist opined, "What was the motto behind providing Block Grant to these privately built educational institutions and then raising the scale of pay from time to time? Surely, the Government wanted to create a healthy atmosphere in schools and colleges. But by repeatedly ignoring the teaching community or rather losing its credibility before them, Government seems to have failed in its motto."

Covid scare

No newspaper allowed in NTPC

PNS ■ TALCHER

The public-sector undertaking NTPC Kaniha has taken a decision not to allow newspapers inside its premises to counter further spread of the Covid virus during its second wave.

Though this is a temporary arrangement, regular news coverage will be put across from time to time. A communication from the company appealed to all concerned to send their photocopies and scanned coverage which is printed in the newspapers via mail or on WhatsApp at 8130073430 till further information.

7 oxygen plants to come up in State soon

Six at DHHs, one at Cuttack Cancer Centre

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While an oxygen crisis is witnessed in the country amidst the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has extended a helping hand in setting up seven oxygen plants in Odisha.

The seven oxygen plants would be constructed in Jharsuguda, Boudh, Koraput, Gajapati, Nayagarh, Cuttack and Bhadrak districts. The plants would be set up at six

District Headquarters (DHHs) and the Acharya Harihar Regional Cancer Centre (AHRCC) in Cuttack, informed an official.

Oxygen would be supplied to hospitals through pipes and the project would be completed within a stipulated time period. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) would build the oxygen plants while the NHAI would look after the civil and electrical works. The exact sites have been finalised for setting up of plants. The construction work has already begun in Cuttack and Boudh, informed NHAI AGM RP Panda.

Dental surgeons seek jobs to fight Covid

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Dental Doctors' Association has written to the State Government offering their services in the time of Covid crisis in return of minimum wage provided to skilled labourers.

The association has submitted a list of 50 of its members, who are in bare need of employment. In its letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik with copies to Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal, Health Minister Naba Kishore Das, Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra,

Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra and Director Health Services Bijay Mahapatra, the association has urged them to consider the economic conditions and unemployment of dental surgeons and engage them in the fight against Covid-19.

Association general secretary Dr Priya Ranjan Samal has appealed to the Government to consider their request on an urgent basis.

10,270-MT oxygen sent from State so far

PNS ■ CUTTACK

A total of 559 tankers and containers carrying 10,270.298 MT medical oxygen have been dispatched under the escort of Odisha police so far from Rourkela and Jajpur, Dhenkanal and Angul districts of Odisha to 11 deficit States in the country. More were leaving on Tuesday.

During last 19 days, as many as 57 tankers were dispatched from Angul with



945.302MT, 147 from Dhenkanal with 2,324.32 MT, 134 from Jajpur with 2,790.112 MT and 221 from Rourkela

with 4,210.564 MT. A total of 169 tankers with 3,385.754 MT of oxygen have been sent so far to Andhra Pradesh, and 147 tankers with 2,494.829 MT of oxygen to Telangana. Tamil Nadu has received 12 tankers with 234.94 MT of medical oxygen.

Similarly, Haryana has received 79 tankers filled with 1,460.342 MT of oxygen. 27 tankers with 465.831 MT of oxygen have been sent so far to Maharashtra; while 320.322

MT of oxygen filled in 21 tankers have been dispatched to Chhattisgarh.

As many as 38 tankers have carried around 719.95 MT of oxygen to Uttar Pradesh and 47 tankers with 823.96 MT of oxygen have been sent to Madhya Pradesh till date. 15 tankers with 274.86 MT of oxygen have been sent so far to Delhi, two tankers with 58.22 MT sent to Punjab and two tankers with 31.29 MT sent to Bihar in last 19 days.

No public darshan of Puri Chandan Yatra

PNS ■ PURI

The 21-day annual Chandan Yatra of Lord Jagannath in Puri will be held at the Narendra Pokhari from May 15 with strict adherence to all Covid-19 protocols. The general public will not be allowed to witness the 'Chapa Khela' ritual of the Lord.

Informing this, Puri district Collector Samarth Verma on Tuesday said that only 50 to 60 servants would be allowed at the holy pond to perform the rituals. RT-PCR test of the

participants would be conducted 72 hours before the festival. However, arrangements are being made for live telecast of the festival.

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in this regard was issued later in the day following a Chhattis Nijog meeting, he added.

District SP K Vishal Singh informed that around 10 platoons of police force would be deployed along the stretch from the Singhadwar to the Narendra Pokhari every day during the festival. Besides,

prohibitory orders under Section-144 CrPC would be imposed around the pond. The decision on observance of the festival outside the Shreemandir had earlier been taken at a meeting chaired by Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator Krishan Kumar on May 6.

Last year, the festival had been held in the temple premises without devotees owing to the nationwide Covid-19 lockdown. Rituals of the festival were performed by servants.



ITI Brahmapur develops revolving car

BHUBANESWAR: On the occasion of the National Technology Day on May 11, students and staffs of the Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Brahmapur, have devel-



oped an innovative engineer-designed project, that is, a revolving car which rotates at an RPM of one per minute. This revolving car is driven by a 2-HP, 3-phase squeal case

induction motor with a speed of 1480 RPM. The students have proved their skill and reduced the speed to 1 RPM by five stages using a V pulley, helical gears and bevel gears. The driving shaft, which is supported by two taper roller bearings and one bell thrust bearing which, takes the load of the car.

According to ITI, Brahmapur Principal Dr Rajat Kumar Panigrahy, most of parts used in the car have been gathered from scraps and the other parts are designed and developed in die CNC tool room and turner workshop of the institute.

Another drive-in vaccination centre in BBSR

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Tuesday decided to open another drive-in Covid vaccination centre in the city at the DN Regalia Mall for second dose of the jab for 45+ age group.

As per the decision, persons aged above 45 years, who have taken the first dose at a Government or a private facility of Bhubaneswar, can book

slots for vaccination from 6 pm on Tuesday. The registration for slot can be done in <https://self-registration.cowin.gov.in/>.

The BMC further stated that 300 vaccination slots would be available daily from May 12 to 15. Earlier, drive-in coronavirus vaccination centres were opened at the Utkal Kanika Galleria Parking lot, KIIT University Cricket Stadium, Esplanade Mall Parking lot and Esplanade One Mall parking lot.

New rules for Unit-I veggie market

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the State capital city reporting around 1,000 daily Covid-19 cases in the second wave of the pandemic, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Tuesday issued new rules for the crowded Unit-I vegetable market to facilitate social distancing. As per the rules, the wholesalers would be allowed for trading between 3.30 am and 6.30 am while the time for the retailers is between 6.30 am and 12 noon. The rule would be in effect till further orders

by the BMC. This apart, two-wheelers would not be allowed inside the vegetable market

during the period. Strict action shall be taken against the violators, the BMC warned.



Inspiring instance

95-yr-old woman wins battle against Covid



PNS ■ KEONJHAR

It's indeed happy news amidst the devastating second wave of the pandemic that a 95-year-old woman has won the battle against Covid-19 after a fight of 15 days in Keonjhar district.

Sushila Bala Pahi, the first woman Zilla Parishad Vice-Chairperson of the district from 1997 to 2002, is a resident of Thakurpatna village. After she suffered from fever, her swab sample was collected on April 25 for Covid-19 test and

the report came out positive. She was being treated by a team of doctors under the supervision of Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) Ashok Das.

After undergoing treatment for 15 days, the nonagenarian recovered from the deadly disease setting an inspiration for many others. She advises all those getting infected with Covid-19 not to lose hope and fight with the virus with a strong willpower.

Earlier, Pahi was undergoing treatment for long due to her heart-related ailments and later had recovered. "A 95-year-old woman beating Covid-19 sends a positive message to the society. Sushila's condition was not well at the time when she tested positive for the virus. Her blood pressure level was fluctuating frequently though her breathing was normal.

Since she is a heart patient, there was risk and it took a lot of time to bring her BP under control," said the CDMO. A rapid response team was visiting the patient regularly to examine her health condition and provide treatment accordingly. Her strong willpower helped her overcome this, he added.

Centenarian beats corona in B'swar dist

However, vaccine non-availability reported from many blocks

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR

Amidst gloomy pictures across India pertaining to Covid-19 casualties, here is a centenarian of Baleswar district who could beat the dreaded virus after being treated at the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) and returned to his family after recovery.

Dayanidhi Panda, stated to be 107-year-old, a resident of Birua near Segargh under Nilgiri block, has sent a message to others that the virus can be beaten with self-confidence.

According to reports, when Panda felt difficulties in breathing, his son Mukteswar brought him to the DHH, where he was advised to get tested for corona and he was found positive.



During his admission, his oxygen level was below the permissible limit. The family members had left hope for his survival. After receiving medication for four days from Wednesday to Saturday, he recovered and the hospital authorities informed his family to take him home as he recovered from Covid and was free from danger.

He was discharged from the hospital on Sunday. However, the family members

were told that he might feel weakness for next few days due to the virus' impact. Meanwhile, there have been reports from various blocks and vaccination centres that people desiring to take vaccines are facing a tough time to avail it as they have no information whether vaccine is available or not.

One can see long queues before each vaccination centre before its opening. The rush is seen for the second dose as well as first timers above 45 years. Some also allege that although their time gap between the first and second jab lapsed yet they couldn't avail it due to its non-availability.

And they had hardly any prior information about the stock position. As a result, everyday they come and return. The date of vaccination should be streamlined and people should be informed telephonically about their turn, they demanded.

Lockdown

Bands of K'pada volunteers act Good Samaritans

When starving stray animals' plight is nobody's business

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

While Covid-19 lockdown is in force, hundreds of stray animals are left without food. A few youths here have acted as Good Samaritans for them.

Meet the members of Shri Jagannath Charitable Trust, who under the leadership of Daman Mohanty, have been



feeding and taking care of the stray animals, including cattle, canines and simians. These animals generally roam on

streets to get their food from the bystanders, hoteliers, and others. However, since people stay indoors and hotels and

shops are closed these days due to the lockdown, these animals are starving, with some of them even having died without food.

According to Mohanty, president of Shri Jagannath Charitable Trust, stray dogs, monies and bulls are hit hard by the ongoing lockdown following all the restaurants, tiffin stalls, hotels and eateries were closed. As a result, with nobody is there to feed them and the plight of these innocent animals is nobody's business. "So we have decided to feed the stray animals in Kendrapada township and also the simians

at Jaipur-based Maha Vinayak Temple, where they are seen in large numbers.

Every day, these volunteers are providing vegetables, biscuits and bananas to the animals. For feeding the stray canines and simians, they are collecting funds from the members.

"Several NGOs, kind hearted persons and youth organisations are supporting us unflinchingly by providing food stuff or money," said Kedar Swain, a member of the organisation, adding, "We are also feeding the destitute, like beggars and mentally chal-

lenged persons roaming on the streets."

Some youths of Marshaghai canal bridge area are also in the limelight for providing food packets to the abandoned insane persons and beggars in the area. "Every day, we have been distributing nearly 40-50 food packets to the neglected sections by moving on the street, starting from Chhagharia to Nilachalabazar and from Marshaghai canal bridge to Kharanashahi," stated the youths, requesting anonymity, because they said that they wanted to stay away from publicity.

Minting money in Covid crisis

Quacks active in worst-hit S'garh

SUNDARGARH: At a time when Sundargarh has turned out to be a Covid-19 hotspot district with rising number of positive cases reported every day, quacks continue to rule the roost in the worst affected region amidst the pandemic situation. Two days after police detained a quack, Sudarshan Singh, at Panchara under Kutra block in the district and sealed his clinic, the local administra-

tion sealed another clinic named Biswas Medical Store located in Kutra main market on Tuesday. Claiming to be a doctor, the clinic owner, a resident of Kolkata, is accused of providing traditional treatment to people in the area over the last 30 years. He is also accused of admitting patients to his clinic during the prevailing Covid-19 situation. Acting on sever-

al complaints, a joint team led by Kutra police station IIC Sushant Kumar Parida and Tehsildar Rabindra Sethy conducted a raid and detained the accused.

"While people in large numbers are getting infected with the disease by the day, quacks and 'fake' doctors are taking advantage of the crisis in rural areas of the district. Many people with flu-like symptoms

Two detained for misleading patients

like cold, cough and fever also opt to visit quacks for treatment due to lack of awareness," said a local. The traditional healers, instead of advising them to undergo Covid test, prescribe them various medicines meant for typhoid, which is one of the reasons behind the rise in cases in the area, he alleged. **PNS**

Oxygen black-marketing, 1 held

KEONJHAR: The Keonjhar police on Tuesday arrested one Trilochan Sethy on the charge of demanding bribe from a Covid patient to supply him an oxygen cylinder at the DD College Covid Hospital. Source close to Town PS IIC Pramodini Sahu revealed that Sethy, who is working as a security guard at the Covid Hospital, had demanded Rs 1,500 from the Covid patient, was arrested and court-forwarded after matter was reported by the Keonjhar CDMO. However, due to the present situation of maintaining social distance, a detailed enquiry was yet to follow.

BeMC chief hails residents for curb compliance

BRAHMAPUR: The residents of Brahmapur have supported the lockdown and weekend shutdowns wholeheartedly. The people of the locality don't move out from their houses except in some emergency needs. The main roads and streets are totally calm and quiet. Only police patrolling vehicles are plying. A few two wheelers and autos are also plying for emergency needs and buses are off the road. Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) Commissioner Siddheswar Baliram Bondar thanked all for the support. **PNS**

Covid rule violation in K'handi

Principal among three of nursing school held

BHAWANIPATNA: Following violation of Covid-19 norms, the Sadar police of Bhawanipatna on Tuesday arrested three persons of GNM Nursing School of Kamthana. On April 30, during welcome ceremony of first year students of the nursing school, around 180 students had participated in function and some of them danced on stage without wearing mask. A video on the incident had gone viral on social media.

It was alleged that authorities had not taken permission to celebrate function. Collector Kalahandi, Parag Harshad Gavali had ordered a probe into incident. The police had lodged an FIR and questioned school authorities in this connection. Sadar PS IIC, Bhawanipatna, Pradeep Dharua said they were released on PR bond.

Ash utilisation gets major boost at OPGC

4,000 MT dispatched to Assam plant for cement production

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

In what could be termed as a historical milestone, the Odisha Power Generation Corporation Limited (OPGC) on Tuesday started dispatching ash from Fly Ash Silo to Star Cement Plant, Assam, which shall be used for making PPC (Portland Pozzolana Cement).

About 4,000 MT fly ash was dispatched from OPGC's Ib Thermal Power Station with the use of railway rake. The PPC is a form of blended cement which is cheap, requires less curing and thus has high

demand in market. The OPGC is one amongst very few power generators having state-of-art technology to dispose ash through railway rake. The OPGC has three Dry Fly Ash Silos with capacity of 2,300 MT

each. With present landmark event, OPGC gains a significant potential to dispose around 90,000 MT of ash per month which can be further increased in months to come, said a release of the company.



Is the new MV Act an excessive legislation?



RAMA CHANDRA PANDA

The new MV Act has brought radical changes in entire transport sector, which intends to bring down fatalities in road accidents which are the highest in India. According to some, lack of safety awareness and reckless driving of two wheelers are major reasons of such accidents.

The deterrent aspect of the new law is very good. It also ensures protection to citizens, by-standers and co-travellers helping an accident victim in arranging medical care as such efforts had hitherto the instinct of fear from possible harassment from law enforcing agen-

cies. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's steps to connect metro cities of the country by 4 lanes NH revolutionized road network, but road accidents are still on the rise. The National Highways witness roughly 60 % traffic of commercial vehicles while other 40 % are plying in State highways. The MV law intends to improve India's traffic standard to the level of any western country.

But the moot point is the Government should first ensure a hassle-free regulating system by making road development, maintenance and traffic justice system transparent and accountable, and raise road standard at par with standards in western countries. In western countries road safety violation makes the agencies accountable but in India it is not so.

There are several black spots in various road networks due to faulty design, lack of aftercare. The traffic justice and registration system needs to be modernised, decentralised and expert oriented to eliminate chance of manipula-

tion and harassment. The provision of penalty relating to disobedience to authorities, overloading, jumping red light, pollution, not possessing DL are excessive and likely to be exploited by checking staff in the context of the system being perceived as corrupt.

Now fine for want of pollution certificate is raised from Rs 1,000 to Rs 10,000 and for lack of DL certificate, the fine is raised to Rs 10,000 from Rs 1,500. The traffic fines should be compatible to the capacity of the common man.

Hence some of the provisions are quite alarming and cause fear in the mind of common people. Vesting too much power with the executive authorities in the Act would touch parameters of excessive legislation and may result in arbitrary use of authority.

It is also necessary to provide more checks and balances to make the system fair and transparent. Any traffic checking must be in presence of a transport officer or a police DSP. Late night checking should be banned and fixing a time frame for disposal of

appeals against imposition of fine would be in public interest.

Pollution

Since vehicles cannot be off the road as they are lifeline of the society, some amount of pollution is unavoidable. It is necessary to strengthen engineering standards to make the vehicles robust and less polluting. There should be constant research on reduction of carbon dioxide emission and on fuel economy for which manufacturing and engineering standard needs constant monitoring.

Let the Government strengthen research and development to convert existing vehicles to run them from fuel to other powers as well as for production of cheap electric cars with more sustainable charging devices to make such vehicles affordable to common man.

The present day bodies of the vehicles are made of low quality steel which gets rusty within 5 years, while brass bodies of British day Austin is

still intact. Business lobby world over is always eager to fix life of vehicles to increase sale of motor vehicles, while quality of vehicles like its body, safety measures is ignored. Old industries and other hazardous manufacturing units considerably pollute environment. Has government ever examined as how many industries are functioning with obsolete machines and outdated process adding more carbon dioxide to the environment?

Felling of trees is a major contributor to rising pollution, which necessitates conserving water and planting trees on every available space to check growing pollution.

Many Highways were built by the British Empire and royal houses in pre-independence days where plantation of fruit bearing trees on road sides were an usual practice.

Trees like jam, mango, and tamarind were earlier planted on road sides. But today such qualities of trees are rarely planted. The act should have mandated for compulsory planting of trees on the NH sides to eliminate effect of car-

bon dioxide emission from vehicles and sound vibration.

New scrap policy

Road safety or pollution has little to do with life of a vehicle. People still use British day vehicles as a matter of pride. 10% of people just keep a car as a mark of social pride and they hardly travel 500 km a month in their 4 wheelers. They upkeep their vehicle in decent condition and take as much care of them just like the care they provide to their near and dear.

Upkeeping a vehicle or engaging a driver costs a family Rs 20,000 to 25,000 a month which they find difficult to face. Therefore under the British, the motor vehicle law permitted extension of registration of old vehicles on the basis of fitness.

Most of the car owners in India belong to middle class who purchase vehicles on loan for personal use and find it difficult to repay their loan. Limiting life span of private vehicles to 20 years in Indian context is not acceptable as it is beyond the capacity of mid-

dle class people to change vehicles every 20-25 years.

Epidemic had caused loss of jobs to thousands in urban areas. More than 5 millions of youths are engaged in driving Autos and taxis. Lockdown/shutdown affected their livelihood at many places. This is regarding small taxis, autos which are mainly plied by individual drivers to sustain their livelihood. Thus the new scrap policy would hard hit common man. It is economically and technically disadvantageous to common man. Even old part market scraps would fetch 7-8 % of the original price, while official policy would fetch 4-6 % to a private car owner. 25 % of commercial vehicles like mini truck and tractor are owned by middle class families who own these units as self driven and as a source of livelihood.

Skill development for drivers

Inexperienced driving and lacking skill is a major contributor to road accidents. The Union Government should adopt a national policy for

improving driving skills of citizens. More than 1 million people are engaged in driving which has potential for employment generation. The Government should actively intervene to open more and more technical schools with approved sites to train drivers for skill development.

Reform of insurance sector

Before giving effect to new MV Act, the Transport Ministry should have enforced a comprehensive policy on insurance. The insurance sector is increasingly expensive and exploitative.

Issues like base premium, liability of insurance, limiting claim disposal period, extending insurance cover periods of private vehicles, two wheelers and agriculture inputs like tractors need to be considered to ease common man's difficulties.

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Sonia, Rahul misleading people, abetting jab hesitancy: Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress criticism of the Covid-19 management by the Modi-Government invited a strong rejoinder from the BJP president JP Nadda who on Tuesday asked the top Congress leadership to "stop misleading people, creating false panic and even contradicting their stands just on political considerations."

In a four-page letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Nadda accused her senior party leaders, including former President Rahul Gandhi, of creating "vaccine hesitancy", at convenience "changing stands" on the lockdown issue and creating "confusion" over the Covid-19 strategy.

BJP president also went on to say that "now there is a new trend in Congress party to put all the blame on the Central Vista project".

The letter came a day after the Congress Working Committee on Monday passed a resolution calling the second Covid-19 wave a "grave calamity and direct consequence of the Modi government's indifference, insensitivity, and incompetence."

Nadda accused Congress of mocking at the vaccine made in India.

"Vaccine that is made in India should be a matter of national pride. Instead, Congress leaders tried to ridicule it and create doubts in the minds of people. Even the chief minister belonging to your party indulged in such antics. In a nation that has almost no recent history of vaccine hesitancy, your party has the dubious record of trying to actively create [it], that too, in the middle of a once-in-a-century pandemic," the letter said.



JP Nadda

"The Congress Working Committee talks about the Modi government 'abdicating' its responsibility on vaccination. Is there so much of a communication gap between the Congress party and the states it shares powers in? In April itself, topmost Congress leaders were calling for decentralisation of vaccination", he said.

Nadda also cited a surge in Covid-19 cases in Congress-ruled state such as Punjab.

Nadda defended the vaccination policy and said it had already ensured considerable coverage in priority groups by providing over 160 million vaccines to states in the first two phases.

"Even now it continues to give 50 percent of the total vaccines free if cost", said the letter of BJP President.

Nadda said that BJP ruled states have announced their resolve to help the poor and underprivileged by providing vaccines for free.

"I am sure that Congress governments in various states also feel strongly for the poor, can they also come out with a similar decision to provide vaccines for free?", he quizzed the Congress President.

Nadda accused the Congress of politicising the pandemic and the vaccination policy. He said in this fight against the pandemic, the conduct of the topmost Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, will be remembered for "duplicitous and pettiness."

Vaccine shortage forces States to suspend vax drive for 18+

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid scarcity of vaccine supplies, many States have suspended vaccination drives for the 18-44 age group so as to prioritise those due for the second jab in the 45-plus age group. People who had registered to get Covid jab through the Cowin app returned disappointed from vaccination centres in some parts including Mumbai, Hyderabad, Patna, Bendi and other places as they were closed due to unavailability of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Karnataka, West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh have rescheduled appointments for the first time vaccine beneficiaries. Delhi and Andhra Pradesh have demanded to share the formula with other companies to manufacture the two Covid vaccines.

The shortage of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin in many states is posing a problem for those who need to get a second jab. Covaxin has to be taken at an interval of 28 days.

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Tuesday said the State

Government has suspended the Covid-19 vaccination drive for the 18-44 age group due to a shortage of jabs. "There is a dearth of vaccines, hence we're considering holding off vaccination drive temporarily for 18-44 age group. 2.75 lakh vaccine doses are left for this age group that'll be now used for 45 years and above group. Administering the second dose is a priority," Tope said.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow other companies the right to manufacture the two Covid-19 vaccines administered in the country - Covishield and Covaxin. In his letter, Kejriwal said that the current supply of vaccine doses is not sustainable to meet the whole country's demand, which will in turn be an arsenal in India's fight against the deadly virus. "Only two companies are producing vaccines so far. They produce only 6-7 crore vaccines a month. This way, it will take over two years to vaccinate everyone. Many waves would have come by then," he said.

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have decided to restrict the vaccination process

only to the second dose. States like Kerala, Karnataka have increased the second dose share given the large numbers involved. Some have stopped walk in appointments.

In some States such as Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, vax centres has been shut to restrict crowds and manage the vaccination driver better.

In Madhya Pradesh, online appointments in some areas including Datia, Damoh, Jabua have been restricted.

In states like Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Governments have restricting the slots for appointments.

Serum Institute of India's current production capacity is 60-70 million doses; the company indicated that it may not hit the 100-million-dose capacity until July. Bharat Biotech is producing about 10 million doses. Only 1,50,000 doses of Sputnik V have arrived from Russia, but it would take a few weeks for its roll-out.

To meet the demand, several states such as Karnataka, Odisha, Delhi, UP, Maharashtra and Kerala have decided to invite global tender to procure the Covid vaccine.

ing Covid guidelines," the letter said.

On the Congress's opposition to the Central Vista, Nadda said the need for a new Parliament was raised during the Congress-led United

CRPF commandants tasked to liaise with State police for access to seized Remdesivir, O2

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid continuing surge in Covid cases, CRPF chief Kuldeep Singh has tasked the commandants of various formations across the States to liaise with the State police to hand over seized Remdesivir injections, oxygen concentrators and oxygen cylinders on "zimmnamama" basis for use by the paramilitary in these "trying times."

Due to the onslaught of the pandemic, the CRPF has also halted all training courses that begin in May.

Following reports of black marketing of these essentials required for Covid patient management, State police forces and law enforcement agencies across the country have raided and seized these items.

These precious lifesaving drugs and equipment, lying with police forces, can be used by the force to save the lives of the paramilitary personnel, officials said.

Through a communication on Friday, the CRPF has also sought a consolidated report of action taken by the offices under different operational jurisdiction by May 13 for perusal of the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

The communication that has been sent to all the sectors

and zones/formations has also underscored the need to treat the matter as a top priority and monitor the progress, they said.

Meanwhile, the CRPF has postponed all training courses, in view of the spread of Covid-19, scheduled to commence this month till further orders. The new dates for commencement of the training courses will be intimated in due course to all the training institutions under the paramilitary.

As on Saturday, a total of 20,106 CRPF personnel contracted Covid-19, including 228 cases during the last 24 hours. Of this, 17,498 men have recovered and the paramilitary suffered 105 deaths due to the viral disease. The CRPF had 2,503 active cases in its ranks till Saturday.

Till Saturday, as many as 69,852 Central paramilitary personnel, including those of the CRPF, have been infected with Covid-19.

Out of this, 60,549 patients have recovered from the disease. The combined death toll across the paramilitary forces was 264 during the period. A total of 9,037 personnel across the Forces continue to be active cases.

Besides the CRPF, other paramilitary forces hit by Covid are the Border Security Force (BSF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Central

Industrial Security Force (CISF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), National Security Guards (NSG) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

A Deputy Inspector General of the CRPF and a Commanding Officer (CO) of the Border Security Force (BSF) have succumbed to Covid-19 this week. Another CO of the CRPF hit by the novel coronavirus is critical, sources said.

A section of officials in the CRPF feel the liaison with the State police should have been undertaken by the senior officials in the rank of Inspectors General, most of whom are IPS officers from various State cadres on Central deputation, for better outcome of the move aimed at offsetting the shortage of the vital medicines and equipment for management of Covid cases.

While the CRPF has a medical set of its own for treatment of its personnel through a range of field and composite hospitals, the CRPF has been stretched too far from crowd control in the first wave to conducting elections in the midst of the second wave in the recently concluded Assembly polls in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, they added.

Reserve 70% vaccines for 2nd dose: Centre to States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the footfall of people turning up for vaccinations has increased due to the recent spikes in Covid-19 cases, and those waiting for a second dose getting longer, the Centre on Tuesday asked the States to give priority to them during vaccination by allocating a minimum of 70 per cent vaccines for the second dose.

The States have also been asked to focus on minimum vaccine wastage and do regular follow up with vaccine manufacturers.

The urgent need to address a large number of beneficiaries waiting for a second dose of vaccine was stressed in a meeting held by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and Dr R S Sharma, the Chairman of Empowered Group on Technology and Data Management to Combat COVID-19, with state officials to review the status of COVID-19 vaccination on Tuesday.

States were urged to "ensure all beneficiaries who have taken the first dose are prioritised for the second doses", the Union Health Ministry said in the statement.

In this regard, states can reserve at least 70 percent of the



vaccines supplied to them from the Government of India channel for second dose vaccination and the remaining 30 percent for the first dose.

"This, however, is indicative. States have the liberty to enhance this to as much as 100 percent. State-wise numbers on CoWIN have been shared with states for their planning purposes."

"The States were asked to undertake an awareness campaign for reinforcing the importance of complete vaccination with two doses of the vaccine," the statement said.

Presenting details of States who have ensured high coverage of priority groups (like population aged 45+, frontline workers and healthcare workers) and the others, the Union Health secretary urged States to ensure that priority groups are

vaccinated.

States have been informed in a transparent manner in advance about the Covid vaccines being provided to them from Govt of India channel. The visibility for the forthcoming fortnight is conveyed to them in advance to enable better and more effective planning by them, the statement said.

The next allocation for the period 15-31st May will be conveyed to them on May 14. It was pointed out that states can utilize the information regarding dose allocation for the next 15 days to plan their vaccination sessions.

States were also urged to minimise vaccine wastage, the statement said. While the overall levels have considerably reduced, Union Health Secretary pointed that there were many states which still

needed to substantially reduce the wastage.

"It was suggested to states and UTs to retrain and reorient vaccinators to ensure judicious usage of the vaccines."

"All wastage more than the national average hereafter is to be adjusted from the subsequent allocations to that state and UT," the statement said.

In this context, it was also pointed out that certain states are able to report a negative wastage because the well-trained health workers can extract maximum doses per vial than what is otherwise generally earmarked.

In view of the payments pending from states to the private vaccine manufacturers, the states were advised to constitute a dedicated team at state level of 2 or 3 senior officers to coordinate with vaccine manufacturers on a daily basis and secure State Govt. Supplies promptly, the statement said.

This team is to also coordinate with private hospitals to facilitate their procurement thereby maintaining the momentum of the overall vaccination exercise in the State.

The District Immunization Officer and COVID Vaccination Centre Manager can increase the session capacity according to demand and can also visualise the target group in their upcoming sessions. Beneficiaries without relevant photo ID cards like senior citizens at old-age homes, etc., can also be registered, the ministry said.

Delhi, K'taka, others for global tender to meet jab shortage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Centre taking its own time to supply the vaccine at the domestic front, Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on Tuesday joined several other States which have decided to issue global tenders for procurement of Covid vaccines to ensure inoculation of its people to save them from the second wave of pandemic. The other States seeking vaccines through a global route are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha.

The Centre said it has so far provided more than 18 crore vaccine doses to States and UTs free of cost, but many of them have complained of an acute shortage of the jabs and are now prioritising people who need to be given their second dose within a prescribed period.

Two crore Covid vaccine doses will be procured through global tender to meet the increased demand and to facilitate vaccination of the age group of 18-44 years, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and state Covid task force head C N Ashwath Narayan said.

"Till now, we had depended only on vaccines supplied by



the Central Government and it was not procured from the open market by floating tender. Now, it has been instructed to float the tender and to complete the process within seven days," Narayan said.

Delhi Government too said it will float a global tender for procuring coronavirus vaccines.

Addressing a press conference, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged that the BJP-ruled Centre was "forcing" State Governments to invite global tenders for vaccine procurement while the Telangana cabinet also decided to follow suit.

Officials said the Andhra Pradesh government will float a global tender in a day or two for the procurement of Covid-

19 vaccines from foreign manufacturers to complete the vaccination process as quickly as possible.

"We are exploring the option of buying the vaccine from any foreign manufacturer since there is a short supply of Covishield and Covaxin," the state's Principal Secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singhal said while Uttar Pradesh Government had earlier this month floated global e-tenders to procure four crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines from licensed manufacturers.

State officials on Tuesday said that UP may directly procure a large amount of international Covid-19 vaccines such as Sputnik V and those developed by Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

2nd Covid wave risky for youth, says ICMR chief



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

If the first wave of Covid took into its grip the old people particularly those with comorbidities, the second ongoing wave of the pandemic is proving risky to more number of younger people as they might have begun going out for economic reasons and also because of some variants of SARs-COV-2 prevalent in the country.

This was stated by the ICMR chief Dr Balram Bhargava on Tuesday in response to a question on whether the younger population were getting more affected.

He said, "The comparison of data during the first and the second wave of Covid-19 has shown that there is not much age difference."

People above the age of 40 are more vulnerable for adverse outcomes.

"We have found that younger people are getting slightly more involved because suddenly they have gone out and there are variants also prevalent in the nation which may be affecting them as well," he said.

India has been reeling under a calamitous second wave of the coronavirus infection.

An early trend of decline in daily new COVID-19 cases and deaths has been noted in the country even as Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, and Punjab are among the 16 states still showing continued increase in daily cases, the government said on Tuesday.

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana were among the 18 states and union territories showing continued plateauing or decrease in daily new Covid-19 cases.

Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal, however, said Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab, Assam, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura were among the 16 states and union territories showing continued increasing trend in daily new Covid-19 cases.

ED freezes ₹76.67 crore under PMLA in Chinese loan app case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said it has attached ₹76.67 crore, lying in various bank accounts and payment gateways pertaining to Chinese loan app companies and their Indian associates under money laundering charge.

The ED initiated investigation on the basis of various FIRs registered by CID, Bengaluru based on the complaints received from various customers, who had availed loan and faced harassment from the recovery agent of these money lending companies.

The amount attached by ED pertains to seven companies out of which three are Fintech companies--Mad Elephant Network Technology Private Limited, Baronynx Technology Private Limited and Cloud Atlas Future Technology Private Limited.

These companies are controlled by the accused Chinese nationals and three NBFCs

registered with RBI styled as X10 Financial Services Private Limited, Track Fin-ed Private Limited and Jamnadas Morarjee Finance Private Limited, the ED said.

The fintech companies have agreements with the NBFCs for disbursement of loans through digital lending apps.

The amount attached by ED also includes the amount of fee charged by Razorpay Software Private Limited to the extent of ₹86.44 lakh for not conducting due diligence in case of a company enrolled with it for disbursement and collection of loans.

Money laundering investigation by ED revealed that these Chinese loan apps offered loans to individuals and levied a usurious rate of interest and processing fees.

The loan apps firms, through their recovery agents, resorted to systematic abuse, harassment and threatening to the defaulters through the call centers for coercive recovery of the loans.

Azad to spearhead Cong Covid task force

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday appointed senior party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad to head a Covid task force with 13 members in the group which includes Priyanka Gandhi.

Azad has been one of the members of the group of 23 dissenters (G-23). The move taken by party chief Sonia Gandhi is seen as an attempt to reach out to the dissenting leader.

Other members include Jairam Ramesh, Mukul Wasnik, Ambika Soni, KC Venugopal, Randeep Surjewala and Youth Congress chief BV Srinivas among others.

The party also set up a five-member group headed by former Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan to evaluate the party's performance in the just-concluded assembly polls.

The announcement comes a day after party chief Sonia Gandhi proposed at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) the formation of a group to assess the party's losses in Kerala, Assam, West Bengal and Puducherry.

"The Congress president has constituted a group to evaluate the results of the recently concluded assembly elections, with immediate effect. Ashok Chavan will be the chairman and other members of the group are Salman Khurshid, Manish Tewari, Vincent H Pala and Jothi Mani," an official statement from AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said.

The group will submit its report within two weeks, the communication further said.

Hold awareness camp to dispel Covid myth, ensure medical care in villages, States directed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Waking up from its slumber following reports of spike in deaths and infections due to Covid-19 in villages which are facing onslaught of third wave, the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj on Tuesday asked the States to take preventive steps such as holding awareness campaigns to dispel myths and ensure better medical facilities to curb the pandemic spread in rural India.

The Ministry in a letter to the States asked them to undertake an intensive awareness drive among rural communities, sensitizing them about Covid infection and preventive and mitigation measures, in accordance with the advice of the Union Health Ministry, doctors and medical institutions etc., while especially taking care to dispel false notions and beliefs.

The Ministry has also asked State Governments to involve frontline volunteers from the local community for the campaign viz. elected panchayat representatives, teachers, ASHA workers etc. and they may also be suitably facilitated with necessary protective systems like finger oxy-meters, N-95 masks, infrared thermal scanning instruments, sanitizers etc.

Rajnath inspects 255-bed Covid hosp in Lucknow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after directing the defence Public Sector Undertakings (PSU) to join the national effort to fight the corona pandemic, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday inspected a 255-bed hospital set up by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in Lucknow.

Uttar Pradesh (UP) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath accompanied the defence minister to visit the facility fully equipped to treat Covid-19 patients.

Giving details here, officials said the two leaders visited the HAL Covid Care Hospital set up under the HAL's Corporate Social Responsibility at the Haj House, Lucknow. They appreciated the facilities and services provided for the Covid patients in a short span of

time. The 255-bed Covid Care Hospital handed over to the state authorities by the HAL is now open to patients. This facility includes 130 beds with oxygen support, 100 with High Flow Nasal Cannula (HFNC) and 25 with ventilators.

The hospital will be managed by the UP Government through Care India, an NGO and charity organization. The technical support is being provided by HAL.

The HAL was instrumental in procurement, installation and commissioning of the infrastructure and will ensure maintenance and servicing of the X-Ray machines, nebulizers, oxy-meters, wheel chair, stretchers, BP monitors, Multi Para Display Monitors for ICU beds, CCTV monitoring system, ECG machine, bio chemistry analyzer, incubator, serum electrolyte analyzer and cell counter.

Declare Maratha as SEBC, Maha urges Prez, PM

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Within a week after the Supreme Court declared the Maratha reservations as "unconstitutional", the Maharashtra Government has urged President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to declare the Maratha community in the State as "Socially and Educationally Backward Classes" (SEBC), enabling it enjoy reservations in education and public employment to an extent of 12 per cent and 13 per cent respectively.

In identical letters written to President Kovind and Prime Minister Modi, on Monday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray stated that though the State Government was of the opinion that despite 102nd Constitutional amendment, it continued to enjoy power, authority and jurisdiction to identify Maratha community as the SEBC.

"However, at this stage, such understanding pales into insignifi-

cance, in view of the authoritative pronouncement made by the Hon. Supreme Court," he said.

"As a consequence of the majority view of Hon'ble Supreme Court, it is the President i.e the Union Government alone, which can identify and notify the Maratha community of state as SEBC, enabling it to enjoy reservations in education and public employment," Uddhav stated.

"This is therefore, to earnestly request you that appropriate steps be taken, albeit in accordance in law, declared by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, to identify and declare Maratha community of my State as SEBC to enable them to claim the reservation in Education and Public Employment, at least 12 per cent and 13 per cent respectively," the Chief Minister said, adding that the State Government would endeavour to the Centre's hands in undertaking such an exercise.

On May 5, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme

Court - headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan - had declared the Maratha reservations as "unconstitutional" on the ground that there was no "exceptional circumstances" or "extraordinary situation" in Maharashtra which required the Maharashtra Government to break the 50% ceiling limit to bestow quota benefits on the Maratha community.

The apex court also struck down the findings of the Justice N.G. Gaikwad Commission which led to the enactment of Maratha quota law and set aside the Bombay High Court judgment which validated the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act of 2018.

The Supreme Court also held the Bombay High Court's June 27, 2019 order directing the Maharashtra government to bring down the quantum of the approved reservations recommended by the Gaikwad Commission from 16 per cent to 12 per cent in educational institutions and 13 per cent in Government jobs.

The apex court also held that a separate reservation for the Maratha community violates Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (due process of law).

It may be recalled that on November 14, 2014, the Bombay High Court had stayed an ordinance promulgated by the previous Congress-led DF Government ahead of the October 2014 State Assembly polls extending 16 per cent reservations to Marathas and five per cent to Muslims, saying that they were not in conformity with the law laid down by the Supreme Court in three cases. However, a HC bench, headed by the then Chief Justice Mohit Shah, had subsequently allowed reservations to Muslims in educational institutions, on the ground that their educational achievements were "abysmally low" and that there was a need to draw them into the "mainstream of secular education".

On its part, the BJP-led saffron alliance government - which came to power after the October 2014

Assembly polls --subsequently moved the apex court challenging the stay granted by the high court on an ordinance promulgated by the previous Congress-led DF government.

However, the Supreme Court rejected the State Government's petition. The matter came back to the high court after advocate Vikas Patil filed an intervention petition in the Supreme Court on the issue.. The apex court directed the high court to hear the bunch of petitions pending before it.

Following a massive agitation demanding Maratha reservations launched by Maratha Kranti Sena (MKS) which organised 58 mammoth silent morchas across the state in 2017 and 2018, both the Houses of the Maharashtra Legislature had on November 29, 2018 passed a bill according reservations 16 per cent reservations in education and government jobs to the Maratha community in the state, thus paving way for enactment of a law.

Kerala's iconic 102-year-old Left leader Gouri no more

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

KR Gouri, the lone surviving member of the 1957 Communist Government in Kerala passed away on Tuesday. She was 102 and was suffering from age related issues. The end came at a private hospital in Thiruvananthapuram.

Alappuzha born Gouri was the Revenue Minister in the EMS Namboodirippadu-led Communist Government that ruled the State during 1957 to 1959. She was the leader who introduced the land reform act in Kerala which sounded the death knell of zamindari system in the State.

Before getting elected to the Kerala Assembly in 1957, Gouri served twice as member of the Travancore-Kochi Legislative Assembly. She was Minister in five Governments that led by Namboodirippadu, E K Nayanar, A K Antony and Oommen Chandi. She will be remembered as the

best Chief Minister the State did not get, said a senior CPI(M) fellow traveller.

The CPI(M)'s campaign during the 1987 assembly election was "Keram Thingum Kerala Naidu K R Gowri Bharicheedum", which when translated means Kerala, jam-packed with coconut trees would be ruled by K R Gouri.

Though the CPI(M)-led LDF has scored an impressive victory in that election, the CPI(M) leadership dumped Gouri and made E K Nayanar, the Chief Minister. Gouri, who felt deceived and let down did not get over that "treachery" committed by the caste leaders of the party that included Namboodirippadu and Nayanar.

She was expelled from the CPI (M) in 1994 by Namboodirippadu and his faction allegedly for anti-party activities. But she retaliated by launching JSS, a political outfit which forged alliance with the Congress and became a part of the UDF.

SIT to move court to seek appearance of CISF officials

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Special Investigation Team of the CID probing the Sitalkuchi firing case is likely to move court to secure the appearance of six Central Industrial Security Force personnel after they failed to turn up for interrogation on Tuesday, relevant sources said. The new Mamata Banerjee Government had formed the SIT soon after returning to power with a thumping majority. The new Government also suspended Cooch Behar SP Debashis Dhar to facilitate the investigations.

Dhar had submitted a report to the Election Commission saying about 300 people had attacked the stated

booth leading the central forces to open fire.

The Election Commission after conducting a preliminary inquiry into the proceedings had said that the firing was resorted to under a justifying condition.

Four persons had died when the CISF opened fire at an alleged crowd of attackers outside a polling booth — in the fourth phase of Bengal Assembly elections— at Sitalkuchi in Mathabhanga sub-division of Cooch Behar district bordering Assam in North Bengal.

The SIT led by a DIG level officer had summoned an Assistant Commandant, an Inspector and four other personnel of the CISF. The respon-

SITALKUCHI FIRING

dents did not appear before the investigators after State police turned down a CISF request to appear digitally citing pandemic situation, sources said.

"A petition seeking court order directing the respondents to appear before the investigating team is not ruled out," sources in the CID said.

The SIT on Tuesday subjected sub-inspector Gobinda Das— who was among the first to reach the area after the firing — to a marathon grilling. It has also summoned Sub-divisional Police Officer of Mathabhanga Surajit Mandal on Wednesday. The then SP

Dhar is also likely to be summoned soon, sources said. The officials are likely to be asked as to who ordered the firing, what they saw prima facie after visiting the site and whether they had formed any opinion about who provoked the firing.

They are also likely to be asked as to whether any alternative measures could have been taken instead of resorting to firing, officials said.

The Chief Minister had earlier wondered "why the CISF had resorted to firing in the first instance and why they did not target the victims below their wastes and why most of the bullets were fired through

the chest or head of the victims."

Meanwhile the State BJP leadership once again accused Banerjee for her appeasement politics saying, "instead of taking steps to control post-poll violence which is taking communal turn she is indulging in petty appeasement politics."

Saying that "the truth will finally come out despite her efforts to implicate the central forces," a BJP MLA said "she is trying to hit two birds in a shot ... first she is trying to inspire the criminals of her party by ordering a probe in their favour and more importantly she is trying to demoralize the central forces so that they hesitate to take strong action in subsequent elections."



Three wheeler auto union starts the Auto Ambulance service for Covid-19 patients in Lucknow on Tuesday

PTI

Three LeT terrorists killed in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A joint team of security forces on Tuesday eliminated three more local terrorists belonging to the pro-Pakistan Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) terrorist outfit in the Kokernag area of Anantnag district. So far eight terrorists have been eliminated in three different encounters since May 1.

On May 4, two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists including a foreign terrorist were eliminated in Nathipora area of Sopore in Baramulla district while three local terrorists of Al-Badr terror outfit were gunned down in Kanigam area of Shopian on May 6.

According to a police spokesman, "the operation was launched in the wee hours around 4.00 a.m on the receipt of information about the pres-



ence of terrorists in one of the houses in Village Shiekhpura, Vailoo area of Kokernag."

"During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given an opportunity to surrender, however they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retali-

ated leading to an encounter".

The police spokesman said, "the joint teams also rescued all the civilians trapped in the gunfire and halted the operation for the time to ensure safety and safe evacuation of people from the area of gunfight".

After rescuing all the civilians from the area, the operation was resumed and all the

terrorists were eliminated in the ensuing encounter.

According to a police spokesman the slain terrorists have been identified as Ilyas Ahmad Dar alias Sameer resident of Danwathpora Kokernag, Ubaid Shafi alias Abdullah resident of Batamalloo Srinagar and Aqib Ahmad Lone alias Sahil resident of Khandaypora Kulgam.

According to police records, "terrorist Ubaid Shafi was part of the terrorist group involved in carrying out the terrorist attack at Aaribagh area of Nowgam Srinagar on 01/04/2021 in which one Constable Rameez Ahmad attained martyrdom".

Arms & ammunition including 01 AK-47 rifle, 02 pistols and incriminating materials have also been recovered from the site of encounter.

Bengal BJP MLAs to get Central security cover

PNS ■ KOLKATA

With the post-poll situation continuing to simmer in Bengal the Centre has decided to provide security cover to all the 77 the BJP MLAs of the State. The security cover will be provided by the jawans of the Central Industrial Security Force and Central Reserve Police Force, sources said.

The decision to provide central security cover to the BJP MLAs comes in the backdrop of preliminary report submitted by a team of Union Home Ministry officials, visiting Bengal to inquire into the reports of post poll violence. Similar reports have been obtained from the other central agencies reporting on Bengal, sources said adding most of the Legislators would be provided, 'X' 'Y' and 'Z' category security.

According to sources the 'X' category security would be pro-

vided to 61 MLAs while the remaining others would be covered by 'Y' category security. Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari and former Railway Minister Mukul Roy who are already under central security covered would continue to get 'Z' category security, sources said.

When asked to comment on the decision taken by the Central Government a Bengal Minister said, "there is always a provision to provide security to the MLAs but if they decide to protect their own MLAs what can we say ... that is their decision ... but before taking such decisions they should remember that law and order is a State subject."

Incidentally Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had opted for a security cover provided by the Railway Protection Force when she first assumed power in Bengal in 2011.

Covid claims 79 more lives in Kerala

KOCHI: It turned out to be a black Tuesday in Kerala as the State saw the passing away of two eminent persons, KR Gowry (iconic Communist leader) and Madambu Kunjikuttan, novelist, play right and actor of repute. The day culminated with the department of health confirming the death of 79 persons due to Covid-19. This is the highest number of persons to die in a single day since the pandemic was reported in the State in late January 2020.

According to the Department of Health, 37, 290 persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 during the 12 hours ending 6 pm Tuesday. This took the Test Positivity Ratio to 26.77. There were 4,23, 957 patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19 in various hospitals across the State which has been under lock down since Saturday last.

The unabated increase in the number of health workers getting afflicted with Covid continued on Tuesday. The State recorded 143 new health workers who were contracted with the pandemic. As per the daily releases issued by the Health Department, more than 100 health workers are getting afflicted with the pandemic.

The Kerala Government Medical Officers Association in a letter to the Chief Minister on Monday had expressed concern over the ever increasing number of health workers as this could lead to severe human resources shortage in the Covid treatment hospitals. PNS

NHRC asks Centre, States to 'get their act together' in Covid-19 response

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday urged Centre and States for universal coverage and non-discriminatory pricing of Covid vaccines. The NHRC also said that if feasible vaccination can be made free.

The Commission also asked Governments to put their acts together in order to meet the immediacy of response by setting up universally functional Covid-19 dashboards for real time information in public domain on the availability of hospital beds, oxygen, critical care medicines and devices. It has also asked for setting up 24x7 functional toll-free help lines and fixing the prices of Covid treatment resources.

"There should be universal coverage and non-discriminatory pricing of Covid vaccines in all health facilities of the country, and if feasible, vaccination should be made free for everyone irrespective of private or public health establishment along with adequate testing facilities for Covid-19 and timely reports," said NHRC in its communication to Centre and States.

The Commission reiterated the Centre and States to adhere to its seven page advisory issued on May 4 regarding availability of hospital infrastructure including oxygen and medicines, real time information through dashboards, affordability, accessibility and pricing of treatments etc. The Human Rights Commission also urged the Centre and States on improved management of crematoriums and burial grounds, usage of electric crematorium and App based interventions to be promoted.

"The protection of Rights of Covid warriors engaged should be ensured and the body of a deceased Covid patient should be treated with dignity and handed over to the family ensuring all Covid protocols," said the NHRC. PNS

Maha dismisses Vaze from service

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Invoking Article 311(2) (B) of the Constitution of India, the Maharashtra Government has dismissed the suspended controversial police officer Sachin Vaze, who is the prime accused in the twin cases of explosive-laden SUV near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence and subsequent alleged murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran, from the service.

Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant Nagre on Tuesday issued the order dismissing Vaze. "The order was issued today under the provisions of Section 311 (2) (B) of Constitution of India by the Commissioner of Police, Greater

Mumbai," the Mumbai police said in a statement issued on Tuesday.

Forty-nine-year Vaze is currently in judicial custody in connection with the twin sensational cases.

Vaze was an Assistant Police Inspector of the Mumbai Police attached to the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Crime Branch-CID.

However, in the wake of the SUV planting case, he was transferred to the Special Branch and then attached to the Citizen Facilitation Centre.

Vaze, who was the first accused to have been arrested by the NIA on March 13 five days after it registered an FIR in the explosive-laden SUV recovery case, was earlier suspended from the service by the

Maharashtra Government on the same day.

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

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

(UAPA). Vaze was subsequently named as a prime accused in the case involving the alleged murder of Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hiran. It may be recalled that the police had recovered 20 gelatin sticks and a letter were recovered from what was later described as Mahindra Scorpions that was found abandoned in the vicinity of Mukesh Ambani's 27-storey residence "Antilia" on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai on February 25.

After joining the State police force in 1990 as a Sub-Inspector, Vaze was initially posted in the Naxalite-infested Gadchiroli district. Later on he was posted in Thane.

One more doctor dies from Covid at AMU medical college

Aligarh (UP): Another senior doctor at AMU's medical college died from coronavirus on Tuesday, taking the number of deaths from Covid and Covid-like symptoms among serving and retired faculty members of the university to at least 35, an official said.

Prof Shoaib Zaheer (56) is the second senior faculty member from the Department of Medicine at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), who has died from the infection. Last week, the head of department, Prof Shadaab Khan, too had succumbed to it. He was Professor Zaheer's brother-in-law.

Professor Zaheer has died just days after AMU Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor shot off a letter to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), urging it to study if a particular coronavirus variant is circulating around the campus.



A city street wears a deserted look during complete lockdown imposed by authorities amid a surge in coronavirus cases across the country, in Amravati, Maharashtra on Tuesday

PTI

J&K announces relief measures for families of pandemic victims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A total number of 65 patients died due to Covid-19, 41 across Jammu and 24 in Kashmir division on Tuesday while 4,352 fresh cases of coronavirus were detected taking the tally of active positive cases beyond 50,000 across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

Since May 1, over 40,000 cases have been detected while 565 patients have died taking the tally of deaths to 2,847.

According to the media bulletin out of 4,352 new positive cases of novel coronavirus, 1,708 were reported from Jammu division and 2,644 from Kashmir division.

Moreover, 3,537 more Covid-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals including 1,275 from Jammu Division and 2,262 from Kashmir Division.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday announced a slew of measures to mitigate the suffering of families who have lost their loved ones to Covid-19 pandemic.

The Lt Governor said, senior citizens who have lost only earning members of the

family will be provided special pension for life while children, who have lost their parents to this calamity, will be provided with special scholarship by the Government.

"Many of our near and dear ones have left us untimely due to Covid-19. The Government has decided to reach out to each and every such family and they will be provided with financial assistance for self-employment by the Jammu & Kashmir Bank," the Lt Governor said.

The Lt Governor also observed that the global pandemic has rendered thousands of daily workers jobless. "The Government has decided to provide ₹1,000 per month to all registered construction workers, ponywalas, palkiwalas, pithuwalas for the next two months", maintained the Lt Governor.

The Government is also adopting other mitigation strategies and all concerned officers have been directed to ensure the supply of ration to all ration card holders on priority. Installments of social welfare schemes like old-age pension, Laadli Beti etc and PMAY, MGNREGA, and other welfare schemes will be released immediately," the Lt Governor further added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Two to tango

Just like the Governments, the citizens are also responsible for the spurt in COVID-19 cases

American TV personality Wally Amos put it succinctly: "There are two reasons why people fail. One is irresponsibility. The second is fear." The Governments at the Centre and in the States take a fair share of blame for the inadequacies in medical infrastructure, resource management and planning even though the second COVID-19 surge continues unabated. But what about the citizens of the country? They are equal shareholders in the system and must equally share the blame for the behaviour that crosses all borders of civic responsibility. The visuals of a big crowd attending the funeral of a Muslim cleric in Uttar Pradesh's Badaun went viral on Monday. The cleric had died on Sunday and his body was kept in a local mosque for public viewing. Within hours, people began to converge near the mosque. It became an unmanageable crowd in no time, the people — most of them maskless — throwing all caution to the winds. There was no question of maintaining social distancing. There was no question of anyone asking them to at least wear masks. In fact, there was no mechanism available to either control the crowd or enforce safety guidelines. What does this show apart from the blatant neglect of the anti-COVID guidelines in public places? It is impossible to know how many among them were COVID positive or were recovering/had recovered or might contract



the virus due to transmission in a fortnight from now. The crowd has the potential to turn into a super-spreader by the end of May.

That the massing of people took the administration by surprise is one half of the story. The death of a prominent cleric should have automatically alerted the police department and the office of the district magistrate. The administration will now initiate action, file FIRs and maybe even order a probe. But the horse has bolted. If the officials had the latest contact tracing measures available, they would know how mammoth a task it is to contain the infection transmission. The other half of the story is the sad, thoughtless and irrational actions of the people who appear willing to put themselves and families at risk. Should we blame religious orthodoxy or obscurantism or retrograde beliefs for such irrational behaviour? No. Take the liquor shops, for instance. One will find longer queues outside liquor vends than at COVID hospitals, oxygen refill plants or vaccination centres. Marriages and other functions continue to take place with far more people in attendance than the permitted limit of 50. The families and friends of COVID patients continue to throng hospitals and often crowd the ICUs where their kin are admitted. Even now, very few people wear double masks and face shields are a rarity. It takes two hands to clap and if the people refuse to let common sense guide their actions, it may be the case of — to cannibalise a Marquez title — a chronicle of an unfolding, avoidable tragedy.

PICTALK



Smoke rises from a building after an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City

PTI

Stand united

It's time for the political class to stop bickering and fight against our common enemy

At a time when the nation is besieged with an unprecedented human tragedy, India's political parties have miserably failed to rise to the occasion. The daily war of words raging among headline-grabbers of our political class has given the impression that they are only bothered about consolidating their vote bank. Take the example of West Bengal. Both Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the BJP leadership have been blaming each other for the Corona bomb that has pulverised the State's health system and seen an alarming positivity rate. But the fact remains that during the Assembly election campaigning, both sides brazenly flouted the COVID protocols and held massive road shows and rallies with thousands of unmasked people in attendance. It was the same scene in Uttar Pradesh, where a massive mobilisation took place during the panchayat elections. Once again, our political class showed a blatant disregard for the health risks that such campaigning posed for the common man. It's not only a violation of the COVID norms, but the bigger issue is the absence of even a symbolic concern for coming together to providing succour to the masses by way of health infrastructure, oxygen and life-saving drugs.



Be it at the State level or the Centre, the political class is bitterly divided even as India's hapless people are watching it with despair. The situation is so pathetic that even within the NDA, the alliance partners are blaming each other for the half-hearted measures being taken to control the pandemic. Anyone following the Bihar developments and noticing the attacks and counter-attacks by the JD(U) and BJP leaders, will feel nothing but shock. It's time Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the initiative and invited the senior leaders of all political parties to keep aside their differences and stay united in the fight against the pandemic. The PM should also ensure that all senior leaders, including the MPs and MLAs, are accessible to their constituents at all hours. It's unfortunate that many of them have remained locked inside their bungalows and flats in Delhi while, back home, those who voted them to power are running helter-skelter for a hospital bed or oxygen cylinders. At a time when profiteers and black marketeers are thriving on misery, the political class should mobilise the people to wage a war on such unscrupulous elements. Much can be done to help the people if only our political leaders show a collective resolve.

Francophobic in 'land of the pure'

Incited by an ultra-religious outfit, Pakistan is protesting France's views on the freedom of speech and radical Islam



BHOPIINDER SINGH

The difference in the governance impulses and compulsions between the Fifth Republic, ie France, and the ostensible 'land of the pure', ie Pakistan, could not be more glaring. Like all nations who have a mixed bag of heroes and villains to define its preferred narrative — France chose intellectual liberals like Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, whereas Pakistan has seemingly come under the irrefutable grip of illiberal like Mumtaz Qadri, Saad Hussain Rizvi and the likes of Baitullah Mehsuds. Genealogically also, La France espoused *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) whereas Pakistan invoked *Iman, Ittihad, Nazam* (Faith, Unity, Discipline), and the religiosity in the latter has only increased over time. It was only a matter of time before the sovereign sensibilities clashed directly, as they recently did, with the ensuing protest by the ultra-religious Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) which is protesting France's views on the freedom of speech, radical Islam and blasphemy and, therefore, seeking the expulsion of the French ambassador.

The history of the two unlike nations had been surprisingly robust, despite their foundational and fundamental anchorages though, in recent times, the crevices have sharply widened. The Pakistan Air Force had been France's largest aerospace customer, having got Mirage fighter aircraft, Exocet missiles, reconnaissance and civil aircraft, whereas the Pakistani Navy had ordered the Daphne-class and Agosta-class submarines — as also agreements to transfer civilian nuclear technology. But the recent strategic-bind in the Indo-French realm (including the much-banded Rafale fighters) has led to a definitive shift in the French preferences. But it did not go unnoticed across the restive Line of Control (LoC), especially since France also took a particularly hard line on terror (owing to its own unrest with Islamist extremism and violence)



and in openly siding with India at multilateral forums.

Beyond the visible optics, France was the only western power to support India after the latter conducted the nuclear tests in 1998 and was instrumental in facilitating India's entry into the non-proliferation regimes of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group. In reciprocal bonhomie, Delhi took an unusually assertive stand to condemn Turkish President Recep Erdogan's (Pakistan's closest ally along with China) diatribe against French President Emmanuel Macron, after the French leader had openly called out "Islamist separatism" in the case of beheading a French school teacher. India's Ministry of External Affairs explicitly stated: "We strongly deplore the personal attacks in unacceptable language on President Emmanuel Macron in violation of the most basic standards of international discourse."

Meanwhile, Pakistan's patented double standards on religious extremism, dangerous dalliances and co-option of the clerical lot allowed for the



DESPITE IMRAN'S POSTURED MODERATION AND CLAIMS OF PROGRESSIVE OUTLOOK, HE HAD WILLINGLY DROPPED RENOWNED PRINCETON ECONOMIST ATIF MIAN FROM HIS ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE LIKES OF THE TLP, OWING TO ATIF'S BELONGING TO THE AHMADIYYA FAITH

dangerous drift towards morphing the French beheading incident, into an uncompromisable *ummah* issue, triggering calls for the boycott of French products and expelling the French ambassador from Pakistan. Continuing to play to the electoral gallery simultaneously, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan kept reiterating and reminding that no one had done more than him in internationalising the issue of blasphemy — this whilst dealing with a supposedly "terrorist" organisation with a violent position and dubious track record on "blasphemy" in Pakistan. Despite Imran's postured moderation and claims of progressive outlook, he had willingly dropped renowned Princeton economist Atif Mian from his Economic Advisory Council under pressure from the likes of the TLP, owing to Atif's belonging to the Ahmadiyya faith.

France is moving in an exact opposite direction with counter-accusations of weaponising its famed policy of segregating the State and religion, a secular ideology known as Laicite. A new law called "Strengthening Respect for Republican Principles" has been introduced in the wake of

recurring Islamist violence to "free Islam in France from foreign influences"! Many accuse the same for right-wing populism with an electoral intent that will further the divide, suspicion and marginalisation of the minority community and the French State. The fact is that the right-wing parties led by Le Pen have gained enough traction to threaten Macron and, therefore, his competitive 'right-wing' stand have more to do with winning the next elections as opposed to concerns on dealing with extremism or personal conviction in free speech. It is this pandering, invocation and inflaming of the basest instinct of the masses that vitiates the popular emotions towards revisionism and "othering", be it in Paris or in Islamabad. That the intrinsically liberal French sensibilities will militate culturally with the conservative moorings of a society like Pakistan is a given, yet it need not spiral to the violent extent that it has, only if the political leaderships didn't play emotions selectively, in both countries.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IRRATIONAL PRICING OF ANTI-COVID VACCINES

Sir — A frustrated Centre has justified the differential COVID vaccine pricing, telling the Supreme Court that the three-slab "liberalised, market-driven" rates for the Centre, States and private hospitals will incentivise demand, lead to higher production, competition and attract overseas investors.

In my view, however, the claim is without any evidence or rationale. Why is the Centre procuring the vaccines at one rate and the States have to buy the same vaccines for double the price or more? The Centre submitted in the Supreme Court that judicial intervention on the issue may have serious consequences. "Any overzealous, though well-meaning, judicial intervention may lead to unforeseen and unintended consequences in the absence of any expert advice," the Centre told the top court, adding that in such a "grave and unprecedented" crisis, the "wisdom of the Executive should be trusted". The Serum Institute of India, which is producing Covishield, is selling it to the Centre for ₹150 a shot. But the State Governments are paying ₹300 a shot, and private hospitals have to shell out ₹600 per vaccine. Bharat Biotech, which is also selling each shot of Covaxin to the Centre for ₹150, is charging the States ₹400 a dose while the private hospitals have to cough up ₹1,200 for each dose. With this, the Centre has not been able to justify the vaccine pricing.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

A DISTANT DREAM

Sir — This refers to the editorial, 'Hope floats' (May 11). There is no doubt that the regional parties have performed well in the latest Assembly elections. At the same time, the BJP hasn't ceded any political space to its opponents. Rather, it is the demolition of the remaining vestiges of the Congress' ability to present itself as a viable alternative to the BJP. The BJP's defeat in West Bengal seems spectacular because of the hype its leadership had created over its poll prospects. Minus the hype, the party's performance is alright. Over the last five years, its vote share has climbed from 10 per cent to 38 per cent; it has replaced the Congress and the Left as

Time gap between the shots



Amid the non-availability of slots and long queues for getting vaccinated, there exists some confusion over the duration before the second shot of Covishield. When this particular vaccine was first administered, the interval between the first and second doses was 28 days. In March, the Union Government sent revised guidelines that, based on experts' recommendation, the gap be increased from 28-42 days to 42-56 days. All States were advised to follow the new schedule.

Surprisingly, the first-dose certificate continued mentioning that the second dose was due after 28 days; the Aarogya Setu app mentions the interval between 28-56 days and

the FAQs on the CoWin website claim the recommended interval is 28-56 days but 42-56 days' gap gives enhanced protection, with the rider that people can opt for their choice as per their convenience. As a result of this confusion, only those in the age group of 45 and above who have waited 42 days are being allowed to take their second shot in Telangana. The others are being made to wait until 42 days but the special vaccination drive would already be over by May 12. Therefore, those who took their vaccine on or after May 1 would have to wait beyond 56 days of their having taken the injection.

The Government of India needs to address this confusion and end it before it spreads to other States and before the 18-44 age group starts getting its first dose of vaccination in right earnest. It is still a matter of conjecture as to why the Government, while accepting the experts' advice, tampered with the minimum interval of 28 days. Instead, it could have simply increased the maximum interval to 56 days as per the experts' suggestions.

N Nagarajan | Secunderabad

the principal Opposition party and set the political agenda for the State.

In Kerala, too, the BJP has changed the societal discourse, forcing the CPI(M) to repent its stand on women entering the Sabarimala shrine and emboldening a candidate in one constituency to declare that he did not want Muslims to vote for him. The party has also wrested Puducherry from the Congress. In this context, it would be premature to speak about the possibilities in 2024. Importantly, the third front experiments in the past have resulted in chaos and disasters. The consensus on leadership is a mirage and it instantly collides with the Congress' ambition of being the primary Opposition force.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

ENSURE A DECENT BURIAL AT LEAST

Sir — The ongoing pandemic has exposed to the world the extent of India's poor sys-

tems, be it healthcare or cremation grounds. The people have already paid a heavy price for the Government's poor preparedness to tackle the second wave. But even if the Government can't provide a decent life to its citizens, a decent cremation is not too much to expect or ask for.

For the Government, there is no dearth of funds for wrong priorities such as building statues, the Prime Minister's residence and a new Parliament building. But there's no money to be seen for free universal vaccination programme. India currently holds a whopping forex of \$580 billion but its citizens are dying on the streets for want of hospital beds, oxygen or medicine.

Girish R Edathatta | Kerala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

We should not be dependent on just one or two companies. I suggest the Centre should collect the formula and give it to firms who can produce vaccines.

Delhi Chief Minister

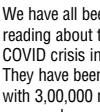
— Arvind Kejriwal



From May 17, pubs, bars and restaurants in England will be permitted to open indoors. But this does not mean we should throw caution to the wind. We must remain vigilant.

UK Prime Minister

— Boris Johnson



We have all been reading about the COVID crisis in India. They have been hit with 3,00,000 new cases a day.

Hollywood star

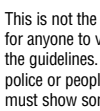
— Drew Barrymore



Our fast bowling unit is a great package where everyone works really hard while also understanding the other counterparts really well.

Indian pacer

— Mohammed Shami



This is not the time for anyone to violate the guidelines. Be it police or people, both must show some rationality in approach.

Karnataka Home Minister

— Basavaraj Bommai



FIRST COLUMN

MANAGING THE WORLD ORDER AMID COVID-19

The India-EU summit has aimed to address contiguity issues among the member nations



SUDHIR HINDWAN

Amid the Coronavirus pandemic, the recent virtual summit between India and the European Union (EU) has provided a huge platform for negotiations in trade, economic partnership and issues related to investment protection, bringing about contiguity among member countries. There are also subtle efforts to establish joint collaborations in Asia, Pacific and African regions. This certainly exhibits high level insight and understanding of both sides. It also points to the vision leaders need to acclimatise to a changed world order necessitated by the current Covid-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, EU President Ursula Von Der Leyen and President of European Council Charles Michel displayed foresight for creating channels of negotiations for trade and global security and a fresh pathway towards inclusive democratisation of world politics. The summit spells out a prototype for the world community handling bilateral and multi-lateral ties through cooperation rather than confrontation. The pandemic has reinforced the need for the member countries to trust one another and bury their differences. The key issue is to bring as many countries to the negotiating table as possible for, in the context of tackling the pandemic, relaxing vaccines related Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to help save maximum lives. The increasing support and agree-



ment with regard to limiting climate change issues and opening up gateways for renewable energy and development in technological knowhow along with channelising the sources of power generation and creating a mechanism to withstand any sudden threat posed by China's BRI (Belt and Road Initiatives) augur well for peace and prosperity of all member countries. The 2019 Japan EU deal was an effort in this direction. India and the EU have shared a positive relationship, with their trade share having crossed a decent landmark during last five years, much more than expected. During the last few years, there have been closer ties with Germany, Italy and The Netherlands, them being the biggest importers from India while Germany, France and Belgium being the largest exporters of goods.

The recent efforts at the summit would further boost and cement their ties and create a genuine environment for stabilizing economic growth (along with ensuring free flow of goods and services) strategic security, prosperity, stability and combating sudden challenges arising due to climate change. Further, help to India from EU's Civil Protection System during the second surge of Covid-19 will open avenues for closer integration.

Foreign relations operate with the help of efficient diplomatic system and diplomacy is all about right gestures and cooperation and coordination at the time of crisis. The Prime Ministers of Belgium and Spain and the French President appreciating India's efforts to combat the pandemic can only lead to further cooperation. There is, however, no lack of unanimity with regard to nuclear energy, sustainable development and environmental issues. Further negotiations may lead to creation of a strategic mechanism to provide a shield against terrorism, international crime, drug dealing, smuggling and cyber threat unleashed by the non-state actors. This may also accelerate maritime friendly ties and bolster up security around Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific areas which have lately become areas of concern.

These are changing times and many changes have occurred in international relations recently. The India-EU summit outcome endorses the fact that sharing a common strategic vision and a combined approach to ensure mutual economic prosperity through a multi-layered and multi-lateral strategy is going to dominate the world order in the coming days. What is required is to develop a fresh perspective for a more matured reliance on international cooperation between nations to enunciate a new strategy of retaliation, threatening a severe response to any attempt of destabilising the order. There are areas where strong relations can generate development funds for integrated education, medicine, science, technology and biotechnology among various nations across the globe.

(The author is a Professor and an expert on strategic affairs. The views expressed are personal)

The renewable energy-land conflict

Designed in 1981, Agrovoltatics is a promising tool that helps a land patch to be used for both farming and power production using solar panels



PRABIR BANERJEE

Agrovoltatics (or Agrophotovoltaic), despite its recent resurgence, is not a new concept. Designed in 1981, Agrovoltatics is a sustainable technique where the same patch of land is used for both farming as well as production of electricity from solar panels. Conventionally, we believe that land can only be used for a single purpose; for instance, farmers would, ordinarily, have to choose between energy generation or farming but agrovoltatics maximizes land efficiency by co-developing solar and agriculture together on the same piece of land.

For a country like India, where agricultural products and practices dominate a major chunk of the national economy, innovative synergic models like agrovoltatics can be practiced to increase agricultural land productivity. In addition, it will also cater to the nation's target of making a big push for renewables through solar, expecting to increase its renewable energy capacity from 380 GW to 450 GW by 2030, about 60 per cent of India's total energy capacity.

How does Agrovoltatics work?

French scientists found that Agrovoltatic systems increase global land productivity from 35 to 73 percent. Likewise, German research revealed that overall efficiency was increased by 60 per cent.

For one year, the pilot project used 720 bi-facial solar modules covering one-third of a hectare, mounted high enough that crops received almost the same amount of sunlight as under natural growing conditions. The system costs as much as a small solar roof system while crop production is sufficiently high and can be profitably sold on the market.

Agrovoltatics system increases the efficiency of energy production as solar panels are inherently sensitive to temperature, they warm up faster. But the crops cultivated underneath the photovoltaic (PV) panels emit water through their natural process of transpiration, reducing the panels' temperature, thus, increasing their efficiency.

Similar efficiency gains are seen in cultivation, it is observed that cultivation under PV arrays provided greater temperature stability and more atmospheric moisture — effectively creating microclimates conducive for growth.

Agrovoltatics in India

Early experiments in India found that agrovoltatics can potentially increase the overall value of grape farms more than 15 times as compared to conventional farming while maintaining the same grape production.

If this dual use of land is implemented nationwide, it can make a significant impact by generating over 16,000 GWh of electricity, which has the potential of meeting the energy demands of more



FOR ONE YEAR, THE PILOT PROJECT USED 720 BI-FACIAL SOLAR MODULES COVERING ONE-THIRD OF A HECTARE, MOUNTED HIGH ENOUGH THAT CROPS RECEIVED ALMOST THE SAME AMOUNT OF SUNLIGHT AS UNDER NATURAL GROWING CONDITIONS. THE SYSTEM COSTS AS MUCH AS A SMALL SOLAR ROOF SYSTEM WHILE THE CROP PRODUCTION IS SUFFICIENTLY HIGH AND CAN BE PROFITABLY SOLD ON THE MARKET

(The author is the co-founder and Managing Member of the Balipara Foundation, an NGO. The views expressed are personal.)



than 15 million people.

Numerous small-scale experiments in agrovoltatics have mushroomed across the country, particularly in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, with some generating up to 3MW. These programs still require a full cost-benefit analysis and rigorous monitoring to understand the impact on crop growth, power generation — and the viability of feasibly scaling these programmes.

However, this also has a challenging side — As India pushes forward to achieve its renewable energy targets, the rights and concerns of small and marginalised farmers across India face a new threat.

Many cases of land acquisition and displacement are picking up pace in the country. According to recent reports from Assam, where the villagers from Amdanga village, who form a part of Mikir Bamuni Grant cluster of villages in Nagaon district, claim that a 'Green Energy Plant' is bulldozing the rights and claims of marginal farmers.

However, displacing vulnerable and marginal farmers with minimal compensation, in an

already climate-vulnerable region, will only reduce the rural capacity to deal with climate challenges all the while offering no guarantee that solar power will contribute to their resilience in the face of global risk.

Assam ranks among the five least climate-resilient States in India's Climate Vulnerability Assessment report, 2021, with rural poverty and marginal farming ranking among the top reasons for this vulnerability. A decarbonisation transition is needed, but only if it can equitably build climate resilience cross-sectionally from urban centers to rural, marginal farmers.

Policy framework for agrovoltatics

Year-wise national targets for scaling agrovoltatics in India must be defined, coupled with pilot projects to sensitise stakeholders.

The explicit mention of Agrovoltatics is necessary for any law, scheme, or policy when cultivable land is used with PV. An agrovoltatic system could be designated in the land use plan as a "special area for agrovoltatics".

A prerequisite of a minimum of 80 per cent of the total surface

to be available and used for agricultural purposes can be set in place to ensure that the farmer or landowner continues to receive the agricultural subsidy allocated to the area in which case statistically the area does not count as sealed. The improvement of livelihoods of the partnering farmers must be prioritised.

As a model, agrovoltatics reconciles the need to decarbonize India's energy production systems, while minimizing land conflicts, especially with small and marginal farmers at greater risk of eviction for solar expansion.

It can also be a tool to create sustainable rural electrification in viable landscapes and build solar micro-entrepreneurship among rural communities.

This, in turn, would augment their agricultural incomes with renewable energy incomes which they can package and sell to the government or distribution firms. It is an opportunity to explore routes to rural development that protect farmer incomes while creating entrepreneurship opportunities, build renewables into electrification and benefit people across all levels.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

SINCE INDIA IS HOME TO ONE OUT OF EVERY SIX PEOPLE GLOBALLY, ALLOWING THE UNCONTROLLABLE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS WILL BE DEVASTATING FOR EVERYONE.

— CONGRESS LEADER

RAHUL GANDHI



IN THIS FIGHT, THE CONDUCT OF THE TOPMOST CONGRESS LEADERS, INCLUDING RAHUL GANDHI, WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR DUPLICITY, PETTINESS.

— BJP PRESIDENT

JP NADDA

Unmasking the face of political violence in West Bengal

The Government's failure to address the pre- and post-poll violence shows that there is no deviation from the established pattern

The recent spurt of political violence in West Bengal following the election results, allegedly perpetrated by the 'karyakartas' [party workers] of Trinamool Congress (TMC), is the latest in a series of recurring events of such violence in the state. There have been allegations that the state government, run by the winning party TMC, and the police administration, have turned a blind eye to it. Is the recent political violence a deviation from established pattern of governance in West Bengal? Has the state leadership addressed the issue? Will the newly elected government be able to protect the democratic space in the state?

The history of West Bengal is replete with instances of political violence. According to a report in India Today on May 16, 2019, between 1999 and 2016, West Bengal witnessed



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365 politically motivated murders. That tradition has grown from strength to strength since, irrespective of the party in power. Not long ago, the Left Front government in West Bengal chose to remain silent about instances of political violence which ultimately led to its downfall in the State Assembly elections. With the popular support of the Left Front waning in West Bengal, it did not hesitate to use police force to suppress any form of resistance. As a result, criminalization and politicization became the order of the day. Consequently, the TMC came to power by defeating the Left which ruled the state for the longest period of time. However, today, the TMC and its party workers seem to be emulating the Left approach by ignoring the recent post-poll violence.

As per facts and figures this is not the first time that the

TMC has been lax in tackling violence in the state. Incidents of violence have been on the rise under the TMC pre and post elections. According to a report of National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), 2019, in the pre-election period, West Bengal saw the maximum number of political murders in the country under the TMC rule. Interestingly, and as stated in the NCRB's report, "the number is likely to increase after the state submits the revised numbers".

Violence paved its way during the 2016 West Bengal Assembly elections with TMC party workers allegedly involved in such violence. Similarly, and as reported in the media, in the run up to the recent state assembly elections, several BJP workers had been killed by the TMC workers for joining the BJP. Even prior to the elections, ver-



bal confrontations were reported between TMC karyakartas and BJP leaders including party president JP Nadda and general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya. In post-election phase, and more recently, the convoy of the minister of state for external affairs, V Murlidharan, was attacked in West Midnapore. The minister has blamed the TMC workers for the attack.

The above facts and fig-

ures testify to the criminalisation of the public domain under the patronage of the state and partisan police force in the state of West Bengal. The criminalization of politics, which has seeped in West Bengal because of the prolonged political violence, has diminished the scope of dissent and differences. The foundation of democracy is built on voice of dissent and respecting differences of views and opinions, irrespective of ideologies.

A corollary to this principle is the fact that expression of dissent and differences is both a right and duty. While everyone enjoys the right to dissent and expression of differences in a democracy, it also enjoins on the citizens a duty to ensure that any actions to exercise these rights are peaceful in nature. In contrast, if the voice of differences is

expressed through violent means, be it the party in power or in opposition, then it is the duty of the government in power to undertake all possible measures to prevent the violent acts so as to protect the very edifice of democracy.

Being the largest democracy in the world, it is also important that multiple perspectives and ideological moorings must be appreciated and accommodated. The onus also lies with the leadership, both at the central and state levels, to comprehend two basic aspects of democracy. First, democracy is a system of governance in which the supreme power is vested in the people and which is exercised by them directly or indirectly through free and fair elections held periodically. This means that any party can come to power or voted out through periodic elections. Second, it

is also a system where each one gets right to express his/her views and participates in all desired activities provided these are peaceful in nature. Implied, any form of expression of dissent cannot amount to violent public actions, including over election results perpetrated by the workers of the ruling party.

The failure of the Government to address the recent pre- and post-poll violence allegedly resorted to by the ruling party workers establishes that there is no deviation from the established pattern of [mis]governance in West Bengal. Considering that the state leadership has miserably failed to address the challenge of political violence so far, the willingness of the newly elected Mamata Banerjee Government to uphold the democratic space in the state appears to be bleak.

100 DAYS IN POWER

Myanmar junta holds pretense of control

AP ■ BANGKOK

After Myanmar's military seized power by ousting the elected Government of Aung San Suu Kyi, they couldn't even make the trains run on time: State railway workers were among the earliest organised opponents of the February takeover, and they went on strike.

Health workers who founded the civil disobedience movement against military rule stopped staffing government medical facilities. Many civil servants were no-shows at work, along with employees of government and private banks.

Universities became hotbeds of resistance, and in recent weeks, education at the primary and secondary levels has begun to collapse as teachers, students and parents boycott state schools.

One hundred days after their takeover, Myanmar's ruling generals maintain just the pretense of control. The illusion is sustained mainly by its partially successful efforts to shut down independent media and to keep the streets clear of large demonstrations by employing lethal force. More than 750 protesters and bystanders have been killed by security forces, according to detailed independent tallies.



Anti-coup protesters from various township hold slogans that reads "Yangon boycott rally to clear all threats here in Yangon" during a demonstration in Yangon, Myanmar on Tuesday

"The junta might like people to think that things are going back to normal because they are not killing as many people as they were before and there weren't as many people on the streets as before, but... The feeling we are getting from talking to people on the ground is that definitely the resistance has not yet subsided," said

Thin Lei Win, a journalist now based in Rome who helped found the Myanmar Now online news service in 2015.

She says the main change is that dissent is no longer as visible as in the early days of the protests — before security forces began using live ammunition — when marches and rallies in major cities and towns

could easily draw tens of thousands of people.

At the same time, said David Mathieson, an independent analyst who has been working on Myanmar issues for over 20 years, "Because of the very violent pacification of those protests, a lot of people are willing to become more violent."

Police in Thailand arrest 3 journalists who fled Myanmar

AP ■ BANGKOK

Three senior journalists working for a news agency in Myanmar who fled after the military government ordered its operations to stop have been arrested by police in northern Thailand, their editor said Monday.

The three work for DVB, also known as Democratic Voice of Burma, an online and broadcast news agency, its executive director and chief editor, Aye Chan Naing, said in an email. Burma is the former name for Myanmar and is still used by some opponents of military rule.

He said the three, along with two activists, whom he did not identify, were arrested Sunday in Chiang Mai during a random search by police. They were charged with illegal entry into Thailand, he said.

From photos published by

local Thai media, it appeared that the journalists may have continued to report from a single-story house in which they seemed to have set up a makeshift video production studio.

Myanmar's junta, which seized power in February and ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, has attempted to silence independent news media by withdrawing their licenses and by arresting journalists. About 40 are currently in detention, including at least two who work for DVB.

Most of the detained journalists are being held on a provision in the Penal Code that prohibits comments that "cause fear," spread "false news," (or) agitates directly or indirectly a criminal offense against a Government employee." Violations are punishable by up to three years in prison.

Nepal President Bhandari initiates Govt formation

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari has called on parties to form a new majority government by Thursday after the one headed by the embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli lost a trust vote.

The Office of the President, in a statement on Monday, said President Bhandari has decided to invite parties to form a majority government pursuant to Article 76 (2) of the Constitution of Nepal.

She has allotted the parties three days' time, asking them to stake their claim to the government by 9:00 pm on Thursday, The Himalayan Times reported.

As per the constitutional provision, a candidate requires to submit signatures of lawmakers belonging to two or more political parties in parliament to the Office of President within the stipulated time. The President's announcement came shortly after Oli lost a trust vote in the House of Representatives. Oli, who decided to seek the trust of the 275-member House on his government, managed to garner only 93 votes, which fell

Gives 3 days time to parties to stake claim

short of 43 votes to reach the 136-mark and win the vote of confidence during a special session of the lower house.

A total of 124 members voted against the confidence motion while 15 members stayed neutral, Speaker Agni Sapkota announced on Monday. The session was attended by 232 lawmakers.

Oli, 69, lost the vote of confidence motion, days after the Nepal Communist Party Maoist Centre led by Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' withdrew its support, reducing the government to a minority.

After Oli lost the trust vote, the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) and a faction of the Janata Samajbadi Party led by Upendra Yadav urged President Bhandari to invoke Article 76 (2) of the Constitution to pave the way for the formation of a new government.

GLOBE TROTTER

ISRAEL SAYS AN ISLAMIC JEHAD COMMANDER KILLED

Jerusalem: The Israeli military says it has assassinated a senior commander of the Islamic Jihad terrorist group in Gaza on Tuesday. It said the militant was the head of the Islamic Jihad's rocket unit and identified him as Samih al-Marmuk. The military said other senior militants in the organisation were also killed in the same strike. Islamic Jihad confirmed the three killed in an airstrike in an apartment in Gaza City.

NASA SPACECRAFT BEGINS 2-YR TRIP HOME

Cape Canaveral (US): With rubble from an asteroid tucked inside, a NASA spacecraft fired its engines and began the long journey back to Earth on Monday, leaving the ancient space rock in its rearview mirror.

AZ PLANS BIG DEFENCE, SECURITY INVESTMENTS

Canberra: The Australian government released a big-spending economic plan for the next fiscal year on Tuesday that includes hefty investments in defence and national security as relations with China worsen. The government plans to spend 270 billion Australian dollars (\$212 billion) over the next decade on upgrading defence capabilities to "promote an open and peaceful Indo-Pacific," Treasury Department documents say.

Russian school shooting in Kazan kills 7 students, 1 teacher

AP ■ MOSCOW

A gunman attacked a school on Tuesday morning in the Russian city of Kazan, killing eight people — seven eighth-grade students and a teacher — and leaving 21 others hospitalised with wounds, Russian officials said.

Russian media said some students were able to escape the building during the attack, while others were trapped inside. Dozens of ambulances lined up at the entrance to the school after the attack, with access to the building fenced off by police.

Rustam Minnikhanov, governor of the Tatarstan republic where Kazan is the capital, said four boys and three girls, all eighth-grade students, died in the shooting. Minnikhanov's press service later said a teacher was also killed.

"The terrorist has been arrested, (he is) 19 years old. A firearm is registered in his name. Other accomplices haven't been established, an investigation is underway," Minnikhanov said after visiting the school, adding that security had been restored.

Authorities said additional security measures were immediately put into place in all schools in Kazan, a city 700

Russian media said some students were able to escape the building during the attack, while others were trapped inside

kilometres (430 miles) east of Moscow. They also announced a day of mourning on Wednesday to honour the victims of the shooting.

According to Tatarstan health officials, 21 people were hospitalised with wounds after the attack, including 18 children, six of whom were in intensive care.

Russia's state RIA Novosti news agency reported earlier that 11 people had been killed in the Kazan shooting. There was no way to immediately reconcile the differing death tolls. Police opened a criminal investigation into the shooting.

Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences to families of the victims and those injured in the shooting and ordered the government to revise gun regulations in light of the attack. Russia's Emergency Ministry has sent a plane with doctors and medical equipment to Kazan.

While school shootings are relatively rare in Russia, there have been several violent attacks on schools in recent years, mostly carried out by students.

Iran rejects US claim that speedboats sparked encounter

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard on Tuesday rejected the US Navy's claim that fast-approaching Iranian speedboats in the Strait of Hormuz sparked a tense encounter in the already sensitive region. The Guard's website, sepaheens.com, published a statement Tuesday saying Americans were guilty of using "false narratives and unprofessional behavior" and should more strictly "abide by international regulations."

Specifically, the statement said the Guard's navy warned the US vessels to stop their "provocative and aimless shooting."

A day earlier, the US said the Revolutionary Guard sent 13 armed speedboats too close to US Navy vessels in the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. The Americans said a Coast Guard cutter fired warning shots when two of the Iranian boats came dangerously close.

The exchange comes as the United States and Iran engage in indirect talks in Vienna aimed at reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which the United States left in 2018.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby declined to comment when asked about the Iranians'

intentions.

"Sadly, harassment by the IRGC Navy is not a new phenomenon. It is something that all of our commanding officers and the crews of our vessels are trained to for," Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon. "This activity is the kind of activity that could lead to somebody getting hurt and could lead to a real miscalculation there in the region, and that doesn't serve anybody's interests."

It was the second time in two weeks that a US ship opened fire to warn vessels of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

On April 26, an American warship fired warning shots when vessels of Iran's Revolutionary Guard came too close to a patrol in the Persian Gulf. That was the first such shooting in nearly four years. The Navy released black-and-white footage of that encounter in international waters of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf near Kuwait, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

In the latest incident, Kirby said 13 Iranian vessels maneuvered at high speed toward six Navy ships that were escorting the guided missile submarine USS Georgia through the Strait on Monday. The sub was sailing on the surface.

Gaza terrorists, kids among 24 dead as Israel hits Hamas

AP ■ GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP)

Israel unleashed new airstrikes on Gaza early on Tuesday, hitting the high-rise home of a Hamas field commander and two border tunnels dug by militants, as Hamas and other armed groups fired dozens of rockets toward Israel.

It was an escalation sparked by weeks of tensions in contested Jerusalem.

Since sundown Monday when the cross-border fighting erupted, 24 Palestinians — including nine children — were killed in Gaza, most by airstrikes, Gaza health officials said. The Israeli military said 15 of the dead were militants. During the same period, Gaza militants fired more than 200 rockets toward Israel, injuring six Israeli civilians.

This was preceded by hours of clashes Monday between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, mainly in Jerusalem but also across the West Bank. More than 700 Palestinians were hurt, including nearly 500 who were treated at hospitals.

The current violence, like previous rounds, was fueled by conflicting claims over Jerusalem, home to major holy sites of Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The rival national and religious narratives of Israelis and Palestinians are rooted in the city, making it the



A Palestinian man inspects the rubble of a partially destroyed residential building after it was hit by Israeli missile strikes, at the Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, early on Tuesday

emotional core of their long conflict.

In the past, cross-border fighting between Israel and Hamas, the group that rules Gaza, would typically end after a few days, often helped by behind-the-scenes mediation by Qatar, Egypt and others. It was not clear if that trajectory would be repeated this time.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Monday that fighting could "continue for some time." Lt Col Jonathan Conrucus, an Israeli military spokesman, told reporters Tuesday that the military was in "the early stages" of strikes against Gaza targets it had planned well in advance.

The escalation comes at a time of political limbo in Israel.

Netanyahu has been acting as a caretaker prime minister since an inconclusive parliamentary election in March. He tried and failed to form a coalition government with his hard-line and ultra-Orthodox allies, and the task was handed to his sworn political rivals last week.

One of those rivals is Israel's defence minister who is overseeing the Gaza campaign. It is not clear if and to what extent the toxic political atmosphere is spilling over into military decision-making, though the rival camps have unanimously expressed support for striking Hamas hard.

WESTERN RAILWAY

WORK OF WIDENING OF CESS

Executive : DEN (S) MNGT, Tender Notice No. & Date : BCT/21-22/39 dtd. 10.05.2021, Work and location : Churchgate - Surat section - Widening of cess in connection with raising of speed to 160 KMPH. Approx. cost of work in Rs. : ₹ 17,71,75,325.17/-, EMD Rs. : ₹ 0.00, Date & Time of submission : on 15.06.2021 till 15.00 hrs. Date & Time of opening : on 15.06.2021 at 15.30 hrs. NOTE : Please visit our website www.irps.gov.in to download the tender document, corrigendum and further details. 092

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CMC/BR/21-22/RS/AR/925	AWARD OF WORK FOR CARRYING OUT DT CLEANING/ REVAMPING WORK FOR TWO (02) DIVISIONS IN BRPL	1.88 Crores	3.77 Lacs	01/06/2021 15:30 HRS	01/06/2021 15:45 HRS

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DELHI JAL BOARD DELHI

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SDW)XII

STP SEC-25 ROHINI DELHI-110085

"STOP CORONA: Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

Short Press NIT No. 01 (2021-22)

SNo	Name of work	Estimate Cost	Earnest Money (EMD)	Date of release of tender in E-procurement solution	Last date/time for receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1	Supply installation testing and commissioning of floating aerator at STP Sector -25 Rohini	Item rate	75000/- Exempted vide	2021_03B_203244_1 10.05.2021	22.05.2021 03.05 PM

NIT along with all terms and condition is available on website : <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)

Adv. No. J.S.V. 50 (21-22)

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SDW)XII

Tikrit Air Academy who were captured, tortured and subjected to mass execution in June 2014.

He said an Islamic State video released in July 2015 showing the killings "constitutes a direct and public incitement to commit genocide against Shia Muslims".

The Security Council voted unanimously in September 2017 to ask the UN to establish an investigative team to help Iraq preserve evidence. AP

China's population grows marginally to 1.412 billion

May begin to decline by 2022: Census

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's population grew by 0.53 per cent to reach 1.41178 billion, up from 1.4 billion in 2019, keeping its status as the world's most populous country, but the numbers are expected to decline from early next year, leading to labour shortages and a fall in consumption levels.

According to the seventh national population census released by the Chinese government on Tuesday, China's population in all the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities reached 1.41178 billion. The figures do not include Hong Kong and Macao.

Significantly, according to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the new census figures reveal that the demographic crisis China faced was expected to deepen as the population above 60 years grew to 264 million, up by 18.7 per cent last year.

"The further ageing of the population imposed continued pressure on the long-term balanced development of the population in the coming period," the NBS statement said.

The proportion of people aged between 15 and 59 was 894 million, down by 6.79 percentage points from that in the 2010 census.

The growth rate of the population was 0.53 per cent annually on average in the 7th census conducted last year in comparison to 0.57 per cent in the 6th census in 2010 and 1.07 per cent in the fifth census held in 2000.

The highest growth of China's population of 2.1 per cent was registered in the census survey held in 1982 after which the population continued to decline at a steady pace, which officials blamed on the decades-old one-child policy pursued by the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) to check the population growth and keep it under a manageable level.

"Data shows that China's population has continued to maintain slow growth in the past decade," said Ning Jizhe, head of the NBS. The birth rates continued to fall as Chinese mothers gave birth to 12 million babies last year, down from 14.65 million in 2019, marking a 22 per cent decline year on year.

The gender ratio of China's population also declined to 105.07 males to 100 females compared to 105.2 in 2010.

Pipeline officials hope most service will be back by weekend

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Hit by a cyberattack, the operator of a major US fuel pipeline said it hopes to have services mostly restored by the end of the week as the FBI and administration officials identified the culprits as a gang of criminal hackers.

US officials sought to soothe concerns about price spikes or damage to the economy by stressing that the fuel supply had so far not experienced widespread disruptions, and the company said on Monday that it was working toward "substantially restoring operational service" by the weekend.

The White House said in a statement late Monday that it was monitoring supply shortages in parts of the Southeast and that President Joe Biden had directed federal agencies to bring their resources to bear.

Colonial Pipeline, which delivers about 45% of the fuel consumed on the East Coast, halted operations last week after revealing a ransomware attack that it said had affected some of its systems.

Nonetheless, the attack

underscored the vulnerabilities of the nation's energy sector and other critical industries whose infrastructure is largely privately owned. Ransomware attacks are typically carried out by criminal hackers who scramble data, paralyzing victim networks, and demand large payments to decrypt it.

The Colonial attack was a potent reminder of the real-world implications of the burgeoning threat. Even as the Biden administration works to confront organized hacking campaigns sponsored by foreign governments, it must still contend with difficult-to-prevent attacks from cybercriminals.

"We need to invest to safeguard our critical infrastructure," Biden said on Monday. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said the attack "tells you how utterly vulnerable we are" to cyberattacks on U.S. infrastructure.

The attack came as the administration, still grappling with its response to massive breaches by Russia of federal agencies and private corporations, works on an executive order aimed at bolstering cybersecurity defenses.

Moody's cuts India's growth forecast to 9.3 %

RISKS OF LONGER-TERM ECO SCARRING

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

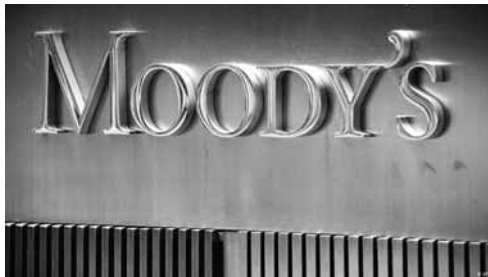
Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday slashed India's growth forecast for the current financial year to 9.3 per cent saying that the second wave of coronavirus infections hampers economic recovery and increases risk of longer-term scarring.

Moody's, which has a 'Baa3' rating on India with a negative outlook, said obstacles to economic growth, high debt and weak financial system constrain sovereign credit profile.

The US-based rating agency had in February forecast a 13.7 per cent economic growth for the current fiscal (April 2021-March 2022). As per official estimates, the Indian economy contracted 8 per cent in the previous fiscal ended March 2021.

"India is experiencing a severe second wave of coronavirus infections which will slow the near-term economic recovery and could weigh on longer-term growth dynamics."

"The surge of the virus, which has been driven by a



highly contagious variant, has put significant strain on India's healthcare system with hospitals overrun and medical supplies in short supply," Moody's said.

Stating that the second wave of coronavirus infections hampers economic recovery and increases risk of longer-term scarring, Moody's said the reimposition of lockdown measures will curb economic activity and could dampen market and consumer sentiment.

However, it does not expect the impact to be as severe as during the first wave. Unlike the first wave where lockdowns were applied nationwide for several months, the second wave 'micro-containment zone' measures are more localised, targeted and will likely be of shorter duration. Businesses and consumers have also grown more accustomed to operating under pandemic conditions.

Ambitious target of \$400 bn exports can be achieved this year: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A sharp rise in exports in April is giving a hope that the ambitious target of USD 400 billion merchandise shipments can be achieved this year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

He also said that the Department of Commerce has taken up several issues of exporters with the Ministry of Finance for their early resolution, like RoDTEP (remission of duties and taxes on export products), MEIS (merchandise export from India scheme), and inverted duty structure.

The minister added that there is a large potential for enhancing exports in several sectors like pharmaceuticals, engineering, auto-component, fisheries and agro-products.

The minister was addressing a meeting of export promotion councils.

India's merchandise exports in April jumped by 197 per cent to USD 30.21 billion as against USD 10.17 billion in April 2020 and USD 26.04 billion in April 2019.

"Performance of exports in April 2021 and 2020-21 gives a hope that an ambitious target of USD 400 billion merchandise exports can be achieved this year," the minister said.

Regarding certain issues



being raised by exporters, Goyal said that they should approach the Covid helpdesk of the department for resolving the problems emanating due to Covid-related measures.

Rates for RoDTEP have not yet been announced by the finance ministry even as the scheme would have to be implemented from January.

Exporting community has time and again urged the government regarding the rates as it would help them in factoring in those rates while negotiating prices of goods with international buyers.

The reimbursement of taxes such as duty on power charges, VAT on fuel in transportation, farm sector, captive power generation, mandi tax, stamp duty and central excise duty on fuel used in transportation would make Indian products competitive in the global markets.

Inflows into equity mutual funds decline in April amid second Covid wave

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity mutual funds witnessed a net inflow of ₹3,437 crore in April, making it the second consecutive monthly infusion but lower than the amount recorded in March amid the second Covid wave.

The quantum is much lower than the inflow of ₹9,115 crore recorded in March, according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India released on Tuesday.

Equity schemes had consistently witnessed outflow for eight straight months from July 2020 to February 2021.

"The net flows into equity funds have continued, which is very encouraging. Flows slowed down a bit compared to

March largely because of the disruption caused by the second wave of the pandemic," G Pradeepkumar, CEO of Union AMC, said.

He also said the flow is expected to pick up pace once the pandemic is brought under control through increased levels of vaccination and other measures.

Making a similar statement, Arun Kumar, Head of Research at FundsIndia, said the inflow trend remains positive while the recent spike in covid cases is a concern and we need to monitor the impact on investor sentiment and behaviour in the near term.

"With the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic putting pressure on citizens to hold a higher emergency cor-

pus for medical needs, investor interest is a tad down and can be expected to recover in the waning phase of this health scare," Gopal Kavalireddi, Head of Research at FYERS, said.

Apart from equities, investors infused over ₹1 lakh crore in debt mutual funds in April after withdrawing ₹52,528 crore in March, on the back of strong inflows into liquid, money market and overnight segments.

Overall, the mutual fund industry witnessed an inflow of ₹92,906 crore across all segments during the period under review compared to an outflow of ₹29,745 crore in March.

As per the data, inflow into equity and equity-linked open ended schemes was at ₹3,437.37 crore in April.

Jewellery industry heading for 2nd consecutive sales washout on Akshaya Tritiya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The gems and jewellery industry is staring at a sales washout on Akshaya Tritiya for the second consecutive year as most of the States are under lockdowns due to the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic which has led to negative consumer sentiment, say industry leaders.

Akshaya Tritiya, considered as an auspicious day for buying gold and jewellery, falls on May 14 this year. India is the worst-hit among all nations with the second wave of the pandemic, which has been killing more than 3,500 daily and infecting close to 4 lakhs daily for weeks. The massive caseload has nearly paralysed the medical infrastructure.

"The second

wave of the pandemic is turning out to be much worse than last year with huge loss of life across the country. This has created an overall negative consumer sentiment. With almost 90 per cent of the states under lockdowns to curb the infections, retail jewellery stores are closed and no delivery is allowed. So, we are expecting a near washout of this Akshaya Tritiya as well," All-India Gems & Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) chairman Ashish Pethe told PTI.



Waiting periods go up for e-commerce deliveries amid second wave

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Waiting period for receiving essential items like grocery via e-commerce has gone up by as much as a week amid the second wave of the pandemic, as digital platforms struggle to balance larger order volumes and ensure safety of their workforce, according to industry executives.

As the country reels through the deadly second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, various State Governments have announced lockdowns to curb the spread of the infection. Most States have allowed delivery of only essentials like grocery and medicines via e-commerce.

A note on BigBasket's app said, "Due to Covid-19-related restrictions on movement in the city by local administration, your deliveries might get delayed... We are facing significant demand. We are distributing tokens to help you place an order." The company declined to respond to a detailed questionnaire on the challenges being faced.

Amazon's Fresh service, which promises delivery in 2 hours, also shows availability only after a day in Delhi. "In these unprecedented times, together with lakhs of sellers (including small and medium businesses) and associates across our network, we are working hard to serve customers while following strin-

gent safety measures and government guidelines.

"We continue to work with the government to request them to allow home delivery of all products to safely fulfill customer needs," an Amazon India spokesperson said.

Interestingly, retail giant Big Bazaar is betting on online deliveries to make up for the lost business at its brick-and-mortar stores.

A Big Bazaar spokesperson noted that there are challenges on account of restrictions on timings and items that can be sold at physical stores, which also differ widely between various states and cities. "While these do create a lot of challenges for retailers, Big Bazaar has rolled out two-hour online deliveries from stores and is using appropriate technology to ensure that we fully abide by the different restrictions in every city." Our Store2Door home delivery in two hours ensures customers do not face any issues and are safe within their homes," the spokesperson said. A senior e-commerce industry executive, who did not wish to be named, said the waiting period for deliveries is as high as a week in cities like Chennai, while it is slightly shorter in cities like Delhi and Mumbai. The delay in deliveries is on account of multiple factors, including manpower availability and longer time taken for packaging to ensure hygiene.

Sensex, Nifty snap 4-session rally amid global selloff

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks nursed losses on Tuesday after four days of gains, largely in tandem with overseas markets which tumbled after surging commodity prices stoked inflation fears.

Profit-booking in banking, finance and metal counters further weighed on bourses, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on the backfoot and stayed in the negative territory throughout the session, ending 340.60 points or 0.69 per cent lower at 49,161.81.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty slumped 91.60 points or 0.61 per cent to close at 14,850.75.

Kotak Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding 3 per cent, followed by HDFC, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Titan, Bajaj Finserv, HUL and Axis Bank.

On the other hand, NTPC, ONGC, PowerGrid, Sun Pharma, UltraTech Cement and SBI were among the gainers, climbing up to 4.60 per cent.

"Rising commodity prices, like international steel price, are at a record high which has instilled a fear in the world market of rising inflation. Global markets are retreating in anticipation of future interest rates hikes, in which the tech-

nology sector will be heavily impacted as it has benefited the most during a pandemic.

"Indian metal stocks witnessed mild profit booking while buying interest is seen in PSE stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

China inflation data also weighed on sentiments. However, domestic benchmark indices outperformed its Asian peers today, said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

World shares skid after tech sell-off on Wall Street

AP ■ BANGKOK

Shares dropped Tuesday in Asia after selling of several Big Tech companies pulled US benchmarks lower. Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Hong Kong declined while Shanghai advanced. Despite reassurances from the Federal Reserve and a much weaker than expected US jobs reading last week, investors have refocused on the potential for surging prices to pressure central banks into tapering off on their massive stimulus and ultra-low interest rates, analysts said.

BRIEFS

VIT BUSINESS SCHOOL GETS AACSB INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION

VIT Business School, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), has been accredited by Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International, the top accrediting body for business schools globally. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), USA accreditation places VIT Business School among the prestigious global business schools that have received this recognition. It joins the league of only 901 business schools across 58 countries that are AACSB accredited. VITBS is the 15th accredited business school in India and 2nd in Tamil Nadu.

GOVT LAUNCHES MIS MODULE FOR AGARBATTI INDUSTRY

New Delhi: The government on Tuesday said an management information system (MIS) has been launched under the National Bamboo Mission for strengthening the domestic agarbatti industry. The MIS will collate data on agarbatti stick production, the locations of stick making units, availability of raw material, functioning of the units, production capacity, marketing, etc. With the help of this module, the linkages with the industry will be synergised better to enable seamless procurement from production units and information gaps can be plugged," the Agriculture Ministry said in a statement. All NBM states are in the process of documenting all the units to assess better how to further support can be given for 'Vocal for Local' and 'Make for the World' since Indian agarbatti are much sought after in global markets, it said. The National Bamboo Mission (NBM), launched in 2018-19 for the holistic development of the bamboo sector, is presently being implemented in 21 states, including nine states of the north-eastern region.

CNH INDUSTRIAL: COVID TASK FORCE TO HELP STAFF

Noida: In the face of a massive second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, CNH Industrial has set up a dedicated task force to track all infected employees and arrange the required assistance from coordinating with hospitals to arranging for beds, and procuring medicine, oxygen, etc. Raunak Varma, Country Manager, CNH Industrial India & SAARC, said, "At CNH Industrial, the health and safety of our employees come first and foremost. We have been proactive and have taken all precautionary measures for the mental and physical well-being of our workforce."

PAYMENTS SOLUTION PROVIDER SAFEXPAY RAISES FUNDS

Mumbai: SafexPay, a B2B-focused, API-driven payments solution provider, has raised \$6 million in a Pre-Series A round led by T Chaitram and Ardor Advisors. This is SafexPay's first funding round after it received seed funding from Ravi Gupta and Pankaj Tripathi as the Angel Investor. The startup plans to use this fresh round of funding to strengthen its product development, focus on key hiring, international expansion, scaling technology platform and launching new products in the market.

Govt ready for another cut in import duty on steel to tame prices

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has proposed to slash import duties on steel items further bringing it to zero or near zero levels to provide relief to MSMEs, which have been hit hard by the high cost of raw materials amidst the raging pandemic.

Top Government sources said that a decision had been taken to review duties on steel products and reduce it or withdraw it completely on few items to help the user industry hit hard by rising price of the metal in the domestic market.

Also, lower import duties would help maintain supply lines that have been affected with several domestic steel companies reducing steel production to divert medical grade oxygen for Covid-19 relief measures.

India's smartphone mkt grew 18% in Q1, segment expected to witness slowdown in Q2: IDC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Smartphone shipment in the country clocked 18 per cent year-on-year growth in the March quarter, but the April-June quarter period is expected to face growth challenges under the weight of the second wave of infections, research firm IDC said on Tuesday.

Smartphone shipment grew 18 per cent to 38 million units in the March 2021 quarter over the year-ago period, but declined by 14 per cent from the December 2020 quarter.

While the vaccine roll-out programme at the beginning of the year instilled positive sentiments, the onset of the second wave of COVID-19 infections towards the end of the quarter resulted in subdued consumer demand, IDC said.

Thus, the inventory cycle - which had shrunk earlier in the second half of 2020 - started to get longer since the mid-



dle of the first quarter of 2021, it added.

"The April-June quarter is expected to face growth challenges under the weight of the second wave of infections. However, the high shipments from the first quarter should be able to suffice for the immediate demand," IDC India Research Director, Client Devices, and IPDS Navkendar Singh said.

IDC estimates the impact to be less pronounced compared with last year, with factories being operational now and only limited restrictions on logistics/transportation and state-level lockdowns instead of a nationwide lockdown, he added.

FinMin, NDB to hold seminar on importance of social infra financing, digital tech use

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry and New Development Bank (NDB) will organise a seminar on the importance of 'Social Infrastructure Financing and use of Digital Technologies'.

The seminar, as part of the economic and financial cooperation agenda under the Indian BRICS chairship 2021, is being organised in the run-up to the 13th BRICS Summit to be held later this year.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of investing in social infrastructure and underpinned the importance of leveraging digital technologies in advanced and emerging economies, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

"The challenges faced, are common to all, especially to the BRICS nations.

There is a great potential in building sustainable mech-

anism to chart the way forward and share the common benefits associated with social, economic and digital development," it said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that our Client Sh. Ashwani Sharma S/o Late Sh. Ramesh Chander Sharma, Resident of EA-340, Terrace, Maya Enclave, Hari Nagar, New Delhi, do hereby sever all his relationship and ties with his elder son Mr. Nishant Sharma & his family members including but not limited to his wife, Mrs. Poonam Sharma all residents of EA-340, Terrace, Maya Enclave, Hari Nagar, New Delhi with immediate effect. Our client has, with immediate effect, disowned all of them and their respective legal heirs, if any, from all his properties (both movable and immovable properties) owned and/or possessed by him. Client Our client will not be held responsible or liable for any consequences arising out of any give and take acts, deeds, transactions and things done by Mr. Nishant Sharma and/or his family members, as mentioned above, (jointly or severally), both in present or in future. Anybody dealing with Mr. Nishant Sharma and/or his family members shall be doing so at his or her own risks, perils, costs, expenses and consequences.
NISHANT ANAND (Advocate)
Enroll No. - D15302013
A-141, First Floor, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110024 (Phone - 011-41013960)

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
E-TENDER NOTICE (SINGLE TENDER)
Tender Notice No.: CLW/DKAE/AMC/555/NRICH/RT Dated 07.05.2021. E-tenders (Single tender) are invited for and on behalf of the President of India for the following work: **SL No. [01]: Tender No. CLW/DKAE/AMC/555/NRICH/RT; Name of the work: Comprehensive AMC of three (03) nos. water purifier of model no. Dr. NRICH HDRO + UV + MTDS (storage capacity: 7 L) with IRONIL iron removal filter assembly of M/s. Eureka Forbes Ltd., at ELAAU/CLW, Dankuni for the period of 2 (two) years; Tender value (Rupees): 39,960.00 (Rupees thirty nine thousand nine hundred sixty) only including GST; Cost of tender document (Rupees): 1,000.00 (Rupees One thousand only); Period of completion: 24 (twenty four) months. NOTE: (i) Complete details can be seen in the Railways website www.ireps.gov.in (ii) Contact Number: 9163340419. (iii) Date of closing of tender submission is 28.05.2021 at 12:00 hrs. **AWM/Dankuni, ELAAU**
SIGNET-037 of CLW, Dankuni
Like us on: www.facebook.com/clwrailways**

UJVN Limited
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135- 2763508 & Fax: 0135- 2763508
CIN No. U40101UP200500025566
Website: www.ujvn.com
पत्रांक: 345 दिनांक: 11.05.2021
Time Extension Notice
Due to unavoidable circumstances, due dates of bidding Office of the Executive Engineer (E&M-II LWR), Vayasi Project, Dakpathar, UJVN Ltd. invites online bid from interested parties. Brief summary of tender are revised as per following details:
NIT No: 01/EE(E&M-II, LWR)/VP/2021-22
Name of work : Work related to Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Sirens at Vayasi Project.
Last date of receipt of Tenders : 17:05:2021 up to 11:00 Hrs
Date of Opening tender : 19.05.2021 up to 11:00 Hrs
For fuller & further details kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's web site "www.ujvn.com. Other terms & Condition of tender unchanged.
Executive Engineer (E&M-II LWR)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

Appeal for Identification
General public is hereby informed that one person Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: 50 Yrs., Height: 5'5", Sex: Male, Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Mehrun Colour Kurta & Gray Colour Pajama and without footwear, Place of Recovery: Found dead on 06.05.2021 in front of Prince Hotel, Lahori Gate, Delhi.
In this regard DD No. 13-A, U/s 174 Cr.PC, Dated 06.05.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Lahori Gate, Delhi. Any clue come to notice please inform undersign.
SHO
P.S. Lahori Gate, Delhi
DP/1175/N/2021 Ph.: 011-23953776, 23958234

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED
General public is hereby informed that a person namely Tarunesh Dubey, S/o: Sh. Indresh Dubey, R/o: E-58, College Lane, Bengali Market, New Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 08.11.2018 at about 1:30 PM, from the area of PS Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 51/2019, Dated 25.04.2019 U/S 365/IPS P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. The investigation this case is being conducted by Anti Human Trafficking Unit, Crime Branch, Sector-16, Rohini, Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped person is as under:
Name: Tarunesh Dubey, Age: About 22 Years, Height: 5'11", Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Built: Slim, Wearing: Blue Jeans, Blue & White Printed Shirt with cap, ID Mark: Tattoo Mark of Lord Shiva Eye on back of his Neck.
If anyone has any information about this person is missing/kidnapped please inform P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi.
Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639
SHO
Police Station, Barakhamba Road, Delhi
DP/95/Crime/2021 Ph: 011-27892844-66-77, 8750871236



Follow proper revision strategy

JEE Main May session has been deferred. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with NITIN VIJAY, Managing Director, Motion Education, who talks about how students can make the best of this time and score well

JEE Main has been postponed once again. While many are not happy with the continuous delays, but it goes without saying that it is definitely the need of the hour. More so, when the country is witnessing more than 3.5 lakh cases per day. "Nobody can do anything about his. The only positive part is that students are getting more time to study," Nitin Vijay, Managing Director, Motion Education, says. With that being said, it is not the time for students to lose hope and or become complacent, instead they should utilise this period to study and work upon their weak subjects. "If a student was preparing to attempt the May session, we assume that he must have completed his syllabus. Hence, the students now have to follow proper revision strategies. They have to revise

every chapter twice at least in the next two months. Their focus should be on following correct revision strategies, this will help them big time," Vijay tells you. Students can start by focusing on their weak concepts and practicing as much as they can. However, this might not be as easy as it sounds. The continuous delays might result in students losing motivation. Hence, keeping yourself motivated is the key. "Students have to keep themselves motivated. Thinking about the positive side of getting extra time for preparation might help. But, at the same time they have to realise that every student is getting the same amount of time. Hence, they have to utilise it in the best possible manner. This time will change their course of future. Students need to

Students have to keep themselves motivated. Thinking about the positive side of getting extra time for preparation might help

remove all the frustration and negativity and concentrate on their studies," he explains. Improving speed is another factor students can work upon during this time. "Identify your mistakes and correct them. Most of the time, students tend to miss spotting their mistakes, this way they continue to do it. Next, work on your accuracy and speed. This will give you motivation to study. Learn to read questions in one go, this is one part that most of the students miss on. They don't know how to read a question in one go," Vijay says. The reason behind this is that students don't read a question as a full statement, they read it word by word. "Try to read the question as a statement, picture what it says in your mind and then comprehend it.

Keep on practicing and you will learn to read questions in one go. Good strategy coupled with motivation will help you achieve good score," he explains. He emphasises on the fact that these delays don't mean wastage of time. It is clearly a bonus time for students. "If you and your family are safe at home, thank God and see the time as a gift. If you can change your mindset, you can change your life. It's a game of mindset," he says. He adds that the students at his institute have already understood this and are busy asking questions and solving problems without thinking about the rest of the things. "The ones who are genuinely interested in studies, can study anywhere at any time. They just need motivation," Vijay says.

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one.
— Mark Twain

Meet Manav Sthali warriors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Today, as a nation, we need to stand together to tackle the grim situation that we are in. The times are indeed challenging as the number of people not being able to procure oxygen, an ICU bed, vaccine and even food for that matter, is increasing every minute. The situation, however, has awakened many a conscience to come forth and support their fellow beings.

Manav Sthali have always stood for a social cause dedicatedly and wholeheartedly extending maximum support during such times of distress. In our constant endeavours to render timely help, under the guidance of Mamta Bhatnagar, Director and Founder principal, Dipti A Bhatnagar, Principal, Manav Sthali School initiated Manav Suraksha — Manav Helpline on May 2 to provide real time information on the availability of beds in hospitals, oxygen, plasma, tiffin services, ambulances, lab/CT scan, chemist etc. in Delhi to the ones in need.

Manav Suraksha team is jointly managed by Anushasit Sainanis and Student Council members along with a team of 80 students who are working 24/7 to help people. The team receives an average of 800 calls a day and works on five levels. First, class-wise leaders are appointed to collect leads for portfolios that are oxygen, plasma, doctors, beds, tiffin service, medicines, and labs.

These leads are then verified by class volunteers. The PR team is in direct contact with patients and provides necessary help from collected leads. The core team manages and supervises the functioning of the Suraksha group and assigns tasks to volunteers. The IT team maintains a database of leads and resources. This list is updated twice a day. The FB team provides required resources to people who reach out on Facebook for help. In these grim times, the Manav Sthali warriors all stand together united as ever to extend ourselves to society.

UG courses at ISBF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The next round of applications for admission into the undergraduate programmes led by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in India at the Indian School of Business & Finance (ISBF), New Delhi, are closing on May 15, 2021.

Students pursuing Accounting & Finance at ISBF will also be eligible for exemptions in eight out of 13 examinations of Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

ISBF has an intake of only 120 undergraduate students across its five programmes. It follows a rounds-based rolling admissions policy, which means that other things equal, applicants of earlier rounds have a higher likelihood of being accepted into the programme of their choice. It also means that applications will be closed as soon as all seats are filled.

Guide to choose the best course

As the need for healthcare services is on a constant rising spree, so is the need for the resources those who can ensure the smooth facilitation of such services. To meet the growing demands, graduates are often seen opting for a certified Hospital Administration course that helps them in enhancing their knowledge related to the healthcare management sector.

In simpler terms, Hospital Administration is a course that incorporates the studies related to the management of various operations and departments in a hospital. A professional who pursues the course and attains the title of a Hospital Administrator is responsible for overseeing and organising the health services and monitoring the day-to-day activities of a hospital or a healthcare unit ranging from managing staff and budgets to communicating between departments and ensuring appropriate patient care amongst other duties.

In times like these, when every health-worker is working extremely hard to contribute their bit in saving the human-race, the Hospital Administration course is gaining massive popularity and the students pursuing it are looked up with utmost respect and dignity. The rising demand for the health professionals emphasises on the need to choose from the significant courses available online.

Here is a quick guide of the best comprehensive and advanced Hospital Administration Online Courses that will definitely help learners add the right skill set to their portfolio as per industry-demand and land an instant job.

Henry Harvin: The Hospital Administration course offered by Henry Harvin equips learners with the most essential conceptual and technical knowledge in management and trains the students for all the hospital administration functions required in any healthcare unit. The course focuses on core topics like accounting, finance, human resource management, information systems, management, marketing, hospital laws, and many more. The 12 month course offers every participant live projects & case studies for improved understanding of the subject.

Medvarsity: The Master class in Hospital Administration course offered by Medvarsity is eligible for all the graduates coming with any disciplinary background. The Master class in Hospital Administration course enables students to acquire conceptual and technical knowledge in management and prepares the student for hospital administration functions



The Hospital Administration course offered by Henry Harvin equips learners with the most essential conceptual and technical knowledge in management

in a hospital. The curriculum focuses on core topics like accounting, finance, human resource management, information systems, management, marketing, hospital laws and many more. The 12 months online course covers four modules and offers live lectures with expert faculty from the healthcare industry.

Manipal University: The MHA (Master of Hospital Administration) Programme strives to prepare health professionals to transform into knowledgeable, ethical and innovative health administrators who can contribute positively to the betterment of the healthcare sector. The programme aims to create competent personnel in the field of hospital & healthcare in a professional manner to optimise care delivery and healthcare costs without compromise on quality. This course is a full-time postgraduate programme spread over two years. The university promises to groom all the budding administrators in

a highly academically surcharged environment.

Dr DY Patil Vidyapeeth's Centre for Online Learning: The institute offers online certificate course in hospital and health care management. Based in Pune, India, they offer this course via online mode. The programme's objective is to develop the most-competent hospital administration professional in the field of hospital and health care administration. Students, who hold bachelor's degree, are graduates in any discipline from a recognised university or are diploma holders are eligible for this course. The 300 hours course provides real experience to candidates who will culminate to develop a high degree of conceptual, analytical skills and quality technical knowledge base among candidates and preparing them well to manage complex health care domains.

ICRI: The online PG Diploma in Healthcare Management course offered by ICRI India aims to impart requisite knowledge and expertise on the concept objectives, operational policies, procedures, etc. in operational management of various departments of Hospital and Healthcare Organisations. This includes the development of conceptual skills in planning, policy formulation, healthcare financing, resource planning, hospital & healthcare material management, Hospital accreditation process in India, research methodology and healthcare services project work. Spanning over a period of six months, this course is available for all the undergraduates and postgraduates in Life Sciences, Microbiology, Biotechnology, Pharmacy, Medicine, Nursing, Homoeopathy, Ayurvedic and Veterinary Science with min 50 per cent.

Experience matters

Many B Schools are exploring the ways and means to provide experiential learning opportunities to their aspirants, says DR RAMAKRISHNAN RAMAN

Majority of aspirants who plan to pursue a Master of Business Administration (MBA) consider it as a programme that equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills, which can make them to build a lucrative career in business and management. Knowledge is imparted through lecture sessions, case based teaching, role play based learning, etc. Many Indian B Schools are exploring the ways and means to provide experiential learning opportunities to their aspirants. There are a few premier Indian B Schools which have made it mandatory to have experiential learning in every subject that is taught to the students.

Here are five popular ways by which Indian B Schools are offering experiential learning opportunities to their students.

Summer internship and live project opportunities

Summer internships and live projects provide students an opportunity to apply their learning to the real-world problems of organisations. Almost all B Schools have Summer Internships and live projects built in their curriculum. Summer Internship is an excellent platform provided to the students to 'learn by doing' which is 'experiential learning'. Given the rapidly changing business landscape, Summer internships are one of the most popular forms of experiential learning, which helps students to gain an insight into the demands of the workplace. Live project opportunities

ties give the students an opportunity to apply and integrate theory with practice. They get to understand the how the decisions that they take and efforts that they put in, give results in real business scenarios.

Case competition by corporate

Several organisations launch their case competitions in select premier B Schools. These case competitions give a platform to the students to work in real world corporate challenges. This form of experiential learning is appreciated and sought after by the students. Case competitions not only helps them learn the nuances of business, but also gives them job opportunities with the same organisation which launches the competitions. Students who give the best solution to the case are offered jobs with lucrative compensation.

Capstone project

A capstone project is a multifaceted assignment that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students pursuing their management program. In this mode of experiential learning students pursue independent research on a question or problem of their choice, and engage in scholarly debates. They are guided by a faculty mentor who helps them to articulate and create a white paper or a journal article that reflects a deep understanding of the topic.

Students' councils activities

There are few B Schools in India which are fully student-driven where the

students pursuing their MBA are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process that helps them learn the experiential way and also shapes their personality. The Students' council is the student body responsible and accountable for almost all activities conducted on the campus of a B School. The teams consist of students from the first and second year who are led by coordinators. These coordinators form an executive council to oversee all activities. The executive council is empowered to plan their budgets, set goals and they work independently on all business processes related to admissions, placements, corporate relations, managing online presence, etc.

International immersion programmes

A few premier Indian B Schools offer their MBA students an opportunity to travel abroad and attend a partner B School. The students enrol for a few subjects which can help them take some credits for the fulfilment of their degree. Students often benefit from gaining critical cross-cultural skills, broadening their perspective and enhancing their understanding of business in a global context. International Immersion Programmes have proved to be a wonderful approach to experiential learning.

The writer is Director, Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune & Dean, Faculty of Management, Symbiosis International (Deemed University)

MBA International Programme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU), Israel is now welcoming applications for its one-year MBA International Programme.

The MBA International Programme at the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management is a unique, integrative one-year study programme that couples a rigorous theoretical and practical academic programme with extracurricular

opportunities that serve to enrich the MBA learning experience.

Eligibility: Students with a bachelor's degree, GMAT or GRE, Professional or International Experience can apply for the programme.

How to apply: Log on to https://bgumanagement.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8j1Jd8vjkhpxYAR.

Last date to apply: June 30, 2021.

Webinar by Great Learning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Great Learning, an edtech company for professional and higher education has announced that it will be hosting a webinar on Introduction to Android Studio today at 12 pm. The live session is free of cost and can be attended by anyone who is tech-savvy and looking to explore a career in application development.

The live session on "Introduction to Android Studio" by Faizan Parvez,

Instructor of Data Structure and Algorithm will shine a spotlight on the wide usage of Android Studio for building applications on android devices. The attendees will get an overview of the features of Android Studio that will further enhance the productivity while developing android applications.

People can register by visiting: <https://www.greatlearning.in/academy/learn-for-free/courses/introduction-to-android-studio>.

Balance leadership

Leadership style is about the way a person leads his subordinates. This varies from person to person. Therefore, right kind of leadership is all about striking a balance between all the major styles, says DR KULNEET SURI

Be it any organisation, from the highest rung to the lowest, one thing is common — everyone wants to be a leader. And why not. Being a leader sounds so powerful and exciting that it is hard not to want to be in that position of influence. However, being a leader is easier said than done. Reaching that powerful position may seem to be daunting at first but it eases out as time goes. But the fact is that for some people it stays intimidating all throughout if they do not tackle the responsibility head on right at the beginning.

Leadership style is all about the way a person uses to lead his subordinates and this style varies widely from one person to the other. Some leaders are the be-all and end-all of every decision while some others are all about delegations and do not take a step without discussing. The right kind of leadership is all about striking a balance between all the major styles.

When one takes up the role of a business administrator in any organisation, one is addressing the roles of both, a manager and a leader and balancing between these two can be a highly sensitive act. To strike the perfect balance between all styles of leadership, the following are the top questions that you need to ask yourself:

■ Can the work get done with my intervention? If the answer is yes, then remove yourself from simply interfering and rather concentrate on motivating the team. Donning the hat of authority is only necessary when you need to implement changes to help the team perform better.

■ How much do you focus on the results? Focusing on results is great but that should not be the only thing that you notice in any project. The focus should be more on the process as that way you will be able to find more alternatives to reach the same or better results.

■ Are you the first person that people come to for advice? If the



answer to this is a big yes, then you are truly already being seen as a leader. If not, look at the changes that you need to bring forth to be seen as a supportive and inspirational figure.

■ What is the most discussed topic in your team? Is it the tasks at hand, the processes, the deadlines, or the strategy and big picture? Make sure that the discussions are balanced and the team is not leaning too hard in one direction or the other.

■ Do you ask the team to complete the tasks without feeling the need to explain the objective? Your team will only be motivated to go that extra mile if they understand the reasons behind accomplishing the task that they are assigned.

■ Who is held responsible when things go wrong? Do you blame yourself or the team? A great leader understands that the

The energy and the attitude of the leader are channelised through the team that he handles. Balance is necessary to ensure that the team stays positive and focused

failure or success of the team is ultimately his/her responsibility.

Achieving a balanced leadership style is necessary to ensure long-term success, both for the company and personally. The energy and the attitude of the leader are channelised through the team that he handles. Balance is necessary to ensure that the team stays positive and focused. Here are ways to be a true leader:

■ Communicate: Clear and honest communication is the key to getting the work done in any organisation. Whether you are conducting a performance review or communicating your aims for the quarter, the subordinates need to know what you require of them, where they stand at present, and how can they get to the end.

■ Know when to let go: You show your trust towards your team when you delegate the responsibilities towards them.

You have given them the direction that they require and now you need to let them follow it through. But do not forget to reward them when they actually manage to make your vision into a reality.

Be a mentor, not the boss: Put aside all the day-to-day distractions and schedule one-on-one time with the staff, take in their input, and listen to their grievances. The team will either listen to you out of fear or out of respect, and you can well understand which way works in the long-term. Be the mentor that understands the coordinates and their viewpoints and not the boss who merely orders. Engaging with the team encourages inputs and presents the opportunity to maintain a balance between your ideas and their views for the greater good of the company.

The writer is Senior Director at Institute of Management Studies, Noida

‘All our courses are industry-led’

The Atria University is all set to open its doors for the students this October.

SHALINI SAKSENA chats up CEO SAHEEM RAHIMAN, Excerpts

■ How much learning are children getting with online mode?

We all agree that a large amount of learning or effective learning takes place with peer learning and peering each other's opinions and all of these things have actually dried up in the online education model. Even in our own work life what I have noticed when the lockdown started all of us were working virtually and we would have amazing meetings at the beginning, when you want to solve a problem you want everybody to come up with new ideas. As the lockdown progressed, off late nobody wants to have contrary opinion on a call, nobody wants to have an opposing view on the call because they feel that they are not participating as much.

■ Tell us about Atria University. It is a year old.

It has been close to two years since we launched the product but we haven't gone live as yet for the first batch. First batch starts in October of this year. This is because Karnataka State Higher Education has announced the next academic year will start in October. We are also in the final phase of getting approvals for the university so all of that will be in place before the academic year starts.

■ What are some of the courses that are being offered to students?

We have five majors. One of them is mobility. Then we have Life Sciences. Number three is digital transformation. Then we have interactive tech. At No 5 is Energy Sciences. Degrees are B.Tech then Bachelor of Design (BDes) then BSc and BBA.

■ How does a student apply?

Just like in the outside world, a student joins the university for an undergraduate programme. The student goes through foundation courses irrespective of whether they came from a science or commerce background from school. These foundation courses are for 12 months. Post that there is a six-to-nine-month period where the student gets to sample courses or projects in each of these areas, there are five majors and four degrees. They get to



Shaheem Rahiman
CEO, Atria University

sample each one of this or each one of them over a period of six to months.

■ What about faculty?

It's a very industry-led programme where the projects are also from the industry. Most of the courses are actually designed by industry leaders and academics are helping facilitate that. They will come on campus for a period of four weeks, teach and leave.

■ What is the fee structure?

We are priced at ₹7 lakh per annum for academics and then residential is ₹1.8 lakh.

■ What's your vision in next five years?

To be sustainable, I must think 10 years ahead. I am scaling between 5,000 to 7,000 students in 10 years on the campus. By the time the first batch goes out my goal is to make sure that everybody who joins us in this year, will actually be going out as employees and not necessarily searching for a job because the model itself allows for nine months of internship right from second year. The idea is student will be working with big organisations in the industry on these projects and will organically get absorbed in the companies that they've worked with.

Due to the present pandemic, many are suffering from psychological distress with increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression. It has deeply impacted the mental health of people which also suggests a troubled future. But it's also true that humans' ability to overcome adversity is often underestimated especially for the overwhelming majority who love to be with nature.

This is not to suggest that the impact of COVID-19 on mental health isn't real, nor that it won't be long-lasting in some cases. It is real, and it will linger for many. Nevertheless it's also important to underline that it's healthy therapeutic for people who spend time amidst Nature.

There is a Japanese practice of nature therapy — forest bathing or Shinrin-yoku. It is simply spending time outdoors under the canopy of trees. In Japanese, shinrin means forest and yok means bath, or immersing oneself in the forest and soaking in the atmosphere through the senses. In one study, Yoshifumi Miyazaki, a nature-therapy expert, found that people who spent 40 minutes walking in a forest had lower levels of stress. He said: "Spending time in the forest induces a state of physiologic relaxation."

Another researcher, Dr. Qing Li, found that trees and plants emit aromatic compounds called phytoncides that, when inhaled, can spur healthy biological changes

MIND IT

in a manner similar to aromatherapy, which has also been studied for its therapeutic benefits. There are various recent studies that have also linked nature to symptom relief for health issues like heart disease, depression, cancer, anxiety and attention disorders.

Love for nature is something that is deeply inherent in all of us. We are part of the ecosystem and nature as much as plants & animals are. No matter how many concrete jungles we create in cities, we are likely to get "naturally happy in the

surroundings of plants and trees.

Exposure to nature, or even just merely observing it, helps us in reducing anger, anxiety and stress. The impact of our brush with nature is not only emotional but physical and neurological as well. Experts call our innate tendency to connect to plants as biophilia.

Even for mood disorders it's beneficial to spend time in nature: There are numerous situations when we have a strong urge to relax in the lap of greens. For instance, when we are battling with a dilemma of

taking a key decision, we are often advised to go for a stroll in a garden before we jump the gun.

Similarly, after heavy rainfall, when we want to experience the pleasant dewy petrichor in the air, and enjoy the pristine hues, we find a reason to have our tryst with nature. Even when we are stressed or anxious, we get an urge to step out of our brick and mortar houses and walk towards a quiet place that is invariably green.

Nature helps us to connect with each other. When we see the beautiful natural scenery, sense of empathy and love lights up in our brain, but when we see only walls or buildings around as is during the lockdowns enforced, we are bound to be

tensed up with fear and anxiety.

So whenever feasible, be amidst nature. Listen to the birds, feel the breeze, spot the leaves of the trees, beautiful flowers, or just take a moment to inhale the fresh air. Reconnect with the clouds as kids do; look for shapes in them. It can instantly put life into perspective.

Even if we can't get outside, try to bring the outside in. Draw up a chair by a window and observe nature, feel the breeze. Close your eyes and try to listen to some relaxing nature sounds like soothing birds singing, natural sound of water.

Nature is indeed the best therapist.

The writer is Dr Mukesh Kwatra, Founder, Smiling Tree



The University of Vaasa, Finland invites applications for Global Student Scholarships. The sponsorship will be rewarded to students who wish to undertake any master's degree programme can apply.

Eligibility: The students must be first-year applicants only. **Supporting documents:** A copy of the (foreign) degree certificate or a provisional certificate; Transcripts of university records.

Admission requirements: The students must complete 120 ECTS to be accepted into a master's degree programme.

Language requirement: The students must submit the following English language proficiency test scores: TOEFL PBT – 580; TOEFL IBT – 92; RPDT – a minimum score of 20 reading section, a minimum score of 20 in the listening section, and a minimum score of 22 in the writing section. Mybestscores is also accepted.

How to apply: Students are required to apply to their preferred master's programme online. Accepted students will automatically be considered.

Application deadline: The date is July 31, 2021.

The Baylor University

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AT LOKMAT MEDIA

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹5,000-₹10,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/2c9ef2
Deadline: May 20, 2021

COURSE CREATION (FLUTTER) AT NULLCLASS TECHNOLOGY

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹8,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/1ee5c6
Application deadline: May 20, 2021

E-COMMERCE OPS AT MY POOJA BOX

Location: Delhi
Stipend: ₹15,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/e3fe0b
Deadline: May 20, 2021

DIGITAL FORENSICS EVIDENCE EXAMINATION AT SYSTOOLS SOFTWARE

Location: Delhi
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/fdc58b
Deadline: May 20, 2021

GIS ENGINEERING AT TECHNOVIQ IT SOLUTIONS

Location: Bhubaneswar
Stipend: ₹3,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/1daf93
Deadline: May 20, 2021

MOBILE APP DEV AT SRI TECHNOCRAT

Location: Lucknow
Stipend: ₹7,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/1daf93
Deadline: May 19, 2021

FRESHER JOBS

SOFTWARE ENGINEER AT FINTECH GLOBAL CENTER

Location: Remote
Stipend: ₹4-₹7 lakh per annum
Link: internshala.com/i/9c73a2
Deadline: June 5, 2021
Skill(s): C#, .NET, C#.NET, Node.js, C++
Programming, React Native, Angular 7.0

IN BRIEF

SCHOLARSHIP TEST FOR ENGINEERS

The CareerLabs has announced CareerLabs Assured Placement Program (CLAPP) for engineering graduates of 2020 and 2021. This programme is launched with the aim to provide high quality placements for students by upskilling them on latest validated skills from industry in the areas of Embedded

Systems, Data sciences, IOT, Full Stack Development, UI and UX Design. The CLAPP is one of its kind and a unique platform for all budding engineers to polish their skills and develop

new ones to be future ready. In order to provide equal opportunity for all, CareerLabs is enabling scholarships for placement assured programmes in numerous acclaimed colleges covering 20,000 students through a test — C.L.E.A.R.

The test which will be based on their aptitude and foundational engineering knowledge. On clearing the test, up to 1,000 students will be awarded with scholarships worth ₹2 crore.

Each student who clears the exam will be awarded a scholarship value of up to ₹25,000. All engineering graduates and students in final year of engineering will be eligible for taking the test which will be conducted free of cost.

ONLINE SUMMER PROGRAMME

The British Council has announced the 11th edition of its summer school programme that helps parents to give their children the confidence and tools to succeed in an evolving world.

The edition has been reimagined in view of the evolving curriculum in schools as well as the present COVID-19 scenario.

Fully online, the programme has

been designed to enable participants improve core communication skills while discovering their style and talents.

It is a theme-based programme that that excites children to learn rather than spend complete hours in front of a screen. The education system and the school curriculum is undergoing change

The theme — #Crafting Futures-

The Fun has been designed for children of age 5-17 years, segregated in age groups of 5-6 years, 7-12 years and 13-17 years to ensure age appropriate learning.

Dates: Crafting Futures Batch 3: May 24-June 4. Fee: ₹5,000 for 2 themes.

For details visit: <https://www.britishcouncil.in/english/courses-children/summer-school-yl>

VOICE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR MPFI

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras researchers will collaborate with members of the Mobile Payment Forum of India (MPFI) to develop voice-based solutions, especially in multiple vernacular languages for digital money transactions in the country.

This will provide a phenomenal platform not only for the increased adoption of digital payments in India but for

research opportunities as well.

These initiatives are being taken up by MPFI towards bringing 500 million active users on to the UPI payment platforms by 2025.

The MPFI is working to identify innovation across three levels; Human behaviour and adoption, Technology (design and safeguards), and policy (a data-centric view), to propel India over the next

decade.

Dr. Gaurav Raina, Faculty, Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT Madras, and Chairman, MPFI, said: "Digital and mobile payments, and in particular contactless payments, are important not just from an efficiency point of view, but also to mitigate risk against COVID-19. It provides a great opportunity to help yourself and also the ecosystem."

TWO PROGRAMMES FOR EXECUTIVES

The Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS) Deemed to be University invites applications for PGDM (Executive) in Business Analytics and PGDM (Executive) in General Management, at Center for Executive Education, Tarnaka campus in Hyderabad.

Designed for working executives, these programmes follow flexible timetables with classes held over the weekends. The PGDM (Executive) in Business Analytics is a 16-month weekend

programme, while PGDM (Executive) in General Management is a 20-month weekend programme.

Ramesh Bhat, VC, NMIMS, said: "In a rapidly-changing work environment, every professional needs cognitive, digital, and practical skills that define a modern manager. A management education program that equips students with the necessary technical and strategic skill sets, along with a collaborative approach, will become necessary with businesses transitioning to Industry 4.0."

VIRTUAL WORKSHOP FOR BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS

The Sanskriti University in collaboration with Sleepwell Foundation and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) led an initiative for the young generation to motivate them to start a business and become a successful Entrepreneur.

This Workshop will be conducted for three days online will discuss the topics for giving a better understanding about the concepts of business. The workshop is being conducted by trainers of MacLead Certification along with the domain experts and all the leading entrepreneurs sharing real-

life experiences and provide help to the students and budding entrepreneurs by answering their queries and clearing doubts.

The workshop organised for the students will help them to recognise their inner potential and start their own business without any hesitation.

Dhawan likely to lead in Lanka

First-choice Iyer's injury open door for Shikhar to captain India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan and flamboyant allrounder-turned specialist batsman Hardik Pandya will be locked in a two-way fight for India captaincy if Shreyas Iyer doesn't get fit in time for the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka in July.

India's limited overs specialists will be playing three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs in the island nation during the second half of July, when big guns like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be in England for a marquee five-match Test series.

"It is still not clear if Shreyas will recover fully and will be match-fit in time for tour of Sri Lanka. Normally, a surgery of this scale along with rest, extensive rehab and training to get back in shape takes around four months," a senior BCCI source privy to selection matters said.

"In case Shreyas was available, he would have been the automatic choice for captaincy."

It's only logical that the two contenders for captaincy are 35-year-old Dhawan, who has had good "one and half IPLs" in last two seasons and Pandya junior, who is one of the most accomplished match-winners.

"Shikhar has had two very good IPL including this curtailed one and being the senior



most among those who are available for selection, he is a very strong contender. Also he has been a solid performer for India for past eight years," an

official said.

As far as Hardik is concerned, his reputation as a white-ball match-winner can't be discounted either.

"Yes, Hardik hasn't been regularly bowling for MI or India in recent times. However, he is the man with x-factor and among options available. He is

INDIA'S LIMITED OVERS SPECIALISTS WILL BE PLAYING THREE T20 INTERNATIONALS AND AS MANY ODIs IN THE ISLAND NATION DURING THE SECOND HALF OF JULY

miles ahead of his peers in terms of being an impact performer. And who knows, may be extra responsibility brings the best out of him."

Pandya was included in the four-Test series at home against England so that his bowling workload is increased keeping the England tour in mind but it is learnt that the Baroda man is unlikely to bowl more than an odd over or two in the short-format or ODI in near future.

"Hardik, after his back surgery to cure stress fracture, is not the same bowler anymore. He was a fast medium bowler before injury but to bowl at a brisk 135 kmph plus pace consistently, it could impact his back.

"So he is focussing more on

his match finishing skills," a person in the know of things said.

MATCHES IN COLOMBO

Colombo's R Premadasa Stadium will host all the matches in India's upcoming limited overs series against Sri Lanka.

"We plan to host the entire series at one venue. As of now, it has been decided that the Premadasa Stadium will host the fixtures. Obviously, it depends on how the situation is around that time," Arjuna de Silva, Sri Lanka Cricket's (SLC) Administrative Committee chairman, told *Sportstar* on Monday.

"With the Covid situation fluid, we cannot allow fans yet, so all the matches will be closed-door affairs," De Silva said.

India are reportedly set to arrive in Sri Lanka for the series on July 5 and, after the team completes its week-long quarantine, will play the ODI series starting on July 13. The T20I series will begin on July 22.

"As of now, we will stick to the protocol where the players will have to undergo hard quarantine for the first three days and in the next four days, they will be allowed to train. However, if there are any revised guidelines by the Health Ministry around that time, we will have to follow that," he added.

India missed trick by not picking wrist spinner: Kaneria

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria reckons India has missed a trick by not picking a wrist spinner for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand as young Rahul Chahar would have added another dimension to their attack.

Last week, India announced the squad for next month's World Test Championship final against New Zealand, to be held from June 18 in Southampton, and a five-match series against England from August 4.

"India has selected quite a strong team. Overall, their squad of is good. But the thing to note is that they have not selected a wrist spinner," Kaneria said from Karachi.

"They have finger spinners — Ashwin, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja — but they don't have a wrist spinner, a right arm leg spinner," the leg spinner added.

Kaneria, who represented English county side Essex, said that the conditions in England is conducive for leg break bowlers.

"When you play in England, and I have a lot of experience playing there — eight years of county cricket in different conditions — there is moisture.

"When the season starts the county matches are going on and after that the sun comes out and the wicket gets baked and the moisture stays."

"Where there are seam conditions, a leg spinner is very useful and that's why I had a successful tenure when I played county cricket. So, it is a little concerning that there is no leg spinner in the team.

"Finger spinners can contain but having finger spinner and a wrist spinner can make an impact on the team," he added.

The 40-year-old, feels Chahar could have been a useful addition in the Indian team.

"Rahul Chahar, his height, the way he delivers the ball, he should have been in the team. New Zealand has Ish Sodhi, a tall leg spinner and Virat Kohli always struggles against a leg spinner as we saw it with (Adam) Zampa.

"So, I feel if there is place open for a leg spinner than Chahar, who has played for Mumbai Indians and India and has performed well, has googly, flipper and leg spin, could have been useful."

India head to the UK on the back of series victories against Australia and India but Kaneria cautioned that New Zealand are also a formidable side that has a strong bowling line up.

"India is playing good cricket, they have won series in Australia and then against England but NZ will not be an easy opponent as they are very tough in this type of condition where the ball seams. They have a very strong bowling line up. "India's batting needs to deliver like Rishabh Pant did well in Australia but Ajinkya Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujar couldn't score many runs that is as cause of concern."

"You win Test cricket because of bowlers, once you have five top bowlers in your rank who can take 20 wickets there is a change of winning a Test match."



Some Indian players didn't like restrictions: Pamment

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Mumbai Indians fielding coach James Pamment has claimed that some senior Indian players did not like being subjected to restrictions inside the currently-suspended IPLs bio-bubble but it felt completely safe till the time cases from participating teams hadn't come to light.

Pamment did not elabo-

rate on his assertion about the Indian players and did not take any names either.

"Some of the senior Indian guys don't like being restricted and told what to do," he was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"But we did feel safe — at no point did we feel the bubble would be compromised ... We felt the travel was always going to be a challenge."

India covered all bases for WTC final: Parthiv

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India have all the bases covered for the World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand, said former wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel. Parthiv said that the fact that a batsman like KL Rahul is not finding a place in the squad shows how strong the batting lineup is.

"If we talk about batsmen — Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant — there's a proper band of proper bats-



men who can bat well in England. Everyone scored runs, and there is a spare batsman in KL Rahul. Imagine KL Rahul not finding a space in the Test squad, so how strong this squad could be," Patel told *Star Sports*.

The former Indian stumper from Gujarat said that India have a strong base of fast bowlers and spinners to pick from.

"You talk about fast bowlers, we've got (Jasprit) Bumrah, Ishant (Sharma), (Mohammad) Shami and if

either of them is not fit then there's Mohammad Siraj and Umesh Yadav. There's enough depth in the squad," he said.

"Then there is Axar Patel, who was probably been the man of the match in a lot of matches against England. He came in place of Ravindra Jadeja and it felt like Jadeja will be out. Now Ravindra Jadeja and (Ravichandran) Ashwin will be back, so I think this squad looks really strong," said Patel.

Eng players to skip remainder of IPL: ECB

▶ **short passes**

PTI ■ LONDON

England have a busy international schedule from June onwards and the players are unlikely to be available for the remainder of the suspended IPL if the T20 tournament is rescheduled this year, says ECB Director of Cricket Ashley Giles.

The IPL was suspended last week after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble. There are two windows for the T20 event to be resumed this year — one is in the second half of September and before the T20 World Cup (October-November) and the other is



after mid-November.

But England's top players will be in action at both times. They have tours to Bangladesh and Pakistan in

September and October, while they will compete with Australia at the Ashes right after the T20 World Cup.

"We're planning on

involvement of England players in England matches. We've got a full FTP schedule. So if those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," Giles said as quoted by *ESPNcricinfo*.

There were 11 Englishman in various franchises in the suspended IPL. "None of us knows what a rearranged IPL looks like at the moment, where it's going to be or when. But from when we start this summer against New Zealand, our programme is incredibly busy," Giles said.

"We've got a lot of important, high-profile cricket including the T20 World Cup

and the Ashes. And we're going to have to look after our players."

Giles dismissed suggestion that this signals a change in approach from the ECB as the management had earlier allowed up to a dozen players to miss the Test series against New Zealand at the start of June due to their involvement in the IPL.

"The New Zealand scenario was very different. Those Test matches were formalised at the end of January, by which time all those contracts and NOCs (no objection certificates) were signed for full involvement in the IPL."

MENDY SUFFERS TIBIA INJURY

MADRID: Real Madrid's hopes of clinching the La Liga title have been hit by another injury after the club confirmed that defender Ferland Mendy has a problem in his tibia.

VERRATTI OUT FOR UP TO 6 WEEKS

PARIS: PSG midfielder Marco Verratti will miss the rest of the season because of a right knee injury. The Italian will be sidelined for four-to-six weeks, possibly forcing him to also miss the European Championship.

BUFFON TO QUIT JUVE

TURIN: Gianluigi Buffon said on Tuesday that he will bring the curtain down on his time at Juventus after nearly two decades at the end of the season, but will look to prolong his trophy-filled career elsewhere at the age of 43.

INIESTA EXTENDS KOBE STAY

TOKYO: Andres Iniesta celebrated his 37th birthday on Tuesday by signing a contract extension that will keep him at J-League side Vissel Kobe for two more years.

LÖW SET TO RECALL MÜLLER

BERLIN: Germany coach Joachim Löw has reportedly contacted Thomas Müller and is poised to reverse the forward's 2019 exile by naming him in his Euro 2020 squad.

BAUMGART TO COACH COLOGNE

COLOGNE: Relegation-threatened Bundesliga club Cologne on Tuesday named Steffen Baumgart from second-tier side Paderborn as head coach for next season — whether or not his new club remains in Germany's top flight.

IBRA TO MISS AT LEAST 2 GAMES

MILAN: Zlatan Ibrahimovic will be out for at least two matches with a knee injury, just a month before the start of Euro 2020, AC Milan coach Stefano Pioli said on Tuesday.

GUYANA RETAIN POORAN, HETMYER

ST KITTS: Nicholas Pooran, Shimron Hetmyer and Brandon King will be back in action for Guyana Amazon Warriors in the 2021 CPL after the franchise announced that it had retained 11 players from the last edition.

HUSSEY TESTS +VE AGAIN

CHENNAI: CSK batting coach Michael Hussey has tested positive for Covid-19 again. He had earlier got a negative result in his second test but tested positive in the third round and is now set to undergo another test on Thursday.

FULHAM RELEGATED

LONDON: Fulham were relegated from the Premier League with a 2-0 loss at home to Burnley on Monday that assured the Claret's of their top-flight status. Agencies

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES 'e' Procurement Notice No 02 (NGR) / 2021-22	
1 Name of work	River Embankment & Road work
2 Total No. of work	22(Twenty two)
3 Estimated cost	Rs.15.75 Lakhs to 38.85 Lakhs
4 Period of completion	Six (06) calendar months
5 Date & time of availability of Bid Document in the portal	15.00 hours of 13.05.2021 to 17.00 hours 24.05.2021
6 Last date/ Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	24.05.2021 up to 17.00 hours
7 Date and place of opening of Technical Bid	On 25.05.2021 at 09.00 Hours in the office of the Executive Engineer, Nayagarh Irrigation Division, Nayagarh
8 Name and address of the O.I.T (Officer Inviting Tender)	Executive Engineer, Nayagarh Irrigation Division, Nayagarh.

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "https://tendersodisha.gov.in"

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Nayagarh Irrigation Division,
Nayagarh.

OIPR-32303/11/0002/2122

Government of Odisha Office of the Executive Engineer Rural Works Division, Nabarangpur. e-mail:eeengr@rediffmail.com, Phone No.225253	
O-165	
Letter No. 1947 Date: 10.05.21	
e-Procurement Notice	
Name of the work	Road Work
Total No. of works	01 (One) No.
Approx. Estimated Cost	Rs.56.58 lakhs
Class of Contractor	"A" "B" Class of Contractor
Period of Completion	02(Two) Months

Procurement officer	Bid Identification No.	No. of works	Availability of tender online for bidding	Date & Time of Opening of Tender
1	2	3	4	5
Rural Works Division-I, Nabarangpur	EERWNGP-Online-02/2021-22	01 (One) No.	18.05.2021 at 10.00 AM To 28.05.2021 up to 03.00 PM	31.05.2021 at 11.00 AM

For Details can be seen from the Government website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Executive Engineer
Rural Works Division, Nabarangpur

OIPR-25092/11/0002/2122

Office of the Executive Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division No. IV, Nirman Soudha, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar	
B-79	E-mail ID: eernb4bbs@gmail.com Tel. - (0674)-2390245

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
No- 2576 Date- 6.5.2021
Bid Identification No- C.C. (R&B) - 04

e - Procurement Notice No. 1 of 2021-22

1	Name of the Work	Building Work
2	Total No. of works	1 No. Building Work
3	Estimated Cost	Rs. 79.50,000.00
4	Class of Contractor	B & A
5	Period of Completion	8 (Eight) Calendar Months
6	Type of Tender	Double Cover System
7	Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	On 07.05.2021 up to 17.30 hrs of Dt. 7.5.2021
8	Last Date & Time for Receipt of bids in the Portal	On 07.05.2021 up to 17.30 hrs
9	Opening of Bid through online	On 08.05.2021 at 11.30-AM onwards
10	Name & Address of the Officer inviting Bid	Er. SK. Nasrulla, Executive Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division No IV, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in
N.B: Subsequent corrigendum / addendum if required shall be available in the website as indicated above

OIPR-34099/11/0002/2122

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
BBSR (R&B) Division No.IV, BBSR.

Nadal casts doubts over Olympics participation



Rome: Two-time Olympic champion Rafael Nadal on Tuesday became the latest top tennis player to admit that he had not yet decided whether he would participate in the Tokyo Games this summer, still giving himself time to decide according to "circumstances".

The 34-year-old Spaniard won Gold in the singles in Beijing in 2008, adding another Gold in the doubles with Marc Lopez in Rio de Janeiro five years ago.

"In a normal world I would never consider missing the Olympics. There is no doubt about that," he said. "Everybody knows how important the Olympics are for me."

"Under these circumstances, I don't know. Let's see what's going on in the next couple of months. But I need to organise my schedule."

Nadal is the latest top tennis star to voice his concerns about the Tokyo Games. On Monday, Serena Williams said she was undecided about going to the Olympics.

Indian shooters leave for training-cum-competition tour of Croatia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Olympic-bound Indian shooting team on Tuesday left for Croatia for a two and a half months training-cum-competition tour, its final tune-up to the upcoming Tokyo Games.

With coaches and support staff in tow, a 13-member Indian shooting team took off for Croatian capital Zagreb, where it will undergo a training camp before leaving for Osijek to take part in the European Championships (May 20 to June 6) followed by the combined ISSF World Cup (June 22 to July 3).

"Team India takes off in 20 mins. Bon Voyage, Get the nose to the ground and work hard for your inevitable success team," Raninder Singh, president of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) tweeted just before the team's departure.

The two Olympics bound skeet shooters Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Mairaj Ahmad Khan will be based in Italy.

The final of the men's skeet event on Monday.

The team left in a chartered flight arranged by the NRAI. After the stint in Croatia, the team will directly leave for Tokyo to participate in the Olympics, beginning on July 23.

The ISSF World Cup in Osijek is being organised in place of the one earlier scheduled in Baku, Azerbaijan (from June 21 to July 2), which got cancelled due to a surge in Covid-19 cases in that country.

There will be nine coaches for the 13 rifle and pistol shooters but some coaches like Samaresh Jung, Jaspal Rana and Ronak Pandit could not travel with the team for various reasons.

Foreign rifle coach Oleg Mikhailov was also a part of the travelling contingent but longtime pistol coach Pavel Smirnov could not leave on Tuesday as he did not get his visa. He is likely to join the team next week.

As per the standard Covid-19 protocols in Croatia, the Indian contingent will serve a mandatory quarantine before starting the training.