

## OPINION 6

FRANCOPHOBIC IN  
'LAND OF THE PURE'

## WORLD 8

NEPAL PRESIDENT BHANDARI  
INITIATES GOVT FORMATION

## AVENUES 10

TIPS TO ACE  
JEE MAIN

CHANDIGARH, WEDNESDAY MAY 12, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹2

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TO LEAD INDIA  
IN SRI LANKA  
12 SPORT

## Fewer deaths during Covid surge! MCD records say

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

The bodies of Covid-19 victims may have been flooding roads and pavements outside "house full" crematoriums and graveyards in the national Capital, but data provided by all the three Municipal Corporation show that fewer people died in corona-ravaged March and April than January when the pandemic was on a decline.

The death figures are inclusive of both general deaths and Covid-19 fatalities.

As per the figure provided by South Delhi Municipal Corporation, 3,620 deaths were registered in January. The number came down to 3,297 in February and 3,173 in March. In April, when the city bore the brunt of the corona and oxygen shortage was at its peak, the city saw 3,351 deaths, nearly ten per cent less than the January death count.

Similarly, the data provided by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation shows that the total deaths reported in January were at 1,426 and the number kept declining with the progress of Covid-19 — 1,345 in February, 1,134 in March, and 1,386 in April.

The data of the East Delhi Municipal Corporation shows that a total of 8,724 deaths were registered between January and April.

In January, EDMC recorded 2,273 deaths while the num-

bers reported in February was at 2,214. Once again with the progress of corona the number came down — 2,006 in March, 2,231 in April and 756 up to May 10.

The reduction of death number at the peak of corona pandemic is baffling. During this period even non-Covid -19 patients were at the receiving end of unavailability of medical support and could not find bed in hospitals. It's strange how in such a situation the fatalities rate came down.

The record surge in Covid-19 cases and its impact on collapse of health service was evident. It put a great pressure on hospitals and drained every ounce of oxygen. The city witnessed chaos and despair as worried families members ran from one hospital to another to get beds for their dear ones. The health infrastructure was stretched beyond its capacity. However, situation has improved with Delhi and the Union Government adding more ICUs, oxygen beds and care facilities across the city.

When asked about the official data on the deaths during the coronavirus surge, a Delhi Government official said social media platforms were flooded with help, out of it some were not true.

"The situation is improving with every passing day. We do hope that mortality rate reduces further and patients go to their homes," the Delhi Government official said.



Relatives of Covid-19 victims prepare for the cremation of bodies at Ghazipur crematorium in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

	SDMC	NDMC	EDMC
January	3,620	1,426	2,273
February	3,297	1,345	2,214
March	3,173	1,134	2,006
April	3,351	1,386	2,231

Kejriwal to Modi:  
Share vax formula  
with pharma firms  
to raise production

New Delhi: With several states grappling with a shortage of Covid-19 vaccines, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, saying the Centre should share the vaccine formula of the two manufacturers with other capable pharmaceutical companies to scale up production in the country.

Double vault by  
death in a month

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

When the second Covid wave gripped India sometimes in March and new cases started spiraling like poppies from the seedlings of a deadly new variant, the country's numerous crematorium and graveyards still provided time and space to graciously perform the last rites of Covid-19 victims and mourn in silence.

But the virus has turned deadlier by the day, and India's death rate has more than doubled during the last one month alone. The final resting places of the dead are now a scene of heart-rending chaos, where pyres burn round-the-clock and tears never stop flowing.

The way the death count in India has soared is alarming, to say the least. A month ago, on April 10 to be precise, India recorded 838 deaths as against 1,52,565 new cases for a fatality rate of 0.55 per cent. One month down the line on May 10, India recorded 3,29,491 cases and 3,847 deaths in a single day for a fatality rate of 1.17 per cent.

The death count clearly

more than doubled in just one month.

But that may be an understatement going by the tale of horror emerging from all over the country with dead bodies piling up on pavements and being washed up on the banks of Ganga in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and crematorium putting up "houseful boards", and experts talking about ten-time more fatalities than the official count.

The rise in India's death rate has not followed a uniform pattern State-wise. For example, while Kerala has a very low fatality rate despite high number of infections, others such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi and Karnataka have far greater death count per thousand infections.

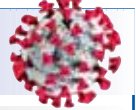
India's death count is now higher than the USA (which once recorded a fatality rate of close to 4-5 per cent), and Spain, Germany, and the UK.

France at this time around leads the globe in terms of fatality rate. The country on Monday recorded 292 deaths against the single-day infection count of 3,292, which translated into a fatality rate of more

than 8 per cent.

France is followed by Turkey, Brazil and Italy even as a host of other nations have sub 1 per cent fatality rate.

One of the main reasons for India's growing fatality count is its collapsing health infrastructure in the face of the rising number of cases.

Covid-19  
IN INDIATOTAL CASES: 2,33,17,414  
(+3,25,375)

DEATHS: 2,53,705 (+3,678)

RECOVERED: 1,93,48,547  
(+3,27,155)

ACTIVE: 37,05,272

MAHA: 51,79,929 (+40,956)

K'TAKA: 20,13,193 (+39,510)

KERALA: 19,67,406 (+37,290)

UP: 15,45,212 (+29,272)

DELHI: 13,48,699 (+12,481)

## CAPSULE

MODI WON'T TRAVEL TO  
UK FOR G7 SUMMIT

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not travel to the UK next month to attend a summit of the G7 grouping in view of the prevailing coronavirus situation, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Tuesday.

BID TO STALL CENTRAL  
VISTA: CENTRE TO HC

New Delhi: The Centre has told the Delhi High Court that the PIL seeking stay on the construction of Central Vista here amid the raging Covid pandemic was just another attempt to stall the project which has been facing such attempts from the beginning on one pretext or another.

ED FILES CASE AGAINST  
ANIL DESHMUKH

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a criminal case under the anti-money laundering law against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh in an alleged "bribery" case, official sources said on Tuesday.

3 LeT MILITANTS KILLED  
IN J&K ENCOUNTER

Srinagar: Three Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Anantnag district of Jammu & Kashmir on Tuesday, police said.

‘Miracle drugs’  
no silver bulletWHO's thumbs down  
to Ivermectin, IRMC  
no to Tocilizumab

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Disappointing in trials but still trusted by the anxious Covid patients. "Miracle drugs" Remdesivir, Tocilizumab, and Ivermectin and Plasma therapy continue to find favour with people pinning their hopes on them to cure themselves of Covid-19 cure in the absence of any sure-shot cure.

But, medical experts are divided over the efficacy of these so-called "miracle drugs" with the World Health Organisation (WHO) giving them thumbs down, indicating that these were false hopes in the fight against the pathogen. Still, the patients see them as a ray of hope, which is reflected in their huge demand and black marketing and hoarding.

In fact on Tuesday, the WHO recommended against the general use of Ivermectin for Covid-19 treatment stating



that it can be used only for clinical trials. The drug is typically used for the treatment of parasitic roundworm infections.

"Safety and efficacy are important when using any drug for a new indication. @WHO recommends against the use of ivermectin for the #COVID19 except within clinical trials," Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist at WHO tweeted.

The warning came a day after the Goa Government decided to provide Ivermectin to all persons above 18 years of age as a prophylactic treatment of Covid-19.

## 26 Covid patients die at Goa hospital

Health Minister seeks probe by HC

PTI ■ PANAJI

Goa Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Tuesday said 26 Covid-19 patients died at the State-run Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in the early hours and sought an investigation by the High Court to find out the exact cause. He said these fatalities occurred between 2 am and 6 am "which is a fact", but remained evasive about the cause.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who visited GMCH, said the gap between the "availability of medical oxygen and its supply to Covid-19 wards in the GMCH might have caused some issues for the patients" even as he stressed that there is no scarcity of oxygen supply in the State.

Speaking to reporters, Rane admitted the shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen at the GMCH as of Monday.

"The High Court should investigate the reasons behind these deaths. The HC should also intervene and prepare a white paper on oxygen supply to the GMCH, which would help to set the things right," the Health Minister said after CM's visit to the GMCH.



Rane said the medical oxygen requirement of the facility as of Monday was 1,200 jumbo cylinders of which only 400 were supplied. "If there's a shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen, the discussion should be held about how to bridge that gap," he said.

Rane said a three-member team of nodal officers set up by the State Government to oversee Covid-19 treatment at GMCH should give its inputs about the issues to the CM.

Earlier, the CM donning a PPE kit visited Covid-19 wards in the GMCH where he met patients and their relatives.

"There are issues over the availability of oxygen in these wards which need to be sorted out," the CM said. He

announced the setting up of a ward-wise mechanism to ensure a smooth supply of medical oxygen.

"Doctors, who are busy treating patients, cannot spend their time in arranging logistics like oxygen. I will hold a meeting immediately to set up ward-wise mechanisms to ensure that oxygen is supplied to patients in time," Sawant said.

The CM said there was no dearth of medical oxygen and cylinders in the State but the problem arises sometimes as these cylinders do not reach their destinations on time. Sawant said the State Government is making efforts on all fronts to tackle the pandemic. "We have abundant supplies of (medical) oxygen. There is no scarcity in the State," he said. Goa's Covid tally stood at 1,21,650 as of May 10, while 50 deaths had taken the toll to 1,729, an official said.

Meanwhile, Sawant warned of action against private hospitals that refuse the coverage of Deen Dayal Swastha Seva Yojana (DDSSY) to Covid-19 patients. He said the pending financial dues on part of private hospitals under this scheme will be cleared in the next 15 days.

Now, bodies of Covid  
patients found floating  
in Ganga in Ghazipur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Close on heels of the recovery of several bodies of suspected Covid patients found floating in Yamuna river in Hamirpur, many corpses were noticed on the banks of the Ganga river in Ghazipur on Tuesday. The place is around 55 km upriver from Bihar's Buxar, where around 80-90 bodies were found floating on Monday.

Ghazipur District Magistrate MP Singh told mediapersons on Tuesday, "Our officers are present on the spot to investigate and ascertain where the bodies came from. A probe into the matter is underway."

Shocked by the sight of bodies floating in the Ganga river, local residents feared the spread of Covid in the area. They complained of stench coming from the bloated, decomposed corpses, and accused the authorities of inep-



titude. "We informed the administration about the matter, but no action was taken by them. If the situation continues like this, there is fear of us getting infected by corona," Akhand, a local resident, told mediapersons.

Union Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Tuesday termed the incidents as "unfortunate" and asked concerned States to take immediate cognizance of the incident.

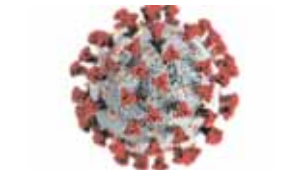
Punjab reports 9 Covid  
deaths every hour

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Dance of death was witnessed in Punjab on Tuesday. Every hour, on an average, nine persons succumbed to the deadly contagion. As the State reported the highest ever single day death toll of 217, two of its districts — Ludhiana (30) and Bathinda (27) — reported one-fourth of the total casualties.

With this, the State's death toll has reached 10,918 at the case fatality rate of 2.38 per cent. Besides, six other districts reported fatalities in two-digit figures — including Amritsar (17), Patiala (17), Muktsar (13), Sangrur (13), Fazilka (12), and Ferozepur (10).

The State registered 8,668 fresh cases in the past 24 hours, at the positivity rate of 15.03



percent, pushing the State's infection tally to 4,59,268. Ludhiana with 1386 fresh cases reported the maximum number of infections in a single day, while Mohali reported second highest with highest positivity rate of 30.81 percent, next to Mansa which registered 34.71 percent positivity rate for 537 cases.

The State now has 76,856 active cases (16.74 percent of the total positive cases), of which whopping 9,652 patients are on oxygen support while 324 are critical and on ventilator support.

## A saviour of bereaved

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Hope always has a trick up its sleeve to steal its way through the difficult times of Covid-19. A lighthouse is always there to beacon you.

The other day in Rajasthan's Sikar district, the village community refused to help the family cremate the body of an elderly woman Sayar Kanwar who had died of suspected coronavirus. Despite the repeated pleading of the deceased poor husband, the villagers did not go anywhere close to the body and even asked her husband to go away.

The village was in the grip of fear as in Sikar district, 21 people died of Covid-19 in 21 days since April 15 after they attended the funeral of a corona patient.

When tehsildar of Sikar district Rajni Yadav learned



that villagers have almost boycotted and distanced themselves from the family of the dead, she decided to act herself. She immediately stepped out of her office and reached the spot wearing a PPE kit and made arrangements for the funeral of the woman.

Before this, Yadav requested community health centre authorities to provide an ambulance to carry the body to the cremation ground. But when no ambulance came for two hours, she went around the area in search of the vehicle.

After some hard work, the Dhod village Tehsildar managed a private vehicle for tak-

ing the woman's body to the cremation ground.

With not many around and the market closed, she alone made all made preparations for the last rites at the cremation ground.

Deriving such all-out support, the grieving and shocked husband lit the funeral pyre of his wife.

"I took the initiative to take the body to the cremation ground in a private vehicle because the ambulance could not be arranged in time. I went to the funeral ground for the preparations because there was no one to assist the elderly man who had two minor grandchildren," Yadav said, adding modestly that it is a small social service from her side in a national crisis.

## Long stay at ICU backfires

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Life-threatening diseases are Lofting pushing patients into despair. Reports pouring in from hospitals show that everyday Covid-19 patients are contracting a complication — ICU psychosis — while undergoing prolonged stays at Intensive Care Units or High Dependency Units for treatment of the affliction caused by the coronavirus.

Prolonged stays at ICUs or HDUs in the midst of a number of gadgets and health parameter monitoring equipment as also life support interventions like ventilators and oxygen administration paraphernalia are also turning patients into insomniacs.

This coupled with negativity due to the uncertainty of

the cure amid fluctuating health parameters is taking a further toll on the patients plunging them into despair.

Cases of ICU psychosis have been reported from Lala Lajpat Rai Hospital, formerly Hallet Hospital, in Kanpur.

Such patients do not respond properly to the doctors or the paramedics attending them. Some are even angered when prodded to take medicines or meals. Some victims of ICU psychosis display bouts of acute anger and have to be given antidepressants or sleep medicines.

According to reports, many of such patients are of younger age or with a background of active field duty.

Reports quoting Professor Ganesh Shankar of Psychiatry Department of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Memorial Medical College, Kanpur suggest life-threatening diseases

like Covid induced unconsciousness in some patients who are often unable to comprehend things properly. The ICU psychosis is also known as delirium.

Experts contend that such patients need counseling by psychiatrists or psychologists who can seek to instill positive thinking in the patients with a reassurance that their condition is improving and everything will be alright soon.

Such measures can help the patients in regaining their confidence and ultimately reviving the psychological wellbeing in the midst of the trauma.

Assistant Professor of Psychology at Gargi College, University of Delhi, Dr Poonam Phogat, said, "ICU Psychosis is a disorder that occurs in patients who are in intensive care due to a certain illness."







# Hry to deploy over 7K teachers on Covid duty

**The Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) faculty from class VI to XII would be deployed for Covid related duties including assisting the doctors and para-medical staff in testing, screening and treatment of Covid patients, data collection, disseminating awareness on Covid appropriate behaviour and home isolation care of Covid patients.**

**NISHU MAHAJAN ■ CHANDIGARH**

As the state struggles to contain the deadly second wave of Covid-19, the Manohar Lal Khattar Government in Haryana has decided to rope in more than 7000 teachers for Covid-19 related duties. The decision came at a time when the spiralling cases of Covid-19 have put an unprecedented load on

Haryana's health infrastructure and the state is staring at manpower shortage to tackle the crisis. The Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) faculty from class VI to XII would be deployed for Covid related duties including assisting the doctors and para-medical staff in testing, screening and treatment of Covid patients, data collection, disseminating awareness on Covid appropriate behaviour and home isolation care of Covid patients. The teachers to be assigned Covid related works are currently undergoing training sessions through online mode in all 22 districts of the state. "These training sessions which began on May 7 would continue till May 12 and include technical sessions on management and treatment of Covid patients including oxygen and ventilation therapy and awareness sessions on

Covid appropriate behaviour, home isolation care, hand washing techniques and proper use of masks etc," according to a letter issued to all civil surgeons by Director Health Services (Training), Haryana. The government's decision to deploy teachers for Covid related duties has however not gone down well with the teachers' associations in Haryana. They have criticized the decision in the wake of reports that more than 700 government schools employees on pan-chayat poll duty lost their lives due to Covid in Uttar Pradesh. Haryana, which is among the worst affected states in the country, has been witnessing 12000-15000 daily Covid cases and over 150 deaths since the past several days. The state has imposed a lockdown till May 17 to contain the spread of the virus.

Satpal Sindhu, state president, Haryana School Lecturers' Association while talking to The Pioneer said that there are more than 7000 PGT/TGT (Science teachers) in the list compiled by the concerned Department who would be assigned the Covid related works. In view of risk involved in Covid duty, we have demanded that all teachers should be given Covid vaccination before joining such duties. If a teacher dies due to Corona during such duties, their families should be given compensation, he said. Yogender Chahar, general secretary, Lecturers' Welfare Association, Haryana, said that teachers with comorbid conditions should be exempted from Covid related duties. It is a matter of life and death... And, one hour virtual training is not enough to learn how to deal with Covid patients or per-

form other duties amid the pandemic, he added. Notably, this is not the first time when the teachers in the state have been engaged in non-teaching activities. In the past, the teaching staff had been assigned the work to conduct survey for making Parivar Pehchan Patra and perform various duties during celebrations like Swachhta Hi Sewa, Gram Samridhi evam Swachhata Pakhwada, Saraswati Mahotsav, International Gita Mahotsav, Kapal Mochan Mela among others. Infact, the State Government had faced severe criticism from various quarters for deputing school teachers to carry out priest duty and count donated cash offerings at the Kapal Mochan Mela in Yamunanagar district and for deputing faculty of colleges at nakas in Mahendragarh district.

## DCs of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali to meet twice a week to deal with Covid situation

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

To curtail the spread of the Covid-19 infection in the tricity, the Chandigarh Administration on Tuesday decided that a committee comprising deputy commissioners of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali will meet twice a week online to ensure effective coordination in all Covid-19 related matters such as lockdown restrictions, hospital management, supply management, vaccinations among others. In compliance with the High Court's order, a meeting was chaired by the Governor Punjab and Administrator UT Chandigarh VP Singh Badnore to discuss uniform anti corona measures in the tricity. Senior officers of UT Administration, senior doctors of all three medical institutions including PGIMER and the Deputy

Commissioners of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula attended the meeting. In the meeting, it was also decided that director health services of Mohali, Panchkula and Chandigarh will also meet twice a week over video conference to decide uniform and coordinated approach in medical treatment of Covid patients under the guidance and consultation of PGIMER. It was also decided that in case of emergencies anywhere in the tricity, the concerned authorities will provide oxygen, medicines, medical equipment like ventilators among others to each other to avoid any untoward incident. In the meeting, it was also decided to request the Punjab and Haryana High Court for a separate quota of 5 MT of liquid oxygen exclusively for PGIMER. **787 NEW CASES, 10 DEATHS IN CHANDIGARH** Chandigarh's Covid tally shot up to 51,857 as it recorded 787 new cases on Tuesday. With this, the city now has 8625 active cases while 10 more deaths took the toll to 585. While 348 men tested positive, the number of women infected is 439. The total number of samples tested in the last 24 hours was 2829 while the overall number of tests conducted was 444,454. Though cases were reported from all sectors, Manimajra reported 42 new cases, Dhanas had 36 cases. As many as 805 people were discharged from various facilities of the city. Meanwhile, 39 affected areas in Chandigarh were declared containment zones till May 31. Regular screening and monitoring will be done by medical teams in these zones.

# Khattar inaugurates 150-bedded Covid Care Centre in Sirsa

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Tuesday inaugurated a 150 bedded Covid Care Centre at Baba Tara Charitable Hospital and Research Centre in Sirsa. In this Centre which was inaugurated virtually, ventilator beds have been installed along with the facility of oxygen. After the inauguration of Covid Care Centre, the Chief Minister said that now, there is no shortage of oxygen in Haryana. The state quota has increased from 152 tonnes to 282 MT. Besides this, demand for getting additional oxygen quota has also been made to the Centre, he said. He said that the State Government is supplying oxygen as per the requirement to all hospitals. At the same time, an oxygen cylinder refilling facility is being made available to the patients staying in home isolation. A portal has been made for this system, on which patients are also apply-

ing and social organisations are also getting themselves registered, he added. Khattar said that the State Government is making all possible arrangements to tackle this Pandemic. He said that private hospitals and social organisations are coming forward to arrange for oxygen beds. The Chief Minister also expressed gratitude to Baba Charitable Trust for setting up a Covid Care Centre. **COMMUNITY POLICING SHOULD BE IMPOSED IN VILLAGES** The Chief Minister said that as the Covid-19 infection is spreading in the villages therefore 'Theekri Pehras' (community policing) should be imposed in the villages. He said that till now, the Covid-19 infection was limited to urban areas but the disease has now started spreading its wings in



rural areas too. Therefore everyone has to remain vigilant. Teams have been constituted to conduct door to door investigations in the villages and every department is cooperating in this, he added. All those who are taking part in agitations should be made to stay in isolation centres and should be allowed to go back to their respective villages only after proper medical screening, he said. **CM FLAGS OFF TWO OXYGEN TANKERS, AIRLIFTED BY IAF** The Chief Minister flagged off two tankers from the International Airport, Chandigarh that were to be airlifted by cargo plane for bringing oxygen supply to Haryana. These tankers have been sent to Bhubaneshwar and will carry about 45 tonnes of oxygen. The Chief Minister said that tankers are being airlifted daily for oxygen supply so that uninterrupted oxygen supply can be ensured and the Covid-19 patients in Haryana do not have to face any problem. He said that the tankers will return next day with liquid medical oxygen supply from the Tata Steel plant in Odisha. The Chief Minister said that the supply of medical oxygen is coming from many places such as Rourkela, Jamnagar, Angul etc. by train or is being airlifted. So far, the aircraft has made 19 rounds and 436 metric tons of medical oxygen has been supplied through 36 tankers. The Chief Minister said that the Indian Air Force is doing commendable work during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Khattar further said that 500 bedded hospitals are being set up in each in Panipat and Hisar. Army's cooperation is also being taken in this work, he added.

## Five out of 13 Covid positive prisoners, who had escaped from Rewari jail arrested

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

Haryana Police has arrested five Covid-19 positive prisoners, who had escaped from special sections of Rewari Jail on the intervening night of May 8 and 9. A total of 13 prisoners had escaped from Rewari's dedicated facility for Covid-19 positive inmates in the state. A spokesperson of Haryana Police said that those arrested were identified as Naveen Sharma alias Golu, Ajit alias Neta, Rajesh alias Kalia, Ashish and Abhishek. Immediately after the incident, several teams of the Haryana Police including CIA and nearby SHOs had launched a search operation to nab the criminals. Police have managed

to nab 5 prisoners. Efforts are on to nab the other inmates, he added. All were lodged in the section designated for Covid patients and fled after cutting grills of their barracks. These inmates were sent to Rewari jail after they tested positive for Covid, the spokesman added. The undertrials who had escaped from the jail are facing cases including murder, theft, dacoity and rape in Rewari and Mahendargarh. As many as 493 Covid positive undertrial prisoners from different parts of the state are lodged in the special section of the Rewari jail. Inmates from different Haryana jails are shifted to this facility for isolation and treatment once they test positive for Covid-19.

## Punjab Govt gives 'last chance' to terminated National Health Mission contract employees due to Covid situation

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

A day after the services of Around 1,400 'agitating' contract employees, working under the National Health Mission (NHM), were terminated after they refused to join work despite repeated pleas, the Punjab Government on Tuesday decided to give them "last chance" considering the massive surge in Covid-19 situation. Setting May 12 as another deadline, the Government has decided to "reinstate" the NHM employees whoever wanted to re-join their duties by calling off the strike. In a letter issued to all Civil Surgeons of the 22 districts, the state National Health Mission director observed that after the instructions regarding termination of protesting employees were passed, several reports were received from the districts that many employees wanted to return to their duties after calling off their

strike. These protesting employees also gave their joining to the concerned civil surgeons or senior medical officers, added the letter. Taking into account the developments, the Government has decided to give a "last chance" to these protesting employees in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic by allowing them to join their duties by 5 pm on Tuesday. These employees have also been asked to submit an "undertaking" at the time of their re-joining, that they would not proceed or participate in any strike in the future. In case any employee participates in the strike on May 12 (Wednesday), the NHM Mission Director has asked the Civil Surgeons to issue their "termination orders" right away. Notably, the state Health and Family Welfare Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu had appealed to the agitating NHM employees to resume their duties from Monday morning in the larger

public interest as the State has been dealing with the second wave of coronavirus. Citing deadly Covid wave, he pointed that Punjab was combating the pandemic that has witnessed a sharp rise in coronavirus cases and deaths. "Instead of serving the helpless and needy people in this hour of crisis, it is unfortunate that NHM employees have decided to proceed on with the strike," he had added. Around 3,000 employees had been on strike for the past one week, demanding regularization of their services. As the State Government had set Monday 10 am as deadline for the protesting NHM employees to join work otherwise their services would be terminated, around 1,600 joined the work while remaining 1,400 did not report to duty. Acting tough, the Government decided to issue their termination orders by Monday evening. Among 1400 employees,

whose services were terminated, include auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs), nurses, data entry operators, Ayurvedic medical officers, community health officers, multipurpose health workers, among others. At the same time, the Civil Surgeons had been directed to recruit "voluntary staff" to replace the sacked employees. A senior government official maintained that because of the strike, the state's campaign against Covid-19 has been a hit, especially in the state's rural areas. "As the CHOs, ANMs, multipurpose health workers remained absent from their duties for a week because of their strike, a massive spike in the positivity rate and also the CFR (case fatality rate) has been noticed. This is because they have a very significant role in sampling and contact tracing of suspected patients. They are the Health Department's need at this hour," added the official.

## Army sets up 100-bed Covid hosp at Faridabad

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

A 100-bed hospital has been jointly set up by the Army with the Haryana Government at Faridabad for Covid -19 patients. Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Krishan Pal Gurjar on Tuesday inaugurated Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Covid-19 Medical College in village Chhainsa in Faridabad district. He said that this medical college has been made operational by the Indian Army under the command of Lt. Gen. Manjinder Singh, Commander of Western Command. The Union Minister said that this Covid-19 Hospital is

of 100 oxygen beds, of which 65 beds have been reserved for men and 35 beds for women. Soon, 35 ventilator beds will also be set up in this hospital. He informed that 300 oxygen cylinders have been arranged for this hospital. A 24-hour ambulance service and a smooth system of oxygen have also been provided here. On this occasion, Lieutenant General Manjinder Singh of the Western Command said that the doctors of the Indian Army have experience in the treatment of Covid-19. He informed that a team of 10 doctors and nursing staff of the Army will be working here with the cooperation of local health authorities.

## Punjab CM directs for expediting work on scheme to provide homes to urban poor

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

Underlining the State Government's commitment to provide homes to the urban poor, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Tuesday directed the Local Government Department to expedite work on his flagship Basera project to achieve the target of giving proprietary rights to 10,000 slum households by September 2021. Reviewing the functioning of Local Government Department during a virtual meeting, the Chief Minister asked the officials to fast-track all major projects under the State and Central Government schemes to ensure their completion and commissioning by December this year. Under the Basera scheme, 196 slums had been identified and 25,850 households surveyed, he pointed out, calling for urgent completion of the

work of transfer of proprietary rights to 10,000 households in the next four months. He also directed the Department to ensure completion of all sanctioned 97,598 houses under the PM Awas Yojana also at the earliest. Referring to unutilized funds under the AMRUT, Smart City, and some other schemes, the Chief Minister stressed the need to complete the projects at the earliest, while underlining the importance of immediate steps to initiate new sanctioned works also on priority. Terming the Budha Nullah scheme as a key project for the State, he emphasized the need for ensuring proper and timely completion, and asked the Department to complete certain phases by December 2021. The Chief Minister underscored the importance of bringing Punjab in top-ranked States in terms of cleanliness and door-to-door collection under

the Swachh Bharat Mission, while directing the department to expedite the various Surface Water Projects too. The Department must put special effort for the implementation of the Management and Transfer of Municipal Properties Act, he stressed, pointing out that that was a long-standing political demand, which his government was committed to realizing. HUDCO, UEIP (various phases) and fire services were some of the other projects which the Chief Minister listed out as important for the upgradation of urban infrastructure in the State. Local Government Minister Brahm Mohindra earlier apprised the Chief Minister of the progress on various projects, and assured of their timely completion. Principal Secretary Local Government, Ajay Kumar Sinha, made a detailed presentation on the schemes underway in the state.

## Hry reports more recoveries than fresh Covid cases for second consecutive day

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

In a positive development, Haryana reported more number of recoveries than fresh Covid-19 cases for the second consecutive day on Tuesday. The state reported 11637 fresh Covid cases while 15728 persons recovered from the virus. The death toll due to Covid-19 however remained high with 144 people succumbing to the virus in the last 24 hours, as per the state's health bulletin. A day before, 161 deaths, 12718 Covid cases and 16192 recoveries were reported in the state. According to the health bulletin, the death toll due to Covid-19 has reached 5910 while the state's cumulative tally stood at 640252. There were 108997 active cases in the state. Rohtak has reported max-

imum of 18 fatalities followed by 16 in Mahendragarh, 13 in Gurugram, 14 in Karnal, 12 in Hisar, 10 in Bhiwani, nine in Ambala, eight each in Faridabad and Jind districts, six in Panchkula and Charkhi Dadri, five in Kurukshetra, four each in Panipat and Jhajjar, three in Sonapat, Fatehabad and Yamunanagar and two in Sirsa. A maximum of 2659 fresh infections were reported in the worst affected district of Gurugram followed by 1255 cases in Faridabad and 928 in Hisar. The state recorded a positivity rate of 21.47 percent on Tuesday. The cumulative positivity rate was recorded at 8.07 while the recovery rate stood at 82 percent in Haryana. The fatality rate in the state was recorded at 0.92 percent. Till date, more than 79.84 lakh samples have been tested in Haryana, the bulletin stated.

## Crop procurement

## Hry Deputy CM directs to transfer pending payment in bank accounts of 56k farmers

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Tuesday issued orders to transfer the payments in farmers' bank accounts with immediate effect whose payments have not been transferred due to various reasons. About 56,000 bank accounts of the farmers are yet to receive payments, out of which payment in 50,000 accounts will be made by Wednesday, said the Deputy Chief Minister, who presided over a meeting with senior officers of the Food and Supplies Department and Hafed here. In the meeting, Dushyant reviewed the procurement and payment process with the officers and gave necessary guidelines. He said that about 12,000 accounts are being investigat-

ed for which correct information is being obtained post contacting the farmers. Apart from these, there are more than 16,000 farmers who have not uploaded their account information correctly. Such farmers will be asked to make their online records in a week so that payments can be initiated, he added. The Deputy Chief Minister expressed satisfaction over the online transfer program of wheat procurement this year and said that giving money against the produced crops to the farmers directly in their account is one of the main objectives of the Government. He hoped that the process of uploading correct records and bank account information will improve eventually in the next season and then every farmer will receive the pay-



ments against the procured crops within 48 hours. He further said that orders have been given to purchase the wheat in the grain markets of the state for which gatepasses have been issued. Such procurement will be completed by Wednesday. The officers have been directed to complete the wheat procurement work by May 15, he added. Dushyant Chautala also informed that for the farmers whose wheat has not yet arrived in the mandis, soon a day will be fixed for the government procurement.



# Sonia, Rahul misleading people, abetting job 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 they “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 pan-



demic,” the letter said.

“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, Bencil 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 “zimmanama” 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 CPFR 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.

Chhattisgarh Government was also constructing a new Assembly complex in the State.

## 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 stated.

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-

## 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, Baryonyx 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 at 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 Naadu 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 Shiekhpora,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 Batamaloo 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.

## 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 Nagrale 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



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 likes 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, Ittihaad, 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

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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 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.

N Nagarajan | Secunderabad

Girish R Edathitta | Kerala

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Girish R Edathitta | 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.

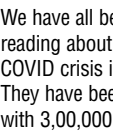


Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal



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.

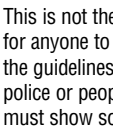


Hollywood star — Drew Barrymore



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



PRABIR BANERJEA

Agrovoltaics (or Agrophotovoltaic), despite its recent resurgence, is not a new concept. Designed in 1981, Agrovoltaics 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 agrovoltaics 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 agrovoltaics 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 Agrovoltaics work?

French scientists found that Agrovoltaic 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.

Agrovoltaics 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.

## Agrovoltaics in India

Early experiments in India found that agrovoltaics 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 agrovoltaics 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 agrovoltaics

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

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

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, agrovoltaics 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



AVNI SABLOK

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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 Murleedharan, 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 durin 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 TROTTING

**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-Mamluk. 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.

**WESTERN RAILWAY WORK OF WIDENING OF CESS Executive :** DEN (S) MMCT, 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.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) to download the tender document, corrigendum and further details. 092 Like us: [www.facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)

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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 Survey 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_DJB 203244_1 10. 05. 2021	22.05.2021 03.05 PM
NIT along with all terms and condition is available on website : <a href="https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in">https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in</a>					
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) Advt. No. J.S.V. 50 (21-22)			Sd/- EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SDW)XII		

## 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, sepah-news.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.

## 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.

## 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 Conricus, 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 parliament 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.

## 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.

"As of now, we expect the negative impact on economic output to be limited to the April-June quarter, followed by a strong rebound in the second half of the year.

"As a result of the negative impact of the second wave, we have revised our real, inflation-adjusted GDP growth forecast down to

9.3 per cent from 13.7 per cent for fiscal 2021 and to 7.9 per cent from 6.2 per cent in fiscal 2022," Moody's said.

Over the longer term, Moody's expects growth to be around 6 per cent.

"The credit profile of India is increasingly constrained by obstacles to economic growth, a high debt burden and weak financial system.

Polycymaking institutions have struggled to tackle and contain these risks, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic," it added.

# 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.

# 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.

## CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS E-TENDER NOTICE (SINGLE TENDER)

**Tender Notice No.: CLW/DKAE/AMC/555/NRIC/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/NRIC/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.irpds.gov.in](http://www.irpds.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/cwrailways](https://www.facebook.com/cwrailways)**

**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 severe 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 our 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 - D1530/2013 A-141, First Floor, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110024 (Phone - 011-41013960).

**UJVNL Limited**  
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CIN No U40101UR200719002596  
Website: [www.ujvnl.com](http://www.ujvnl.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), Vaysi Project, Dakpathar, UJVNL 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 Vyasi 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.ujvnl.com](http://www.ujvnl.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:** Mehroon 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**  
**Ph.: 011-23953776, 23958234**

DP/1175/N/2021

## 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](mailto: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 any where 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 Sthalians 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 opportuni-

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\\_8j1Jd8vjkhpyXAR](https://bgumanagement.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8j1Jd8vjkhpyXAR). **Last date to apply:** June 30, 2021.

## Webinar by Great Learning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Great Learning, an edtech Gcompany 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 undergrad 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 felicitate 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 healthily 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 yoku means bath, or immersing oneself in the forest and soaking in the atmosphere through the senses. In one study, Yoshitomi 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; RPD – 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](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://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/692d38](https://internshala.com/i/692d38)  
Deadline: May 20, 2021

### MOBILE APP DEV AT SRI TECHNOCRAT

Location: Lucknow  
Stipend: ₹7,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/1daf93](https://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](https://internshala.com/i/9c73a2)  
Deadline: June 5, 2021  
Skill(s): C#, .NET, C#.NET, Node.js, C++ Programming, React Native, Angular 7.0

## INBRIEF

### SCHOLARSHIP TEST FOR ENGINEERS

The CareerLabs has announced CareerLabs Assured Placement Program (CLAAP) 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 CLAAP 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 reimaged 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  
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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 shortest 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, 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 is of 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.

"Indian 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 elaborate 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."

The New Zealanders, said he and the MI players started to feel apprehensive shortly before the competition was halted.

"It was when cases started to come with the teams. They were a little more fearful, a little more apprehensive," said the 52-year-old, who returned home on Saturday.

"Chennai (CSK)

announced their cases and we'd played Chennai at the weekend, so straight away, the dynamic changed. I certainly noticed from within my group. I'd spend most of my time with the Kiwis and the Aussies, their mindset had changed.

"We started to get Indian guys in our environment whose families were sick. There were bereavements as well and we were taking a bit of a cue from those guys who were saying 'no, we want to carry on' and the messages were coming back that this is a good distraction."

Pamment said at no stage did he feel his health was going to be put in jeopardy within the bubble set up by MI at a Mumbai hotel.

He said long before the suspension of IPL, he was aware of the pandemic getting worse in India and the event should not have been spread across six venues.

"If it (IPL) had been held solely in Mumbai, perhaps it'd have been easily managed."

# India covered all bases for WTC final: Parthiv

FIANS ■ 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

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."

## ► shortpasses

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 also miss the Euros.

BUFFON TO QUIT JUVE

TURIN: Gianluigi Buffon said that he will bring the curtain down on his time at Juventus after nearly two decades at the end of the season.



**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Before Shri Satish Kumar Jain, HCS, Additional Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Chandigarh.  
Sub: Transfer of ownership rights of 100% share of SCF No. 605, Motor Market & Commercial Complex, Manimajra. Chandigarh from the name of Late Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati to the name of Mrs Gulati Tyres Sales through Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati S/o Shri Anand Pal Gulati. It has been reported by (i) Smt. Kanchan Gulati W/o Late Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati (ii) Shri Rohit Gulati S/o Late Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati (iii) Shri Rajesh Gulati S/o Late Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati all r/o H. No. 945, Sector 12, Panchkula that M/s Gulati Tyres Sales was a Partnership firm and the above named firm was dissolved as per the dissolution deed dated 31.03.2021. As per the said Dissolution deed Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati S/o Shri A. P. Gulati had received the SCF No. 605, motor market & commercial complex, Manimajra Chandigarh. It has further been reported by (i) Smt. Kanchan Gulati W/o Late Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati (ii) Shri Rohit Gulati S/o Late Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati (iii) Shri Rajesh Gulati S/o Late Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati all r/o H. No. 945, Sector 12, Panchkula has applied for the transfer of ownership rights to the extent of 100% share in respect of SCF No. 605, Motor Market and Commercial Complex, Manimajra, Chandigarh in their favour on the basis of intestate death of Shri Vijay Kumar Gulati S/o Shri A. P. Gulati. If anybody has got any objection upon the mutation of the said share in the said property in favour of the above named applicant, he/she may file the same in writing, in the office of the undersigned in his office Room No. 115, First Floor, New Deluxe Building, Municipal Corporation Sector 17, Chandigarh within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the ownership of the said property will be transferred accordingly and no further claim whatsoever shall be entertained at any later stage.  
Satish Kumar Jain, HCS, Additional Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Chandigarh

# 'Windies may never return to dominate world cricket'

PTI ■ KINGSTON

Pace legend Curly Ambrose believes the current lot of Caribbean youngsters doesn't really understand what cricket means to the West Indies and so the two-time world champions will never be able to relive the glory days again.

West Indies had lifted first two World Cup titles in 1975 and 1979 and it took 33 years for the team to claim another ICC title when Darren Sammy had guided them to the 2012 T20 World Cup crown and repeated the feat four years later.

"Most of the youngsters we have now probably don't quite understand what cricket means to West Indians in the West Indies and abroad because cricket is the only sport that really unites Caribbean people," Ambrose told *Talk Sports Live*. "This is no disrespect to the players we have now because we have a couple of guys who have some quality in them and can become great, but what we



have to understand is that I don't think we will ever see those great, exceptional glory days again."

The 57-year-old, who claimed 405 wickets in 98 Tests between 1988 and 2000, said it is difficult to find talented cricketers from the island nation nowadays.

"It's going to be difficult to find another Viv Richards or a

(Demond) Haynes and (Gordon) Greenidge, a Brian Lara, Richie Richardson, you know, a Malcolm Marshall, Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Michael Holding, Andy Roberts, and the list goes on and on, Clive Lloyd," Ambrose said.

"It's going to be extremely difficult to find those quality players again."

Ambrose said West Indies team can improve their ICC rankings but won't be able to dominate the way it did in the 80s and 90s.

"When we were the best team in the world, West Indians all over the globe could walk and boast about how good we were because we were the best, so it's going to be difficult to see those glory days again," he said.

"Yes, we can be competitive and climb up the ICC rankings and be a force to be reckon with again, but those glory days, I don't think we will see them again."

# 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 Indians, including Gurjoat Singh Khangura, took part in the ongoing shotgun World Cup in Lonato, where they could not make

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 Samareesh 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.