

OPINION 6 INCREDIBLE INDIA DESERVES RESPECT

WORLD 8 RAMZAN IN CHINA: FAITHFUL DWINDLE UNDER LIMITS ON RELIGION

SPORT 12 AUSSIES FLY OUT TO MALDIVES

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## CAPSULE

**MALDIVES EX-PRESIDENT NASHEED HURT IN BLAST**  
Male: Maldives' first democratically elected President and current Parliament Speaker Mohamed Nasheed was injured in a blast on Thursday near his home and is being treated in a hospital in the national capital, police said.

**9 DEAD AFTER DRINKING 'MEDICINE' IN C'GARH**  
Bilaspur: At least nine persons have died over the last two days after allegedly consuming an alcohol-based homeopathy medicine as a substitute for liquor in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district, police said on Thursday.

**30 PEOPLE IN PAURI VILLAGE TEST COVID +VE**  
Kotdwar: Thirty out of 45 people living in a village in Pauri district tested positive for Covid-19 on Thursday, ringing alarm bells for the administration, which declared the gram sabha area a containment zone. All of them have been put in home-isolation, Revenue Officer Sudha Dobhal said.

**DOG EATS 30 PPE GLOVES, UNDERGOES SURGERY**  
London: A pet dog in the UK had to undergo a three-hour operation after eating 30 PPE gloves, according to a media report on Thursday. Rambo the Rottweiler was taken to see vets in Wakefield by his owner.

**SC refuses to expunge Madras HC's comment on EC, but says it was 'harsh'**  
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court on Thursday disposed of the Election Commission (EC)'s petition to expunge the observation of Madras High Court that the poll panel was singularly responsible for the rise in the Covid-19 pandemic. Disposing of the petition, which was objected by Rajiv Kumar from filing, the Bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud said judges should exercise caution in making off-the-cuff remarks while appreciating the role of High Courts across the country in taking up the cases related to the pandemic and delivering remedies. "The remarks of the High Court were harsh. The metaphor inappropriate," the Supreme Court said, adding even if the High Court did indeed make the oral observations that have been alluded to, it did not seek to attribute culpability for the Covid-19 pandemic in the country to the EC. *Continued on Page 2*

## India logs more cases than rest of world in 24 hours

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

India has contributed half of the world Covid cases in the past 24 hours. Of the total 8,43,709 Covid cases reported across the world on Wednesday, India contributed over 4.12 lakh cases. This is the highest single-day case reported by any country in the world. India's share of global active coronavirus cases now stands at 19.26 per cent.

According to the worldometers.info data, the US, the worst affected country, has reported 46,129 in the last 24 hours. The rate of daily new infections fell below 50,000 per day over the weekend and continues to decline in the US. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 33,321,244 and 5,93,148 respectively. The new cases and deaths in India hit a record daily high with 4,12,262 new infections and 3,980 fatalities being reported, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to

## 2,600 trains freeze in tracks in 10 days

Rlys in lockdown mode; Shatabdi, Rajdhani, Vande Bharat suspended

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In view of a massive surge in Covid-19 cases and States imposing curfew and lockdown to contain the pandemic, the Indian Railways has gone for cancellation and suspension of huge numbers of trains, including premier trains such as Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Vande Bharat express.

At an average, the Railways has suspended 260 trains per day in the last ten days. The total number of suspended trains now stands at 2,600, which is more than one-fifth of the 12,000 trains operated by railways during the pre-Covid time. The Indian Railways had started the operations of almost 9,000 trains in October 2020. The number has now come down to around 6,400.

"Movement of certain pairs of the passenger trains is being suspended till further notice in view of surging Covid-19 positive cases and poor occupancy as well," said Deepak Kumar,



Chief Public Relations Officer, Northern Railways.

The cancellation of the premier trains is expected to send the domestic air ticket price soaring high and place the country in a state of semi lockdown with States introducing major restrictions on the movement of people. The decline in traffic is cited as official reason for the suspension of trains.

Apart from Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Vande Bharat

Chhatisgarh Rajdhani, Katra Vande Bharat and other pairs.

According to Ministry of Railway sources, if the situation didn't improve more trains could be suspended in coming days, bringing the passenger transport services to a near halt.

Earlier the suspension of the train was only for short distance duration but the Ministry of Railways has instructed the Zonal Railways to suspend trains wherever there is a massive Covid-19 surge and also poor occupancy.

So far zones like ECR, Central Railway, Southern Railway, South Eastern Railway catering to States like Bihar, UP Jharkhand, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Maharashtra had suspended their inter and intra-State passenger services due to sharp rise in covid cases and low occupancy in the trains.

The passenger train services had started in a phased manner last August after complete suspension in March end 2020. Most of the suspended trains are destined to Bihar, UP, Jharkhand and Odisha. Bihar has announced complete lockdown till middle of this month and given the acute surge in cases it is likely to be further extended.

Trains suspended till further notice from Friday onwards include Amritsar Shatabdi, Kalka Shatabdi, Bhopal Shatabdi, Dehradun Shatabdi, Chennai Rajdhani,

## Oxygen just a click away for home isolated in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major relief to Delhiites, the Delhi Government has now set up a website to facilitate online registration for making available oxygen cylinders for home isolated Covid patients. The online system started functioning from Thursday.

"All people requiring oxygen for the patients in home isolation can apply on the Delhi Government's website at <http://delhi.gov.in> with a valid photo ID, Aadhaar Card details, and valid Covid-19 positive report indicating the need for oxygen. The applicant will also be required to inform the actual quantity of oxygen needed," the Government order stated.

As per the order, the District Magistrates shall ensure an adequate number of office personnel to scrutinise

Visit Delhi Government's official website at <http://delhi.gov.in>

Click on the 'Online booking of Oxygen Cylinders' link on the home screen. It will take you to another tab where you can fill in your details

Submitting your details — Photo Id proof, Covid positive report, Aadhaar Card details

After submitting your details, click on apply

Your application will be submitted to the authorities who will allot you a dealer to procure your oxygen cylinder

The DM will issue a pass bearing the date, time and address of the dealer from where the oxygen cylinder can be issued or exchanged

every application being registered on the portal and issue the e-passes quickly as time is the essence in such cases. *Continued on Page 2*

## Kejriwal thanks PM after Delhi receives 730 MT of O2 on May 5

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the national Capital received 730 metric tonnes of oxygen on May 5. In a letter, Kejriwal said that it was for the first time the national Capital received more than 700 MT of oxygen.

## Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES:	2,14,85,285 (+4,14,182)
DEATHS:	2,34,071 (+3,920)
RECOVERED:	1,75,97,410 (+3,28,141)
ACTIVE:	36,44,441
MAHA:	49,42,736 (+62,194)
K'TAKA:	17,90,104 (+49,058)
KERALA:	17,86,397 (+42,464)
UP:	14,25,916 (+26,622)
DELHI:	12,73,035 (+19,133)

## Plan in advance to stem 3rd wave, vaccinate kids: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court on Thursday urged the Central and State Governments to start working on plans "today itself" to tackle the third wave of Covid pandemic. The court also suggested that there should be "scientific plan" to vaccinate children too before the third wave.

Meanwhile, the Centre informed the apex court on Wednesday that 730 MT (extra 30MT) oxygen was supplied to Delhi, and the judges advised both the Centre and Delhi



State Counsels to "avoid political ideological differences" in the time of pandemic in the interest of people.

"The third surge in India which is around the corner according to experts will affect children. So when a child goes

to hospital, the mother and father will also have to go. That is why vaccination will have to be over for this group of people. We need to plan for this in a scientific way and thus make arrangement... If we prepare today we may be able to handle it," said the Bench comprising Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah, reiterating on vaccination cover for Children.

Several health experts have cited risk to children during the third wave. The Bench also urged the

Centre to examine the possibility of utilising services of doctors who have completed MBBS and waiting to enroll for PG courses. Their services could prove crucial for the third wave.

"Today we have 1.5 lakh doctors who have finished medical course but waiting for NEET exam. How do you tap them? 1.5 lakh doctors and 2.5 lakh nurses are sitting at home. They will be crucial for third wave," Justice Chandrachud said. *Continued on Page 2*

## Monsoon likely to make it on time, to arrive in Kerala on June 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The southwest monsoon is likely to make its onset over the Indian subcontinent at its normal date of June 1. "Extended Range Forecast suggests monsoon will arrive over Kerala on time, around 1 June. This is an early indication," said M Rajeevan, Secretary at the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

This is the second indication of a normal monsoon season in 2021. About 75 per cent of the country's annual rainfall is recorded between June and September. *Continued on Page 2*

## Centre appoints military officers as secretaries for fast decision making

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major reform to fast-track decision making in the Armed forces, the Government has appointed military officers as additional and joint secretaries in the Defence Ministry. These officers can now act on their own avoiding bureaucratic maze.

The setting up of these posts was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister on Wednesday evening, sources said here on Thursday. The officers will be part of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the Defence Ministry.

The DMA was created last year along with the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) institution and General Bipin Rawat was appointed as the first head of it.

The CDS is single-point adviser to the political leadership on matters of defence and strategic importance. Similarly, the DMA also came into being along with the CDS to propel major reforms in the Armed forces, including joint commands, cutting down avoidable expenses by pooling scarce resources and speeding up the pace of modernisation. Rawat heads it as the Secretary, DMA.

After the ACC nod, Lt General Anil Puri became Additional Secretary. Major

General K Narayanan, Rear Admiral Kapil Mohan Dhir and Air Vice Marshal Hardeep Bains were appointed as joint secretaries in the DMA, the ACC note said.

Sources said Puri was already officiating as additional secretary and the other three officers as joint secretaries. With the official and formal seal of additional secretary and joint secretaries, these four officers can now take decision independently. Elaborating on this aspect, they said till now the four officers had to seek approval for any decision from Secretary, the DMA as they did not have the requisite official sanction. *Continued on Page 2*

## Era of Jat politics ends with Ajit Singh

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Chaudhary Ajit Singh, 82, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) chief and a powerful Jat satrap of western Uttar Pradesh, who held key portfolios in several Governments at the Centre and switched sides effortlessly died of Covid on Thursday.

Singh could not be a witness to the recent revival of his party in the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat polls after it was virtually washed out in last Assembly elections.

The twin Jat-Muslim support in the rural hinterland of Western UP remained late leader's political lifeline that failed him in the twilight of his long career as the BJP made its



12 Feb 1939 — 6 May 2021

foot-prints in the region. Singh, son of Ch Charan Singh, the first Prime Minister from the Jatland, was apparently a reluctant politician

before he took the plunge and established himself as an astute politician, who like late Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, was seldom "jobless".

Singh was born on February 12, 1939, at Bhadoola, in Meerut, UP, to former Prime Minister Ch Charan Singh and Gayatri Devi. He is survived by his wife Radhika Singh and son Jayant Chaudhary.

Singh was an alumnus of Lucknow University, IIT Kharagpur, and Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago. He worked for 15 years in the IT industry in the US before returning to India.

The Jat leader was caught in an unsavoury controversy when in 2014 water and electricity connections of his Thuqal road residence were snapped as he failed to vacate it despite being served the eviction notice.

Despite witnessing a dive in his political career in the last few years, he nevertheless enjoyed power as good as one can. Singh had inherited the political legacy of his father in 'Lok Dal' and became a Rajya Sabha member in 1986, a year after the former's death.

A seven-time Member of Parliament from Baghpat, Singh served as Union Minister for Civil Aviation, Agriculture, and Food Processing Industries in different Governments.

The Government changed hands but the RLD leader retained his political clout and managed key cabinet slots in the series of coalition Governments at the Centre. *Continued on Page 2*

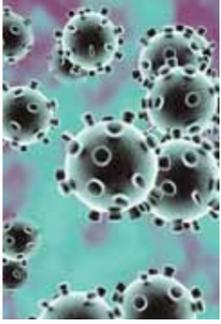
# Highly contagious strain spreading among young

**Amaravati:** The very infectious strains of coronavirus, B.1.617 and B.1, are currently found in the Covid-19 positives in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana and spreading fast in younger age groups, apart from adults.

The N440K is neither a 'variant of interest' nor is virulent now, the state Health Department has said quoting a study by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology.

"The major strains identified from the samples of south India (AP, Karnataka, Telangana), from the positives of the April month data, are B.1.617 and B.1, which are very infectious and also spreading in the younger age groups apart from the adults.

It is pertinent to note that COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update of April 25, issued by WHO, mentions about lineage B.1.617 as VOI (Variant of Interest) from India and doesn't mention



about variant N440K," AP Covid Command and Control Centre Chairman K S Jawahar Reddy said in a statement.

Genome sequencing was carried out in CCMB, Hyderabad, for the samples collected from AP, Telangana and Karnataka.

On an average around 250 samples are being sent to CCMB from the labs of AP

every month. "N440K Strain of coronavirus (B.1.36) was detected in June-July 2020. This strain was prevalent in December 2020 and January and February 2021 and dropped down drastically in March.

Now the share of N440K among the positives is very minimal," Jawahar Reddy pointed out.

He said research data so far did not establish that N440K was a variant of interest and very virulent.

"If this variant is of such public health concern, it should have by now found a place in WHO as well as ICMR reports," he noted.

The Special Chief Secretary's statement came in the backdrop of reports, both in the media and social media, that the N440K variant of coronavirus was rampant in Andhra Pradesh and causing fatalities, besides a higher infection rate.

## IGI first airport in world to register 1,000 TaxiBot movements

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Airport has become the only airport in the world to register 1,000 TaxiBot movements, this has helped in saving 214,000 litres of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) and reducing 532 tonnes of CO2 emissions, a Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) official said on Thursday.

Not only this, TaxiBot's also helped the Delhi Airport insignificantly in reducing the risk of foreign object debris (FOD) damage to the aircraft during its ground movement and taxiing noise at the airport. "It is resourceful to ATC as TaxiBot's offer faster apron clearance and assist airlines in reducing turnaround time for its ground operations," a DIAL official said. Adoption of TaxiBot at Delhi Airport was DIAL's one of the strategic initiatives to reduce carbon emissions by planes, as part of DIAL's objective of becoming a "net zero carbon emission airport" by 2030, Delhi.

Airport is one of the leading airports globally in terms of adopting environmental sustainability related initiatives. With the implementation and continuous use of TaxiBot, DIAL continues its journey of making Delhi Airport one of the most sustainable airports globally. The reduction in carbon emissions by use of TaxiBot establishes DIAL as an environment-friendly organisation. This is a major milestone not only for DIAL but also for the aviation sector globally, in terms of promoting and adopting alternative and greentaxiing solutions," said CEO-DIAL Vidheh Kumar Jaipuria.

## Take precautions, maintain social distancing: Gurugram Police Commissioner

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In view of the alarming surge in Covid-19 cases, the Gurugram Police Commissioner, KK Rao, along with joint-commissioner Kulvinder Singh on Thursday visited multiple spots and police checking points across Gurugram and asked the personnel to take adequate precautions, maintain social distancing and wear face masks to protect themselves.

During his visit, the district police chiefs briefed his personnel to be extra cautious and follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to avoid covid infections. Notably, amid surging Covid-19 cases, the increase in the number of police officers getting infected with the disease is causing a major concern for the police department.

According to the data provided by the police for this year, 140 personnel tested positive for COVID-19 and a majority of them were infected while on duty.

Rao stated to the cops they must take precautions to prevent the spread of Covid among officers.

"We have asked all officers to use two masks and gloves while interacting with the public. We have also ensured proper supply of sanitizers, masks and gloves in all the police stations," he said. He also told them to not be "careless" even if they have been vaccinated.

## Ggm admin fixes ambulance rate for Covid patients

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The district administration Gurugram on Thursday issued an order to regulate the maximum amount of fare that can be charged by ambulances and other vehicles carrying bodies in Gurugram.

The fares have been fixed for ambulances. Rupees 500 km will be charged for a distance of upto 3 km and after this ₹25 per km. Similarly, ₹750 would be charged for a distance of 3 km to 7 km and after this ₹25 per km. For more than 7 km ₹1,000 would be charged and after this ₹25 per km. The deputy commissioner Gurugram, Yash Garg said that strict action will be taken against those who charge more than the fixed prices from the Covid patients.

District administration order stated, "It has come to notice of the district administration that private ambulance driver/service providers are charging exorbitant rates from the citizens for transporting the patients within/outside State.

## Essential items' prices capped

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The district administration of Gurugram has fixed the rates of essential items on Thursday to stop blackmarketing.

The Deputy Commissioner of Gurugram, Yash Garg, has directed the shopkeepers not to sell the goods at a price higher than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) or above the prescribed rate while determining the price of sale of essential commodities in the district Gurugram.

These orders have been issued to run the supply and distribution of essential commodities smoothly and to prevent abnormal increases in prices. The Deputy Commissioner has asked all shopkeepers, including wholesale dealers and grocery associations, to publicly list the rate of essential items at their shop.

## Lockdown must be extended for 2 more weeks in K'taka: Expert

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A health expert on Thursday suggested extension of lockdown by two more weeks in Karnataka, saying the state is yet to reach peak though it has been reporting over 50,000 cases.

"At least in two weeks we will see a peak in Karnataka," Dr Giridhara R Babu, who is a professor and head of Life Course Epidemiology at the Public Health Foundation of India, told PTI. Babu, who is a member of the Technical Advisory Committee on COVID, said the case detection is presently erratic because the testing numbers have reduced, especially in Bengaluru.

"I will not give a clear indication on the number of cases during the peak, but irrespective of the testing, we will see the peak in the next two weeks," he said.

Hailing the decision of the State Government to impose lockdown from April 27 to May 12, Babu citing an estimate by IISc, said the State has saved 5,800 lives.

"Lockdown has helped in reducing the number of deaths, according to the models by IISc Professor Sashikummar Ganesan. So, I recommend

that the lockdown be extended by at least two weeks," Babu opined. He added that there will be an increase in fatalities at least 10 to 14 days from the date of cases being reported. On the measures to be taken in view of surge in infections, he said triage could be a game changer in the fight against COVID.

According to Babu, there should be more screening and triage centres with oxygen supply all over Bengaluru where the COVID cases are high.

"These (Triage centres) should be set up every five kilometres. By doing this kind of enhanced triage by using existing manpower, we can tide over the crisis," he claimed.

While daily infections and active cases in the State are rising alarmingly, the fatalities too are spiralling.

On Wednesday alone, there were 346 deaths taking the total deaths so far to 16,884. Bengaluru was the main contributor of COVID cases in Karnataka with 23,106 infections and 161 fatalities on a single day taking the total infections and deaths to 8,63,380 and 7,006 cumulatively.

The city had 3.13 lakh active cases as on Wednesday.



Labourers cover sacks containing wheat grain with plastic sheets on a cloudy day in Patiala on Thursday

## Gehlot: Nationwide lockdown only option left to check Covid

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Endorsing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's call for a nationwide lockdown, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday said it can help in breaking the chain of COVID-19 if planned properly.

There is already a shortage of oxygen, medicines and other equipment, and the country might soon face a shortage of medical staff as well, he warned.

"I fully endorse the call given by @RahulGandhi ji that national lockdown is the only option left. For more than one

year - our doctors, medical staff have been performing under excessive workload for the nation. We have lost many of them," the chief minister said. "The second wave is starting us in the face - Experts and doctors believe that how much ever we prepare we are already facing shortage of oxygen, medicines and other equipment, soon we may run short of medical staff as well," he added in a series of tweets.

A lockdown planned properly to avoid hardships and misery to the poor and the migrant workers may be helpful in breaking the chain of the virus, Gehlot added.

## Ex-Union Minister Matang Singh falls prey to Covid-19

**Guwahati:** Former Union minister and Congress leader from Assam Matang Singh passed away at a hospital in New Delhi on Thursday due to Covid-19, party sources said here.

Hailing from Tinsukia in eastern Assam, the 59-year-old Congress leader was a close aide of former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Assam in 1992.

He had tested positive for coronavirus on April 22 and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the national capital.

Sinh had served as the Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs from 1994 to 1998 during which he played an important role in most of the decisions relating to the northeast region.

The coal businessman-turned-politician was expelled from the Congress in 1998 on disciplinary grounds following his controversial remarks against party president Sonia Gandhi. In 2015, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had arrested Singh, who had launched several television channels, for his involvement in the Saradha chit fund scam.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has consoled the death of Singh. IANS

## Uttarakhand IAS officers to contribute to CM's relief fund to fight Covid

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

IAS officers of the Uttarakhand cadre will contribute their one day's salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the next three months to assist in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

President of the Uttarakhand IAS Association and Additional Chief Secretary

Manisha Panwar has written to the Finance Secretary informing him about the decision.

All IAS officers of the Uttarakhand cadre have decided to contribute their one day's salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund during May, June and July as an assistance in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Panwar said in the letter.

## Rupsi Airport in Assam to be operational from tomorrow

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

**Guwahati:** Rupsi Airport in Assam's Dhubri District is poised to be operational from Saturday with a trial flight conducted on the Guwahati-Rupsi-Guwahati route by Flybig Airlines, an Airports Authority of India (AAI) official said on Thursday.

The trial run was completed timely and safely on Wednesday with extended support from the Assam Government and concerned

agencies, the AAI official said. The airport has been developed under the RCS-UDAN scheme and operations by Flybig Airlines are scheduled to start from Saturday between Guwahati-Rupsi-Kolkata route.

The flight is scheduled to operate on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, the official said. Bookings for the route has been opened by Flybig airlines, he added. Meanwhile, a release of Flybig

Thursday said that it has forayed into the North East region to provide connectivity under UDAN scheme to remote areas amidst the pandemic and at a time when the country is facing challenges due to COVID-19.

Safer means of transport during the pandemic have become critical to ensure the aspirations of the emerging region and its economy, the release said. PTI

## Plan in advance to...

From Page 1

The apex Court noted that the formula provided by Central Government to arrive at the requirement of Oxygen for Delhi needs to be reexamined since the Centre's formula only takes into account ICU beds and hospital admissions but not those who are at home but in need of Oxygen or requirements for ambulance, etc.

"Your formula needs a relook. When you prepared the formula not everybody who went to ICU needed oxygen. But now many home isolation patients need oxygen. Your formula does not take into account ambulances etc," the court remarked. When Solicitor General Tushar Mehta demanded audit of usage of Oxygen and other infrastructure by the Delhi Government, State's Counsel Rahul Mehra objected. At this point the Judges advised that both Centre and State should refrain from political slugs "Be assured the order will not like be a witchhunt of the Delhi Government. Just allow we didn't allow recriminations against Centre we won't allow the same for Delhi Governments. You may have ideological differences but that is of no concern for us," Justice Chandrachud said.

## SC refuses to...

From Page 1

"What instead it would have intended to do was to urge the EC to ensure stricter compliance of Covid-19 related protocols during elections," observed the apex court while disposing of the EC's petition. "The Supreme

## Oxygen just a...

From Page 1

"This may be accorded top priority," it said. According to the order, it will be the DMs responsibility to check whether a filled oxygen cylinder is available with a re-filler or dealer. "The DMs shall identify dedicated dealers or depots to distribute such cylinders to the individuals who shall not be redirected to refilling plants under any circum-

Court also noted and appreciated the role of High Courts across the country in handling cases related to pandemic. "Sometimes, High Court Judges are stressed about local conditions and at times, they may make strong remarks, the Bench said, adding but "we must not be so fragile as to get offended by them".

stances. The DMs shall ensure that the dealers regularly get their cylinders refilled from the designated refilling plants," quoted as mentioned in the order. "DMs shall also ensure distribution of lump-sum allocation is done judiciously and equitably among individuals, any non-Covid hospitals, nursing homes, ambulances and 'SOS' cylinders of Covid hospitals running on liquid medical oxygen (LMO)," the order further stated.

## Mamata fumes as Centre...

From Page 1

The team met State Home Secretary and ADGP (Law and Order) at State secretariat Nabanna. The team is likely to visit the violence hit areas of the State. Apart from the Central team Union Minister V Muralidhar too visited Bengal to take stock of the situation. Earlier the Home Ministry shot off a "strong" letter to Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay asking him to send detailed reports on the ongoing violence. Quoting an earlier letter sent on May 3 the latest communication wondered why no report on violence had been sent to the Centre. "This means that no effective measures (on the violence) have been taken so far..." the letter read, warning if a report was not sent to the Centre "at once, it will be viewed seriously".

Apparently the tone and tenor of the letter irked the Chief Minister who had returned to power with two-third majority even as she said "strong letters are being sent in order to intimidate us... but such things would hardly bother us... no intimidating tactic would work... there is no point threatening us." The Chief Minister who earlier shuffled 27 IPS officers said, "I have already issued strong instructions that no violence will be tolerated," adding "both the TMC and BJP have lost people in violence... though no death can be measured with money the Government will sanction Rs 2 lakh for the kin of the deceased."

## Monsoon likely to make it on time...

From Page 1

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) will issue an official monsoon forecast on May 15, he said.

Earlier this month, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in its stage one forecast that this year's southwest monsoon is likely to be 98% of its long-performing average, which would make it a third consecutive year of normal or above-normal monsoon. The forecasters had said that the neutral phase of El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) throughout the four-month season could act favourably and bring good rainfall activity over the country. ENSO is among the several key factors that determine the rainfall performance during the crucial Indian summer monsoon.

Normal monsoon cheers farmers and boosts rural demand, which is particularly rel-

evant this year as economic activity has yet again been slowed down by lockdowns in various parts of the country for a second consecutive year. Farmers will be anxiously watching the onset in Kerala, as they will need to complete the pre-sowing operations accordingly.

Last year, the monsoon winds hit the coast of Kerala on June 1 as well, buoyed by Cyclone Nisarga. However, in 2019, it made its onset over Kerala only on June 8, causing a 35% deficit in rainfall over that month.

The summer rains — which typically set in from June 1 — are critical because nearly 75 percent of India's net arable land lacks irrigation and nearly half the population depends on a farm-based livelihood.

The rains also replenish 89 "nationally important reservoirs" critical for drinking and power generation.

## India logs...

From Page 1

Nations with a death toll of over 50,000 are Mexico (2,17,740), the UK (1,27,570), Italy (1,22,005), Russia (1,11,895), France (1,05,631), Germany (84,593), Spain (78,566), Colombia (76,015), Iran (73,568), Poland (68,482), Argentina (65,865), Peru (62,674) and South Africa (54,557).

India's first case was detected in late January 2020 and the country's total did not cross 10 million infections until December but the next 10 million cases were reported in the span of just under five months, mostly in April. The Covid tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark

on August 7, 2020; 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4.

In its weekly report, the World Health Organization (WHO) said, India accounted for 46 per cent of global cases and 25 per cent of global deaths reported in the one week. India reported nearly 2.6 million new cases, a 20 per cent increase on the previous week, and 23,231 deaths in the last seven days. Worldwide, 5.7

million new cases were reported last week and more than 93,000 deaths. The overall global Covid cases has topped 1,55,922,363 while the deaths have surged to more than 3,258,295.

The data showed that the highest numbers of new cases were reported from India (25,97,285 new cases, an increase of 20 per cent), Brazil (4,21,933 new cases; an increase of 4 per cent), the United States of America (3,45,692 new cases; an increase of 15 per cent) in the last one week.

The South-East Asia Region reported over 2.7 million new cases and over 25,000 new deaths, a 19 per cent and a 48 per cent increase respec-

tively compared to the previous week. Turkey and France have reported a decline of active cases 32 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. The African Region reported over 42,000 new cases and 1,000 new deaths in the past one week, a 15 per cent and a 13 per cent decrease respectively compared to the previous week.

The data further stated that, the highest numbers of new deaths were reported from India (23,231 new deaths; 1.7 new deaths per 1,00,000; a 53 per cent increase), Indonesia (1,152 new deaths; 0.4 new deaths per 1,00,000; a 2 per cent decrease), and Bangladesh (588 new deaths; 0.3 new deaths per 1,00,000; a 17 per cent decrease).



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## Raise O2 bed number as supply ample: CM



Ranjana Dimiri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said that Delhi received 730MT oxygen from the Centre on Wednesday for the first time. "We will need 700MT oxygen on daily basis to tackle the prevailing situation. With an adequate supply of 700MT oxygen, Delhi Government will be able to set up a centre with 9,000-9,500 more beds. For the past few days, Delhi has been suffering from a scarcity of oxygen. Today, we require 700MT oxygen daily to run all

our hospitals and our health infrastructure in Delhi," he said.

The Chief Minister appealed to hospitals to raise the number of beds that were reduced due to shortage of oxygen. "Many hospitals reduced their beds due to shortage of oxygen. A huge hospital with 300 beds reduced to 100 beds. It is my request to all hospitals to reinstate the number of beds. I hope 700MT oxygen will be available each day," he added.

Kejriwal said that till today Delhi has administered

35,74,000 doses of vaccines; around 28 lakh people have received their first jab and 7,76,000 people have received both the jabs and in the last three days 1,30,000 youth (18-44) have received their first jab.

"If we receive 700MT oxygen daily, we can create several oxygen-beds in Delhi. Presently, given the scarcity of oxygen, we can only create 5,000 beds in Radha Soami Satsang; 2,500 beds in two places in Burari; 1,000 beds in Commonweath Games Village; and 1,000 beds in Yamuna Sports Complex. Around 9000-9500 beds can be prepared if we get adequate oxygen.

"If we get 700MT oxygen daily, I guarantee you that no person will have to die because of a shortage of oxygen. No one will face scarcity of oxygen in Delhi," he said.

The Chief Minister further said, "I hope all Governments will work together in the near future. No Government can fight this huge pandemic alone. I hope that in the upcoming

## Kejriwal thanks Modi for 730 mt oxygen

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the national Capital received 730 metric tonnes of oxygen on May 5, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and thanked him for ensuring oxygen supply.

In a letter, Kejriwal said that it was for the first time the national capital received more than 700 metric tonnes of the life-saving gas.

"Delhi has a consumption of 700 metric tonnes of oxygen on a daily basis. We have been urging the Centre on a regular basis to give us 700 metric tonnes. It was for the first time yesterday that Delhi

received 730 metric tonnes," he said in the letter in Hindi.

The Chief Minister also requested the prime minister that the national capital should be given this quantity every day.

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart on behalf of Delhiites.

I request you that Delhi should be given at least this much oxygen on a daily basis and there should not be any reduction in this quantity. The whole of Delhi will be grateful to you," he said.

Hospitals across the national capital and its suburbs have been sending out SOS messages on social media about their depleting oxygen supplies.

days, all governments can work harmoniously. We are getting a lot of support from the Courts.

Have complete faith that we will be relieved of our problems soon."

## Govt to set up control room for hassle-free O2 supply

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

To ensure hassle free timely supply of medical oxygen in hospitals required for the treatment of critical Covid 19 patients, the Delhi Government on Thursday appointed two IAS officers at the Kalinga Nagar facility of Tata Steel where oxygen is being produced. The Delhi Government will also form a control room on May 7 to monitor the real-time dashboard of the oxygen supply and demand in the city.

According to senior health official Atul Garg, the State administration has formed a decentralised management system also for the decentralised management system for the oxygen distribution in hospitals and institutions.

While the oxygen supply chain has become pivotal amid surge in Covid-19 cases, Delhi government team is also ensuring and tracking the movement of each and every tanker for obstacle-free movement.



"The Delhi Government has got a GPS tracking system on 41 tankers carrying oxygen in the city. A dashboard has been prepared, and Amazon has been roped in as a partner to track the cargos carrying the liquid oxygen in the National Capital," a Government official said. On May 5, Delhi received around 360 MT oxygen via railway, a Government official said.

Delhi is gradually ramping up capacities to transport liquid oxygen. All the DMs are tracking each and every re-filler and making sure that it reaches

the earmarked destination," he added.

The Delhi State Health Department has also issued an order to revive the dealer network of oxygen cylinders. "All dealers who were providing industrial gases, have been linked with the re-fillers. The dealers provide cylinders to the retailer outlets for citizens. The government is also creating a buffer stock for oxygen and 505 D-type cylinders have already been distributed to 11 Deputy Commissioners across the city," a Government official added.

## Kejriwal thanks French Govt to help install oxygen plant

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday inspected the installation of the new oxygen plant at Satyawadi Raja Harishchandra Hospital.

The CM said that this plant can generate 330 litres of oxygen and can fill 50-60 cylinders, and if used directly, around 33 patients can be treated 24x7. Kejriwal extended his gratitude to the French Government for its support to help install this oxygen plant. He also said that the Delhi Government is setting up 48 such plants across Delhi to address oxygen shortage.

Kejriwal tweeted, "Inspected the installation of the new oxygen plant at Satyawadi Raja Harishchandra Hospital. I want to thank the French govt for their support. We are setting up 48 such plants across Delhi to address the shortage of oxygen."

"Delhi has seen an acute shortage of oxygen in the last few days. While on one hand, we are taking oxygen from the Central Government, on the other hand, we are also trying to produce as much oxygen as we can at our own level.

## 4 arrested for black marketing of O2 concentrators

NEW DELHI: In yet another

punitive action against the hoarders and black marketers, the Delhi Police has arrested four men who were allegedly involved in the black marketing of oxygen concentrators in south Delhi's Lodhi Colony area. Police said that they have recovered 419 oxygen concentrators that were to be sold in black market.

The accused have been identified as Gaurav (47), a resident of Lajpat Nagar, Satish Sethi (44), a resident of East of Kailash, Vikrant (29), a resident of Mahipalpur, and Hitesh (32), a resident of Arjun Nagar.

According to Atul Kumar Thakur, DCP, South district, during patrolling around 5 PM on Wednesday, it came to notice that Nege Ju Restaurant and Bar in central market Lodhi Colony was found open and some suspicious activity was going on. "After searching the restaurant, one person was found working on a laptop and was getting online orders of oxygen concentrators. Police searched the restaurant premises and a total of 32 boxes of oxygen concentrators having capacity of nine and five liters, one box of thermal scanner and one box containing N 95 masks were found," said the DCP.

## City sees increase in containment zones

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a span of one month from April 6 till May 6, Delhi has witnessed sharp increase in Covid 19 containment zones. As per the Revenue Department's data released on Thursday the overall per cent of jump was recorded at 1,449.5 per cent.

South Delhi accounted for the maximum with 21,172 such zones, nearly 45 per cent of the total 47,704 in the city, followed

by central Delhi (7,114), New Delhi (4,946) and southwest Delhi (3,238), according to official figures and Northeast Delhi has 600 containment zones closely followed by East Delhi (504) which has the lowest number of such zones.

According to the state health bulletin data, Delhi had 3,291 containment zones on April 6. The number shot up to a staggering 47,704 - an increase of over 1,449.5 per cent by Tuesday.

## Provide Covid treatment to each resident of State: HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the Centre and the Delhi Governments to provide the facility for medical treatment required by all residents of Delhi who are suffering from Covid-19.

The HC Bench headed by Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said that it was the State's obligation to provide sufficient infrastructure to save the lives of people.

However, the existing medical infrastructure in the State had been "completely exposed", said Judges while considering petitions for ICU Beds by some patients.

The Court noted that Article 21 of the Constitution guaranteed the right to life and liberty to all and thus the petitioner could not be turned away on account of lack of medical infrastructure. "We are sworn to protect the fundamental rights of the people. Therefore, we are bound to issue a writ to provide

## Govt caps pvt ambulance rate

NEW DELHI: Amid several reports of overcharging by ambulance services, the Delhi Government has capped the maximum prices that private ambulance services can charge in the national Capital. Delhi CM said it has come to our notice that private ambulance services are more. It has come to our notice that private ambulance services in Delhi are charging illegitimately. To avoid this practise, the Delhi Government has capped maximum prices that private ambulance services can charge.

## 335 Covid deaths in City, 19,133 +ve, positivity 25%

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital recorded 19,133 new cases during last 24 hours, while the positivity rate dropped below 25 per cent for the first time since April 18. At least 335 Covid-19 deaths were also reported in a day taking the total tally to 18,398 on Thursday.

According to the bulletin issued by the Delhi health department on Thursday, "At 24.29 per cent, the case positivity rate is its lowest since April 16, when it was 19.7 per cent, according to Government data. It was 24.6 per cent on April 17. This is the third time in the last four days that the number of new cases remained below 20,000."

It is also significant that Delhi's Covid positivity rate has fallen each day during these nine days. On 27th April, the positivity rate of Delhi was 32.7 per cent on 28th April, it was 31.8, on 29th April, it was 32.8 and on 30th April, the Covid positivity rate was 32.7 per cent, the bulletin stated.

Incidentally, at the beginning of this month, May 1st recorded a 31.6 positivity rate,

which came down to 28.3 on 2nd May, followed by positivity rate of 29.6 on 3rd May. On May 4th, the positivity rate stood at 26.7 and on the fifth, this was 26.4 per cent.

From this drop in the positivity rate, it can be concluded that in Delhi the case positivity rate of COVID-19 has dropped by approximately one per cent each day in the last 10 days.

During these days, the Delhi government has not only ramped up its testing but also worked relentlessly in increasing the number of beds across Delhi. The government is also giving an aggressive push to the vaccination drive, which will further help bring down the positivity rate in the coming days.

Delhi had reported 20,960 cases on Wednesday, 19,953 on Tuesday, 18,043 on Monday, 20,394 cases on Sunday, 25,219 on Saturday, 27,047 on Friday, 24,235 on last Thursday and 25,986 on Wednesday last week.

The national registered a positivity rate of 26.4 per cent on Wednesday, 26.73 per cent on Tuesday.

## Jobs to kin if employee dies on Covid duty: NMC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said on Thursday the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) will give appointment letters to the dependents in case of death while working to fight Covid-19. The Mayor said that on the death of A or B class regular contractual officers due to corona, his dependents would be granted appointment at entry level in A or B category on contract basis on regular basis as per the qualification.

"If the deceased held group C post on regular basis then their dependents would be granted appointment on a regular basis as per the qualification and if the deceased held group C post on contractual basis then his dependent would be granted contractual appointment in group C analogous posts subject to fulfilment of eligibility criteria," he said. He further said that the benevolent fund created for the employees would be utilised for the help of dependents of the employees died while performing their duties to fight Covid-19.

## ASI defers daughter's wedding to help people in cremation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

For more than 20 days, the 56 year-old Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI), Rakesh Kumar, has been performing last rites of people who had no one to cremate them at national Capital's Lodhi Crematorium after he was deputed there on April 13.

Since April 13, Kumar had performed last rites of more than 50 bodies and assisted in the cremation of at least 1,100 bodies at Lodhi crematorium in the city.

Kumar, posted at Hazrat Nizamuddin police station, even cancelled his daughter's wedding as she was set to get married on May 7. Kumar said that he does not want to leave

his post. "Delhi Police ASI Rakesh 56yr old, father of 3, lives in PS Nizamuddin barrack. On duty at Lodhi Road crematorium since 13 April, has helped over 1100 last rites, himself lit pyre for over 50. Postponed daughter's marriage due yesterday to attend to covid duties," Delhi Police wrote on its twitter.

Rakesh Kumar hails from Baghpat district in Uttar Pradesh while his wife and three children live there, he has been working in Delhi Police for the past 36 years.

"I have postponed my daughter's marriage to help people here and in these hard times I cannot think of celebrations," said Kumar. Rakesh said that he has



helped many people who came alone to cremate their parents or grandparents.

He has even cremated elderly whose children and grandchildren were abroad and due to the ongoing pandemic they were not able to come here.

Kumar comes to the cre-

matorium every day at 7 AM and stays there till the end of the day while assisting priests and crematorium staff in managing the cremations.

"I had been vaccinated and as a precaution I wear a PPE kit and double-mask every time. I don't want to put my family members at risk," said Kumar.

## Cops hold virtual meeting for Covid-orphaned kids

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's special unit for women and children held a web meeting with all stakeholders on Covid-orphaned children, and women-related cases especially involving the Covid orphaned children during the ongoing pandemic, officials said.

According to a statement released by police, deliberating on suggestions and inputs received from participants regarding covid orphaned children and complaints relating to women's issues received by the police and various other forums, it was emphasised that the universal child helpline number 1098 and women helpline number 181 should be

## THE MEETING WAS ATTENDED BY 75 POLICE OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENT

given wide publicity.

Informative material such as pamphlets, brochures, posters and guidelines of Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA) should be displayed at hospitals, police stations and public areas, it stated.

It was also emphasised that

the rescue of children in need of care and protection should be done in a proper legal manner, after following procedures and guidelines.

The provisions of Juvenile Justice Act 2015 should be followed meticulously, the statement added.

If any instance of a child getting orphaned comes to notice, the NGO or individual should immediately report the matter to the nearest police station whereby the Child Welfare Officer will present the child before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

"The CWC will assign the child to child care institutions as deemed fit. The due process of adoption comes later after observing the legal procedures

and government guidelines," statement further added.

The meeting was chaired by Special Commissioner of Police, Women Safety, Nuzhat Hasan.

The meeting was attended by 75 police officers and representatives of government, including of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR).

The National Commission for Women (NCW), the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR), the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), and the Delhi Legal Service Authority (DLSA), police said.

# Speed up job drive, vaccine production: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the country and called for speeding up vaccination drive and expanding its production.

Modi noted that an advisory was sent to the States to identify districts of concern where case positivity is 10% or more and bed occupancy is more than 60% on either oxygen supported or ICU beds.

Union Minister s Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, Dr Harsh Vardhan, Piyush Goyal, Mansukh Mandaviya other ministers and top officials took part in the meeting, according to a statement from Prime Minister's Office (PMO)

The Prime Minister was given "a detailed picture" on the Covid outbreak in various states and districts. He was informed about the 12 states which have more than 1 lakh active cases and details on the districts with high disease burden.

Modi directed that states should be given help and guidance about leading indicators to ramp up healthcare infrastructure.

The need to ensure quick & holistic containment mea-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the country and called for speeding up vaccination drive and expanding its production.

sures were also discussed, said the PMO statement.

Prime Minister also reviewed the availability of medicines. He was briefed about the "rapid augmenting of production of medicines including Remdesivir."

In the meeting Prime Minister reviewed the progress on vaccination & the roadmap for "scaling up production on vaccines in the next few months."

He was informed that around 17.7 crore vaccines have been supplied to the states. Modi also reviewed the state wise trends on vaccine wastage.

According to the PMO, the Prime Minister was briefed that "around 31% of eligible population over the age of 45 has been given at least one dose".

He spoke about the need to sensitise states that the speed of vaccination doesn't come down, said PMO.

# Don't delay shots to civil aviation staff: Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Thursday issued guidelines for Covid-19 vaccination of all civil aviation personnel working in Government as well as private entities.

According to the guidelines, a priority during vaccination should be given to the air traffic controllers (ATCs), cockpit and cabin crews of the airlines as well as mission-critical and passenger-facing staff. The Ministry has also advised that the vaccination of civil service personnel should not have any delay. The Ministry's guidelines came after the Air India pilots union threatened to stop work if the airline failed to set up vaccination camps for them on priority.

"A dedicated vaccination facility will be established by the airport operators in their respective airports to facilitate expeditious vaccination of staff. Basic facilities for the personnel visiting (help desk, drinking water, ventilation fans, washrooms, etc.) to be arranged following Covid safety protocols. The cost per vaccination dose can be decided by the airport operator with the service provider and it will be the same for aviation personnel," the guidelines said.

The guidelines stated that the operator should immediately contact the State Governments or private service providers (hospitals), which are willing to set up Covid-19 vac-

ination centres at the airports. There can be more than one service provider at any airport depending on a number of personnel working in the aviation ecosystem," it stated. The focus of major airports could be on tying up with private service providers, it noted.

"For the smaller airports, where the numbers to get vaccinated are less and private players do not find it viable, the airport operators can approach the district or local administration for extending the vaccination programme," it added.

The guidelines further stated that all agencies working in the airports eco-system need to sponsor their personnel to avail the facilities as operators/service providers would not be dealing with individual cases. Further, online Payment mechanism to the service provider for vaccine doses administered for their respective personnel has been advised to be devised.



The facilities created by airport operator would be available for all aviation personnel in the first phase and can be extended to the family members subsequently, it mentioned.

"All airport operators are advised to designate a nodal officer — and alternative nodal officer may also be kept in readiness — for coordinating the efforts," the guidelines noted.

"Chairman of Airports Authority of India (AAI) will hold regular meetings to review the progress and coordinate with the Civil Aviation Ministry, and Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will address issues or challenges" it said. The AAI owns and manages more than 100 airports across the country.

"This is the broad framework to facilitate expeditious vaccination of the civil aviation community in the country," the guidelines said.

more doctors," the minister said.

On the steps taken by the Army, Rajnath said it has provided 100 beds each to Lucknow and Allahabad, set up a 40-bedded isolation facility at Sagar in Madhya Pradesh and established a 50-bed isolation facility at Namkum in Jharkhand.

Army medical persons have been deployed at Ahmedabad and Patna, and battlefield-nursing assistants have been provided to the Patiala administration for hospital management, the minister noted.

He also talked about the logistics support that is being provided by the IAF and the Navy in bringing required medical supplies including oxygen cylinders from outside India or in transporting these supplies from one place to another within the country.

Indian naval ships including Kolkata, Kochi, Tabar, Trikand, Jalashwa and Airavat have been deployed for shipment of liquid medical oxygen-filled cryogenic containers and associated medical equipment from various countries in the Middle East and South-East Asia, he noted.

The DRDO has also initiated fabrication of 500 medical oxygen plants with allocation received from PM Cares Fund, he said.

At least 5,31,16,901 1st dose and 1,29,15,354 2nd dose beneficiaries in the category of more than 60 years old and 5,38,15,026 (1st dose) and 48,43,429 (2nd dose) beneficiaries aged 45 to 60 years have been vaccinated so far.

In the meanwhile, the Government said that Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi are among 10 states that account for 72.19 per cent of the new Covid-19 cases reported in a day.

New coronavirus cases and deaths in India hit a record daily high with 4,12,262 new infections and 3,980 fatalities being reported, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 2,10,77,410 and the death toll to 2,30,168.

The ministry said that Karnataka, Kerala, Haryana, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are among the other states in the list of 10.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 57,640. It is followed by Karnataka with 50,112 while Kerala reported 41,953 new cases. Besides Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Jharkhand account for 75.55 per cent of the new deaths.

India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,72,80,844 with 3,29,113 recoveries being registered in a day.

# Give disability certificates online to people at home, States, UTs directed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after asking the States/UTs to prioritise persons with disabilities (PwDs) in the ongoing vaccination drive, Union Social Welfare Ministry has made it mandatory for them to issue disability certificates online to the sector which is confined within the four walls of their homes due to Covid-19.

A gazette notification has been issued in this regard by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment recently.

"Mandatory for all States/UTs to grant certificate of disability through online mode only using the UDID portal with effect from June 1. States/UTs have been advised for compliance," the ministry's Department of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) tweeted.

The sector had been demanding such a move, especially during the Covid pandemic where PwDs were unable to get their certificates due to the prevalent restrictions as well as health threat posed by the deadly virus.

According to the 2011 Census, there were 2.68 crore PwDs, while till mid-March this year just around 54.84 lakhs e-Unique Disability Identification (UDID) cards have been generated in 710 out of 734 districts across States/UTs. Thus, indicating the slow pace of the UDID project which is envisaged to

be the national database for the PwDs, for issuance of UDID Cards in order to enable the sector to avail various concessions under schemes meant for their welfare.

The DEPwD plans to cover an additional 10 lakh persons by December to reach 65 lakhs.

Unhappy at the poor pace of the UDID, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment in March recommended that DEPwD must fix state-wise annual targets for issuing the UDID cards.

In another decision, the Ministry has also asked the State/Union Territory to make sure "special provisions" were made at testing, vaccination and treatment centres for PwD.

The move followed allegations that persons with disabilities (PwD) were being made to wait for COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccination.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 mandates that PwD are given priority when it comes to medical attention and treatment. The DEPwD said it had received a representation from the National Federation of the Blind, Delhi on April 22 "alleging that PwDs including persons with visual impairments have to stand in long queues for the purpose of testing, vaccination and treatment for Covid-19 induced ailments".

operate quarantine facilities and procure items that are required to fight against the pandemic.

Various defence organisations such as the DRDO, Cantonment Boards, Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) have established COVID hospitals and facilities in various cities including Delhi, Lucknow, Bengaluru and Patna, he mentioned.

The AFMS has deployed additional doctors, including specialists, super specialists and paramedics, at various hospitals, he said. "My ministry has granted an extension to short service commissioned doctors of AFMS till December 31, 2021, which has augmented the strength of AFMS by 238

logistics support, an exclusive COVID Management Cell under a Director General rank officer has been established which reports directly to the Vice Chief of Army Staff.

This will bring in greater efficiency in coordinating real time responses to address exponential rise in COVID cases across the country including Delhi where assistance to civil administration in the form of testing, admissions in military hospitals and transportation of critical medical equipment are already being provided, they said.

In a blog post on his website, Rajnath said emergency financial powers were granted to the armed forces so that commanders can establish and

# N440K variant of Covid first wave to vanish soon: Scientists

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The N440K variant of coronavirus, which was largely responsible for the first wave of the pandemic in India is diminishing and likely to disappear soon, scientists at CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) have said.

They shared this information to the public by posting a tweet on Thursday.

They also said that the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus which is more infectious is fast replacing the N440K variant in south India, thus indicating that the worse is in waiting.

N440K strain, also known as B.1.36, was detected in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana last year. However, its impact has suddenly dropped in March, and now "the share among the positives is very minimal", according to CCMB institute.

COVID Command Centre chief Dr KS Jawahar Reddy on Thursday said, "Research data doesn't establish that N440K is variant of interest and is very virulent".

"On average around 250 samples are being sent to Centre



for CCMB from the labs of the state every month, where genome sequencing of southern States — Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka — are being carried out. The research data of CCMB far does not establish that N440K is a variant of interest and is very virulent," he said.

The CCMB also released an official statement in which it said, "Although N440K variant shown to be efficient in cell culture system in the experimental condition, it is also important to remember that just because a variant behaves a certain way in cell cultures, it does not mean it will behave the same way in humans, or a complicated pandemic scenario".

The Hyderabad-based institute further cited World Health Organization's weekly epidemiological reports and said that even the WHO mentioned B.1.617 as the "Variant of Interest" and did not say anything about N440K.

"If this variant (N440K) is of such public health concern, it should have by now found a place in WHO reports as well as ICMR report," the CCMB said in the statement.

However, currently, doctors have identified two strains B.1.617 (double mutant strain) and B.1 in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana, which are said to be "very infectious" and "easily spreading" in the younger age groups.

# Army sets up Covid mgmt cell to aid civil administration

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With its engagement growing to fight the corona pandemic, the Army has set up an exclusive Covid management cell to fine-tune response in real-time to the civil administration to provide aid.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday underlined efforts made by the armed forces, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the defence public sector undertakings (PSU) to meet the ongoing second wave of the pandemic.

Giving details about the new cell, army officials said here on Thursday while the force has ensured own force preservation, medical care to veterans and their dependents, it has also deployed considerable medical resources to assist civil authorities especially at the five COVID hospitals already functional or in the process of being established at Delhi, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Varanasi and Patna.

In order to coordinate multiple facets of staffing and



logistics support, an exclusive COVID Management Cell under a Director General rank officer has been established which reports directly to the Vice Chief of Army Staff.

This will bring in greater efficiency in coordinating real time responses to address exponential rise in COVID cases across the country including Delhi where assistance to civil administration in the form of testing, admissions in military hospitals and transportation of critical medical equipment are already being provided, they said.

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operate quarantine facilities and procure items that are required to fight against the pandemic.

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The AFMS has deployed additional doctors, including specialists, super specialists and paramedics, at various hospitals, he said. "My ministry has granted an extension to short service commissioned doctors of AFMS till December 31, 2021, which has augmented the strength of AFMS by 238

# Current Covid surge may see decline in middle to end of May, says Kang

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The current surge in coronavirus cases may go down by the middle to the end of May, noted vaccinologist Gagandeep Kang has said.

She said there could be one or two more peaks of coronavirus cases but they may not be as bad as the current one.

Right now it's doing a "world through" in areas it did not do last year, in the middle class population, in the rural areas and there is going to be "very little fuel" for the virus to continue to go through, she said.

Allaying fears about vaccines, she said they are efficacious and emphasised the need to ramp the inoculation drive.

She also expressed concern over the declining number of coronavirus tests. The proportion of cases is actually much larger than the tests reveal but in absolute numbers in "what we track and count", Kang said.

"Best case estimates from

a number of models are somewhere between the middle and the end of the month. Some models have it going into early June but based on what we are seeing, right now middle to end of May is a reasonable estimate," she said in response to a question in a webinar organised by the Indian Women Press Corps.

On forecasting waves of virus, she said one can definitely use the characteristics of the strain, characteristics of a pandemic in a particular place to predict what is going to happen in that location if the data is available at that level for mathematical modelling.

She said there are few infectious disease modellers in the country.

"And all the ones that exist will tell you that their models are as good as the data they have and the models are accurate up to two weeks. You cannot expect a prediction for three months or six months or two years from now as yet. We don't know enough about the virus.

Using national health

# Study finds slightly increased blood clot rates after AstraZeneca Covid shot

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A large study in Denmark and Norway has 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, compared with expected rates in the general population.

However, the study published in The BMJ on Wednesday, stresses that the risk of such adverse events is considered low.

The researchers from University of Southern Denmark, and Norwegian Institute of Public Health, set out to compare rates of blood clots and related conditions after vaccination with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine with those in the general populations of the two countries.

The findings are based on 280,000 people aged 18-65 who received a first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, known as

Covishield in India, from February 2021 through to 11 March 2021 in Denmark and Norway.

Using national health records, they identified rates of events, such as heart attacks, strokes, deep vein blood clots and bleeding events within 28 days of receiving a first vaccine dose and compared these with expected rates in the general populations.

The researchers found 59 blood clots in the veins compared with 30 expected, corresponding to 11 excess events per 100,000 vaccinations.

This included a higher than expected rate of blood clots in the veins of the brain, known as cerebral venous thrombosis (2.5 events per 100,000 vaccinations), the said.

However, the team found no increase in the rate of arterial clots, such as heart attacks or strokes.

For most remaining outcomes, results were largely reassuring, with slightly higher rates of less severe events such as thrombocytopenia a condition related to low blood platelet levels — clotting disorders and bleeding.

The researchers said these events could be influenced by increased surveillance of vaccine recipients.

This is an observational study, so cannot establish

cause, only correlation, the researchers said.

They also point to some limitations, such as a lack of data on underlying risk factors for clotting and the possibility that their results may not apply to other ethnicities.

However, strengths include the large population based approach, using reliable national registry data and near complete follow-up of participants.

# Govt to distribute 20L seed kits to farmers

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has formulated a special strategy for the ensuing Kharif 2021 season and has proposed to distribute 20,27,318, almost 10 times more, seed mini kits than the 2020-21 season costing Rs 82.01 crores. The total cost for these mini-kits will be borne by the Central Government to boost the production and productivity of Tur, Moong and Urad. The following mini-kits will be distributed: 13,51,710 mini kits of arhar containing certified seeds of HYVs of arhar released during the last ten years and productivity not less than 15 qtl/ha for inter-cropping.

4,73,295 mini kits of moong containing certified seeds of HYVs of moong released during the last ten years but productivity not less than 10 qtl/ha for inter-cropping.

93,805 mini kits of urad containing certified seeds of HYVs of urad released during the last ten years but productivity not less than 10 qtl/ha for inter-cropping.

1,08,508 mini kits of urad containing certified seeds of urad HYVs of urad released

during the last 15 years and productivity not less than 10 qtl/ha for Sole Crop.

The above mini-kits used for inter-cropping and urad Sole Crop will cover an area of 4.05 lakh hectare in the Kharif season 2021 to be funded by the Central Government. In addition to this, the usual programme of inter-cropping and area expansion by the states will continue on a sharing basis between the Centre and the States.

Through consultations with the State Governments, a detailed plan for both area expansion and productivity enhancement for Tur, Moong and Urad has been formulated.

Under the strategy, utilising all the high yielding varieties (HYVs) of seeds that are available either with the Central Seed Agencies or in the States will be distributed free of cost to increase area through inter-cropping and Sole Crop.

Tur inter-cropping will be covered in 11 states and 187 districts.

The states are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

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# Another chunk of 1.5L doses of Sputnik V to reach in 2 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the first consignment of 150,000 doses of the Sputnik V vaccine landed in Hyderabad from Russia on May 1, yet another lot of 1.5 lakh doses of Sputnik V vaccine will reach here in the next two days while another 30 lakh doses will be arriving in Hyderabad with Dr Reddys Laboratories by the end of this month. However, no timeline has been set when the Indians will be able to avail the vaccines.

Currently the Centre has rolled out a nationwide vaccination drive using two COVID-19 vaccines — Covaxin of Bharat Biotech and Covishield of Oxford-AstraZeneca, manufactured by Serum Institute of India in Pune.

In September 2020, Dr. Reddys and RDIF entered into a partnership to conduct clinical trials of the SputnikV, developed by the Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology and the rights for distribution of the first 100 million doses in India.

Later it was enhanced to 125 million. Dr Reddys has already received approval from Indian drug regulator for restricted emergency use of Sputnik V in India on April 12.

"New Delhi and Moscow are constantly in touch with each other through the diplomatic channels so that medical support is available on demand as much as possible," an Indian diplomat reportedly said.

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# Stalin to take oath as TN CM today

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

After ten years in the Opposition benches, the DMK will take over the State administration and return to Fort Saint George (the headquarters of Tamil Nadu Government) on Friday morning. Party president M K Stalin (68) will be sworn in as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on Friday at 9 am in a simple function to be held at Raj Bhavan. Governor Banwarilal Purohit will administer oath of office and secrecy to 33 MLAs as members of the council of Ministers to be formed by Stalin.

The names of MLAs to be sworn in Ministers include Durai Murugan (83), who will be the minister for water resources, a portfolio in which he has excelled during his previous tenure in the Karunanidhi ministry. As per the list released by Raj Bhavan, Durai Murugan would be the second-in-command to the Chief Minister.

Those who are joining Stalin in the council of ministers include veterans K N Nehru, I Periyasamy, K Ponnudhi, E Velu, M R K Panneerselvam, KKSSR

Ramachandran, Thangam Thennarasu, S Raghupathy, S Muthusamy, K R Periyakaruppan, T M Anbarasan, M P Saminathan, Geetha Jeevan, "Anitha" R Radhakrishnan, S R Rajakannappan, K Ramachandran, R Sakkarapani, V Senthilbalaji, R Gandhi, M Subramanian, P Moorthi, S S Sivasankar, P K Sekar Babu, Palanivel Thiagarajan, S M Nassar, Ginge K S Masthan, Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi, Siva Meyyanathan, C V Ganesan, Mano Thangaraj, M Mathiiventhan and Kayalvizhi Selvaraj. Palanivel Thiagarajan is the new finance minister while Senthil Balaji, who crossed over to the DMK from AIADMK via the AMMK has been allocated the portfolios of electricity, prohibition and excise.

Fort Saint George has been given a fresh coating of paint to welcome the new chief minister and his colleagues. The Information and Public Relations Department has removed all pictures of late Chief Ministers M G Ramachandran, J Jayalalitha and former Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy from all offices in the Secretariat.

# Union Min's convoy trapped in Bengal post-poll violence

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Union Minister V Muralidharan too got trapped in the post-poll violence on Thursday even as reports of clashes continued to come in from various parts of the State. The Minister's convoy was attacked at the Panchkhuri village in Midnapore Sadar area when he went there to inquire into the reports of some BJP workers being attacked by alleged TMC men, sources said.

The Minister's convoy was chased away by the locals who attacked with sticks. Another senior saffron leader and former State party president Rahul Sinha too was attacked, sources said.

Seven hundred kms away at Dinhatia in Cooch Behar district former TMC MLA and senior leader Udayan Guha was attacked by alleged BJP men who smashed his vehicle, gave him a fractured hand and head injuries, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said.

"Udayan has been seriously injured" she said. Guha's personal security officer too was attacked and he received stitches on his head, police said. The former MLA who lost by a few votes had been hospitalized.

Back in Kolkata the Union Minister said, "They stoned my vehicle," adding "this

cannot be politics but simple goondaism" he said adding any build-up should die down after the elections but "here it is continuing with vengeance ... so much so that even a protected person like a central minister is not spared ... then what must be happening to the common party workers."

He said he would submit a report to the appropriate authorities while State BJP vice president JP Majumdar wondered "whether we are in Bengal and whether we are in India and whether we are Indian citizens ... a Central Minister was driving past a public road ... is he not entitled to do so as a citizen of this country? Should he be stoned like the way they did in Kashmir ... there they pelted stones and here they are throwing brickbats ... is there a difference ... if President's Rule can be imposed there in Kashmir for stone-pelting why cannot the same be done here?"

Later a 10-member team of BJP leaders led by State party president Dilip Ghosh on Thursday met the central team. "We have given our side of the story on how our leaders, candidates and workers are being attacked and killed every day... thousands of them are homeless and living in camps," Ghosh alleged.

# 9-DAY TOTAL LOCKDOWN IN KERALA FROM TOMORROW

State records 42,464 new Covid-19 cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Kerala Government has declared a nine-day complete lock down of the State with effect from Saturday. This has been necessitated because of the failure of the State administration to bring in any change in the ever growing number of Covid-19 patients on a daily basis. Though the complete lock down begins only on Saturday, the entire State wears the look of a deserted place with most of the population staying indoors.

According to the Department of Health, Kerala diagnosed 42,464 new Covid-19 patients in the 12 hours ending 6 pm on Thursday. The death toll too increased in the last 24 hours as 68 persons succumbed to the pandemic. The Test Positivity Rate reached 27.28 per cent by Thursday evening.

The lock down rules have been made stringent this time as no private vehicles would be allowed anywhere in the State unless it is for medical emergency. The Government order says the police have been empowered to seize any private vehicles that come out to the roads during the lock down period.

The KSRTC buses owned by the Kerala Government would deploy sufficient buses on Friday to help travelers reach their destinations.

The next nine days would see all public vehicles staying off the roads.

Shops selling emergency materials like milk and vegetables would be opened for a few hours daily while the general public have been asked to make use of home-delivery facilities.

The Kerala Government Medical Officers Association welcomed the move to declare total lock down for nine days. "We are hopeful that the decision would help in curbing the increase in the transmission of the pandemic."

Yes, we have been requesting the authorities to declare total lock down for quite some time," Dr T N Suresh, general secretary, KGMOA, told The Pioneer.

He said the Government was taking measures to appoint more doctors and para medical staff as there was severe shortage of doctors and medical professionals in the Government Hospitals. Southern Railway has cancelled 15 long distance trains plying through the State because of the lock down.

# 3 ultras killed in Shopian encounter

Jammu: A joint team of security forces on Thursday neutralised three local terrorists of Al-Badr terror outfit while one of them surrendered before the security forces in Kanigam area of Shopian.

In Jammu, a Pakistani intruder was shot dead by the BSF jawans as he had managed to sneak at least 100 metre into the Indian territory in the Samba sector.

Initially, BSF jawans deployed along the International border challenged him but when he kept moving he was neutralised in the wee hours of Thursday.

In a brief statement, PRO BSF Jammu frontier said, "a Pakistani intruder was shot dead in the Samba sector. A paltry sum of Rs 150 was recovered from his possession." In Srinagar, a police spokesman said, the joint team of security forces had

launched a joint cordon and search operation in the Kanigam area of Shopian after receiving the information about the presence of group of terrorists in the area.

Police spokesman said, "during the search operation as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given an opportunity to surrender. Family members of the trapped terrorists were also called to the encounter site to motivate and persuade them to surrender."

Following repeated appeals one of the trapped terrorists Tausif Ahmad stepped out of the hideout and laid down his arms before the joint security forces.

"The surrendered terrorist later also appealed to his trapped companions to surrender, however, they turned down the surrender offer and fired indiscriminately on a joint

search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter", police spokesman added.

In the ensuing encounter, three terrorists were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of encounter. They have been identified as Danish Mir, Mohd Umer Bhat both residents of Khajapora Shopian and Zaid Bashir Reshi resident of Raben Shopian. As per police records, they were affiliated with proscribed terror outfit Al-Badr.

IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar congratulated the joint team of police and security forces for showing utmost patience and exhibiting professionalism, which resulted in saving the life of a misguided youth. IGP Kashmir also made a fervent appeal to all misguided youth who have joined terror ranks to shun the path of violence and return to mainstream. PNS

# Rangasamy to be sworn in as Puducherry CM today

Puducherry: AINRC Chief N Rangasamy will be sworn in as Chief Minister of Union Territory of Puducherry at a brief ceremony here on Friday. Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan would induct Rangasamy as Chief Minister at a brief session on the premises of Rajinivas here. Official sources said Rangasamy alone would be inducted as Chief Minister tomorrow although he would be heading an NDA dispensation which has the BJP as the other constituent.

According to party sources, the swearing in of other ministers, including those from BJP will take place in the next few days. Usually, the strength of a ministry in Puducherry would be six including Chief Minister.

There is however a reported move to have one Deputy Chief Minister now

although there is no precedent in this regard.

A Namassivayam, who joined the BJP in January after quitting the Congress is tipped for the post of Deputy Chief Minister.

The concurrence of the Centre is awaited for the appointment of Deputy Chief Minister, BJP sources said.

The AINRC bagged 10 seats out of the 16 it contested in the April 6 polls while the BJP garnered six out of the nine seats it contested.

The total strength of the Assembly is 30 and sixteen is the magic number for formation of a ministry.

The AINRC and BJP has a combined strength of 16. There are six independents elected to the House and they are by and large supporters of Rangasamy. PTI

# Raj CM gives approval to open 48 new courts

Jaiapur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has given approval for the opening of 48 new courts in the State and the creation of 550 posts of various cadres for them.

In accordance with the budget announcements, Gehlot has given approval to open commercial courts in Bikaner, Alwar, Bhilwara and Jodhpur, courts of additional district judge in Jalore, Sirohi, Wair, Dungargarh, Nainwan, Sardarshahar, Nasirabad, Kathumar, Sadulshahar, Begun, Anupgarh, Neem Ka Thana and Gangapur City.

He also gave approval for the opening of various other courts in other districts.

The Chief Minister has also sanctioned 550 posts of presiding officer, stenographer, reader, clerk, class-4 employee etc. For these courts.

"With this decision of the chief minister, people will be able to get justice at the local level itself and cases pending in the courts will be cleared," according to a release. PTI



A view of deserted Lal Chowk during lockdown in Srinagar on Thursday

# J&K records 4,926 new infections, 52 deaths

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday came closer to recording around 5,000 fresh cases of coronavirus while 52 patients succumbed to the virus across different covid hospitals in the last 24 hours.

With 4,926 fresh cases of coronavirus the total active positive load stood at 41,666 cases. Out of 52 deaths, 34 were reported from Jammu division and 18 from Kashmir division. So far 2562 patients have died due to Covid-19. 1068 patients succumbed to the deadly virus across Jammu region and 1494 across Kashmir division. According to

the media bulletin, out of 41666 active positive cases, Kashmir region accounted for 65 percent active positive cases while Jammu division accounted for 35 percent cases. Out of 20 districts, Jammu and Srinagar districts alone accounted for 17 % and 25% active positive cases.

Meanwhile, chaos prevailed outside Chest Disease hospital in Jammu during the first half of the day as several patients in need of hospital beds with oxygen support were directed to return home due to non-availability of beds.

As media teams arrived in the hospital premises several care takers of the seriously ill patients claimed they had been

waiting for admission but the same was not happening in the absence of beds.

Around one dozen patients along with oxygen cylinders were seen sitting in different corners of the hospital premises/garden waiting for their turn to get admission.

To set the record straight, Incharge Triage Facility and Medical Superintendent, Chest Disease & TB Hospital Jammu, Dr Rajeshwar Sharma claimed that health infrastructure in Jammu has sufficient resources in place to treat all Covid-19 patients.

He further urged the public not to give in to panic and rumours. Dr Rajeshwar informed that 366 Covid-19

patients are under treatment in GMC Jammu, out of which 35 have been admitted in the last 24 hours.

"Out of 94 under treatment Covid patients in Chest Disease & TB Hospital, 14 have been admitted since yesterday. Similarly, the Super Speciality Hospital and Maternal & Child Health Hospital are treating 33 and 83 Covid patients respectively, out of which 14 have been admitted in the last 24 hours. (4+10)" Dr Rajeshwar Sharma added.

Giving the details of recoveries, Dr Rajeshwar Sharma said that in the last 24 hours, 22 Covid-19 patients have been discharged from GMC Jammu, 3 from Chest Disease & TB

Hospital, 2 from Super Speciality Hospital Jammu and 8 from Maternal & Child Health Hospital Jammu.

Regarding treatment protocol, he said at present 359 Covid-19 patients are on oxygen support in GMC Jammu, 2 patients in Chest Disease & TB Hospital and one in Super Speciality Hospital.

With regards to beds, he said 366 out of 410 beds are occupied in GMC Jammu; 94 out of 110 beds are occupied in Chest Disease & TB Hospital and 83 out of 172 beds are occupied in Maternal & Child Health Hospital Jammu. The Super Speciality Hospital is occupied to its full capacity. (33 beds), he said.

# 853 die, 62,194 test +ve in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With absolutely no improvement in the Covid-19 situation, Maharashtra on Thursday recorded 853 deaths and 62,194 infections, even as 63,842 patients were discharged from various hospitals across the state.

A day after the state recorded 920 deaths and 57,640 infections, the daily deaths dropped to 853, while the daily infections went up to 62,194.

With 853 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 72,662 to 73,715. Similarly, with 62,194 new infections, the total number of cases rose from 48,80,542 to 49,42,736.

As 63,842 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 42,27,940. The recovery rate in the state for the first time in several days rose from 85.32 per cent to 85.54 per cent. The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 6,41,569 cases to 6,39,075. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.49 per cent.

With 69 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 13,511 to 13,580, while the infected cases went up by 3028 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,65,057 to 6,68,085.

Patients can avail benefits for a maximum 10 days from the date of admission and they will be applicable only to DDSSY-empanelled hospitals with ICU facility, said the order.

The notification said all charges, including admission, those related to medical consultancy, nursing, beds, diet, PPE kits, X-Ray, ECG and cardiac monitor, among others, will be covered under the scheme's package.

The government-sponsored scheme, with nominal premium, allows residents of Goa to receive healthcare services from government and listed private hospitals for surgical, medical and hospitalisation expenses.

It offers health insurance coverage between ₹2.5 lakh and ₹4 lakh, depending on the number of family members, and provides benefits on a cashless basis. PTI

# Covid treatment now covered under Goa Govt's health scheme

Panaji: The Goa Government on Thursday brought Covid-19 treatment under its flagship medical insurance scheme, which covers the entire population of the state.

The move will allow patients to avail benefits under the Deen Dayal Swasthya Seva Yojana (DDSSY) while undergoing treatment for Covid-19 in private hospitals, according to a notification issued by Additional Secretary (Health) Vikas Gaunekar. Treatment for Covid-19 in government hospitals is free in the state.

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# MAHA PHONE-TAPPING CASE

## Won't arrest Shukla till next hearing: Mumbai Police

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a relief to senior IPS officer Rashmi Shukla, the Mumbai police told the Bombay High Court on Thursday that they would not arrest her for the time being, if she co-operates with them in the investigations into the much-discussed phone tapping case.

During the hearing on a petition filed by Shukla seeking a direction to the Mumbai police not to take any "coercive action" against her for allegedly leaking certain confidential documents, senior counsel Darius Khambata - appearing for the state - told a two-member HC bench comprising Justices Manish Pitale and S S Shinde that the Mumbai police would not arrest her till the next date of hearing.

Khambata told the high court that if Shukla - who is currently Additional Director General (ADG) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) based in Hyderabad - could not go to Mumbai, the Mumbai police would send a team of police officers to record her statement under Section 160 Code of Criminal Procedure.

On his part, senior Advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, representing Shukla, told the court that a statement of 'no-arrest' may be made and that Shukla was willing to co-operate with the investigation.

After the State agreed not to arrest Shukla till the next date, the HC bench observed:

"Respondent 1 (state) and the petitioner shall strictly abide by the statements made by them through their senior advocates and can proceed further."

In a related development, Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh appearing for the CBI submitted that the observations made in the regard to Shukla's petition "may not be construed as impediment to it" to proceed further in the larger investigation being conducted by it in the FIR registered against former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on corruption charges.

The HC bench clarified that the order statements and the observations made in the order passed on Shukla's petition were only limited to the present case and "may not be construed as impediment to it" into the FIR registered in the corruption case on April 2.

In a criminal write petition filed through her advocate Sameer Nangre, Shukla had on Monday sought a direction to the police to not take any "coercive action" against her. She also sought an urgent hearing in the case, as she was apprehending her arrest in the case.

"My client is one of the senior most officers of 1988 cadre in police service for more than 30 years...The approach of the respondent state is to arm-twist the petitioner by bogus and frivolous case," Shukla's counsel had said in the petition.

# HC adjourns for 4 weeks hearing on Maha ex-HM's plea to quash of FIR

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday adjourned the hearing for four weeks on a petition filed by Maharashtra's former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh seeking the quashing of "false" FIR filed against him by the CBI under the Prevention of Corruption Act, after the central investigating agency told the court that it needed time to file its reply.

In a petition filed before the high court on Wednesday, Deshmukh had urged the court to quash the "false" FIR filed against him on the ground that the CBI - while registering the case against him - had followed a "biased and dubious" way and that too after a "legal non-existent

enquiry with an ulterior motive at the behest of those having political or other vendettas" against him.

Deshmukh had also told the high court that the CBI had based its FIR on "vague allegations" and that there was no case of allegations of "illegal gratification" under section 7 of PCA or criminal conspiracy under section 120-B of the IPC.

In his petition, he had also told the court that the CBI had not taken the Maharashtra government's consent to register the FIR against him which he said was necessary since he was a minister when the alleged offence took place.

Deshmukh had told the court that the reason behind filing an FIR against him was to

have him "arrested with an ulterior motive".

On Thursday when senior counsel Amit Desai appearing for Deshmukh began to make submissions before the court, Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, representing the CBI - told the court that since the petition copy was served to him on Wednesday evening, he needed four weeks' time to file a reply to the former minister's petition seeking quashing of the FIR against the latter.

The petitioner's counsel opposed the four weeks' time sought by the CBI saying that "there is urgency in the matter".

However, the court allowed the CBI's request and gave four weeks' time to the investigating agency to file its reply on Deshmukh's petition.

# BMC makes Cowin registration mandatory for vaccination

Mumbai: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday made it mandatory for Mumbai residents desirous of getting vaccinated to register themselves on Cowin Portal and book appointment slot for vaccination at the centre of their choice.

In his order, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner I S Chahal stated: "... all citizens who wish to get vaccinated against COVID-19 shall in advance register themselves on the Cowin portal and also book the appointment slot at the CVC of their choice on the same portal before proceeding to the Vaccination Centre".

However, the BMC made exceptions to its "Cowin reg-

istration" rule in the cases where the citizens are above 45 years of age who are due for the second dose of COVAXIN only (subject to production of the provisional certificate of 1st dose in either soft or hard copy), health care and frontline workers due for second dose of COVAXIN or COVISHIELD and health care and front line workers due for first dose having authentic certification by his employer.

The BMC started the vaccination program against Covid-19 from January 16, 2021. Currently, it is carrying out the vaccination program is implementing through 147 Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs).

# Goa Govt cancels permission for film, tele-serial shootings

Panaji: The Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG) on Thursday cancelled all permissions granted for film and television serial shootings in the state in the wake of the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

ESG is the Goa government's nodal agency which is empowered to give permission for commercial shootings in the coastal state.

Several film and TV serial makers from Mumbai and Chennai recently shifted their shootings to Goa in the wake of the surge in COVID-19 cases in their respective places, ESG's Vice Chairman Subhash Faldesai told PTI. PTI



A family member of a Covid-19 patient waits to refill a cylinder with medical oxygen, in Ajmer, on Thursday



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Blithesome

The Congress doesn't seem to mind electoral losses. But it must bounce back for a balance in democracy

The propensity of the Congress to lose an election, and then to turn its back on the humiliation, is glaring. Any electoral debacle would ideally trigger an appraisal exercise within a party. It is surprising that the urgency of self-evaluation, the need for corrective measures and for the right people to carry these out is missing in the Congress. It has already been a couple of days since the party suffered a total loss in four of the five Assembly elections. The Tamil Nadu verdict can at best be a consolation for the Congress which merely piggybacked the winning DMK. Surprisingly, not many senior leaders, and certainly not the party leadership, have spoken on its sorry performance. It seems the Congress, as always, has turned its back to the losses. It is only a matter of time before the G-23, a splinter group within the Congress, will strike back asking for course correction. The "insiders" scuttled every past attempt by this group to pin accountability on the leadership. Not many in the Congress want to alter the cosy arrangement that exists in the top echelons. But the absence of a peacemaker between this group and the Sonia-Rahul-Priyanka troika will worsen the situation for the party's "first family". The Congress has already lost some of its promising second-generation leaders to the BJP and others, and the latest round of electoral reverses might convince others who are on the brink of quitting. It has not only lost power to the BJP and others in the last six years but also forfeited its status of the principal Opposition in at least half a dozen States.



There are two pressing issues for the Congress to address. One, Rahul cannot run the party through a proxy. The spin doctors around him would suggest he is reluctant to return as the party president but it is a very convenient arrangement. It gives Rahul the cushion to isolate himself from the ignominy of defeat but grab the credit in case of a victory. If Rahul doesn't want to lead the Congress, he should step aside and allow a democratic and transparent election for a new leader. That leader should enjoy all the independence that Rahul had when he helmed the party. Two, it has long been suggested that Priyanka is the magic wand that can rid the party of all its woes. But that's not happened. She has remained as much a part-time politician as her brother and her electoral track record is no better than Rahul's. She is the third most — if not the second — powerful leader of the party. Just like Rahul, her politics has been more about photo opportunities than building on any energy that her occasional visits to UP may have generated. The party's poor performance in the UP panchayat elections is another telling comment on the "charisma" of Priyanka, who her admirers see as another Indira Gandhi. A stronger Congress is needed to restore the balance of order in our parliamentary democracy. The Congress must rise from the ashes and recognise the problems before even thinking of solving them.

### PICTALK



People walk across an intersection during a sandstorm in Beijing

## Brewing crisis

Nepal is staring at a political and humanitarian emergency in these uncertain and testing times

As the cases of COVID-19 infection rise steadily in Nepal, the country is engulfed by a looming political storm. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), headed by former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', has withdrawn support to the KP Sharma Oli-led Government. Now, Oli will have to face the trust vote on May 10 which, under the current circumstances, he might not survive. However, Oli has been quick to offer the olive branch and a few deals to the Opposition Nepal Congress. Noteworthy, Oli had played a masterstroke in the 2017-18 elections by merging his party (the CPN-UML) with the archrival CPN (Maoist). This had not only weakened a strong Opposition but also ended the premiership tussle between Oli and Prachanda. However, differences between these two competitive and power-hungry leaders were out in the open within months of the Government's formation. This tussle finally ended in March this year with the Supreme Court declaring the "merger" illegal and restoring the individual status of the two parties.



Considering Oli fails the floor test on May 10, his two year-plus administration will be remembered for his assertion, authoritarianism, hunger for power, blatant lies, misgovernance, foreign policy failures and, above all, corruption. Oli centred his ultra-nationalistic outlook around an anti-India campaign. His country's geographical constraints notwithstanding, he chose to badmouth India's goodwill for political gains and compromised Nepal's integrity by signing the Treaty of Mutual Legal Assistance with China and allowing its embassy to micromanage local affairs. Besides, corruption charges in the procurement of medical supplies to fight COVID-19 had led to the Army's intervention last year. But the Oli Government is still crying foul against a private drug agency in Nepal that was assigned to procure vaccines from the Serum Institute of India. While the firm is accused of making profits out of human agony, the Oli Government did not bother to audit the agency which is found to have close ties with several Ministers. With the chances of a fresh election brightening, Nepal stands close to a major political and humanitarian crisis. The pandemic has reached the Everest base camp and the people can't find medical help. The health infrastructure, already in a shambles after the 2015 earthquake, is overburdened. It's time for the Nepalese people to rethink democracy in the existing form and start questioning politicians.

# Incredible India deserves respect

The world media has been quick to judge India, a fascinating country in all ways, as it currently reels under the pandemic



MATTHEW HAYDEN

India is in the middle of the pandemic second wave's battering, as never seen before. As it battles the alarming spread of the virus, the world media has spared no time in lambasting a country of a whopping 1.4 billion where the sheer numbers make the implementation and success of any public scheme a challenge. I have been visiting India for over a decade now and have travelled all over the country, especially Tamil Nadu which I consider my "spiritual home". I have always had the highest respect for the leaders and public officials who are entrusted with the task of running such a diverse and vast country. Wherever I went, the people greeted me with love and affection, for which I remain in their debt. I can proudly claim that I have seen India up close over the years and that is why my heart bleeds to see it not only in agony at the moment, but also for the bad press that has been hurled at it by those who I am not sure spend any time here to understand India, its people and their myriad challenges.



As a cricketer and lover of the game, I have maintained my association with the sport which has allowed me to come to India to cover the Indian Premier League (IPL). Many of my fellow countrymen have also been playing in the IPL for years. In this context, at a time when the world has been shutting doors on India and lambasting the Government, I thought of sharing my thoughts while in India, to give a perspective not available to those sitting thousands of miles away.

I am not a data person, but some of the figures I gathered from some of the media reports are astonishing. India has already vaccinated over 160 million people (five times the population of Australia) and has been conducting 1.3 million tests a day. The point I am making is not to overlook the sheer vast numbers and the challenges associated with it. When one conjures up thoughts of India, a singular word comes to mind. Incredible; a word popularised by the Indian Tourism slogan, "Incredible India". Even now, being caught in the political crossfire of the Scott Morrison Government's decision to temporarily ban the travel to Australia, nothing has changed my mind about this ancient civilisation. As of now, this heaving mass of humanity reels in the wake of the pandemic; the new normal replacing various religious festivals, exotic wedding celebrations, bustling streets jampacked with street vendors and livestock, all sadly — like the Morrison Government's travel policy — temporarily put on hold. Looking out the window of my room overlooking Bengaluru, a truss has been established; as if a siesta has been called in respect to health authorities' call to action for our new global anthem: "Isolate, stay home, sanitise your hands, wear your mask, social distance." A race busily running in the background, in many cases for life itself, as national resources like oxygen and critical medical supplies are being re-routed from manufacturing plants to hospitals and care facilities. The simple

truth: The demand for basic medical facilities is making the supply look more like one of Usain Bolt's competitors. In short, hectic has been replaced with nervous. One can truly sense the fear and anxiety as India faces off against the challenges of this horrific pandemic. Begging the question, why is an Aussie ex-cricketer away from his beloved country and family at such a critical, even dangerous, time? On the surface is the commercial value for my family, having played and worked on every IPL since its conception in 2008. It's true, my remuneration is significant and, yes, it pays my family's bills. More broadly, however, I have a deep connection to Mother India which docks into my life's mission: To connect people and organisations on purpose and strategy. My purpose in supporting the IPL this season was to provide a welcome relief to the monotony of extended periods of partial or hard lockdown. Every evening from 6.30 pm, cricket lovers, and let me tell you there are a few, went online or turned on the television to watch their favourite franchise battle. As a genuine lover of the



I HAVE A DEEP CONNECTION TO MOTHER INDIA WHICH DOCKS INTO MY LIFE'S MISSION: TO CONNECT PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS ON PURPOSE AND STRATEGY. MY PURPOSE IN SUPPORTING THE IPL THIS SEASON WAS TO PROVIDE A WELCOME RELIEF TO THE MONOTONY OF EXTENDED LOCKDOWN PERIODS

game since I was four years old, my voice, full of excitement, helps narrate our great game by bringing an authentic positive view to the cricket community. Cricket, as so often throughout history, has been and is the silver lining to our COVID cloud. The cricketers, especially in the IPL, have understandably been soft targets of the media and, because of their contractual obligations, cannot defend themselves. It makes all the more important for people such as me, who have once been in a similar situation but can now from the outside not only share a "player's perspective" but also speak up for them. India is a rich civilisation which has very few parallels in the world and, in its hour of need, the least we can do is to appreciate its cultural, regional, linguistic, human development and other complexities before passing any judgement on it. (The writer is a former Australian cricketer; Board Member, Australia India Council (DFAT) and the Goodwill Ambassador for India, Institute for Australia India Engagement. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BJP HAS NO IDEA OF BENGALI CULTURE

Sir — In the West Bengal Assembly election, the Bharatiya Janata Party's, supposedly invincible election juggernaut was vanquished in the long-drawn fight. The saffron army was led by none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The reasons for the BJP's defeat are not difficult to analyse. After the Parliament election, the BJP started believing that it could wrest power from the TMC through coalescence of social engineering, religious polarisation, advocacy of nationalisation, noisy campaigns, psychological warfare and inflaming the anti-incumbency against Mamata Banerjee. In the run-up to the voting, they demonised the Muslims, promised to banish the Muslim infiltrators, offered citizenship to the numerically strong migrant Matus-the scheduled caste Vaishnava sect, rent the air everywhere with religious chants and had been deeply disrespectful towards Mamata Banerjee all through. Perhaps, that was the genesis of the slogan — "Bangla Nijer Meyeker Chaay" — which literally means "Bengal wants none but its own daughter" — which transformed the election into a battle between 'son of the soil' versus the 'outsider'. This is the third consecutive victory for Trinamool in the Bengal Assembly election. Since 2011, it has been leading in all elections in the State, whether Assembly or parliamentary. There is no gainsaying the fact the saffron outfits proved to be out of sync with the culture of Bengal.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

**THE PAINFUL DIVORCE**  
Sir — Bill and Melinda Gates have filed for divorce to end their 27 years of marriage. Divorce is sad and stressful for most people who go through it. They are hyper-wealthy, but that doesn't make them less human. One hopes they are able to walk the difficult path forward as amicably and gently as possible. Bill has said that they both will continue their work together at the Foundation.

The Gates Foundation has spent more than \$50 billion, mostly on essential global health and development initiatives. Vaccinations, education and campaigns against HIV/AIDS and malaria have long been on the Foundation's agenda, but over the years, Melinda's voice was heard pushing for an increased focus on family planning efforts envisaging that family planning makes families healthier, wealthier and happier. And as they — Bill and Melinda — are transitioning into the next phase of their lives, we should respect their wish for personal privacy. Only time would tell where lies the future of their highly influential Foundation in times to come.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

**IT'S PLAIN SHAMEFUL**  
Sir — It refers to the editorial 'Wide of the mark' (May 6). It's shameful that our scientists are unable to accurately predict the COVID-19 pandemic — the number of cases, when it will reach its peak, when it

## Ensure adequate vaccine doses



will subside, making the curve flat etc. If one or two scientists or institutes are of the mark then it can be understood but if all are giving predictions which are far from real then it does raise serious doubts on the research work going on in our institutions. We are going through one of the worst crises and we need to have accurate data to plan accordingly. It seems that our scientists are firing arrows in the dark just based on faulty hypotheses. Since there is no dearth of technological tools available with our scientists, we expect them to give us accurate data as possible. Indeed our scientists need them to facilitate our Government as vaccinating all 18 plus citizens will take months if not years and is no mean task.

Prabhakaran Vallath | Kerala

Moreover, according to the latest survey a third wave is inevitable. Under such circumstances the only practical remedy to rein in the pandemic is to ramp up the vaccination process. The Centre has to shoulder the responsibility of accelerating the vaccination process and must negotiate with vaccine manufacturers on pricing and production. Meanwhile, the State Governments will have to evolve a creative solution to inoculate all irrespective of their age-group and financial status. Instead of bickering with the Centre over this issue, the State Governments will have to accelerate the vaccination drive on a war footing and mobilise their own resources. Unfortunately, some superficial observers in our country are beating around the bush and many are involved in black marketing of oxygen and medicines. We all need to work together irrespective of our differences to overcome the current crises.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUNDBITE

Ajit Singh had given support to our Statehood movement. The people would remember those who supported their aspirations.

Telangana Chief Minister — K Chandrababhan Naidu

Moscow is ready to facilitate direct dialogue between Israel and Palestine both through bilateral efforts and as a member of the international quartet of Middle East mediators.

Russian Foreign Minister — Sergei Lavrov

There is going to be a severe crisis in blood-banks. People who haven't been vaccinated till now needs to step forward and donate blood.

Singer — Sonu Nigam

The report we got is that there's no breach of the bubble. How it happened is very difficult to say.

BCCI president — Sourav Ganguly

What Facebook, Twitter, and Google have done is a total disgrace and an embarrassment to our country. They must pay a political price.

Former US President — Donald Trump

**FIRST COLUMN**

**THE WAR IS FAR FROM OVER**

Much like everyone else, medical professionals are also learning from and adapting to the pandemic



In the early days of the pandemic, a 15-year-old girl from Kasganj in Uttar Pradesh (UP), was having fever, a low blood count and was suspected to be a blood cancer patient. The unusual part was her distressing cough and oxygen saturation of 85 per cent. Then her COVID-19 test came positive. More exasperating than treating a new infection was managing the terror surrounding it. Soon the nurses, junior doctors and other patients' relatives were asking us what to do. All we had was a faith in what we knew and a belief that the infection would run its course. Since then, it has been a journey full of fear, panic and despair. COVID-19 came to us at a time when Google has started replacing doctors in our country. When every decision is looked at with suspicion and social media is deepening the divide between the caregiver and the patient. Today, the same space is drowned with requests for oxygen, beds, medicines and for a second opinion. We lose someone we know, almost daily these days and when it happens, we blame the "system." Surely someone is culpable.

Now, it has been more than 12 months since we saw the Kasganj girl. We started with no knowledge of how to plan for a pandemic. It was the time when all and any planning seemed alarmist. We were used



to diagnosing and treating infections like tuberculosis, malaria, dengue and HIV. With COVID-19 the system responded, even before we realised it. The system started to train healthcare workers and doctors, nurses, attendants, housekeeping, security and administrative staff in hospitals were trained. They were told how to don the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), how to wash hands and wear masks, how to deliver oxygen and other things. The disease forced us to be fastidious about everything. Those who learnt became trainers for their underlings. However, we needed to track patients to contain the infection for which testing numbers were scaled up. Further, testing labs were established, PCR machines were ordered and microbiologists were empowered. It became a battlefield. Samples had to be collected properly, transported and reported without pendency. Multiple departments and Governments worked to take the pandemic head-on.

The battle continued. There was fatigue from extreme heat. Many stopped eating and peeing during duty hours for fear of removing PPE. Medicine felt more like a punishment than a profession at times. Many fell ill and tested positive. Many cried. In between all this, there was resilience. Some learnt to say "yes" and move ahead. There was a relief when each patient got discharged. By now, the battle has become a war. The system continues with relentless efforts even when soldiers are falling. Beds need to be arranged, oxygen cylinders are required to be filled and medicines should be allotted to hospitals. And caught between the devil and the deep sea are non-COVID patients like the Kasganj girl, facing the collateral damage. Fighting one disease is a formidable challenge in itself and Coronavirus compounds the situation for such patients. The UP task force has reported over 12 lakh Coronavirus cases in the State so far with a case fatality of a little over one per cent. Data on bed occupancy, availability of medicines, oxygen and consumables are monitored twice daily by both health services and the medical education department. Deaths are to be reported within six hours of occurrence. The task force links all State and Central institutes, Government and private medical colleges in effort to diagnose, treat COVID-19 and prevent it. Medical professionals are wiser today even as the war is far from over. And much like everyone else we are also learning and adapting to this crisis. After all, this is a first pandemic for all of us.

(Prajapati is Additional Director, UPDGME. Radhakrishnan heads the Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Department, Child PGI, Noida. They are part of the UP COVID task force. The views expressed are personal.)

# Looking beyond the oxygen crisis in India



While there are a lot of lessons to be learnt from this emergency, the task of adding health to the Concurrent List under the Constitution must be taken up on priority

As the India oxygen story leaves the world wondering and different versions of the preparedness of the nation make headlines globally, it's time we start looking at the crisis from a different angle. That the Government should have been better prepared and that they should have seen this coming, has already been said a million times. That we celebrated too early and should have been more careful, is widely acknowledged. While the blame game will continue, it's time to rethink our priorities. There is no disputing the fact that we were not prepared for the second wave and it just blew away the entire Government machinery. It exposed the fact that our disaster management services were faulty and their plans were not methodical. The Centre-State debates and the blame game took its own toll. It was, however, marvelous to see how various social groups and individuals rose to the occasion and took steps to help out in any way they could.

Anthony Fauci, the Chief Medical Advisor to the Joe Biden Administration, in an interview recommended steps to be taken on an immediate, intermediate and long-term basis to overcome this crisis. The immediate steps suggested by him were: Make an emergency group that will visit the situation every day and suggest measures; focus on the immediate need for oxygen, beds and medicines rather than the long-term strategy of vaccination though it should keep going on simultaneously as a long-term strategy; rope in the Army to help with the situation; shut down the entire country for a few weeks. While these suggestions are relevant and have been known to work for both China and the US, we must realise that whenever the lockdown is opened, we will plunge back into the crisis. This is because, the mutability of the virus is unpredictable and we are dealing with a political class and population that doesn't understand the importance of COVID-appropriate behaviour and the severity of the situation.

To keep the economy from crashing; to save the lives of the people; to take all measures to keep them healthy and to keep the stoves burning in their homes so that they can feed their families is tough. Even as we choose strategies to fight one variant, the next one will be ready to play hide and seek with us. What options are we left with, then?

India's National List of Essential Medicines, as also the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) model list of essential medicines, lists oxygen as one. As AIIMS Director, Randeep Guleria puts it, "Many of the patients can be saved by giving just one treatment, that is by giving oxygen." Therefore, a strategy of having more oxygen beds makes a lot of sense. However, there is no official data on the overall requirement of oxygen of the country. Hence, preparedness has suffered and the future demand of oxygen cannot be predicted. Piped oxygen in hospitals is much safer and cheap in comparison to oxygen cylinders which are unsafe, logistically challenging and expensive. The purity of oxygen and whether it is medical grade or not, is equally challenging.

Procuring oxygen concentrators from abroad is also being actively pursued to artificially produce oxygen, which is then transported to medical establishments. In large hospitals, liquid oxygen is filled in large tanks and supplied through a network of pipes to the outlet near the patient's bed. Piped oxygen is more automated and it is easier to control the levels. The Government had created guidelines for



THIS IS ALSO THE TIME TO REALISE THAT WHAT WILL SAVE OR DEFEAT US IS OUR OWN STRENGTH, WHETHER IN TERMS OF CONTRACTING THE DISEASE OR IN TERMS OF OUR SURVIVAL. HENCE, WE NEED TO FOLLOW OUR SCIENTIFIC WISDOM THAT IS SILENTLY BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT AND WIDESPREAD THE WORLD OVER

The writer is Registrar, IIT-Delhi. The views expressed are personal.



management of medical oxygen at the start of the pandemic to ensure that the supplies were enough in hospitals. The first wave was managed well but when the new strain of the virus started infecting more people, the numbers escalated. The demand rose from 1,500 metric tonnes (MT) to 6,000 MT within 72 hours. This led to a panic situation as no one was prepared for it.

While India has the capacity to produce 8,500 MT oxygen, it has a stock of 4,000 MT. The crisis also happened due to supply chain management failure. Oxygen transport is not easy due to its highly inflammable nature and the vehicles carrying oxygen cannot run very fast. The availability of cryogenic tankers was limited. However, as usual, we have been resilient and the Government has roped in the security forces to help tide over the oxygen crisis in the country. They have been ferrying oxygen from abroad and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has set up an oxygen generation plant at the AIIMS in New Delhi. Four more plants capable of generating more than 1,000 litres of oxygen per hour will soon start functioning in the RML Hospital, Lady Hardinge, Safdarjung and the AIIMS in Rohtak. The system can cater to 190 patients at a flow rate of five litres per minute and charge 195 cylinders per day.

The Medical Oxygen Plant technology has been developed by the DRDO based on the on-board oxygen generation unit of the Tejas light combat aircraft and will help over-

come the logistics issues of oxygen transportation. The IAF is making relentless sorties to airlift oxygen from abroad and one of its C-17 aircraft flew 35 hours to fetch cryogenic oxygen containers from England. Earlier, another C-17 flew 14 hours non-stop to get cylinders from Germany. Looking at the serious situation, the IAF has to date brought in more than 60 cryogenic containers and 900 oxygen cylinders from Singapore, Dubai, Bangkok, Frankfurt and the UK, clocking over 140 flying hours. While there are a lot of lessons to be learnt from this crisis, the importance of adding health to the Concurrent List under the Constitution has been pointed out by the Finance Commission. This must be taken up on a priority basis. It is imperative that central health schemes are implemented in States and the Centre and State Governments work in tandem. If all concerned perform their duties in time and there is cohesiveness in functioning, the next crisis during the predicted third wave of the pandemic can be averted.

Meanwhile, it is heartening that several startups and corporates have stepped up the fight against the second wave of the contagion in India. The Paytm Foundation is raising over ₹10 crore to donate oxygen concentrators across India. Zomato Feeding India, in association with logistics firm Delhivery, has started the 'Help Save My India' endeavour to source oxygen concentrators. Action COVID-19 Team Grants (ACT Grants) have taken the task of fund-

ing ideas that can solve the global health crisis. Google and Microsoft have pledged to support India. Apple has also offered to extend its support to India. Many NRIs have formed social groups that are collecting funds and have opened charities to send the required supplies to India. Amazon has offered to bear the cost of airlifting oxygen concentrators to India. A new US public-private-partnership called 'A Global Task Force on Pandemic Response: Mobilising for India' will provide the country with critical medical supplies, vaccines, oxygen and other life-saving assistance.

With so much help pouring in from all quarters, all India needs to do is stand strong, take the immediate steps and prepare for the future to avoid another such crisis. Defeating the virus that changes everyday and keeping normal life going will be tricky in a vast country like India. With all the required support from across the world, we will definitely come out of this crisis very soon. What remains to be seen, however, is how we will fare in future. We have survived past disasters and will wade through this with immense global and internal support, India-specific wisdom, a strong will power and community cooperation. This is also the time to realise that what will save or defeat us is our own strength, whether in terms of contracting the disease or in terms of our survival. Hence, we need to follow our scientific wisdom that is silently becoming more important and widespread the world over.

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

THE SC STAMPED ON THE FACT THAT MAHARASHTRA HAD NO RIGHT TO AWARD ANY QUOTA AFTER THE 102ND AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION. FADNAVIS MISLED US. —MAHARASHTRA MINISTER ASHOK CHAVAN



THE STATE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE PLAYED A PROACTIVE ROLE AND FURNISHED SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS CASE. —FORMER MAHARASHTRA CM DEVENDRA FADNAVIS



# Pandemic politics is a disservice to the country

This is the time for us to come together as a nation and rally behind our leaders, who are doggedly working towards COVID recovery

India is reeling under the impact of the second, more virulent wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. And the number of cases and casualties are just mounting up. As the Government scrambles to handle the situation, fingers are being pointed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and there have been calls for his resignation from some quarters. In the eyes of the Opposition, the Press, both Indian and international, and some communities, Modi is responsible for every shortcoming in the country. However, this blame game has not helped in addressing the problem. As a nation, the need of the hour is to rise beyond COVID politics and establish fundamentally strong arrangements for providing relief to the suffering citizens.



The writer is Chairman, Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The views expressed are personal.

Indeed, some errors may have occurred in arresting the second wave of the virus.

However, we must remember that India is a large and populous nation with unique challenges and it is almost impossible to take into account every detail and caution while developing national strategies and implementing the local actions of these wider programmes. Often, people do not cooperate unless forced to do so.

We must realise that our historic cumulation of knowledge has not given us enough understanding about the behaviour of this microscopic beast. Most researches on the COVID-19, including the invention of the Coronavirus vaccine, are only a few months old and we are yet to discover the long-term effects and effectiveness of the measures being prescribed and adopted. As such, the policy-making horizon at the national level also does not have an accumulated experience to bank upon and

derive from. If you analyse the matter, India has actually done much better than many advanced countries. First, many western countries, including the US, allowed civil protests on the need for masking up and people argued that imposing the mask rule was against their fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. India has imposed the mask rule much more sincerely than any other country in the world.

As for social distancing, India imposed stringent guidelines and meticulously implemented them. However, there is a view that this regulation could have been better followed in election rallies and religious congregations. With the cooperation of the people and all political outfits, this could have been coordinated better, though. Or even better, the elections and the Maha Kumbh could also have been



put off for some time in view of the outbreak, but that is not an easy decision to take.

Vaccine production is one important and primary response to the pandemic that India excelled at. It invested heavily in this and brought out effective vaccines at affordable prices. India also became a global leader and shipped millions of doses for free to countries in trouble, as part of its "vaccine diplomacy." Many countries, including the US,

kept for domestic use what they produced, without shipping out a single vial. Now, when we are falling short of vaccines for our own citizens, this "vaccine diplomacy" is paying off and other nations are lending a helping hand and shipping the precious doses to us.

Till the second wave of the contagion exploded and we fell short of vaccines, our public vaccination programme was a very systematic one. India began its inoculation programme from the most vulnerable section of the society. In Germany, senior citizens who registered for vaccination in January are still waiting to get their first dose. In Switzerland, which has a tiny population the vaccination programme that started in December 2020 has still covered only eight per cent of the citizens.

However, India is shown in a bad light, all the while, which

is a trend in international onerupmanship, to which even Indians in India and abroad greatly contribute. If the per unit population death by the virus is computed, India has the least number of casualties per crore of population. It is only that India is visible because of its large population and the absolute numbers affected by the virus. Also, we are visible because of the dramatic footage of cremations of the dead while the rituals in other communities may not be that dramatic looking.

We must realise that by highlighting and constantly filling the television channels and social media with negative information of the tragedy India is undergoing and not giving enough coverage to the enormous amount of positive work the nation is doing towards the mitigation of the pandemic, we only stir up anar-

chic conditions and delay recovery. Also, nations like Pakistan and China are determined to show India in a poor light. China in particular has an axe to grind because as a nation, it was isolated during the first wave of the outbreak and COVID-19 was called the "Chinese virus." Politics over the pandemic will only provide India-bashing fuel to China and its allies. We will play into the hands of international cartels that want to see India underdeveloped and politically chaotic.

This is the time for us to come together as a nation and rally behind our leaders, who are doggedly working towards COVID recovery and the development of the country. If we don't recognise our role as citizens, we will just turn out to be our own worst enemies and spin within the negative spiral that we ourselves create, knowingly or unknowingly.

# Flash mobs in Myanmar's biggest city avoid deadly response

AP ■ BANGKOK

A flash mob of mostly young people in Myanmar's biggest city staged a brief protest march on Thursday against military rule, the latest in a series of actions aimed at reducing the chances of a deadly response by the authorities. In the five-minute protest in Yangon, about 70 marchers chanted slogans in support of the civil disobedience movement that opposes February's army coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. They then scattered into the downtown crowds.

Protests also took place in other cities and towns including Mandalay, the country's second biggest city, where Buddhist monks marched, and Dawei in the southeast, where the demonstrators included engineers, teachers, university students and members of LGBT groups.

In Yangon in particular, small protests publicised by word of mouth have become

popular. They contrast with weeks of confrontations in which security forces increasingly used lethal force, with some militant protesters responding with homemade weapons such as gasoline bombs in self-defence. In other areas, mass peaceful protests still are being broken up by force, while in some remote areas, groups opposed to the ruling junta have occasionally ambushed security forces, leading to bloody clashes.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which compiles details of arrests and fatalities linked to the junta's crackdown, 769 protesters and bystanders have been killed since February's military takeover. The junta has said the death toll is about one-third of that, and that the use of lethal force was justified to end what it called rioting.

After the military government began using lethal force to suppress demonstrations, protesters in some towns and neighbourhoods began organising themselves into home-grown militias or defence groups. On Wednesday, the anti-



Anti-coup protesters shout slogans during a demonstration on Thursday

neighbourhoods began organising themselves into home-grown militias or defence groups. On Wednesday, the anti-

military shadow government formed by elected lawmakers who were barred from taking office by the military announced a plan to unify

these local groups into a national "People's Defence Force" which would serve as a precursor to a "Federal Union Army" of democratic forces

including ethnic minorities.

The plan was announced by Khin Ma Ma Myo, deputy defence minister of the shadow National Unity Government, which challenges the junta's legitimacy. She said one of the duties of the People's Defence Force is to protect the country's resistance movement from military attacks and violence instigated by the junta.

The National Unity Government has the backing of several major ethnic minority groups who for decades have been seeking greater autonomy and who maintain their own guerrilla forces. The two most important are the Kachin in the north and the Karen in the east, both of which are actively engaged in combat with the government's military forces.

Pado Man Man, a spokesman for the 5th Brigade of the Karen National Union, said he believes that the formation of the People's Defence Force will be a step toward a future state that includes all ethnic armed groups.

## Over 200 NGOs call for UN arms embargo on Myanmar

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

More than 200 global organisations urged the UN Security Council on Wednesday to impose an arms embargo on Myanmar, saying the time for statements has passed and immediate action is needed to help protect peaceful protesters against military rule and other opponents of the junta.

A statement by the non-governmental organisations said the military "has demonstrated a callous disregard for human life" since their Feb 1 coup, killing at least 769 people including 51 children as young as six years old and detaining several thousand activists, journalists, civil servants and politicians. Hundreds of others have disappeared, it said.

"No government should sell a single bullet to the junta under these circumstances," the NGOs said. "Imposing a global arms embargo on Myanmar is the minimum necessary step the Security Council should take in response to the military's escalating violence."

The organisations urged the United Kingdom, the Security Council nation in charge of drafting resolutions on Myanmar, "to begin negotiations on a resolution authorising an arms embargo as soon as possible."

This "will demonstrate to the junta that there will be no more business as usual," they said. Myanmar for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions.

As the generals loosened

their grip, culminating in Aung San Suu Kyi's rise to leadership in 2015 elections, the international community responded by lifting most sanctions and pouring investment into the country. The coup took place following November elections, which Suu Kyi's party won overwhelmingly and the military military rule and other opponents of the junta.

The 15-member Security Council has issued several statements since the coup demanding the restoration of democracy and the release of all detainees including Suu Kyi, strongly condemning the use of violence against peaceful protesters and the deaths of hundreds of civilians and calling on the military "to exercise utmost restraint" and "on all sides to refrain from violence."

It has also stressed "the need to fully respect human rights and to pursue dialogue and reconciliation," and backed diplomatic efforts by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and UN special envoy Christine Schraner Burgener to find a solution.

"The time for statements has passed," the NGOs said. "The Security Council should take its consensus on Myanmar to a new level and agree on immediate and substantive action."

They said a UN global arms embargo against Myanmar should bar the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of "all weapons, munitions, and other military-related equipment, including dual-use goods such as vehicles and communications and surveillance equipment."

## Ramzan in China: Faithful dwindle under limits on religion

AP ■ KASHGAR (CHINA)

Tursunjan Mamat, a practicing Muslim in western China's Xinjiang region, said he's fasting for Ramzan but his daughters, ages 8 and 10, are not. Religious activity including fasting is not permitted for minors, he explained.

The 32-year-old ethnic Uyghur wasn't complaining, at least not to a group of foreign journalists brought to his home outside the city of Aksu by government officials, who listened in on his responses. It seemed he was giving a matter-of-fact description of how religion is practiced under rules set by China's Communist Party.

"My children know who our holy creator is, but I don't give them detailed religious knowledge," he said, speaking through a translator.

"After they reach 18, they can receive religious education according to their own will."

Under the weight of official policies, the future of Islam appears precarious in Xinjiang, a rugged realm of craggy snow-capped mountains and barren



Uyghurs and other members of the faithful pray during services at the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar in western China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as seen during a Government organised visit for foreign journalists

deserts bordering Central Asia. Outside observers say scores of mosques have been demolished, a charge Beijing denies, and locals say the number of worshippers is sinking.

A decade ago, 4,000 to 5,000 people attended Friday prayers at the Id Kah Mosque in the historic Silk Road city of Kashgar. Now only 800 to 900 do, said the mosque's imam, Mamat Juma. He attributed the drop to a natural shift in values, not government policy,

saying the younger generation wants to spend more time working than praying.

The Chinese government organised a five-day visit to Xinjiang in April for about a dozen foreign correspondents,

part of an intense propaganda campaign to counter allegations of abuse. Officials repeatedly urged journalists to recount what they saw, not what China calls the lies of critical Western politicians and media.

## General: China's Africa outreach poses threat from Atlantic

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The top US general for Africa is warning that a growing threat from China may come not just from the waters of the Pacific but from the Atlantic as well.

US Gen. Stephen Townsend, in an interview with The Associated Press, said Beijing is looking to establish a large navy port capable of hosting submarines or aircraft carriers on Africa's western coast. Townsend said China has approached countries stretching from Mauritania to south of Namibia, intent on establishing a naval facility. If realized, that prospect would enable China to base warships in the Atlantic as well as Pacific oceans.

"They're looking for a place where they can rearm and repair warships. That becomes militarily useful in conflict," said Townsend, who heads U.S. Africa Command. "They're a long way toward establishing that in Djibouti. Now they're casting their gaze

to the Atlantic coast and wanting to get such a base there."

Townsend's warnings come as the Pentagon shifts its focus from the counterterrorism wars of the last two decades to the Indo-Pacific region and threats from great power adversaries like China and Russia. The Biden administration views China's rapidly expanding economic influence and military might as America's primary long-term security challenge.

U.S. military commanders around the globe, including several who may lose troops and resources to bolster growth in the Pacific, caution that China's growing assertiveness isn't simply happening in Asia. And they argue that Beijing is aggressively asserting economic influence over countries in Africa, South America and the Middle East, and is pursuing bases and footholds there.

"The Chinese are outmaneuvering the U.S. in select countries in Africa," said Townsend. "Port projects, economic endeavors, infrastructure and their agreements and

contracts will lead to greater access in the future. They are hedging their bets and making big bets on Africa."

China's first overseas naval base was built years ago in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and it is steadily increasing its capacity. Townsend said as many as 2,000 military personnel are at the base, including hundreds of Marines who handle security there.

"They have arms and munitions for sure. They have armored combat vehicles. We think they will soon be basing helicopters there to potentially include attack helicopters," said Townsend.

For some time, many have thought that China was working to establish a Navy base in Tanzania, a country on Africa's eastern coast, that has had a strong, longstanding military relationship with Beijing. But Townsend said it appears there's been no decision on that yet.

He said that while China has been trying hard to get a base in Tanzania, it's not the location he's most concerned about.

## Support grows for IP waiver on virus vaccines, snags remain

Geneva: France joined the United States on Thursday in supporting an easing of patent and other protections on Covid-19 vaccines that could help poorer countries get more doses and speed the end of the pandemic. While the backing from two countries with major drug makers is important, many obstacles remain.

The move to support waiving intellectual property protections on vaccines under World Trade Organisation rules marked a dramatic shift for the United States — and drew cheers from activists, complaints from Big Pharma, and a lot of questions about what comes next. Washington had previously lined up with many other developed nations opposed to the idea floated by India and South Africa in October.

Attention is now turning to those richer nations, notably in the European Union — and France was the first to voice its support. "I completely favour this opening up of the intellectual property," AP

## Lanka bans travellers from India

Colombo: Sri Lanka on Thursday announced that all arrivals from India will be banned with immediate effect due to the record rise in Covid-19 cases in the neighbouring country.

Several countries like the UK, the UAE, Australia and Singapore have already banned travellers from India as well as other South Asian countries. The Civil Aviation Authority on Thursday said that travellers from India will not be allowed to disembark in Sri Lanka. The decision has been taken as the coronavirus continues to spread rapidly in India.

The Director General Civil aviation in a letter to the CEO of the national carrier Sri Lankan Airlines has said, "in accordance with instructions received from health authorities of Sri Lanka due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, it is hereby directed that passengers travelling from India will not be permitted to disembark in Sri Lanka with immediate effect." PTI

## Int'l Court sentences Ugandan to 25 yrs for war crimes

The Hague: The International Criminal Court sentenced a Ugandan former child soldier who turned into a brutal rebel commander to 25 years' imprisonment on Thursday, with judges saying that his own abduction as a schoolboy and history as a child soldier prevented him being sentenced to life.

Dominic Ongwen was convicted in February of a total of 61 war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape, forced marriage, forced pregnancy and using child soldiers as a commander in the shadowy Lord's Resistance Army. His lawyers have said they will appeal the conviction.

Presiding Judge Bertram Schmitt said that judges had to weigh Ongwen's brutality and victims' wishes for justice against his own tortured past when deciding on a sentence.

"The chamber is confronted in the present case with a unique situation. It is confronted with a perpetrator who willfully brought tremendous suffering upon his victims," Schmitt said.

"However, it is also confronted with a perpetrator who himself had previously endured extreme suffering himself at the hands of the group of which he later became a prominent member and leader."

Ongwen, wearing a face mask and headphones, showed no emotion as he heard that the three-judge panel had given him a sentence five years longer than the 20 years prosecutors requested.

Ugandan authorities welcomed the sentence, in a case they had asked the court to investigate.

"As the government of Uganda, we are happy that the case we referred to the ICC had merit," said spokesman Otwono Opondo. "We are satisfied, and we hope it will serve as a signal to others who think they can commit a crime and run away. The law will

always catch up with you."

Ongwen's defence lawyers have always cast him as a victim of the LRA's brutality who was traumatised after being abducted as a 9-year-old and turned into a child soldier in the group's violent insurgency.

But judges in February ruled that he committed the crimes "as a fully responsible adult, as a commander of the LRA in his mid- to late 20s".

Schmitt underscored that on Thursday, saying Ongwen could have fled the LRA, was not always in a position of total subordination to its leader Joseph Kony and committed some of the crimes in private. AP

## Ukraine wants aid, NATO support from Blinken's visit

Kyiv (Ukraine): On the frontlines of the battle against Russia-backed separatists and in the halls of government in Kyiv, Ukrainians hold strong hopes for Thursday's visit of the US Secretary of State - increased military aid and strong support for NATO membership among them.

By visiting so early in his tenure, before any trip to Russia, Antony Blinken is signalling that Ukraine is a high foreign-policy priority for President Joe Biden's administration. But what he can, or will, deliver in the meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is unclear. Blinken said Monday in London that he would use the

visit to show "our unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine."

Zelenskyy has made it clear that he wants significant action. "Ukraine needs a clear signal about the European and Euro-Atlantic prospect," Zelenskyy said Monday on Twitter, referring to Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO and the European Union. "Postponing these issues for later, some day, (in) 10 years' has to end."

"We need to be more supported, given some special status - NATO membership," said a Ukrainian soldier on the eastern front lines, who gave his name and patronymic as Vasyil Adolfovich. AP

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियन्ता, लोक स्वास्थ्य यात्रिकी खण्ड अम्बिकापुर जिला सरगुजा (छ.ग.)

// Notice Inviting Tender //

एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीयन देकरावों से विनिश्चित कार्य हेतु जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता मिशन सरगुजा (जल जीवन मिशन अंतर्गत) ऑनलाइन (Online) विधिवत आमंत्रित की जाती है।

Sr. No.	NIT No. & Date	Tender System No.	Online Bid Submission Date	Name of Work	P.A.C. (Rs. In Lakh)	E.M.D. (In Rs.)
1	04, दिनांक 24.04.2021	76531	18.05.2021	Rate Contract for Implementation Support Agencies (ISA) Under JJM	395.28	2,96,460/-
2	05, दिनांक 24.04.2021	76523	18.05.2021	Rate Contract for Third Party Inspection Agencies (TPIs) Under JJM	988.2	2,25,000/-
3	06, दिनांक 24.04.2021	75231	19.05.2021	Constt. of O.H.T., Pipeline work, Instt. Of Submersible Pump, Providing of FHTC Constt. Of Boundarywall etc. At Village- Shivnathpur, Block- Sitapur, Under JJM	174.19	1,30,640/-
4	07, दिनांक 26.04.2021	75234	17.05.2021	Constt. of O.H.T., Pipeline work, Instt. Of Submersible Pump, Providing of FHTC Constt. Of Boundarywall etc. At Village- Podipa, Darima, Bhitkalka, Block- Ambikapur, Under JJM	250.01	1,87,600/-

चरित्रक निर्माण कार्य की ऑनलाइन (Online Tender) देखकर आमंत्रित की जाती है। अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल (https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in) पर देखी जा सकती है।

हस्ता/- कार्यपालन अभियन्ता लोक स्वास्थ्य यात्रिकी खण्ड अम्बिकापुर

R.O. No:- 60449/12  
R.O Date:- 05/05/2021

**SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY**

E-Tender Notice No. 14/MYS/2021 of 03-05-2021

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following works.

Sl.	Name of Work	Approx. Value
1	Sakleshpur - Subrahmanya Road Ghat Section :- Clearing of earth slip and restoration of track due to land slide (For the anticipated slips in the year 2021-22) in Reach-I between Sakleshpur-Yedakumari Road Stations.	Rs. 1,52,31,124/-
2	Sakleshpur - Subrahmanya Road Ghat Section :- Clearing of earth slip and restoration of track due to land slide (For the anticipated slips in the year 2021-22) in Reach-II between Yedakumari-Subrahmanya Road Stations.	Rs. 1,39,71,295/-
3	Assistant Divisional Engineer / Shivamogga Sub Division: Supply of drinking water in tanker to stations, colonies, coach watering and washing between Birur - Talaguppa Section and Kadur - Chamarajanager for one year from May 2021 to April 2022.	Rs. 20,50,530/-

Last date for submission of bids: Upto 11:00 Hrs. on 25-05-2021

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Mysuru

PUB40/AA/SR/SWR/2021-22

## Woman from Mali gives birth to 9 babies in Morocco

AP ■ BAMAOK (MALI)

A Malian woman has given birth to nine babies at once — after only expecting seven, according to Mali's Minister of Health and the Moroccan clinic where the nonuplets were born.

It appeared to be the first time on record that a woman had given birth to nine surviving babies at once. The Guinness Book of World Records said in an email to The AP on Wednesday that its current record for most living births at once is eight, and that it is verifying the Morocco birth.

The current holder of the Guinness record is American Nadya Suleman, who gave birth to eight premature but otherwise healthy children in 2009.

The five girls and four boys, and their mother, "are all doing well," Mali's health minister said in a statement.

## China silent on falling debris of its space rocket amid rising concerns

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday declined to comment on reports that the debris of its Long March 5B rocket, which last week launched the core module of the country's space station, is set to re-enter the earth's atmosphere this weekend, amid concerns that it could cause damage if it crashes in civilian areas.

While the Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin parried questions about the reports that the US defence department was tracking the falling rocket debris, official media here quoted Chinese experts as saying that the parts of the disintegrated rocket will fall in international waters.

The Pentagon said on Tuesday that it was tracking a large Chinese rocket that is out of control and set to re-enter earth's atmosphere this weekend.

Asked what measures China is taking to deal with the situation arising out of the

falling rocket, Wang said "specifics I refer you to the competent authority."

"As a principle, China is committed to the peaceful use of outer space and believes we should conduct international cooperation in this area," he said.

"We stand ready to work with all parties to make efforts for the peaceful use of outer space and uphold its safety and security," he said.

The rocket was used by China to launch part of its space station. While most space debris objects may burn up in the atmosphere, the rocket's size — 22 tonnes — has prompted concern that large parts could re-enter and cause damage if they hit inhabited areas.

State-run Global Times quoted aerospace expert and TV commentator Song Zhongping as saying that it is "completely normal" for rocket debris to return to Earth.

Wang Yan'an, chief editor of Aerospace Knowledge mag-

azine, said that the development of rocket debris falling was carefully considered by China's space authorities from the initial rocket design phase and the choice of a launch site, to the rocket's liftoff attitude and its trajectory.

"Most of the debris will burn up during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, leaving only a very small portion that may fall to the ground, which will potentially land on areas away from human activities or in the ocean," Wang told the daily.

On May 4, the US Defence Department said it was tracking a large Chinese rocket that is out of control and set to re-enter earth's atmosphere this weekend. CNN reported.

The Chinese Long March 5B rocket is expected to enter earth's atmosphere "around May 8," the report quoted a statement from Defence Department spokesperson Mike Howard, who said the US Space Command is tracking the rocket's trajectory.

**GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE**

Sr. No.	Name of Board/Corp./Auth.	Name of Work/Notice Tender	Opening Date (Time)	Closing Date (Time)	Amount / EMD (Approx.) in Rupees	Website of the Board/Corp./Auth.	Official/Contact Details/Email
1	UBIN	17 ALPHE ARMoured Cable of size 3025 SQMM AS PER NIGMS TECH. SPECIFICATION NO. CSC-2019/1204/VP/3020-21 AND AS PER RELEVANT IS ALONGWITH ITS AMENDMENTS. + 2 OTHER	04.05.2021 24.05.2021	END 6 LACS	6 LACS	ubin.org.in	9023360202 csm@ubin.org.in
2	UBIN	NEW TRANSFORMER OIL CONFORMING TO IS-335/2018 ALONGWITH ITS AMENDMENTS, OTHER RELEVANT IS AND AS PER NIGMS TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION NO. CSC-1000/VR-2019/196/2020-21 & ITS AMENDMENTS, IF ANY	04.05.2021 24.05.2021	END 2 LACS	2 LACS	ubin.org.in	9023360202 csm@ubin.org.in

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

RO No. 2861

# GDP growth seen at 9.5 pc: Fitch

## COVID-19 RESURGENCE BRINGING RENEWED CHALLENGES FOR INDIA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The spiralling crisis from resurgence of Covid-19 cases in India has dented support for the ruling BJP but voter support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party will remain strong over the coming quarters and through this humanitarian crisis, Fitch Solutions said Thursday.

The sudden and steep surge in the number of coronavirus cases – the highest-ever 4,12,262 new infections and a record 3,980 daily death toll in a day – has swamped the health system, which seemed to have collapsed.

While containment measures will weigh on India's ongoing economic recovery, the localised nature of restrictions means that the actual impact is likely to be much less severe relative to April-June 2020 when a strict nationwide lockdown was imposed, Fitch Solutions said.

It forecasted real GDP to grow 9.5 per cent in 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022).

Risks to this forecast are to the downside, as the surge in new daily COVID-19 case-

loads will most likely see an extension and expansion of lockdowns, it said adding that the resurgence of Covid-19 cases exposed cracks in the Indian healthcare system.

"While there appears to be signs that the spiralling COVID-19 crisis in India has dented support for the ruling BJP, we maintain our view that voter support for Prime Minister Modi and the BJP will remain strong over the coming quarters and through this humanitarian crisis," Fitch Solutions said.

This second wave in India has been widely attributed to the B.1.1.7 variant – first identified in the UK – which had ramped up cases in Punjab. Another possible culprit is a homegrown variant, B.1.617, with two worrying mutations that originated in Maharashtra, the worst affected state.

"In addition to this, in India, a year of COVID-19 fatigue gave way to an ill-advised euphoria over herd immunity as cases began to dip in January 2021.

"Inadequate government measures and people not adhering to public health guidelines, such as wearing

# Revenue Deficit Grant of ₹ 9,871 cr released to 17 States

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Finance Ministry on Thursday released the 2nd monthly installment of Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant of Rs 9,871 crore for the year 2021-22 to 17 states.

With the release of 2nd installment, a total amount of Rs 19,742 crore has been released in the first two months of the current financial year as PDRD grant to the states. The Centre provides the grant to the states under Article 275 of the

Constitution.

The grants are released as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission in monthly installments to meet the gap in revenue accounts of the states post devolution. The 15th Finance Commission has recommended PDRD grants to 17 states.

These states are: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand,

and West Bengal.

The eligibility of states to receive this grant and the quantum of grant was decided by the Commission based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the State. Assessed devolution for the financial year 2021-22 was also taken into account by the Commission.

face masks and maintaining social distancing, are also the main reasons for India's upward tick in infections," it said.

It added that a number of political, social and religious events and elections for local bodies in multiple states and preparation for Assembly elections in others also created an opportunity for the virus to

move fast.

Fitch Solutions said that in March this year, a few weeks before the new surge, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, who is also a physician, asserted that India was in the "endgame" of the COVID-19 pandemic, justifying the government's decision to export medical resources to other

# Benchmarks build on gains; auto, IT stocks take charge

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity gauges Sensex and Nifty notched up gains for the second straight session on Thursday, boosted by hectic buying in auto, financial and IT counters amid firm global cues.

Participants cheered the US government's decision to back waiver of intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines, which can speed up the vaccination drive in India and other emerging economies, traders said.

The BSE benchmark Sensex closed higher by 272.21 points or 0.56 per cent at 48,949.76. In volatile trade, the 30-share index oscillated between a high of 49,011.31 and a low of 48,614.11 during the day. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty ended with gains of 106.95 points or 0.73 per cent at 14,724.80. On the Sensex chart, Bajaj Auto, HDFC, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Nestle India, Maruti and Titan emerged as the prominent gainers, advancing up to 2.61 per cent.

On the other hand,

PowerGrid, ONGC, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, NTPC and Sun Pharma were the major laggards, dropping as much as 1.24 per cent.

Of the Sensex constituents, 20 shares ended with gains. "The trend of positive news alternating with negative news continues.

President Biden's decision to back waiving intellectual property rights on vaccines is a big positive. This will quicken the vaccination process enabling countries like India to come out of the pandemic faster," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

But data on daily infections indicate a rise after five days of decline, he said, adding lockdowns and restrictions on mobility are increasing, impacting the economic recovery.

New coronavirus cases and deaths in India hit a record daily high with 4,12,262 new infections and 3,980 fatalities being reported, taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 2,10,77,410 and the death toll to 2,30,168.

# Plea in HC seeks Z-plus security for SII CEO Adar Poonawalla

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A petition filed in the Bombay High Court has sought Z-plus security for Adar Poonawalla, Chief Executive Officer of the Serum Institute of India (SII) which manufactures the Covishield vaccine against Covid-19.

The Union government has already granted 'Y' category security to the Pune-based industrialist.

Advocate Datta Mane, the petitioner, also sought a direction to the police to register FIR and carry out a probe into alleged threat to Poonawalla over the supply of vaccine.

If vaccine makers felt unsafe, it could affect vaccine production, the petition, filed on Wednesday, said.

"If Adar Poonawalla is out of India due to threat to his life, then it (his company) will be a ship in a storm without its captain," said the plea.

Poonawalla had said in a recent interview to The Times that he left for the United Kingdom due to threats and pressure from 'powerful people' seeking vaccine doses on priority. Mane further said in the petition that he has approached the Commissioner of Police, Pune and Maharashtra Director General of Police with a complaint about alleged threat to the SII CEO. The high court should direct the police to register FIR and ask the government to provide higher-level security to Poonawalla, the petition said.

# Covid to shave off 20-25% of auto fuel demand in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's second wave of coronavirus infections and the resultant city and state-specific restrictions may shave-off about 20-25 per cent of auto fuel demand in April, consultancy Wood Mackenzie said on Thursday and estimated a modest impact on oil demand in the absence of a full nationwide lockdown.

India's COVID crisis shows no sign of slowing. The country has reported new cases above 3 lakh per day for two weeks straight, though experts think the true number is likely to be far higher, it said.

"Yet despite increasing calls for the government to impose a nationwide lockdown to reduce the rate of infection, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has so far resisted, citing the economic impact on an already suffering population."

Compounding this terrible human tragedy, the crisis is also impacting India's near-term

economic performance as travel is curtailed and local restrictions enforced.

"This is inevitably impacting the country's energy markets, with all sectors being impacted.

However, without a nationwide lockdown along the lines of that seen in Q2 (April-June) 2020, energy demand has so far proven relatively resilient, despite the more severe levels of infection compared to 12 months ago," Wood Mackenzie said in a report.

It trimmed India's GDP forecast to 9 per cent year-on-year in 2021 from 9.9 per cent previously due to the second peak of COVID cases. But there is further downside risk if lockdown measures and restrictions on movement are tightened further.

"While current localised restrictions appear inadequate in comparison to the severity of the pandemic, tighter restrictions come with expectations of

additional financial support from the government; India's stimulus measures have been modest since the start of the pandemic, totalling 9 per cent of GDP. If a nationwide lockdown is enforced, the government will need to provide much more," it said.

With the domestic economy gripped by the pandemic and the looming risk of a nationwide lockdown, external demand and export-orientated industries are now critical for the economic recovery in the short term.

During last year's lockdown, India's oil demand fell by 1.2 million barrels per day in April-June, equal to about a 25 per cent drop. Road traffic was particularly impacted, recording a peak decline of some 45 per cent during April 2020.

Oil product consumption almost halved in April 2020 with petrol demand slumping by a record 60.5 per cent and diesel by 55.6 per cent.

# Petrol price hiked by 25 paise, diesel by 30 paise

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Beijing has expressed deep concerns over India's new telecom policy that does not permit Chinese telecommunication companies to conduct 5G trials in the country, saying the move is not conducive to the innovation and development of related Indian industries.

On Tuesday, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) granted approval to nearly a dozen companies to conduct a six-month trial for use and applications of 5G technology. The telecom service providers included Bharti Airtel, Reliance JioInfocomm Ltd, Vodafone Idea Ltd and MTNL who have tied up with original equipment manufacturers and technology providers which are Ericsson, Nokia, Samsung and C-DOT.

There was no Chinese company -- Huawei or ZTE -- in the list that have been operating in India for several years.

# Let our firms take part in 5G trials, China tells India

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Wang Xiaojian, spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India, said in a statement that China expresses "concern and regret that Chinese telecommunications companies have not been permitted to conduct 5G trials with Indian Telecom Service Providers in India."

"Relevant Chinese companies have been operating in India for years, providing mass job opportunities and making contribution to India's infrastructure construction in telecommunications," Xiaojian said. "To exclude Chinese telecommunications companies from the trials will not only harm their legitimate rights and interests, but also hinder the improvement of the Indian business environment, which is not conducive to the innovation and development of related Indian industries."

Like the US and the UK, there have been demands from the industry stakeholders like the Confederation of All India

Traders to ban Huawei and ZTE Corporation of China from participating in 5G network rollout in India.

## APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

The general public is hereby informed that an unidentified person about 70 years of age whose name and family is unknown, R/o Kudesia Ghar Park, Delhi had been found dead at Kudesia Ghar Park, Delhi. In this regard, a vide has been registered with DD No: 15A, dated: 28.04.2021 at PS Civil Lines, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to identify the deceased person, but no clue has come to light so far.

The description of the UIDB is as under:  
**Sex:** Male, **Age:** 70 Years, **Height:** 6', **Complexion:** Wheathish, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Dark blue pant.

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



E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
 Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641  
 Fax : 011-24368639

SHO  
 P.S. Civil Lines, Delhi.  
 Ph. No. 011- 23810633, 23815444

# Power market beats pandemic, April trade up 90.2% YoY

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing its exceptional performance during the last fiscal, the electricity market at the Indian Energy Exchange entered the new fiscal year 2022 with 7707 MU volume in April 2021, achieving a 90.2 per cent YoY growth.

The average monthly price at Rs 3.70 per unit witnessed 53 per cent increase over Rs 2.42 in the corresponding period in 2020.

The increase in price was primarily due to increase in demand and sharp slump in electricity prices in April 2020 due to a stringent nationwide lockdown. The day-ahead market saw ample availability of power with sell-bids at 1.48X of the cleared volume during the month.

The term-ahead market comprising intra-day, contingency, daily & weekly contracts traded 349 MU during the month.

ferred destination for power procurement for both the distribution utilities as well as the industrial consumers.

The day-ahead market traded 5,699 MU volume in April, achieving a significant 54 per cent YoY growth.

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The term-ahead market comprising intra-day, contingency, daily & weekly contracts traded 349 MU during the month.

# Crisil says half of its rated mid-sized cos eligible for loan recast under new guidelines

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Another round of restructuring, largest domestic ratings agency Crisil on Thursday said half of the mid-size companies in its portfolio will be eligible for the recast.

Companies with relatively weaker credit profiles, and part of low-resilience sectors are expected to benefit more from the scheme, Crisil said, specifying that mid-sized companies are those having aggregate exposures of less than ₹500 crore.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had on Wednesday announced another window to recast loans given the second wave of COVID-19 infections.

As per the announcement, individuals, small businesses and MSMEs having aggregate exposure of up to Rs 25 crore would be eligible for consideration under the Resolution

Framework 2.0, provided they have not availed of restructuring under any of the earlier frameworks and were classified as standard accounts as on March 31.

Crisil said it rates 6,800 mid-sized entities and more than half of them are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) having a bank loan exposure of up to Rs 25 crore.

Over 3,400 of the mid-sized companies were classified as standard accounts, making them eligible to avail restructuring.

"The RBI's intervention is timely and companies with weaker credit profiles will benefit more from the restructuring scheme," its Chief Ratings Officer Subodh Rai said.

Four out of five companies eligible for restructuring have sub-investment category ratings, indicating their relatively weak ability to manage liquidity shocks, he said.

# Govt should allow cryptocurrencies, says Garg

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government should regulate and control cryptocurrencies instead of prohibiting them, former finance secretary SC Garg said on Thursday.

Addressing a virtual event organised by industry body Assocham, Garg also said there is undue emphasis on cryptocurrencies and these digital assets will require standard frameworks. "I don't think we still have full clarity and understanding about how to regulate cryptocurrencies...Regulate, control cryptocurrencies but

The RBI had virtually banned cryptocurrency trading in 2018 and had directed all entities regulated by the central bank to cease dealing in virtual currencies. The Supreme Court had asked the Centre in 2019 to frame policies for crypto, and in 2020, struck down the curbs imposed by the RBI.

All Indian companies should only be keeping digital accounts in the next three to five years, Garg said, adding "it is possible to integrate national accounts with company accounts." In the times to come, the entire system of accounting, auditing and reporting can be automated, he added.

"At present, we have this

quarterly accounting system whereby companies have to show their books of accounts after every three months.

"We need to set higher accounting standards and move out to automatic accounting system which would be relevant to present needs of the business," he noted.

According to Garg, the current financial reporting standards are for the bygone industrial era and there is an urgent need for a complete digitalisation of accounting, financial reporting and auditing for companies.

## BRIEFS

### SECY REVIEWS VACCINATION DRIVE FOR TOURISM OFFICIALS, STAKEHOLDERS

SRINAGAR: Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Sarmad Hafeez reviewed the pace of Covid-19 vaccinations being undertaken by various units of the Tourism Department and stakeholders in Jammu & Kashmir in a high level meeting of officers here today. During the meeting, the Tourism Secretary asked for line listing of all the staff and stakeholders at various tourist destinations for smooth vaccination in coming days. He asked the CEOs of various Tourism development authorities and Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir to work in a coordinated manner to achieve the optimal results in this regard. The Tourism Secretary was informed that the officials of Directorate of Tourism, Srinagar, TRC, Srinagar and Jammu and SKICC have taken the first jab of the vaccine already.

### RIGHT COURSE FOR FUTURE: COVESTRO

New Delhi: Leading producer of advanced and high-performance polymers Covestro has successfully navigated through 2020, a year dominated by the coronavirus pandemic, said its CEO Markus Steilermann. "We will not simply be content with this. We are actively setting the right course for the future," he said at the group's AGM. Despite declines in the volumes sold due to the pandemic, the group benefited from its broad range of measures and a strong rebound in demand from mid-year onwards.

### TATA CONSUMER PRODUCTS POSTS Q4 NET PROFIT AT ₹7.35 CR

New Delhi: Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) on Thursday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 74.35 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021, helped by double-digit volume growth in its domestic business. The company had posted a net loss of Rs 122.48 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago, TCPL, earlier known as Tata Global Beverages Ltd, said in a BSE filing.

## Appeal for Identification

General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body Name: Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/O: Unknown, Age: about 55, Height: 5', Complexion: Shallow Built; Medium, Face: Round with white beard, Wearing : Light Blue Colour Shirt & bottom part bere of clothes & Silver colour watch in left hand & Golden colour earring in ears was found lying in unconscious near shop no 228, Bazar Ajmeri Road Near Chawari Bazar metro station Hauz

Qazi. The person was taken to lady harding medical collage & hospital where he was declared brought died. In this regard, a DD No. 46-A, Dt 02.05.2021 has been lodged at PS Hauz Qazi, 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., Hauz Qazi, Delhi  
 Ph : 011-23210414, 23212482

## Office of Chief Medical Officer, Haridwar

Email: [cmoharidwar@rediffmail.com](mailto:cmoharidwar@rediffmail.com)

### Notice Inviting Tender (NIT)

The earlier tender of this office published on 01.05.2021 is cancelled due to unavoidable reason. Chief Medical Officer, Haridwar re-invites tenders through e-tendering, from Eligible Bidders for the following works:

**01. Health Workers and sanitation worker with sanitation services and necessary equipments (inclusive of all taxes) to be deployed at DCCC/DCHC etc.**

Detailed eligibility criteria, EMD, ITB and other terms & conditions of the tender document can be seen at <https://uktenders.gov.in>. Any amendment in future against the tender shall be uploaded on <https://uktenders.gov.in>.

Document Download Start Date	07.05.2021 at 10:00 hrs
Proposal Due Date	13.05.2021 at 16:00 hrs
Opening of Technical Bids	13.05.2021 at 17:00 hrs
Tender Document Price	Rs 5900 (Including GST)
No. Covid/CMO/2021-22/2495 <span style="float: right;">CMO, Haridwar</span>	

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DIVISION, RAJNANDGAON (C.G.)

☎ 07744-224035(O) E-mail:- [eeraj-phe-cg.nic.in](mailto:eeraj-phe-cg.nic.in)

NIT No- 08/JJM/Eo/EE/2021 Rajnandgaon Date 03-05-2021

System no- 76605

**Short Notice Inviting Expression of Interest For Empanelment of the Implementation Support Agencies (ISA) under Jal Jeevan Mission, PHED, Chhattisgarh Eo/No 04/2021**

On behalf of Governor of Chhattisgarh, The Executive Engineer, PHED & Member Secretary (DWSM) District Rajnandgaon invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from national and international NGOs /Self Help Groups (SHGs)/ CBOs/ VOs/ similar Social Development Oriented Organizations/Foundations/Trusts for empanelment as Implementation Support Agencies (ISA) under Jal Jeevan Mission being implemented by State Water and Sanitation Mission. Probable amount of total cost of work Rs. 2033.54 Crores.

Any modifications/amendments/corrigendum shall be published in the website only. The eligible bidder may submit their bid with the EOI document along with EMD as detailed in EOI document. The Bid must be delivered through Online only on detailed EOI at e-procurement portal <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> upto 10:30 hrs of 10-05-2021 Bids are to be submitted online in the portal <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> on or before 17:30 hrs of 17-05-2021 In no case manual EOI will be entertained.

Sd/-  
 Executive Engineer,  
 Public Health Engineering  
 Rajnandgaon (C.G.)  
 Ro.No.: 60450/12  
 Ro.Date:- 05/05/2021



**Bollywood**  
 I'm delighted to join hands with PETA India to get protein-packed vegan meals to thousands.  
 —Sunny Leone

https://www.dailypioneer.com/vivacity/



## Singers need audience

Till an artiste isn't fronted with listeners, critics and admirers, s/he is lost, believes singer, **SHAHID MALLYA**



Popular singer Shahid Mallya, who is the voice behind classic hit songs like *Rabba Main Toh Mar Gaya (Mausam)*, *Ikk Kudi (Udta Punjab)*, and *Kukkad (Student Of The Year)*, says that he misses the physical audience-artist interaction. It is very crucial to the essence of being an artiste and prays for normalcy to return.

Asked how has the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown impacted his professional and personal life, the playback singer said, "Till an artiste isn't fronted with listeners, critics and admirers, she or he is somehow lost. Yes we are recording sitting at home, but at the end of the day, we miss the face-to-face interaction. The artiste inside is unnerved and is wondering whether the future will be without any physical connect and we'd remain relegated to screens only? I pray that the audience-artist interaction can begin again soon."

According to the vocalist, "Without an audience, an artiste is not a true artiste."

Mallya has repeatedly also critiqued remixed music. Speaking on his approach to music and songs, he says, "The remixes that are being made today are mostly songs from the 1990s or 2000s era. If the singers of the original song are still active, when they hear their own work via some other music director, they wouldn't like it. At some point in the past, they had collected appreciation for these songs, and when they see someone else being appreciated for singing the same song, I think it's wrong."

He adds that remixes are alright if the songs are really old, or the original makers have passed away or if the songs have slipped away from popular memory. "Then it's good to recreate them, so today's generation know of the songs from the bygone era. My perspective on selecting songs is that they should have good poetry, and I should enjoy doing the song, and it should fit my singing skills."

Responding to a question about debates around nepotism and favouritism in Bollywood, Mallya shares an interesting viewpoint. "Nepotism happens truly when any artiste is launched but is unable to do justice to the role or task, whether it's in acting, dancing, singing or any domain where people achieve stardom and their descendants want to follow suit. According to me, even if an artiste is launched or gets work in the industry, unless they have what it takes, the audience will anyway not accept them. If someone works hard, then it's not nepotism. If a singer's child is good, then she or he has the right to work. Yes, the entry is easier for them. In this process, overlooked are those artistes who come from a small village or a poor family or those who aren't enabled to reach the right place at the right time. There are reality shows which often platforms fresh talent. Experienced people in any field have the responsibility to guide the right talent. Nepotism can give you a platform, but to keep standing on it and succeed, depends on one's capabilities," he says.

Finally, who are some of the biggest influencers of his music? "Whatever I know, I have learnt from my father. I have also listened to great artistes from the childhood. I have huge respect for Mohammed Rafi *sahab* and Sonu Nigam *ji*, and am influenced by them," concludes Mallya.

—IANS

# MYTHOLOGIES DOMINATE SMALL SCREEN

Traditional tales return to the Indian television as there is a captive audience, locked down at home, amidst the surge of the second wave of Covid-19

Last year during Covid lockdown, Doordarshan struck gold re-telescoping *Ramayan*, Ramanand Sagar's hit mythological series of the eighties. This year, as India has come to a standstill once again owing to the second wave of the deadly coronavirus, many soap makers seem to have picked up cue. Mythology seems to be flavour on the tube once again, as Indian television finds a ready homebound audience base.

A host of shows including *Vighnaharta Ganesh* and *RadhaKrishn* make for prime family viewing while the epics *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* are being re-tecast.

Shooting for mythological shows in the time of Covid is naturally tough, given the extravagant set, costumes, heavy jewellery and the execution they demand. Also, no matter the precautions, actors would always have to take off their masks in front of the camera. "Shooting in Covid times is tough because there are so many precautions

that need to be kept in mind. Actors are at high risk because we cannot wear a mask while shooting. If the team is good and precautions are being taken, actors are safe. You need to sanitise your hands and take precautions and see if people around you are wearing masks and sanitising their hands," says Riney Aryaa, who plays Goddess Laxmi in *Vighnaharta Ganesh*.

She adds, "A lot of people touch actors for costume, hair and make-up, which increases the risk of contracting Covid-19. The costumes are so heavy and the temperatures are high and that makes it very difficult. We are in our jewellery and get-up for 16 hours."

"In these uncertain times, portraying a mythological character also entails a very different challenge. Shows in this genre are meant to spread hope during a crisis such as the pandemic, as people look up to divine protagonists on the small screen with reverence. In turn, this means we need to take extra care in portraying such

characters with as much authenticity as possible, as these are characters people have immense faith in and are sensitive about," observes Madirakshi Mundle who plays Devi Parvati in *Vighnaharta Ganesh*.

"I feel fortunate to have essayed Goddesses on the TV screen. We have grown up hearing tales of the ennobling qualities, benevolence and deep intrinsic strength of virtuous Goddesses such as Sita, Lakshmi and Parvati and have a deep reverence for them. They are often very commonly invoked as role models. People are attached to them and their principles are deeply integral to our culture and mythology. So, the audience's feelings towards them are of paramount importance when I essay such a role. People have a certain image they attach with such a character, in their minds," she added.

Here are some of the mythological shows that are currently a rage on the tube:

### RAMAYAN

The popularity of late Ramanand Sagar's tele-epic continues to grow with time. While the show broke several records upon re-release on Doordarshan during last year's lockdown, it has been brought back on Star Bharat this year. The show stars Arun Govil as Ram, Deepika Chikhalia as Sita, Sunil Lahri as Lakshman, Arvind Trivedi as Raavan and Dara Singh as Hanuman.

### MAHABHARAT

This 2013 series stars Saurabh Jain as Lord Krishna, Pooja Sharma as Draupadi, Sayantani Ghosh as Satyawati, and Shaheer Sheikh as Arjun. The show also stars Arpit Ranka as Duryodhana, Pranee Bhatt as Shakuni and Puneet Issar plays the role of Parshurama. The series has been re-released on Star Bharat.

### MERE SAI: SHRADDHA AUR SABURI

The story of the show revolves around the life story of Sai Baba of Shirdi

and talks of how he helps multiple people who seek him. His path of Dharma is highlighted in the series. The show stars Tushar Dalvi, Kishori Godbole and Vaibhav Mangale. Tune in to Sony Entertainment Television (SET) India to watch this show.

### SANTOSHI MAA: SUNAYEIN VRAT KATHAYEIN

The show is a sequel to the series *Santoshi Maa* and has been produced by Rashmi Sharma and Pawan Kumar Marut. Actress Gracy Singh plays the lead in the show which is being telecast on Zee5. Actors Tanvi Dogra and Vijay Badlani are also part of the show.

### RADHAKRISHN

The series revolves around the eternal bond of love shared by Radha and Lord Krishna. The show stars Sumedh Mudgalkar and Mallika Singh and has been directed by Rahul Kumar Tiwari. It is being aired on Star Bharat.

—IANS



## 'Don't forget to donate blood'

Singer Sonu Nigam urged every non-vaccinated person in India to step forward and donate blood because there will be a severe shortage following the second wave of Covid-19.

"There is going to be a severe crisis in bloodbanks. People who haven't been vaccinated till now need to step forward and donate blood. The situation, which could turn serious in the near future, can easily be controlled with blood donation," said Sonu.

The singer, who donated blood and oxygen canisters at a blood donation camp in Juhu, urges everyone to not wait till the 11th hour.

"Rather than waiting for the crisis to arrive and then start looking for a solution, it would be a lot easier to foresee the threat and prepare for it right away. That's what I am doing here: looking for a solution to a looming crisis," added Sonu.

Sonu inaugurated the blood donation camp and also donated 250 oxygen canisters for Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and ambulances. He added, "There are 250 oxygen canisters here for patients who are being transported in ambulances, from home to hospital. We're making these canisters available for BMC and ambulances."

Sonu had tested Covid positive earlier and he has not taken the vaccine yet.

—IANS

While many over-the-counter creams claim to fade away dark spots within a matter of days, there is no such magical potion to clear your skin instantly unless you eliminate the cause behind it. Pigmentation occurs due to an excess amount of melanin production in the skin cells, triggered from sun exposure, hormonal changes, poor diet, medical conditions, use of certain products, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, or environmental conditions.

Here are seven tips to easily treat dark spots on your body for a bright and clear complexion.

### Wear broad-spectrum sunscreen

UV radiation coming from the sun induces the production of melanin, which results in tanning. However, sun exposure can also exaggerate post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, resulting in the darkening of the brown spots. Therefore, make sure to add sunscreen to your skincare routine 365 days a year to prevent intensifying pigmented marks. Also, physical protection is more effective than using the sunscreen, so make sure to wear hat, scarf, or even use an umbrella when you are outdoors. Try to limit spending hours in the sun for long hours to prevent exacerbating the skin issue.

### Include antioxidants in diet

Consume antioxidant-rich foods such as coloured fruit, vegetables, berries, dark chocolate, etc. to even out your skin complexion. Antioxidants promote collagen production, repair acne marks faster, increase cell turnover, and lead to a brighter complexion.



# Zap that spot

Pigmentation can take a toll on self-confidence. Here are some natural ways to overcome the problem



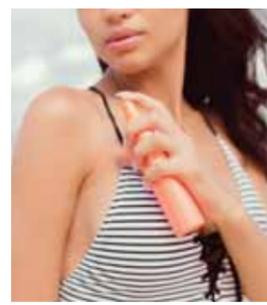
plexion.

### Drink adequate amount of water

Dark spots are sometimes caused by lack of hydration, so consuming an adequate amount of water can do wonders for your skin. Drinking water can provide a natural barrier from pollutants and heal the skin faster, resulting in a flawless complexion.

### Exfoliate

Make sure to gently exfoliate your skin at least twice a week to diminish the appearance of dark



spots. Choose alpha-hydroxy acids based exfoliators that work to improve skin by removing top layers of the skin and remove dead cells to reveal healthy and glowing skin.

### Use turmeric

Packed with anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial benefits, turmeric has been shown to inhibit the skin's melanin production. Topical application of turmeric on dark spots can help to lighten hyperpigmentation and prevent the occurrence of acne.

### Apply night cream

The skin repairs and rejuvenates while you take your beauty sleep. So, make sure to apply a night cream with a high concentration of antioxidants, Vitamin E, Kojic acid, Azelaic acid, Glycolic. When your body has the right vitamins in the right quantities, the health of the skin cells improves rapidly and it radiates from within. Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin B12, and Vitamin E are some of the best vitamins for lightening dark spots. Generally, vitamin skin treatment starts showing results but to know the right vitamins as per your skin type, take advice from a certified dermatologist.

### Develop healthy skincare habits

Make sure to cleanse your skin twice a day to remove dirt and dead skin layer. Get at least six-eight hours of sleep so that your skin has ample time to heal. Quit bad habits like excessive drinking and smoking for glowing skin.

—IANS

## Curtis praises Smith for 'worst shape'

Actress Jamie Lee Curtis has given a motivating response to Hollywood star Will Smith's social media post which stated he is currently in the "worst shape" of his life.

Curtis reinforced his positive message by reminding people to set their own realistic self-acceptance goals.

In a now-deleted Instagram post, Curtis, 62, shared an unedited photo of herself from an old *More* magazine photoshoot along-

side the 52-year-old Smith's shirtless image.

"Acceptance of the way things are is the first step to any change," she wrote alongside the picture and added, "My old *More* @\_moremagazine story was both a testament to 'The way things were for me' as well as a way to show the artifice of magazine advertising and airbrushing but also a chance to look in the mirror and make some changes. None of us should be unhealthy. We ALL have fallen

into bad habits." "The goal is self-acceptance, self love. Realistic, attainable self-acceptance. In recovery we say 'compare and despair,' nothing changes unless something changes," Curtis, quoted the sayings she had collected during her drug and alcohol addiction recovery.

She added: "Many people don't have the luxury of devoting oodles of time and money on their appearance. Mostly it should be a conversation starter."

—IANS

# TREND BLAZER



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY NOMINATED

The short film, *Happy Birthday*, featuring **AAHANA KUMRA** and Anupam Kher, has bagged nominations for Best Actor, Actress, Short Film and Director at the New York City International Film Festival (NYCIFF).

"It always feels incredible to be appreciated because an artiste puts so much effort into making the film. This project is very close to my heart. I am so grateful and thrilled to be nominated at such a prestigious Film Festival, and I hope the team wins big," Aahana said.

## fairtalk

RASHMI AGDEKAR



"I would like to play any and every character on the spectrum. While there are so many roles I want to play eventually, my immediate wish is to be or play a somewhat dark, gritty character, or something that is a contrast to my previous roles, which were mostly quirky, girl next door in nature."

## dailytalk

VIR DAS



"No one has told me to go to Pakistan in about a month. Left and right are helping each other get beds. The conversation is about antibodies and not anti-nationals. We went from 'Bollywood is on drugs' to literally helping each other get drugs. I'm not sure how long this version of social media lasts. I may take a second to appreciate it today."

## PAMELA GETS HITCHED AGAIN

Hollywood star **CHANNING TATUM** shared that he has a good physique thanks to his job profile. "As someone who works out for a job, I promise you I would not look like this unless I had to be naked in most of my movies mostly. At some point I have to get better at acting so I don't have to be naked in all of them," Tatum said on the *The Kelly Clarkson Show*. He also expressed his admiration for the people who find the time to work out as well as having full-time jobs and families to raise.



# PUT MICRO IN THE GREENS

During a time when the focus has shifted to eating healthy, here is a way to up your immunity with small things. By PRIYANKA JOSHI Karnatak



The pandemic turned our focus around and made us concentrate on tiny things that improve our health. Microgreens are one food group gradually climbing the charts of popularity. It might have started as an exotic garnish but now, it has made it to the front row of immunity-building foods. You might have seen microgreens in fancy restaurants all around the world. Top chefs have taken a fancy to these because of their ability to enhance the looks, taste and health quotient of dishes.

Delhi-based Swati Jain, The First Leaf, highlighting their importance, says, "A healthy immune system is our best defense against viruses, bacteria and carcinogens. A great way to strengthen it is by adding microgreens to our daily diet. They are abundant in vitamins and minerals that improve the body's ability to fight, prevent and recover from an illness."

But what are microgreens and where can we find these? You know that a bunch of fenugreek (*methi*) is a great source of vitamins, minerals and so much more. Similarly, mustard greens are loaded with antioxidants and essential vitamins. Then, there is spinach that's packed with plenty of minerals and iron. In fact, the list of these amazingly nutritious vegetables is rather long.

"Now imagine, if we could harness up to 40 or even 50 times the nutrients out of these already magical vegetables. The small edible greens grown from the seeds of these mighty vegetables are called microgreens," says Jain and adds, "Always make sure that these are grown organically and consumed as living foods."

Microgreens are the first true leaves produced from a seedling of vegetables and herbs that are about two-three inches tall. There are so many varieties of plants including turnips, radishes, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, celery, chard, lettuce, spinach, arugula, amaranth, cabbage, beets, parsley and basil, to name a few, that can be grown as microgreens for a wholesome and nutritious addi-



tion to your daily meals. The tiny leaves of most of the microgreens get ready for harvest in 12 to 14 days and are packed with nutrition and intense flavours imitating their mature counterparts.

Bengaluru-based chef Vikram Udaygiri and his wife Divya Kumar from Earthistic Agro represent the Ministry of External Affairs in promoting Indian cuisine and have organised food festivals in several countries including South Africa, Israel, and Egypt. "During a food festival in Zimbabwe, I came across microgreens being used as a garnish for dishes in the same way that we use coriander or curry leaves. I was amazed because, at the time, these tiny leaves were considered an exotic ingredient back home and were also quite expensive. I wondered if I could work towards changing that perception and make them affordable," says chef Udaygiri. The couple, in 2017, converted his grandparents' empty house into a microgreens farm and today he is one of the top suppliers in Bengaluru. He adds, "We have door-to-door delivery because now people are aware and concerned about their health. And trust me, it's a very good source for improving immunity."

Fine dining has relied on the power of microgreens for some time now. Chef Siddharth Sharma, Holiday Inn New Delhi Mayur Vihar Noida says, "For a long time microgreens were used and served as a decorative item and for colour contrast, especially in Continental and French food. These give a different texture and elevate the flavours of food."

But if you think these are best used in a restaurant, you are mistaken. These tiny greens can improve the flavours of your regular, homemade food to something par excellence. Jain says, "These can work as a great healthy addition to our daily diet. These are not only packed with nutrition but a lot of flavour too. Basil, corn shoots, amaranth, sunflower, pakchoi, pea shoots have a mild flavour profile. Whereas mustard, radish, arugula, garden cress have a sharper flavour. One can pick and choose based on his/her palate." Another advantage is their versatility. You can blend them in smoothies, stuff them in sandwiches, toss them in salads, sprinkle them over eggs. Or simply munch on them like a snack.

Dr Manjari Chandra says that there is more which works in the favour of adding microgreens to your diet. She says, "Most of our food has pesticides and growing these at home can be the first step towards a healthy life. These plants stimulate immunity, help to lose weight and reduce inflammation. They contain sulphur that repairs damaged cells in our bodies. These tiny plants are a kitchen pharmacy."

So, what are you waiting for? Go ahead and get that dash of micro.



## Say no to gluten

AKSHINA and RAINA MEHTA give you a low down on how desserts without cereals taste and look different

As times change people and their perceptions towards their lifestyle and their habits have also changed drastically. The ongoing pandemic has accelerated this process and has been a critical wake-up call for many people who now look for ways to improve their habits for better immunity and a better lifestyle. With healthier alternatives such as oats, chia seeds and others, gluten-free food has become quite popular. Besides people switching to a more calorie-conscious diet, others who are diagnosed with Celiac disease should definitely not consume gluten.

In this never-ending quarantine, cooking isn't just an essential but also a hobby for many who bake to keep themselves distracted inspired by YouTube videos. People who choose to switch to a gluten-free diet are apprehensive that they might not be able to enjoy their favourite dishes, especially desserts if they forego wheat flour. But that is just a myth. Baking enthusiasts need to keep these things in mind while rustling up gluten-free desserts.

### CHANGE IN TASTE

One of the major pain points that make people hesitant to switch to gluten-free products is finding a substitute that gives you the taste and texture of wheat flour. Gluten-free desserts are made from a wide host of flours such as almonds, potatoes, oats, quinoa, coconut, amaranth, sorghum among others. However, using a blend of flours ensures the structure and moisture in the treat as one type of flour cannot replace the strength of gluten.

### CHANGE IN SHAPE

As the gluten bonds are formed, the protein forms elastic networks within the dough, which in turn gives structure to it. This helps the dough to rise and adds shape and a chewy texture to baked goods. The gluten proteins solidify, when heated, forming a semi-rigid structure and providing texture to many wheat-based products. However, due to the absence of the glue-like binding nature of the dough, gluten-free desserts have to use several ingredients for the flour. These could include chia seeds/flax seeds/psyllium husk/agar powder.

### CHANGE IN DOUGH

We're often warned not to over-whisk baked goods made with wheat flour. The upside of gluten-free desserts is that you really can't toughen the dough. Therefore, another aspect that one can keep in mind while making these desserts is that, since there is no gluten



in the flour, you can never overmix gluten-free cake.

### CHANGE IN CONSISTENCY

One of the major points of differentiation between gluten-rich and gluten-free cake batters is that the latter has a much more runny consistency. The baking time is much longer. The cakes do not rise as well and often sink due to the lack of structure made by the glue bonds in the batter. However, these are only aesthetic differences and the desserts taste just as rich and amazing. A tip for the new bakers — when you start experimenting with gluten-free baking, you must ideally follow the given proportions in the recipes until you get the hang of the consistency and workability of the dough/mixture.

### CHANGE IN SHELF LIFE

Once made, the life of gluten-free desserts is not as long as regular desserts. So, these dishes should be consumed in the given time period and stored according to the recommended method.

A gluten-free diet can help improve your intestinal and dietary issues and help you and your entire family feel healthier while, at the same time, eating the tastiest of desserts. For people suffering from celiac disease improvements in digestive health are observed. Consuming gluten-free desserts satiate your sweet tooth while helping to revitalise your body with better digestion.

— The authors are head bakers and co-founders, Moonlight Bakers

## R E C I P E S



### CHAI CHEESECAKE

#### WHAT YOU NEED

##### FOR THE FILLING:

- Toasted and crushed green tea - 5 gm
- Fresh cottage cheese - 100 gm
- Cardamom powder - 1/2 tsp
- Honey - 2 tsp

##### FOR THE BASE:

- Melted butter - 50gm

- Dates - 30 gm
- Walnut - 20 gm
- Pistachio - 10 gm
- Chia seeds - 5 gm
- Sunflower seeds - 5 gm
- Desiccated coconut - 25 gm

#### METHOD

- Mix all the ingredients of the filling and cream it with the flat of the palm on a clean surface. Keep aside in the

refrigerator.

- Line a pie dish or a cake pan with the base mixture. Put it in the refrigerator and let it set for about 20 minutes.

- Remove pan from the fridge and spread the filling on top evenly. Return to the fridge to set.

- Slice and serve at room temperature with sliced coconut and mango.



### FIG HALWA

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Dried figs (soaked overnight) - 1 cup
- Cow milk ghee - 2 tbsp
- Soaked and peeled almonds - 10
- Cardamom powder - 1 tsp
- Chopped pistachio - 1 tsp

#### METHOD

- Drain the figs and blend the smooth along with soaked almonds.
- Heat ghee in a saucepan and add the puree
- Cook till all the moisture is dry and add the cardamom powder.
- Serve hot, garnished with pistachio.

Courtesy: Chef Ishika Konar  
 Executive Chef, Altman Wellness Centre, Mulshi, Pune

### BROWN RICE AND PRUNES PHIRNI

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Himalayan millets - 15 gm
- Jaggery - 10 gm
- Coconut milk - 15 ml
- Ghee - 1 tsp
- Cardamom powder - 1 tsp

#### METHOD

- In a thick-bottomed pan heat ghee and saute

the millet for four-five minutes.

- Add coconut milk and jaggery.
- Cook on a slow flame while stirring to avoid curdling of coconut milk.
- Once the millets are well cooked and pudding is thick turn the flame off and add cardamom powder.
- Serve hot garnished with pistachio powder.

Courtesy: Chef Ishika Konar

Executive Chef, Altman Wellness Centre, Mulshi, Pune



shortpasses

**VEDA LOSES SISTER TO COVID-19**  
**NEW DELHI:** Indian women's cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy's sister Vatsala Shivakumar has died due to Covid-19, two weeks after her mother succumbed to the dreaded virus. The 45-year-old died at a private hospital in Chikkamagaluru on Wednesday night.

**PFIZER, BIONTECH TO DONATE VAX LAUSANNE:** Vaccine developers Pfizer and BioNTech will donate doses to inoculate athletes and officials preparing for the Tokyo Olympics, the IOC said on Thursday. Delivery of doses is set to begin this month to give Olympic delegations time to be fully vaccinated with a second shot before arriving in Tokyo for the games.

**MALIK 1 WIN AWAY FROM OLY**  
**SOPIA:** Sumit Malik was still in contention to qualify for the Tokyo Games but it was all over for Amit Dhankar and Satyarth Kadiyan, who were ousted from the World Wrestling Olympic Qualifiers after losing at different stages of the competition on Thursday.

**SHOOTERS RECEIVE 1ST DOSE**  
**NEW DELHI:** Many shooters, coaches and officials from India's Olympic-bound contingent received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine across cities on Thursday. The shooters were to get vaccinated before leaving for Zagreb, Croatia on May 11 to participate in the European Championship.

**ARCHERS TO MISS SWISS WC**  
**KOLKATA:** India's Olympic-bound archers will not get to compete in the Stage 2 World Cup in Lausanne as their visa application has been rejected by the Switzerland Embassy.

**ED SHEERAN TO SPONSOR IPSWICH**  
**LONDON:** Four-time Grammy winner Ed Sheeran will be the shirt sponsor for his boyhood team Ipswich Town next season. The 30-year-old will see his logo appear on the men's and women's first-team shirts.

**ODISHA FC ROPE IN VILLA**  
**NEW DELHI:** Odisha FC roped in football legend David Villa, who has joined the club's football committee and will head the global football operations of the club.

**MAN UTD VS L'POOL ON MAY 13**  
**MANCHESTER:** Manchester United will have to play three Premier League matches in five days after their postponed clash with Liverpool was rearranged for May 13.

**STERLING RACIALLY ABUSED**  
**LONDON:** Man City forward Raheem Sterling has been racially abused on Instagram less than 48 hours after the Premier League's social media boycott ended.

**NAGAL REACHES QUARTERS**  
**MADRID:** Sumit Nagal came from a set down to defeat Ukraine's Sergiy Stakhovskiy 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 in the round of 16 at the Prague Open ATP Challenger Tour clay court event on Thursday.

**ABU DHABI T10 FROM NOV 19**  
**ABU DHABI:** The fifth edition of the Abu Dhabi T10 league will be held here from November 19 to December 2

# Aussies fly out to Maldives



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Australians flew off to Maldives, the South Africans headed home as the suspended IPL's foreign cricketers bid adieu to India, hoping that the country recovers from the mayhem unleashed by a second wave of Covid-19 cases.

The 40-strong Australian contingent, except for a Covid-positive Mike Hussey, left for Maldives on Thursday to serve out the waiting period before they can board a flight to Australia once the travel restrictions end on May 15.

"We can confirm that Australian players, coaches, match officials and commentators have been safely transported from India and are en route to the Maldives," Cricket Australia stated in a release.

"The Australians will remain in Maldives until the conclusion of the travel pause pertaining to flights from India to Australia," it added.

Of the 40 Australians involved in the league after three early pullouts, 14 were players, including mega-stars such as David Warner, Pat Cummins, and Steve Smith among others.

The 11 South Africans in the league boarded flights for Johannesburg as their country has not imposed any restrictions on travel from India, which recorded more than 4 lakh Covid-19 cases on Thursday and close to 4,000 deaths.

"My constant prayers is with the people from India to get through this. Pls Take care of yourselves," Proteas star Faf du Plessis, who turned up Chennai Super Kings, posted on Instagram.

Cricket Australia thanked the BCCI for its assistance in ensuring that players were able to leave India within two days of the league's suspension

owing to Covid-19 cases inside its bio-bubble.

"CA and the ACA extend their sincere thanks to the BCCI for their responsiveness in moving the Australians from India to the Maldives..." the statement read.

**JAYAWARDENE TO COMPLETE QUARANTINE IN MALDIVES**

Mumbai Indians on Thursday said that their local stars have reached home while it has also ensured a safe passage for its Australian contingent to Maldives along with Sri Lankan head coach Mahela Jayawardene, who also will be quarantining there.

The five-time champions posted a series of tweets and shared the travel plans of its players and support staff.

"Indian players have embarked on their journey back to their hometowns. All Covid-19 related travel and safety protocols have been diligently adhered to."

"Mumbai and Ahmedabad based players and support staff members will return home via Ahmedabad on a charter flight. The cabin crew has completed seven days quarantine at the team hotel in Delhi," the franchise stated.

"Australian players and support staff members will fly to Maldives on a special charter. MI has made arrangements for their 14-day quarantine stay in Maldives before flying them back to Australia," it said.

The franchise has two Australian players — hard-hitting batsman Chris Lynn and pacer Nathan Coulter-Nile.

"Head coach Mahela Jayawardene will also complete his quarantine in Maldives before returning to Sri Lanka," it added.

The players and support staff from New Zealand, South Africa and

the Caribbean will fly to Auckland, Johannesburg and Trinidad and their respective charter flights arranged by the franchise.

Among its foreigners, while swash-buckling all-rounder Kieron Pollard is from the West Indies, opener Quinton De Kock hails from South Africa.

Pacer Trent Boult and bowling coach Shane Bond are from New Zealand.

**Covid-infected Hussey, Balaji flown to Chennai**

**Chennai:** Chennai Super Kings' batting coach Mike Hussey and bowling coach L Balaji have been flown into the city from Delhi in an air ambulance as they recover from Covid-19, a top franchise official said on Thursday.

Hussey and Balaji were among the prominent non-playing staff to test positive when the IPL was 'indefinitely suspended' on Tuesday.

"We decided to bring Hussey and Balaji to Chennai by an air ambulance as we have better contacts here and wanted to ensure better medical facilities in case of any need," the CSK official said.

He further said the duo was 'asymptomatic and doing fine'.

The CSK official said Hussey would have to wait for a Covid-19 negative report to be able to leave the country.

"Hussey has to wait and get a Covid negative report before he can leave India. We will make arrangements for a charter when it is safe for him to fly," the official added. PTI



Rajasthan Royals Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman, right, and KKR all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan pose for a photo in flight as they reach Dhaka on Thursday

**Shakib, Mustafiz return to Dhaka**

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh internationals Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman on Thursday afternoon returned safely to Dhaka on a chartered flight arranged by the Rajasthan Royals and the Kolkata Knight Riders after the IPL was indefinitely postponed.

While KKR posted the news of Shakib's safe arrival here, Mustafizur took to Twitter to thank both the franchises for facilitating their Delhi-Dhaka flight.

"Thank you @Sah75official, happy to know you've landed home safely in Dhaka with Bangladesh teammate @Mustafiz9 from Ahmedabad. Stay safe, and see you soon." KKR tweeted.

"Alhamdulillah, we have safely back in Bangladesh without any trouble. I would like to thank @rajasthanroyals and @KKRiders franchises for making it happen. I would also like to thank our health ministry for its contribution," Mustafizur wrote. PTI



RCB's New Zealand players Kyle Jamieson, right, Scott Kuggeleijn, Finn Allen and Director of Cricket Operations Mike Hesson pose for photo

**NZ IPL-based Test players to leave for UK on May 11**

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Four members of New Zealand's Test contingent involved in the now-suspended IPL, including captain Kane Williamson, will leave India for the United Kingdom on May 11 while the rest will make their way back home on Friday, the country's cricket board has announced.

New Zealand are scheduled to play hosts England in a two-match Test series, beginning on June 2, before facing India in the World Test Championships final at Southampton from June 18.

"We've worked closely with the BCCI and the IPL franchises on the various departure strategies and we're very appreciative of their support during what is, clearly, a very challenging time," New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive David White said in a statement on Thursday.

Skipper Williamson, pacer Kyle Jamieson and spinner Mitchell Santner, as well as physio Tommy Simsek, will remain in a mini-bubble in New Delhi before departing for the UK, ahead of preparations for the Test series against England, and the WTC final against India.

There were 17 New Zealanders involved in the IPL, including 10 players.

"We are also very grateful to the England and Wales Cricket Board for accommodating the early arrival of the four members of the Test squad currently in India." NZC said May 11 is the

earliest date it could obtain for the team's arrival in the UK.

However, pace spearhead Trent Boult will return home briefly to see his family before joining the Test squad in early June, for the second match against England and the WTC final.

The New Zealand-based Test squad members will depart for England on May 16 and 17.

"Along with the balance of the New Zealand-bound IPL players, support staff and commentators, Boult is scheduled to depart New Delhi tomorrow on one of two charter flights, arriving in Auckland on Saturday before undergoing managed isolation," the NZC stated.

"...Boult will leave MIQ (Managed Isolation and Quarantine) on May 22 and will spend a week at home with his family, training at Mt Maungani before departing for the UK in early June," it added.

New Zealand team trainer Chris Donaldson, who has been with the Kolkata Knight Riders, will also return home briefly to see his family before reconnecting with the Test squad.

White said IPL players, support staff and commentators returning to New Zealand would adhere to all regulatory protocols, including pre-departure Covid-19 tests.

Those returning home from India also include Stephen Fleming, Brendon McCullum, Kyle Mills, Shane Bond, Mike Hesson, Tim Seifert, Adam Milne, Scott Kuggeleijn and James Pamment.

**Barty in Madrid final**



**Madrid:** Rafael Nadal swept into the Madrid Open quarter-finals on Thursday with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Alexei Popyrin, while Ashleigh Barty booked her spot in the women's final by ending the run of wildcard Paula Badosa.

Barty cruised into the women's decider with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Badosa, as the world number one avenged last month's loss to the Spaniard in Charleston.

Barty, the 2019 French Open champion, is targeting a fourth title of the year following her wins at Melbourne's Yarra Valley Classic, in Miami and on clay in Stuttgart.

In men's, Dominic Thiem, the Madrid runner-up in 2017 and 2018, also reached the last eight after beating Alex de Minaur 7-6 (9/7), 6-4.

But world number three Daniil Medvedev exited in the last 16 following a 6-4, 6-7 (2/7), 6-1 defeat by 16th seed Cristian Garin of Chile. AFP



Indian cricket team's senior opener Shikhar Dhawan on Thursday said he has received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. "Vaccinated. Can't thank all our frontline warriors enough for their sacrifices and dedication. Please do not hesitate and get yourself vaccinated as soon as possible. It'll help us all defeat this virus," Dhawan tweeted.

**4 English counties offer to host IPL-14**

PTI ■ LONDON

Four premier English counties — Middlesex, Surrey, Warwickshire and Lancashire — have expressed interest in hosting the remaining 31 games of the Indian Premier League, which was postponed after coronavirus breached the bio-bubble to infect four Indian cricketers.

With India anticipating a third wave of the pandemic later during the year, BCCI is exploring a window in September after the conclusion of India's England tour to complete the tournament.

India's tour of England ends on September 14.

According to ESPN Cricinfo, Lords, Oval (both London), Edgbaston



(Birmingham) and Emirates Old Trafford (Manchester) are understood to be part of the group who wrote to the ECB expressing their interest.

"The plans would see the tournament completed in around two weeks in the second half of September," accord-

ing to the report. BCCI is ideally looking at a 20-day window with multiple double headers in order to complete the tournament.

It is expected that at the ICC Chief Executives Meeting, the representatives of the BCCI and the ECB may discuss the matter.

A logic that goes in the favour of the tournament is that it provides a good opportunity to all the players to prepare for the World T20 which in all likelihood will be moved to the UAE from India.

And if both IPL and World T20 are played in the UAE, the pitches might get slow during second half of the global tournament, so England would be a better option to host the League.

However, there are some issues that need to be addressed. When India's tour of England ends on September 14, at that time at 30 Indian cricketers will be there but flying others would be an onerous task, keeping in mind the quarantine rules.

**Chelsea set up all-English CL final**

AFP ■ LONDON

Chelsea set up an all-English Champions League final against Manchester City as goals from Timo Werner and Mason Mount beat Real Madrid 2-0 in a dominant display on Wednesday to seal a 3-1 aggregate victory at Stamford Bridge.

If anything, the scoreline flattered Madrid as the 13-time European champions had no response to Chelsea's greater strength and speed. The Blues should have run out far more convincing winners as they toyed with the tired visitors in the second half.

However, Werner's cushioned header into an empty net on 28 minutes after Kai Havertz's initial effort came back off the crossbar and Mount's tap-in five minutes from time were enough to seal their place in Istanbul on May 29.

"To never lose the concentration, focus and positive energy on the pitch — it was a huge performance and well deserved," said Chelsea manager Thomas



Mason Mount (19) celebrates with his Chelsea teammates after he scores his side second goal against Real Madrid

Tuchel, who has masterminded a huge turnaround in Chelsea's season since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard in January.

Backed by Russian billionaire owner Roman Abramovich, Chelsea's £220 million spending spree last summer has been rewarded with a first Champions

League final since they lifted the trophy for the only time in 2012.

"We never lost the hunger, the desire to defend," added Tuchel. "In the second half we had even better structure to defend and it was a fantastic performance."

"We could have scored so

much earlier and more to be safe, but it's no time for criticism now. It's a fantastic achievement and big congratulations to the team."

Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane welcomed back captain Sergio Ramos for the first time in six weeks, while Eden Hazard was handed a rare start in an

**quoteunquote**

I CAN'T PUT IT INTO WORDS. TO GET THAT GOAL LATE ON, YOU CAN SEE BY THE CELEBRATIONS, IT WAS A MASSIVE GOAL AND GAVE US BREATHING SPACE

Mason Mount, Chelsea player

injury-hit season on his return to Stamford Bridge.

But the Belgian was again a peripheral figure as Madrid's over-reliance on Karim Benzema to provide a goal threat was exposed.

"We needed to be better going forward," said Zidane. "We didn't have any clear chances. They made a number of them and that's football."

"We fought and tried but they deserved to win and go through."

**Saina, Srikanth's Olympics hopes hang in balance**

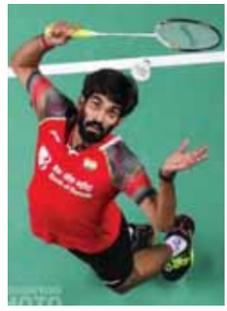
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

London Olympics Bronze-medallist Saina Nehwal and men's star Kidambi Srikanth's last hopes of Olympic qualification hang in balance as the Indian Government negotiates for their participation in the Malaysian Open amid a ban on flights from India in that country.

Following the postponement of the India Open (May 11-16), Saina and Srikanth's hopes of qualifying for the Tokyo Games hinge on the (May 25-30) Kuala Lumpur event followed by the Singapore Open (June 1-6).

In the wake of an unprecedented Covid-19 surge in India, Malaysia and Singapore have banned flights from the country effective April 28.

"The Sports Ministry, through the Ministry of External Affairs, has approached the Malaysian Government requesting to



grant permission to the Indian Badminton Team to travel to Malaysia to participate in the Malaysian Open scheduled from May 25 to May 30," the Sports Authority of India said in a statement.

"This is in light of a temporary travel ban that has been imposed by Malaysia on travellers from India, owing to the rising Covid-19 cases in India," it added.

After an initial request made earlier this week, the Indian High Commission in Malaysia "received information from the Malaysian Government that the travel of the team may not be possible immediately."

"However, with 19 days left for the competition to begin, the possibility of travel cannot be ruled out completely," SAI stated.

The tournament is one of the last events that contribute to Olympic qualification which ends on June 15. All top Indian singles and doubles players like PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Kidambi Srikanth, Sai Praneeeth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Ashwini Ponnappa and Sikki Reddy are due to participate in this.

With direct travel not possible, BAI had been trying to work out a solution and was exploring alternative routes to reach Malaysia via Doha or Sri Lanka.