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INDIA IS VERY
MUCH A DEMOCRACY**WORLD 8**
GAZA TUNNELS DESTROYED I
N HEAVY AIRSTRIKES**SPORT 12**
OZ IPL CRICKETERS
RETURN HOME

DEHRADUN, TUESDAY MAY 18, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹2

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HEALTH: SHILPA
11 VIVACITY

Case load 4-week low, India turns the corner

Nation sees lowest Covid count in 25 days in last 24 hrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's Covid-19 case load saw a major dip on Monday hitting a four-week low as Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh recorded major decline in number of cases and overall situation looked promising for the first time in months.

On Monday, India recorded 2,42,903 cases and 3,707 deaths which is the lowest single-day count since April 19 when the country recorded 2.57 lakh cases in 24 hours.

Of course, the Monday number also reflects the impact of lower testing at the weekend, but the fact that positive rate is beginning to count down gives an undeniable impression that India may have peaked out and now there will be a painful process of plateauing.

Even on Sunday, the daily cases dropped below the 3-lakh mark — 2,81,386 to be precise — for the first time in nearly a month. This was the lowest count in 25 days.

On May 12, India recorded 4,205 fresh Covid deaths, while on May 7, the country

had recorded its highest ever cases of 4,14,188.

In a substantial drop in both Covid-19 fatalities and infections in Maharashtra on Monday, the cases dropped to 26,616, while the daily deaths came down to 516 on Monday, in what came as a big relief to the State authorities.

A day after Maharashtra logged a staggering 974 and 34,389 new cases, the situation in the State improved as the infections dropped by 7,773 cases, while the daily deaths came down by a substantial 458.



Health workers attend Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment at Shehnai Banquet Hall isolation centre, in New Delhi, on Monday PTI

Lockdown, measures pay dividends in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The timely lockdown and proactive public health measures taken by the Delhi Government to fight the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have helped the city in bringing down the total number of Covid-19 cases to 4,524 in a day on Monday.

The positivity rate is also going down steadily during past few days. At 8.42 per cent, the positivity rate is the lowest

since April 9 when it stood at 7.8 per cent. According to the health bulletin released by the Government on Monday, Delhi reported 4,524 new Covid-19 cases, lowest since April 5, and 340 fatalities on Monday.

The national Capital conducted 53,756 tests, including 41,849 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests on Sunday.

A total of 10,918 people recovered from the infection during the period, the health bulletin said.

Covid-19 IN INDIA
TOTAL CASES: 2,52,07,982 (+2,42,903)
DEATHS: 2,78,121 (+3,707)
RECOVERED: 2,15,58,262 (+3,90,516)
ACTIVE: 33,61,320
MAHA: 54,05,068 (+26,616)
K'TAKA: 22,42,065 (+38,603)
KERALA: 21,69,370 (+21,402)
UP: 16,28,990 (+9,345)
DELHI: 13,98,391 (+4,524)

RSS outfit starts campaign for patent-free rights for vax, drugs

DEEPAK K UPTETI ■ NEW DELHI

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), an RSS outfit, on Monday asked the Government to use the public health safeguards in the Patents Act to grant licence to more pharmaceutical companies for the production of Covid vaccines and medicines. The country may require 200 crore vaccine doses in the next six months.

The SJM has started a "Digital Signature Campaign" for Universal Access of Vaccine and Medicines. According to sources, though the Centre is working towards giving licence to more companies, the "pharma lobby" may be the pushing against this move.

Talking to *The Pioneer*, National Co-Convener of the SJM Aswini Mahajan, said, "We are trying to identify Indian firms with competence We have the competence, we sell medicines to 200 countries."

Mahajan said in 1990 during the TRIPS negotiations, India presented its side that in the eventuality of a pandemic, the Government has competence to cancel patents. He said in 2009, Indian company NATCO had manufactured cancer drugs bringing its price down by thousand times.

Tauktae threatens Covid spread

Crowded relief centres pose grave danger

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extremely severe cyclone Tauktae has diverted the attention and resources of Covid-19-affected districts across Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Diu and Tamil Nadu, which are already facing shortage of medical supplies from oxygen cylinders to vaccines. As several lakh people have been shifted to relief shelters, there is a greater risk of virus transmission in crowded evacuation shelters. The situation is likely to worsen if any long-term disruption is caused by the cyclone.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Tauktae is close to the Gujarat coast. "The land-fall process has started and will continue during next two hours," the IMD said.

These States are on high alert with transport services suspended and emergency and relief teams on the lookout for possible rescue operations. Tauktae has killed at least 14 people and left a trail of destruction as it brushed past the coastal States of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and



An uprooted tree collapsed on a house due to Cyclone Tauktae at Nerul on Monday PTI

Maharashtra.

Virus lockdown measures, meanwhile, could slow relief work after the storm, and damage from the storm such as uprooted electricity poles, disruption in power supplies may further delay the fight against

the Covid-19 in affected States.

In Gujarat, vaccination was suspended for two days and authorities worked to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people to temporary relief shelters.

According to authorities,

the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has moved at least 600 patients from Covid centres to Government hospitals. While 243 patients were shifted from BKC facility, 176 were removed from Mulund and 184 from Dahisar centre.

Journalists fall easy prey to coronavirus

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-19 on Monday claimed West Bengal's top editor Anjan Bandopadhyay. Two days ago, Sunil Jain, Managing Editor of *Financial Express*, succumbed to the virus infection. The list is long. Nearly 200 journalists have become victims of the lethal virus.

Ironically, while they had been vocal, shaking the authorities to ensure medical facilities to the common man, many among them died for want of timely treatment or due to financial constraints.

According to a study conducted by the Delhi-based Institute of Perception Studies, as many as 171 journalists have died due to Covid-19 between April 1, 2020 and May 10, 2021.

However, April 2021 has

been the worst for journalism world in India as during the second wave at least 55 journalists died in just 30 days.

For instance, television journalist Neelanshu Shukla, associated with *AajTak* channel, Rohit Saldana, celebrated anchor of *AajTak*, Siliguri-based senior journalist in Himalaya Darpan, Mani Kumar Rai, *Malayala Manorama*'s senior journalist D Vijayamohan, poet and journalist Manglesh Dabral, senior journalist Rajiv Katara, Pankaj Shukla from Noida, TV journalist Shankar Suman, Delhi-based senior journalist Rakesh Taneja, and Deputy News Editor Ajay Choudhury from *The Pioneer* shared similar fate.

Actual number of deaths could be even higher as many little known freelancers and scribes of small newspapers

have been reporting at the local level despite lockdown.

Bhubaneswar-based television journalist Prabir Kumar Pradhan, Tripura-based Jitendra Debbarma, Mysuru-based Pavan Hettur, Patna-based photojournalist Krishna Mohan Sharma, Assam-based journalist Dhaneswar Rabha, Ludhiana-based veteran journalist Ashwani Kapoor, *All India Radio* news presenter from Guwahati Golap Saikia, Indore-based senior journalist Manoj Binwal are among the other few who couldn't survive the corona onslaught.

The journalists are already facing Covid-triggered economic pressures. Many have lost their jobs while many fear of layoffs.

Researchers say journalists below age 60 account for most recent deaths. Four journalists

use of the drug last week.

The INMAS-DRDO scientists conducted laboratory experiments with the help of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad.

Giving details about the trials, Bhatt said a substantial number of patients were part of the phase three trials. The tests showed many patients were able to "come out of oxygen (support)", he added.

On availability of the drug, officials said the hospitals across the country will start getting it by June. At pre-

sent, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi and Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) have access to it.

Veterans and serving personnel undergoing treatment for corona at the military hospital in Delhi and for that matter all over the country will be administered the drug as per the doctor's advice, officials said.

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seen as a game-changer in the battle against deadly coronavirus, the first indigenously developed oral drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose drug (2DG drug), which is said to help in faster recovery of virus-infected patients while reducing dependence on supplemental oxygen, was launched here on Monday.

The drug is likely to be made available in all medical settings in the country from June.

The first batch of the drug, developed by the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), was released by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan at an event at the DRDO headquarters here.

The first batch will be used in a limited manner in Central Government medical settings like AIIMS, Armed Forces Hospitals, DRDO hospitals and any other places where the need arises. The deliberations are on to decide on the price, in case it is to be sold in the open market, even as States like Haryana have shown interest to purchase the medicine.



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Health Minister Harsh Vardhan releases the first batch of anti-Covid drug 2DG, developed by DRDO, in New Delhi, on Monday PTI

The story behind 2-DG development

DRDO scientists began working on it in April last year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

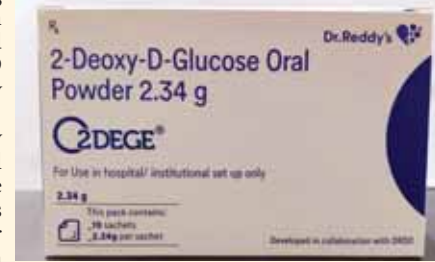
The DRDO got into the act to develop 2-DG drug way back in April last year when the pandemic hit India. The oral drug is result of more than a year of trial and testing.

Project Director Dr Sudhir Chandana told mediapersons during laboratory tests that his scientists found

"Spurred by these critical findings, we asked the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for permission to conduct clinical trials," Chandana said.

The DRDO got the go-ahead for the trials in May. The phase two trials were concluded in October last year and final trials in November.

Dr Anand Narayan Bhatt, another scientist associated with this path-breaking project said the rigorous trials took nearly a year before the DCGI approved emergency



CAPSULE

COVID CURFEW EXTENDED TO MAY 25

Dehradun: The State Government has extended the Covid-curfew ending today till the morning of May 25. The decision was taken in a high level meeting chaired by chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat on Monday. According to Cabinet Minister and State Government spokesman Subodh Uniyal, the decision was taken to enhance the positive results achieved with the enforcement of Covid-curfew so far.

PLASMA THERAPY OUT OF THERAPY REGIME: ICMR

New Delhi: Plasma therapy on Covid-19 patients has not been found effective in reducing the progression to severe disease or death and is dropped from the clinical management guidelines, the ICMR stated.

MARKETS	
SENSEX	49,580.73 (+848.18)
NIFTY	14,923.20 (+245.40)
GOLD	47,961.00 (+285.00)
SILVER	71,707.00 (+622.00)
WEATHER	
MAX 33.0°C	
MIN 22.0°C	
Mainly Clear Sky	
POWERED BY	
UNIGATE GENERAL MEDIA (P) LTD	
https://pioneeredge.in	

TMC workers go berserk after Narada arrests, bail calms nerves

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Pandemic-stricken Bengal had a sigh of relief after the day-long high-voltage political drama that started with the arrest of four senior politicians — two Ministers, an MLA and a former Minister — by the CBI ended with all four getting bail from a designated CBI court late on Monday evening.

Senior Ministers Subroto Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, MLA Madan Mitra and former TMC leader and Minister Sovan Chatterjee were granted bail on personal bonds of ₹50,000 each in the much-hyped Narada payoff case.

Soon after the TMC leadership promptly said, "Yet another egg on BJP's face after

the humiliating defeat in the Assembly elections."

Before the four got bail, thousands of angry TMC cadre hit the streets blockading roads, pelting stones, burning tyres and effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and the CBI and causing a major law and order issue.

The seven-year old Narada sting case involving a dozen politicians and police officers once again snowballed into a Modi-versus-Mamata Banerjee affair on Monday after the CBI in a sudden move arrested four senior politicians evoking mass protests in Kolkata and districts.

Soon after the arrests a CBI statement said, "Firhad Hakim,

SubrotoMukherjee, Madan Mitra and Sovan Chatterjee have been arrested by CBI and are being produced in the jurisdictional court."

Raj Bhawan gherao: Guv warns of action

Kolkata: Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday made a series of tweets slamming Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over violent protests by the ruling Trinamool Congress workers outside the CBI office and Raj Bhavan in Kolkata and asked her to consider the repercussions of such lawlessness.



Representational

Covid-19 in April.

In July 2020, Madhusudhan Reddy, a Kadapa-based staff reporter working for an online media channel in Tirupati died while award-winning crime reporter Prabir Kumar Pradhan, with India's *News18 Odia TV*, was just 35 when he succumbed to Covid-19 in early November last year.

Secretariat employees to return their Golden cards

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The anger among the state government employees on the discrepancies in the State Government Health Scheme (SGHS) is increasing. The Uttarakhand Secretariat Association, the powerful association of secretariat employees has decided to return the golden cards of the SGHS. The President of the association Dipak Joshi said that on many occasions the State Health Agency (SHA) and the health department were informed about the discrepancies and problems faced by the employees in the golden cards but action has been taken to recti-

fy the problems.

He said that a deduction from the salary and pension of the state government employees is being done for the scheme and it appears that the scheme has become a tool to collect money. Joshi said that the association has decided that all the cards of the members and their families would be returned. “These cards would be collected in the office of the association from May 19 to 20 and after that these useless cards would be handed over to the CEO of the State Health Agency,” he said.

Joshi added that the employees would not accept the deduction for the scheme from their salaries now.

Violent clash between Hisar farmers and Police: Khattar meets Amit Shah, Nadda

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Under severe criticism from opposition and farmers' unions over the violent clash between protesting farmers and cops in Hisar a day before, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Monday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda in New Delhi and apprized them about the prevailing situation in the state. After the meeting at Amit Shah's residence, the Chief Minister while talking to the

mediapersons said that the central leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has agreed that the protesting farmers should not have opposed the inauguration of a COVID hospital.

He said that the main agenda of the meeting was to discuss the arrangements made to tackle the second wave of the COVID-19 and the ongoing farmers' agitation against three agriculture laws of the Centre. Notably, a violent crash had broken between the farmers and the police in Hisar on Sunday.

Fireworks in Punjab Cong continues unabated, crisis deepens

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Warfare is on within Congress party's Punjab unit. Less than a year before the assembly elections in the State, the allegations of Punjab Congress training its guns against its own men —critical of the State Government's functioning — have surfaced, compelling the state Congress chief Sunil Jakhar to clarify that the party has never indulged in vendetta politics.

In a surprising turn of events, two-time legislator and Olympian Pargat Singh on Monday alleged that he received a “threatening call”, on the behalf of the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, in case he did not stop criticizing the government over the sacrilege issue.

That was not all! The state's Tourism Minister Charanjit Singh Channi may also face the heat as the state women panel has sent a notice to the State Government in a three-year-old ‘Me Too’ case, involving him, seeking reply within a week's time.

The developments came a day after reports emerged on a vigilance probe into the alleged deals of the close associates of former Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu and his wife Dr Navjot Kaur.

Openly coming out in support of Sidhu and Pargat Singh, Congress' Rajya Sabha MP and Capt Amarinder's known critic Partap Singh Bajwa Pargat asserted that the “continuous attempt” to “browbeat” the Congress MLAs for raising

their voice “must stop”.

“Pargat S being threatened by the CM for doing his duty to the people & raising his voice is extremely distressing. I stand with him & his democratic right to speak about issues affecting Punjab. This continuous attempt to browbeat INC MLAs for raising their voice must stop,” tweeted Bajwa.

There were allegations against the Sidhu couple that one of their aides was instrumental in getting Change in Land Use (CLUS) files of illegal and unauthorized colonies cleared, and 500 acres of Nadda and Karoran village were being made a part of Nayagaon municipal committee by extending the limits. The project could not be completed as Sidhu resigned from the Cabinet.

Allegations were also made regarding the land deals in Dera Bassi, Zirakpur, and Amritsar that some booths of municipalities were given on rent to “known persons” by causing a loss to the state exchequer. Besides, there are allegations of several aides of Sidhu launching their own firms to land projects.

Reacting, Bajwa also tweeted, “Would have been pleasing to the eyes & ears of Punjabis had the Vigilance knocked at the doors of Badal's for their acts of omission & commission from 2007- 2017. Sudden spurt against @sherryontopp & colleagues is ill advised, ill timed & detrimental to the interest of the Congress.”

Besides Bajwa, Cabinet Minister Sukhjinder Singh

Randhawa had also extended his support to Sidhu by asking the former cricketer to join the probe and come clean.

Randhawa, who has also been critical of his own party's government and had also submitted his resignation to the Chief Minister following High Court's adverse judgment in Kotkapura firing case, minced no words to say that Vigilance Bureau was always “used as a tool of vendetta” by the successive governments.

Amidst murmurs of dissent within the state party unit, the Punjab Congress has been divided into two power centres with both factions indulging in a silent warfare against one another. As the anti-Capt Amarinder camp started coming together, the reports of Vigilance Bureau opening a probe against persons close to Sidhu went around — in an apparent attempt to send across a strong message to the “dissident voices” to keep mum else face the music.

The same warning of “falling in line” was reverberated through the Monday's developments where Pargat Singh alleged CM's political adviser Capt Sandeep Sandhu of “threatening” him for questioning the State Government, and Punjab State Women Commission (PSWC) chairperson seeking State Government's reply within seven days in three-year-old harassment case involving Channi and a women IAS officer.

“SANDHU ASKED ME TO GET READY TO FACE

ACTION”:

PARGAT SINGH Indian hockey team's former captain Pargat Singh on Monday accused the Chief Minister of using a stick-and-carrot policy against those raising voice against the State Government's functioning. Pargat Singh, addressing the media, claimed that Capt Sandeep Sandhu telephoned him last week (on Thursday night) and threatened him. “He said that they have collected all papers against me and I should get ready to face action,” alleged Congress MLA from Jalandhar Cantonment.

Making it clear that he was ready to face any “punishment” for speaking the truth and raising his concern over sacrilege incidents, the former Olympian said: “Being a former captain of the Indian hockey team, I was shocked to have got such a message. But if speaking truth on sacrilege and police firing cases was not acceptable to them, let them do whatever they want.”

He alleged that even other MLAs, including Sidhu, who had raised a banner of revolt, were facing intimidation from the Government such as a vigilance probe against some of them. “If vigilance has to do something, it should take an irrigation scam involving many officials to its logical conclusion. But efforts are being made to save big fish,” he said, adding other cases were not being probed by the Vigilance Department. Pargat Singh rued that he was left with no option but to raise his voice.

Known for his upright-

ness and for being outspoken, Pargat Singh has been raising voice against his own party's government from time to time reminding the Chief Minister of the “unfulfilled” promises and the need to “buck up” before it was too late.

Notably, Pargat Singh was one of the senior party leaders who participated in the meeting of MLAs and Ministers to pressurize the Chief Minister to act against the perpetrators of sacrilege and the police firing. He had also held a meeting with the Ministers — Sukhjiinder Randhawa and Charanjit Channi, MP Partap Bajwa and MLA Navjot Singh Sidhu and others on the issue.

REPLY WITHIN A WEEK IN ‘ME TOO CASE’ AGAINST CHANNI ELSE WILL SIT ON DHARNA: WOMEN PANEL CHIEF

Hours after Pargat Singh's allegations, Cabinet Minister Charanjit Singh Channi found himself in trouble with the State Women Commission sending a notice to the Punjab Government in a three-year-old “Me Too case” seeking reply within seven days. In fact, the Commission chairperson Manish Gulati had threatened to sit on dharna in case the government failed to submit a reply within the set time limit.

Channi, who had also raised the banner of revolt against his own government and had held a series of meeting with Dalit MLAs, was facing allegations of sending “objectionable” messages to a woman IAS officer.

The issue was highlighted by the media in October 2018, following which the State Women Panel had taken suo motu cognizance and sent notice to the State Government to submit a reply. However, with the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh's intervention, the issue was “sorted out to IAS officer's satisfaction” as Channi had reportedly “apologized” to her. Later, Channi had also come on record to say that the message was inadvertently sent on the IAS officer's mobile phone and the matter has been sorted out.

However, on Monday, Commission head Gulati issued a notice to the Chief Secretary seeking a status report within a week “otherwise I, along with my team, would sit on fast at the Matka Chowk in Chandigarh from 12 pm on next Monday if the state government failed to submit its reply”.

Making it clear that the Commission has “nothing to do with the politics”, Gulati said that she has sent the notice again as several IAS officers have questioned her integrity and “accused me of pushing the matter under the carpet”.

“Many IAS officers in the State used to tell me that I have not done justice in the case. I cannot be blamed for this. State government should also know the powers of the Commission. I am answerable to the public,” said Gulati, adding that she expects better response from the Chief Secretary as she was also the women officer.

Chandigarh extends Covid-19 curfew restrictions by one week

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Chandigarh administration on Monday decided to extend weekend curfew restrictions by one more week till May 25. It said the weekend curfew was being extended so that gains made by the plateauing number of cases due to the lockdown is not lost.

“Following extensive discussions in various forums and with medical experts, it was decided that the restrictions already imposed under corona curfew should remain in force for another week, that is up to 5 am on May 25, so that gains of plateauing of caseload due to lockdown is not lost,” an official said according to the decision taken in a COVID-19 review meeting here. However, the cases have been coming down in the city during the past few days. The night curfew in the city is in place from 6 pm till 5 am on weekdays. The weekend curfew starts at 5 am on Saturday and continues till 5 am on Monday.

Haryana CM inaugurates Command Centre for Covid control

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Monday inaugurated the Integrated Command and Response Control Centre (ICRCC) at Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority's office at Sector-44. The Centre has been established to make necessary and required arrangements to control the COVID-19 pandemic. After launching the ICRCC, the Chief Minister reviewed the facilities in the Centre.

He also reviewed the present COVID-19 cases status in Haryana and directed the officers concerned to make concerted efforts to provide relief to all the infected patients.

Chief Executive Officer, Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority, Gurugram, Sudhir Rajpal apprised the Chief Minister that through ICRCC, the number of COVID patients would be analyzed. An analysis would be made as to how many patients are there in an area that comes under Primary Health Centre and even further analysis would be done as in which house, how many COVID patients are

there. Later, all this information can be obtained from the Centre's dashboard, he said.

He informed that all agencies engaged in relief operations will be linked with this Centre.

By visiting the dashboard, the patient or his attendants will be able to get information about the availability of beds in hospitals and vaccination centres etc, he added.

It was informed that the COVID patients can contact the District Administration through Whatsapp (9643277788) and COVID helpline number-1950. They can even contact the Administration on the state government's web portal.

The Chief Minister Manohar Lal also inaugurated a 100-bed Covid Care Centre set up by the Hero Group in the auditorium of Government College, Sector-14, Gurugram. With this facility, the Chief Minister has inaugurated Covid Care Centres with a collective capacity of 500 beds for COVID-19 patients in Gurugram over the last two days on Sunday and Monday. The Covid Care Centre built in the auditorium of the college, is equipped with 100 oxygen beds.

Himachal urges Centre to provide 200 ventilators

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Government has urged the Central Government to provide 200 additional ventilators to the state from PMCAREs fund, said Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Monday.

The Chief Minister was presiding over a meeting with the senior officers of the State Government and Principals of Indira Gandhi Medical College, Shimla, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College Tanda and Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Government Medical College, Ner Chowk in Mandi through video conferencing.

He said that presently, there are 49 functional ventilators in Dr. Rajendra Prasad Medical College, Tanda. 19 more ventilators would be provided to Medical College Tanda immediately and 35 more ventilators would be provided to Ner Chowk Medical College, he added.

Thakur further said that in

order to ensure adequate supply of oxygen to the medical colleges, 20 MT each additional storage capacity would be created in Indira Gandhi Medical College, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College and Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Government Medical College at the earliest.

He said that similar efforts should be made to establish PSA plants at various health institutions in the state. The CM also directed that it must be ensured that all the test reports are made available within 36 hours.

HIMACHAL LAUNCHES VACCINATION DRIVE FOR 18-44 AGE GROUP

Himachal Government on Monday launched COVID-19 vaccination drive for 18-44 years age group in the state. Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur launched the vaccination drive from Government Senior Secondary School, Chhota Shimla at Kasumpti, Shimla.

Birth of New Akali Dal: Dhindsa, Brahmputra launches Shiromani Akali Dal

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Years after parting ways with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) led by the Badals, the two Akali veterans — Ranjit Singh Brahmputra and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa — on Monday announced to launch a new Akali Dal — Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukat).

The new political outfit was formed after the dissolution of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Taksali), formed by former MP Ranjit Singh Brahmputra, and Shiromani Akali Dal (Democratic) launched by Rajya Sabha MP Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa. SAD (Democratic) and SAD (Taksali) — both the breakaway factions of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) — had announced on April 19 that they were dissolving both outfits to make way for a new party.

But due to COVID-19, the new launch of the new party got delayed. The announcement of the floating of the new political party was made in the presence of some selective senior leaders of both the parties. “We have decided to launch new political party

‘Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukat)’ today and the organizing structure of the party would be set up soon,” said Dhindsa and Brahmputra in a joint statement to the media after a meeting of the two stalwarts in Chandigarh.

Dhindsa is the President of the new political party while Ranjit Singh Brahmputra will be its Patron. Coming down heavily on SAD (Badal) president Sukhbir Singh Badal, the Akali stalwarts sought his clarification on the acceptance of donations from the people responsible for Sikh genocide as Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (DSGMC) has accepted Rs 12 crore donation from Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan alone.

“We also demand from Sukhbir Singh Badal that SGPC and DSGMC should release a white paper on how much donations have been received from whom during the COVID-19 pandemic and farmers protest by the two Sikh bodies so that the people can learn about the donors. killed,” said Dhindsa and Brahmputra.

Covid curfew extended to May 25 in State

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Government has decided to extend the Covid-curfew in the state from the morning of May 18 to 6 AM on May 25. The decision was taken in a high level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat on Monday.

Informing about the decisions taken in the meeting, cabinet minister and state government spokesman Subodh Uniyal said that the first phase of the Covid curfew had resulted in some desired effect but it was felt that the curfew had to be extended further for more effect. The

government decided to resolve some of the practical problems faced during the Covid-curfew so far. The Government has advised people to postpone marriages but if this can't be done, maximum 20 people will be allowed to attend a marriage after getting an RT-PCR negative report not more than 72 hours old. Similarly, maximum 20 people will be allowed in a funeral procession though this time they will have to secure an e-pass to prevent any inconvenience while returning from the funeral. For attendants of patients, the doctor's prescription will be accepted as the cur-

few pass. An e-pass will also have to be secured on application for travelling in case of a medical emergency and death of a family member. Further, Government fair price shops and bakeries will be allowed to open daily from 7 AM to 10 AM while groceries shops will open on May 21 from 7 AM to 10 AM. Those entering Uttarakhand from the Uttar Pradesh border will not require a pass but will have to register online on the Dehradun smart city portal. The other restrictions and exemptions have remained unchanged from the earlier phase of the Covid-curfew.

136 deaths, 3,719 new patients reported in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State health department reported 3,719 new cases of novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) in Uttarakhand on Monday which increased the cumulative count of patients to 2,91,005. The department also reported the death of 136 patients from the disease. A total of 5,186 patients have so far died from the disease in the state. The authorities also discharged 3,647 patients from different hospitals on the day after their recovery on Monday. The recovery percentage now stands at 9.48 while the sample positivity rate is 6.78 percent.

Out of the 136 deaths reported on Monday, 18 deaths occurred in Sushila Tiwari

government hospital Haldwani, 16 each at Base hospital Bhupatwala, Haridwar and Himalayan hospital Dehradun, 12 each at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh and Arogyadham hospital Dehradun and 11 at Mahant Indresh hospital Dehradun on the day. Similarly nine patients succumbed to death at L. D Bhatt hospital Rudrapur and seven each at Military Hospital (MH) Dehradun and District hospital Rudrapur.

The provisional state capital Dehradun reported 752 new cases of the disease on Monday. Haridwar reported 464, Chamoli 449, Udham Singh Nagar 410, Tehri 299, Uttarkashi 229, Rudraprayag 226, Pauri 205, Almora 200,

Pithoragarh 180, Champawat 153, Nainital 106 and Bageshwar 46 new cases of the disease on Monday.

The state now has 78,608 active patients of the disease. Dehradun continues remains at the top of the table of active cases of the disease with 26,373 patients; Haridwar has 13,547, Pauri 6618, Udham Singh Nagar 6356, Nainital 6,051, Tehri 5,738, Chamoli 2,278, Almora 2524, Rudraprayag 2,362, Uttarkashi 2,179, Pithoragarh 1,728, Champawat 1566 and Bageshwar 1,288 active cases of the disease. To contain the contagion of Covid-19, the state administration has set up 518 containment zones in different parts of the state.

In the ongoing vaccination

drive 28,214 people were vaccinated in 383 sessions in different parts of the state on Monday. A total of 6,80,191

people have so far been fully vaccinated in the state while 19,68,368 have been partially vaccinated.

Many hospitals giving late information on deaths

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The state health department reported 136 deaths from Covid 19 on Monday but the cumulative count of deaths increased by 223 on the day because of the delay in reporting of deaths by some hospitals. In JLN district hospital Rudrapur 65 deaths which had occurred from April 28 to May

7 were reported on Monday. Similarly 15 deaths were reported from BHEL hospital Haridwar. These deaths had occurred from April 29 to May 12. Navya hospital Udhm Singh Nagar too submitted a delayed report of seven patients. On May 14, the Baba Barfani hospital, Haridwar had delayed reporting about the death of 65 patients of Covid -19.

U'khand to adopt decentralised Covid care system

Health dept to set up one Covid Care Centre & Control room in each block of the state

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Faced with a challenge to combat the contagion of Covid 19 which has now spread to the rural areas, the state government has decided to implement a decentralised Covid care system in Uttarakhand. Informing about the plan, the Health secretary Amit Singh Negi told media persons here on Monday that under the new system one Covid Care Centre would be set up in every block of the state. He said that every block would also have a control room and arrangement of manpower for the CCC and control rooms would be made. Negi said that efforts are being made to operate mobile testing

labs which would visit villages for collecting samples.

He claimed that in the last one month, a total of 2600 oxygen supported beds, 678 ICU and 192 ventilators have been added in the health system. "Now we have 6000 oxygen beds, 1495 ICU beds, 983 ventilators, 1500 oxygen concentrators and more than 10000 oxygen cylinders in the state," he said.

The secretary further informed that 26900 telecommunications have been done from April 1 till date in the e-Sanjeevani portal and more than 1.10 lakh calls have been attended on the 104 helpline.

The secretary, Pankaj Kumar Pandey said that more people have been added to the expert committee for Covid headed by the Vice Chancellor (VC) of Medical University. The committee gives advice to the government on various aspects of the disease and its control. He asserted that the state government is ready to

meet the challenge posed by the Mucormycosis (Black fungus). He said that people suffering from other critical illnesses, uncontrolled sugar, excessive use of steroids and those with

low immunity levels are susceptible for the fungal infection. He said that 25 oxygen supported beds and ICU beds in the upcoming 500 bed facility in Rishikesh and Haldwani

would be kept reserved for children. The Inspector General (IG) Police Amit Sinha said that action on 1.90 lakh people for not wearing masks has been taken.

MUCORMYCOSIS:

AIIMS- Rishikesh deploys a team of 15 doctors

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh has constituted a team of doctors to deal with the fungal infection 'Mucormycosis'. One patient of the disease has died while 22 patients are undergoing treatment in the institute. The director of AIIMS Rishikesh, Dr Ravikant said that Covid-19 positive, diabet-

ic patients and patients who are taking steroids are most at risk from the disease. "Because a large number of Covid patients are admitted for treatment in AIIMS, it is being taken seriously to deal with the new disease of fungal infection. We have constituted a team of 15 doctors headed by ENT surgeon, Dr Amit Tyagi. The team will monitor the disease, issue the guidelines related to it from time to

time, take precautions and treat the patients of Mucormycosis admitted in AIIMS," he said.

The Covid nodal officer of AIIMS Rishikesh, Dr P K Panda said that one patient of Mucormycosis has died while ten have undergone surgery. He said that the health care givers should use steroid only when required as per national and international Covid 19 guidelines.

Garud telemedicine launched at AIIMS Rishikesh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat inaugurated 'Garud' the telemedicine service started by All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh on Monday. A total of 898 trained medical and paramedical students will provide relevant information and consultation to citizens in all 110 Tehsils through this service.

Speaking at the inauguration of the telemedicine service, the chief minister appreciated the initiative taken by AIIMS Rishikesh to involve youths of the medical and paramedical fraternity. He said that the state government is making consistent efforts to ensure that as many doctors as possible are posted in the state. The biggest challenge in the current times is to strengthen connectivity and health systems in the border areas of the state, he said. Rawat said that it had been noticed in the past few days that while the Covid situation appeared to have stabilised in the urban areas, the graph is rising in the rural areas. Considering this, all the



officials concerned have been directed to establish control rooms at each block. Before this, control rooms were being made at the district level. The chief minister further said that the state government is presenting the testing data in a transparent manner.

The testing in Uttarakhand is more than the national average which clearly shows that more testing is being conducted

in the state. The state government is also making efforts to ensure that all necessary preparations are completed before the onset of the third wave of Covid-19.

The AIIMS Rishikesh director Dr Ravikant said that the institute had sought applications for project Garud from medical and paramedical students from across the nation. A total of 1,621 students registered

for the programme and out of these a total of 898 students were selected for the Garud service. He said that these include 621 MBBS and BDS doctors and 277 students connected to paramedical courses.

Vidhan Sabha speaker and Rishikesh MLA, Prem Chand Agrawal, Rishikesh mayor Anita Mangai and others were also present on the occasion.

Inclement weather forecast in various districts for 3 days

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Parts of the state are forecast to experience inclement weather on May 18, 19 and 20. According to the state meteorological centre, heavy rainfall is likely to occur at isolated places in Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh districts on Tuesday. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and intense shower is likely to occur at a few places in mountainous regions of the state while hail is likely to occur at isolated places in Dehradun, Tehri, Nainital, Almora, Champawat, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh districts.

Further, the communication sent by the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority to all the district magistrates, the forecast issued

by the state meteorological centre states that some places

Considering this, the DMs concerned have been asked to

SOME PLACES IN DEHRADUN, TEHRI, UTTARKASHI, CHAMOLI, RUDRAPRAYAG, BAGESHWAR, PITHORAGARH AND NAINITAL DISTRICTS MAY EXPERIENCE HEAVY RAIN AND HAIL ON MAY 19

in Dehradun, Tehri, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudraprayag, Bageshwar, Pithoragarh and Nainital districts may experience heavy rain and hail on May 19. Similarly, parts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Dehradun, Nainital, Bageshwar, Rudraprayag and Pithoragarh districts may experience very heavy rain with lightning on May 20.

ensure that focus is laid at every level on alertness, safety and transportation.

In case of any disaster or accident, swift action should be ensured on the ground along with immediate exchange of information.

All officers deputed in the disaster management IRS system and the departmental officials will remain on high alert.

The NH, PWD, PMGSY, ADB, BRO and CPWD among other departments concerned will ensure swift action in case any motor road is blocked to get the same cleared for traffic.

All revenue sub inspectors, village development officers and Gram Panchayat officials will remain present in their respective areas.

All the police stations and posts in the districts along with necessary equipment will remain on high alert.

During the said time period, no officer or employee will keep his or her mobile phone switched off.

Food items and medical supplies should also be arranged for in case people get stuck in any place.

Blockages should be removed from drains and culverts in city and nearby areas.

Special prayers in Char Dham shrines for relief from Covid

VINOD CHAMOLI ■ NEW TEHRI

The priests of the Char Dham shrines- Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri will be offering special prayers for the wellbeing of the devotees and relief from the Covid pandemic.

Due to the faith in the Char Dham, every year millions of people from far and wide reach these shrines to pray to the presiding deities. However, this time the state government has suspended the pilgrimage considering the Covid surge. The priests of Char Dham shrines will perform special prayers seeking relief for the whole world from the Covid pandemic. Yamunotri's portals were reopened on May 14 while Gangotri was reopened on May 15. Kriteswar Uniyal, secretary of Yamunotri Dham and Deepak Semwal, secretary of Gangotri Dham, said that since the day of the opening of the shrines, prayers are being offered daily for wellbeing of the world. Similarly, at Kedarnath, the chief priest Bagish Ling said that a Mahabhishek will be performed daily for the welfare of the world. At Badrinath, which will be reopened today, the Rawal, Ishvari Prasad Namboodari and Dharmadhikari Bhuwan Chandra Uniyal said that lord Narayana will be worshipped for the welfare of the world.

Kedarnath reopened with observance of Covid guidelines



PNS ■ RUDRAPRAYAG

The portals of Kedarnath were reopened ritually for the summer at 5 AM on Monday. The rituals for opening of the shrine began at 3 AM.

The Rawal of Kedarnath, Bhima Shankar Ling, chief

priest Bagesh Ling, Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board additional CEO BD Singh and Rudraprayag district magistrate Manuj Goyal entered the temple complex from the east entrance after which prayers were offered at the main door of the temple before it was opened at 5 AM.

Bagesh Ling then ritually brought out the Swayambhu Ling of lord Kedarnath out of Samadhi after which Nirvan Darshan, Shringar and Rudrabhishek were conducted. The first Rudrabhishek at the shrine was offered on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi wishing for the welfare of the

people.

As the Char Dham Yatra has been suspended due to the Covid-19 surge, only a few priests and officials were present on the occasion. Expressing happiness at the reopening of Kedarnath, chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat wished for the good health of all people. The Tourism and Culture minister Satpal Maharaaz expressed confidence that the pandemic will be overcome soon and that the Char Dham Yatra will begin once the situation normalises. On Monday, the Covid guidelines were observed during the reopening of the Kedarnath shrine.

According to the SOPs issued by the Devasthanam Board, the use of masks, hand sanitisers and thermal screening have been made mandatory among other measures. The Tourism secretary Dilip Jawalkar said that with the opening of the Kedarnath shrine, execution of works under the Kedarnath master plan will gain pace. Teams of the district administration, police, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) along with Health department, electricity department and Jal Sansthan are undertaking their respective works at Kedarnath.



PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

The Badrinath temple will be reopened ritually for the summer at 4:15 AM today.

The seat of Adi Shankaracharya, Uddhav, Kuber along with the temple's Rawal, Ishvari Prasad Namboodari and representatives of the Dimri Panchayat with the Gadu Ghada containing sesame oil used to anoint

lord Badrinath reached the temple township on Monday from the Yogdhyan Mandir in Pandukeshwar.

The Badrinath temple has been decorated with garlands of marigold flowers for the occasion.

Wishing the devotees on the occasion, chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat has appealed to all to conduct their prayers from home.

The Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board media in-charge Harish Gaur informed that all preparations have been completed for reopening of Badrinath. On the occasion of Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti on Monday, prayers were held at the Narsinh temple in Joshimath. The Covid guidelines are being observed in all rituals, he said.

Bihar to track Covid +ve in homes with AI

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

With the situation likely to be precarious in Bihar due to the rural penetration of the Covid pandemic, the State has developed a first of its kind initiative in the country to track Covid positive cases under treatment at home.

The system called “Home Isolation Tracking (HIT) Covid” based on artificial intelligence will help the authorities track the every minute details of the corona patients and also would geo-fence the home or place where the positive cases are lodged.

The app-based system launched as a pilot project in five districts of Bihar will enable the administration to keep a track of the Covid positive cases and help in trend analysis in the districts which can enable that how much population was impacted and how much is home isolated.

“The App was designed and developed in a very rapid manner in a short span of time of five days by pulling up more resources by Bihar IT Department and Bihat Electronics Limited (Beltron) in coordination with the Health Department. The App is synced with the Data of Health department, so that the latest records are updated into the HIT COVID app. It also helped to reduce the time of data transferring between one process to another process,” said Santosh Kumar Mall, Secretary, IT Department, Bihar. He is also the CMD of Beltron and Secretary Tourism.



The most important functionality of the app is to transfer the details of all critical patients to the nearest authority. The app is design in a modular way, so that all the authorities at various level are well informed and involved. For instance, a Block Do Administration unit can see the critical patients under their area as well as the District administration units can also see all the patients across the districts. Similarly, States can also drill down to the last patient, who is critical. Currently it has been made functional in the districts of Bhagalpur, Aurangabad, Gopalganj, Nalanda and Supaul.

“In the pilot mode under operation on Monday around 1000 people tracked in these five districts, 952 cases had normal SP02 level while 23 patients reported to have SP02 oscillating between 90 to 94. A total of 12 Patients were found

to be critical there by escalating the alert right from block level to the State Health Department,” explained an official in the IT Department.

The system will enable the state machinery to track different data a requisite in monitoring of the Covid situation like daily patients whose details are recorded; district wise numbers of home isolated person; a way forward; development of other functionality where a person can be tagged with the health facility in the district thus making it convenient to know the status of the vacant facilities health and medical units within the State.

For the rollout across the state, all the districts have been provided with a user kit that comprises of user manual, walkthrough of the App and other necessary details to make it user friendly for the stakeholders.

States on full alert to blunt Tauktae’s devastating attack

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called-up Chief Ministers of Gujarat, Goa and Lieutenant Governor of Daman and Diu to discuss preparation and response to the Cylone Tauktae in the respective States.

Assuring all possible Central assistance to these states and the UT, Prime Minister said the National Disaster Response Forces (NDRF) teams are also active in relief and rescue operations.

Prime Minister spoke to Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Daman & Diu’s LG Praful Patel over phone to know the preparation to counter cyclone Tauktae and minimise the damage to the life and property.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister had spoken to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on the State’s preparedness to deal with the severe cyclone as heavy rainfall battered Mumbai City and 550 Covid-19 patients shifted to the safer camps. Mumbai airport has also been closed for operations till 8 pm.

Thackeray told the Prime Minister that the administration in the state is fully alert.

Prime Minister assured Chief Ministers and the Lt Governor of all the help from the Central Government in

dealing with the intensifying cyclone.

“Had a detailed telephonic discussion with Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi about Cyclone Tauktae. Briefed him about the situation and measures taken by the state government,” Rupani tweeted adding the Prime Minister assured all assistance.

Rupani visited the State Emergency Operation Center in Gandhinagar and held a video review meeting with district collectors saying generator back-up has been organised for all Covid19 hospitals in case of power failure.

Modi spoke to Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant over phone to enquire about damage caused in the state by cyclone Tauktae. Two persons had died on Sunday in separate incidents caused due to gusty winds triggered by cyclone Tauktae, which also damaged around 100 houses and blocked some highways due to the falling of trees, the Chief Minister had earlier said.

Similarly, the Prime Minister also had a call with Puducherry LG of Daman and Diu and enquired preparedness of the union territory to face the cyclone along the coast and it’s hinterland.

On Saturday Modi had reviewed the preparedness to deal with the cyclone’s fallout in a high-level meeting which was attended by several ministries and agencies concerned.

SC directs MP K Raju’s medical examination at Army Hospital

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday ordered that the rebel YSR MP, KR Krishnam Raju, be medically examined at Army Hospital, Secunderabad. The rebel MP was arrested by Andhra Pradesh crime branch on Friday under sedition charges. The MP said that he was tortured in custody.

However the Bench of Justices Vineet Saran and BR Gavai did not grant bail to Raju, who had filed a petition to cancel the bail of Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy in corruption cases filed by CBI.

Meanwhile, Andhra based TV Channels TV5 and ABN news also moved the Supreme Court against the FIR registered against them by the state police for sedition and other charges after it telecasted “offending speeches” made by YSR rebel MP Krishnam Raju.

Raju who is at loggerheads with Chief Minister obtained Y category security from Delhi High Court. The YSR Congress has already approached Lok Sabha Speaker to terminate his membership of parliament for several violation of party whips.

Appearing for Raju, Advocate Mukul Rohatgi pleaded for ad interim bail and a medical examination of his client by a neutral or private hospital. The Court was informed that Raju had open heart surgery last year, which is why the magistrate ordered a medical check up by a government and a private hospital.

Advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for the Andhra Pradesh government, said that the matter be kept for Friday this week, as the State had not received a copy of the appeal.

2DG works directly on cells infected with Covid: DRDO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From the next week of June as the production span of 2DG will be increased, the Government will be able to make it available to all hospitals and other medical facilities in the country.

“This is because the production time and the cycle of this is about a month. After approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) the industry is working really hard but it will take a month to reach the normal production capacity,” explained the DRDO chief G Sathesh Reddy.

Talking about how the drug will work, Reddy said, “It works directly on the cells infected with Covid and gets absorbed in them. It then stops the virus from multiplying and moving to other healthy cells. It also works on the immune system of the patient so that the person can recover speedily.”

The person needs to take the drug twice a day for around five to seven days. It also depends upon the person’s weight and doctor’s prescription, he added. The 2-DG drug comes in powder form in the

sachet, which is taken orally by dissolving it in water. It accumulates in the virus-infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and energy production. Its selective accumulation in virally infected cells makes this drug unique.

During the first wave of the pandemic In April 2020, INMAS-DRDO scientists had started conducting laboratory experiments with the help of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and found that this molecule works effectively against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and inhibits viral growth.

Based on these results, the DCGI gave nod to Phase-II clinical trials of 2- DG in Covid-19 patients in May 2020. In Phase-II trials (including dose ranging) conducted during May-October 2020, the drug was found to be safe in Covid-19 patients and showed significant improvement in their recovery.

Phase-II was conducted in six hospitals and Phase IIb (dose ranging) clinical trial was conducted at 11 hospitals all over the country. Phase-II trial was conducted on 110 patients.

Armed forces join rescue operation against Tauktae

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Cyclone Tauktae gathers momentum, the Armed forces have got their act together by deploying more than 40 aircraft and helicopters, four warships and 2,000 soldiers comprising 180 teams and nine engineer task forces of the Army. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reviewed the preparedness here on Monday besides taking stock of the ongoing operations in the fight against Covid pandemic.

Giving details of the naval readiness, officials said here the navy has deployed three of its frontline warships after receiving messages to rescue over 400 people onboard two barges off the Mumbai coast in view of cyclone Tauktae.

The ships deployed to extend assistance to the two barges are INS Kolkata, INS Kochi and INS Talwar, Navy officials said.

“On receipt of a request for assistance for a barge ‘P305’ adrift off Heera oil fields in Bombay high area with 273 personnel onboard, INS Kochi was swiftly sailed with a despatch for search and rescue assistance,” Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said. The INS



Talwar has also been deployed for the search and rescue operation, he said.

“In response to another SOS received from barge GAL Constructor’ with 137 people onboard about 8NM from Mumbai, INS Kolkata has been sailed with despatch to render assistance,” Commander Madhwal said.

He said several other ships and aircraft have also been readied for HARD (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) operations in the wake of cyclone Tauktae.

As regards the army deployment, officials said 180 teams and nine engineer task forces are on standby to face

any contingency as Cyclone Tauktae is likely to hit the Gujarat coast on Monday evening.

“Sector commanders and Divisional HQ (headquarter) are in touch with District Collectors and the Revenue Commissioner who is the nodal agency for relief activities in Gujarat,” the Army said in a statement.

The Army said it has identified likely areas — talukas as well as districts — where the impact could be higher and it has geared up its columns to react immediately.

“Focus is to save lives, speedy clearance of routes to ensure movement of oxygen

and standby arrangements at Covid hospitals,” it mentioned.

The Army is continuously monitoring the situation for likely intensity, maximum impact areas and anticipated relief effort in coordination with civil administration, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and other agencies.

Ten integrated teams are poised to be employed for aid to the civil administration of Diu. Moreover, ten teams have already been positioned in the Junagadh area while others are ready to move on short notice of the state administration after analysis of situation as it builds up.

“GOC (General Officer Commanding) of the Army Division located at Ahmedabad attended a coordination meeting chaired by the Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat and has assured all support,” the Army noted.

At this meeting, it was discussed that all efforts should be made to open the roads at the earliest as Gujarat is a critical supplier of oxygen from its ports to outside state destinations.

The Army said it is providing assistance in creating power back up and making preparations for other contingencies at Covid Hospitals in the affected region including Dhanvantri Covid Hospital in Ahmedabad.

Include oxygen audit in your daily efforts, Modi urges doctors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday told doctors that strategy of starting Covid vaccination with front-line warriors paid “rich dividends” in second wave of Covid-19 and urged them to include “oxygen audit” in their daily efforts.

Prime Minister interacted with a group of doctors from across the country, via video conferencing, to discuss the Covid related situation in the country, according to a statement from the Prime Minister’s Office.

Prime Minister thanked the entire medical fraternity & the paramedical staff for the “exemplary fight” displayed by them against the “extraordinary circumstances” of the second wave of Covid.

He said the entire country is indebted to them. Prime Minister noted that be it testing, supply of medicines or set-up of new infrastructure in record time, all these are being done at a fast pace.

Several challenges of oxygen production and supply are being overcome and steps taken by the country to augment human resources, like including MBBS students in Covid treatment, and ASHAs and Anganwadi workers in rural areas, provided extra support to the health system, said the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister underlined that the “strategy of starting vaccination programme with front line warriors has paid rich dividends in the second wave.”

Modi said about 90% of the health professionals in the country have already taken

the first dose. Vaccines have ensured safety of most of the doctors.

Prime Minister requested doctors to include oxygen audit in their daily efforts.

Noting that a large number of patients are undergoing treatment in ‘home isolation’, he requested the doctors to ensure that the home based care of every patient is SOP driven.

He said that telemedicine has played a big role for patients in home isolation, and this service needs to be expanded in rural areas as well.

Prime Minister lauded the doctors who are forming teams and providing telemedicine service in villages.

He appealed to doctors across the states to form similar teams, train final year MBBS students and MBBS interns, and work towards ensuring that all tehsils and districts of the country have telemedicine service.

Prime Minister also discussed the challenge of Mucormycosis and said that doctors may need to put in extra effort towards taking active steps and spreading awareness about it. He further underscored the importance of psychological care, along with the importance of physical care.

The meeting was attended by Member (Health) NITI Aayog, Health Secretary, Pharmaceutical Secretary and other officers from PMO, Ministries and Departments of Central Government.

During the interaction, the Doctors thanked the Prime Minister for his guidance and leadership during the recent surge of cases.

Fewer cases of vein blood clots in India after taking Covishield: Study



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A large study in Denmark and Norway may have found slightly increased rates of vein blood clots, including in the brain, among adults who had received their first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, in India there have been ‘miniscule’ such cases, to be precise 26 serious and severe events following inoculation of the jab being manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII) as Covishield.

However, no clotting case has been reported post Covaxin shot, said the panel on AEFI (adverse events following immunisation) which submitted its report to the Union Health Ministry on Monday. Covaxin is developed by Bharat Biotech.

The statement on the report shared with the media had no mention of if there was any fatal case due to the AEFI.

“The number of bleeding and clotting events following a Covid vaccine injection, of which 26 out of 498 serious and severe events are ‘miniscule’ and “in line with the expected number of diagnoses while no clotting case has been reported post Covaxin shot,” said the panel. Covaxin is developed by Bharat Biotech.

The panel said that Covishield AEFI reported fewer than 0.61 cases per million doses administered. “It is far below the four cases per million doses reported by the United Kingdom’s health regulator, and the 10 cases per million doses reported by Germany.”

As of April 3, 2021, at least 75,435,381 vaccine doses had been administered of which 68,650,819 doses were of Covishield while 6,784,562 jabs of Covaxin. Of these, 65,944,106 were first doses and 9,491,275 second doses.

Thromboembolic is the formation of a clot in a blood vessel that might also break loose and be carried by the blood stream to plug another vessel.

“It is important to know that thromboembolic events keep occurring in the general population... background and

SUSPECTED THROMBOEMBOLIC SYMPTOMS

Breathlessness; pain in chest; pain in limbs/pain on pressing limbs or swelling in limbs (arm or calf); multiple, pinhead size red spots or bruising of skin in an area beyond the injection site; persistent abdominal pain with or without vomiting; seizures in the absence of previous history of seizures with or without vomiting; severe and persistent headache with or without vomiting (in the absence of previous history of migraine or chronic headache); weakness/paralysis of limbs or any particular side or part of the body (including face); persistent vomiting without any obvious reason; blurred vision or pain in eyes or having double vision and change in mental status or having confusion or depressed level of consciousness.

scientific literature suggests this risk is almost 70 per cent less in persons of South and South East Asian descent in comparison to those from European descent,” the panel said. Nevertheless, the Ministry has advised people to be aware of suspected thromboembolic events. (See Box)

Since the Covid-19 vaccination drive was initiated i.e. from January 16 more than 23,000 adverse events have been reported from 684 of the 753 districts of the country. Of these, only 498 cases were reported to be serious and severe in nature, said the panel.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, senior hematologist, cautioned that vaccine-induced thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT) is real. We need to be cognizant of sign and symptoms and one should take proactive steps for early diagnosis and treatment of this entity which could be life threatening.

The researchers from University of Southern Denmark, and Norwegian Institute of Public Health, had from February 2021 through to 11 March 2021 studied 280,000 people aged 18-65 who received first dose of Oxford-AstraZeneca jab to compare rates of blood clots and related conditions with those in the general populations of the two countries. However, the study published in The BMJ had stressed that the risk of such adverse events is considered low.

Raging cyclone disrupts medical treatment in Covid-hit districts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extremely severe cyclone Tauktae has diverted the attention and resources of Covid-19-affected districts across Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Diu and Tamil Nadu, which are already facing shortage of medical supplies from oxygen cylinders to vaccines. As lakhs of people have been shifted to relief shelters, there is a greater risk of virus transmission in crowded evacuation shelters. The situation is likely to worsen if any long-term disruption is caused by the cyclone.

The weather department seems to be clueless as Cyclone Tauktae intensified from a very severe to an extremely severe cyclonic storm rapidly on Monday morning.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has earlier issued a bulletin saying that a cyclonic storm would intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm

and cross the Gujarat coast on May 18 (Tuesday) early morning.

The rapid intensification happened in the early hours of Monday, said the IMD, which had earlier not predicted that Tauktae will intensify into an extremely severe cyclonic storm.

Officials said that Tauktae has been intensifying very rapidly. From a depression formed in the southeast Arabian Sea on May 14 morning, it strengthened into a VSCS by the early hours of May 16. Compared to Tauktae’s 2 days, Cyclone Vayu had taken 36 hours to become a VSCS, while Cyclone Mekanu (4 days) and Cyclone Nisarga (5 days) had developed slower.

These states are on high vigil with transport services suspended and emergency and relief teams on the lookout for possible rescue operations. Tauktae has killed at least 14 people and left a trail of destruction as it brushed past the coastal states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and

Maharashtra.

Virus lockdown measures, meanwhile, could slow relief work after the storm, and damage from the storm such as uprooted electricity poles, disruption in power supplies may further delay the fights against the Covid-19 in affected states. In Gujarat, vaccinations were suspended for two days and authorities worked to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people to temporary relief shelters.

According to authorities, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has moved at least 600 patients from Covid centres to government hospitals. While 243 patients were shifted from BKC facility, 176 were removed from Mulund and 184 from Dahisar centre.

In Gujarat, in the Khambhalia Civil Hospital of Devbhumi-Dwarka district, where 120 Covid-19 patients are on oxygen support, authorities have installed two extra diesel generator sets to deal with power outage.

Arthritis to anti-malaria pills all part of Covid-19 oral drug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From arthritis pills to anti-malaria formulations all are part of the oral drug being developed in several parts of the world as a potential cure for covid-19.

Of a range of oral drug undergoing phase 3 trial, Baricitinib studies are in progress to determine the effectiveness of a Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitor called baricitinib (marketed under the brand name Olumiant for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis) as a potential silver bullet for Covid-19 patients.

Drug firm Eli Lilly on Monday said it has signed a voluntary licensing agreement with Natco Pharma to further expedite the availability of Baricitinib for Covid-19 patients in India.

Fingolimod, an approved drug (marketed under the brand name Gilenya for the treatment of relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis) is being studied as a treatment

for Covid-19 at the First Affiliated Hospital of Fujian Medical University in Fuzhou, China.

Bamlanivimab was designed to block the SARS-CoV-2 virus from entering and infecting human cells. Research on Bamlanivimab is still ongoing, including using it in combination with other treatments.

In a small study commissioned by the French government, 20 patients with Covid-19 were treated with a combination of the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine and the macrolide antibacterial drug azithromycin (Zithromax). Results showed that all patients taking the combination were virologically cured within 6 days of treatment.

Besides, Monoclonal antibodies (MABs), Bamlanivimab (LY-CoV555), Bamlanivimab and Etesevimab, Casirivimab and imdevimab (REGN-COV2), Kinase inhibitors, Kaletra

(lopinavir/ritonavir), Nitazoxanide, Lopinavir and ritonavir, Remdesivir vaccines are also being tested for Covid treatment.

Kevzara (sarilumab), which works similarly to tocilizumab, is also being tested for COVID-19. Early results were not promising. Another drug Monoclonal antibodies (MABs) are antibodies made in a lab.

It can take the body weeks to develop natural antibodies, so using MABs can potentially fight off infections sooner.

The Montreal Heart Institute’s COLCORONA trial is examining the anti-inflammatory drug colchicine, which is widely used to treat gout and some heart conditions. Researchers claimed that among 4,488 participants with mild, at-home Covid-19 cases, colchicine helped cut the combined risk of hospitalization or death by about 21 percent, when compared to patients who didn’t receive the drug.

COVID-19

Cases have come down in Kerala: CM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Monday that the total lockdown has started yielding results as the number of new COVID-19 cases has come down in the last 24 hours. "Though we tested 86,505 samples on Monday, there were only 21,402 people who tested positive. Similarly, there were only 85 deaths in the State," said Vijayan in his daily Press briefing at Thiruvananthapuram.

Vijayan also disclosed that Kerala saw on Monday 99,651 persons getting cured of Covid-19 on a single day. He said that the Test Positivity Rate too has come down on Monday and attributed it to the total lockdown which was well received by the Government.

He said that while the State had logged 37,144 new patients on an average during May 1 to 8, the figure came down after May 9 to 35, 919. "The results are encouraging and we are con-

fident that this achievement could be sustained," he said.

But Vijayan said that there were some instances of hike in the number of cases in certain districts. "There is a discernible reduction in the transmission of the pandemic and this is an encouraging result," he said. The Test Positivity Rate has come down to 24.74 per cent, said the chief minister.

The Chief Minister continued to express his displeasure over the "indifference" of the Centre towards the State. He said there were 80 health workers out of the 21, 402 persons who tested positive on Monday.

A nurse who tested positive was thrown out of the Huda Trust Hospital in Alappuzha district and the police have started a probe into the incident. The Chief Minister also disclosed that the total number of patients undergoing treatment in the State for Covid-19 has come down to 3.62 lakh.

TN logs 33,075 new patients, 335 deaths

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

While neighbouring Kerala has succeeded in bringing down the COVID-19 cases considerably, the number of people getting diagnosed with the infection is increasing on a daily basis.

On Monday, Tamil Nadu logged 33,075 new COVID-19 patients across the State while 335 people succumbed to the pandemic during the last 24 hours, according to the release by the directorate of health and preventive medicine.

There were 2.31 lakh Covid patients across the State as on Monday evening, said the release. But the State held more than 1.49 lakh RT-PCR tests on Monday while the corresponding figure for Kerala was 86,505 samples.

With 335 lives being claimed by the pandemic, the total number of fatalities in the State till date reached 18,005.

Chennai topped the table on Monday with 6,150 new patients, followed by Coimbatore (3,264) and Chengalpattu (2,154).

Tamil Nadu brings in oxygen from Amsterdam

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has said that the State has received liquid oxygen from Amsterdam.

The Chief Minister said this during a meet with journalists on Sunday. However Stalin did not give details on the quantum of liquid oxygen received by the state but mentioned that the oxygen came in Indian Air Force (IAF) flights.

However, Industries Minister Thangam Thenarasu had tweeted that the state has received four cryogenic containers of oxygen with a capacity of 20 tonnes each from Amsterdam.

The present medical requirement of medical oxygen in the state is 480 tonnes to 500 tonnes but the availability is only 440 to 470 tonnes. The union government had last week increased the volume of oxygen allotted to Tamil Nadu from 220 tonnes to 419 tonnes. This was after Stalin had sent a letter to the Prime minister requesting a minimum of 500 tonnes to the state.

IAN S

Goa 02 deaths: Cong files complaint against CM, Health Minister

IAN S ■ PANAJI

The Congress on Monday filed a police complaint against Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Health Minister Viswajit Rane, claiming that their "sheer incompetence, mismanagement and criminal negligence" led to the "deaths of hundreds of Covid patients due to oxygen shortage".

"This complaint reflects the pain and the anguish of all Goans, who have been completely failed and let down by the present State Government on account of their sheer incompetence; criminal negligence; mismanagement and complete disregard to the lives of the peoples in handling the COVID-19 pandemic situation," the complaint filed by state Congress chief Girish Chodankar at the Agacaim police station said.

"Since the onslaught of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic i.e somewhere since April 2021, hundreds of people have died at Goa Medical College (GMC) due to shortage



and or failure of the Government to maintain uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen," it said.

Health Minister Rane on May 11 said that 26 Covid patients admitted to the hospital had died on the day due to lack of oxygen. Days after the admission, Goa Medical College Dean, Dr Shivanand Bandekar claimed that it was not possible to link the deaths to oxygen shortage.

In all, 75 patients have died at the hospital over four days beginning May 11, due to oxygen shortage, forcing even the Bombay High Court's Panaji bench to step in and attempt to streamline the oxygen supply procedure.

Covid care centres for cops come up in UP

IAN S ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government has set up Covid Care Centres at Reserve Police Lines across 66 districts of Uttar Pradesh for police personnel.

The centres will provide proper isolation and quarantine facility and immediate required medical aid to asymptomatic and mild symptomatic police personnel.

These Covid-care centres have 2,993 beds, out of which 299 are oxygen beds in the Police Lines. Covid Care Centres have also been established at about 34 PAC Battalions. Besides, a provision of 628 beds has been made for better treatment and health care of personnel of the Uttar Pradesh Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC). Out of these, 45 are oxygen beds.

As many as 589 policemen were undergoing medical treatment at these Covid-care centres, out of which, a total of 244 policemen have completely recovered and are discharged,

whereas, 322 policemen are being currently treated in these centres.

A 107-bedded COVID-care centre exclusively for frontline workers by Government Railway Police (GRP) and a 236-bedded COVID-care centre by the Training Directorate has been set up to provide immediate and proper medical treatment to the policemen. These fully functioning Covid-Care Centres have not only reduced the burdens on district hospitals but have also led to swifter recovery of policemen as the latter has been able to get a favourable environment and care without any delay. Isolation wards have been set up at Police Lines in Hamirpur, Siddhartha Nagar and Unnao.

Due to the absence of a police line in rural Varanasi, Covid-Care centre has been set up in the Commissionerate Police Line. According to the government spokesman, 200-bed, 120-bed and 110-bed Covid care centres set up in Gorakhpur, Aligarh and Hardoi, respectively.

Won't cancel Class 10, Class 12 exams, says Karnataka Minister

IAN S ■ BENGALURU

Putting an end to speculation about cancellation of Class 10 and Class 12 examinations conducted by State boards, Karnataka Education Minister, S. Suresh Kumar on Monday said that the State Government has not decided yet to cancel examinations of Class 10 (Secondary School Leaving Certificate - SSLC) and Class 12 (II year pre-university) examinations.

In a statement released by the Minister's office here, Kumar has appealed students who are appearing for SSLC (Class 10) and II year PU (Class 12) must not fall prey to any rumours or mischievous statements quoting him on any social media sites.

"I appeal to students preparing for these examinations SSLC and PU II year to continue to study and prepare well for their examinations," he said and added that the state government would soon make a decision on announcing fresh dates for these examinations.

Amid the ongoing onslaught of the pandemic, on May 13, Karnataka had decided to postpone the Class 10 (Secondary School Leaving Certificate - SSLC) state board examination.

Kumar had said in a state-

ment released through his office that the fresh dates for SSLC examinations will be announced only after ongoing Covid second wave subsidies.

Kumar on April 20 had asserted that the examinations for SSLC were scheduled to begin on June 21 and this time these examinations would neither be cancelled nor be postponed and it will be held in the state as scheduled from June 21 to July 5.

Karnataka had decided to postpone these examinations after parents, students and many school associations had raised red flag over holding these crucial examinations from June 21 onwards owing to a severe spike in Covid cases since the beginning of April.

Earlier, Karnataka had postponed the second year Pre-University Exam (PUC) or Class 12 final exams and promoted first-year students.

Given the circumstances, even the Karnataka Common Entrance Test (KCET) 2021, which is held for Engineering admission, was also postponed on May 12.

Karnataka schools are currently observing summer vacation, which will continue till June 14. The new academic year would begin on June 15.

However, high school

teachers had been instructed to conduct revision classes for SSLC students. Summer vacation for high school teachers is till May 31.

With the second wave of the pandemic raising its head in April, several state boards and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) announced their decision to cancel the ICSE or class 10 board examinations in April itself, but Karnataka continues to 'maintain' that it wants to hold examinations for class 10 students.

Subsequently cancelling class 10 examinations, the CBSE even announced an alternative scheme for the evaluation of Class 10 students.

The Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board (KSEEB) - state's education board that holds class 10 examinations, about 8.5 lakh students appear for the SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate or Class 10) examination annually.

While the Karnataka pre-university Examination board (KPUEB) is responsible for conducting board examination for Class 12 or II year PU examinations in multiple streams - humanities, commerce and science.

Jammu records 54 deaths on Monday, highest so far in single day, Kashmir 19

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After wreaking havoc in the urban areas now COVID-19 is spreading its tentacles across rural pockets of Jammu division. On Monday, Jammu division alone recorded 54 deaths, highest so far in one single day, while 19 patients succumbed to the virus across Kashmir division taking the tally of deaths due to covid19 to 3222. So far, Jammu region has recorded 1493 total deaths and 1729 patients have succumbed across the Kashmir division.

Overall the positivity rate reported a marginal decline across J&K. From 11.27 percent the positivity rate reported on Monday stood at 9.65 percent. Significantly, 4042 patients recovered fully and went home from different hospitals.

According to the media bulletin, several districts of Jammu division including Rajouri , Poonch, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi, reported deaths due to Covid 19 on Monday. Jammu district recorded a maximum number of 21 deaths followed by Rajouri where seven patients succumbed to the virus while 11 patients undergoing treat-

ment in home isolation were brought dead in the hospital. In the Kashmir division a total number of 1926 patients tested positive on Monday.

The highest number of 495 cases were reported from Srinagar district followed by Budgam where 373 patients tested positive and Anantnag reported 227 cases.

On its part the UT administration is working round the clock to meet the growing demand of oxygen and hospital beds. Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan Monday received the consignment of 7 Oxygen Generation Plants from Germany, Frankfurt on behalf of Jammu and Kashmir government at Srinagar Airport. Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, PK Pole and Chief Engineer, Kashmir (Mechanical), were also present on the occasion.

The Advisor said that with the Commissioning of these 7 plants, the oxygen requirement in the hospitals of the J&K will almost be fulfilled and will cater to our daily requirements.

Among the 7 plants, 5 will have a capacity of 1000 LPM each while the two plants will have a capacity of 1500 and 600 LPM.

Son-in-law's rise in Kerala CPI(M) upsets leaders

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The political grapevine in Kerala is working overtime to zero in on the names of the 11 CPI(M) representatives to be sworn in along with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday.

Since senior party leaders like E P Jayarajan, A K Balan , Thomas Issac, and G Sudhakaran were denied party tickets to contest the 2021 assembly election, Vijayan is left with comparatively young legislators which give him the freedom to try youth as ministers. One of the names that figures in all discussions is Mohammed Riyaz, the new son-in-law of Vijayan. Riyaz, though a first-time MLA , is certain to be included in the council of ministers and allocated an important portfolio.

The truth is that the hands of Riyaz were visible in the selection of candidates fielded by the party. "It was at his instance that the condolence message posted by the chief minister over the murder of Soumya Santos by the Hamas terrorists in Israel was removed from the social media page of Vijayan," a party insider told The Pioneer.

Riyaz is known for his association with Palestinian cause and holds the Hamas in respect. In addition to Chief Minister Vijayan, leader of the opposition Ramesh Chennithala and former Chief Minister Oommen Chandi too deleted their social media posts condoning the murder of Soumya.

"This is a sign of the extremist Islamist leaders establishing their command in the CPI(M)," said Rajit Kumar, political commentator and general secretary of Samskaar Bharati. He said the CPI(M) has been taken over by the Islamists and this does not augur well for the party.

The 2021 assembly election results have strengthened Vijayan's position in the party and today he is the undisputed leader of the CPI(M) not only in Kerala but all over India. The editorial by People's Democracy decrying the tendency of a section of the media to bestow Vijayan with the entire credit for winning the 2021 election speaks a lot.

K Surendran, Kerala BJP president, has come out with the copy of an email sent by a senior journalist in a TV news channel exhorting her col-

leagues in the field to produce news reports portraying the Hindutwa party in poor light. Though TV channels do not play any significant role in deciding the winner in an election, this allegation by Surendran is a serious development," said Murali Parappuram, author and commentator.

The decimation of Congress, the principal Opposition party even as the Muslim League, its principal ally winning most of the seats it contested has opened a new political discourse in Kerala. The disclosure by leaders of the extremist organisations SDPI and PFI that their cadres voted in favour of the CPI(M) in the assembly election too has to be seen in this backdrop.

"P C George, a devout Catholic, who has never been defeated in any election from his home turf of Poonjar had to bite the dust this time as the Muslims got angry over the statement made by him against Love Jihad. Kerala has become the headquarters of terrorism and the coming days will see more developments in the political battlefield," said T G Mohan Das, a lawyer and commentator.

CPI(M) to have 12 Mins while CPI to get four berths in new Govt

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A 21-member council of Ministers under Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan would be sworn in on Thursday at Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram. The Ministers who would be administered oath of office and secrecy by Governor Arif Mohammed Khan would have representation from the CPI(M), CPI, Kerala Congress (Mani) and other fringe outfits like INL, NCP , Kerala Congress(J) and Kerala Congress (B).

While the CPI(M) would have 12 ministers, the CPI has been allocated four Ministers, parties like JD(S), Kerala Congress (Mani), and NCP would have one minister each. A Vijayaraghavan, the convener of the LDF told the media after Monday morning's meeting held at the Capital city.

Last time the CPI(M) had 13 representatives in the council of ministers. Though no reason has been given by the party leadership to shed the post of one minister, astrological advice to avoid number 13 is being seen as the reason. The ministry that was sworn in



2016 had 13 members from the party and it had to face a series of charges ranging from gold smuggling to favouritism.

The Janata Dal (S) and NCP would have one minister each in the new government. The LDF resolved the demand from the KC(B), Indian National League, Congress (S) and Kerala Congress (J) for ministers by making the party leaders agree to share the duration of the tenure by half. Accordingly, representative of the KC(B) and INL will hold the ministership for the first two and half years, while the KC(J) and Congress (S) legislators would be sworn in after the former's tenure.

Vijayaraghavan said the portfolios of the ministers would be announced by Pinarayi Vijayan after the latter's scheduled meeting with the Governor.

Two terrorists killed in Srinagar

PNS ■ JAMMU

A joint team of security forces gunned down two terrorists in Khonmoh area on the outskirts of Srinagar on Monday without suffering any collateral damage.

According to police, both the terrorists belonged to Al Badr terrorist outfit. They have been identified as Wasim Bashir Pandit son of Bashir Ahmad Pandit resident of Kakapora and Mudasar Ahmad Khanday son of Farooq Ahmad Khanday resident of Bargam Awantipora.

According to a police spokesman, "a joint cordon and search operation was launched by Srinagar Police , Pulwama police, 50RR & CRPF on receipt of the information about the presence of terrorists in the area".

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

In the ensuing encounter, two terrorists were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of the encounter.

With the elimination of these two Al Badr terrorists



now only five terrorists remain active in Srinagar.

"There were six active terrorists in Srinagar of which one was recently killed in Kokernag (Anantnag) gunfight. Now there are five local terrorists still active in Srinagar who would either be killed or apprehended," IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar told reporters on Monday at Pantha Chowk, Srinagar after the gunfight in Khonmoh.

The IGP Kashmir said that there is a "vast network of OGWs" active in Srinagar district of which many have already been arrested and booked under PSA and many are still on the police radar.

"There are C-category OGWs who are being counselled and handed over to their families," the IGP said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Ready, go?

Are we on the right path to addressing the pandemic?
Do we have the right people on our right side?

One of the most prominent scientific voices of the COVID-19 pandemic, virologist Shahid Jameel has resigned as the head of the Indian SARS-COV-2 Genomics Consortia (INSACOG), the scientific advisory group coordinating the country's genome-sequencing work. The scientific body advising the Union Government on the epidemiological and virological aspects of handling the COVID pandemic is the poorer by the surprise resignation of the virologist. He chaired the INSACOG that the Government set up this January to use genetic sequencing to track the emergence of the COVID variants. The consortium first detected the deadly Indian variant, B.1.617, in February itself and shared the findings with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) under the Health Ministry in early March.

It stated that the variant may cause a spurt in infections across the country. The consortium found out that B.1.617 had two mutations, called E484Q and L452R, that could transmit faster and escape antibodies as well. The Health Ministry made this information public on March 24. Responding to a query by the *Reuters* news agency about the lack of a more robust response from the Government to the findings, Shahid Jameel said: "I am worried that science was not taken into account to drive policy. But I know where my jurisdiction stops. As scientists we provide the evidence, policymaking is the job of the Government."

He may not have been mending bridges with his well-known candour. Jameel continued to follow the Indian strain and regularly inform the Government.

On May 13, he wrote a signed article in the *New York Times*, critical of India's response, specially about vaccination. "India should vaccinate with far more than the two million daily doses now....In India the virus was mutating around the new year to become more infectious, more transmissible and better able to evade pre-existing immunity....The timing and scale of the third wave would depend on the proportion of vaccinated people, whether newer variants emerge and whether India can avoid additional super-spreader events, like large weddings and religious festivals....." Jameel gave no reason for quitting the post, but he may just have reached the end of the long rope. Previously, Dr Gagandeep Kang, another scientist and the only Indian woman to be elected as Fellow, the Royal Society of London, resigned as the executive director of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute. She is also the vice-chairperson for Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness, a global consortium facilitating promising vaccine candidates for COVID-19. Kang was also the head of the National COVID-19 task force constituted by the Indian Council of Medical Research for a similar purpose, but disbanded within a month. She is also known to speak out her mind. It is high time that the scientific task force is headed by virologists —with the bureaucrats handling the execution side.

PICTALK



People at an amusement park during the Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations, in Baghdad

AP

Stop the cruelty

The Hazaras, for decades at the receiving end, are still facing torture in Afghanistan

Afghanistan, a country where war and bloodshed never end, is again in the news. And for the same reason. As the US troops start withdrawing from Afghanistan, the ultra-radicals have found the right time to teach the minorities a lesson, in a bloody way, probably the only way they know. The Hazaras have always been at the receiving end in the Afghan society. They have faced discrimination but this time it was dastardly and inhumane as the attack targeted young schoolgirls. A bomb attack on Kabul's Sayed-ul-Shuhada High School killed over 60 people; most of the victims were young girls. It is still not clear which group was behind the attack. But whichever group did it, knew that it had the tacit backing of the majority of Afghanistan, or at least it assumed that. The Afghan Taliban and the Government are both condemning each other for the attack. The Taliban have all along held the Hazaras as heretics. Their Deobandi and Salafi belief system finds faults with the Hazara's religious practices and beliefs. The Hazaras are nine per cent of the Afghan population. They are considered the descendants of Changez Khan, who settled in Afghanistan.

Till the 19th century, they were being traded as slaves. Many radical groups still have the same notion about the Hazaras, a "sub-human" group that has no rightful place in that society. During the reign of Amir Abdur Rehman in the late nineteenth century, the slavery stopped but they still had to perform menial tasks. With the checks and balances provided by the US presence no longer in place, the writing on the wall is quite clear. The Hazaras are going to be targeted by the Taliban as they have always had strained relations. They supported Uzbek opponents of Gen Rashid Dostum in 1997, who massacred the Taliban trapped in Mazar-i-Sharif. Many Hazaras live across the border in Pakistan but they aren't safe either. According to a 2019 report by Pakistan's National Commission for Human Rights, at least 509 Hazaras have been murdered since 2013. In The Kite Runner, Hassan was a Hazara, and we all know what he had to go through. In Afghanistan's current state, not much can be done. Pakistan is no better but, for its part, it is making efforts to promote reconciliation. By all possibilities, Hazaras may be left to fend for themselves.

India is very much a democracy

Contrary to what the critics might say, we have a nation that is strong enough to accommodate all the viewpoints



PRAFULL GORADIA

Lately, several observers of democracy, the Freedom House of the US, V Dem based in Sweden and the Democracy Index of the UK, have commented that India may be moving towards an electoral autocracy. Such a conclusion is extremely unfair and positively damaging. Evidently, these agencies and others are unable to appreciate India having a strong Government. While the American establishment, especially the Pentagon, would like a viable ally against the expansionist China, these so-called liberals prefer to see India as a permanent Third World Society.

Do they realise that India has a dominantly Hindu ethos which is intrinsically an epitome of freedom? Anyone who believes in the phenomenon of karma is a Hindu. Whether he/she is a whole-time worshipper or an agonistic, it enjoys or suffers the fruit of his karma. No god sits on judgement over any individual or his/her community; there is no anticipation of a doomsday or an end of the world. *Anadi-ananta*, or there is no beginning of life and no end, according to Hindu scriptures.

Karma is reminiscent of physics, which says that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Every action by an individual, whether virtuous or vicious, is spontaneously recorded by the grand nature or its celestial computer as well as its reaction or *bhagya*. There is no single judge, nor only two alternatives for the individual, namely heaven or hell.

Any assertion of a single god resembles Deductive Logic which asserts a premise namely so and so is my God and He is the only God. The corollaries that emanate from the premise are flawlessly consistent. In sharp contrast, Hinduism is a specimen of Inductive Logic. Herein lies the freedom intrinsic to Hinduism. To illustrate this contrast, say, four Hindus happened to meet somewhere and discuss the subject of roses. The person from the north may say that roses are red. The southerner could assert that he has seen only white roses. The easterner may express serious



disagreement and insist that the roses in his region are only pink. The person from western India may say you are wrong; roses are always yellow. After half an hour of animated argumentation, each would say: Possibly in your parts of the country, there are other colours of roses. Someone else would propose: Let us agree to disagree, and request that we exchange samples of all four colours.

A member of an Abrahamic or western background, in such a controversial situation, may well declare that roses are always red; the rest must be other flowers or, perhaps, weeds. Just as a Jew is a Jew, the rest are gentiles. That is where conflict and war begin. Prophet Abraham, when he first saw a vision, said God told him to prove his bon-fires by sacrificing his own son Isaac. When he was about to obey God and behead Isaac, the Almighty told him to stop and sacrifice a goat instead. The western religion was thus born in violence; Prophet Moses had a much more violent experience when he freed the Israelis from the clutches

“KARMA IS REMINISCENT OF PHYSICS, WHICH SAYS THAT FOR EVERY ACTION, THERE IS AN EQUAL AND OPPOSITE REACTION. EVERY ACTION BY AN INDIVIDUAL, WHETHER VIRTUOUS OR VICIOUS, IS SPONTANEOUSLY RECORDED BY THE GRAND NATURE OR ITS CELESTIAL COMPUTER AS WELL AS ITS REACTION

of the Egyptians and brought them to Judea.

Again, Jesus Christ, the “son of God”, was brutally crucified, more violence.

When we went to Jerusalem, one morning the guide took us all to the foot of the Calvary Hill on the top of which Jesus Christ was crucified. There are 14 stations, or stops, to the top of the hill where now is the Church of Sepulchre; the “son of God” was buried therein. At the time, I was too weak to climb all the distance. To please my wife and cousins, I said I would climb to station two and sit down and wait for them to return from the top. However, a magnet in the air drew me on and on. I went up all the 14 stations. I am not a Christian nor have been in a missionary school. So, I climbed to the top of the hill and returned without feeling any great extra weakness or fatigue.

In the deductive religions, there is limited scope for spirituality beyond the scriptures and places of worship. As a result, the believers tend to unite communally and fight in

order to fulfill themselves collectively in the service of God.

Whereas, the inductive Hindus are dependent on individual karmas and have no pressure to unite to serve society and, in turn, God. In the bargain, they unite only in the face of severe collective danger. In the bargain, they believe they are peace-loving and in the eyes of others they might seem deficient in courage. But those who believe in the deductive approach have their histories littered with violence and war.

As early as the ascension of Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD, the Caliphs initiated the conquest of the Middle-East, including Morocco in the west, to Iran in the east. The Moors of North Africa invaded Spain in 712 AD and reached Poitiers in France soon. Historian Ian Morris, in his book *WAR*, calls it the “Five Hundred-Years War” but it was actually longer. Eventually, Britain alone conquered one-fourth of the world.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TIME TO STAND UNITED

Sir — I refer to the article ‘*Corona: some real and some hype*’ (May 17). It is true that the Opposition and the so-called section who are against Modi decried lockdown and its adverse implications on livelihood of the people when the first wave struck us. They were against vaccines and questioned its potentiality. Everybody pointed fingers at the Centre.

Now Lockdown 2.0 is being unilaterally announced by the States. Similar is the case with the other States pertaining to the vaccination drive which had some hesitancy among the people earlier because of their false propagation earlier. Won't this lockdown ruin the economy of the States or the people? The creation of such impression among the people is against the people, the States and the entire nation. It is against national interest, basically. It shows the inability of the local Government. When the entire world is fighting Coronavirus, such unwanted criticism by the Opposition does not entail well; in fact, it vitiates the entire atmosphere of recovery from the pandemic.

Secondly, the Centre was forced to keep its commitment on exporting vaccines after getting the raw material. Now the States have invited global tenders for vaccines. Still, the Centre is distributing vaccines to the States. On the other hand, in many States, the medicines, vaccines, oxygen cylinders, Remdesivir or hospital beds are being offered at a high premium. It is not the time to indulge in politics. We, together, should fight the virus tooth and nail

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

ENSURE SAFE CREMATIONS

Sir — The Central Government has directed the States to be on guard against the dumping of dead bodies in the rivers and focus on their safe disposal, besides providing support for ensuring dignified cremation. Witnessing dead bodies in the rivers would amount to among the most undesirable and alarming situations.

The dumping of dead bodies, as well as their safe disposal and protection of

Let's not be hesitant



The surge in COVID-19 cases and the deaths across India, the vaccine hesitation in the rural populace and small towns has emerged as a major obstacle. A large number of people living in villages and small towns are going to “*jhola chhap*” doctors to get treatment for their fever, cough and cold, and not for a COVID test.

The fear of these sections is that “those who test positive will be transferred to COVID hospitals, where no one survives”. It is the fear of positive testing that is clearly preventing these villagers from taking the test and the lack of infrastructure is another major reason for the lack of tests, lack of oxygen, hospital beds

water quality in the rivers, has to be attended to on war footing. The need of the hour is that authorities should spread awareness with the riverside communities on the use of river water and to prevent such incidents of dumping of bodies in the river. The society needs to ensure the safe and dignified cremation of the deceased.

Amit Singh Kushwaha | Satna

ARE THE PEOPLE COMPLACENT?

Sir — Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on May 15 accused the Government and the people of becoming complacent after COVID's first wave, which irritated the commoners. It was the day of the Modi Government's “eighth victory anniversary day” (May 16, 2014). But the big question: Is Bhagwat's accusation of the Government truly a warning to Prime Minister

and vaccines.

There are clear instructions from the Government that there should be no loss of wages. Is it being followed? People passing through, many people, especially those belonging to the economically weaker sections, still fear losing their livelihood. Among the other major factors contributing to the vaccine hesitation are the sample collection and the announcement of the report.

There may be a long waiting period. In fact, the “fear” chasing the villagers, and even some urban people who are pushing them to refuse vaccinations or tests, was due to the ignorance and the mass proliferation of fake news, mostly. A huge wall of suspicion, rumours, fake news and fear was hesitation or outright denial for both the vaccine and the trial. The fact of the matter is that the Government and medical fraternity put “ignorance” behind the hesitation of testing and vaccines in India, social workers and most doctors felt that a massive awareness campaign was needed to combat these obstacles.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Narendra Modi and his Government or an indirect way to play cover-up with Modi? Did Bhagwat suggest that the people became complacent because Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP chief JP Nadda and UP's Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asked the people to attend their political rallies? Did these same people force the Government to set up the infrastructure for the Kumbh Mela where thousands got infected and took that infection to their native towns and villages? Now, only the public has been punished for this “leniency”, losing lakhs of lives and wasting crores of rupees for the mismanagement.

The Government needs to accept that it failed to health infrastructure, beds, oxygen and vaccines

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

The Centre has informed that Delhi will be supplied 3.83 lakh doses in May and no vaccines to be supplied for the age group 18-44 years.

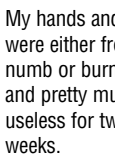


Delhi Deputy Chief Minister — Manish Sisodia



The Russian side is committing stupidity because it is a mistake to turn former friends into enemies

Czech President — Milos Zeman



My hands and feet were either frozen, numb or burning, and pretty much useless for two weeks.

Rocker, guitarist — Eric Clapton



Pressure, anxiety and all were always there. In my case, I realised all my preparations were there in a physical sense. After all of that, the anxiety was always there

Cricketer — Sachin Tendulkar

Back to the jungle! Went to Mumbai to donate plasma but didn't have enough antibodies for donation.



Model, actor — Milind Soman

FIRST COLUMN

INDIAN VIEWPOINT ON ISRAEL, PALESTINE

We proudly state that India is a secular State, but are we actually not communal?



For several days the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians has been going on. We in India have seen on *YouTube* rockets being fired by Hamas, which are often intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome, and the demolition of buildings in Gaza by the Israeli Air Force.

What do Indians think about all this? About 80 per cent Indians are Hindus, and about 16 per cent are Muslims. Almost all Hindus, including the so called 'intellectuals' among them (academics, mediapersons, professionals like lawyers and doctors, writers, etc) support Israel in this conflict, and almost all Indian Muslims support the Palestinians. Only the so-called 'liberals' among the Hindus support the Palestinians, but these would be hardly five per cent of all Hindus. The rest believe all Muslims everywhere in the world to be trouble-makers and terrorists.



This is because despite the Indian Constitution calling India a secular country, the truth is it is highly communal. Most Hindus are communal, and so are most Muslims. This I can say from personal knowledge. When I am with my own relatives, and they are sure no Muslim is around, they often spout venom against Muslims, who are perceived as fanatics and anti-national. When a Muslim is lynched in India most Hindus are indifferent, and some even happy. One terrorist less! In fact, it is because most Hindus are communal that the BJP, which claims to represent the Hindus, won the parliamentary elections in India in 2014 and 2019, and came to power. Thereafter, polarisation of Indian society on religious lines has grown exponentially. No doubt the recent farmers agitation in India cut through caste and religious lines, and the ongoing pandemic has been a reverse to the BJP which is being blamed by the people for not properly handling it. But these are temporary phenomena. Once they are over, the country will again revert to the old status.

The truth is that secularism is a feature of industrial society, as in North America and Europe, but India is still semi-feudal, and most people here are strongly religious. The religious divide between Hindus and Muslims was fanned up by the British rulers by their policy of divide and rule (see my article 'The Truth about Pakistan' and BN Pande's 'History in the service of Imperialism' online), and continued even after Independence in 1947 by some vested interests, particularly after the BJP came to power in 2014.

Some people claim that the recent elections in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu where the BJP and/or its ally (like the ADMK) suffered a reverse, shows that the BJP is on the decline. I do not agree. A few carefully engineered communal riots will neutralise this trend.

Unless India becomes a highly industrialised country, communalism will thrive in India. To end communalism, a radical transformation of Indian society is required, which is only possible by a mighty historical united people's struggle, culminating in a revolution, but this is as yet nowhere on the horizon.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court. The views expressed are personal.)

My heart is in the West though I am in the East

When your country burns, there is nothing more important left to do than be with all your loved ones around, all together

For the last few days, despite the very challenging times in India, and Delhi in particular, where I have been living and working for the past two years, I haven't really "been" in Delhi. I mean: physically, I have. But while I am physically here, my thoughts, my prayers, and my fears are in Israel. My family, my friends, my co-workers, live mostly in areas that have been fired on by Hamas, and so have had to spend the last few days and nights running between their apartments and their shelters.

As a matter of fact, since last Tuesday, Hamas, the terrorist organization controlling Gaza, has fired about 3000 rockets towards Israel. Three thousand times in less than a week, the Israeli population, the elderly, the adults and children, had to move as quickly as possible and run to



The author is head of Public Diplomacy at the Israel Embassy in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.

Rise of religions and decline of the West

In an increasingly globalised world, there is greater civilisational, social and ethnic self-consciousness. But cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people

India has seen an uprising of religious consciousness, pride, assertiveness and aggression in recent years like never before. The credit or blame is reserved for the BJP generally, though now prominent parties like the AAP, TMC and Congress are also seen as following suit. But is rise of religious and civilizational identity particular to India, or is it a global phenomenon of our times? From Islamic nations to Europe, from Brazil to Philippines the phenomenon seems to be taking shape. Three decades ago, the American political scientist Samuel Huntington made such a prophesy for our times.

The post-Cold war world has changed fundamentally, so he wrote. The world has never been multipolar and multicivilizational before -- while being so interconnected - in the entire human history. The most important distinctions between people in this new world will not be ideological or economic but cultural; most important and dangerous conflicts will occur not between rich or poor but between people belonging to different cultural entities. End of Cold war has led to global resurgence of religions around the world, involving intensification of religious consciousness, rise of fundamentalist movements, escalating ethnic conflicts and ethnic cleansing.

Huntington identifies another significant phenomenon taking place in the post-Cold war world: the relative decline of the western power. East is on its way to equating with the West. The US and UN are unable to suppress bloody local conflicts and rising China is increasingly assertive. Asian civilisations are expanding economically. Economic growth creates basis for enhanced military power and political influence. As the power and self-confidence of non-Western societies increases, they assert their own cultural values and reject those imposed on them by West. Most notable cultural resurgence is happening in Asia and Islamic nations generated by their economic and demographic dynamism.

The multi-civilisational world and rise of religions: Huntington writes empires rise and fall, governments come and go, civilizations remain and survive political, social, economic, even ideological upheavals. The great religions are the foundations on which great civilisations rest (Confucianism, Hindu, Islam, Judeo-Christian). The 20th century ideological conflict between Liberal Democracy and Marxist Leninism was only a fleeting, superficial historical phenomenon, a temporary aberration in the centuries-old human history. History of the world has been the history of civilizations, and conflict between them. Religion is the most important factor in determining civilisation.

The most salient cause of religious revival is the process of social, economic and cultural modernization which has disrupted longstanding system of identity and authority. In an increasingly globalised world, there is greater civilisational, social and ethnic self-consciousness — because people define themselves by what makes them different from others. Cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people.

In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of superpower is replaced by the clash of civilizations. Global politics began to be reconfigured along cultural lines: civilizational identities are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration and conflict. Present day conflicts between West and China, West and Islam, cohesion and unity of Islamic nations, China and Islamic connection against



THE GREATEST CHALLENGE COMES FROM ISLAM AND CHINA. THAT EMBODY GREAT CULTURAL TRADITION VERY DIFFERENT FROM WEST AND, IN THEIR EYES, SUPERIOR TO IT. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY, WHEN A CIVILISATION'S POWER HAS EXPANDED, IT HAS ALWAYS USED THAT POWER TO EXTEND ITS VALUES, PRACTICES AND INSTITUTIONS TO OTHER SOCIETIES

The author is a public policy analyst and a lawyer. The views expressed are personal.



West, Turkish and Iranian support to Azerbaijan in conflict can all be explained on the basis of this theory. **Is western liberalism universal?**

Most non-western nations take offence to the West's sitting as the jury on the level of democracy and freedom in their governing systems--while the non-western world can never judge the west. Huntington questions the imposition of western liberalism on the non-western world: its universalism. He states that western assumption that the only river of civilization is our own and all others are either tributaries to it or lost in the desert sand is an egocentric illusion of the West. Universalism justifies western cultural domination over others by making other societies ape western practices and institutions. What west calls universal, others see as imperialism. It increasingly brings West into conflict with other civilizations, most seriously with Islam and China.

He states major differences in political and economic development among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures. East Asian economic success as well as difficulties in achieving stable democratic political system, has its source in East Asian culture. Islamic culture explains failure of emergence of democracy in much of Islamic world. Japan and India are the only two civilizations which had a class system paralleling that of the West; why only two non-western societies to sustain major democratic governments. The recent coup in Myanmar, dictatorial regimes in Russia and Turkey despite their proximity to the West, failure of West to import democracy to Iraq, Afghanistan,

North African nations after Arab Spring can be understood by Huntington's theory.

Huntington dismisses Fukuyama's End of History theory that predicts victory of western liberalism over all other ideologies. The collapse of communism in Soviet Union doesn't necessarily mean that other societies will import the Western ideology of liberal democracy - this underestimates the non-western culture's creativity, resilience and individuality. This thinking is rooted in Cold War perspective, that liberal democracy is the only alternative to communism. There are many forms of authoritarianism, nationalism, corporatism and market communism (China) that are alive and well in the world today. More significantly there are religious alternatives that lie outside secular ideologies.

Modernisation and Westernisation: Huntington questions that modernization essentially needs westernization. No one political ideology or set of institutions -- elections, civic associations and other hallmark of western life — are necessary for economic growth. Non-western societies have modernised and can do so without adopting values, institutions, practices of the west. Gulf nations and East Asian economies are the living examples of this in our times.

In fundamental ways the world is becoming more modern and less western. Modernisation strengthens cultures adopting it and reduces relative power of the west. At individual level, modernisation breaks traditional bonds and social relations, creating crises of identity to which religious provides an answer.

Decline of the West: The challenge

that the west faces is not just economic but more importantly to its political influence and liberal value system. The greatest challenge comes from Islam and China, that embody great cultural tradition very different from West and in their eyes superior to it. Throughout the history when a civilisation's power has expanded, it has always used that power to extend its values, practices and institutions to other societies. The era dominated by western ideologies is over, new era will have multiple and diverse civilizations interact, compete and coexist and accommodate with each other.

Second generation indigenisation phenomenon is taking place all over the non-western world. In 1960-70s pro-west governments and west-leaning (often western educated) leaders were threatened by coups and revolutions; in 1980-90s they were increasingly in danger of being ousted by elections. Electoral competitions are won by most popular appeals of ethnic, nationalistic and religious character.

Another challenge that the West faces is the democracy paradox: democratisation conflicts with westernisation. Democracy is inherently a parochialising, not cosmopolitanising, process. As non-western societies take to democracy, or deepen democracy, they seek to assert their own value systems and rebel against the western diktats, often a change from friendly dictator to unfriendly democratic regime for the west. Regionalisation will be the central trend in post-cold war global politics. The US is not likely to have the military capability to manage regional contingencies.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE AAP IS BEHIND THESE POSTERS. I AM BEHIND THE POSTERS. ARREST ME AND OUR MLAs BUT DO NOT HARASS POOR PEOPLE WHO PASTE POSTERS.

— DURGESH PATHAK
AAP LEADER



I WONDER HOW MANY WALLS OF DELHI THE POLICE HAS THOUGHT OF CLEANING, EXCEPT THOSE WHERE PM MODI IS CRITICISED.

— ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI
CONGRESS LEADER

the closest bomb shelter. Or to the stairway. Or as far as possible from their apartments' windows. And then, after hearing the explosion and feeling the building shaking, they had to go back to what they were doing before the alarm started and try to keep on living their lives, as if this whole situation was normal.

It is almost impossible to understand this when you don't experience it (and God, I pray that no one has to ever experience this), but when the alarm sounds, you have less than 40 seconds (if you live in the South, you may not even have 10 seconds) to run to a shelter. Less than 40 seconds. Think about it: what can you do in less than 40 seconds? It takes me more time to put my shoes on. More time to write a text message to a friend. Much more time to wake my kids up in the morning!



I am a mother of three small children. Just to imagine — practically — how I would manage taking the three of

them to the shelter in the middle of the night worries me. What if I don't manage? What does it mean? And what if we

live in a place where there is no shelter? These surreal situations and dilemmas happen day after day here. A few days ago, an Indian nurse, Soumya Santhosh, who had been working in Ashkelon in the South of Israel for the last eight years, was killed by a rocket fired at the house by Hamas. Soumya Santhosh, the mother of a nine-year-old boy, was working as a caregiver for an elderly woman, and was waiting for the woman's daughter to come home. When the alarm started, she didn't have the time to run to a shelter and unfortunately got hit. A matter of seconds...

My sister doesn't have a shelter in her apartment. When the alarm sounds, they don't have the time to run to a "public shelter". So, they remain at home all together, my sister, her husband, and

their children, and they wait until it passes. Imagine what kind of a feeling that must be, to know that you cannot protect your own children from danger, that you cannot calm them, reassure them.

When our children are born, we are quite clueless, but we all know one thing for sure: we will do everything we can to protect them and give them the best childhood possible. And no one, no one should live through what the families in Israel have been living.

My Indian friends and colleagues from Delhi have been sending me texts since Tuesday, showing love and support, and I know we are blessed to be serving in India in those times. And from here, all I can do is pray for better days in Israel and its surroundings, pray for the day that our neighbours can be our partners, and hope for more

peaceful days and for a brighter future.

There was a Jewish poet who lived in Spain in the Middle Ages, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi. He wanted one thing more than anything in his life: to be able to go to the Promised Land, to Israel. He said: "My heart is in the East and I am in the West".

This sentence reminds Israelis of those who didn't have the chance to go to Israel through the centuries but were dreaming of it. Today, this sentence resonates in me more than ever. As I am sure that it does for my colleagues, Israeli diplomats abroad too. Because when your country burns, you want nothing more than to be with your loved ones, at home, all together. So today, I am in the East, but my heart is in the West, with my loved ones.

Gaza tunnels destroyed in heavy airstrikes

AP ■ GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP)

The Israeli military unleashed a wave of heavy airstrikes on the Gaza Strip early on Monday, saying it destroyed 15 kilometers (nine miles) of militant tunnels and the homes of nine Hamas commanders.

Residents of Gaza awakened by the overnight barrage described it as the heaviest since the war began a week ago, and even more powerful than a wave of airstrikes in Gaza City the day before that left 42 dead and flattened three buildings.

That earlier attack was the deadliest in the current round of hostilities between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers.

There was no immediate word on the casualties from the latest strikes. A three-story building in Gaza City was heavily damaged, but residents said the military warned them 10 minutes before the strike and everyone cleared out. They said many of the airstrikes hit nearby farmland.

Gaza's mayor, Yahya Sarraj, told *Al-Jazeera TV* that the strikes had caused extensive damage to roads and other infrastructure.

"If the aggression continues we expect conditions to become worse," he said.

The U.N. Has warned that the territory's sole power station is at risk of running out of fuel, and Sarraj said Gaza was also low on spare parts. Gaza already experiences daily



A Palestinian firefighter extinguishes a fire from a beachside cafe after it was hit by airstrike, in Gaza City on Monday

power outages for between eight and 12 hours and tap water is undrinkable.

Mohammed Thabet, a spokesman for the the territory's electricity distribution company, said it has fuel to supply Gaza with electricity for two or a three days.

Airstrikes have damaged supply lines and the company's staff cannot reach areas that were hit because of continued Israeli shelling, he added.

The war broke out last Monday, when the Hamas militant group fired long-range rockets at Jerusalem after weeks of clashes in the holy city between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police.

The protests were focused on the heavy-handed policing of a flashpoint sacred site during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish

settlers.

Since then, the Israeli military has launched hundreds of airstrikes that it says are targeting Hamas' militant infrastructure. Palestinian militants in Gaza have fired more than 3,100 rockets into Israel.

At least 198 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes, including 58 children and 35 women, with 1,300 people wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Calls mount for Gaza-Israel ceasefire, greater US efforts

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

UN Security Council diplomats and Muslim foreign ministers convened emergency weekend meetings to demand a stop to civilian bloodshed as Israeli warplanes carried out the deadliest single attacks in nearly a week of Hamas rocket barrages and Israeli airstrikes.

President Joe Biden gave no signs of stepping up public pressure on Israel to agree to an immediate cease-fire despite calls from some Democrats for the Biden administration to get more involved.

His ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, told an emergency high-level meeting of the Security Council that the US was "working tirelessly through diplomatic channels" to stop the fighting.

But as battles between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers surged to their worst levels since 2014 and the international outcry grew, the Biden administration — determined to wrench US foreign policy focus away from the Middle East and Afghanistan — has declined so far to criticize Israel's part in the fighting or send a top-level envoy to the

President Joe Biden gave no signs of stepping up public pressure on Israel to agree to an immediate ceasefire despite calls from some Democrats for the Biden Administration to get more involved

region. Appeals by other countries showed no sign of progress.

Thomas-Greenfield warned that the return to armed conflict would only put a negotiated two-state solution to the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict even further out of reach. However, the US, Israel's closest ally, has so far blocked days of efforts by China, Norway and Tunisia to get the Security Council to issue a statement, including a call for the cessation of hostilities.

In Israel, Hady Amr, a deputy assistant dispatched by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to try to de-escalate the crisis, met with Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz, who thanked the US for its support.

Afghans who helped the US now fear being left behind

AP ■ KABUL

He served as an interpreter alongside US soldiers on hundreds of patrols and dozens of firefights in eastern Afghanistan, earning a glowing letter of recommendation from an American platoon commander and a medal of commendation.

Still, Ayazudin Hilal was turned down when he applied for one of the scarce special visas that would allow him to relocate to the US with his family.

Now, as American and NATO forces prepare to leave the country, he and thousands of others who aided the war effort fear they will be left stranded, facing the prospect of Taliban reprisals.

"We are not safe," the 41-year-old father of six said of Afghan civilians who worked for the US or NATO.

"The Taliban is calling us and telling us, Your stepbrother is leaving the country soon, and we will kill all of you guys."

The fate of interpreters after the troop withdrawal is one of the looming uncertainties surrounding the withdrawal, including a possible resurgence of terrorist threats and a reversal of fragile gains for women if chaos, whether from competing Kabul-based

warlords or the Taliban, follows the end of America's military engagement.

Interpreters and other civilians who worked for the US government or NATO can get what is known as a special immigrant visa, or SIV, under a program created in 2009 and modeled after a similar program for Iraqis.

Both SIV programs have long been dogged by complaints about a lengthy and complicated application process for security vetting that grew more cumbersome with pandemic safety measures.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters last month that the US is committed to helping interpreters and other Afghan civilians who aided the war effort, often at great personal risk. The Biden administration has also launched a review of the SIV programs, examining the delays and the ability of applicants to challenge a rejection. It will also be adding anti-fraud measures.

Amid the review, former interpreters, who typically seek to shield their identities and keep a low profile, are becoming increasingly public about what they fear will happen should the Taliban return to power.

Blinken hasn't seen any evidence on AP Gaza building strike

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday he has asked Israel for any evidence of Hamas operating in a Gaza building housing news bureaus that was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike over the weekend, but hasn't seen any.

Blinken spoke at a news conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, as pressure is increasing on the Biden administration to ask for a ceasefire in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel destroyed a building housing The Associated Press and Al Jazeera and claimed that Hamas used the building for a military intelligence office. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called the building a "perfectly legitimate tar-



get" and told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday that Israel passes such evidence through intelligence channels.

"Shortly after the strike we did request additional details regarding the justification for it," Blinken said Monday. He declined to discuss specific intelligence, saying he "will leave it to others to characterise if any information has been shared and our assessment that information."

Britain calls on Israel to act proportionately

London: The British government says Israel must ensure that its military activities against Hamas are "proportionate," and it is deeply concerned by the destruction of media offices and other civilian targets in Gaza.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman, Max Blain, said Britain is "in contact with our US and UN counterparts and urgently seeking more information from the Israeli government" on Saturday's attack, which destroyed a high-rise building housing the offices of The Associated Press and other media organisations.

"We are deeply concerned by U.N. Reports that 23 schools and 500 homes, as well as medical facilities and media offices, have been destroyed or damaged in Gaza," Blain said.

He added that "Israel must make every effort to avoid civilian casualties and military activity must be proportionate."

EU vows to boost efforts to end Israeli-Palestinian fighting

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union will redouble its efforts to end the upsurge in violence between the Israeli military and Palestinian militants, and seek progress during a special meeting of its foreign ministers Tuesday, the bloc said.

The EU also called the weekend destruction of a building housing major international media "extremely worrying" and said safe working conditions for journalists were essential. The EU has never had the impact Washington can wield in the region and no immediate breakthrough was expected from Tuesday's meeting. Ever since the outbreak of violence last week, the EU has been calling for restraint and condemned attacks that hit civilian populations.

Because EU policy toward the region requires unanimity among the 27 EU member nations, its actions and statements haven't had the impact

that could be expected from a bloc that has large trade and aid interests in the region.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and European Council President Charles Michel both called over the past days to call for an end to the escalation in violence and ensure that civilians get the best possible protection.

Tuesday's meeting is to seek "how best that EU can contribute to diffusing the tensions, stop the escalation and stop the ongoing violence," EU spokesman Peter Stano said.

Pro-Palestinian critics of EU policy insist the bloc has been far too lenient when it comes to imposing sanctions on Jerusalem, but since this too requires unanimity, the issue hasn't yet surfaced for Tuesday's meeting, Stano said.

"Let's not jump ahead. Let's focus on trying to diffuse the situation, trying to solve the situation to normal diplomatic and political means," Stano said.

Report: Microsoft investigated Gates before he left board

New York: Board members at Microsoft Corp. Made a decision in 2020 that it wasn't appropriate for its co-founder Bill Gates to continue sitting on its board as they investigated the billionaire's prior romantic relationship with a female Microsoft employee that was deemed inappropriate, according to a report in The Wall Street Journal.

Citing unnamed sources, The Journal reported online Sunday that board members looking into the matter hired a law firm in late 2019 to conduct an investigation after a Microsoft engineer alleged in a letter that she had a sexual relationship with Gates over several years.

The Journal reported that Gates resigned before the board's investigation was finished, citing another person familiar with the matter.

An unnamed spokeswoman for Gates acknowledged to The Journal that there was an affair almost 20 years ago, and that it ended "amicably."

The spokesperson told The Journal that "his decision to transition off the board was in no way related to this matter."

When he left Microsoft's board last year, Gates said he was stepping down to focus on philanthropy.

In an email sent to The Associated Press late Sunday, Microsoft said that it "received a concern in the latter half of 2019 that Bill Gates sought to initiate an intimate relationship with a company employee in the year 2000. A committee of the Board reviewed the concern, aided by an outside law firm, to conduct a thorough investigation."

France holds global talks to offer debt relief for Sudan

AP ■ PARIS

French and African leaders and international organizations were holding a conference Monday in Paris to negotiate debt relief and raise global support for Sudan's transitional leadership.

French President Emmanuel Macron was hosting the event in the presence Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, head of Sudan's ruling sovereign council, and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, in charge of making changes in the African nation after a popular uprising led to the military's overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

The conference is taking place along with the heads of state of neighboring Egypt and Ethiopia as well as the International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat.

It is meant to be a kind of re-introduction of the new Sudan to the concert of nations, ending 30 years of international isolation," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Monday.

Macron's office said the event aims at having talks on how to boost investment in Sudan and negotiate debt relief.

Sudan's transitional government has taken a set of measures in recent months to transform the country's economy and rejoin the international community after over two decades of isolation.

‘So I raped you.’ FB message renews fight for justice

AP ■ NEW JERSEY

Shannon Keeler was enjoying a weekend getaway with her boyfriend last year when she checked her Facebook messages for the first time in ages. A name popped up that stopped her cold.

"So I raped you," the person said in a burst of unread messages sent six months earlier.

"If you have a moment give me a call."
"I need to hear your voice."
"I'll pray for you."

The messages rocketed Keeler back to the life-shattering night in December 2013 when an upperclassman at Gettysburg College stalked her at a party, snuck into her dorm and barged into her room while she pleaded with him and texted friends for help. It was the final night of her first semester of college.

Eight years later, she still hopes to persuade authorities in Pennsylvania to make an arrest, armed now with perhaps her strongest piece of evidence: his alleged confession, sent via social media. But is it enough?

Before and after the attack, Keeler followed the protocols designed to prevent campus sex assaults or address them when they happen. She had a male friend walk her home from the party. She reported the rape that day, met with police and endured a painful and intrusive rape exam. And she pushed for charges. Yet, at every turn, the justice system failed her, just like it fails most college rape victims.

For all the focus on sexual



Shannon Keeler poses for a portrait in the United States

violence in the #MeToo era, and on student protections under Title IX, very few campus rapes are ever prosecuted, according to victim advocates and the limited crime data available. Only one in five college sex assault victims report to police. And when they do, prosecutors often hesitate to take cases where victims had been drinking or knew the accused.

"It has bothered me over the years that I was never able to do anything," said Keeler, now 26. "If you're not going to help me, who are you going to help? Because I do have evidence."

At Gettysburg, a small school with about 2,500 students, 95 rapes were reported to campus security from 2013 to 2019 — but only 10 non-child rape cases were prosecuted in the entire country during that period, according to school data and county court records.

And that discourages students like Katayoun Amir-

Aslani, who quietly left Gettysburg after her own sexual assault in the spring of 2014, from coming forward.

She met Keeler the night she was assaulted. Then few months later, she was raped at Gettysburg by an acquaintance, she said.

She did not file a report. She did not get a rape kit. Instead, she quietly left school after that spring.

"I didn't have any witnesses, and after the experience I had ... with Shannon, and nothing happened with her, I just (thought), Well, what's the point of me going through all of this for nothing?" said the 26-year-old New Yorker. "So I just didn't really tell anyone."

For Keller, the suspect's withdrawal from school ended the campus Title IX investigation. Two years later, just after the window to file a civil suit closed, then-District Attorney Scott Wagner said he wouldn't be filing charges.

Pak Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif placed on no-fly list

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday added the name of Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif, who has been charged with corruption, to the no-fly list, barring him from leaving the country for medical treatment.

Earlier this month, the Lahore High Court granted Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz — also the younger brother of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif — permission to travel abroad once for medical treatment.

Trump to speak at North Carolina GOP convention on June 5

AP ■ RALEIGH (US)

Former President Donald Trump will speak at North Carolina's annual state Republican Party convention next month, party officials announced Monday.

The former president will speak in person at the June 5 convention dinner in Greenville. Trump narrowly carried North Carolina in 2020 and held numerous events in the state toward the end of his campaign. Trump's speech will be closed to the media, and journalists won't be able to view it via livestream or alternate

Writs seeking fresh swearing in of PM Oli filed in Nepal's SC

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Four writ petitions were filed in the Supreme Court of Nepal on Monday demanding that Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli be sworn in again as he disgraced the office of the President by refusing to repeat all the words she recited during the oath-taking ceremony.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari administered the oath of office and secrecy to Oli as the prime minister at a scaled-down ceremony at Shital Niwas, the presidential palace, on Friday. During the oath-taking ceremony, Oli, the 69-year-old Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist),

omitted the word "vow" when the President recited it, besides "in the name of God".

"I will take oath in the name of the country and the people," Oli, who has become Nepal's prime minister for the third time, said, while President Bhandari mentioned "God, country and the people."

All four writ petitioners have demanded that Oli take another oath of office and secrecy as the one taken on Friday was illegal, The Kathmandu Post reported.

Senior advocate Chandra Kanta Gyawali and advocates Lokendra Oli and Keshar Jung KC have registered a joint writ while advocates Raj Kumar Suwal, Santosh Bhandari and

Nawaraj Adhikary have registered separate writs on the same issue. The petitioners claim that the prime minister disgraced the office of the President by saying "it is not necessary" even when the President repeated the word twice, the report said.

They have demanded that all the actions of the prime minister be declared null and void until he takes the oath again, it said. The petitioners said the prime minister told the president that a phrase of the oath — "I solemnly and sincerely pledge" — was not necessary and such an utterance by the prime minister during the swearing-in ceremony undermined the prestige of the President's Office.

111-year-old Australian recommends eating chicken brains

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australia's oldest-ever man has included eating chicken brains among his secrets to living more than 111 years.

Retired cattle rancher Dexter Kruger on Monday marked 124 days since he turned 111, a day older than World War I veteran Jack Lockett was when he died in 2002.

Kruger told Australian Broadcasting Corp. in an interview at his nursing home in the rural Queensland state town of Roma days before the mile-



stone that a weekly poultry delicacy had contributed to his longevity.

"Chicken brains. You know, chickens have a head. And in there, there's a brain. And they are delicious little things," Kruger said. "There's only one little bite."

WPI inflation hits double digits in April at 10.49 pc

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price-based inflation shot up to an all-time high of 10.49 per cent in April, on rising prices of food items, crude oil and manufactured goods, and experts believe that the uptrend is likely to continue.

This is the fourth straight month of uptick seen in the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation. In March, 2021, it was 7.39 per cent.

The low base in April last year, when WPI inflation was (-) 1.57 per cent, also contributed to the spike in April 2021.

“The annual rate of inflation in April 2021, is high primarily because of rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz petrol, diesel etc, and manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year,” the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said.

Inflation in food articles in April was 4.92 per cent as



prices of protein-rich items like egg, meat and fish hardened. Inflation in this basket was 3.24 per cent in March 2021.

This was led by 10.88 per cent inflation in ‘egg, meat and fish’ basket during April, 10.74 per cent in pulses and 27.43 per cent in fruits.

In vegetables, the rate of price rise was (-) 9.03 per cent, against (-) 5.19 per cent in the previous month.

Inflation in the fuel and power basket was 20.94 per cent in April, while in manu-

factured products it was 9.01 per cent.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said at 4.9 per cent inflation in food articles was at a six-month high and data shows a greater impact of supply chain disruptions at the wholesale level.

“We expect the headline WPI inflation to rise further to 13-13.5 per cent in the current month before commencing a downtrend, whereas the core-WPI inflation may continue to rise over the next three prints to a peak of around 10.5

PRICES OF FOOD ITEMS, CRUDE HARDEN

per cent.

“The likely trajectory of the WPI inflation supports our view that there is no space for rate cuts to support the faltering growth momentum, even as we expect the monetary stance to remain accommodative,” Nayar added.

India Ratings and Research Principal Economist Sunil Kumar Sinha said the impetus to April 2021 inflation came from all the three major groups namely primary article, fuel and power and manufactured products which recorded an inflation of 10.2 per cent, 20.9 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in April 2021.

“Within food components except cereals many major items such as pulses, fruits, eggs, meat, tea etc recorded double digit inflation. In April 2021 core inflation rose to 8.3 per cent. Even inflation ex-fruit and vegetables rose to 10.7 per cent in April indicating that the upsurge in wholesale inflation is not only due to seasonal factors,” Sinha added.

Home sales across top 7 cities up 21% in Q1 2021: PropEquity

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Sale of housing units rose by 21 per cent across top seven cities in India in the first quarter of 2021 to 1,05,183 units against 87,236 units in Q1 2020, according to a PropEquity report.

However, the new supply or launches of housing units decreased by 40 per cent in the same period to 59,737 units in Q1 2020 as against 1,00,343 units.

Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, MMR, NCR, and Pune are the cities where home sales witnessed a growth in Q1 2021 versus Q1 2020 at 13 per cent, 29 per cent, 16 per cent, 26 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively.Only Kolkata witnessed downfall of 20 per cent in home sales during the same period.

“Beginning of Q1 was relatively better for Indian realty as compared to last year and there was higher demand in ready to move in units and the projects nearing completion.

However, the second wave of Covid will lead to muted



demand going forward and we expect sales to pick up post second wave of Covid ending which should be around Q3 or Q4 onwards,” Founder and Managing Director Samir Jasuja said.India’s IT capital, Bengaluru saw a rise of 13 per cent in home sales in Q1 2021 at 12,263, but new launches decreased by 40 per cent at 8,492 units. Chennai saw a 29 per cent increase in home sales in Q1 2021 and new launches decreased by 8 per cent to 4,044 units.Kolkata saw an increase of 26 per cent in home sales in the first quarter at 41,323 units, whereas new launches fell by 48 per cent to 20,269 units.

Only NCR witnessed an increase in both home sales and new launches by 6 per cent and

136 per cent respectively in Q1 2021.

Ambience Group President (Sales & Marketing) Ankush Kaul said: “The current Covid wave has hit the sector when Indian real estate housing demand was on the growth trajectory in Q1 of 2021.”

“We believe the current state of lockdown is short-lived and the execution of the ongoing projects would not be impacted much in terms of delivery timelines. Our two under completion projects in Gurgaon and Noida were witnessing steady demand in Q1 and we believe once the current Covid spread in India is stabilised, the end user demand will again witness growth,” he said.

Federal Bank shares gain over 2 pc after earnings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Federal Bank on Monday gained over 2 per cent after the company reported a nearly 59 per cent jump in its standalone net profit for the quarter ended March.

The stock closed the day with a gain of 2.45 per cent at ₹81.65 on the BSE.

During the day, it jumped 4.70 per cent to ₹83.45.

On the NSE, it gained 2.32 per cent to close at ₹81.50.

Private sector lender Federal Bank on Monday reported a nearly 59 per cent jump in its standalone net profit at ₹478 crore for the quarter ended March.

The bank had posted a net profit of ₹301 crore in the same quarter of the financial year 2019-20.

The profit was higher sequentially also against ₹404 crore in December 2020 quarter.

Sebi proposes framework for gold exchange; suggests trading in electronic gold receipts



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday proposed an elaborate framework for setting up a gold exchange wherein the yellow metal will be traded in the form of electronic gold receipts and will help in having a transparent domestic spot price discovery mechanism.

Also, the proposed denominations - reflecting underlying physical gold - of Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) are 1 kilogram, 100 grams, 50 grams and subject to conditions, those can also be even for 5 and 10 grams.

Apart from issuing a consultation paper on the gold exchange, the watchdog has come out with draft norms for

vault managers and they will be registered as a Sebi intermediaries.

The proposed gold exchange, encompassing the entire ecosystem of trading and physical delivery of gold, is extremely necessary to create a vibrant gold ecosystem in india which is commensurate with its large share of global gold consumption, according to Sebi.

Presenting the Budget for 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that Sebi will be the regulator for gold exchange and Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) will be strengthened to set up the commodity market ecosystem.

Sensex, Nifty log best single-day gains in 7 weeks; banking shares steal limelight

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity gauges Sensex and Nifty registered their biggest single-session gains in about seven weeks on Monday as investor optimism returned amid a consistent drop in new Covid-19 cases in the country.

The BSE benchmark Sensex zoomed 848.18 points or 1.74 per cent to end at 49,580.73; and the NSE barometer Nifty surged 245.35 points or 1.67 per cent to settle at 14,923.15 -- the biggest one-day gains for both indices since March 30.

On the Sensex chart, IndusInd Bank was the top gainer, rallying over 7 per cent, followed by SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC and Bajaj Finserv.

On the other hand, L&T, Bharti Airtel, Nestle India, Sun Pharma, PowerGrid, Maruti Suzuki and HUL were the laggards.

Of the Sensex constituents, 23 closed with gains and 7 suffered losses.

Sectorally, BSE banking, finance, metal and auto indices rallied up to 3.98 per

Rupee gains for 2nd day on positive equities, rises by 7paise

Mumbai:The rupee rose for the second straight session on Monday to close 7 paise higher at a one-and-a-half month high of 73.22 against the US dollar on the back of positive domestic equities and weak American currency.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened higher at 73.24 and moved in

a narrow range of 73.16 to 73.26 in day trade. “The Indian rupee appreciated on Monday extending gains from Friday against the greenback tracking strong local equities and on bets that the second COVID-19 wave in the country may have peaked,” said Sriram Iyer Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

According to Binod Modi, Head, Strategy at Reliance Securities, domestic equities witnessed strong rebound as robust Q4 FY21 earnings and early sign of decline in second wave of daily caseload bolstered investors’ confidence.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended on a positive note, while Tokyo and Seoul were in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a negative note in mid-session deals.

Banking stocks took a breather as it helped in soothing asset quality concerns,”

while telecom and healthcare were in the red.

Broader midcap and smallcap indices surged up to 1.63 per cent.

“Indian indices soared with solid gains led by banking, metal and auto stocks due to fall in infection cases. The market expects a rapid fall in daily reported Covid cases which helped to ease concerns over extended lockdowns and sharp correction in FY22 estimates.

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Art of Giving Day Observed Worldwide

It is usually the family from where the sense of love, affection and sharing happiness to others originates. Actually, the love and affection disseminated by the mother become the stepping stone of encouragement for the children to give to others later in their life. Based on this thought, the 8th Art of Giving Day is being celebrated across the world on 17th May 2021.

The Founder of Art of Giving, Dr. Achyuta Samanta has picked ‘My Mother-My Hero’ as the theme of AOG for

this year to spread the essence of loving others and sharing happiness among them unconditionally. No outdoor activity has been organized to mark the occasion. T

he fans and followers of AOG across the globe are celebrating Art of Giving Day enthusiastically by conveying gratitude to their Mothers. Due to the enduring 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic, requests have been made to one and all, to pay gratitude to their mothers on this theme staying at home this year.



SBI's New Delhi Main Branch opens over 13,000 FCRA accounts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India on Monday said its New Delhi Main Branch has opened 13,729 Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) accounts till date for transfer of foreign contribution to be spent by NGOs and charitable organisations for social cause.

This branch was designated to open FCRA accounts by the Ministry of Home Affairs in October 2020, SBI said in a statement.Out of the total 22,598 active FCRA associations, 17,611 entities (NGOs and associations) approached SBI for opening of FCRA accounts and the bank has already opened accounts of 78 per cent of the applicants, it said.The rest of the accounts shall also be initiated once their pending documentation formalities are completed, it said.

TAIPA writes to CMs for priority vax for telecom workers

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The Tower and Infrastructure Providers Association (TAIPA) has written to the chief ministers of the states and union territories urging for the priority vaccination for the telecom infrastructure field engineers and technicians under frontline workers category. In a statement the telecom infrastructure body said that the whole country is facing the second wave of Covid-19 which is more intense than the previous one. In this regard, Taipa has written to the chief ministers addressing that the telecom infrastructure provider industry have huge manpower consisting of frontline workers (technicians and field engineers) who have been working tirelessly during lockdowns to maintain the telecom services.

UJVNL LIMITED
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006,
Telephone: 0135 – 2763808, Fax 0135-2763508,
CIN No. U46101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvnl.com

पत्र सं. 360 दिनांक 17.05.2021

e-Tender Notice

Office of the Executive Engineer (M) Tiloth Power House, Uttarkashi invites online bid from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No.:- 03/EE(M)/2021-22
Name of work :- Polysuiphide epoxy resin based protective coating on outer surface of exposed penstock and at C-point of Tiloth Power House, Uttarkashi.
Estimated cost :- ₹ 34,96,724.00 (excluding taxes)
Date of availability of bid document on website :- 19.05.2021 at 16:00 hrs.
Last date of submission of bid on website :- 10.06.2021 at 16:00 hrs.
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in".

Executive Engineer (M)

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

O-187

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

INVITATION OF BID THROUGH e- TENDERING
Bid Identification No- 11/EE/RWSS/ 2021-22 /Bpt Dated,13.05.2021

e-mail: eerusskd@gmail.com
rwsrs.18@nic.in
Phone No: 06670-230784

01.Name of the work :- As per ANNEXURE - A				
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of tender online for bidding on office hour only:		Date of opening (Technical Bid)
		From	To	
1	2	3	4	5
Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna	11/EE/RWSS/2021-22 /Bpt Dated- 13.05.2021	20.05.2021 10.00 AM	04.06.2021 05.30 PM	05.06.2021 10.00 AM onwards

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

Executive Engineer,
Kalahandi RWS&S Division,
Bhawanipatna

OIPR-25005/11/0007/2122

Mineral Resources Department, Government of Chhattisgarh
Directorate of Geology & Mining
Indravati Bhavan, Block-4,
Second Floor, Nawa Raipur Atal Nagar,
Raipur, Chhattisgarh - 492002, India.

[Monday, May 17, 2021]

Request for Proposal (RFP)
Invitation of RFP for "Selection of Exploration agencies (Empanelment)"

Mineral Resources Department, Government of Chhattisgarh wishes to explore high value and bulk minerals in the state. For this, Department desires to empanel technically competent and financially sound exploration contractors to undertake all the activities necessary for exploration of the blocks and hereby invites technical and financial proposals from eligible bidders.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) documents for "Selection of Exploration agencies (Empanelment)" can be downloaded from websites <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> and websites of Mineral Resources Department, Government of Chhattisgarh (www.chhattisgarhmines.gov.in) for the purpose of information only. Terms and conditions, deadlines etc. for participating in the electronic bid are provided in the RFP Documents.

Those interested and eligible for bidding can participate in the bidding only after online purchase of RFP documents on payment of the non-refundable fee of INR. 23,600 (Indian Rupees Twenty Three Thousand and Six Hundred only) including Goods and Service Tax (GST shall be payable at 18% of RFP fee) from the website of e-procurement platform. After registration at e-procurement website, interested & eligible bidders can purchase the RFP documents. On successful registration, eligible bidders will obtain Login ID and password necessary for participation in the bidding process.

Last date for online purchase of Tender Document is **[Monday, June 28, 2021]** upto 17:00 Hours and the last date for submission of the bid is 15:00 Hours IST on **[Tuesday, June 29, 2021]**. Any further communications, amendments etc. shall be available on the above websites.

Director
Geology & Mining
Chhattisgarh

R.O. No. 60609/5
R.O. Date:- 17/05/2021

Appeal for Identification

General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body **Name:** Unknown, **S/o** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** 19-20 years, **Sex:** Male, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Injury Marks :** Head Injury, **Recovery Place :** was found dead at K.M. Pole No. 15/32-34 between DN Rly Line Near Sultan Puri Fatak Rly Station. Delhi on 10.05.2021 at 12:32 PM. In this regard, a **DD No. 14A, dated 10.05.2021** has been lodged at PS Sarai Rohilla Railway Station, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any, person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S., Sarai Rohilla Rly. Station, Delhi
Ph. : 011-28711697, 8750871308

DP/143/RLY/2021

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA

CORRIGENDUM

SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD CORP./AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	UHBVN	RFP NO.306/PMA/UHBVN/2021-22	DATE OF CLOSING E-TENDER: 01.06.2021 (17:00 HRS.) DATE OF OPENING OF PART- 1 : 02.06.2021 (15:00 HRS)	www.uhbvn.org.in	ceapdc@uhbvn.org.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

RO NO. 2955

DOCYARD

DR SUBHASH CHANDRA

Chairman & HOD,
Cardiology

BLK-MAX SUPER SPECIALITY
HOSPITAL



Manage hypertension effectively



Hypertension or high blood pressure, the silent killer disease needs to be managed in an effective manner to avoid complications related to COVID-19. Apart from the regular risks associated with patients with hypertension, patients with COVID-19 were found to have a high rate of co-morbidities. Hypertension affects vital organs such as the kidneys, heart and brain even though the person has no symptoms. Heart or kidney failure, as well as a debilitating paralytic stroke, can be the first sign of hypertension. According to WHO, India accounts for over a fifth of these deaths. Undetected and untreated hypertension has been ranked as the highest risk factor for heart disease and related deaths.

Though a majority of COVID-19 patients experience mild symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough and are able to recover fully, it has been noticed that some patients who have hypertension, Diabetes and heart diseases are at the risk of developing more severe symptoms and the resultant complications. The ICMR has thus advised extra care for these patients.

It has also been speculated that hypertensive patients may not respond to anti-covid treatment protocols in comparison to non-hypertensive patients. Therefore, hypertensive patients can become very critical with respect to COVID-19 prognosis. A majority of the hypertensive patients are given medications known as “ACE-Inhibitors”. Since these drugs work via the ACE receptors, and the coronavirus binds itself to the ACE receptors located on lung cells (pneumocytes), it was being assumed that patients taking ACE inhibitors to regulate blood pressure might do worse than others. However, to the relief of the medical fraternity in majority of the trials, this hypothesis has been disproved. It is therefore advised that patients who have successfully regulated their blood pressure with these medications should continue to do so and those who have COVID-19 should monitor their blood pressure closely and try to regulate it as much as possible. They must

The highest spike in blood pressure occurs early in the morning, around 4 to 5 am and before 7 am, in a 24-hour circadian period. Therefore, heart attacks and strokes happen early in the morning

also be in regular touch with their consulting doctors and must immediately contact them in case of any major fluctuations in the blood pressure so as to manage Covid-19 more effectively.

It has been observed that in the early stages of hypertension, patients do not experience any pain or sickness and hence it goes undetected only to surface during a routine check-up. Factors that increase the risk of high blood pressure and heart diseases include unhealthy weight, obesity, an unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, smoking, and poorly controlled cholesterol levels, among others. A doctor will look for signs such as high blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, lack of appetite, shortness of breath, ankle swelling and chest tightness while diagnosing hypertensive heart disease.

This year, the World Hypertension Day theme was “Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer,” with a focus on combating low awareness rates worldwide, especially in low to middle income areas, as well as accurate blood pressure measurement methods.

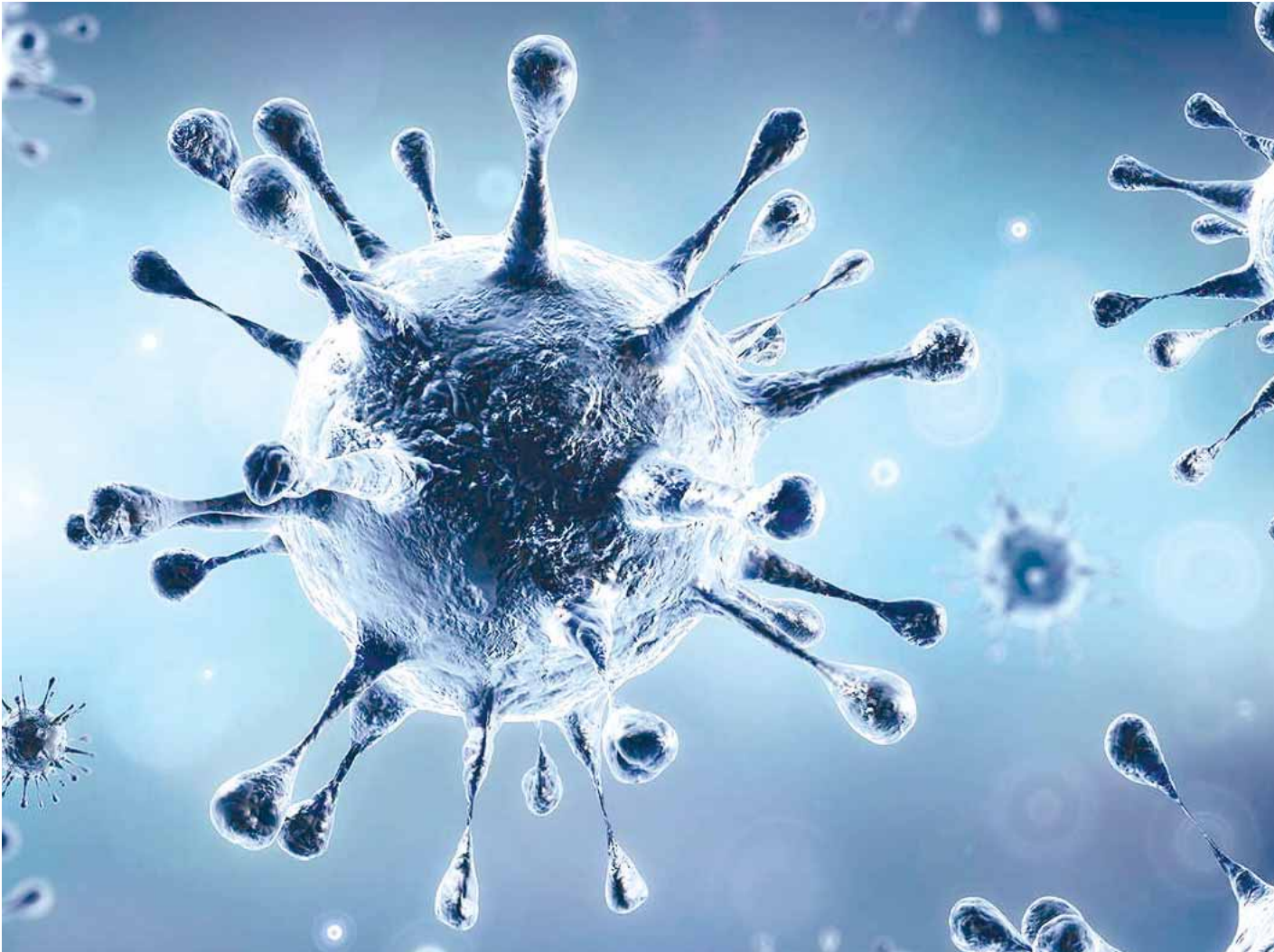
We must understand that the highest spike in blood pressure occurs early in the morning, around 4 to 5 am and before 7 am, in a 24-hour circadian period. Therefore, heart attacks and strokes happen early in the morning. The early morning surge in blood pressure is caused by a high level of catecholamines in the body. As a result, the drugs must be picked up in a way that guarantees 24-hour blood pressure regulation or delivered at a time that addresses the morning blood pressure spike. For example, if a person has a morning surge-on a 24-hour blood pressure monitor, he should be given some of the medicine in the evening, about tea time in order to avoid heart attacks, paralysis and strokes.

COVIDCARE

COCONUT WATER: If you were down with COVID, you might understand the importance of keeping yourself hydrated and what role coconut water has to play in it. Be it weakness or fatigue, coconut water is expected to give you a refreshing feel, because of the presence of electrolytes, while also boosting your energy and not giving you a nausea attack at the same time.

Not only this, coconut water is also rich in Calcium, which is vital for

more than just strong bones and teeth. It helps muscles contract and work properly. As you exercise, your muscles pull on your bones and break them down slightly. As your body recovers, your bones use calcium to get stronger and repair. In addition to all of its hydrating benefits, coconut water contains antioxidants that help to neutralise oxidative stress and free radicals created by exercise. Look for fresh coconut water to get the highest levels of antioxidants.



MUTANT DANGER

World Health Organisation has termed the B.1.617 variant of COVID-19 as a variant of global concern. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with doctors to bring you a report on what makes the mutant so dangerous and the efficacy of available vaccines against this mutant

COVID-19's raging fury seems to not stop any time soon. Adding to the woes, is the rapid mutation of the virus. Why, you ask? The continuous mutations in the virus are increasing its severity and infection rate.

If this was not all, the B.1.617 variant, which was reportedly first found in India have been termed as a variant of global concern by the World Health Organisation.

“This new variant is said to have double mutation which means an increase in transmission as well as reduction in neutralisation, possibly stunting the ability of vaccines to curb them. That's why there is a Tsunami of cases in India, thereby making the country the world's second most worst-hit,” Dr Yash Javeri, Critical Care, Anesthesia and Emergency Medicine, Regency Super specialty Hospital, Lucknow, tells you.

Generally, viruses mutate all the time, as part of evolutionary biology, but some mutations weaken the virus while others may make it stronger, enabling it to proliferate faster or cause more infections. “And, latter happened in India and that's making the whole scenario worrisome,” Javeri adds.

Many doctors are also terming the variant unique. “The variant is unique as it has both higher infectivity and higher severity. Unprotected exposure has lead to huge clusters in families and communities. Most of the time whole family or clusters are infected. Mutations in the spike gene can make the virus inherently better at infecting people or can help the virus to escape neutralising antibodies. This means if the virus mutates in the “right way”, it can reinfect someone who has already recovered from COVID-19,” he says.

While, this may answer your queries on people who are getting infected with virus in a span of just five months, this is nothing short of an alarm to not put your guards down, even if you have got COVID previously.

The variant is very infectious and easily transmissible hence, it has now passed on to fifty countries. “This virus is mutating because of expected changes in the RNA virus. The worrisome part is that this virus is directly going into lungs and hence, we are witnessing more cases of chest infection, which is increasing the need of respiratory therapy in the form of ventilators.

This new variant is said to have double mutation which means an increase in transmission as well as reduction in neutralisation, possibly stunting the ability of vaccines to curb them — Dr Yash Javeri

Other symptoms of this mutant are loss of smell and taste, fever, diarrhoea and dry cough,” Dr HK Mahajan, Anaesthesiologist, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, Vasant Kunj, tells you.

The recovery and survival rate of patients depends on the stage. “Mostly 85 per cent patients recover easily (home isolation as per the doctors advise), 5 to 10 per cent need hospitalisation (oxygen bed) and remaining 1 per cent of the cases who are from moderate to

severe need extensive care including ventilator. Asymptomatic patients get recovered early, patients with moderate symptoms get recovered in two to three weeks and severe patients takes 2 to 3 months as they have to face post-Covid syndromes too,” Mahajan explains.

While, there is not much data to prove the efficacy of the available vaccines against this mutant, Mahajan says, that Covaxin is said to be effective. “Recently, we got a batch of Sputnik V and we are hopeful that this vaccine will also give good results,” he says and adds the only way out of this pandemic is to increase vaccination.

Not only this, but Javeri says, more mutations are likely to happen. The virus mutates constantly. “Mutations might increase or decrease lethality and infectivity and might make vaccine less efficacious. Booster doses might be needed for these mutants. The issue is multiple mutants are spreading across the globe. The challenge of mutants is ever growing and is a major deterrent in the war against COVID. Worrisome mutations could also become more common if antibody therapies aren't used wisely,” Javeri opines.

BEAT STRESS AND ANXIETY

It is more important than ever to look after our mental and physical wellbeing. **EIRINI PETRATOU**

shares tips that can help ward off anxiety

The year 2020 was officially cancelled and we all were looking forward to a great 2021, but it didn't last too long. The nation has been unexpectedly hit by the second wave of COVID-19 and this time it has inched closer to home. The rising number of cases has caused a lot of misery and confusion among people and brings with it issues of anxiety and stress.

Facing the new normal of working from home, temporary unemployment, home-schooling of children, and lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues has made us prone to anxiety, stress and depression. Hence, it is more important than ever to look after ourselves and our mental and physical wellbeing. Keeping yourself safe mentally and physically is the key to staying healthy. Here are five ways to keep anxiety and stress at bay during these tough times:

Write a journal: Journaling is a form of self-expression that can enable you to understand your complex feelings and boost your mood. Journaling is known to have positive effects such as calming and clearing your mind, identifying and accepting your emotions, releasing pent-up feelings and everyday stress, and letting go of negative thoughts. The best part about journaling is that it doesn't restrict you to a format: write about how you feel, write down your goals, make lists or even doodle. Be yourself and write whatever or however you want without any fear of judgement.

Mandala colouring: Mandalas have been identified as an important tool to reduce stress, combat depression, and lower blood pressure. Also, colouring is proven to be a stress-buster, which makes Mandala colouring books your best friends during quarantine. Colour a mandala using pencil crayons, crayons, paint, or pastels, as it combines the benefits of meditation and art therapy into a simple practice that can be done at any time and place.

DIY Projects: Indulge in some Do It Yourself (DIY) projects with material available at home to keep your mind occupied in a constructive manner. DIY projects help your brain to function creatively and can help minimise any negative thoughts building up in your head. For example, make your own candles with crayons or photo frames out of old magazines and newspapers.

Reduce your time on social media: Social media has emerged as a very useful tool for people in these trying times. It has become a source for connecting, staying informed and helping each other. However, it is important to minimise your time on social media because constant exposure to negative information can trigger anxiety and stress. It is important to stay informed, but an overload of information can aggravate your emotions in a way that is not healthy.

Workout: Physical and mental health are interlinked. It is recommended that including some kind of workout in your daily routine helps release “feel good” endorphins, which can help reduce symptoms of anxiety or stress.

The writer is Senior User Research Manager, BIC

DadiKaKehna

Boosting immunity is all that matters in COVID times. ROSHANI DEVI shares a list of foods that can help strengthen your immune system and ward off infections



It is more important than ever to have a strong immune system. Feeding the body certain foods may help keep your immune system strong.

One of the most important ways to increase immunity is to include Vitamin C in the diet. Eat peppers, spinach, Kiwi, broccoli, grapefruit, strawberries and oranges. One can also take a Vitamin C supplement to boost intake of this vitamin. Garlic can build a strong immune system. One can eat garlic in a variety of recipes. Garlic soup is a delicious way to boost

immune system. Dark chocolate, as also pointed out by the Government, can help boost the immune system by protecting the body's cells. Eat broccoli. It is a great source of Vitamin C. Eat this vegetable regularly. Ginger besides having anti-inflammatory and antioxidative properties, it can several illness and boost immunity. Almonds are an excellent source of Vitamin E. Eat a small handful or a quarter of a cup of almonds to build immunity.



Keep an eye on black fungus

DR VINEET SEHGAL tells MUSBA HASHMI how black fungus is resulting in loss of eyesight, dos and don'ts to keep in mind and the treatments available

Black fungus has rung alarm bells in the Capital and several other States with a surge in cases. The rare fungal infection is now turning frequent among COVID patients.

Apart from the various other complications that the infection causes, one of the most severe is loss of eyesight. “Mucormycosis can destroy all ocular tissues and cause widespread destruction. It also can cause blockage of the arteries supplying blood to the eye (Central Retinal Artery) causing rapid vision loss. The symptoms start from mild sinusitis and nasal discharge and can lead to eye infection and blindness in no time. It doesn't stop here and can also cause damage to the brain, leading to death,” Dr Vineet Sehgal, Senior Glaucoma Consultant, Sharp Sight Eye Hospitals, tells you.

While there is not much that one can do to prevent the fungal infection, Sehgal lists a few dos and don'ts.

“Wash your hands regularly. Keep regular check on your Diabetic status, since Diabetics, who have or had COVID are more prone to catching this infection. Keep wearing proper mask. Wear your glasses when you visit outside to prevent respiratory droplets going inside eye. Don't take steroids without prescription. This increases your chance of getting infected with black fungus. Last, but not the least, don't touch your eyes without washing hands,” Sehgal explains.

The treatments available, he says, are Intravenous Amphotericin B, endoscopic debridement of the necrotic tissue and exenteration.

“Amphotericin B has become the gold standard in the systemic treatment of mucormycosis. Liposomal amphotericin B is the first choice of treatment, as it crosses the blood-brain barrier more effectively. Those who present earlier have better chances of survival. The Amphotericin B

should be given in doses according to the renal status of the patient as it can be a nephrotoxic drug,” Sehgal tells you.

A critical stage in the treatment of mucormycosis is the endoscopic debridement of necrotic tissue by ENT specialist. This is usually accompanied by the Amphotericin B irrigation. The endoscopic clearing of all the involved sinuses and debridement of the walls that are infected is done. It is better than open surgery as it gives better visualisation and lesser morbidity.

“Exenteration is the last resort by an ophthalmologist to limit the spread of infection to the brain and rest of the body. In exenteration, the eyeball is removed with its adjoining structures like orbital fat, eyelids and periocular fascia. It is reserved in the cases when permanent damage has been caused to the eye which cannot be restored and has immediate risk of spreading intracranially,” Sehgal tells you.

INBRIEF

One may have never thought that a treatment could be designed not for your hair or skin but for your clothes. You may have heard about the fire resistant clothes but mosquito repellent, anti-microbial, anti-viral or anti odour clothes is something that no one has ever imagined.

With an ambition to protect the world with the power of fabric during a pandemic, Faibr-x, a Nanochemiqs venture, has recently introduced and developed protective anti-viral treatment services in its operations for your clothing. Faibr-x treatments converts any common fabric into a tool, a lifeguard and a utility that helps ease our normal life. Combined with Nanotechnology we make formal, casual, linen, sports wear, undergarments, upholstery or any fabric in a smart machine and that too at the door step of a consumer, as service.

Faibr-x is a special treatment introduced for your wearable that creates an invisible yet effective shield on your clothes that make them antimicrobial, Antiviral, Anti-Odour and Antifungal. This treatment can be done on any fabric like linen, cotton, etc,” says Sasha Bose, MD, sNanochemiqs.

DON'T LOCK YOUR SPIRITS DOWN

Pandemic-induced lockdowns have become a way of life. After talking to a few clinical psychologists, **CHRISTY VARGHESE** realises how important it is to change our response to reality when we cannot change our reality

While the first case of the novel Coronavirus in India was detected on January 27, 2020, it did not affect the common citizens until the end of March, when a three-week nationwide lockdown was announced. And then there were drastic changes in our lives, the way we knew it. Exams were indefinitely postponed. The academic calendar has been in a disarray since last year. For many students, online classes were a luxury because they did not have access to devices or a data connection. Offices encouraged employees to work from home, some of them even providing the equipment needed to facilitate such a change. Domestic helps were out of a job for months on end. But things gradually slipped into a routine. Families, which stayed apart for a huge portion of the day, have since gotten used to being around each other for extended periods. The maids are back at work. Children have settled into online classes even though they might not be completely happy with these.

If we say things have changed in these 14 months, it would be almost akin to an understatement. Besides observable events, there are other incidents happening in the background which are just as noteworthy, if not more. While, on the surface, children and adults have got used to being away from their peers and colleagues, other issues chipping away at their mental health. According to psychiatrist and Founder & Director of The Happy Tree, De-addiction And Mental Health Hospital, Dr Anuneet Sabharwal, “It can be easily observed that lack of structure and routine is causing significant stress among children. College students and school-going children alike are experiencing increased levels of anxiety because they are not able to meet their friends and attend classes physically. Similarly, working from home (WFH) has created many mental health challenges for the working class as it has been observed that the eponymous model has led to greater emotional exhaus-



tion and cognitive distress. The lack of physical connection and social support that one requires from ones colleagues is leading to more stress. Setting boundaries happen to be an integral part of the WFH model, the lack of which results in an increasing urge to work for longer periods leading to rising levels of stress and anxiety impacting the long term productivity of the employees.”

However, clinical psychologist, author and Harvard alumni, Dr Rajat Mitra, approaches it from a different perspective and believes that it has its share of positives as well. He shared that one prominent benefit which cannot be denied happens to revolve around families, which would spend most of the day away from each other. People who constitute such families

have had an opportunity to examine themselves and their relationship with their near (pun unintended) and dear ones. “While parents are still engrossed with work, they now have a chance to observe their children the entire day, whereas earlier, they would be too tired to interact with them after getting home from work on weekdays. The lockdown has presented working parents with the opportunity to connect and engage with their children. Many parents who consult me rue the fact that their children don't experience childhood the way they did. While that is unavoidable in these times, I recommend them to have a conversation with their kids and take a break from the digital world along with them. Simple activities such as being involved in indoor games — carrom

or ludo — go a long way in dissipating while encouraging unfiltered interaction,” he said.

Dr Mitra also voiced his thoughts on how the pandemic could be changing our psychological wiring. He said, “We are dealing with adaptability here. We, humans, are resilient beings and time is a testament to the fact that we can adapt at will. We will survive this pandemic, there is no doubt about that. However, we would have changed in certain aspects. For example, various studies have indicated that introverts are dealing with lockdown better than extroverts who have had to spend precious time and energy developing coping mechanisms which are more in line with these times. Introverts are being held in high esteem by employers today,

while that was not the case before the pandemic.”

He also feels that there is a good possibility we have developed some new neural circuits since we have to adapt to the needs of these times. “I can't remember the last time I met my students in a classroom. Ever since the world has been made digital, I have realised that I have subconsciously learnt to recognise my students based on their respective voices. Even when I step out, just about everyone has a mask on and my psyche has been forced to adjust. While earlier one's face was their most dominant identifier, I now recognise people by their voice,” Dr Mitra said.

Moreover, sitting at home in these dystopian times is underlined by confusion and disorder due to information overload. Simply put, information overload (also known as infobesity, infoxication, information anxiety and information explosion) is the difficulty in understanding an issue and effectively making decisions when one has too much information about that issue. An author and clinical psychologist, Pulkit Sharma, said, “A lot of information is easily accessible in these digital times. Most of it related to the pandemic might be true, but trust me, a lot of fake news is being circulated. Is it all relevant? Of course not. While this digital age has its boons, having access to unlimited information is turning out to be a major disadvantage. This has led to a growing sense of fatigue and pessimism among the masses. There is no need to drown yourself in the news or social media which will only lead you to worry and panic. Reports have determined that of all those who were afflicted with COVID-19, 98 per cent survived. Yes, the reality is that the pandemic has a mortality rate of just two per cent but we are blowing things out of proportion.”

“We have to understand that there are times when we cannot change our reality. However, in those instances, we do have control over our response to that reality. So, in these times I believe our focus should

be on ourselves and how we can make this gift of life meaningful,” he added.

A sentiment that was echoed by Dr Mitra, “During online consultations, I see that more and more people are turning inwards and indulging in introspection without any coercion. It is a global occurrence, to be honest, one which has been unheard of in recorded history.”

Both psychologists agreed on the fact that it ultimately comes down to how one perceives things. “For a long time, everyone in the urban jungle felt that there was no time to do things that they wanted to do. Now that time is abundant, one should be thankful for it and make use of the same. For the working class following the WFH model, it is very important to make a schedule and stick by it. Being mindful of the things that you wish to do and incorporating them into your schedules has a very wholesome feel. On the other hand, after making a schedule if you fail to abide by it right at the beginning, the rest of the schedule goes to waste. Hence, the simple act of making or planning a schedule is an exercise in being the right frame of mind in the immediate future. This enables one to be present and constructively make use of time,” expressed Dr Sharma.

Additionally, Dr Sabharwal provided a concise guide on how to keep one's self grounded in these uncertain times. He said, “Try to focus on things you can control instead of focussing too much on things you can't control. Check-in with your loved ones as often as you can. Try to regularly engage in some light exercises such as stretching, walking as they might help you feel better and will allow you to stay active. Don't forget to take a break from social media and news channels now and then as listening and watching about the pandemic might be upsetting and overwhelming.”

Staying at home can be just the opportunity to take stock of your lives, be thankful for your blessings and structure your priorities.

Not against remixes: Kumar Sanu

Playback veteran Kumar Sanu is not against the current trend of remixing old songs. He says that he likes a remixed number even better if the original voice is retained. He also opened up with nostalgia on his association with composers Nadeem-Shravan.

“I was never against remixes. There are some songs that the new generation does not even know who had composed the music or who had sung them. They get to learn about it through its remix, which is a plus point. Secondly, remix is not bad if the lyrics and composition are kept intact and only the arrangement is changed. Also if a superhit song is remixed and the remix also becomes popular, it is certainly a plus point for today's music directors and producers. It is good for everyone,” Sanu said.

Quizzed if he is personally fond of remixes, the singer replied: “Personally I like remixes when the remix of a song also features its original singer.”

Sanu became popular in the nineties, particularly singing romantic numbers that reigned that charts back then, and among his biggest hits were songs he recorded for Nadeem-Shravan, starting *Aashiqui* in 1990. Shravan Kumar Rathod of the Nadeem-Shravan duo passed away last month. Walking down the memory lane, Sanu recalled how he has a special memory with literally every song he sang for them.

“Music composer duos like Nadeem-Shravan are rare and Shravan *ji's* demise is a great loss for our industry. I have so many memories with them. Shravan *ji* was a soft spoken and jovial person, and loved me a lot. They used to call me Tiger. I have a separate memory associated with every song I sang for them, the shows we did together, the tasty food I had at their place, the tips they shared to help me during song recording. I remember how, at times, they would try to make a song a little tougher with a classical touch while I would try to make it easier, and how we celebrated after every recording was completed. These are the things which keep flashing in my mind now,” Sanu recalled.

Any Nadeem-Shravan number close to his heart? “Every song I have sung for them



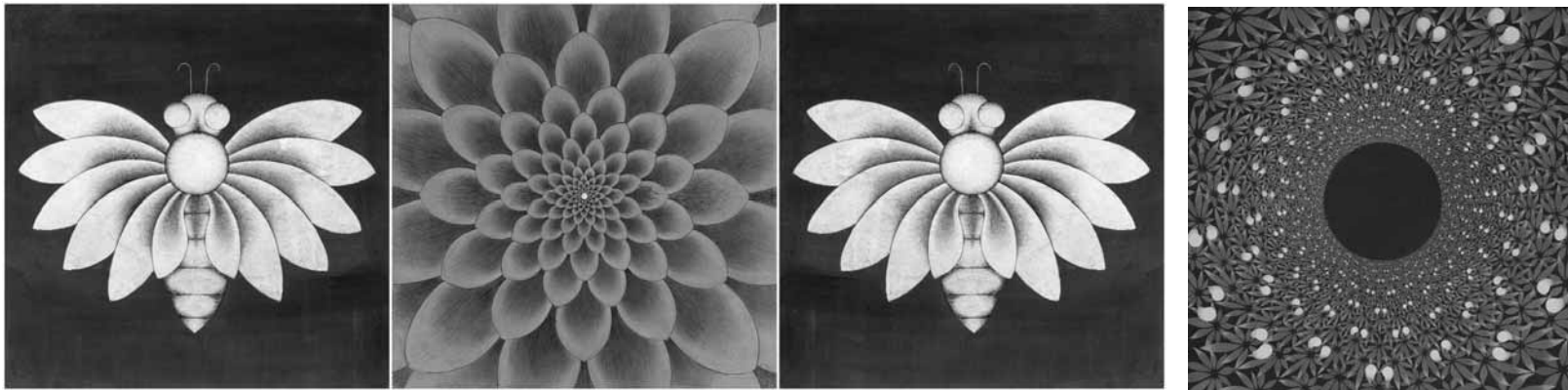
is special to me. Their songs used to have melody and good lyrics, for which people remember me. One song, *Zindagi ki talash mein hum maunt ke kitne paas aa gaye* from the film *Saathi*, is a meaningful song and really close to my heart,” revealed the singer.

Times are difficult especially when the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc in India and the veteran singer suggests everyone to get vaccinated at the earliest.

“I have completed my second dose of the vaccine. It has been 12 days since I took my second dose and I haven't experienced any side effects, which people are talking about, like pain or fever. Everybody should get vaccinated. It is good for them,” Sanu suggested.

What is it that he is missing the most being stuck at home during lockdown? “I miss live concerts and recordings. I enjoy doing live performances a lot and I am definitely missing it,” shared Sanu.

—JANS



Between the Amaltas, the Fraser's prismatic flower and bee series, the suite of works offers succour to the soul in troubled times of sorrow and tragedy. Grosvenor Gallery London presents her exhibition — *Indian Summer* — which features a selection of Olivia's latest body of works, all executed in the past year during her time spent between India and the UK.

Being in and out of lockdown, Olivia turned to and found solace in nature. Whether it was among the blossoms of the Amaltas trees or the bounty of sweet Indian mangoes, the spiritual connections associated with nature provided a boon to the soul and a pleasure to the senses signalling a hope for the future.

“I painted these works during the first lockdown in India, just as the summer heat was notching up into the early forties (degrees). As a Northern Scot, even after all these years in Delhi, I find extreme heat challenging, but when the Amaltas trees (the Indian laburnum) burst into bloom in May, their golden boughs light up and lift the streets of Delhi out of their hot torpor,” says Olivia.

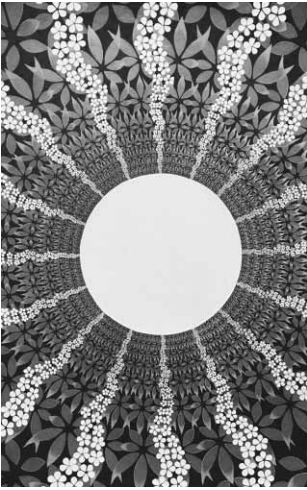
She also adds that she is fascinated by the idea of harness-

Solace in nature

Artist OLIVIA FRASER's latest exhibition — *Indian Summer* — features a selection of her latest body of works, all executed in the past year during her time spent between India and the UK. By UMA NAIR

ing the senses during meditation. She states that when she creates a *Bloom* with both bee and flower petals, she is drawing on the idea that the bee and flower become one as in *Bhramari*, which is a yogic asana involving the sound of the bee. Look closely and the work is more like an insignia of surreal splendour. The petals of the bloom and the wings of the bees have about them a fulsome lushness. Anatomical perfection and precision is as important as botanical meticulousness. At once you know that Olivia has a deepened sense of both the garden of earthly delights as well as yogic symbolism and evocations.

In *Bloom*, the blue Lotus flower is surrounded by two golden bees. The lotus flower has ancient sacred associations within the art of India. As a flower that blooms out of the mud, it is associated with purity, perfection, resurrection and



spiritual growth. The lotus along with the colour blue are both used to depict Lord Krishna in Hindu mythology.

She quotes the Gheranda Samhita C 1700 and says, “Slowly draw in air and perform *Bhramari Kumbaka*, exhale it

very slowly and then the sound of the bee will arise. On hearing the sound of the bee from within, lead the mind there. *Samadhi* will occur, together with the bliss arising from the realisation ‘I am that.’”

The Amaltas trees and mangoes depicted in *Indian Summer I and II* are a reminder of the summer season in India and the joy the season can bring. “I watched the Amaltas tree outside my studio window come into its sunshine bloom over the course of the weeks, that I was painting this,” Olivia's continued interest in yoga, the different visualisations used in meditation and nature itself (an inner and outer vision) have also influenced these new works.

She first came to India in 1989 and had her first show in Delhi in 1991. Following in the footsteps of her ancestor, James Baillie Fraser who painted India, its monuments and land-

scape in the early 1800s, Olivia set out to continue where her ancestor had left off, painting the architecture of India and its people. James Baillie Fraser also commissioned local artists to paint what has become the famous ‘Fraser Album’ — the greatest masterpiece of Company School Painting portraying the different types of people and their jobs, crafts or castes against stark white backgrounds. This hybrid form of painting where Indian artists created something that mixed techniques and ideas from the East and West has greatly influenced Olivia's work during the 1990s.

Since then, she has studied the traditional Indian miniature painting technique under Jaipuri and Delhi masters, and now uses this in her work with its gem-like stone colours, its unique miniature brush work, and its elaborate decorative and burnished surfaces. Having been, especially influenced by Nathdwara *pichwai* painting in recent years, Olivia has been exploring its visual language, honing it down to create one of her own that seeks to convey the very essence of the Rajasthani tradition.

(The exhibition opened on May 17 at the prestigious Cromwell Place in London.)

TRENDBLAZER

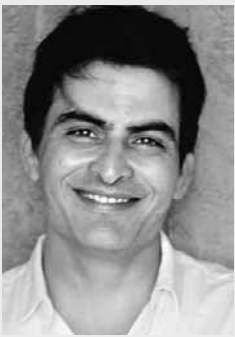


‘ACTORS CAN PICK UP STUFF THAT'S HATKE’

Actor **NEENA GUPTA** had no inhibition about portraying a nonagenarian in the forthcoming film *Sardar Ka Grandson*. She says nowadays, just like filmmakers, actors too have a chance to pick stuff that is “*hatke*.”

Talking about actors not shying away from portraying older characters, Neena said, “Times have changed, and the way people are writing scripts. The way actors are getting a variety of roles and the most important thing is that the audience is accepting it have also helped. It is encouraging.”

fairtalk MANAV KAUL



‘This was only last year but feels like I can't remember when was the last time I visited the mountains. When was the last time I had a hearty laughter or hugged someone after meeting them? Last year I thought that I will forget this like a bad dream but now we are living in this bad dream and keep reminiscing about our good old times.’

dailytalk SHILPA SHETTY



‘To be able to stay united and help each other, we need to be gentle with ourselves. Prioritise what needs and deserves your attention before everything else. Please don't neglect your health, your food, your sleep or even your water intake. You can ensure everyone around you is okay only when you are okay.’

DON'T HAVE INSTINCT FOR MARRIAGE: KELLY

Model-actor **KELLY BROOK** has been with her beau Jeremy Parisi for years, but is not desperate to have children or tie the knot. “I've got a bucket list and I have to say a wedding is not on it,” Brook said.

“I feel like marriage and children are not things I've wanted. I like travelling and being with my partner. I like my freedom. I like being spontaneous,” she said.

She added that having children is a huge commitment.



Eng Tests aren't warm-ups for WTC final: Wagner

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand fast bowler Neil Wagner on Monday said his team is not going to treat the upcoming two-match series against England as warm-ups for the World Test Championship (WTC) final versus India.

India and New Zealand will lock horns for the inaugural WTC title, at Southampton's Ageas Bowl, from June 18-22, four days after the Test series against hosts England is scheduled to conclude.

"We're not going to treat these two Test matches against England just as warm-ups (for the WTC final)," Wagner told reporters at the Auckland airport before his departure.

"I know for a fact we're going to get out there and pride ourselves the way we've been playing Test cricket and we want to win Test matches for New Zealand," he added.

A majority of the New Zealand Test players arrived in London on Monday for the two-match series against England and the WTC final against India, but Wagner was part of the second batch of cricketers to leave for their UK tour.

Wagner, ranked number three in the world among Test bowlers, trained with the Dukes ball in Lincoln before departing for England.

Dukes ball is used for Test matches in England.

He said he benefited from the camp.



NZ pacers Neil Wagner, center, and Tim Southee, right, during training camp



A majority of the New Zealand Test players arrived in London for the two-match series against England and the WTC final against India. The players arrived on Sunday afternoon after flying from Auckland via Singapore and were transferred to the Ageas Bowl in Southampton where they will be based for the first two weeks of the tour

"It's been quite nice, it's obviously got different characteristics to the Kookaburra," Wagner said.

"The way we've been training for the last while is something we didn't always have in the past, having the facilities and having a marquee up and getting a number of training sessions in before going to England.

"On tours in the past you rock up there and you've only got a couple of training sessions and maybe one head out with the Dukes ball before the first Test and with that you can find yourself a little bit behind."

He added, "Having had those little bit of trainings leading into it has been quite beneficial, just because it's a little bit different, and obviously adapting to it. It's been really good

preparation and everybody is excited bowling with it."

This will be Wagner's third trip to England as part of the New Zealand squad, although he played there only during the 2013 Test series, besides playing in the County Championship for Lancashire.

"Sometimes you have to control all that because there's a high expectation of the ball doing a lot and moving around but sometimes you can get there and it can be quite flat and slow as well," Wagner said.

"The nice thing about it is we've got a wealth of experience and the guys have been there before so we can feed off each other and bounce ideas off each other as well," he added.

Archer out of NZ series

London: England pacer Jofra Archer, who recently returned to action after missing the now-suspended IPL, has been ruled out of the Test series against New Zealand as his elbow injury has resurfaced.

The 26-year-old played a game for his County side Sussex against Kent but had to be pulled out of the game after bowling just five overs.

Before this match, the fast bowler had also featured in a game against Surrey last week in a second XI game, bowling 29.2 overs.

"England and Sussex seamer Jofra Archer has been ruled out of the LV= Insurance Test Series against New Zealand starting next month," an England and ales Cricket Board (ECB) statement read.

".....He was suffering from pain in his right elbow when bowling and was unable to bowl in the final two days of the match."

Archer had declared himself fit for the Test series against New Zealand, starting June 2 in London, but the pain in his elbow scuttled his and ECB's plan.

The cricket board is now pondering the right treatment for Archer. The England squad for the New Zealand series will be named on Tuesday.

PTI

► shortpasses

SS DAS IS EVES BATTING COACH

NEW DELHI: Gutsy former India opener Shiv Sunder Das has been appointed the batting coach of the Indian women's for the tour of England and he is looking forward to use his coaching stint at NCA to guide the youngsters during the trip. Das, who has played 23 Tests between 2000-02, has a decent average of near 35 with more than 1300 runs, including two hundreds and nine fifties.

INDIA'S TESTS WEREN'T FIXED: ICC

DUBAI: The ICC on Monday dismissed claims made by news channel Al Jazeera that India's Test matches against England (2016) and Australia (2017) were fixed, saying the passages of play identified as fixed were entirely predictable, and therefore "implausible as a fix".

DORTMUND, WOLFSBURG IN CL

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund and Wolfsburg clinched Champions League qualification on Sunday night. Dortmund won 3-1 at Mainz & Wolfsburg drew 2-2 at Leipzig to ensure both sides will finish among the top four to qualify.

EVERTON END CL HOPES

LIVERPOOL: Everton's slim hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League were extinguished on Sunday by a 1-0 loss to last-place Sheffield United.

AC MILAN COMPLICATE CL FATE

MILAN: AC Milan complicated their passage to the Champions League with a goalless draw at home against Cagliari. They could have sealed a return to CL with a win but dropped points with a top-four finish going down to the wire in their final game.

IGA ENTERS WTA TOP 10

ROME: Iga Swiatek, who won the Italian Open on Sunday jumped six places on the WTA Tour rankings to enter the top 10 on Monday. The 19-year-old player is now ninth. Agencies

Oz IPL cricketers return home

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's IPL players, including Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell and Steve Smith, arrived in Sydney on Monday after a stop-over at Maldives due to travel ban from Covid-ravaged India, almost two weeks after the T20 league was suspended due to the health crisis.

Most of the 38 members of the Australian contingent, including players, officials and commentators who participated at the non-suspended league, landed at the Sydney airport Monday morning after spending 10 days at Maldives.

Australian players, however, couldn't head home immediately as the country had imposed a travel ban from India, which is battling a deadly second wave



Glenn Maxwell arrives for hotel quarantine in Sydney on Monday

of the coronavirus.

They will all be spending two weeks in a Sydney hotel for the mandatory quarantine.

According to national broadcaster ABC, Smith,

Cummins, Warner and Ricky Ponting, who coached Delhi Capitals, were among the people on the Air Seychelles flight.

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey also

headed home on Sunday via Doha after testing negative for Covid-19 on Friday.

CA GRATEFUL TO BCCI

Cricket Australia's interim chief executive Nick Hockley on Monday said he was "grateful" to the BCCI for ensuring a "safe and quick" return of Australia's IPL contingent from India following a stopover in Maldives.

"We are delighted. We're really grateful to the BCCI for getting them home quickly and safely. I haven't spoken to them since they've landed, but obviously we've been in text exchange and I'm sure they'll be very relieved and very appreciative to be home," Hockley was quoted as saying in Sydney Morning Herald.

Starc back for WI tour

Sydney: Australia welcomed back their star players and picked four spinners in an extended 23-man squad named Monday for a white-ball tour of the West Indies in July.

The team will be captained by Aaron Finch and will feature the return of Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, David Warner and Pat Cummins, who all missed the recent trip to New Zealand.

The whirlwind tour starts with the first of five Twenty20 internationals in St Lucia on July 9 and ends with the third of three one-day international in Barbados on July 24 as the teams prepare for the T20 World Cup in India later this year.

AFP

Serena gets 1st clay win of season

Parma: Serena Williams brushed aside the challenge of local teenager Lisa Pigato in the opening round of WTA tournament in Parma on Monday.

Williams, ranked eighth in the world, beat the 572nd-ranked Pigato, making her WTA debut, 6-3, 6-2 in the first meeting between them.

Serena made a sluggish start as the 17-year-old came up with three glorious winners to break the 23-time Grand Slam champion in the first game.

The American, however, got into gear and dropped just five more points on her serve, firing down six aces and many more that Pigato could barely reach.

Williams, however, was



Serena Williams in action during her match at Emilia Romagna Open

full of praise for her teenage opponent.

"Lisa played really well," she said in her on-court interview.

"She told me she was only 17. Her future is super-bright. She handled the moment well, so I look forward to cheering for her in the future."

'No surprise': Clarke on Bancroft's revelations on ball tampering issue

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former captain Michael Clarke won't be surprised if it comes to light that more players were aware of the ball-tampering plot in 2018 as he accused Cricket Australia of sweeping the issue under the carpet.

The scandal had led to a review of Australia's win-at-all-cost team culture and led to one-year bans being slapped on then captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and a nine-month suspension on opener Cameron Bancroft, who had the sandpaper in his possession.

The issue was put under the spotlight again when Bancroft last week revealed that Australian bowlers in the team at that time might have had some knowledge about the plot.

"If you are playing sport at the highest level you know your tools that good it's not funny. Can you imagine that ball being thrown back to the bowler and the bowler not knowing about it? Please," Clarke told Sky Sports radio on Monday.

"I love how the articles in the paper are, 'It is such a big surprise that Cameron Bancroft has made a ...' Actually, if you read his quotes, it is not what he did say as what he didn't say in regards to other people knowing about 'sandpapergate,'" he said.

Following Bancroft's interview, Cricket Australia said it was open to a re-investigation into the incident and its integrity team has already approached the pacer for more information.

"What's the surprise? That more than three people knew? I don't think anybody who has played the game of cricket, or knows a little bit about cricket, would know that in a team like that, at the highest level, when the ball is such an important part of the game," Clarke said.

"If you'd played the game of cricket, you would know more than three people know what was going on in there. The problem Cricket Australia has is the fact they've tried to sweep it under the carpet and not come out and tell the full story.

"You don't have to have played cricket at the highest level. If you know anything about the game of cricket, you know on that day, on that field, what went down, more than three people had to know about it. Impossible not to..."

"That's why there's going to be finger-pointing until, I think until someone writes their book and tells the complete, honest truth. It will continue because it hasn't been finished, so much is left unsaid from the players and even what happened with staff."

Clarke also threw his weight behind Bancroft. "I don't think Cameron Bancroft should be smashed for what he's come out and said, he's tried to say nothing but he's doing an interview," he said.



Barcelona players hold the trophy aloft after the UEFA Women's Champions League final match between Chelsea and FC Barcelona in Gothenburg on Sunday. Barcelona won 4-0

French title chase down to wire

AFP ■ PARIS

Lille's bid to win the Ligue 1 title will go to the final weekend of the season after Sunday's goalless draw with Saint-Etienne allowed Paris Saint-Germain to moved to within a point of the leaders.

Reigning champions PSG strolled to a simple 4-0 win over 10-man Reims to pile the pressure on Lille, who will nonetheless claim the French title for the first time since 2011 if they win at mid-table Angers next Sunday.

Christophe Galtier's Lille hit the post in the final seconds of a frus-

trating match with little in the way of goalmouth incident.

It was not the display the fans who had gathered to follow the team bus to the Stade Pierre Mauroy ahead of the match expected and will leave those supporters with frayed finger nails next weekend.

PSG meanwhile were gifted a perfect start at the Parc des Princes when Yunus Abdelhamid handled Kylian Mbappe's shot in front of an empty goal, conceding a penalty and being sent off in the process.

Neymar slotted home the spot-kick in the 13th minute and 11



Neymar hugs Mbappe after PSG win

minutes later Mbappe pounced on a wayward pass across the area by Thomas Foket to tap home the second. Marquinhos made it three in the 68th minute with a thumping header from Neymar's corner.

Kean rounded off an easy win for PSG one minute from the end. Monaco are also still in with a potential shout for the title after their 2-1 home win over Rennes

moved Niko Kovac's third-placed side three points behind Lille with one to play.

However the Principality club have an significantly inferior goal difference to both Lille and PSG.

Ter Stegen out of Euro 2020

AFP ■ BARCELONA

German international goalkeeper Ger Marc-Andre ter Stegen on Monday announced that he is to undergo an operation on his right knee that will rule him out of Euro 2020.

"I have decided together with the medical team of the club (Barcelona) that I will do a complementary intervention on my knee. I'm sad that I will miss the Euro 2020 this summer with Germany," the 29-year-old said on Instagram. "For the first time in many years I will be a fan at home supporting my country, I hope we win it!"

Barca said in a statement that Ter Stegen is scheduled to go under



the knife on May 20 in Malmö, Sweden, ruling him out of the club's final LaLiga game of the season next weekend.

His announcement comes a day after Barca were officially left out of the running for the La Liga title after a 2-1 home defeat by Celta Vigo left them seven points behind La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid with one game to play.

Ter Stegen has played just 24 times for his country as he has struggled to dislodge Bayern Munich stopper and Germany captain Manuel Neuer from the number one spot.

Germany are in Group F alongside world champions France, Euro 2016 winners Portugal and Hungary.

Modric to lead Croatia

Zagreb: Croatia coach Zlatko

Dalic named a 26-man squad for Euro 2020 on Monday, comprising players who won Silver at the 2018 World Cup and their younger peers and led by veteran Luka Modric.

"Our latest results were not the best, but I'm an optimist. Our first goal is to get out of the group," Dalic told reporters.

Croatia have been drawn in Group D, and will play England in London on June 13.

Dalic described that opening match as the toughest in the group stage as England "have good quality and we play at Wembley".

Croatia then travel to



Glasgow where they will face the Czech Republic on June 18 and Scotland four days later.

"We have difficult opponents, but I believe in us. We are at our best when the going gets tough," Dalic said.

Captain Modric, 35, is among several players who took part in Croatia's wonderful run at the

World Cup in Russia in 2018 where they beat England in the semi-final before losing 4-2 to France in the final.

That group of experienced players includes defenders Domagoj Vida, Dejan Lovren and Sime Vrsaljko, midfielders Mateo Kovacic, Marcelo Brozovic and Milan Badelj as well as attackers Ivan Perisic, Andrej Kramaric and Ante Rebic.

BELGIUM INCLUDE WITSEL

Bursells: Belgium coach Roberto Martinez on Monday named a 26-strong squad for Euro including Axel Witsel.

Witsel underwent an operation on his achilles tendon in January and resumed running just a few days ago, leaving his availability for the June 11-July 11 tournament in doubt.