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MY FRIENDS
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Himanta muscles his way to power

BJP offers Sonowal any role he chooses



BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma is greeted by outgoing CM Sarbananda Sonowal and Assam BJP president Ranjit Das in Guwahati on Sunday

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Assam on Sunday saw the literal realisation of the BJP's campaign song "Aahise aahise Himanta aahise" heralding the coming of Himanta Biswa Sarma. The wily and resourceful troubleshooter for the BJP in the North-East pipped the low-key gentle politician Sarbananda Sonowal in the Chief Minister's race. With the blessing of Home Minister Amit Shah at the Centre and the support of the majority of the MLAs in the

State, Sarma is set to take oath as the 15th Chief Minister of Assam at a simple ceremony on Monday in Gauhati. This is perhaps the first time in the BJP politics that a seating Chief Minister who led his party to victory has been made to make way for a new face. Sonowal who resigned as Chief Minister soon after BJP's central observer Narendra Singh Tomar announced the "unanimous" election of Sarma as BJP's legislature party leader is expected to be moved to the

3rd Congress deserter to shine in BJP as CM

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Himanta Biswa Sarma is the third former Congress leader to be anointed as the Chief Minister of a BJP-ruled State in North-East. Arunachal Pradesh CM Prema Khandu and Manipur CM N Biren Singh are the other two former Congressmen who are holding the fort for the BJP. A senior Congress leader pointed out since 2014 when Modi came in Delhi, more

than 50 per cent of its Union and State Cabinets are former Congress leaders, be it Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Tripura, and elsewhere. "There will now be three BJP-ruled States in North-East where Chief Ministers are former Congressmen; viz Assam: Himanta Biswa, Arunachal: Prema Khandu, Manipur: N Biren Singh," tweeted Congress spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

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Lockdown saved Delhi

Capital's positivity rate came down to 21.67% during the period

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital may be struggling to get its quota of oxygen from the Centre, but timely lockdown seemed to have saved Delhi from a much bigger catastrophe. When the first lockdown was imposed on April 26, Delhi had a positivity rate of 35 per cent, which came down to 21.67 per cent on Sunday. The lockdown has really worked. Delhi recorded 273 coronavirus deaths on Sunday, the lowest since April 21. The 13,336 fresh cases recorded on Sunday meant a huge dip in the incidence of the Covid-19 infection.

Health expert said the timely lockdown did not only help the Government to break the chain, it also put all the available resources to tackle the disease effectively. The Delhi Government has used the lockdown period to strengthen the health services to tackle the pandemic. It has added more than 12,000 beds in hospitals during the period and 1,200 oxygen beds will be added by May 10, of which 500 oxygen beds' facility will be set up at Ramila Maidan opposite Lok Nayak Hospital. Further, 500 oxygen beds will be added in GTB Hospital while 200 ICU beds will be added in Radha Soami Satsang Beas Covid Care Centre.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said, "We have used this lockdown period to strengthen our health resources and infrastructure. New oxygen beds were prepared in many places." "The biggest problem that Delhi faced was shortage of oxygen. In the past few days, the oxygen situation has improved following the directions by the Supreme Court and High Court and Centre's help. Now, we are not facing a situation like only two hours of oxygen are left in one hospital and someone dying because of shortage of oxygen. We have made several attempts during the lockdown to improve our own system," he added.

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People sitting in a queue to receive the Covid-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in a Government school in New Delhi on Sunday

Lockdown extended till May 17, Metro stopped

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday extended the ongoing lockdown in the national Capital for another week — up to May 17 morning. Metro train services will not ply during the period. Kejriwal said the decision was taken based on public feedback and under compulsion only to stem the spread of Covid-19. "The Government is extending the lockdown for another week. We must remember that 'Jaan Hai Toh Jahan Hai', therefore, this lock-

down will be stricter and the Delhi Metro will not be plying from May 10," he said. "When last month Covid cases rapidly surged in Delhi, we witnessed just how dangerous this particular wave was. With an alarming number of people facing serious conditions, needing hospitalisation, ICU beds and many lost their lives. We were thus compelled to impose a lockdown on April 20. Cases were on a steady rise, and owing to the lockdown and many other reasons, on April 26 the positivity rate increased to 35 per cent," he said.

CAPSULE

RS MEMBER RAGHUNATH MOHAPATRA DIES OF COVID
Bhubaneswar: Rajya Sabha member Raghunath Mohapatra, who was also an eminent sculptor, died on Sunday at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, days after he tested positive for Covid-19, a senior official at the hospital said.

SADIQ KHAN WINS 2ND TERM AS LONDON MAYOR
London: Sadiq Khan has been re-elected as Mayor of London for a second term after beating his closest rival with a vote share of 55.2 per cent versus 44.8 per cent in an election that was closer than expected.

ADVISORY FOR FUNGAL INFECTION PATIENTS
New Delhi: Mucormycosis, a fungal infection being found in Covid-19 patients with uncontrolled diabetes and prolonged intensive care unit (ICU) stay, may turn fatal if uncared for, the Centre said on Sunday. In an advisory, it also said the fungal infection mainly affects people who are on medication that reduces their ability to fight environmental pathogens.

OUT OF JAIL, LALU HOLDS 1ST 'VIRTUAL' INTERACTION
Patna: Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) founding president Lalu Prasad, who is out on bail after spending more than three years behind bars, on Sunday held a much-awaited "virtual interaction" with workers of his party back home in Bihar.

Forces battle Covid as 200 test +ve a day

25 deaths reported from Army hospital daily in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Armed forces are also falling prey to corona with veterans among them reporting alarming fatalities while the serving lot battling it out in hospitals and home isolation. At present, nearly 200 personnel from the three Services are testing corona positive every day all over the country. Moreover, these numbers pertain to the last few weeks when the second wave of the pandemic erupted in the country. Nearly 20 to 25 deaths have been reported from the Army hospital daily in the national Capital alone in the last two weeks or so. All fatalities involved veterans or their dependents undergoing treatment at the Base Hospital here.

Co-morbidities were present in most cases of deaths, sources said here on Sunday. They, however, clarified that no serving personnel undergoing treatment for Covid-19 in the national Capital succumbed to it in the last few weeks. Incidentally, more than 98 per cent of the serving soldiers and officers of the three Services have undergone the two-dose vaccination course.

Keeping in view the persisting tense situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, the Army has ensured that all its troops deployed at the frontline are vaccinated, they said. As many as 119 armed force personnel died due to corona while 44,766 contracted the infection the last one year before the second wave hit country. These figures were given in the Rajya Sabha on March 22 by Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik. He said the Army reported 81 deaths while it recorded 33,003 cases of corona.

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Gangwar writes to Yogi over Covid mishandling in UP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Listing a host of complaints against Covid-19 management in Uttar Pradesh, Union Minister Santosh Gangwar on Sunday wrote a letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and spoke of official apathy, hoarding of oxygen cylinders, and plight of patients. In his letter, Gangwar also mentioned that his home constituency Bareilly is facing a "huge shortage of empty oxygen cylinders" as "people have

kept them in their homes as a precaution." The Minister asked that such people who are "hoarding cylinders unnecessarily" and not allowing needy to use them, must be "identified". "People are selling cylinders at arbitrary prices", he further said in his letter.

Gangwar said ventilators and monitors are being sold "one and half times more the rate" and demanded that "this needs to stop".

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Navneet Kalra gives police slip, search on in 4 States

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has sent its teams to Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana to arrest Navneet Kalra, the owner of a chain of restaurants in oxygen concentrators' hoarding case. Over 500 oxygen concentrators were recovered from his famous Khan Chacha restaurant, Town Hall restaurant and Khullar farms in Chattarpur on Friday. A senior official said that a complete report with valid documents is also being prepared by police after Matrix Cellular moved the Delhi High



Court demanding the possession of the seized goods. The oxygen concentrators were imported from China by Matrix owned by one Gagan Duggal, who is friend of Kalra. "The report will be submitted to the court on Monday," said police official. After raids at Kalra's

Chattarpur farms in South Delhi, the police teams were dispatched for Uttarakhand, UP, Punjab and Haryana to nab Kalra. "On Saturday, police teams conducted raids at Kalra's farmhouse and it was revealed that he had left the farmhouse late night along with his family in his car, without the driver. Police also searched the premises," said the source. Delhi Police Commissioner SN Srivastava transferred the case to Crime Branch as hoarding oxygen concentrators is a serious crime during the pandemic.

Covid jab makers oppose patent rights waiver, fear supply break

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Pushing against the proposed Intellectual Property (IP) waiver for Covid vaccines, major vaccine makers such as Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax and BioNtech have said that simply waiving patent would not guarantee availability of vaccines. The vaccine makers said the waiver could disrupt a

fragile supply chain and such a measure would even slow down the vaccine production. Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla has already stated that he doesn't favour waiving patents on Covid-19 vaccines. Bourla said the waiver proposal will create more problems. "Currently, infrastructure is not the bottleneck for us manufacturing faster," Bourla wrote

in a dear colleague letter posted on LinkedIn. "The restriction is the scarcity of highly specialised raw materials needed to produce our vaccine," he added. Pfizer's vaccine requires 280 different materials and components that are sourced from 19 countries around the world, Bourla said.

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10 States report max vax wastage: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While many States have been lamenting that the shortage of Covid vaccine has hit their vaccination drive, wastage of vaccines is also rampant in the country. Lakshadweep, Haryana, Assam, and Rajasthan are among top ten States reporting maximum wastage of Covid jabs. According to the latest data

available from the Union Health Ministry, the Union Territory wasted 22 per cent Covid vaccines, followed by Haryana 6.65 per cent, Assam 6.07 per cent, and Rajasthan 5.50 per cent. Punjab delayed the vaccine drive after accusing the Centre of not providing sufficient jabs, but the State has reported 5.05 per cent wastage.

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India let its guard down: WHO top gun

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an observation that could put the authorities in a spot for allowing massive poll rallies during the Covid second wave, World Health Organization (WHO) top scientist and former ICMR's head Soumya Swaminathan on Sunday said the variant alone could not be blamed for the sharp uptick in cases and deaths reported in India. She rued that the country appeared to have let its guard down with "huge social mixing and large gatherings" and warned that with just less than 1.5 per cent population vaccinated so far as cases surge in the second wave, the jab alone would not be enough to gain control of the situation.

In the last 24 hours, India has recorded 4,03,738 fresh Covid cases and 4,092 deaths, taking the caseload to 2.22 crore. Swaminathan's comments come a day after an editorial published in the world's most renowned medical journal The Lancet said the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) estimates that India will see a staggering 1 million deaths from Covid-19 by August 1 and said, "If that outcome was to happen, Modi's Government would be responsible for presiding over a self-inflicted national catastrophe." The former ICMR DG red-flagged the surge in India saying the exploding infection numbers can dramatically increase the chances of new



Covid-19 victims at Seemapuri crematorium ground as coronavirus cases surge in New Delhi on Sunday

and more dangerous variants emerging which may be dangerous for the entire world. "The B.1.617 variant of

Covid-19, which was first detected in India last October, was clearly a contributing factor to the catastrophe," she

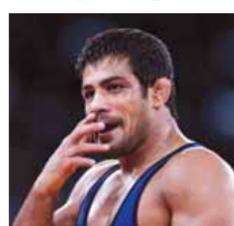
said and did not rule out the WHO listing the variant as "Variant of Concern" as done by various countries like the UK and Britain. The WHO had recently listed B.1.617 as a "variant of interest". "B.1.617 is likely to be a variant of concern because it has some mutations which increase transmission, and which also potentially could make (it) resistant to antibodies that are generated by vaccination or by natural infection," she said as quoted by the news agency. Swaminathan said, "Even as many in India felt the crisis was over, dropping mask-wearing and other protection measures, the virus was quietly spreading."

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Victims name Sushil, raids on to nab Olympic medallist

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Days after 23-year-old former junior national wrestling champion Sagar Rana was beaten to death during a brawl at the Chhatrasal Stadium parking area, the victims injured in the clash recorded their statements before the Delhi Police and claimed that two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar was involved in the incident. Sushil Kumar is absconding ever since his role surfaced in the brawl. "The victims recorded their statements. They said that the incident took place over vacating a flat in Model Town area. Sushil Kumar is



were brutally assaulted by other wrestlers in the parking of the stadium. During enquiry, it was found that a fight had taken place allegedly between Sushil Kumar, Ajay, Prince, Sonu, Sagar, Amit and others in the parking area, police said. During inspection, one double barrel loaded gun with five live cartridges were found in one Scorpio and two wooden sticks were also recovered from the spot. The Chhatrasal Stadium is the country's premier wrestling training school, having also produced Olympic bronze medallist Yogeshwar Dutt and three-time world medallist Bajrang Punia.

absconding and efforts are being made to nab him. Raids are being conducted in Delhi and neighbouring States," said a senior police official. On the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, Sagar died and his two friends — Amit Kumar and Sonu — sustained severe injuries after they

Over 75 weddings deferred in Kota

Kota: Over 75 weddings were postponed in a day in Kota Rural district after police reached out to families as part of a campaign to comply with the lockdown which has been enforced in the State to contain rising Covid cases.

During a field visit of DIG Ravidutt Gaur, two beat constables of Kota Rural Police, Asharam of Digod police station and Navneet of Kaithun police station, informed him that they had persuaded three families to call off weddings scheduled for this month, DSP and CO (Itawa) Vijayshankar Sharma told PTI.

The beat constables were given a reward of ₹1,100 each, he said.

The DIG then directed officials to conduct meetings at



gram panchayat level in presence of influential locals and public representatives to persuade families to cancel upcoming weddings, Sharma said.

Under the supervision of Kota Rural SP Sharad Choudhary, the campaign was launched at gram panchayat level on Saturday morning with beat constables and SHOs interacting with families, resulting in postponement of more than 75 weddings in a single

day, the DSP said.

"My sister Manisha was supposed to get married on Friday but a beat constable came early morning and convinced us to call off the wedding. It has now been postponed to after the coronavirus pandemic," said Rinkesh Kumar.

Another local, Ramdayal Khatri, said he decided to postpone his daughter's wedding scheduled on May 24 after being convinced by a beat constable and the sarpanch.

According to Rajasthan Cabinet decision on Thursday, a strict lockdown was imposed in the state from May 10 to 24. Under it, weddings would be permitted only in courts or at home in the presence of maximum of 11 people. **PTI**

572 more die in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a drop in the number of Covid-19 fatalities and infections, Maharashtra on Sunday logged 572 deaths and 48,401 new cases, even as 60,226 patients were discharged after full recovery from various hospitals across the State.

A day after the state recorded 864 deaths and left 53,605 infections, the number of daily deaths dropped by 292 and infections came down by 5204.

With 572 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 75,277 to 75,849. Similarly, with 48,401 new infections, the total number of cases rose from 50,53,336 to 51,01,737.

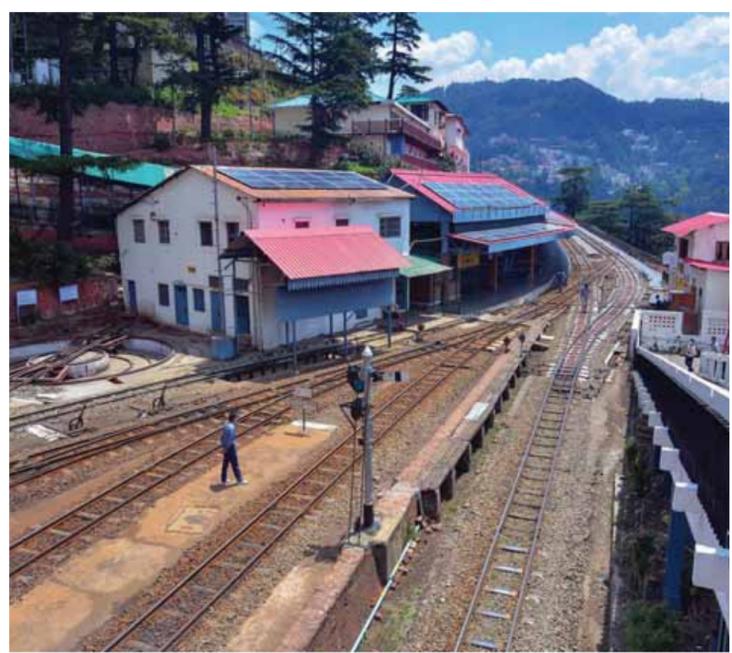
As 60,226 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up from 43,47,592 to 44,07,818. The

recovery rate in the state went up from 86.03 per cent to 86.04 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 6,28,213 to 6,15,783. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.49 per cent.

With 63 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 13,781 to 13,713, while the infected cases went up by 2395 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,73,235 to 6,75,630.

While Pune accounted for a maximum 1,00,316 "active cases" in the state, Nagpur stood second 59444, followed by Mumbai with 51165, Thane (38,352) Nashik (39,539), Chandrapur (24,479), Ahmednagar (24,452), Solapur (23,375), Satara (22,771), Beed (14,761), Jalgaon (14,111), Aurangabad (12,536), Latur (11,463), Parbhani (10,895), Osmanabad (7,277), Bhandara (6,884), Jalna (6,941) Buldhana (5,744), Nanded (5,662) and Nandurbar (4,227).



Deserted view of Shimla Railway Station during Covid-induced curfew in Shimla on Sunday

PTI

Maratha activists hold protest against SC's quota verdict

Thane: Maratha quota activists on Sunday staged a protest at Diva in Thane district of Maharashtra against the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the law granting them reservation in admissions and jobs.

At least a dozen office-bearers and activists of the Bharatiya Maratha Sangh (BMS) tansured their heads and displayed banners opposing the SC verdict at Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Chowk.

Speaking on the occasion, BMS leaders lashed out at political leaders belonging to the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government as well as the Opposition accusing them of leaving the Maratha community in the lurch.

They also threatened to take to the streets for restoring the quota and said they will not let MPs, MLAs and ministers move around. **PTI**

Alarmed by teachers' deaths, AMU VC asks ICMR to study if Covid 'variant' responsible

Aligarh: Alarmed by deaths in recent days among AMU teachers due to Covid and Covid-like symptoms, Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor wrote to the ICMR on Sunday, urging it to study if a particular coronavirus variant is circulating around the university campus.

In a letter to the director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the VC said 16 serving and 18 retired teachers besides other employees of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) have succumbed to the infection in the past 18 days.

There is a possibility that "a particular variant may be circulating in areas around the AMU campus and surrounding localities, which has led to these deaths", he said, stressing the need for the study to control the spread of the virus.

He further said the microbiology laboratory at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College here is sending samples to the Institute of Genomic and Integrated Biology laboratory, New Delhi, for the genome sequencing.

Meanwhile, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Principal Shahid Ali Siddiqui told mediapersons that 25 doctors at the hospital there tested positive for the infection in the past fortnight. Currently, only three doctors are under treatment as others have recovered from the infection, he said.

The head of the Medicine Department at the college, Prof Shadaab Khan, had died from Covid-19 two days ago.

The college principal said the hospital is battling a shortage of medical oxygen and totally dependent on its three liquid oxygen plants.

Bengal Guv OK's prosecution of top Bengal netas

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In what could be a major embarrassment for the Trinamool Congress Government Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday sanctioned the prosecution of four senior Bengal politicians who were Ministers in the State Cabinet during the second term of Trinamool Government in power.

According to Raj Bhavan sources acting on a request by the Central Bureau of Investigation --- investigating a "serious offence" --- the Governor sanctioned the prosecution of four erstwhile ministers Subroto Mukherjee, Sovan Chatterjee, Firdah Hakim and Madan Mitra.

Raj Bhavan sources said, after the CBI had made a request and "made available entire documentation relevant to the case to the honourable governor and he invoked his powers under Article 163 and 164 of the Constitution, being the competent authority to accord such sanction."

While Chatterjee is currently not in the Trinamool Congress all three leaders who have been elected in the just-conclude elections on TMC ticket are likely to be sworn in as ministers on Monday.

Lockdown saved Delhi

From Page 1

It is significant that Delhi's Covid positivity rate has fallen each day during last few days. At the beginning of this month, May 1 recorded a 31.6 positivity rate, which came down to 28.3 on May 2, followed by a positivity rate of 29.6 on May 3. On May 4, the positivity rate stood at 26.7, on the fifth, this was 26.4 per cent, on May 6, it was 24.29 and on May 9 it further came down to 21.67 per cent.

On April 26, Delhi conducted around 57,690 tests with positivity rate stand at 35 per cent and around 20,201 people tested positive. On May 9, Delhi conducted around 61,552 tests with the positivity rate dipped to less than 22 per cent and 13,336 people tested positive for Covid-19. These numbers show that during these 14 days, there has been a marked drop in the case positivity rate in the national capital of India. In order to avert the crisis in hospitals, the Government has created SOS reserve from where we supply oxygen responding to various hospitals keep sending SOS alert to the Delhi Government. Hundreds of hospitals have been provided oxygen responding to their SOS calls and not even a single untoward incident happened after that.

A senior Government official said a team of officers is working 24 x 7 to monitor the status of demand and supply of the oxygen in the national Capital. "Real time monitoring of oxygen tankers is being done by the team formed by the Government to mitigate the challenges and obstacles in the supply chain management of the oxygen in the national Capital. The Delhi Government has also deputed a team of officers to each of the oxygen plant locations to make sure that there are no glitches and any administrative obstacles in the oxygen supply," he said. The Government has also distributed more than 2,000 cylinders from May 7 for the home isolation patients needing the oxygen supply. It also set up 174 hunger relief centers across the city to make sure that the poor and needy are being given food on a daily basis. During these days, the Delhi Government has not only ramped up testing but also worked relentlessly in increasing the number of beds across Delhi.

India let its guard down...

From Page 1

"In a large country like India, you could have transmission at low levels, which is what happened for many months. It was endemic (and) probably gradually increasing," she said, as she lamented that "those early signs were missed until it reached the point at which it was taking off vertically."

"At that point it's very hard to suppress, because it's then involving tens of thousands of people and it's multiplying at a rate at which it's very difficult to stop."

Pointing out that as India, had only fully vaccinated around two per cent of the 1.3 billion-plus population, she said it's going to take many months if not years to get to the point of 70 to 80 per cent coverage.

Hence, "for the foreseeable future, we need to depend on our tried and tested public health and social measures" to bring down transmission said the scientist.

She was of the view that the sharp increase in cases in India is frightening not only due to the horrifying number of people who are infected and dying, but also because the exploding infection numbers dramatically increase the chances of new and more dangerous variants emerging.

"The more the virus is replicating and spreading and transmitting, the more chances are that... mutations will develop and adapt," Swaminathan said cautioning that "variants which accumulate a lot of mutations may ultimately become resistant to the current vaccines that we have".

Gangwar writes...

From Page 1

The Union Minister has particularly drawn Chief Minister's attention to the fact that patients are made to run from one hospital to another for a referral letter from District Chief Medical officer for the hospital admission.

"When a patient goes to a L3 hospital. The patient keeps going from here to there while his oxygen level falls. This is a matter of concern", he said.

According to reports, the State Government on April 30 had waived the need for the referral letter for any hospital in the state, private or the Government.

Gangwar also wrote about

the non-availability of officers who are "not picking-up phone" causing "great inconvenience to patients".

The Minister has suggested that all private hospitals in the State be converted into Covid-19 facilities. The BJP leader, who is also an MP from Bareilly, also sought 50 per cent concession to those wanting to set up oxygen plants in his home city.

Forces battle Covid as 200 test +ve...

From Page 1

Moreover, two personnel of the Navy died while the force had 3,604 positive cases. In the IAF, 36 deaths were recorded and the total infection rate was 8,159.

As regards rising numbers of deaths amongst the veterans during the past few weeks, officials said the crematorium at the Brar Square, Delhi Cantonment alone is witnessing more than 20 cremations a day as against four to five till some time back. The same situation may be prevailing in other parts of the country, they admitted.

In order to ensure decent and dignified last rites of the veterans and serving personnel, the Army last month activated a cell.

There are more than 65 military stations all over the country and the army has an Assured

Decent Last Rites scheme. Every station or cantonment has funds and set up for this scheme. This has to take care receiving the body from the airport, transportation from there to the soldier's native place, and provision of funds for the family to conduct last rituals.

The need for such a cell was felt after the onset of the second wave of corona and rising death toll. It resulted in unprecedented rush at crematorium.

The Army cell ensures hassle free process at its cremation centre at Brar Square. Similar procedure is followed at the other stations for veterans and their dependents. It has deployed more personnel and hired additional hearse vans.

In cases where it is not possible to move the mortal remains to Brar Square, necessary coordination is done with

the State or district administration to ensure proper last rites. Also, in case there is no family member around to handle the last rites, the Army does the needful, they said.

They also clarified that the last rites are performed with proper Covid-19 protocols as well as Army traditions. The soldiers engaged in this duty are provided with PPE kits as per the standard operating procedure. All precautions are also taken while placing wreaths, they said.

Given the rush at the Brar Square, the soldiers performing duty work long hours to ensure decent last rites. Also, the cremations take place on first come first serve basis and not depending on the rank and the Army follows the rules and its working ethos meticulously, officials said.

10 States report max vax wastage: Centre

From Page 1

Bihar recorded 4.96 per cent wastage of Covid vaccines. Similarly, Dadra and Nagar Haveli reported 4.93 per cent Covid vaccine wastage followed by Meghalaya (4.21 per cent), Tamil Nadu (3.94 per cent) and Manipur (3.56 per cent).

In March, on an average 6.5 per cent of vaccine doses were reported getting wasted in the country. The major culprits were Jammu & Kashmir (6.6 per cent), Karnataka (6.9 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (9.4 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (11.6 per cent) while Telangana reported 17.6 per cent wastage.

According to the Government officials, wastage can occur at three levels: during transportation; during cold chain point; and at a vaccination site - both at service and delivery levels.

The nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive was started on January 16 for the healthcare workers. The country had launched its third phase of the vaccination drive on May 1 for people aged between 18-44 years. As per the official data, the Centre has so far provided more than 17.56 crore vaccine doses (17,56,20,810) to States and UTs free of cost. Of this, the total consumption including wastages is 16,83,78,796 doses. The total number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered stands at 16,94,39,663, according to the Union Health Ministry.

Covid job makers ...

From Page 1

"It will unleash a scramble for the critical inputs we require in order to make a safe and effective vaccine," Bourla wrote.

"Entities with little or no experience in manufacturing vaccines are likely to chase the very raw materials we require to scale our production, putting the safety and security of all at risk," the CEO wrote.

Covid vaccine maker BioNTech pointed to issues ranging from the set-up of manufacturing sites to the sourcing of raw materials, to the availability of qualified personnel that were holding up the process.

BioNTech said it took more than a decade to develop its vaccines manufacturing process and replicating it required experienced personnel and a meticulous technology transfer, among several other factors beyond patents. Germany, a WTO member and the largest economy in Europe, came out against the waiver proposal but later it has agreed. BioNTech, which partnered with Pfizer in developing the vaccine, is based in Germany.

"Vaccine manufacturing is a complex process, which requiring high levels of technology and quality control to ensure that vaccines are manufactured to the highest quality standards. The sharing details around the creative process behind the vaccines would result in large pharmaceutical companies giving up valuable trade secrets and serve as a disincentive for companies to develop medicines and vaccines in response to other health crises," the pharmaceutical industry's global lobby group, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA), said giving warning that a waiver would rather undermine the global response against the virus instead of boosting vaccine supplies.

Novavax also criticised an Indian proposal to waive IP rights for Covid-19 vaccines saying such a move would undermine efforts by vaccine developers for equitable access to inoculation.

"The WTO TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) waiver and similar proposals to weaken IP protection would not achieve equitable vaccine access, and instead has the very real potential to undermine Novavax's ability to fulfil our commitment," the US com-

pany said in a statement. As per the partnership with Novavax, SII will produce the vaccine as Covovax, and sell it in India and overseas.

"Manufacturing vaccines that, like Moderna's and Pfizer's, use messenger RNA, is a relatively new, complex and resource-intensive process. There may not be sufficient production capacity for others to boost supply even if intellectual property protections are temporarily lifted," Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel has said last week.

Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association has opposed the waivers saying such a move could exacerbate global shortages of vital components for vaccines and stoke anxiety about product quality.

Terming the IPR waiver as disappointing, the IFPMA said that if adopted by the World Trade Organisation, the proposal would invite new manufacturers that lack essential know-how and oversight from the inventors to crowd out established contractors. "A waiver is the simple but the wrong answer to what is a complex problem," the IFPMA said in a statement. "Waiving patents of Covid-19 vaccines will not increase production nor provide practical solutions needed to battle this global health crisis.

The real challenge "real challenges" in scaling up production and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines are trade barriers, bottlenecks in supply chains, scarcity of raw materials and ingredients in the supply chain, and the unwillingness of rich countries to share doses with poorer nations," it said. Italy's ReiThera which is in late-stage tests on an experimental Covid-19 vaccine, was also critical of patent waivers.

The IP waiver might open up space for production of Covid vaccines with emergency use authorisations (EUA) - such as those developed by Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Novavax, Johnson & Johnson and Bharat Biotech - on a larger scale in middle-income countries.

Last week, the United States has announced support for waiving intellectual property protection for COVID-19 vaccines, saying extraordinary circumstances call for extraordinary measures while the European Union (EU) for one has opposed waiver of patenting. WTO leaders have recently urged member nations to come to an agreement on the potential vaccine patent waivers. But even with the U.S. backing, a deal is hardly guaranteed, since the WTO's rulings are based on consensus, requiring approval from all 164 members.

Himanta...

From Page 1

Sarma who staked his claim to form the government in a meeting with Governor Jagdish Mukhi would announce his cabinet after swearing-in ceremony "including new dynamic blood, including his loyalists".

Arrangements are underway at the Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra, Guwahati for the swearing-in ceremony which would be attended by BJP president J P Nadda and regulated under Covid19 protocol.

According to sources, BJP picked Sarma as it wanted an "aggressive and resourceful leader" who has "resonance" beyond Assam and could consolidate BJP's political gains via-a-vis the Congress in the region and skillfully tackle controversies emanating from CAA and NPR.

His initiative in floating North-East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) that brought together non-Congress forces together, been cited to appreciate his dynamic leadership. Himanta's increasing clout

across the Northeast has proved to be an asset for the BJP and party insiders suggest that the party can't afford to annoy or lose him, given North-East's importance in the Modi-scheme of things and "polarised politics" across the NE.

Sarma's hyper-Hindutva shouts found favour with the BJP central leadership, particularly, Union Home Minister Amit Shah to whom he is known close to since his cross-over from the Congress.

As the health minister of Assam, Sarma's handling of the Covid crisis has been appreciated and as the finance minister he is credited for implementing some of the most important welfare schemes, which have yielded rich electoral dividend to the party.

This apart, BJP allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) also tilted the balance by support to Sarma's leadership said sources.

Sarma would form the government with the support of 59 BJP MLAs, 9 AGP MLAs and 6 MLAs of UPPL in 126 Assam assembly.

3rd Congress deserter to shine...

From Page 1

This drew sharp reactions on social media with a section of them making scathing remarks of the Congress leadership for losing such leaders to BJP.

Similarly, a large chunk of the BJP's Cabinet everywhere from Centre to State consists of ex-Congress persons and some of them like Jyotiraditya Scindia waiting to be inducted.

Himanta's exit from the grand old party is blamed on Rahul Gandhi who was against his elevation in the party in Assam at the cost of the then Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi.

"Sonja Gandhi and her political adviser late Ahmed Patel had assured Himanta that he would be made the next CM after he proved he was backed by the majority of MLAs. But then again Rahul miscalculated," said the party leader regretting that it was a huge loss for the party.

Another shocker for the Congress in northeast region came in March 2016 when its longtime leader N Biren Singh

joined BJP and was soon appointed CM of Manipur after a political turmoil. Biren was once considered a close aide of Congress heavyweight in NE Okram Ibobi Singh. He was the spokesperson for the Manipur Government from 2007 to 2012 and later a spokesperson for the Congress.

The party got another setback when Pema Khandu joined BJP to be appointed as CM is Arunachal Pradesh later the same year in December 2016. Khandu's exit was the outcome of a power struggle within the then ruling People's Party of Arunachal Pradesh (PPA) leading to the fall of Congress government headed by Chief Minister Nabam Tuki.

Meanwhile, Dwijin Sarma, vice-president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, said there was no meaning in a narrative of "change" when all the BJP did was give the reins to old Congressman Himanta Sarma.

"Even BJP leaders quietly agree with the Congress that the party has failed to bring in

any change. There is great discontent in the BJP. All it did was bring Congress person, Himanta Sarma, make him the most powerful in the cabinet, and then claim 'it's a vote for change'. If it is a vote for change, why bring so many Congress people into your government? I find no meaning in this. People ultimately look for principles, respect that," Dwijin Sarma said.

However, Ajay Bhatt, president of the Uttarakhand BJP, defended the party against the allegations of 'Congressisation', and said former Congress MLAs now in the BJP were fully devoted to the party's ideology, and were welcomed for their experience and commitment.

The maximum number of former Congress men making as Ministers in a state is in Uttarakhand where six of the nine ministers have a Congress background. "Uttarakhand, Assam, Goa or Manipur, AP all have former Congress men as their CMs and cabinet members," said the leader.

TO VACCINATE ALL DELHIITES IN 3 MONTHS Give 60 lakh jabs month, CM urges Harsh Vardhan



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has written to Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, urging him to instruct Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to supply 60 lakh vaccine doses to Delhi every month during May to July in order to vaccinate all in the next three months.

In the letter, he said that Delhi has around 92 lakh people in 18-45 age groups.

"I urge you to direct Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech to increase their monthly supplies to Delhi to 60 lakh doses per month during May till July. We need 83 lakh doses per month to vaccinate everyone above 18 years of age in Delhi in the next three months if both the groups put together," he said.

vaccines by the private parties so that supplies in adequate quantities are made to all State Governments and this crucial aspect is not left to the discretion of the private manufacturers," he added.

He also advocated for uniform price be fixed for the vaccines for supplies made to Governments (whether Centre or State) and to private hospitals. "We have started vaccination program in right earnest as per Centre's guidelines.

We have made substantial progress in the first two phases for healthcare workers, frontline workers and the 45 plus age groups.

By 8th May, we have administered 38.97 lakh doses (30.35 lakh first dose and 8.61 lakh second doses) to this group for the 18 - 45 year age group. We are procuring the required number of vaccines and providing them free of cost at various centers," he said.

"Delhi has a population of about 2 crore, out of which 1.5 cr people are above 18 years. Vaccinating all of them would be needed three cr doses. We have received roughly 50 lakh doses so far.

Therefore, we need about 250 lakh additional doses. But we are not able to receive supplies as per our requirement and even get firm delivery schedules," he said.

'Centre committed crime by sending jabs to other nations'



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the Centre over the export of coronavirus vaccines, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia Sunday said that a large number of lives could have been saved in India if the doses were given to people in the country first.

"It has a heinous crime committed by the Central Government to sell vaccines to other countries only for its image management at a time when people were dying in our own country," he said.

Citing a newspaper report, Sisodia said the Centre sold coronavirus vaccines to 93 countries of which 60 per cent had Covid-19 under control, and also where there was no threat of loss of life due to the virus.

"We all know how our country is going through this deadly Covid crisis. This is the 2nd wave in India and the 4th wave in Delhi. The whole

country is grappling with this unprecedented crisis and our health infrastructure has been put to test. There is news from all over the country of high Covid-19 numbers and deaths," he said.

"Upon doing further research, I found out that 60 per cent of these 93 nations have not reported many Covid-19 cases. In fact, 88 of these 93 nations have not reported many deaths and therefore do not see fatality rate as a big challenge," he said.

"Since the start of this second wave since March, we have lost a cumulative of 1 lakh people in India as a result of Covid-19. But the centre is busy in exporting 6.5 crore doses of vaccines to 93 nations so they can continue to maintain their image. What was hoped from the Central Government was to manage the Covid crisis in India, but they were too busy in their image management instead. It is important to help nations in this crisis but not at

the expense of our own people," he said.

"People reiterate and use treaties as an excuse to defend this mismanagement of vaccination, but countries like US, Canada, France and other European nations who also follow international treaties did not cut vaccine doses from their own stock so they could send it to other countries for image management. They prioritised their citizens. It is just our Central Government sending vaccines to 93 countries while India struggled to vaccinate its citizens," he said.

He reiterated the Delhi

Centre sold vaccines to 93 countries, says Manish Sisodia

government can vaccinate everyone in the city within three months if adequate doses are made available to it.

"We are selling vaccines to other nations while our own citizens have to fight to schedule an online appointment to get vaccinated. This is the sad reality of our Central Government. Central Government has no value for Indian citizens. We could have saved our youth and our community of older people if Central Government wasn't so interested in image management," he said.

City just got 499 MT oxygen on May 8 against 700 MT: Raghav



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi received just 499 metric tonnes of oxygen on May 8 against the average supply of 700 MT ordered by the Supreme Court, AAP MLA Raghav Chadha said on Sunday.

Over the last week, the city got an average of 533 MT oxygen daily, which is 76 percent of the quantity directed by the SC.

On Saturday, only four healthcare facilities in the national capital, with 1,271 oxygen beds, sent out oxygen shortage SOS calls, the city government said.

The Delhi government supplied 15.50 MT of oxygen to these hospitals, according to official data.



23 Covid patients go missing from hospital, probe ordered

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday directed the Health Department to conduct an enquiry about 23 Covid patients missing from Hindu Rao hospital and asked them to submit the report by Monday evening.

It may be recalled that 23 patients admitted at north Delhi's Hindu Rao Hospital have reportedly gone missing from the hospital between April 19 and May 6.

"It is very shocking to

note that such large number Covid 19 patients missing from Hindu Rao Hospitals in spite of the separate wards.

It is not only dangerous to the lives of patients but also a set back to the efforts of Government which has imposed curfew / lockdown to break the Corona chain to check the spread of the dreaded diseases," the order stated.

"The health department is directed to get an inquiry conducted into the matter and submit a report by Monday evening," the order stated.

160 donate plasma



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

More than 160 people, including 71 Delhi Police personnel, have volunteered to donate plasma at police recently launched 'Jeevan Rakshak' scheme in the National Capital.

"Out of these 160 persons, 71 were police personnel and during scrutiny, 23 people found fit for plasma donation. Of these 23 people, 16 were police personnel and seven were commoners," said Chimmoj Biswal, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police.

"After matching and going through the clinical process of eligibility, the plasma donations took place in various hospitals such as ILBS Vasant Kunj, Action Balaji, Moolchand

Hospital, Saroj Hospital and Max Saket hospital," Biswal said.

In view of surge in Covid cases in the city, the Delhi Police had also appealed to the public to come forward in more numbers to register in 'Jeevan Rakshak' to donate plasma and save lives in this unprecedented time of human crisis.

"Jeevan Rakshak" initiative of Delhi Police was launched on 24 April to facilitate plasma donation by acting as an interface between the plasma seekers and donors for covid treatment.

"A total of 1144 recipient have enrolled for requests of plasma out of whom 12 are police personnel. Constable Sunil of North District has donated plasma two times," said Biswal.

Cops on lookout for Olympic medallist Sushil in wrestler murder case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic medallist Indian wrestler Sushil Kumar is absconding ever since his role surfaced in a brawl that led to the murder of a 23-year-old budding wrestler. The Delhi Police has recorded the statement of the victims of Chhatrasal Stadium brawl where they alleged that the incident took place over a property dispute. Investigators said that they have evidence to suggest that Sushil Kumar was present at the spot when the incident took place.

"The victims recorded their statement where they said that the incident took place over a dispute of vacating a flat in Model Town area. Sushil Kumar is absconding and efforts are being made to nab him. Raids are being conducted in Delhi/NCR and neighbouring States," said a senior police official.

On the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, a 23-year-old wrestler Sagar died and his two friends - Amit Kumart and Sonu - got injured after they were allegedly brutally assaulted by other



wrestlers in the parking of Chhatrasal Stadium in northern part of city.

Police had said that on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, an information regarding firing inside the Chhatrasal Stadium was received, following which they reached the spot and found five cars parked in the parking area of the stadium.

During enquiry, it was found that a quarrel had taken place allegedly between Kumar, Ajay, Prince, Sonu, Sagar, Amit and others in the parking area. Thereafter, police registered a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Arms Act at Model Town police station in this regard.

The injured were shifted to BJRM Hospital for treatment. The crime scene as well as all the five vehicles were inspect-

ed. During inspection, one double barrel loaded gun with five live cartridges were found in one Scorpio and two wooden sticks were also recovered from the spot. All the five vehicles and weapons of offence were seized. The crime scene was further inspected by forensic experts of FSL, Rohini.

During investigation, information regarding death of Sagar, son of a head constable, and injury to Sonu was received from Trauma Centre, Civil Lines, following which sections 302, 365, 120B of the IPC were registered, police had said.

Police had apprehended one Prince Dalal (24), a resident of Jhajjar in Haryana, in this case, along with one double barrel gun. Police recovered two double barrel guns, seven live cartridges, two wooden sticks and five cars.

"It was not a case of trespassing. The accused took the victims inside the stadium where they assaulted them in the parking area. Kumar was present at the spot when the incident happened, however, police are investigating his role in the assault," an official source had said.

'COVI-Van' helpline for elderly during lockdown

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In its bid to provide assistance to the elderly during the lockdown in the National Capital, the South district of Delhi Police on Sunday launched 'COVI-Van' helpline for senior citizens.

According to a senior police official, in view of the safety and security of senior citizens.

South district Delhi Police has started a COVI Van Helpline -011- 26241077 for senior citizens in the neighbourhood.

"This vehicle has been donated for use during the pandemic by SIAM. After receiving any call for COVI Van, deployed police officials on COVI Van with beat officers of the concerned beat will go to the house of senior citizens and help them in getting them any essential items, vaccination, medicines and other assistance," he said.

"The information of commencement of COVI Van has been disseminated in the GK-1 area through beat officers and RWA.

All the precautions such as

sanitization, gloves, masks and social distancing will be taken after every visit. The citizens

of the area have greatly appreciated this step of Delhi Police," said police.



300-bedded Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Covid Care Centre opens at Bhai Laxhi Shah Vanjira Hall Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib in New Delhi on Sunday

Sudden change in weather gives much-needed relief

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed a sudden change in weather on Sunday afternoon as skies turned cloudy and rains in some parts brought the mercury down, giving much-needed relief to the people of the national capital.

People also shared videos of rains and hailstorm on the

social media.

The city recorded a minimum temperature of 23.2 degrees Celsius, two notches below the season's average.

The weatherman said the maximum temperature is likely to settle around 40 degrees Celsius.

The relative humidity was 58 per cent.

The air quality in the city

was recorded in the "moderate" category. The air quality index (AQI) was 150 at 8.05 am, real-time data of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) showed.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

Vaccination only way to prevent spread of corona, says Atishi



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MLA from Kalkaji constituency, Atishi on Sunday said that vaccination is the only way to stop the spread in second wave of Covid-19 and the third impending wave in Delhi.

Atishi further mentioned that 4.65 lakhs are available in Delhi for over 45 years of age and 2.74 lakh doses for youth between 18-45 years old, the Central Government should provide vaccines to Delhi as soon as possible.

She further added that Delhi has received a total of approximately 43 lakh doses for people above 45 years of age, health care workers and frontline workers and 5.50 lakh vaccines for those between 18-45 years of age. So far, 38,96,551 vaccines have been inoculated

to the people of Delhi, out of which 30,35,279 people have been given the first and 8.61 lakh people have received the second dose.

The AAP leader further stated that Delhi has 470 vaccination sites for people above 45 years of age, 394 vaccination sites for youth between 18-45 years. "Today, Delhi is conducting the vaccination drive at a large-scale.

There are two kinds of vaccination programs that are being run: one, for those above 45 years of age, healthcare and frontline workers and two for those above 18 years of age, who are getting inoculated at the government schools of Delhi.

Those above 45, and healthcare/frontline workers, are getting jabbed in various hospitals and dispensaries of the national capital," she added.



A long exposure photograph shows light trails due to passing of vehicles at the AIIMS flyover, during Covid-induced lockdown in New Delhi

PTI

400 former Army docs to help India combat Covid-19



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ramping up its efforts in meeting the corona pandemic challenge, the Defence Ministry has ordered recruitment of ex-Army Medical Corps medical officers. Under the 'Tour of Duty' scheme, 400 ex-AMC or Short Service Commissions (SSC) medical officers, released between 2017 and 2021, are expected to be recruited on a contract basis for a maximum period of 11 months.

The order issued recently says fixed monthly lump sum amount will be admissible by deducting the basic pension from the salary drawn at the time of retirement plus specialist pay wherever applicable. The amount would remain unchanged for the term of the contract and no other

allowances would be paid. The medical officers to be recruited are required to be medically fit as per civilian standards.

It may be recalled that the Ministry has taken several steps to mobilise additional manpower to assist the civil administration to tide over the current Covid-19 situation. The Armed Force Medical Services (AFMS) has already deployed additional doctors, including specialists, super specialists and paramedics, at various hospitals, while SSC doctors of AFMS were granted extension till December 31, 2021, which has augmented the strength by 238 more doctors. Medical professionals, recently retired from AFMS, have also been redeployed to further bolster the work force of health professionals.

Anti-inflammatory drugs doesn't raise Covid severity, finds study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen does not increase the risk of developing a severe form of Covid-19 or of dying from it, according to a new study, the largest so far in this class of medicines.

The study is published in The Lancet Rheumatology journal.



Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are common treatments for acute pain and rheumatological diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Early in the pandemic, there was debate on whether the use of such drugs increased the severity of Covid-19, which led to urgent calls for investigations between NSAIDs and Covid-19.

The ISARIC CCP-UK (International Severe Acute Respiratory and emerging Infection Consortium Clinical Characterisation Protocol United Kingdom) study, which is the largest of its kind, provides clear evidence that the continued use of NSAIDs in patients with Covid-19 is safe.

In the study, around a third of patients (30.4%, 1,279 out of 4,211) who had taken NSAIDs prior to hospital admission for COVID-19 died, a rate which was similar (31.3%, 21,256 out of 67,968) in patients who had not taken NSAIDs. In patients with rheumatological disease,

the use of NSAIDs did not increase mortality.

Prof Ewen Harrison, of the University of Edinburgh and lead author of the study, said: "NSAIDs are commonly used to treat people all over the world for a range of conditions, from minor aches and pains to chronic conditions such as arthritis and cardiovascular disease.

"Many people rely on them to be able to carry out their day-to-day activities. When the pandemic began over a year ago, we needed to be sure that these common medications would not lead to worse outcomes in people with Covid-19. We now have clear evidence that NSAIDs are safe to use in patients with Covid-19, which should provide reassurance to both clinicians and patients that they can continue to be used in the same way as before the pandemic began."

The study collected data on

the medication patients had been prescribed, were currently taking, or had taken within 14 days prior to being admitted to hospital, as well as demographic information, and medical history.

The study cohort included patients with confirmed or highly suspected Covid-19 infection admitted to 255 healthcare facilities in England, Scotland, and Wales, between January and August 2020. Of the 72,179 patients eligible for the study, 5.8% (4,211) had taken NSAIDs prior to admission.

However, the authors noted some limitations to the study. Despite being the largest ongoing prospective study of patients admitted to hospital, it only represents 60% of hospitalised patients in the UK over the time of the study and it did not include patients with severe Covid-19 who were not hospitalised.

Now villages also left to mercy of God, says Rahul

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Amid surge of Covid cases in the rural areas, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday hit out at the Narendra Modi-led Central Government for not tackling the situation.

"Shehron ke baad ab gaon bhi parmatma-nirbhar (After cities, villages also left to the mercy of God," he said in a tweet, attaching an image of a Hindi caption reading "Covid-19: Mahamari ki dusri lahar ab gaon mein barpa rahi hai keh (Covid-19: The second wave of the pandemic now overwhelming villages)".

Gandhi had earlier tweeted the country doesn't need a new house for the PM but oxygen, attaching photos of people in line for the life-saving gas, and work on the Central Vista.

In another tweet which displayed a graph on the Covid surge and falling vaccinations, he had termed the situation "The Movid pandemic."

India on Sunday recorded 4,03,738 fresh cases in last 24 hours, with 4,092 fatalities, taking the total number of cases in the country to 2,22,96,414, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said.

It is the fifth time after May 1 that India has crossed the four-lakh-mark of new cases in last 24 hours.

Call all-party meet to discuss Covid situation: Kharge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu and suggested to convene an all-party meeting and virtual meetings of Parliament Standing Committees to discuss the Covid-19 situation in the country.

Kharge made a total of six suggestions to the PM for tackling the ongoing surge in number of Covid-19 cases. "Use ₹35,000 crore allocated in Union Budget to ensure free vaccine for all," Kharge wrote in the letter.

At the backdrop of states and other stakeholders reporting acute crisis in the availability of covid vaccines, Kharge advised the Centre to leverage compulsory licensing to increase production of vaccines and also waive GST on vaccines, PPE, ambulances, ventilators, oxygen and sanitizers.

Kharge through his letter further suggested to expand the scope of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) to 200 days.

"Expedite the distribution of relief material and proactively



disclose where it is shipped and leverage our collective strengths by governing consensually and inclusively," the letter added.

Key points Kharge made in Letter to Chairman Rajya Sabha M Venkaiah Naidu was to convene Virtual meetings of the Standing Committees and bring to the notice of Chairman the 123rd Report of the Department Related Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare, which made vital recommendations vis-à-vis coping with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kharge requested Naidu to take cognizance of the report and secure the action taken report on its, as deemed fit. Such an action taken report can provide a fresh blue print for further tackling in the covid menace in the country, the letter mentioned.

Earlier on Saturday, Congress President Sonia Gandhi had also called for an all party meeting and a meeting of Parliament Standing Committee on Health to discuss Covid-19 situation.

India got 3L Remdesivir, 6,000 O2 concentrators from abroad

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

India has cumulatively received three lakh Remdesivir vials, 6,738 oxygen concentrators, 3,856 oxygen cylinders and 16 oxygen generation plants from the global community in the last 13 days, an official statement said on Sunday.

A total of 4,668 ventilators or Bi PAP were also sent to India from April 27 to May 8.

The major items received on Saturday from Canada, Thailand, the Netherlands, Austria, Czech Republic, Israel, the US, Japan, Malaysia, US (GILEAD), US (salesforce) and Indian community in Thailand include 2,404 oxygen concentrators, 25,000 Remdesivir vials, 218 ventilators, and 6,92,208 testing kits.

A coordination cell has been created in the Union Health Ministry to coordinate the receipt and allocation of foreign Covid relief material. This cell started functioning from April 26, and Standard Operating Procedure has been framed and imple-



mented by the Health Ministry since May 2, the statement said.

According to the statement, the Central government has designed a streamlined mechanism for effective allocation and prompt distribution of the supplies received by India. This will help to supplement the medical infrastructure of the tertiary care institutions and recipient states and UTs, and strengthen their clinical management of the

hospitalised Covid-19 patients. India has been receiving international aid of Covid-19 medical supplies and equipment since April 27 from different countries and organisations.

AllMS Director, Professor Randeep Guleria, on Sunday thanked all for sending foreign aid in form of medical equipment - ventilators, oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentrators to fight huge surge of cases.

Grant IGST exemptions for Covid relief material from abroad: Sisodia to FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to grant IGST exemptions to donors based in the country procuring Covid relief material from abroad.

Sisodia, who is also the Finance Minister of Delhi, wrote a letter to Sitharaman on Friday appreciating the central Government's decision to waive integrated goods and services tax (IGST) till June 30 on Covid-19 relief goods donated or received free of cost from outside India for free distribution.

"There is another category of donor organisations, governmental, non-governmental or private, who are based in India and are directly procuring these items from abroad and donating it to Union or State Governments," he said.

These organisations are not covered under IGST exemptions as they are not importing life-saving materials free of cost and paying for it,

He requested IGST exemptions be given to such organisations saying they were doing philanthropic work and also because the tax they may act as a deterrent since they are anyway paying a premium on urgent shipment or airlift of relief goods from all over the world



although they are finally donating it to the government for distribution among people without any charge, Sisodia said.

He requested IGST exemptions be given to such organisations saying they were doing philanthropic work and also because the tax they may act as a deterrent since they are anyway paying a premium on urgent shipment or airlift of relief goods from all over the world.

Ivermectin use can end Covid-19 pandemic: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ivermectin use can end the Covid-19 pandemic as the medicine significantly reduces the risk of contracting the deadly respiratory disease when used regularly, according to a peer-reviewed research published in the American Journal of Therapeutics.

Ivermectin is a broad spectrum anti-parasitic agent, included in WHO essential medicines list for several parasitic diseases. It is used in the treatment of onchocerciasis (river blindness), strongyloidiasis and other diseases caused by soil transmitted helminthiasis. It is also used to treat scabies. The WHO recommends that the drug only be used within clinical trials.

However, led by the Front Line Covid-19 Critical Care Alliance (FLCCC), a group of medical and scientific experts reviewed published peer-reviewed studies, manuscripts, expert meta-analyses, and epidemiological analyses of regions with iver-

mectin distribution efforts all showing that ivermectin is an effective prophylaxis and treatment for Covid-19.

"We did the work that the medical authorities failed to do, we conducted the most comprehensive review of the available data on ivermectin," said Pierre Kory, MD, president and chief medical officer of the FLCCC. "We applied the gold standard to qualify the data reviewed before concluding that ivermectin can end this pandemic."

A focus of the manuscript was on the 27 controlled trials available in January 2021, 15 of which were randomised controlled trials (RCT's).

Consistent with numerous meta-analyses of ivermectin RCT's since published by expert panels from the UK, Italy, Spain and Japan, they found a large, statistically significant reduction in mortality, time to recovery, and viral clearance in Covid-19 patients treated with ivermectin.

"Our latest research shows, once again, that when

the totality of the evidence is examined, there is no doubt that ivermectin is highly effective as a safe prophylaxis and treatment for Covid-19," said Paul E. Marik, founding member of the FLCCC and Chief, Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Many regions around the world now recognise that ivermectin is a powerful prophylaxis and treatment for COVID-19. South Africa, Zimbabwe, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Mexico, and India have approved the drug for use by medical professionals.

The results, as seen in this latest study, demonstrate that the ivermectin distribution campaigns repeatedly led to "rapid population-wide decreases in morbidity and mortality."

"We are calling on regional public health authorities and medical professionals around the world to demand that ivermectin be included in their standard of care right away so we can end this pandemic once and for all," Marik noted.

CRPF DIG under probe for misbehaving with lady doctor

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

An enquiry was initiated on Sunday against a Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for allegedly misbehaving with a lady doctor of the force deputed in Bihar's Muzaffarpur.

The enquiry was set up after the victim lodged a complaint against Surinder Prasad, the DIG Range Muzaffarpur in Bihar, on Sunday morning with concerned officials in the CRPF.

In her complaint, the lady doctor complained that the DIG "made repeated phone calls late in the night followed by inappropriate advances at her place of stay in drunken state". The complainant is posted at CRPF Composite Hospital Muzaffarpur.

"An inquiry has been ordered to establish the facts and appropriate action will be taken against the delinquent," the CRPF said in a statement.

The CRPF further made it clear that the force is committed to creating a safe and secure environment for its women personnel and has a zero-tolerance policy for misbehaviour.

The CRPF, a 3.25 lakh strong force, is mandated to provide internal security in the country especially in terrorist torn Jammu and Kashmir region and Maoist-affected states.

Political parties, civil society should unitedly defeat Covid-19: Jitendra Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said political parties and members of the civil society should rise above differences and unitedly defeat Covid-19.

He said at this time of the calamity, which happens once in a century, all other issues, priorities or agendas have to be set aside so that humanity survives for the future.

The minister called upon all political parties and senior members of the civil society to rise above differences and unitedly fight the battle against COVID-19, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, said this while despatching the first consignment of COVID-related material for his Lok Sabha constituency of Udhampur-Kathua-Doda in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday.

This (dispatch) is going to be a regular feature in the future as well, he said.

it to different parts of the region up to block and panchayat level, Singh said.

The dispatch included separate kits of face masks, sanitizers, antiseptics, toilet items, immunity boosters and a wide range of accessories and articles for use in COVID pandemic, the statement said.

Singh said only today he had tested negative for COVID-19 after being afflicted with the infection for three weeks and the very first activity that he had chosen to undertake is to start the despatch of COVID-related material for the people of his constituency, it said.

The minister said he had arranged for sending this material last month itself but it got delayed due to him getting infected with the disease.

He was advised not to physically interact or meet anybody till he tested negative, the statement said.

Singh said that on Saturday, even though being in quarantine, he held a detailed review and interaction with the administration and public representatives of each of the six districts of his Lok Sabha constituency, namely Udhampur, Kathua, Doda, Reasi, Ramban and Kishtwar.

Oxygen Exp: 4,200 MT of liquid medical O2 delivered across India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Railways has delivered nearly 4,200 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen in more than 268 tankers to various states since April 19, the national transporter said on Sunday.

So far, 68 'Oxygen Express' trains have completed their journeys, it said.

Till now, 293 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) has been unloaded in Maharashtra, 1,230 tonnes in Uttar Pradesh, 271 tonnes in Madhya Pradesh, 555 tonnes in Haryana, 123 tonnes in Telangana, 40 tonnes in Rajasthan and 1,679 tonnes in Delhi, it said.

The Railways also delivered oxygen to new cities including Kanpur, which received 80 tonnes on Sunday. "More loaded 'Oxygen Expresses' are expected to start their journeys later in the night," the Railways said.

The railways started running 'Oxygen Express' trains to transport liquid medical oxygen last month when the country reported acute shortage of the life-saving gas amid a deadly second COVID-19 wave.

Sad to see Health Min occupy 'alternative reality' as 'nation gasps for breath': Tharoor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor attacked Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday over his remarks that no fresh Covid-19 cases have been detected in 180 districts in the last seven days, saying it is sad to see the Health Minister occupy an "alternative reality while the nation gasps for breath".

In his virtual address at the 25th meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on Saturday to discuss the pandemic situation, Vardhan said 180 districts have showed no fresh cases in the last seven days, 18 districts reported no cases in 14 days, 54 districts reported no infections in 21 days and 32 districts were bereft of any fresh cases in the last 28 days.

Tagging Vardhan's remarks, Tharoor tweeted, "It's sad to see Health Minister @drharshvardhan occupy an alternative reality while the nation gasps for breath & the world sees Indians suffering." "Can one imagine Dr Fauci (and White House Chief Medical Adviser) celebrating SMSs, promoting faux medicines & endorsing unproven therapies? No one believes our figures," the former Union minister said.

Tharoor also tagged another tweet of Vardhan a few days ago in which he had noted that "our world-class Co-WIN plat-

form ensured smooth rollout of beneficiary registration for Phase 3 of world's largest vaccine drive". Vardhan mentioned in that tweet that in just three hours, 80 lakh people registered, 1.45 crore SMS were successfully delivered and 38.3 crore API hits recorded.

Taking a swipe at Vardhan, Tharoor tweeted, "SMS delivered as an indication of success in fighting #Covid?" The Congress leader also tagged a media report which claimed that the Indian Medical Association has demanded an explanation from Vardhan for "promoting" Patanjali's Coronil tablet, and tweeted, "Would love to see that explanation! The nation wants to know..."

In another tweet, Tharoor asked why is the government not spending the Rs 35,000 crore allocated in the budget and instead passing the burden of vaccine costs to states. "Once Parliament has approved it, why does the government sit on the money? There's a record GST collection & windfall gains from fuel taxes. Buy vaccines!" the MP from Thiruvananthapuram said.

Tharoor also took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Central Vista project by tagging two old media reports -- one quoting the PM as saying that every Indian will have a house in 2022.

Centre issues advisory on mgmt of mucormycosis fungal infection in Covid-19 patients

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mucormycosis, a fungal infection being found in Covid-19 patients with uncontrolled diabetes and prolonged intensive care unit (ICU) stay, may turn fatal if uncared for, the Centre said on Sunday.

In an advisory, it also said the fungal infection mainly affects people who are on medication that reduces their ability to fight environmental pathogens.

The evidence-based advisory for screening, diagnosis and management of the disease was released by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Union health ministry.

"Mucormycosis, if uncared for, may turn fatal. Sinuses or lungs of such individuals get affected after fungal spores are inhaled from the air," it said. Warning symptoms include pain and redness around eyes and nose, fever, headache, coughing, shortness of breath, bloody vomits and altered mental status, the advisory stated.

In COVID-19 patients with diabetes and immuno-suppressed individuals, one must suspect of mucormycosis if there is sinusitis, one-side facial pain or numbness, blackish discoloration over the bridge of

the nose or palate, toothache, blurred or double vision with pain, skin lesion, thrombosis, chest pain and worsening respiratory symptoms, it said.

Major risk factors for this disease include uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immunosuppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, malignancy and voriconazole therapy, the ICMR-health ministry advisory stated.

To prevent the disease, blood glucose level should be monitored post-COVID discharge and also in diabetic patients; steroids should be used judiciously in correct timing, dose and duration; clean sterile water should be used in humidifiers during oxygen therapy; and antibiotics and antifungal medicines should be used correctly, it said.

The disease can be managed by controlling diabetes, discontinuing immunomodulating drugs, reducing steroids and extensive surgical debridement to remove all necrotic materials, according to the advisory.

Medical treatment includes installing peripherally inserted central catheter, maintaining adequate systemic hydration, infusion of normal saline intravenously before Amphotericin B infusion and anti-fungal therapy for at least six weeks.

Kerala sees 35,801 cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Two days of lockdown has not produced any visible impact on the Covid-19 situation in Kerala. According to the release issued by the department of Health on Sunday evening, 35,801 Covid-19 cases reported during the 12 hours ending 6 pm. Covid claimed 68 lives taking the total death toll in the State till date to 5,814. Test Positivity Rate in Kerala continued to be critical at 28.88 per cent. Though the entire State remained in a lockdown mode, roads and thoroughfares across major towns and cities remained empty thanks to strict policing by the cops who have

been deployed to control movement of the people.

There were 4,23,514 Covid-19 patients across the State as on Sunday evening. The Government has declared total lock down across the State till May 16. Ernakulam district continued to be the epicentre of Covid-19 cases with 4,767 new persons getting diagnosed with the pandemic on Sunday. There are 67,210 Covid patients undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the district. The entry and exit to the district is monitored by police and department of revenue officials and the region continued to be cordoned off from other places.

Centre rejects Didi's GST waiver demand on Covid items

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Centre has turned down Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's plea seeking waiver of GST (Goods and Services Tax) and other taxes on corona-specific medicines, vaccines, oxygen etc.

Hours after the Chief Minister wrote her third letter in a week to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding waiver of taxes on equipment and drugs required to treat corona Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman wrote her back hammering home the need to maintain the said taxes to keep costs of the products low.

Writing a series of tweets Sitharaman --- one of the first national BJP leaders to congratulate Banerjee in her fantastic win in the just-concluded Assembly elections --- reasoned "if full exemption from GST were given, the domestic producers of these items would be unable to offset taxes paid on their inputs and input

services and would pass these on to the end consumers by increasing their price."

She also informed the Chief Minister that pandemic specific items and medicines had already been given exemption from import duties besides reminding that the States were the beneficiaries of the 70 per cent of the IGST (Integrated Goods and Services Tax) realized from various items.

Earlier sending her third letter to the Prime Minister demanding tax-waiver on pandemic specific items the Chief Minister wrote that a large number of organizations, individuals and benevolent agencies who want to donate oxygen concentrators, cylinders, cryogenic storage tanks, tankers, tanks containers and corona-related drugs have "approached the State Government to consider exemption of these items from customs duty SGST/CGST/IGST ... as the rate structure falls under the purview of the central Government I

would request that these items may be exempted from GST/Customs duty and other such duties and taxes to help remove supply constraints of above-mentioned life-saving drugs and equipment"

In her earlier letters the Chief Minister had asked the Prime Minister

to set aside Rs 30,000 crore to fight the pandemic. She also wondered why a Government that spent Rs 50,000 crore to construct a new parliament, trendy aircraft and residents for the Prime Minister could not dedicate Rs 30,000 crore to fight the pandemic.

Ex-cricketer Manoj in WB Cabinet

PNS ■ KOLKATA

New faces, including former India cricketer and Bengal Ranji Trophy captain Manoj Tiwari, tribal actress Birbaha Hansda, retired IPS officer Humayun Kabir and Ghulam Rabbani are likely to figure in the list of 34 Ministers who would be sworn in on Monday, Trinamool Congress sources said.

Nine out of the 34 MLAs are likely to be sworn in as State ministers while the remaining 24 would get Cabinet berth. According to

sources there could be about nine ministers from the minority community while three from the tribal groups.

Among the prominent names are Amit Mitra --- who has been the Finance Minister of Mamata Banerjee Government since 2011, Partho Chatterjee, Subroto Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, Arup Biswas, Arup Roy, Jyotipriya Mullick, Bratya Basu, Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay, Siddiqullah Chowdhury and Javed Khan, sources said.

Mangaluru Police Commissioner urges people to stick to Covid guidelines

Mangaluru: Mangaluru city police commissioner N Shashi Kumar on Sunday urged the people to strictly adhere to the Covid-19 guidelines issued by the Government to contain the spread of infection in the state.

He said a majority of people are strictly following the government order. Strict action will be taken against those violating the directions.

The department is not using force on the public within the city, he said, adding it is monitoring the situation and working on humanitarian grounds at checkpoints. The Commissioner said travellers coming from the railway stations and airport can use their tickets as passes. In case of violation, police have booked cases and seized the vehicles. Kumar said he has directed the police personnel to follow Covid appropriate behaviour. **PTI**



Women workers carry their children while working at a brick kiln on International Mother's Day, in Nadia district of West Bengal on Sunday **PTI**

Chennai doctors hailed for treatment of +ve patient with comorbidities

CHENNAI: While the entire medical world is burning midnight oil to make a breakthrough in finding out the drug that can cure Covid-19, a Chennai based physician with more than six decades experience in medical research has come out with a treatment protocol with which he has cured a 57-year-old housewife of the pandemic. What makes this treatment unique is the patient who was suffering from multiple comorbidities. The treatment consisted of an integrated system of modern medicine and Ayurveda.

The breakthrough by Dr C V Krishnaswamy, 83-year-old reputed diabetologist has been published in the 2021 April issue of Journal of the Science of Healing Outcomes, an internationally read medical publication which carries only "super peer reviewed" research works. What makes the finding of

Dr Krishnaswamy is the patient who approached him after the medical fraternity washed their hands off her because of the series of "Multiple Comorbidities" plaguing her. "She was contracted Covid-19 infection while on a regular Haemodialysis program for Chronic Kidney Disease," Dr Krishnaswamy told The Pioneer.

The seriousness of patients with comorbidities could be understood from the fact that out of 241 deaths reported in Tamil Nadu till 6 pm on Saturday, 180 victims had comorbid conditions. Similarly, out of the 197 deaths reported on Friday, 150 were suffering from comorbid issues. It is a universally accepted phenomenon that Covid-19 claim the lives of most of those with comorbid conditions.

It was at this juncture that the patient who had comorbid

conditions like Type 2 Diabetes mellitus (since 1987), hypertension (since 1998), coronary artery disease (since 2015), CKD on maintenance haemodialysis weekly thrice (since 2013), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (since 2014) and breast lesion (since 2019), tested positive for Covid-19.

She was taken to the hospital where she was undergoing haemodialysis regularly. But the doctors asked her to come back only after testing Covid-negative. With all other hospitals refusing to entertain her because of the Covid-19 infection, a compassionate doctor and hospital came forward to take the risk. When she was admitted to the hospital on June 12, 2020, she was weak, dehydrated, apyrexial and hardly able to take any food. The patient was put on Ayurvedic treatment for eight days and it

has to be said that hospitals from Patiala to Chennai provided traditional Indian medicine to get rid of the Covid-19 virus from her body system.

Dr Krishnaswamy says she was administered Triphala Pippali Churnam, Dhanwantara Gutika, Sudarsan tablets, Kutajarishtam. "She was tested negative on June 19 (13th day) and was discharged on the same day. The swab turned out positive three times (on June 4, 9, and 14) before it tested negative on June 19," said Dr Krishnaswamy who supervised the progress of the treatment on a round-the-clock basis.

Dr Krishnaswamy further stated that the lady staged a very good recovery and went back to her original hospital Covid free for her routine haemodialysis regime. The scientist in Dr Krishnaswamy has furnished the entire treatment history to

drive home the point that it was not a flash in the pan incident.

As a conclusion, Dr Krishnaswamy has stated that though the patient was on haemodialysis thrice a week, she was able to survive without dialysis for nine days and yet her important renal parameters like serum potassium and bicarbonate were maintained before dialysis was resumed.

Dr Krishnaswamy also states in the findings that Ayurvedic medication works in human body in sync with the cellular mechanism leverotatorily while most of allopathic chemical medications are capable of damaging liver, pancreas, kidney, brain and locomotor system.

JSHO is a unique quarterly medical journal brought out by a team of doctors and medical scientists spread across Asia, USA, Australia and Europe. **PNS**

No let-up in corona cases in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The total number of active positive cases of coronavirus is set to cross 50,000 mark across Jammu & Kashmir while there has been no let up in the Covid-19 situation. 54 more patients succumbed to the virus on Sunday while 5,190 fresh cases were detected taking the tally of active positive cases to 49,248.

Out of 48553 tests conducted across J&K on Sunday, 5190 persons tested positive registering a positivity rate of 10.68.

Moreover, 2423 more Covid-19 patients were recovered and discharged from various hospitals including 624 from Jammu Division and 1799 from Kashmir Division.

Keeping in view the grim situation, the UT administration Sunday also decided to further extend the corona curfew for another seven days till May 17 across all the 20 districts.

In order to closely monitor the patients, currently undergoing treatment in home isolation, the UT administration has also decided to utilize the services of final year MBBS students for providing services like tele-consultation and monitoring of mild Covid cases after due orientation by and supervision of faculty.

In Jammu, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha chaired a high-level meeting of Covid Task Force to review the containment measures.

The Lt Governor asked the Divisional Commissioners to conduct extensive exercise of house to house screening and Covid-19 status verification for identifying the vulnerable population through dedicated teams at the local level.

The meeting was informed that 10 additional Oxygen generation plants are coming up in J&K soon with the intervention of the Central Government.

Most of the big Covid care Government hospitals in J&K now have their own oxygen generation plants.

The upcoming oxygen plants will add to the capacity of oxygen availability in the UT, observed the Lt Governor.

In order to break the transmission chain of the virus, it was decided that 50% of staff in Government departments would attend offices as per duty rosters and their movement would be strictly through passes during the Corona Curfew.

Decision was also taken to establish two more Triage centres, one each in both the divisions to facilitate Covid patients.

NIA takes over probe into seizure of ₹21 cr natural uranium in Mumbai

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over the investigations into the case involving the seizure of 7.1 kilograms of natural Uranium worth ₹21.30 crore made by Maharashtra's Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) in February this year.

Three days after the ATS arrested two persons in connection with the natural Uranium seizure made in February, the NIA took over the case on Saturday and re-registered an FIR with Kalachowki Police station in south-central Mumbai under section 24(1) (a) of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962.

"Pursuant to registration of the case, requisite actions as per law for expeditious investigation of case have been initiated," the NIA said in a press release issued in the evening.

Acting on a complaint received from the Regional Director, central region, Atomic Minerals Directorate of Exploration and Research, Nagpur, the ATS officials had on Thursday arrested two persons in connection with the seizure of "natural Uranium" made in February this year.

The two arrested persons were produced before a city court which remanded them in ATS' custody till May 12.

It may be recalled that on February 14, the Nagpada unit of the ATS -- acting on specific information that a Thane-based resident identified as Jigar Pandya (27) was planning to sell some uranium, apprehended Pandya with some small pieces of the valuable substance on February 14 this year.

During the interrogation, the ATS officials learnt that one Abu Tahir Afzal Husain Choudhary (31), a resident of Mankhurd in north-east Mumbai, had given him Uranium pieces to sell. Subsequently, the ATS officials searched Tahir's godown at Kurla Scrap Association at Mankhurd, from where they detained

him and seized 7.1 kilograms of natural uranium from his possession.

The ATS had sent the seized uranium to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) at Trombay for analysis. An analysis report received from the BARC early this week said that the seized substance was natural uranium, which is "highly radioactive and dangerous to human life".

The element in the seized Uranium is used for radiation in some medical techniques and as a counterbalance weight in airplanes, among other things.

The NIA, which has taken over the investigations in the natural Uranium seizure case, will try to ascertain from where the arrested persons obtained such a fairly quantity of natural Uranium and whether any security interests had been compromised at the atomic energy establishments.

This is not for the first time that the police in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) have seized Uranium-related material.

Earlier in December 2009, the Navi Mumbai police crime branch sleuths have seized five kg of "depleted" Uranium from three persons. The police had then sent the seized material to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) for analysis.

At that time, then BARC spokesperson RK Sharma had described the seized material as "depleted uranium". According to Sharma, Natural Uranium is extracted from the earth crust and contains mainly two isotopes of Uranium i.e., U-238 (99.3%) and U-235 (0.7%). The third isotope, U-234 is present in a very low percentage in Natural Uranium.

"Depleted Uranium has less U-235 content as compared to natural Uranium. In the seized Uranium this % is 0.2%.

Depleted Uranium is used as Shielding material to shield large Gamma Radiation Sources and as a counter balancing weights in ships and Aircraft," he had said.

Video of Covid-19 victim's body dumped in river in Katihar goes viral

Patna: A video purportedly showing a Covid victim's body being dumped into the bank of Saura river in Bihar's Katihar district has gone viral on social media.

Katihar's District Magistrate Udayan Mishra has cross verified the video clip and found it to be true. The incident took place on May 7.

"Soon after we have learnt about the incident, an inquiry panel headed by city's Magistrate, SDO and SDPO of the area, was constituted who later visited the Bheria Rahika village on Sunday.

During investigation, it was found that the person died of Covid on May 6," Mishra told IANS.

"As per the statement of the deceased's brother, his kin did not have enough money to cremate the body. Moreover, the villagers told the family members that cremation of Covid victim could be a hazardous to health for others. Hence, they had dug an 8 feet deep pit in their own land to bury the body," Mishra said.

"After the patient had succumbed to Covid in Sadar hospital, the hospital administration then sent the body in an ambulance to the village on May 7.

The complainant of the incident was the driver of the ambulance. We had cross checked about the incident with the victims' family members. During the process of burial, some onlookers filmed it and made it viral on social networking platforms," Mishra said. **IANS**

Andhra sets up high-level probe into limestone quarry tragedy

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh Government has instituted a high-level enquiry into Saturday's explosion that rocked a limestone quarry in Kadapa district, leaving 10 people dead, and several others critically injured.

The State's Minister for Mines and Geology, Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy stated on Sunday that a committee comprising of five departments, has been set up for the purpose.

The inquiry committee, headed by the Kadapa district joint collector (revenue), will submit its report to the government within five days he added. The minister said that a sum of ₹ 10 lakh is being sanctioned as ex

gratia to families of each of the deceased, while those injured will be given ₹5 lakh each.

Pointing out that the tragedy occurred because adequate safety precautions were not observed while unloading the explosives, the minister stated that action will be initiated against the mine's leaseholder.

The incident had occurred near Mamillapalle village in Kalasapadu mandal when the labourers were unloading gelatin stick from a vehicle for using them at a limestone mine.

Such was the impact of the explosion that the body parts of the deceased were blown apart and the vehicle was completely burnt. **IANS**

K'taka to launch Covid-19 vaccination for 18+ today

Bengaluru: Karnataka is all set to begin vaccination of people, in the 18 to 44 years age group, from Monday.

K. Sudhakar, the state's health and medical education minister, took to Twitter on Sunday, and shared plans to launch vaccination for this age group, in several government-run hospitals of the capital city.

In his tweet, the minister said that place will be earmarked for people of the age group at the vaccine centres Vaccine will be administered only to persons who book their slots on Arogyasetu or Cowin apps and obtain confirmed slots."

Vaccine shortages had forced the Karnataka government to symbolically launch this vaccination drive, recently. **IANS**

The minister also said that the vaccination will be initiated on a limited scale in other parts of the state. "As for the districts, initially vaccination will be made available at district hospitals, government medical colleges and Taluka Hospitals. As vaccine supply improves, we'll increase the number of vaccination centres will be increased."

The minister advised youth to be patient and await their turn. "Government is leaving no stone unturned to vaccinate each and every citizen at earliest and is making continuous efforts to secure supply of vaccines. I urge all citizens, especially my young friends, to wait for your turn and govt will ensure you will surely get your jab," his tweet read. **IANS**

Focus on enhancing health machinery: Raj CM

Jaipur: Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has said the corona infection is spreading very fast in the cities as well as in the villages. Health machinery should be fully activated in rural areas to prevent its spread and provide immediate treatment to the infected.



Also, to make people aware and other arrangements, maximum participation of all the personnel of the State Government and the representatives of the panchayat level should be ensured. He said that if the infection increased in the villages in the same way, then it would be very difficult to control it. Shri Gehlot conducted a high-level

review on Saturday night through video conference on other related topics including Covid compression, lockdown and availability of resources.

The Chief Minister said that it is very late for people from villages to reach the city for treatment and the risk of the patient increases due to very high levels of infection.

Death of schoolteacher triggers virtual protest in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Death of a seniorteacher serving in a prominent Convent school due to Covid-19 here on Sunday triggered angry reactions on various social media platforms as the school authorities forced them to attend the school even when the district magistrate had ordered its closure in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

Questioning the rationale behind forcing the teachers to remain present inside the school premises several netizens and close friends urged the district authorities to take serious note of the brazen violations committed by the private school management during the period.

According to close family members, Nilu Varinder, a senior Music

teacher of St Mary's Presentation Convent School, Jammu lost her battle to the deadly virus while her husband was still struggling to survive in the ICU on Sunday. Her daughter, also tested positive, was recuperating in home isolation. On Sunday, a handful of relatives along with volunteers from a local organisation performed the last rites of the school teacher.

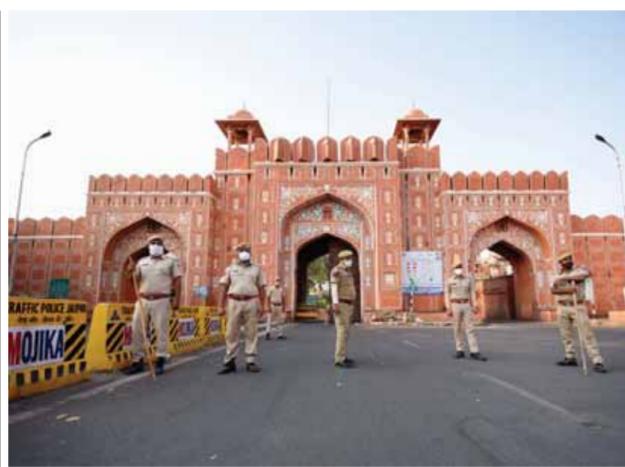
According to her colleagues, Nilu Varinder was regularly attending her school duties as late as April 26 against her wishes. The District Magistrate had issued an order on April 27 clarifying that the teaching and non teaching staff was not required to remain present in the educational institutions and shall continue to work from home till further orders.

In contrast, the school teachers

privately revealed the school Principal had directed the staff members to remain present in the school and work from there ignoring all government orders issued since the first week of March when the District Magistrate had ordered closure of schools in view of the rising number of coronavirus cases.

Several teachers claimed along with Nilu Varinder few other staff members and students who had attended their practical examinations also tested positive and were undergoing treatment.

The District authorities are learnt to have taken cognizance of the matter and are expected to hold an inquiry to ascertain the facts of the matter and violations committed by the school before taking any action.



Police personnel stand guard outside the historic Sangneri Gate after the announcement of a lockdown, in Jaipur on Sunday **PTI**



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Fair deal?

In an indication of the future, the BJP uproots the popular Sonowal from the Assam CM's chair

When the BJP's leadership didn't outright project Sarbananda Sonowal as its chief ministerial face ahead of the Assam Assembly polls, it was clear to everyone that the issue will be decided after the polls — and Himanta Biswa Sarma was in with more than a strong chance. Sonowal ran a largely successful Government as the Chief Minister, ran a corruption-free Government and faced several tricky challenges without many slip-ups. When a man like him, who played a key role in the integration of the tribal votes with the BJP's Hindutva support base, was not deemed fit to be projected as the CM, the writing seemed clear on the wall. The formality took nearly four days of negotiation and deliberation on the part of the central leadership before deciding to hand over the State's reins to a man who, despite all his experience and financial muscle, carried the legacy of scams and corruption. After all, before Himanta switched over from the Congress in 2015, he was being probed by the CBI in more than one corruption scandal. That a party like the BJP, which places such high premium on probity and ideological mooring, would reward such a person with the chief ministerial office shows a major shift in the saffron outfit's policy. No doubt, Sonowal is a non-controversial, popular figure who led the BJP's poll campaign in 2016 and brought the party home by ousting the well-entrenched Congress regime. But Sonowal had to pay the price for not being as suave, politically crafty and a man of the masses as Himanta.

Sonowal also lacked a godfather like Amit Shah in Delhi. The tribal leader also lacked influence outside Assam, whereas Himanta has played a key role in putting the BJP's footprint in the entire Northeast. By hook or by crook, he ensured that the BJP emerged as the main player in the region. While Sonowal was undoubtedly a popular tribal leader, Himanta could wear many hats at the same time. Himanta was seen as the architect of the BJP's impressive show in the Northeast in the last Lok Sabha elections and also hailed for his handling of the anti-CAA agitation and the pandemic. Meanwhile, Sonowal has been offered a Cabinet berth in the Modi Government but it's not yet clear whether he wants to accept it. It's known that he is very unhappy with the treatment meted out to him. His next move has to be watched carefully. If he chooses to return to the Centre where he held the Sports portfolio before becoming the Assam CM, then the BJP leadership could breathe freely. Otherwise, he would remain a serious challenge to Himanta with the backing of the various tribal outfits and legislators. The fact that someone like Himanta, who undoubtedly is a resourceful leader of the Northeast, had to leave the Congress after being "insulted and humiliated when Rahul Gandhi made him wait for hours", shows that the current plight of the Congress is of the making of its own. Himanta's elevation will no doubt hurt Sonowal, but it will hurt Rahul much more.

PICTALK



A man crosses a street during sudden rain in Kolkata, Sunday

PTI

Moo-t point

If cow urine is really beneficial against Corona, the Govt hasn't done a great job propagating it

Walk into any ayurvedic store and you can easily buy a bottle of "gaumutra"; one need not have a medical prescription. The cow's urine, or "gaumutra" as it is commonly known, has immense therapeutic value and is used in the treatment of various diseases in the traditional Indian medicinal system. Used in many formulations, it is considered the panacea for a host of ailments, ranging from constipation to cancer. Many, who believe in this curative system, have stood benefited. But still, the majority of people, particularly the urban class, has an obnoxious feeling about it and considers it sub-standard — something that belongs to the "uneducated" and "orthodox" class. But there are a lot many people who, in the face of these unsubstantiated critique and the wayward trolls, don't take offence and stand their ground. They do have a reason, a valid one — we have failed to establish the medicinal properties of "gaumutra" as per the modern scientific parameters, thanks to our ignorance and carelessness towards our heritage.

The country is facing an unprecedented crisis in the second wave of COVID-19; the impending third wave looms large. At a time when the scientists are struggling with the virus mutants, BJP MLA Surendra Singh from Uttar Pradesh comes up with a suggestion that seems bizarre, to put it mildly. He said that the spread of COVID-19 can be stopped by using "gaumutra" as he demonstrated that five bottle capfuls should be mixed in a glass of water and gulped down. He claimed that the secret of his health, "despite working for 18 hours a day", was "gaumutra". Well, in this hour of crisis, when everyone is anxiously waiting for his or her turn to get vaccinated, such out-of-the-box advice will hardly prompt anyone to walk into an ayurvedic pharmacy for "gaumutra". When it's about making choices in the face of an existential threat, most people will obviously go for a safer option, i.e. vaccination. The general populace is not at fault but only those who claim to serve the cause of ayurveda and other indigenous medicinal system. Well, the desired results have not been obtained but with the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy purposed with developing education, research and propagation of indigenous alternative medicine systems and the Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog formed in 2019, one can only hope that our indigenous medicinal system and traditional knowledge and breeds are not lost.

Subhash Chandra Agrawal | Delhi

PROTECT THE PUBLIC SECTOR ENTERPRISES

Sir — The successive Governments have failed to promote public sector enterprises and, it seems, that those involved in production of the ayurvedic medicines are also neglected. It is high time that the Government should work upon the loopholes. The Indian Medicines Pharmaceuticals Corporation Limited (IMPCL), a Central Public Sector Enterprises, is a premier company under the Ministry of AYUSH for production of Ayurvedic medicines at economical prices. It is known for producing cost-effective medicines of reliable quality and standard. The IMPCL has recorded its highest-ever turnover of ₹164 crore in 2020-21. Further, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recently recommended its 18 Ayurvedic products for WHO-GMP/COPP certification subject to certain observations in March 2021.

Unfortunately, its products are not seen anywhere in the market except at Government dispensaries. There also, a complete range of products is not available and especially pain-relief oil is always out of stock. Even the website of the company doesn't display the full range of products and list of distributors or dealers. It is really a cause of concern especially in the backdrop of the fact that it has been awarded "World Health Organisation, Good Manufacturing Practices / Certificate of Pharmaceutical Product (WHO-GMP/CoPP)" certification by WHO after conducting a thorough inspection and this certification is an endorsement of the quality of products. While the product of our public sector is recognised worldwide, it seems that our own Government has failed to give the much needed push to it. That is why, the products are not found in private ayurvedic medicinal stores in Delhi and are always out of stock. In case the company does not have a network of distributors and dealers, it should immediately engage them so that people may be benefitted through economical and reliable range of ayurvedic medicines.

Subhash Chandra Agrawal | Delhi

Stalin must not fail Tamil Nadu



Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin's Government must step up efforts to contain COVID-19. It must be his first task and empathy for people who are in difficult and distressed situations, he should guide the handling of the pandemic. The change of Government in Tamil Nadu is significant in terms of ideology and culture, apart from politics. The new Government is unlikely to be pliable in the manner the EPS Government was for the BJP to implement its agenda. As the inheritor of the legacy of Periyar, Anna and Kalaignar, Stalin will continue to be in the vanguard of the ideological battle against the BJP.

PUNISH THE PANDEMIC SCAVENGERS

Sir — During these trying times, when philanthropy is at its peak and people are helping each other, there are some morally bankrupt people who are profiteering from the hapless victims of COVID-19. In the absence of any price capping mechanism, costs of life saving equipment have jumped manifold.

Though some prices can be reasoned with inflation, Chinese products like pulse oximeter which come with no price tags are sold overpriced. Private hospitals bribe health workers to refer patients to them and demand exorbitant sums upfront for their admission, people are cheated over oxygen supplies, ambulance services charge more than ₹30k to ferry patients within the city limits and the pharmacies attached to the hospitals sell life saving drugs at three times

the maximum retail price.

Further, the duplicate of Remdesivir and other life saving drugs are circulating in the open market. On one side we have auto-rickshaw drivers, recovered victims and middle class senior citizens selling their jewellery and other belongings, giving up their vehicles and spending their lives savings to aid the COVID victims and on other side we have these pandemic scavengers doing everything possible to decimate the humanitarian efforts. Supply of life saving drugs, oxygen concentrators, raw materials for vaccines and other essentials are pouring in from across the world. But these pandemic scavengers are undermining the efforts of our Government and international bodies.

Aryaputra P Das | Bhubaneswar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The pandemics & the epidemics

Starting from bubonic plague, there has been a series of pandemics. Corona is only the 12th to have hit the human race so severely



PRAFULL GORADIA

We all know that Corona is not the first pandemic to attack almost the entire world. One can only hope that it neither conquers countries nor changes the course of their history. The key to overturning a pandemic appears to discovering the heart of it; what precisely sets it off. What to destroy at the core of the disease and then how to destroy. While medical scientists and experts try to find a way out, the disease runs riot.

A consolation is that Corona is by no means the first pandemic. There have been 11 predecessors and Corona is the 12th. As far as the recorded history tells us, the first calamity was caused by bubonic plague which suddenly sprouted into an Egyptian port in the sixth century. On record, it has been called a pestilence; the word pandemic is a recent innovation. The plague spread far and wide and, on the way, it went to Constantinople across the Adriatic Sea, then Rome, from the Eastern to the Western Roman Empire. From early years, plague was nicknamed "Black Death".

It then spread across Western Europe, including Britain. Incidentally, at Constantinople at the time, ruled the Emperor Justinian. I remember him in history for building the Hagia Sophia, the architectural icon of the city and, for centuries, of an empire. The Turkic conquerors built four minarets and converted it into a mosque. Kamal Mustafa Ataturk in the early 1920s changed it to a museum which, very recently, President Erdogan has reconverted it into a mosque. Incidentally, in parts of the German-speaking areas, Jews were accused of poisoning the wells' mud, and hence the drinking water. As a punishment, the Jews were given the choice of either converting to Christianity or face death. Those who did not convert were taken to Jewish cemeteries and collectively on fire.



Some historians believe that the plague was a very big blow or setback to the Eastern Roman Empire, which became weaker with time. No wonder that its successor, the Byzantium, failed to stand up to the Central Asian Turks who invaded first Anatolia and eventually also Constantinople and changed its name to Istanbul. This shows how a pandemic can affect the destiny of a civilisation. Christianity in the avatar of the Eastern Roman empire did not decline, but the Empire did. The Church is still headquartered at Istanbul with only about two to three per cent Christians. Smallpox was the next epidemic that came from time to time and place to place. But regardless, it was a disease which was generally feared as an endemic; it continued to frighten people until some decades ago. So much so that, in most parts of Asia, every infant was compulsorily vaccinated against it. Out of fear, in India the disease was worshipped as Sitala Devi and there were temples dedicated to her. Experts suspect that it began as a virus carried by cows, camels or monkeys. These



DIPHTHERIA, POLIO, TYPHOID, MEASLES, INFLUENZA AND YELLOW FEVER ARE SOME OTHER ENDEMIC. TYPHOID, LIKE CHOLERA, WAS A WATER OR LIQUID-BORNE DISEASE. POLIO, MEASLES AND INFLUENZA ARE AIR-BORNE. ALL THESE ARE DIFFERENT BUGS. INFLUENZA PLAYED HAVOC AFTER THE WORLD WAR I

useful animals might have passed on their virus when their domestication began. The disease began, it is conjectured, about 1,100 years BC because it was detected in some Egyptian mummies of the time. One or two Roman emperors were recorded to have died of smallpox at the turn of the millennia. The pox did not spare Western Europe, especially Spain, from where it reached Latin America by the early years of the 16th century. A reported Spanish solution was: to the whole family or household being infected, demolish the whole building. So that so many burials were avoided!

Cholera was another menace that spread mainly through water or any liquid. It is believed to have begun in the Ganga delta. From there, it travelled far and wide, including Russia, on to places in Europe early in the 19th century. The bug then crossed the Atlantic Ocean America and spread for a while in the US as well as to Latin. As was often the case, the source of the epidemic of cholera was discovered by the German scientists in the late 19th century. Despite this discovery, cholera also travelled

east to Indonesia and south-west to some African countries. To prevent the menace of cholera, all that was needed was for people to keep away from drinking doubtful water. In the West, it was nicknamed as "Blue Death" though in Kolkata, the first symptom the doctors looked for was the colour of the excreta. If it was not white, it was not cholera.

Diphtheria, typhoid, polio, measles, influenza and yellow fever are some other endemics. Typhoid, like cholera, was a water or liquid-borne disease. Polio, measles and influenza are air-borne. All these are different bugs. Influenza played havoc after the World War I in most parts of the world. Malaria is unique. In India, it had been virtually eradicated but has come back. Evidently, in India, we have allowed that particular breed of mosquito to be reborn. Incidentally, while studying modern European history, I had come across a reference to Napoleon Bonaparte having lost thousands of soldiers upon the altar of 'yellow fever'.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SOUND BITE

It is very difficult to maintain proper supply of oxygen at every hospital. We request the Centre to provide at least 700 MT oxygen per day to Delhi.



Delhi Deputy Chief Minister — Manish Sisodia

May 8, 1945, was a day of liberation. It is our everlasting responsibility to keep alive this memory of people who lost their lives during those years.

German Chancellor — Angela Merkel

Delhi is almost gasping for breath. I have dispersed a lot of 300 cylinders and, for the rest, we are trying to generate funds from like-minded people.

Actor — Raveena Tandon

The availability of players from the top two T20 teams—England and India—should prompt the BCCI to host the remaining IPL matches in England.

Former England captain — Kevin Pietersen

There are lives at stake. Saving them is our priority, and it is the responsibility of every Punjabi to save these lives.

Punjab Chief Minister — Amarinder Singh



FIRST COLUMN

TOWARDS HIGHER WISDOM

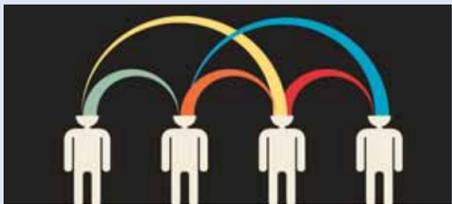
It is best not to push things towards a bigger crisis. Alleviating suffering is the need of the hour



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The term "learning organisations" has been around in management literature for ages. Like many fashionable phrases, it got its fame because it originated in the West at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Sloan. Peter Senge's work on learning organisations, *'The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization'* talked of organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they wish for, thereby making it necessary for expansive patterns of thinking. Senge also talked of "aspiration being set free." It was widely hailed as a breakthrough, thought with five components to it: Systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision and team learning. His commitment to the concept of systems thinking found wide resonance among engineers and economists.

Senge needed to look at two further points. One was his belief that all expression of behaviour has a logical backdrop to it and the other is that organisational survival had some special logic to it. Anyone who has made some attempt to understand human behaviour knows that there aren't always logical processes of behavioural derivations. Emotions matter and many times emotions take over logic.



Unfortunately, sometimes at the cost of the subject's welfare! It is important to realise that "non-systems thinking" is very often the underpinning of much human action. There are many situations where this propensity surfaces, not the least of it is where egos are involved. In closed systems like organisations, continuous self-growth is essential. It is equally so in open systems like societies. It is difficult to survive with the mindset of a 20-year-old when one is in the 40s. Hence while Peter Senge's contributions are useful, they have been, however, built upon for organisations what would be fairly commonsensical for society at large. Be that as it may, the concept has determined a lot of collateral business which has originated in the domain of firm management. Follow up books have emerged, consultancies have become endemic and training programmes have been spawned.

Organisations and individuals who are not conversant with the line of thinking on the subject have obviously hailed it as a big breakthrough. Putting it all together within learning organisations, exchange of knowledge within the system and interaction of the firm with the business environment have become an important fact. The fulcrum of the action is to provide continuous learning opportunities for achievements of organisational goals and to encourage enquiry and dialogue. When people attempt collective enquiry accompanied by dialogue, it is easier to manage risks. Risk is fundamental to the act of living. All this is possible only when one has shared goals and mutual respect.

Some major theories of organisational management are under stress due to the pandemic. Over the last 18 months there has hardly been any sustained thought on conceptual pillars of organisation management. Illustratively, the media which has such an important role in the formulation of organisational norms of society, at times, tends to operate in the same manner — for instance in the same way in May as it did in December 2019. Obviously, a few newspapers and channels represent a vested interest. However, a time comes when pursuit of group interests would need to be subsumed for a while, to the larger cause of collective survival. For instance, in India, some things have gone wrong. They cannot be swept under the carpet however, when collective survival is at stake, judgement has to be exercised as to when to raise a topic and pursue it. Holding on to one's views to convert them with a focus on solutions would be the wise way forward. It is good that several agencies are doing so. It is best not to push things towards a bigger crisis. Alleviating suffering is the need of the hour.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

Time to review public health insurance

It is now for the policy doctors in India to collaborate with the real doctors to come up with radical solutions that can build a healthier world for everyone



MOIN QAZI

Healthy families are the foundation of healthy communities, thus, there is nothing more important than good health and reliable healthcare for the family. Universal health coverage aims to ensure that all people receive quality healthcare without suffering financial hardship. The biggest challenge is to combat the multiple scourges ravaging the world's poor and sick. Due to the current pandemic we are facing pressing challenges and health-related expenditure has now become a primary route to impoverishment. India took a great leap in public health insurance when it launched the Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) and the Ayushman Bharat (AB) scheme. These are the country's flagship structures created to help universalise healthcare so that economically vulnerable families get the medical care they need without being pushed into debt. The cost to the Government is around ₹1,052 per family, with 60 per cent of it being borne by the Centre and the rest by States.

Although the scheme has several laudable objectives and novel features, it has its limitations. Despite having an apparently formidable beneficiary base, the AB-PMJAY still has a small share in the overall inpatient care provision. This is due to low empanelment of hospitals, a general reluctance of private providers towards dispensing AB-PMJAY benefits, and limited contribution of AB-PMJAY to the overall business of hospitals. The Government pays public and private hospitals fixed rates for treating people covered under the programme and this doesn't fit in with the viability of the private sector. New ways will need to be explored to see how the private sector can be co-opted in the delivery of public health. At the same time, the public health system — particularly in rural India — will have to be regenerated.

For the poor, health is often the dividing line between the path to prosperity or a slide into destitution. To make matters worse, the combination of typically volatile and precarious incomes and the absence of quality healthcare means low-income communities not only need access to healthcare, but also the ability to pay for it. Private healthcare has catastrophic costs that shave off hard-earned savings of patients. The repercussions have spillover consequences, resulting in less money being available to households for food, education, housing and other necessities.

A health emergency is a bigger risk to farmers than an unsuccessful crop. Once they sell their land/livestock, they become indentured labourers and that takes a generation or more to fix. Care at India's public hospitals is technically free. But in reality the poor quality of care, lack of human resources and equipment have impeded them from coping with overwhelming patient loads. As a result, many underprivileged Indians are forced to seek treatment in costly private hospitals they cannot afford, or, simply go without care.

Not only are there steep medical costs involved in a health episode, but there are also incidental expenses. This is further compounded by the loss of income during the period an individual is ill/injured or caring for an ailing loved one. Without insurance, people often turn to informal means to manage these risks, but such strategies provide inadequate protection. So when misfortune strikes, many get drawn into debt traps as they borrow beyond their means. This can lead them to sell



UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE WILL BECOME A REALITY ONLY IF INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ARE EMPOWERED TO IDENTIFY THEIR OWN HEALTH NEEDS AND TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS THE DISEASES THAT INCREASE COST OF CARE AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE BURDEN ON OUR HEALTH SYSTEMS. IT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY JOB TO INVEST IN A DEPENDABLE STATE-RUN SYSTEM AND ALSO DEVISE REGULATIONS THAT KEEP PLAYERS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, COMMITTED TO SERVING NATIONAL INTEREST

The writer is a well-known development professional of international repute. The views expressed are personal.



productive assets, take children out of school or put them to work, compromise on food, or leave other illnesses untreated. Due to this dynamic, a health issue can easily become a financial sinkhole. Health insurance serves two primary functions for individuals. First, it secures financial access to healthcare, both for preventive services and/or treatment. Second, it evens the costs of those services, protecting against potentially devastating economic shocks.

Health insurance policies in India typically don't cover outpatient or domiciliary treatment, where the major expenses involve pharmacy bills, diagnostic and pathological tests. Several health insurance programmes cover wage loss on account of illness or other health-related issues, but many don't. Due to these coverage gaps, even insured beneficiaries can incur high indirect costs, especially in cases that require hospitalisation. For instance, India's flagship public health insurance scheme, AB, fails to recognise and compensate the indirect costs associated with hospitalisation — and these are quite significant for the poor. These include expenses on travelling to the hospital and back. Additionally, staying in a hospital or at home, after hospitalisation, implies a loss of wages. Often, attending caregivers from the family also have to forgo wages for several days and arrange for their lodging in case the treatment is being undertaken away from their native town. Poor households may take on debt, selling productive assets or even their homes.

This risks a negative feedback loop: Poverty leads to bad health, which generates further poverty. They may be forced to avoid or delay

treatment, as they cannot afford to lose their wages. Similarly, those who need longer-term hospitalisation may go back to work even if they have not fully recovered. Lost income, often one of the largest components of a financial shock, is far lower among the insured, because it allows them to seek care sooner.

Since many of the concerns of women are not easily insurable, e.g., maternity costs, a more relevant product would be one that combines insurance and savings. In this way, for example, a woman could use her savings to cover the cost of normal delivery, and insurance to cover the cost of unexpected complications. In evaluating the success of AB, what matters, even more than the beneficiaries count, is whether it removes the need in the target population to prioritise livelihood over their daily needs. This is normally the case for most poor families who lack income support during the treatment.

It can also consider including primary, day-to-day healthcare instead of just secondary and tertiary care. This is because poorly-delivered primary care inevitably increases the burden on health and finance at the secondary and tertiary levels down the line. Nurses and practitioners of traditional medicine will have to take "bridge courses" to keep abreast of the bewildering forms of new diseases. Diseases are not static things. Pathogens change, hosts change and environments change. Our immune systems change as well, as a result of fending off infections. And, of course, our lifestyles change, as also social standards, medical systems and public-health programmes.

Thus, it is necessary to enlarge the benefits to include loss of wages

and incidental expenses during hospitalisation. This is already the prevailing practice of specific comparable schemes. Such plans provide a "hospital cash" or "wage loss" benefit, which is a fixed amount for transportation and wage loss for each day of hospitalisation. Some plans in developing countries provide a fixed amount to the beneficiary for each night of hospitalisation, irrespective of the actual expenses incurred. This top-up coverage can be used with any other social security scheme that members may enroll in. The enhancement of the coverage could make the scheme truly pro-poor. And, considering that this added benefit would be conditional on prior hospitalisation, there is no risk of moral hazard or unwarranted claims.

Universal health coverage will become a reality only if individuals, families and communities are empowered to identify their own health needs and take action to address the diseases that increase cost of care and contribute to the burden on our health systems. It is the Government's primary job to invest in a dependable State-run system and also devise regulations that keep players, public and private, committed to serving national interest.

Several laudable policies are already in place. Yet, for reforms to be successful, we need hardcoded changes and higher and more productive investments. A lot of money is wasted on excessive administrative expenses, inefficiencies, duplication of services, and fraud and abuse in insurance claims. It is now for the policy doctors to collaborate with the real doctors to come up with radical solutions that can build a healthier world for everyone.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE CENTRAL VISTA IS A CRIMINAL WASTAGE. PUT PEOPLE'S LIVES AT THE CENTRE, NOT YOUR BLIND ARROGANCE TO GET A NEW HOUSE.
—CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



THE COST OF THE CENTRAL VISTA IS ABOUT ₹20,000 CRORE. THE CENTRE HAS ALLOCATED NEARLY TWICE THAT AMOUNT FOR VACCINATION.
—HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS MINISTER HARDEEP PURI

Indians need to look within to fix their broken ethical compass

Sadly, people all over the country are facing extortion and being forced to make large payments to get essential medication, oxygen, ambulances and so on

Ever since the second wave of the COVID-19 infections has shaken our country it has also shaken the moral values of many people. There are any number of stories all over the country of people facing severe extortion and being forced to make large payments to get essential medication, oxygen, ambulance service and hospital beds.

Perhaps there is a reason why people have behaved and continue to behave in such a shameful manner. The drop in incomes and loss of livelihoods over extended periods since the pandemic struck has probably shaken the moral and ethical values of many. But it still doesn't justify such actions when somebody's life is at stake. It doesn't justify selling an injection of Remdesivir at ₹40,000 when the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) is ₹3,500 a dose. A few arrests have been



SUNIT MEDIRATTA

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made, but this trade continues unabated in many parts of the country.

When somebody's loved one is struggling to breathe and stay alive, people are forced to shell out huge sums. People have taken flights from Delhi to Mumbai and Hyderabad to source this drug from production units. Since this is a scheduled drug and permitted to be given only under the supervision of a medical practitioner, the Government should have made it mandatory for the pharmacies to sell this drug directly to the hospital or nursing homes where patients are admitted, based on the doctor's prescription.

The patients could pay for it along with the hospital bill. It would result in complete transparency and tackle hoarding along with black marketing.

The other huge issue has been the lack of medical oxy-

gen. Despite the Supreme Court's direction to the Centre to make 700 metric tonnes of medical oxygen available to Delhi on a daily basis to tide over the COVID crisis, Delhi is still gasping for its share and the Arvind Kejriwal Government is running from pillar to post to get its allotted quota. The same dire situation exists in other States, too.

In smaller hospitals and COVID care facilities, patients are being told to bring their own oxygen. People are camping outside oxygen plants for hours together to fill cylinders. A normal cylinder that would earlier cost ₹600-₹800 is being sold by unscrupulous people for over ₹20,000.

Gurudwaras have started distributing oxygen within their premises as have other religious places, easing some of the pain. Even then, lives continue to be lost at a rapid pace with the con-



tinued scarcity of this naturally available product. People who could not afford to get hold of oxygen cylinders started looking for oxygen concentrators to deliver uninterrupted oxygen supply without having to refill. Overnight, oxygen concentrators (OCs) disappeared from the market, every

available piece of every brand got taken and then started the usual black marketing. A branded OC that is usually priced at ₹40,000-₹50,000 is being sold in the black market at around ₹90,000 for substandard Chinese products without warranty, and depending on the urgency and desperation goes up to ₹1.5 lakh. With the increase in production of medical oxygen in Delhi hopefully things will get better.

Transporting a COVID patient to the hospital has been another nightmare. Patients cannot be brought in a car driven by relatives for the fear of transmitting infection, requiring transportation in an ambulance. Hence, ambulance providers have been charging exorbitant amounts for short distances of travel. In Delhi-NCR the minimum charge for a ride of less than five km is ₹10,000 provided the patient

does not require oxygen support or an accompanying doctor; the same ride for a patient requiring oxygen support and a doctor could cost the family upwards of ₹20,000. Inter-city transfers by ambulance, for example Delhi-Chandigarh are priced at ₹1,00,000. When one service provider was confronted and told that this was far more than what an airline would charge, the response was: "Please take the plane!"

Bargaining and pleading has no takers. Nobody has the time for your story. Thankfully, in Delhi, the Government has now intervened and regulated prices. The other problem is the shortage of hospital beds. Government portals showing vacant hospital beds haven't been updated with the ground realities.

Many telephone numbers posted on Government websites are not in use or not

being answered, adding to the peoples' misery. Many hospitals show vacant beds on their website but these are not available when patients arrive. Staff in many hospitals has been charging huge bribes from patients to provide beds. Those waiting in ambulances till the patient gets a bed are being charged ₹2,000 per hour, as waiting charges!

Large hospitals have beds reserved for politicians and senior bureaucrats, whereas the commoner has to run around to multiple hospitals, pay large sums at every point and yet, has a faint hope of getting the care needed.

Has our country lost its soul? Is it the effect of the pandemic or were we inherently like this? As the country battles its biggest crisis ever and families weep for the departed, Indians need to look within to fix their broken ethical compass.

China's rocket debris falls in Indian Ocean

NASA criticises Beijing for its failure to 'meet responsible standard'

PTI ■ BEIJING

The remnants of China's biggest rocket crashed into the Indian Ocean near the Maldives on Sunday with no reports of damage, but Beijing was criticised by NASA for its failure to "meet responsible standards" regarding its space debris.



China's Long March 5B rocket launched on April 29, 2021, and fell into the Indian Ocean north of the Maldives on Sunday.

The bulk of the out-of-control rocket, which had put into orbit the core module of China's planned space station on April 29, was mostly destroyed as it re-entered the atmosphere, China's state media reported.

The Long March-5B vehicle re-entered the atmosphere at 10:24 Beijing time on Sunday, the Chinese Manned Space Engineering office said. It said debris from the 18-tonne rocket, one of the largest items in decades to have an undirected dive into the atmosphere, landed in the Indian Ocean at a point 72.47° East and 2.65° North. There were no reports of injuries or damage.

There have been intense speculation over where the rocket debris might land, and US officials and other experts

warned its return risked potential casualties.

The hurtling debris of the rocket evoked sharp criticism from the US, NASA and international astrophysicists that Beijing has won a reckless gamble the uncontrolled fall of the rocket stroked fears that it may fall into inhabited areas.

The global anxiety over the debris was sparked by remnants of a similar Chinese rocket fell in Ivory Coast last year damaging several homes in villages.

It was the largest craft to crash to Earth since the US space laboratory, Skylab scat-

tered debris over the southern Australian town of Eserance in 1979.

Harvard astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell, who tracked the debris of the rocket part for the past few days, said on Twitter, "An ocean re-entry was always statistically the most likely. It appears China won its gamble... But it was still reckless."

A number of people in Jordan, Oman and Saudi Arabia posted the video footage as the falling debris whizzed past their countries.

Monitoring service Space-Track, which uses US military

data, also confirmed the re-entry.

"Everyone else following the LongMarch5B re-entry can relax. The rocket is down," it said. "@18SPCS confirms that CZ-5B (LongMarch5B) (48275 / 2021-035B) reentered atmosphere May 9 at 0214Z and fell into the Indian Ocean north of the Maldives at lat 22.2, long 50.0. That's all we have on this re-entry; thanks for the wild ride," it said.

In a statement NASA Administrator Senator Bill Nelson criticised China, saying that it failed to meet responsible standards.

"Spacefaring nations must minimise the risks to people and property on Earth of re-entries of space objects and maximise transparency regarding those operations.

Nelson said it is clear that China is failing to meet responsible standards regarding their space debris.

"It is critical that China and all spacefaring nations and commercial entities act responsibly and transparently in space to ensure the safety, stability, security, and long-term sustainability of outer space activ-

ities," he said.

"Spacefaring nations must minimise the risks to people and property on Earth," US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement.

"It is clear that China is failing to meet responsible standards regarding their space debris."

US Space Command, meanwhile, simply said the rocket had "re-entered over the Arabian Peninsula".

It did not confirm the landing point reported by Chinese media, saying instead that it was "unknown if the debris [had] impacted land or water". State-run Chinese media dismissed the criticism of debris falling in an "uncontrolled" manner as "purely false allegation".

Despite clarification by China's space industry insiders and Foreign Ministry that the probability of the rocket remnants causing harm was extremely low, the Western media outlets and Pentagon, incessantly hyped that the debris was heading back to Earth in an "uncontrolled" manner, state-run *Global Times* reported.

Myanmar junta brands ousted lawmakers 'terrorists'

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar's junta has labeled a shadow government of lawmakers and politicians ousted in a February coup and a people's defense force that is being set up to confront security forces as terrorist groups.

The government of national unity was established by elected legislators who were barred from taking their seats when the military seized power and detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others.

The junta has previously accused them of treason, and the announcement on state TV Saturday said they were being branded terrorists because of their participation in a civil disobedience movement — a popular revolt against the military takeover that has seen people taking to the streets daily despite the lethal use of force by authorities.

More than 700 protesters and bystanders have been killed by security forces since the Feb. 1 coup, according to several detailed estimates. The junta has said the death toll is about one-third of that, and that the



Anti-coup protesters hold the flag of the National League for Democracy party of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, while others flash the three-fingered salute during a "flash mob" rally in Bahan township in Yangon on Sunday.

use of lethal force was justified to end what it called rioting.

Last week, the shadow government announced the formation of "People's Defense Force," which would serve as a precursor to a "Federal Union Army" of democratic forces including ethnic minorities.

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.

Since the coup and crackdown on opponents, students and factory workers have fled to territory controlled by the ethnic guerrilla forces to take military training.

Sadiq Khan wins second term as London Mayor, hails overwhelming mandate

PTI ■ LONDON

Sadiq Khan has been re-elected as Mayor of London for a second term after beating his closest rival with a vote share of 55.2 per cent versus 44.8 per cent in an election that was closer than expected.

Labour Party candidate Khan, 51, defeated his Conservative Party rival, Shaun Bailey, after winning a total of 1,206,034 votes as against 977,601 when both first and second preference votes from Thursday's mayoral election were fully counted overnight on Saturday.

The Pakistani-origin former Labour member of Parliament was the first Muslim mayor of a European capital city when he was first elected in 2016. The mayoral poll was due last year but was postponed by a year at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

"I am deeply humbled by the trust Londoners have placed in me to continue leading the greatest city on earth," said Khan.

"I promise to strain every sinew, help build a better and brighter future for London, after the dark days of the pandemic and to create a greener,

fairer and safer city for all Londoners, to get the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential. I am proud to have won an overwhelming mandate today," he said, speaking at his City Hall office.

Khan reiterated his previous pledge to be a mayor for all Londoners and work to improve the lives of every single person in this city.

"The results of the elections around the UK shows our country, and even our city, remains deeply divided. The scars of Brexit have yet to heal. A crude culture war is pushing us further apart," he said.

US Navy seizes weapons in Arabian Sea likely bound for Yemen

AP ■ DUBAI

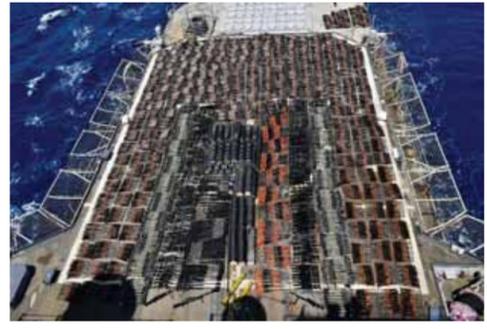
The US Navy announced Sunday it seized an arms shipment of thousands of assault weapons, machine guns and sniper rifles hidden aboard a ship in the Arabian Sea, apparently bound for Yemen to support the country's Houthi rebels.

An American defense official told The Associated Press that the Navy's initial investigation found the vessel came from Iran, again tying the Islamic Republic to arming the Houthis despite a United Nations arms embargo.

Iran's mission to the UN did not immediately respond to a request for comment, though Tehran has denied in the past giving the rebels weapons.

The seizure, one of several amid the years-long war in Yemen, comes as the US and others try to end a conflict that spawned one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. The arms shipment, described as sizeable, shows that the war may still have far to run.

The guided-missile cruiser USS Monterey discovered the weapons aboard what the Navy described as a stateless dhow, a



Weapons that the US Navy described as coming from a hidden arms shipment aboard a stateless dhow are seen aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS Monterey on Saturday.

traditional Mideast sailing ship, in an operation that began Thursday in the northern reaches of the Arabian Sea off Oman and Pakistan. Sailors boarded the vessel and found the weapons, most wrapped in green plastic, below deck.

When laid out on the deck of the Monterey, the scale of the find came into focus. Sailors found nearly 3,000 Chinese Type 56 assault rifles, a variant of the Kalashnikov. They recovered hundreds of other heavy machine guns and sniper rifles,

as well as dozens of advanced, Russian-made anti-tank guided missiles. The shipments also included several hundred rocket-propelled grenade launchers and optical sights for weapons.

The Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet did not identify where the weapons originated, nor where they were going. However, an American defense official said the weapons resembled those of other shipments interdicted bound for the Houthis.

Saudi calls for dialogue between India and Pak to resolve their issues

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Saudi Arabia has emphasised the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve their outstanding matters, including the Kashmir issue.

Pakistan Foreign Office on Saturday night released a joint statement agreed between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia after Prime Minister Imran Khan held high-level talks with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

Khan is on an official visit to Saudi Arabia from May 7-May 9.

"The two sides emphasised the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries, especially Jammu and Kashmir issue, to ensure peace and stability in the region," according to the joint statement.

The Crown Prince "welcomed the recent understanding reached between the military authorities of Pakistan and India regarding ceasefire at the Line of Control (LoC),

which is based on a 2003 understanding between Pakistan and India."

The militaries of India and Pakistan, in a surprise announcement on February 25, said that they have agreed to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir and other sectors.

India has told Pakistan that it desires normal neighbourly relations with it in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence.

During Khan's Saudi visit, the two sides also reviewed all facets of bilateral cooperation and discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest and agreed to further strengthen the relationship in diverse fields.

They signed an agreement on the establishment of the Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council (SPSC). An MoU on combating illicit traffic in narcotics, drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals was also signed.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that the cancellation period of following earlier announced cancelled trains due to operation reason, has been extended upto 17.05.2021 as under:-

EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION OF UNRESERVED MEMU/EMU EXPRESS TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	
04184/04183 Delhi Jn - Tundla Jn - Delhi Jn MEMU Special Express	
04417/04418 Hathras Qilah - Delhi Jn - Hathras Qilah MEMU Special Express	
04427/04428 Hathras Qilah - Hathras Jn - Hathras Qilah MEMU Special Express	
04415/04414 Aligarh Jn - New Delhi - Aligarh Jn EMU Special Express	
04420/04419 Ghaziabad - Mathura Jn - Ghaziabad EMU Special Express	

For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

PUBLIC NOTICE

We act for and on behalf of our client, "The Khatri Co-operative Urban Bank Limited", having its branch at 4, LSC, Saini Enclave, Karkardooma, Delhi 92, and publish this Public Notice for the necessary information and intimation to all the below mentioned customers of the Bank who availed locker facilities from the Bank but have persistently defaulted in payment of Locker Rents and have also not operated their respective lockers for more than three years. The below mentioned lockers have thus become dormant and individual Notices to the below mentioned locker holders have already been issued on 02.04.2021 asking them to pay the overdue locker rent and regularize their respective lockers within 15 days of receipt of the said Notices. Accordingly, by way of this Public Notice, a last and final opportunity is granted to the below mentioned locker holders, who have, despite the service and receipt of the said individual Notices, not come forward either to regularize the position of their respective lockers or to surrender them after paying the overdue locker rent. Such below mentioned locker holders of the Bank are given this last and final opportunity to regularize the position of their respective lockers or surrender them within 15 days of publication of this Public Notice, failing which, the Bank shall be constrained to break open the below mentioned lockers, collect contents thereof and then proceed in accordance with law and more particularly under the provisions of Rule 7 of Safe Deposit Vault (Locker) Conditions, to which the said locker holders have already agreed and consented.

S.No.	Locker Number	Size	Name and Address of Locker Holder	Amount of Rent overdue	Rent due from	Date last operated
1	765	Medium	Mr. Bimal Jain & Mr. Rajnish Jain, D-9, Vivek Vihar, Delhi-92	7,200.00	01.04.2016	19.10.2015
2	764	Medium	Mr. Neeraj & Mrs. Kusum D-9, Vivek Vihar, Delhi-92	7,200.00	01.04.2016	19.10.2015
3	507	Medium	Mr. Vivek Manocha C-22, 3rd Floor Vivek Vihar, Delhi-92	5,400.00	01.04.2017	10.08.2016
4	199	Small	Mr. B.R. Seth & Mr. Raman Seth & Mr. Umesh Seth 113, Jagriti Enclave, Delhi-92	3,600.00	01.04.2017	30.10.2001
5	83	Small	Mr. Manoj Sharma & Mrs. Prakash Wati H-12, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-32	6,000.00	01.04.2015	15.10.2013
6	1027	Medium	Mr. Harpal Singh Dhingra & Mrs. Jyoti Dhingra & Mrs. Harmeet L-401, Design Arch Apartments, Sector 5, Vaishali, Ghaziabad, UP-201011	5,400.00	01.04.2017	02.04.2016

Accordingly, the locker holders named above, may take Notice and act accordingly. No further Public or Private Notice shall be given.

For The Khatri Co-operative Urban Bank Limited
sd/- N.K.BHATNAGAR
NKB LEGAL - Advocates & Legal Consultants
1st Floor, 50 Janpath
Tolstoy Lane, Connaught Place
New Delhi - 110001
E-mail: nkb@nkblegal.com
Phone: 9810039263

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client, Sh. Mohd. Faizan S/o Sh. Mohd. Baseer R/o 3/111, J-Extn., Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092 is registered owner of property address Shop at Ground Floor, no. J-3/111, Khalsa No. 54/13, Village Khureji Khals, abadi of J-Extn., Laxmi Nagar, Ilaqa Shahdara, Delhi-110052 vide Sale Deed dated 28/07/2020 registration No. 2425 Sub Registrar-VIII-A, Delhi executed by Smt. Razia W/o Sh. Mohd. Javed. My client has lost the two chain documents i.e. GPA dated 26/08/2003 executed by Shri Gaffur and Shri Sushant Gupta in favour of Prakash Verma reg. no. 11721 and Sale deed dated 05/07/2019 executed by Prakash Verma in favour of Raziqareg no. 3757. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/D within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. **Vishal Mehan (Advocate)** E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 Mobile No. 9811215181

Donald Trump's 'Big Lie' imperils Republicans who don't embrace it

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Allegiance to a lie has become a test of loyalty to Donald Trump and a means of self-preservation for Republicans.

Trump's discredited allegations about a stolen election did nothing to save his presidency when courtrooms high and low, state governments

and ultimately Congress — meeting in the chaos of an insurrection powered by his grievances — affirmed the legitimacy of his defeat and the honesty of the process that led to it. Now those "Big Lie" allegations, no closer to true than before, are getting a second, howling wind.

Republicans are expected to believe the falsehoods, pre-

tend they do or at bare minimum not let it be known that they don't. State Republican leaders from Georgia to Arizona have been flamed by Trump or his followers for standing against the lies.

Only a select few Republicans in Washington are defying him, for they, too, know that doing so comes with a cost.

B'desh turns down jailed former PM Zia's request to fly abroad for treatment

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday rejected a petition by jailed former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to go abroad on a medical visit, saying "there is no judicial provision that permits a jailed convict to go abroad for treatment."

The 76-year-old chief of main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), who is serving a 17-year jail term on charges of embezzling foreign donations, has been temporarily released from prison amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Zia contracted the virus in early April. As per the doctors, she has now tested negative for the infection and is recovering at a hospital here.

"There is no judicial provision that permits a jailed convict to go abroad for treatment," Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told a news briefing on Sunday, hours after the Law Ministry turned down a petition on her behalf seeking permission to fly abroad for further treatment.

Officials said the Law Ministry reviewed the legal scope and barriers for Zia's visit abroad and sent its opinion to the minister.

The government officially turned down the application after Zia's doctors said she had tested negative for the virus.

"The third phase test has found her Covid-19 negative but she is now in hospital for post Covid-19 treatments," said Zia's doctor and BNP vice chairman AZM Zahid Hossain.

In tense Jerusalem, flag-waving Israeli march to go ahead

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Police on Sunday gave the go-ahead to the annual Jerusalem Day parade, a flag-waving display of Israeli claims to all of the contested city, despite days of unrest and soaring Israeli-Palestinian tensions at a flashpoint holy site.

Monday's parade will pass through Jerusalem's Old City, part of east Jerusalem, which was captured and annexed by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war.

The march was approved amid ongoing clashes between police and Palestinians in the Old City, the emotional epicenter of the long-running conflict, and in a nearby Arab neighborhood where Jewish settlers are trying to evict dozens of Palestinians from their homes.

Before dawn Sunday, thousands of Muslim worshippers skirmished anew with police at

the gates of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City. Videos on social media showed Palestinians hurling water bottles and rocks at officers, who fired stun grenades.

Amos Gilad, a former senior defense official, told Army Radio that the Jerusalem Day parade should be canceled or rerouted away from the Old City's Damascus Gate, saying "the powder keg is burning and can explode at any time."

The site, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, is considered the holiest site in Judaism and the third holiest in Islam. It has been a tinderbox for serious violence in the past.

Dozens of Palestinians were wounded in violent confrontations with police in Jerusalem overnight from Saturday to Sunday.

Dozens of Palestinians were wounded in violent confrontations with police in Jerusalem overnight from Saturday to Sunday.

GST exemption may lead to price hike of vaccines: FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said GST exemption to domestic supplies and commercial import of Covid drugs, vaccines and oxygen concentrators would make these items costlier for consumers as manufacturers would not be able to offset the taxes paid on inputs.



Currently, domestic supplies and commercial imports of vaccines attract a 5 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST), while it is 12 per cent in case of Covid drugs and oxygen concentrators.

"If full exemption from GST is given, vaccine manufacturers would not be able to offset their input taxes and would pass them on to the end consumer/citizen by increasing the price. A 5 per cent GST rate ensures that the manufacturer is able to utilise ITC and in case of overflow of ITC, claim refund. Hence exemption to vaccine from GST would be counterproductive without benefiting the consumer," Sitharaman tweeted.

She further said that if Integrated GST (IGST) Rs 100 is collected on an item, Rs 50

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee earlier in the day wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking exemption from GST and customs duty any donations of oxygen concentrators, cylinders, cryogenic storage tanks and COVID related drugs from organisations or agencies.

The Finance Minister tweeted her response to the Chief Minister's letter, saying these items are already exempted from customs duty and health cess. Besides, Integrated GST (IGST) is also exempted on all COVID relief material imported by the Indian Red Cross for free distribution in the country.

Also IGST exemption has been given in case of goods when imported free of cost for free distribution in the country by any entity, state government, relief agency or autonomous body on the basis of a certificate issued by a state government.

"In order to augment the availability of these items, government has also provided full exemption from basic customs duty and health cess to their commercial imports," Sitharaman said.

Economy likely to rebound by Q4 of FY22: Chandra Shekhar Ghosh

BANDHAN BANK BULLISH ON MEETING TARGETS

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bandhan Bank MD & CEO Chandra Shekhar Ghosh is hopeful that the economy will rebound by the third and fourth quarters of the current fiscal, enabling the lender to meet its targets.

He said the bank had exercised caution amid the Covid-19 pandemic and made additional provisioning in the last quarter of 2020-21.

"We remain cautiously optimistic for the current fiscal as we have made additional provisioning as safeguard. The second wave of Covid pain is expected to subside in the next two-three months, and this time people are better geared than the first wave that took everyone by surprise.

"The worst seems to be over, and the economy will rebound by the time major lending business happens in Q3 and Q4, to meet our targets," Ghosh told PTI.

On NPAs, he said the numbers will come down with time as borrowers are aware about missing repayments amid the pandemic scenario.

"I recently went to an area where NPAs are high, and

Bandhan Bank had on Saturday reported an 80% dip in its March quarter net profit at ₹103 cr, as it wrote off a huge portfolio of loans worth ₹1,929 cr in the flagship microlending business by recognising stress upfront

people acknowledged Bandhan's role in development of that locality. They are aware of the lapses in repayments due to the present situation, and have sought more time. So, there is an intent to repay; it's just a matter of time for our NPAs to come down," he said.

Bandhan Bank had on Saturday reported an 80 per cent dip in its March quarter net profit at Rs 103 crore, as it wrote off a huge portfolio of loans worth Rs 1,929 crore in the flagship microlending business by recognising stress upfront.

As a result of the accelerated write-off, the bank's overall provisions shot up to Rs

1,594 crore in the reporting quarter from the year-ago period's Rs 827 crore. It also made an additional provision of Rs 388 crore on standard advances in the microfinance segment.

"We have almost doubled our provisions during the quarter (under review). We restructured housing loan accounts to the tune of Rs

617 crore, but none in the microfinance portfolio," Ghosh said.

Retail banking loss for the lender in the quarter to March stood at Rs 112.66 crore. However, the retail loan book grew by nearly 25 per cent on-year to Rs 79,466 crore in the 2020-21 fiscal.

Bandhan Bank's collection efficiency (including write-offs and NPAs) stood at 95 per cent as of March 2021 as against 92 per cent in December 2020.

Ghosh had Saturday said troubles in two key markets of West Bengal and Assam, arising due to factors like state elections, a local law in Assam and the second wave of the pandemic, have subsided, with both the states showing collection performance at over 90 per cent.

Myanmar junta approves 15 investments, including huge Chinese project

FIANS ■ KOLKATA

China has started reaping Cereals for backing the February 1 military takeover in Myanmar.

The military regime-controlled Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) this week approved 15 projects, including a Chinese \$2.5-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) power project, easily the biggest single investment since the new military takeover.

The MIC, headed by Lt General Moe Myint Tun, did not specify details of the mega project but IANS reliably learned from Myanmar Planning Department sources that the LNG project approved on Friday is likely to be the Chinese-backed Mee Lin Gyaing power project in the country's Irrawaddy Delta.

The nature and cost revealed by Lt Gen Tun's office matches the Mee Lin Gyaing project first discussed during Chinese President Xi Jinping's trip to Myanmar in 2020.

At that time, Beijing and the National League for Democracy (NLD) govern-

ment ousted by the February 1 coup signed a letter of intent to speed up implementation of the project under the countries' Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) agreement.

At the time of the coup, the Mee Lin Gyaing project was one of two LNG projects awaiting official approval.

The other is worth \$2 billion. The 1,390 MW Mee Lin Gyaing project is to be developed jointly by Yunnan Provincial Energy Investment Group Co Ltd, the UREC, Zhefu Holding Group Co Ltd, and the Supreme Group.

The project is expected to be complete in 2023; 35 per cent of the power produced will be distributed to Ayeyarwady Region, with the rest going to Yangon via the national grid.

Myanmar's Supreme Group's Deputy CEO U Htu Htu Aung told IANS that the joint venture company has been awaiting approval for the Mee Lin Gyaing project and is yet to be formally intimated. However, the company has picked up information about the project clearance, Aung said.

Reliance Retail 2nd fastest growing retailer in world



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Retail Ltd has been ranked second fastest growing retailer in the world in the 2021 ranking of global retail power houses by Deloitte, down from top rank secured the previous years.

It has been ranked 53rd in the list of Global Powers of Retailing, improvement from 56th earlier, according to the Deloitte report.

The list is topped by US giant Walmart Inc, which retains its position as world's top retailer. Amazon.Com Inc improved its position to rank second. Costco Wholesale Corporation of US slipped a rank to be placed third followed by Schwarz Group of Germany.

The top 10 has seven US retailers and one from the UK (Tesco PLC at 10th position). Other US retailers in the top 10

include The Kroger Co (ranked 5th), Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc (6th) and CVS Health Corporation (ranked 9th). Germany's Aldi Einkauf GmbH & Co. OHG and Aldi International Services GmbH & Co. OHG is placed at 8th position.

Reliance Retail is the only Indian entry in the global list of 250 retailers. It features consecutively for the 4th time in the list of Global Powers of Retailing and World's Fastest Retailers.

"Reliance Retail, last year's Fastest 50 leader, dropped to second place. The company recorded YoY growth of 41.8 per cent, driven primarily by a 13.1 per cent increase in the number of stores in its consumer electronics, fashion and lifestyle and grocery retail chains, to 11,784 stores across 7,000+ towns and cities in India at fiscal year end (FY20)," Deoitte said.

COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

Centre releases ₹8,923 cr to 25 States as grants for rural local bodies

The grants are meant for all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions - village, block and district, an official statement said.

It may be utilised by the RLBs, among other things, for various prevention and mitigation measures needed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and will augment their resources.

As per the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission, the 1st instalment of grants was to be released to the states in the month of June 2021.

However, in view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic situation and at the recommendation of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Ministry of Finance has decided to release the grant in advance of the normal schedule, the ministry added.

The Finance Ministry on Sunday said it has released Rs 8,923 crore to 25 States for providing grants to the rural local bodies for various prevention and mitigation measures needed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, on Saturday released an amount of Rs 8,923.8 crore to 25 states for providing grants to the rural local bodies (RLBs).



FPIs withdraw ₹5,936 cr from equities in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pulled out ₹5,936 crore from the Indian equities in the first week of May amid worries over the intense second wave of coronavirus infection and its fallout on the economy.

Foreign investors had pulled out ₹9,659 crore in April after infusing money in the preceding six months, according to the depositories' data.

If fears of Covid-19 persist

among overseas investors, then further redemptions cannot be ruled out, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, stated.

According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) withdrew a net sum of ₹5,936 crore from Indian equity markets during May 3-7.

Prior to April's outflow, FPIs had been infusing money in equities since October. They invested over ₹1.97 lakh crore in equities during October

2020 to March 2021. This included a net investment of Rs 55,741 crore in the first three months of this year.

"The nervousness among FPIs with regards to the second wave of coronavirus pandemic in India was visible in the flow numbers for this week," Srivastava said.

Alok Aggarwal, Chief Research Officer, Bajaj Capital, said the pullback by FPIs is consistent with a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases in India, state-wide lockdowns and the

consequent slowdown in growth.

In addition, a weak currency added to the outflows by FPIs, he added. Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO of Groww, opined that the recent withdrawal could be due to profit booking. "FPIs had started investing heavily around April 2020. Since then, the markets have climbed significantly and many of the stock picks made by them have given good returns over the same period," he said.

IDFC First Bank's Q4 net profit up 79%

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

IDFC First Bank on Sunday reported a 78.6 per cent increase in its net profit for the quarter ended March at ₹127.81 crore.

During the same period of FY20, the bank had reported a net profit of ₹1.54 crore.

The bank's total income during the fourth quarter of FY21 came in at ₹4,834 crore, against ₹4,576.12 crore.

The gross non-performing asset (GNPA) of IDFC First Bank as a percentage of gross advancements was 4.15 per cent during the period under review, up from 2.60 per cent in January-March quarter of the previous fiscal.

The provision for Q4 FY21 was at ₹603 crore as compared to ₹679 crore for Q4 FY20 and as compared to ₹595 crore in Q3 FY21.

V. Vaidyanathan, Managing Director and CEO, IDFC First Bank said: "Including the equity capital of ₹3,000 crore raised through QIP on April 6, 2021, our overall capital adequacy is strong at 16.32 per cent.

We maintain high levels of liquidity with liquidity coverage ratio of 153 per cent."

India's power consumption grows nearly 25 pc in first week of May



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Power consumption in the country grew 25 per cent in the first week of May to 26.24 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing consistent recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first week of May 2020 was 21.05 BU. The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

On the other hand, peak power demand met, which is the highest supply in a day, during the first week of this month remained well above the highest record of 166.22 GW in May 2020 except on May 2, when it was 161.14 GW.

During the first week of

May this year, peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded a growth of nearly 22 per cent over 138.6 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 7, 2020). The power consumption in April grew 41 per cent to 119.27 BU.

Power consumption in April 2020 had dropped to 84.55 BU from 110.11 BU in the same month in 2019, mainly because of fewer economic activities following the imposition of lockdown by the government in the last week of March 2020 to contain the spread of deadly COVID-19.

The power consumption also fell in May 2020 to 102.08 BU from 120.02 BU in May 2019.

Covid-19: NCP demands GST waiver on oxygen equipment & drugs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The NCP has sought waiver of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on all oxygen equipment and other drugs being procured to tackle the COVID-19 surge, claiming that such levies were "choking" the health care system.

Maharashtra NCP chief Jayant Patil in a tweet tagged a letter written by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM) to the Union finance minister on May 6, requesting that the GST, customs and any other levies on drugs and oxygen products be waived off until March 31, 2022.

"While India is reeling at the lack and unavailability of medical apparatus, a 12% levy on them is simply absurd. @FinMinIndia should heed words of @ASSOCHAM India and waive of GST levies on all O2 equipments immediately. It is choking our health care system," Patil, who is the state's water resources minister, tweeted on Saturday night.

The NCP shares power in Maharashtra with the Shiv Sena and Congress. Since GST related decisions are within the purview of the GST coun-

The death toll climbed to 2,42,362 with 4,092 daily deaths, the data updated at 8 am showed

cil, copy of the letter has been sent to all state finance ministers so that the matter is addressed expeditiously, the ASSOCHAM letter said. It said to meet the huge and sudden demand of medicinal drugs and devices, hospitals are installing PSA plants, and states, corporates, individuals and donors are buying oxygen concentrators, cylinders, cryogenic storage tanks, tankers and containers, the industry body said.

These measures are imperative for the country to ensure there are no supply constraints with respect to these life saving items to meet not only the current surge, but also prepare for the impending third wave of the pandemic, it said in the letter. India recorded 4,03,738 fresh COVID-19 cases in a day, which pushed the tally to 2,22,96,414, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Sunday.

The death toll climbed to 2,42,362 with 4,092 daily deaths, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Coal India to continue with fuel supply to power plants under import substitution in current fiscal



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL will continue with the supply of coal to the power plants under import substitution in the ongoing fiscal.

The development assumes significance in the wake of the PSU earlier stating its drive for coal import substitution has gained tempo with consumers opting for about 90 million tonnes (MT) of indigenous coal in FY'21.

"The issue of supply coal in the FY 2021-22 was deliberated during the sub-group meeting...Chaired by Joint Secretary, Ministry of Coal, wherein it has been decided to continue the supply of coal to the power plants under import substitution mechanism for FY 2021-22," Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a notice.

Fincare Small Finance Bank files ₹1,330-cr IPO papers with Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Digital lender Fincare Small Finance Bank has filed preliminary papers with capital market regulator Sebi to raise Rs 1,330 crore through an initial share-sale.

The initial public offer (IPO) comprises fresh issue of equity share of the bank worth Rs 330 crore and an offer for sale aggregating up to Rs 1,000 crore by promoter Fincare Business Services Limited, according to the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP).

This offer includes a reservation for subscription by employees. The bank would utilise net proceeds from the fresh issue towards augmenting its Tier-1 capital base to meet future capital requirements. Further, a small portion of the proceeds will be used towards meeting the expenses in relation to the offer. Under the terms of the RBI final approval and the small finance bank licensing guidelines, the lender is required to list its equity shares on the stock exchanges within a period of three years from reaching a net worth of Rs 500 crore.

The Bengaluru-based MFIT turned small finance bank started operations in July 2017.

imposed under this notification shall remain in force up to and inclusive of the 31st October, 2021, unless revoked, superseded or amended earlier," the CBIC has said in a notification. The commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) had recommended for extension of the duty, after concluding a probe. While DGTR recommends the duty to be levied, the finance ministry imposes it. Countries initiate anti-dumping probes to determine if the domestic industry has been hurt by a surge in below-cost imports.



In between receiving accolades for his road trip film, *Hum Bhi Akele Tum Bhi Akele*, ANSHUMAN JHA spared some time for a quick chat with CHRISTY VARGHESE



How often have you seen a film that places a person with a different sexual orientation at its centre without making a caricature out of him or her? Or if not that, doesn't the character remain helmed in within the confines of this particular aspect of his/her personality where it becomes his/her sole defining trait. We all know the answers when it comes to mainstream Indian cinema.

It is against this backdrop that Harish Vyas' heart wrenching human drama, *Hum Bhi Akele Tum Bhi Akele* needs to be viewed. Of course it helps that it has had an astounding journey across several prominent film festivals. It won awards including the 'Best Film' Audience Choice Award at the HBO South Asian Film Festival in New York, the jury prize 'Best Actor' (Anshuman Jha) at Rajasthan International Film Festival. The film, screened at the closing night of India's biggest LGBTQ film festival Kashish, premiered on Disney+ Hotstar yesterday.

At its heart lies a love story, with Anshuman Jha and Zareen Khan in lead roles, which captures the individual journeys of a gay man and a lesbian woman who embark on a road trip to discover the many elements of "love" and how they form a unique relationship which explores the notion of a soulmate beyond sexuality and gender. The film has been touted as a conversation starter about the LGBTQ community and the many definitions of love and friendship.

Anshuman Jha took some time off to discuss the film and more...

◆According to Wikipedia you are a film and theatre actor. While both mediums have their own pros and cons, which one are you more effortlessly drawn to and why?

My love for cinema began when I was five, which is when I first thought of becoming an actor. As a middle-class boy in Allahabad (now officially known as Prayagraj) I remember falling in love with Naseruddin Shah as he grooved to *Tirchi Topiwale* in *Tridev*; we had VHS cassettes at that time.. Over the years I have been lucky to train with some of the best theatre gurus around, whether it be Barry John in Delhi or Sanjana Kapoor at Prithvi and Atul

UNUSUAL LOVE STORY

Kumar in Mumbai. Each medium has its own charm and appeal, each playing a significant role in my life. Theatre for me is meditation; Cinema is euphoria. Theatre grounds me as an actor and keeps me rooted while cinema gives me the wings to fly, that's how I would look at it.

◆If you had to choose, would you like your movie to receive more awards or would you prefer it to be popular amongst the masses?

I just want it to touch as many people as possible. So, if by popularity you mean it makes an impact among more people, that would be awesome. And if receiving accolades translates into more people tuning in and getting touched by it, even better. Honestly, both options sound good. I would want you to understand that I don't make films with an eye on the commercial aspect. I make films from an emotional point of view. There was this gentleman in New York from the LGBTQ community, who saw the film and approached me at the premiere to tell me, with tears in his eyes, that I had depicted his relationship with his father. That memory would probably last a lifetime for me. I make films seeking more of such moments, everything else that comes along with it is just a byproduct.

◆What would life be like, if it was centered around friendship and not matrimony?

It would be very peaceful.. (laughs before continuing) According to me, jokes apart, the foundation for every marriage should be friendship. I say that because the essence of 'love' in friendship is very pure and has an unconditional nature. It is the human mind which starts expecting



and plays games with others as well as its own self. And that is where the troubles begin because the moment there is any sort of selfish expectation, you are weighed down by the baggage of your own thoughts.. So I think friendship should be the base of any healthy equation between people, irrespective of whether it be sexual or non sexual. This film also talks about discovering love in friendship because there is a certain purity to that. It can be platonic and still be just as beautiful as anything. While the basis of your question might boil down to how society has conditioned us, it is not impossible to break free from it and adopt another thought process altogether. Ultimately, I believe, we can choose our conditioning and start a chain reaction which would eventually impact someone else's conditioning.

◆This might sound clichéd but what would be your definition of a soulmate?

Definition of a soul mate... hmm (seems to be ruminating over the answer and almost drifts off). Very good question and... a somewhat difficult question. I don't have a definition of a soulmate set in stone, to be honest. I think it is somebody you can be yourself with, without thinking too much about it. Someone with whom you share a bubble of intimacy without forcing it. There has to be a certain sense of connection which transcends mere words and elevates the human experience (laughs a little as he emerges from his thoughts) That is the best way I can define it, at this point in my life.

◆Over the years there have been many instances of cinema which were conversation starters for the LGBTQ community. However, the members of the community are still frowned upon in the mainstream Indian set up. What will it take to change this scenario?

I know it is legalised in India but it is still taboo amongst certain sections of society and I think the only way to get around it is through more conversations, and hopefully more films, which will in turn lead to more acceptance. One can't really force people to do something they do not agree with but if it becomes a point of conversation more frequently, people would have to engage with it. Cinema can play a huge role with respect to that. Like I said earlier, we all are the sum total of our conditioning. The more we normalise talking about, the more we accept it, and little by little the taboo associated with it will wear off. A 360° impact is what is required to change this scenario. Eventually, it will take time, but as we have seen in this past decade it will only keep on getting better as times roll by.

◆Are conversations alone enough?

I think it is a starting point. Let me tell you something. When I started this film, there were a lot many people close to me who wanted me to give this project a good thought, they would ask me to consider whether this would be a smart move for an actor like me.. And the same people, after seeing the movie, shared some incredibly positive feedback. The fact that I had those conversations strengthened my belief in making this feature film. Every process, simple or complex, begins with a thought, right? A conversation can be equated with the process of sowing a seed, with a thought being planted in someone's mind. Given enough time, that thought will bear fruit and produce some more seeds. Believe what you may, your words and actions (or the lack of) do make a difference.

Extend a hand

DREW BARRYMORE has urged people to help India during the pandemic



Hollywood star Drew Barrymore has urged everyone to help India amid the Covid-19 second wave. The actress addressed the issue on *The Drew Barrymore Show*.

"Hello everyone and Namaste India! This one's a special message to the people of India. A lot of you guys already know of my deep-rooted connection with the country and how I've always loved India for its culture, its people and so much more!" she said.

Barrymore added it "holds a very special place in my heart", and that in her visits, she has met so many "wonderful people" who have truly inspired her as a person, which propelled her to write a chapter in her book, too.

"Today, as we cope with the worldwide situation, my heart goes out to the people of India who are trying hard to hold it together. My sincere wishes and prayers to you to stay strong and believe that we will come out stronger together," she said.

The actress added: "I came across a couple of articles online that truly invigorated a sense of faith and positivity in me, like a 110-year-old Covid-19 survivor in India, or how a man donated his entire life's savings towards relief. Countless people, celebrities and organisations coming together and pledging support, people starting food centres and relief groups — and this is truly the need of the hour."

"A small contribution could really help and make a giant difference, and even save a life! I'm doing my bit and urge you to do whatever is in your capacity. Most importantly, I'm sending you a lot of love, healing and prayers and faith in the light at the end of this dark tunnel."

"Namaste. Thank you so much and all of my love," Barrymore concluded on the show that airs on Zee Cafe in India.

Many international celebrities including James McAvoy, Camila Cabello, Shawn Mendes, Jada Smith have helped and also urged fans to help the people in need.

Actor KALKI KOECHLIN debuts as a writer with *The Elephant In the Womb*

Changing gears

After making waves with films like *Margarita with a Straw*, *Yeh Jewani Hai Deewani* and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, award winning French-Indian actor Kalki Koechlin is to debut as a writer with *The Elephant In the Womb*, publisher Penguin Random House India announced recently.

In this unique graphic book, a combination of personal essays and think-pieces, we finally have that candid, funny and relatable book on pregnancy and parenting that mothers, expectant mothers, and anyone even thinking about motherhood have been waiting for.

Gorgeously illustrated by Ukrainian artist Valeriya Polyanychko, with deeply personal journal entries captured in real time, alongside reflections and anecdotes, this is a ground-breaking book — it's the motherload!

Commenting on the experience and inspiration, Kalki said, "While I was struggling with my pregnancy and my new role as a mother, it was my friends who helped me. They shared their rough times and dark phases and how they got through it with laughter and contemplation, and that helped me more than those who spoke only of the



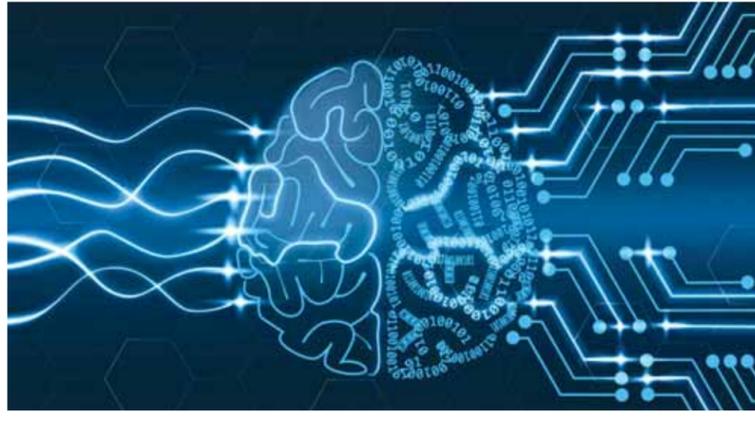
glorious, blessed babe in arms that brought light into their lives."

Illustrator Valeriya Polyanychko, said, "We often take motherhood for granted and assume that it's something that just happens. Kalki's book uses quick wit and a sense of humour to take the reader down the long and winding road of parenting. Not only did Kalki's emotional journey deeply resonate with me, but illustrating this book has also been one of the most profound and enriching experiences I've ever had."

With whimsy compassion, uproariously funny art and spellbinding honesty, *The Elephant in the Womb* blends the deeply private with the blazingly political. It's an eye-opener for anyone who has ever thought that pregnancy was all about the glow and that motherhood was all about fulfillment. From fixing broken parts to enduring untimely farts, Koechlin's nuanced prose tells us the bare-faced truth about the physiological discomfort and manic expectations that make it a bittersweet experience.

Talking about the book she commissioned, Manasi Subramaniam, Executive Editor and Head of Literary Rights, Penguin Press, Penguin Random House India, said: "Kalki Koechlin's book deals with the mother of all issues — the fact that parenting is as exhausting as it is fulfilling, as draining as it is inspiring, and as frustrating as it is joyous. We romanticise motherhood in popular culture, and I'm so glad Kalki has pulled back the curtain on what is essentially the physical and emotional labour of much of the female population."

—IANS



This AI is a bit smarter

A sarcasm detector for social media posts means that it can correctly identify the emotion behind the text



Computer science researchers including one of Indian-origin at the University of Central Florida have developed an artificial intelligence (AI)-based sarcasm detector for posts on social media platforms.

Sarcasm has been a major hurdle to increasing the accuracy of sentiment analysis, especially on social media, since sarcasm relies heavily on vocal tones,

facial expressions and gestures that cannot be represented in text.

While artificial intelligence (AI) refers to logical data analysis and response, sentiment analysis is akin to correctly identifying emotional communication on social media.

"The presence of sarcasm in text is the main hindrance in the performance of sentiment analysis," says Ivan Garibay, Assistant

Professor of engineering from Complex Adaptive Systems Lab (CASL) at University of Central Florida.

Sarcasm isn't always easy to identify in conversation, so you can imagine it's pretty challenging for a computer programme to do it and do it well.

"We developed an interpretable deep learning model using multi-head self-attention and gated recurrent units," Garibay said in a paper published in the journal *Entropy*.

The team taught the computer model to find patterns that often indicate sarcasm and combined that with teaching the programme to correctly pick out cue words in sequences that were more likely to indicate sarcasm.

They taught the model to do this by feeding it large data sets and then checked its accuracy.

The team included computer science doctoral student Ramya Akula. "In face-to-face conversation, sarcasm can be identified effortlessly using facial expressions, gestures, and tone of the speaker," Akula said.

"Detecting sarcasm in textual communication is not a trivial task as none of these cues are readily available. Specially with the explosion of internet usage, sarcasm detection in online communications from social networking platforms is much more challenging," she added.

—IANS

TRENDBLAZER

STAYING HOME IS A HOBBY: SONAKSHI
 SONAKSHI SINHA added a dash of wit on Instagram saying she has reached the point when staying at home has become a hobby. She urged everyone to get vaccinated to drive Covid away. "Reached that point where staying home has become a hobby. #coronabhagao #getvaccinated," she wrote alongside the post. She recently announced her new project *Bulbul Tarang*. She makes her web series debut with *Fallen* and will also be seen in *Bhuj: The Pride Of India*.

fairtalk
 RAVEENA TANDON
 "Just look around you, how can what's happening not need you to do something, instead of just sitting and tweeting about it. As you can see, Delhi is almost gasping for breath, and this is the initiative a few like-minded people along with me decided to take up. I have dispersed a lot of 300 cylinders and for the rest, we are trying to generate funds."

dailytalk
 LIZAA MALIK
 "It's a precarious time for everyone. Things are falling off for a lot of people. We have about 50 of our employees who tested positive. This is the time we have to stand for them. We are in it together and we will stand strong. I request everyone to follow all the SOPs and take care of themselves. Stay indoors if it's not an emergency."

MEGAN ON HAVING THREE SONS
 Hollywood star MEGAN FOX says having three sons is nothing short of watching a UFC fight throughout the day. "I don't know what it's like to have a girl. For me, it's like UFC Fight Night all day, every day. We need to live in a padded cell for everyone to be safe. They love each other. They're best friends, but the fighting is non-stop because they have so much energy and they're so rambunctious that it's just a melee."



Once again, schools and other education institutes across states have been shut soon after they reopened in January following a hiatus of almost a year. The interaction between students and teachers has returned to the online platforms. Several students, especially the ones with no access to smart phones and internet are once again unable to manage online classes. With ever-increasing number of Covid-19 positive cases and deaths across the country, their plight has taken a back seat. Amid the chaos, the student community continues to struggle for its education, more so, in the rural hinterland.

In Jammu and Kashmir, attending online classes is as much a challenge for students as it is for teachers to conduct these. Owing to its tough geography and extreme weather conditions, the telecommunication and Wi-Fi options are limited. Most families own only one smartphone which is not enough to cater to the needs of all the children. Neither do they have enough money to pay for mobile internet. All these challenges, which were recognised during the first wave itself, continue to adversely impact the future of children in rural regions of Jammu district.

Yathir Chaudhary, a social activist from Surankot Tehsil in Jammu's Poonch district, while reflecting upon

DIGITAL DIVIDE

The shift to online mode of education during the pandemic has adversely affected education, says SAJJAD HUSSAIN SHAH GILANI



the concerns of the parents says that the second wave and its impact on the education of children is being discussed in every family. "Parents were already dis-



appointed seeing their children struggling with online classes during the last academic year. They don't want children to forget what school life is all about and miss out on holistic growth. Studying online and interacting with fellow students and teachers through the small screen is killing their childhood," he rued. "The biggest concern for parents is that children are losing interest in education. "No one knows when this pandemic is going to end. If the education institutions remain shut, two academic years will be wasted. There are no easy answers to address

the fear of parents," shared Akhlaq Ahmed, a resident of Surankot.

A strong foundation is required to compete at higher education levels. Discontinuing classes at primary and middle-level impacts the learning skills of the students. "In our country, the general perception is that only board exams are important. But that doesn't mean education can be compromised at the primary level. In fact, primary education impacts children's academic progress as it prepares them for future challenges," Akhlaq added.

The first wave of coronavirus was not as scary as the second has proved to be. There are a total of 44,307 active cases in J&K — 28,736 in Kashmir and 15,571 in Jammu. The overall death toll is around 1,515 in Kashmir and 1,097 in Jammu. There is a sense of panic among parents as this time children, largely unaffected in the first wave, have not been spared. As per government data, approximately 11.5 per cent of the 56 lakh Covid-19 cases reported between January 1 and April 21 were in the age group zero to 20 years.

The impact of the second wave on children intensifies the need for protecting them from the deadly virus by taking the correct measures at the right time. While shutting down education institutes and shifting to the online mode is justified, is it being executed in the correct manner? How well did our government prepare our schools and other education institutions in the last one year to ensure that students are not affected during the second wave?

As per the UNICEF, the closure of 1.5 million schools in India due to the pandemic and lockdowns last year has impacted 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. In addition, there are over six million girls and boys who were already out of school even before the COVID-19 crisis began. Online education is not an option for all as only one in four children has access to digital devices and internet connectivity. Pre-COVID, only a quarter of households (24 per cent) in India had access to the internet and there is a large rural-urban and gender divide.

On one hand, we have people fighting to save the lives of their family members from this fatal infection and on the other is the fight to keep moving ahead. Considering the ongoing scenario, the academic session should be suspended for a month, appropriate measures should be taken during this time to ensure that whenever the session starts, no student — from both rural and urban areas — is left behind.



Theory of POLITICS

A proper perspective that includes the right knowledge of the prehistoric era is essential to raise standards to a high pedestal to achieve professed goals, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

Off late, there has been a lot of discussion about value-based and issue-based politics. On one hand, few senior statesmen have been laying emphasis on value-based politics, whereas the new age leaders, have been saying that politics should be issue-based.

The recent tensions at the international border and the election results of some states in India have revived these questions relating to the primacy of values vs issues again. Some political parties and their leaders, who focus on values, are highlighting the questions of corruption, nepotism and lust for power that have become the bane of present-day politics. Others are raising the issues of unemployment, decentralisation of political power, giving women a greater share in the democratic set-up at the panchayat level and more in their speeches, writings or election manifestoes. Those who campaign for value-based politics, mention it as essential for principled politics. Some of the values they advocate are clean and speedy administration, fulfilling election promises and goals mentioned in the manifesto, maintaining a high standard of public and private morality and responsibility towards one's official duties as well as the electorate. Others who talk of issues, mention poverty, unemployment, casteism, participation of youth at grass-root level as essentials of the democratic process. There is also a group who talk of both — issues and values.

A common feature noticed in the speeches and writings of all these three kinds of political leaders is that their thinking is guided by the political, economic and social theories enunciated by the western or eastern thinkers of the last two or three centuries, including those of Rousseau, Thomas Malthus, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Mahatma Gandhi and more. Some have a wider range of vision that includes Kautilya, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato and more. But one important element missing from the perspective of almost all is the knowledge of the state of society as it existed in the earliest times. Not only is that knowledge missing but its place has wrongly been taken by the false concept or belief that there did not exist any 'society' which implies that man during the time which was called golden age (*satyuga*), was barbarous.

The fact, however, is that the society at that time had all those values which we cherish today and there were no issues like poverty, unemployment and more. So, unless our leaders and political thinkers have a clear understanding of that society — and its political, economic, social and cultural aspects — it would be almost impossible for them to understand the values and method of their inculcation today. Hence, a proper perspective that includes the right knowledge of the prehistoric era is essential to raise the standard of politics to a high pedestal and to make it achieve its professed goals.



The soaring temperatures and scorching sun impact the young ones severely. Here are a few tips to keep them safe

Shade the child



It's the beginning of May, and temperatures are already soaring close to 40 degrees Celsius. The sun is scorching and humidity is hitting us in the face like a sauna.

Children are home because of summer vacations and, also, online classes, but parents still need to ensure the protection of little ones from the ill-effects of the season. Follow these simple tips by Manoj Jain, Director, Scram.in to navigate through these sticky weeks like a pro and keep your children safe and comfortable this summer.

KEEP TINY TOTS OUT OF THE SUN

Keep newborns, especially those under six months, out of direct and indirect sunlight. Young infants have not developed sweat glands, meaning they have no natural way of cooling off. Add to it the fact that children's body temperature can rise up to five times faster than adults. Since babies have no way to tell you they're uncomfortable, you need to be more vigilant. The perfect way to prevent heatstroke is by keeping them in the shade — under a tree or an umbrella — even when out-



doors.

MAKE HATS MANDATORY

A lightweight wide-

brimmed hat is perfect to keep your little ones cooler when they're playing outdoors. It not only blocks out the brightness but also protects hair, eyes, face, ears and neck from sun damage and harmful UV rays.

COVER UP IN COMFORT CLOTHING

Stick to natural cotton outfits for your precocious tots this season. They are likely to sweat buckets while running around causing mayhem. Loose, light



clothing not only allows their skin to breathe, but also absorbs moisture from the skin, preventing pesky itchy rashes.

HYDRATE! HYDRATE! HYDRATE!

Keep their water bottles filled and handy at all times. Not only does drinking water often replenish body fluids lost due to excessive sweating, taking a few gulps every now and then makes them feel cooler instantly.

SLATHER ON THE SPF

Probably the most important summer tip — more so for Indians baking under the tropical sun. Apply sunscreen early, and often, especially if the children spend time outdoors. Sunscreen protects your little ones' delicate skin from the harmful (and sometimes cancer-causing) ultra-violet rays of the sun. Go for a brand that offers a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30, contains zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, has broad spectrum coverage (against UVA and UVB rays), and is water-resistant. Make

sure to lotion them up at least 30 minutes before sun exposure, and don't forget to top it up every few hours, as a sunscreen's SPF is only fully effective for up to two hours after you put it on.

KEEP A CLOSE WATCH

Lastly, remember to always look out for signs of heat-related illness. No matter our best efforts, sometimes life and kids can get the better of us. So pay attention to these tell-tale warnings that can signal an oncoming problem. Signs of heat exhaustion in children may include: elevated body temperature, cool and clammy skin, goose bumps, fainting, dizziness or weakness, headache increased sweating increased thirst irritability, muscle cramps and nausea and/or vomiting.

If you notice any of the above, it's best to immediately bring your child into the shade, cool them off with wet towels or sponges, and encourage them to drink fluids with electrolytes. Don't hesitate to call your doctor when in doubt.

—IANS

Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.
 —Leonardo da Vinci

VITAMIN C EFFECTIVE IN FIGHTING COVID-19

Studies published in *Indian Journal of Basic and Applied Medical Research* prove Vitamin C's effectiveness on COVID-19 patients. Studies were conducted at a Government hospital in Coimbatore over four months on 400 COVID-19 positive patients, with consent, to understand impact of high dose of Vitamin C given via Liposomal Vitamin C drink and Vitamin-C tablets.

Two consecutive negative results were confirmed in 94 per cent of the patients on high dose oral liposomal Vitamin-C on 14th day, which suggests it is a useful, cheap yet powerful tool as adjuvant treatment of COVID-19, with other available treatment modalities (However, preventive methods, social distancing, masks, sanitizers (SMS) are essential for everyone till all get vaccinated and get herd immunity from COVID-19). Vitamin-C is cheap, easily available, efficient and helps the body to fight against COVID-19 too.



SLEEP DISORDERS HIKE HEALTHCARE COSTS

Sleep disorders are associated with significantly higher rates of health care utilisation, conservatively placing an additional \$94.9 billion in costs each year to the United States health care system, according to a new study from researchers at Mass Eye and Ear, a member hospital of Mass General Brigham.

In their new analysis, published in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, the researchers found the number of medical visits and prescriptions filled were nearly doubled in people with sleep disorders such as sleep apnea and insomnia, compared to similar people without. Affected patients were also more likely to visit the emergency department and have more comorbid medical conditions.

The analysis revealed that patients with sleep disorders attended more than 16 office visits and nearly 40 medication prescriptions per year, compared to nearly nine visits and 22 prescriptions for those without a sleep disorder.



BURN AND TRAUMA SCARS CAN BE REDUCED

Researchers have been able to reduce scarring by blocking a part of the healing process in research that could make a significant difference for burns and other trauma patients.

University of Queensland Professor Kiarash Khosrotehrani said scars had been reduced by targeting the gene that instructs stem cells to form them in an animal study.

"The body's natural response to trauma is to make plenty of blood vessels to take oxygen and nutrients to the wound to repair it. Once the wound has closed, many of these blood vessels become fibroblast cells which produce the collagens forming the hard materials found in scar tissue. We found that vascular stem cells determined whether a blood vessel was retained or gave rise to scar material instead," Professor Khosrotehrani said.

The experimental dermatology team then identified the molecular mechanism to switch off the process by targeting a specific gene involved in scar formation known as SOX9.



EFFECTIVE SALMONELLA VACCINE

University of Florida researchers led by Mariola Edelmans in the department of microbiology and cell science, UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, are laying the groundwork for an effective vaccine for salmonella and other hard-to-treat bacterial infections. In their study, supported by the National Institutes of Health and published in *PLOS Pathogens*, the UF/IFAS scientists demonstrate a novel approach to triggering immunity against salmonella.

This approach takes advantage of how cells communicate with each other, said Winnie Hui, first author of the study. The researchers found that after they introduced the exosomes containing salmonella antigens, the exosomes localised to tissues that produce mucous, activating specific cells at these sites. Weeks later antibodies against salmonella and specific cellular immune responses developed.



PREFERRED MUSIC LOWERS HEART RATE

Trials are under way at an NHS trust to see if an algorithm can curate music playlists to reduce suffering in Alzheimer's patients as well as in stressed medical staff.

A test among people with dementia found an algorithm that 'prescribes' songs based on listeners' personal backgrounds and tastes resulting in reduction in heart rate of up to 22 per cent, lowering agitation and distress in some cases.

The Lancashire teaching hospitals' NHS trust is extending trials to medical staff who worked in critical care during Covid to see if it can ease anxiety and stress. It is also planning to test it on recovering critical care patients, needle-phobic children and outpatients coping with chronic pain in the hope of reducing opiate prescriptions.



Dravid predicts 3-2 win for India in Eng

▶ shortpasses

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Beating great Rahul Dravid reckons India will prevail over England 3-2 in this summer's away Test series and calls it the visitors' "best chance" to win in the UK since 2007.

Dravid was the last Indian captain to win a Test series in England.

"I really do think India have a very good chance this time," Dravid said during a webinar, according to ESPNcricinfo.

Dravid, who is now the head of the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru, said Ravichandran Ashwin versus Ben Stokes could form an "interesting subplot" to what is expected to be an intriguing series.

"There's no question about their (England's) bowling. Whatever bowling attack England put on the park, especially their seam-bowling attack, is going to be fantastic. They have a lot of players to pick and choose from and that's going to be terrific.

"But if you look at their top six or top seven, you really think of one great batsman, a world-class batsman who is Joe Root.

"Obviously, Ben Stokes is another one, who is a good all-rounder, but for some reason Ashwin seems to do well against him. And that should be an interesting contest. I know he's done well against him (Stokes) in India, but it'll still be an interesting subplot to the series."

But an Indian team, on the back of its historic triumph in Australia and the home series win against



Indian skipper Virat Kohli with his England counterpart Joe Root

PTI/File Picture

AFTER THE WTC FINAL, THEY'RE GOING TO BE IN ENGLAND FOR A WHOLE MONTH BEFORE THE TEST SERIES STARTS. I DON'T THINK ANY TEAM HAS HAD THAT KIND OF TIME TO PREPARE FOR A TEST SERIES

— RAHUL DRAVID

ply our best chance, maybe say 3-2 to India," Dravid said.

The former captain said India, to their advantage, will get a lot of time to prepare there for the rubber.

"I think India will play really well in England this time," Dravid said.

"It's a great opportunity we've got. After the WTC final, they're going to be in England for a whole month before the Test series starts. I don't think any team has had that kind of time to prepare for a Test series as India will have this time, so that surely should be a great advantage.

"In England, if there's one thing you've always got to respect, it's the conditions. It's slightly different from say an Australia or India.

"To some extent you sort of get the feeling (as batsmen) that you're never set. Even if you're set and you get a good start, batting on 30, 40, 50, things can change very quickly, the weather can change, the ball can swing even after it's 40-50 overs old," Dravid observed.

England, will certainly fancy its chances.

"... But I just think India will be well-prepared, have the confidence from Australia, there's lot of belief

in the squad.

"A couple of players have been to England a few times, there's a lot of experience in the batting order this time around, so this is proba-

NZ cricketers reach home



PTI ■ AUCKLAND

All New Zealand cricketers and coaches, who were involved in IPL 2021, have arrived home safely by private jets in two groups after the indefinite suspension of the T20 league midway into the season due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cricketers Trent Boult, Finn Allen, Jimmy Neesham, Adam Milne and Scott Kuggeleijn, coaches and former players James Parnment and Shane Bond, and Royal Challengers Bangalore's director of cricketing operations Mike Hesson were the first to land here late on Saturday night.

They arrived on board a Bombardier Global Express private jet via Tokyo in the first of two chartered flights repatriating the

Kiwis. On Sunday, former Black Caps captains Brendon McCullum and Stephen Fleming were among the second group of cricketers to touch down here.

A second private flight of Vistajet carrying McCullum, Fleming, fellow IPL coach Kyle Mills, Kiwi fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, commentators Simon Doull and Scott Styris, and umpire Chris Gaffaney also safely landed at the Auckland Airport on Sunday evening.

All the players and coaches went into managed isolation upon arrival, according to a report in *stuff.co.nz*.

Also, five-time champions Mumbai Indians on Sunday said that all their foreign players and support staff have reached their respective destinations safely.

A total of 14 foreign players and support of MI have left India.

According to MI, Kieron Pollard reached Trinidad safely, South African wicketkeeper-batsman Quinton de Kock and Marco Jansen had landed in Johannesburg.

The franchise's Australian players Chris Lynn, Nathan Coulter-Nile and support staff members, including chief coach Mahela Jayawardene have reached Maldives via a charter flight, and they will serve a 14-day quarantine there.

India will tour SL in July for white ball series: Ganguly

PTI ■ KOLKATA

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Sunday said that the Indian team, sans the top players, will tour Sri Lanka in July for a limited overs bilateral series.

Big names such as skipper Virat Kohli and vice-captain Rohit Sharma will not be part of the tour as they will be engaged in a marquee five-match Test series in England.

"We have planned a white ball series for the senior men's team during the month of July where they will play T20 Internationals and ODIs in Sri Lanka," Ganguly told PTI.

Asked how will India seg-

regate the two teams, Ganguly said that it will be a different side, which won't have anyone from the outfit that will be in the United Kingdom at that time.

"Yes, it will be a team of white ball specialists. It will be a different team," the former India captain said, making it clear that the cricket board also has the preparation of white ball regulars in mind.

There will be at least 5 T20 Internationals and may be three ODIs in Sri Lanka.

India's tour of England will end on September 14 and with the schedule of the remainder of IPL yet to be chalked out, the BCCI would want the likes of Shikhar Dhawan, Hardik



Suryakumar Yadav & Ishan Kishan will hope to get chance in SL series

BIG NAMES SUCH AS SKIPPER VIRAT KOHLI & VICE-CAPTAIN ROHIT SHARMA WILL NOT BE PART OF THE TOUR AS THEY WILL BE ENGAGED IN A FIVE-MATCH TEST SERIES IN ENGLAND

Pandya, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Deepak Chahar, Yuzvendra Chahal to be match ready.

"The BCCI president is very keen that all our top players are match ready and since England doesn't have a white ball leg the month of July can be utilized well," a BCCI source said while explaining the logic behind the tour.

For the Kohlis and Sharmas, they need not come from UK, which has in place some hard quarantine rules.

"Technically, in the month of July there are no official senior India team matches. The Test squad will be playing intra squad games.

"So there is no harm in

India's white ball experts getting some match time and selectors also get to fix the missing jigsaws in selection puzzle."

This will give the team a chance to carry out experiments, like whether it will be Chahal, Rahul Chahar or Rahul Tewatia for the leg break bowler's slot, if Chetan Sakariya can be tried as left-arm option, whether Devdutt Padikkal or Shreyas Iyer gets fit to play by then.

Not to forget that Prithvi Shaw's International career could get a boost with this white ball tournament, with Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan also getting a chance to stake their claims.



Lewis Hamilton celebrates on the podium after winning the Spanish F1 Grand Prix at the Barcelona Catalunya racetrack in Montmelo on Sunday

Hamilton reigns in Spain (again)

AP ■ BARCELONA

Lewis Hamilton beat Max Verstappen in a thrilling duel to win the Spanish Grand Prix and increase his championship lead over his top rival on Sunday.

Verstappen's Red Bull edged the pole-sitting Hamilton to the first curve to snatch the early lead.

But Mercedes' use of two pit stops to give Hamilton fresher tires down the final stretch paid off and allowed him to overtake the Dutchman with six laps remaining.

"Red Bull got a great start," Hamilton said.

"I was hunting.... It was a long way to come back from, 20-odd seconds back. But it was a good gamble."

Hamilton followed his 100th career pole on Saturday by taking his 98th career win. He also tied Michael Schumacher's mark of six victories at the Spanish Grand Prix, including the last five in a row.

Hamilton increased his lead to 14 points over Verstappen, who grabbed a bonus point for the fastest lap.

Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas steered his Mercedes to a third-place fin-

ish.

Verstappen got the jump on Hamilton off the starting line, recovering the scarce meters that separated them on the grid down the first straight. They entered the first curve side-by-side and appeared to graze one another before Hamilton backed off, as Verstappen pulled away.

The superior tire strategy kicked in on lap 25 when Verstappen came in to swap his soft tires for the more durable mediums. Hamilton stayed out to take the lead for three laps before he ceded it back to Verstappen when he had to change his tires to mediums as well.

Even though Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff said before the race that he expected to make one pit stop, seeing Verstappen holding his lead must have changed his mind. Hamilton came in for a second time on lap 43 for a new set of tires.

Verstappen saw Hamilton eating into this lead and told his team "I don't see how we are going to make it to the end."

He was right. Verstappen was unable to put up a fight when Hamilton caught and overtook him on the outside of a turn.

'Bumrah can take 400 Test scalps'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indies fast bowling great Curtly Ambrose says Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is "so different" from all other bowlers he has seen and has the potential to reach the 400 wicket milestone in Tests if he manages to stay fit.

Ambrose, who took 405 wickets in 98 Tests at an outstanding average of 20.99, said from the current Indian lot, Bumrah has impressed him the most.

"India's got a few good fast bowlers. I'm a big fan of Jasprit Bumrah. He's so different than any bowler I have seen. He's so effective and I'm looking forward to him doing really well," Ambrose said on *The Curtly & Karishma Show on YouTube*.

Asked if the 27-year old can scalp 400 wickets in the longest format of the game, Ambrose said, "As long as he can remain healthy, fit and play long enough. He can seam the ball, swing the ball and bowl



great yorkers."

"He's got a lot in his arsenal. So as long as he can remain on the park for a long period of time, I'm sure he can get up there," Ambrose added.

Bumrah, who made his Test debut in 2018, has snapped 83 wickets in just 19 Tests at an impressive average of 22.10, quickly becoming a vital cog in the Indian team's scheme of things.

Ambrose, who along with

compatriot Courtney Walsh made the most lethal opening bowling pairs of all time, feels the Indian speedster, with his short run up, puts a little more strain on his body.

"You know in terms of fast bowling, it's generally about rhythm. So, you need to build a good rhythm before you can deliver.

"Bumrah has got a very short run up. He walks most of the way and maybe one or two

or three little jogs before delivery. So, it simply means he may be putting a little more strain on his body but if he can remain strong enough, I think he'll be ok.

"It's just about him staying strong to accompany that short run up. If he can do that, he'll go the distance," Ambrose added.

India is set to take on New Zealand in the inaugural World Test Championship final from June 18 to 22 in Southampton next month and Ambrose feels a good opening partnership will be crucial for Virat Kohli's men.

"It will be very important that the opening batsman lay the foundation because if you lose 1-2 wickets pretty early you exposes captain (Virat) Kohli and the others guys in the middle order.

"So if you get a solid platform from the openers I am sure it will make life a lot easier for the middle order and the team can put up a good total," Ambrose added.

Tokyo Games can be beacon of hope: Coe

Tokyo: World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe on Sunday said that he believes the coronavirus-postponed Tokyo Olympics can be "a beacon of hope and optimism", despite infections surging in Japan and other countries.

A virus state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of Japan was extended on Friday, less than three months before the Games are due to begin.

The emergency measures come as Olympic organisers struggle to win over a sceptical Japanese public, who fear the Games could spread infections despite a ban on overseas fans and possibly domestic spectators too.

But Coe, speaking at an athletics test event held behind closed doors at Tokyo's Olympic Stadium, said he believes the Games can "have a profound impact" on the world and moved to reassure the Japanese public that "we take those con-



cerns very, very seriously."

"I think that it will also act as a beacon of hope and optimism in a world that I hope is soon moving back to some type of normalcy," he told reporters.

"I think that these Games will leave a strong lasting legacy, not just for Japan but at a time when the world is coming to terms with some pretty difficult and harrowing months."

More than 10,000 athletes from 200 countries and regions are set to travel to Tokyo for the Games, with a decision on how many domestic fans — if any — can attend to be taken in June.

Osaka conflicted over holding Olympics

Rome: Naomi Osaka is conflicted over whether the Tokyo Olympics should be held amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The second-ranked tennis player, who represents Japan, was asked about the games at the Italian Open on Sunday.

"Of course I would say I want the Olympics to happen, because I'm an athlete and that's sort of what I've been waiting for my entire life," she said.

"But I think that there's so much important stuff going on, and especially the past year," Osaka added.

"I think a lot of unexpected things have happened and if it's putting people at risk, and if it's making people very uncomfortable, then it definitely should be a discussion, which I think it is as of right now."

Man Utd spring another comeback

AFP ■ BIRMINGHAM

Manchester United put Manchester City's Premier League title celebrations on hold after coming from behind to win 3-1 away to Aston Villa on Sunday.

Defeat for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side would have handed the title to City and their local rivals would have enjoyed seeing Villa's Bertrand Traore opening the scoring midway through the first half.

But United hit back with two goals in four minutes after the break, Bruno Fernandes equalising from the penalty spot before Mason Greenwood put them ahead.

United wrapped up the win thanks to substitute Edinson Cavani's goal three minutes from time.

Victory left second-placed



Man United's Edinson Cavani celebrates after scoring his side's third goal

United 10 points behind leaders City, with 12 still on offer to the Red Devils from their final four league games.

United, however, face Leicester and Liverpool in the coming week and defeat in either of those matches will see City, beaten 2-1 at home to Chelsea on Saturday, crowned champions before Pep Guardiola's men are away to Newcastle on Friday.

United kicked off having not lost a Premier League match at Villa Park since 1995, a year before current manager Solskjaer joined the club.

Villa's hopes of ending that run against United were not helped by England International Jack Grealish's ongoing absence due to a shin injury, with Egypt forward Trezeguet a long-term absentee as well.

Grealish looked on from the stands on Sunday as did England manager Gareth Southgate, himself a former Villa defender.

WEST HAM DROP POINTS

Everton have strengthened their hopes for European football next season thanks to their 1-0 win over West Ham.

The visitors went ahead through Dominic Calvert-Lewin who finished well after being expertly found by Ben Godfrey.

Lukasz Fabianski had to be at his best to deny Gyfi Sigurdsson from long range, before thwarting Richardson moments later.

West Ham almost equalised when Vladimir Coufal struck the post after a brilliant team move, with Jarrod Bowen unable to convert the rebound.