

**OPINION 6**  
NEPAL SLIPS INTO  
DEEPER CRISIS

**WORLD 8**  
HAMAS, ISRAEL  
FIGHTING ESCALATES

**SPORT 12**  
SHAFALI, RADHA  
TO PLAY IN WBBL

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## States' jab tender not easy as global supply runs dry

Foreign vaccine makers busy meeting pre-orders for others

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

States have started floating separate tenders to procure Covid-19 vaccines from abroad, but experts feel they should not expect much from the global market which is facing acute shortages of vaccines, too.

Most of the foreign vaccine makers are busy meeting their pre-order commitments to other countries, experts said, giving the instance of the US which is stockpiling Pfizer-made vaccines in a big way. Similarly, Australia on Thursday secured 25 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine produced by US pharmaceuticals manufacturer Moderna.

There is a serious dearth of vaccine in the global market, because the number of suppliers is limited and demand too high from across the world.

The Chinese vaccines are likely to be a strict "no no" for many countries considering that Seychelles, which mostly used Chinese vaccines made by Sinopharm to vaccinate its people, continue to report high cases.

Moderna and Pfizer are already busy executing existing orders of various countries. Recently, the European Union sued AstraZeneca, which developed Oxford University's vaccine known as Covishield in India, over not honouring the vaccine supply contract.

It is unlikely that AstraZeneca, which has a partner in India, will enter into a contract with any of the States floating global tenders for Covid-19 vaccines, said Dr RK Dhamija, head of Neurology Department of Lady Hardinge Medical College, Delhi.

The experts also said any order takes time to ramp up

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Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,40,31,730 (+3,28,506)
DEATHS:	2,62,044 (+3,691)
RECOVERED:	2,00,54,010 (+3,25,213)
ACTIVE:	37,05,600
MAHA:	52,69,292 (+42,582)
K'TAKA:	20,88,488 (+35,297)
KERALA:	20,50,890 (+39,955)
UP:	15,80,980 (+17,745)
DELHI:	13,72,475 (+10,489)

production since the key ingredients are biological in nature and can't be mass produced initially keeping safety in mind.

Public health expert KS Reddy from the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) said India should have placed order much earlier foreseeing shortages given the huge population to be vaccinated.

The experts also felt that instead of allowing States to look for import of anti-Covid vaccines on their own, the Centre should have taken up centralised procurement to ensure that it can bargain the vaccine at the competitive price and then made available to States as per their consumption.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Covishield 2nd dose gap raised to 12-16 weeks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the second time in three months, the Government has increased the intervals between two doses of Serum Institute of India (SII)'s Covishield from six to eight weeks to 12 to 16 weeks.

In March, States and UTs were told to increase the gap from 28 days to six-eight weeks "for better results". Now on Thursday, the Union Health Ministry said at a Press conference that it has accepted the recommendation of the expert panel to extend the gap between the first and second dose of the Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks. The current gap between two doses of the vaccine is six-eight weeks.

Earlier in the day, the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommended the same to the Centre. No changes, however,

have been made to the interval of Covaxin, Dr VK Paul, Niti Aayog member (Health), said at a routine presser.

"This is beneficial both from the efficacy and immunogenicity standpoint. This is a very good move because this is based on data that the Government received on the basis of which they made a good scientific decision to increase the gap," Adar Poonawalla, CEO of SII said.

*Continued on Page 2*

**Sputnik V from next week**

**NEW DELHI:** Sputnik V, the vaccine against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) developed by Russia's Gamaleya National Centre, is likely to be the first foreign jab to be available in Indian market. The Union Health Ministry on Thursday said it will be available in markets across country from early next week. Dr VK Paul, member, NITI Aayog, said the local production of Sputnik V, often called the world's first vaccine against the viral disease, will begin in July. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories will manufacture the vaccine in India.

**PNS**

## Bengal poised to fish out bodies floating in Ganga

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With reports of dead bodies floating in the Ganga in adjoining areas of Bihar, the Bengal Government has placed the Malda district officials on alert asking them to fish out the bodies and arrange for their proper funeral, sources in the State Health Department said.

"There are reports of many bodies of people who died of corona floating in the Ganga in adjoining districts of Bihar. We do not want these bodies to float into Bengal causing health hazards and hence Rajarshi Mitra, the DM of Malda, has been alerted to take appropriate measures to fish out the bodies when they float into this State," a senior Health department official of the Bengal Government said.

*Continued on Page 2*

**SEVERAL BODIES FOUND BURIED AT BANK OF GANGA IN UNNAO; PROBE ORDERED**

**Unnao:** The Unnao district administration has ordered a probe after some bodies were found buried on the Ganga riverbank in the Bighapur Patan tehsil area, officials said on Thursday. The district administration swung into action after locals spotted bodies buried on the Baksar ghat of the river with some photographs of the bodies too going viral on social media, they said.



## All-out bid to set up O2 plants, 1,594 in pipeline

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid growing reports of Covid-19 patients being unable to access oxygen, sometimes dying for want of it, the States and the Centre are going all out to mitigate the situation. As many as 1,594 oxygen plants (Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA)) are being set up across India.

Work is underway to set up 300 oxygen plants in Uttar Pradesh while Maharashtra is also setting up 350 such plants that will generate about 500 metric tonnes of oxygen a day. Bihar will also set up 15 PSA plants in 15 districts while Haryana planned to install PSA at 60 hospitals. Delhi's AIIMS, Ram Manohar Lohia, Safdarjung hospital and Lady Hardinge Medical College are in the process of setting up oxygen plants by the end of this week.

Additionally, 1051 PSA plants sanctioned under the PM Cares Fund in March and April 2021 will be commissioned in the next three months in phases.

Of the 162 oxygen plants for which the Government had invited tenders in October last year, 74 have been installed and the rest is expected by June. India's most populous State



Uttar Pradesh is setting up 300 oxygen plants to meet the demand. UP had been receiving oxygen from plants in Kashipur, Gazipur, Modinagar (Inox Air), Panipat and Roorkee, but that has clearly not been enough.

The State needed 960 tonnes of the gas, but could manage only 650 tonnes. It even planned a train to ferry oxygen from Bokaro, Jharkhand. Rather than trying to arrange for more, the Yogi Adityanath Government announced an oxygen audit with the help of the Indian

Institutes of Technology Kanpur and Varanasi.

Maharashtra is in the process of setting up 350 Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants across the State that will generate about 500 metric tonnes of oxygen a day. The tender is being floated. Besides, the MVA Government in Maharashtra has come with a scheme that will return 100 per cent to 150 per cent of the investment of companies that set up oxygen generating plants in the state in the next couple of months.

Under the scheme, each district in the State will be equipped with oxygen generating plants.

*Continued on Page 2*

## CAPSULE

**OLI REAPPOINTED AS NEPAL PRIME MINISTER**

**Kathmandu:** KP Sharma Oli, in his capacity as leader of the largest political party in Nepal's Parliament, was reappointed as the PM on Thursday after the Opposition parties, riddled by factionalism, failed to secure majority to form a Government.

**UPSC (PRELIMS) RESCHEDULED IN OCT**

**New Delhi:** Civil Services (Preliminary) examination, 2021 was deferred and rescheduled in October — four months from its original schedule.

**TIMES GROUP CHAIRPERSON INDU JAIN DIES**

**Mumbai:** Times Group chairperson Indu Jain died on Thursday at the age of 84, the flagship news channel of the group reported. In a tweet, Times Now called Jain a "lifelong spiritual seeker, pioneering philanthropist, distinguished patron of the arts, and passionate proponent of women's rights." Complications arising out of coronavirus infection led to her death, Times Group sources said.

**PTI**

## As cases dip, Delhi to give up surplus O2

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has written to the Centre, saying the surplus oxygen that is being given to it can be supplied to other States, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Thursday.

He thanked the Centre and the Delhi High Court for coming to the aid of the people of Delhi while they were in distress due to a surge in the number of coronavirus cases.

Sisodia said Delhi recorded 10,400 fresh Covid-19 cases in a 24-hour period and the positivity rate stands at 14 per cent.

He said the national Capital had a requirement of 700 MT of oxygen when the number of cases was rising but now that the

figure is showing a declining trend, the requirement has come down to 582 MT.

"We have written to the Centre for giving the surplus oxygen to other States. We are a responsible Government," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

Meanwhile, the Centre on Thursday rejected the Delhi Government's claim that Covaxin maker Bharat Biotech has refused to provide it "additional" doses and said the national Capital has received over 15 lakh doses of vaccine.

Addressing a briefing of the Union Health Ministry, Niti Aayog member (health), VK Paul said the Government of India's role is to facilitate. "We refute the charge."



## PM to directly interact with DMs of 10 States to plan Covid strategies

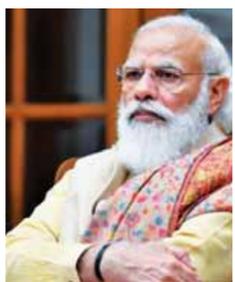
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid spike in Covid-19 cases across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will directly interact with District Magistrates (DMs) of ten States from next week to work out containment strategy.

However, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the PM-DMs meeting as an act of overlooking Chief Ministers and against the federal structure.

According to sources, the Prime Minister is scheduled to interact with the DMs of 54 districts of ten States and other officials from May 20 to devise strategy for speedy containment of the coronavirus cases with suggestions from the Empowered Group whose members will be present during the online interaction.

In the first phase, DMs of Maharashtra, West Bengal, UP, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan,



Odisha, Jharkhand, Kerala, Puducherry and Haryana would participate in the video conferencing.

Maharashtra, the State with the largest positive cases in the country, will have the largest number of DMs who will interact with Modi, said sources.

Mamata has on several occasions attacked the Modi Government for violating the federal principles and bypassing the State Government.

## Serious errors in NRC draft, says Assam coordinator

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a serious development, Assam's NRC Coordinator Hitesh Dev Sharma has informed the Supreme Court that "fundamental and serious errors" have crept in the draft National Register of Citizens (NRC) updating and sought "comprehensive re-verification."

Sharma in an affidavit said around 50,000 persons were found eligible to be included in NRC though their names were excluded from the draft NRC.

"For a flawless complete NRC, names of these persons have to be included in NRC failing which NRC will lose its acceptability," said the affidavit submitted last week.

Detailing the discrepancies, the affidavit said out of around 30,684 people in Kamrup included in the supplementary NRC under the "Original Inhabitants" category, 7,446 were found ineligible while 23,345 were found eligible on ground other than "Original Inhabitant" category.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Now, a portable smokeless electric crematorium ready

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is finally some relief for people running around for place to perform the last rites of their loved ones and finding majority of the crematoriums overbooked. The Indian Institute of Technology has developed a portable prototype electric cremation system which claims to be using first of its kind technology that involves smokeless cremation despite using wood.

It uses half of the wood otherwise required for the cremation and still is eco-friendly because of the technology that uses a combustion air system and can be relocated.

It is based on wick-stove technology in which the wick when lighted glows yellow. This is converted into a smokeless blue flame with the help of a combustion air system that is installed over the wicks.

The cremation cart has wheels and can be transported anywhere without much



efforts. The stainless steel trays on both sides are easy ash removable. The cart is equipped with combustion air for primary and secondary hot air system.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Coronavirus survivor to corona warrior: A journey of sheer grit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In this battle against Covid-19, there are a lot of faces around us that have fought hard, made a strong comeback and have set an example of courage and grit. They have showcased to the world that courage is a choice and willingness is the weapon to win any battle.

"Consider this as a war and yourself as a soldier," said Akshit K Thottam, a banker working in Gandhi town situated in Kutch, Gujarat. On April 6, he went for a test in a nearby hospital. After the test results were out, he was found positive with Covid-19. He shared his journey of successfully battling against Covid.

In the initial phase, it was quite tough for him as he was living alone in Gujarat and his family was in Kerala.

Urging the people to get the treatment as soon as possible, he said, "Keep your surroundings clean. If possible, change your pillow and bedsheets daily. Take as much rest as possible. Do a bit of yoga. Always keep your mind positive and try to be in touch with your family."

Informing the people about dos and don'ts, Akshit said, "You need to eat

healthy food. And drink as much water as you can. Try to do exercises that can keep your lungs active. Enjoy the sunsets and fresh air in the mornings and evenings". In a video message, Akshit sent his best wishes to everyone who is recovering from Covid-19.

**Hope amid the pandemic:** An elderly woman from Ujjain was suffering from 95 per cent lung infection. She successfully beat Covid after being on oxygen support for 80 days.

*Continued on Page 2*



## Naxals turn to mainstream, thanks to corona scourge

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus has triggered terror in the minds of the otherwise dreaded Naxals in their heartland Chhattisgarh where a number of top ultras have been afflicted with the deadly disease and deserted their ranks to seek better care and treatment in the nearby town and cities.

Driven to despair amid lack of medical facilities in the jungles, panic has gripped the ranks of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) following infection among a number of the commanders and deaths of a number of cadre owing to Covid-19.

While the Naxal leadership has in the past resorted to recruitment of children, the current move symbolises depravity of the worst kind as it is exploitation of children in the midst of a pandemic that has hit the entire humanity to some degree or the other.

Former Director General of Border Security Force, Uttar Pradesh Police and Assam Police, Prakash Singh in a tweet said, "CPI-Maoist are learnt to have recruited nearly 700 schoolchildren

aged between 12-18 years during the coronavirus lockdown. A training camp for these schoolchildren was organised in the Abujhmad area of Chhattisgarh for a month."

The new recruitment is aimed at meeting the loss caused by desertion and despair.

Scrutiny of a number of letters of the Naxal cadres seized during combing operations in the Naxal-hit areas in Chhattisgarh and the State's triad with Andhra Pradesh and Odisha throws light on the state of mind of the naxals.

*Continued on Page 2*



# UP sees 281 new deaths, 17,775 more Covid cases

**Lucknow:** Uttar Pradesh on Thursday recorded 17,775 fresh Covid-19 cases that pushed the infection count to 15,80,980, while 281 new fatalities took the death toll to 16,646 in the State, officials said.

The number of active cases in the state has come down by over 1.06 lakh in the past 12 days, Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Amit Mohan Prasad said.

The Covid-19 recovery rate now stands at 86 per cent in Uttar Pradesh, he said.

On April 30, there were

about 3.10 lakh active cases, and the number currently stands at 2,04,658, the official said.

With this, the total number of patients in the State who have recovered from the infection has risen to 13,59,676, Prasad said.

In the past 24 hours, while the state reported 17,775 fresh cases, 19,425 people recovered from the disease, he said.

Among the fresh deaths, the maximum of 35 were reported from Lucknow, 16 each from Kanpur and Ghaziabad, 12 from Bahraich,

15 from Meerut, 10 each from Mahoba, Jhansi and Ghazipur, nine from Gorakhpur besides other cities, a health bulletin issued here said.

As far as fresh cases are concerned, the maximum of 1,070 cases were reported from Meerut, 856 from Lucknow, 775 from Gorakhpur and 772 from Varanasi, it said.

So far, over 4.39 crore samples have been tested in the state and it includes more than 2.53 lakh samples tested on Wednesday, Prasad said. Of the fresh cases, 1,45,108 are in home isolation, he added. **PTI**



View of a city neighbourhood shrouded in mist following heavy rain in Shimla on Thursday

## Global drug racket operating from Batla House busted, ₹250 cr heroine seized

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

In a biggest haul this year, the Delhi Police has recovered 54 kilograms of heroine worth ₹250 crores and busted an international drug cartel operating from Delhi's Batla House area. Police said that they have arrested five people including two Afghan nationals from the city.

The accused have been identified as Altaf, a resident of Kashmir, Abid Hussain Sultan, a resident of Kashmir, Tifal Nau Khez, a resident of New Friends Colony and Hashmat Mohammad, and Abdullah Najibullah alias Nabi, all

Afghan nationals.

According to Pramod Singh Kushwah, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Special Cell, on May 2, Altaf was nabbed after a trap was laid and 4.5 kg contraband was recovered from his possession.

"Accordingly, a case under the NDPS Act was registered at the Special Cell police station and investigation was taken up. During further investigation, based upon disclosures made by Altaf, a raid was conducted and second accused Abid Hussain was arrested and a total of 12 kgs of contraband was recovered from his home situated in Vinoba Puri," said the DCP.

## HC dismisses plea against AAP MLA Imran Hussain in alleged hoarding of O2 cylinders

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

In a big relief to Aam Admi Party, the Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed a plea accusing MLA Imran Hussain for "hoarding" oxygen cylinder. Hussain submitted documents showing that he supplied oxygen cylinders in his constituency by renting. The Delhi Government also reported to the HC that there was no such allocation from the Government quota, as alleged in the petition.

The Court also considered that Hussain's stand that the oxygen cylinders were on rent and oxygen was procured from a refilling agency in Haryana. This was verified by the Amicus Curiae, Senior Advocate Rajshakar Rao. "We

are not inclined to proceed any further," said the Division Bench comprising Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli.

Following the order, Senior Advocate Rahul Mehra argued that such pleas should be discouraged by the court. "Such applications are causing embarrassment... kindly see that it takes away the spirit of service... there should be a deterrence." Senior Advocate Vikas Pahwa who represented Hussain also raised a similar grievance.

"If you're doing something good, please do it. We've not stopped you. We can't stop people from coming to court," said the Bench dismissing the petition. AAP alleged that the frivolous petition against Minister Hussain was engineered by BJP.

## 18 elephants killed in lightning strikes in Assam's Nagaon

**Guwahati:** Eighteen elephants died in lightning strikes at a forest in Nagaon district of Assam, a senior Forest Department official said on Thursday.

The incident happened on Wednesday night at a hill in the Kundoli proposed reserve forest in the Kathiatoli range, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Amit Sahay told **PTI**.

"The area is very remote and our team could reach there on Thursday afternoon. It was found that carcasses were lying in two groups. Fourteen were lying atop the hill and four were found at the bottom of the hill," he said. The preliminary investigation found that the jumbos were killed due to electrocution caused by lightning last night, but the exact reason will be known only after post-mortem, which will be done on Friday, Sahay said. **PTI**

## All-out bid...

**From Page 1**  
The Brihanmumbai municipal corporation also plans to set up 16 oxygen generation plants in 12 Mumbai hospitals to ensure the city becomes partially self-reliant for its oxygen needs.

The Haryana Government has planned to set up 66 oxygen plants at hospitals across the States. Presently, of the six pressure swing adsorption (PSA) oxygen generation plants, two are already operational and rest of the four will start working by the end of this week.

Of the 66 plants, 60 will be installed at hospitals with bed capacities of 30, 50, 100 and 200. Haryana has four oxygen

plants manufacturing 272 tonnes a day.

The State keeps 162 tonnes and sends 140 tonnes to Delhi, 20 tonnes to Punjab and the rest to UP.

The demand in the city has shot up to about 14 tonnes from 6-8 tonnes. For the entire state, the demand nearly doubled to 120 tonnes.

The Delhi Government has also planned to set up 48 oxygen plants, of which 21 are being imported from France and the rest are manufactured in India.

Two oxygen plants have been set up at AIIMS Trauma Centre, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RML), Safdarjung Hospital and Lady Hardinge Medical College.

The Nitish Kumar

Government has also decided to set up oxygen plants in 15 districts which include Patna, Begusarai, Darbhanga, Bhagalpur, Bhojpur, Gaya, Gopalganj, Katihar, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Nalanda, West Champaran, Purnea, Saharsa, and Vaishali. The plants will be set up from PM Cares Funds.

Battling with rising oxygen demand due to the devastating second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, Punjab is making efforts to revive and re-energise about a dozen small and medium oxygen plants to augment the supply of life-saving gas in the State.

These plants located in Mandi Gobindgarh, Pathankot, Muktsar, Bathinda, Ludhiana and Fatehgarh Sahib and hav-

ing an installed capacity of more than 20 metric tonnes have been lying defunct or manufacturing oxygen for industrial or captive use.

Odisha has proposed the Centre for installation of 40 oxygen plants in all medical colleges and hospitals, district headquarters hospitals (DHHs), Capital Hospital, Rourkela Government Hospital and Acharya Harihar Post Graduate Institute of Cancer (AHPGIC) at Cuttack.

Madhya Pradesh has also planned to set up plants in Bhopal, Rewa, Indore, Gwalior and Shahdol for Rs 1.60 crore. But plants it promised earlier in Babi, Mohasa - at a cost of Rs 125 crore for producing 210 tonnes - has not fructified in seven months.

**GOVT. OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER**  
**CENTRAL IRRIGATION CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR**  
A-121  
**'e' Procurement Notice No.ACECIC 05 OF 2021-22**

1. Name of the work : 1. Restoration to Krushnaprasad Saline Gherry from RD.5.00 Km to RD.10.20 Km under NABARD Assistance RIDF-XXVII.  
2. Protection & Restoration to Tue-Gambhari Saline Embankment from RD.1.00 Km to 9.840 Km including construction of sluices under NABARD Assistance RIDF-XXVII.  
3. Protection to Kalapadar Saline Embankment from RD.1.500 Km to 5.500 Km from Village Jaguleipadar to Kaudikani under NABARD Assistance RIDF-XXVII.  
4. Restoration to Luna Right Embankment from RD.20.500 Km to RD.25.500 Km from Village Mulbasant to Bilopatana under NABARD Assistance RIDF-XXVII.

2. Amount put to Tender : Varies from Rs.699.19 Lakh to Rs.423.74.Lakh  
3. Bid Document Cost : Rs.10,000.00 for each work (online)  
4. E.M.D : Bid Security Declaration to be furnished as per Annexure-III of Section-6 of Technical Bid Document.  
5. Class of Contractor : "A" Class, "Special" Class & "Super" Class  
6. Period of Completion : 12 calendar months (365 Days)  
7. Other details are as follows-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Date of Opening of Technical Bid (Cover-1)
		From	To	
Additional Chief Engineer, Central Irrigation Circle, Bhubaneswar-12	ACECIC PID 02 to ACECIC PID 05 of 2021-22	18.05.2021 10.00hrs	01.06.2021 17.00hrs	02.06.2021 11.00 hrs

E-mail ID :- [secic\\_down@yahoo.com](mailto:secic_down@yahoo.com)

Further detail conditions can be seen from the Govt. website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Sd/-  
**Additional Chief Engineer**  
Central Irrigation Circle  
Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32160/11/0006/2122

## Serious errors...

**From Page 1**

Only 107 were found eligible under "Original Inhabitant" category, Sharma pointed out seeking detailed re-verification. "Pass appropriate directions for a complete, comprehensive, time bound re-verification of draft NRC as well as supplementary list of NRC," said the affidavit.

The re-verification should be done under the supervision of a monitoring committee in the respective districts and the committee must preferably have the concerned District Judge, District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police, he added. The affidavit also pointed out that 3.93 lakh persons excluded from NRC (out of a total of 40 lakh) who did not file any claims and objections against the same. The application said after some sample checks and analysis, 50,695 persons out of the 3.93 lakh were found to be eligible for inclusion in NRC under "Original inhabitants" category or "Persons from other States" category.

The affidavit also pointed out that many persons not included in the list have not yet approached the Foreign Tribunal.

## States' jab...

**From Page 1**

Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhnad Haryana and Delhi are among States that have decided to go global to procure vaccines as the supply of vaccines in the country is not adequate compared with the population.

In fact, many States have postponed the vaccination drive for those 18 plus to 44 years old, due to shortage which they plan to meet through import.

For its part, the Central Government said the vaccine availability situation is likely to be improved only after July when 216 crore doses of vaccines will be manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech which are providing Covishield and Covaxin respectively.

Dr VK Paul, Niti Aayog member (Health) at a Press conference on Thursday here said those jabs approved by FDA and World Health Organisation (WHO) can come to India. "Import license will be granted within 1-2 days," he said, in the wake of the States decision to

import the jabs.

States seem to be clueless on the vaccines it can import. For instance, senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik on Thursday asked the Centre if the Moderna vaccine has been cleared for inoculation in India.

"Presently Covishield and Covaxin are being administered while Sputnik V has just been permitted in India by the Central Government. According to the information I have received, the French Embassy in India has procured Moderna vaccine and it is being administered to the French citizens and their relatives in Navi Mumbai with the help of Apollo Hospital in Mumbai," Malik said in a statement. "If they can get it, why can't the Indian Government get it for its citizens?" he asked.

Intriguingly, on Thursday, for the first time the Centre too revealed that it was in touch with foreign vaccine makers Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson (J&J) for manufacturing, fill and finish but they indicated availability only in the third quarter of 2021, said Dr Paul. So far since the launch of the nationwide vaccination drive from January 26, nearly 18 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccine have been administered in India. Currently, Covaxin

is available for Rs 400 a dose to state governments and Rs 1,200 to private hospitals, while Covishield costs states Rs 300 a dose and private hospitals Rs 600.

Former Union Health Secretary Sujatha Rao tweeted, "Totally unprecedented that States issue global tenders for vaccines. It's bizarre. What are we conveying to the world? Impossible to understand why GOI does not simply do what all Governments till now had done...procure for govt -central and states...money can be shared as CSS if required."

In fact, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal too pointed out that states importing on their own will be like competing with each other at the international market for life saving items like vaccines.

Rahul Bhargava, Director and Head, Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplant, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, too echoed similar concerns saying "this is going to lead to total chaos".

The Centre on behalf of the States should bargain with vaccine manufacturers and then distribute to them as per their need. Each State individually bargaining means the vaccine company making maximum profit. Who will bear the cost, a common man only."

## Covishield 2nd dose gap...

**From Page 1**

The extension between the two doses has come as a blessing in disguise to the Centre as well as the Covishield manufacturer, which are in acute pressure to meet the vaccination targets but are not able to do so due to supply shortage. The extended gap will ease the pressure on the SII. In fact, Poonawalla while moving to London had recently alleged that he was facing "pressure"

from "some VIP" to meet the targets. The panel also said pregnant women can choose their vaccine and lactating women will be eligible after delivery. Currently, neither is eligible to get the shots. The panel also stated that those having laboratory test proven SARS-CoV-2 illness should defer Covid-19 vaccination for six months after recovery.

According to the Union Health Ministry's current pro-

toocol, the vaccine is to be taken four to eight weeks after recovery from Covid-19 infection and pregnant and lactating women are not to be administered the shots.

"Based on the available real-life evidence particularly from the UK, the Covid-19 working group agreed for increasing the dosing interval to 12-16 weeks between two doses of Covishield vaccine. No change in interval of Covaxin vaccine doses was recommended," the Ministry said in a statement.

## Bengal poised...

**From Page 1**

"There are chances of dead bodies washing up on the banks of the Ganga. We gave directions to the nearby blocks of Ganges Manikchak and Kaliachak 2 and 3 block to monitor round-the-clock for the dead bodies," officials said adding fishermen also have been alerted. Adequate boats have been pressed on service for the purpose and the BDOs of Manikchak and Kaliachak 2 blocks have been asked to maintain high vigil.

The Ganga enters Bengal at Manikchak area in Malda district from where Farakka Barrage is just 22 km, the official said. "We have asked the Farakka Barrage authorities too asking them to keep an eye on the floating bodies because there is a feeder canal that feeds the Hooghly River downstream... we do not want the Hooghly River to be contaminated," the official said adding the "Government has asked the district officials to arrange for the funeral of the floating bodies with due honour."

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH CIRCLE, BHAWANIPATNA**  
Parmanandpur, Railway Station Road, Bhawanipatna, Dist: Kalahandi, PIN -766002

**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**  
Identification No. SEPHC-BHPT-01 of 2021-22 Dt. 03.05.2021  
**e-Procurement Notice**

Name of the Work : Laying of Pipeline, Construction of Reservoirs, External Electrification & ancillary works in Different ULBs under PH Circle, Bhawanipatna. 18 (Eighteen)

Total No. Of works : 18  
Estimated Cost : Approx. Rs 110.00 Lakhs to 490.00 Lakhs  
Class of Contractor : B, A, Special Class & ELBO Contractor  
Period of Completion : 3 to 6 Calendar Months

Procurement Officer.	Bid Identification No.	No. of works	Availability of Tender On-line for Bidding		Date & time of opening of Bid
			From	To	
2 Superintending Engineer, P.H. Circle, Bhawanipatna	3 SEPHC-BHPT-01 of 2021-22	3 18 (Eighteen)	4 17.05.2021	5 31.05.2021	6 01.06.2021

For details can be seen from the Government website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Sd/03.05.2021  
**Additional Chief Engineer,**  
P.H. Circle, Bhawanipatna

OIPR-13055/11/0001/2122

**कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल**  
यांत्रिक विभाग ( मुख्यालय ) गोविंदपुरा ( बी.एच.ई.ए. )  
निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा-पत्र

क्र.24/यां.वि./2021 भोपाल, दिनांक 12.05.2021

निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु दो लिफाफा पद्धति के अनुसार म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में केन्द्रीकृत व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत पंजीकृत टेकदार परसेन्टेज मोहर बंद निविदाये निर्धारित प्रपत्र पर ऑनलाईन आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र.	ऑनलाईन निविदा क्र.	कार्य का नाम	अनुमानित राशि	घरोहर राशि	प्रपत्र राशि	कार्य हेतु निर्धारित एच.ओ.आर.	कार्य की अवधि
1	2021_UAD_142348_1	PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF NAGRİK BANK BLOCK AT NEW MARKET T.T. NAGAR ZONE NO. 07, BHOPAL	17724578/-	177246/-	12500/-	MP UAD ISSR 2012	09 Months

1. निविदा प्रपत्र को निर्धारित राशि एवं घरोहर राशि एवं अन्य आवश्यक दस्तावेज ऑनलाईन प्रस्तुत करने होंगे एवं अन्य समस्त विस्तृत जानकारी [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) पर देखी जा सकती है।  
2. विद्युतीकरण से संबंधित कार्य के लिए स्वयं के पास ए क्लास का विद्युत का पंजीयन हो अथवा किसी ए क्लास के विद्युत टेकदार से अनुबंध को प्रति मय विद्युत टेकदारी पंजीयन के प्रस्तुत करना होगा।  
3. किसी भी निविदा को स्वीकार अथवा अस्वीकार करने का अधिकार विभाग के पास सुरक्षित होगा।

अधीक्षक यंत्र ( सिविल )  
नगर निगम भोपाल

क्र.क. 91/021/022

# 'Jab makers profiteering from crisis'

# City's positivity rate touches 14.24%, the lowest in a month



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday said that the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech are making a humongous profit of ₹16,000 crore on 100 crore doses.

In a meeting with Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, Jain stressed that private players like the SII and Bharat Biotech were considering the pandemic an opportunity to generate enormous unnatural profits. Jain stated that a rate of ₹150 per dose should be fixed for all, the Centre, States and private entities. He also went on to highlight the glitches that the CoWIN software suffers from and claimed that Delhi has neither been informed nor been supplied with doses of the

Sputnik V vaccine.

"I raised three concrete points which I would like to present here. First, for the vaccines being purchased from overseas nations, instead of every State preparing its own tender, the Centre should make one for the entire nation, and purchase it on behalf of the States. A 'One Nation, One Tender' policy should be implemented, keeping in view that a tender from different States would not show India in a good light," he said.

"Plus, the two companies preparing the two vaccines Covishield and Covaxin, must share their formulas with other companies as well. It is widely known that India is home to the biggest and most prominent vaccine manufacturers in the world, hence, a number of companies are capable of man-



Health workers examine patients receiving treatment inside a banquet hall that has been converted into a Covid-19 isolation centre, in New Delhi on Thursday  
Ranjan Dimri

ufacturing the jabs to end the vaccine shortage," he added.

Throwing light on the cost disparities and the colossal profit generated by the manufacturers of the two vaccines, Jain said: "The manufacturers of Covaxin and Covishield have considered this crisis to be an opportunity to generate high profits. So, Covishield is being supplied to the Centre at ₹150 and the company is manufacturing six crore vaccines every month. Even if we go by a profit of ₹10 per dose and they give half of the vaccines to the Centre, which is three

crore, the estimated profit comes out to be ₹30 crore. Now, the same vaccine is being sold to the State Governments at ₹300 which means the profit doubles, while the cost of production remains the same."

He further said the same vaccine is being sold at ₹400 to private entities and the profit incurred goes up to ₹260 per dose (considering that their cost of production would be ₹140). "The company generates a humongous profit of ₹960 crore in just one month by this entire estimation. Nonetheless, average profit when calculated

around the same scheme of logic, comes at generation of profit of ₹160 over one single dose.

Citing the necessity of delegating the CoWIN software to States, Jain added, "The CoWIN software is completely handled by the Centre. In this, online registration and scheduling of appointments is to be done. This is extremely difficult for those who do not have a smartphone and don't know English. This should be left to the States as to how they are going to facilitate the vaccination programme."

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital reported 308 more coronavirus deaths and 10,489 infections on Thursday with a positivity rate of 14.24 per cent, the lowest in a month.

According to the health bulletin, the number of new cases is the lowest since April 10 when 7,897 people were diagnosed with the disease. The positivity rate is the lowest since April 13, when it stood at 13.1 per cent, according to Government data.

The 10,489 new cases were detected after 73,675 tests were conducted, including 58,709 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests. As many as 15,189 people recovered from the infection during the period.

According to the health bulletin there are 77,717 active cases and 48,340 of the patients were in home isolation. The number of cumulative cases as of now stand at 13,72,475 and the death toll is at 20,618. As per the data, over 12,74,140 people have either recovered, shifted out or have been discharged from hospital. Of the 23,423 hospital beds for coronavirus patients in the city, 5,212 are vacant.



Ranjan Dimri

Delhi had reported 300 deaths and 13,287 cases on Wednesday with the positivity rate of 17 per cent. On April 22, a positivity rate of 36.2 per cent, the highest so far, was recorded. The highest number of 448 deaths was reported on May 3.

A senior Government official said that a team of officers is working round the clock to monitor the demand and supply of 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 oxygen in the national Capital. The Delhi Government has also deputed a team of officers to each of the oxygen plants to make sure that there are no glitches and any administrative obstacles in oxygen supply," he said.

The AAP Government has not only ramped up testing but has also worked relentlessly to increase the number of beds across Delhi during the lockdown. The Government is also giving an aggressive push to the vaccination drive, which will further help bring down the positivity rate in the coming days.

# B.Tech student held for duping people on promise of home ICUs, O2 cylinders



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has nabbed a 21-year-old B.Tech student from Pathankot for allegedly duping 47 people of several States on the promise of providing an ICU set-up and supply of oxygen cylinders for coronavirus patients at home.

The accused has been identified as Aryan Singh alias Dhananjay, a resident of Noida, who is pursuing B.Tech from a renowned institute. Police said that the accused had duped relatives and friends of Covid-19 patients at several places, including Delhi, Noida, Faridabad, Mumbai and other cities.

He spent the money that he took from the desperate people, to lead a luxurious life and stayed in luxurious hotels in Gurugram, Noida and Jammu, police said.

According to Anto Alphonse, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, the matter came to light after one of the relatives of a Covid-19 patient, who was duped by the accused, complained against him on the Covid helpline.

"The complainant alleged that he received a message on a WhatsApp group advertising

the setting up of ICU facilities at home. When he called on the mobile number given in the post the person who took the call introduced himself as Dhananjay. The man directed the victim to deposit ₹ 3,950 as advance rent for setting up an ICU facility at home," said the DCP.

"After the victim transferred the amount on an online wallet account on April 30, the accused stopped receiving the complainant's phone calls.

A case under Section 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property) of the Indian Penal Code was registered at the Wazirabad police station.

The cyber crime cell team conducted a technical analysis of the alleged mobile number and the online transactions," said the DCP.

As per the technical investigation, the location of the accused was traced to Jammu and his earlier transactions revealed that he used to stay in luxurious hotels. "His location was traced close to Radisson Hotel in Jammu. When our team reached Jammu, it was found that the suspect had checked out from the hotel," said the DCP.

"Aryan Singh was later

apprehended near Pathankot after a long chase. He was brought to Delhi and subsequently arrested. Police have recovered mobile phones used by Singh for contacting victims as well as for operating his online Wallet account," said the DCP.

"During interrogation, it was revealed that he posted a story on Instagram about an oxygen cylinder and seeing the huge response to his post, he came up with the idea of duping people in the name of setting up an ICU at home," said the DCP.

Singh disclosed that his number was shared on WhatsApp through several groups and he was contacted by relatives of corona patients looking for ICU beds in hospital. The accused, with his good communication skills, explained the entire process to the victims and provided an online wallet account and UPI ID to victims for transferring the money to him.

"At first Singh used his own online Wallet account and later on he started using the accounts of people known to him. He believed that if he duped people of small sums the victims would not approach the police," said the DCP.

# Ensure uninterrupted water supply to Covid hospitals: Chadha

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) twice-chairperson Raghav Chadha on Thursday convened an online meeting of senior officials with a focus on equitable distribution and rationalisation of water supply and to maintain status quo vis-à-vis uninterrupted water supply to medical establishments, especially to Covid hospitals in the city.

Acknowledging the hard work of the DJB officials, Chadha said: "All of Delhi is extremely proud of you. Nobody can forget your invaluable contribution towards fulfilling the needs of every



Delhiite towards ensuring they get unhindered supply of water, particularly in one of the most difficult times in history. In spite of the difficult circumstances, everyone at the DJB went ahead with their work."

The DJB has installed about 115 tube wells and five Ranney wells in Palla and other suitable locations for water augmentation. "The water production from here is about 30

MGD and is likely to be increased further. While the DJB has been taking regular steps to augment water supply within Delhi, it has been observed that due to frequent and prolonged power failures, there has been a loss of a few MGDs in water production in May, and similar losses have been observed in the preceding months," he said.

"It is a fact that due to severe shortage of raw water supply from Haryana, there is an overall reduction of 60-65 MGD in the water production of the DJB which is adversely affecting potable water supply in many parts of Delhi, especially the tail-end of the com-

mand areas," he said.

He went on to explain the severity of the situation due to the pandemic and the already existing peak water demand during the summer months. He further instructed DJB officials to make all necessary efforts and efficiently manage the available water produced and ensure minimum inconvenience to the public through rationalisation across networks and enhanced tanker supply to affected areas.

In addition, he laid special emphasis on the water requirements of healthcare establishments, including Covid facilities, so as to facilitate their optimum functioning.

# Need jabs soon, else first dose too will be ineffective: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MLA Atishi on Thursday appealed to the Central Government to supply vaccines to Delhi at the earliest. The AAP leader said that if the Center did not send the vaccines soon, people in the 45 plus age group would be unable to get their second dose and the first jab would become ineffective in such a scenario.

Atishi said that on May 12, Delhi administered shots to around 74,448 people. Out of this, around 50,294 people were in the age group of 18-44 and 24,154 people were in the 45 plus age group. "We have no Covaxin for people in the age group of 18-44 and most of the vaccination centres have closed down due to this. However, we have Covishield stock for eight days," she said. She said that for the healthcare workers, frontline workers and people in the age group of 45 plus, there is only three days' worth of Covaxin stock and the Covishield stock would last for two days only.

# Delhi BJP chief opens vaccination centre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Adesh Gupta inaugurated a vaccination centre in Sagarpur area of South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC). The centre will facilitate people between the age group of 18-44 who will be coming to get a shot. Lauding the work done by corporations during the pandemic, he said: "It is no secret that despite having limited resources the SDMC is doing a great job in serving people at

such times. Our target is to see the maximum number of people get vaccinated so that we can save ourselves from this pandemic." Gupta urged everyone to go for vaccination as vaccines made in India are safe and will help fight the disease.

Meanwhile, the party has also written to the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi urging him to empower the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) to take over the entire health infrastructure of the national Capital to prepare for the third wave of Covid-19.

# Navneet Kalra denied anticipatory bail in O2 concentrator hoarding case

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Thursday dismissed the anticipatory bail application of Navneet Kalra in connection with the alleged black marketing of oxygen concentrators, saying that allegations against him were serious and his custodial interrogation was required to "unearth the entire conspiracy." Fearing arrest, Kalra had moved the court earlier this week to seek bail in the

case, claiming that no offence was made out against him and that he was willing to join the investigation. Additional Session Judge Sandeep Garg dismissed his application and stated, "Custodial interrogation of the accused is required to be carried out to unearth the entire conspiracy hatched by him and a number of co-accused persons."

# Now walk-in jabs for 45+ group: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Eradicating the pre-Online booking for Covid-19 vaccine, now 45 plus citizens can get vaccinated, Delhi Government said on Thursday.

Manish Sisodia, Deputy Chief Minister and Nodal Minister for Covid-19 management, said that vaccination centres for the 45 plus age group will be shifted to Government schools for a hassle-free experience and walk-in vaccination would be allowed. "After reviewing challenges of citizens with regard to internet accessibility and issues in registering online slots, we have made a decision to allow registration and walk-in vaccination in all inoculation centres of Delhi, for individuals above 45 years of age."

"Further, we have also taken the decision to shift vaccination centres from hospitals to Delhi Government School centres for citizens above 45 years of age."



"Vaccination centres in Delhi Government Schools had been initiated on May 3 for citizens between 18 to 45 years of age. Now the same will be done for citizens above 45 years of age. Inclusivity and accessibility are key to ensure a successful mass vaccination drive in Delhi," Sisodia said.

The Delhi Government is also planning to quickly scale up vaccination centres.

"We are instituting centres in every part of Delhi and ensuring that all centres have the required materials to vaccinate a large number of people in a short amount of time. These centres will be open six days a week, barring Sundays," the Minister added.

# Drive through vaccination for second dose of Covishield for 45+ in Gurugram

**DRIVE THROUGH COVID VACCINATION**

For 45 Years and above, Covishield 2<sup>nd</sup> Dose only

An Initiative by Health Department, Gurugram in association with Park+ & DLF City Centre Mall

- Just drive in to the venue & get vaccination done without leaving your vehicle.
- After getting vaccinated park your car and wait for 30 minutes.
- In case you feel uneasy please switch on your parking light to alert medical staff. They will approach you themselves.

**VENUE**  
DLF City Centre Mall Gurugram

**14 May**  
10 AM onwards  
200 slots available  
No pre-registration required.  
Just walk in.

**FREE OF COST**

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In collaboration with Park Plus and DLF City Centre Mall, the District health department of Gurugram is going to organise a one-day 'Drive Through Vaccination' programme for the second dose of Covishield for people in the age group of 45+ at the DLF City Centre Mall on Friday.

According to health officials, the drive would begin at 10 am and 200 free slots would be available without any registration. The vaccines will be administered on a first come, first serve basis.

Officials said the drive through vaccination programme was being done on an experimental basis at the mall for one day only. As the name suggests, during the drive the people would not even be required to come out of their vehicles. After getting the shot, the receiver would have to wait for 30 minutes in his/her vehicle as part of the requisite observation period. And if someone develops any problem, they will have to signal the health department team with the aid of the vehicle's indicators.

The District Immunisation Officer, Dr MP Singh said that this drive by the health department was just to provide people with hassle-free Covid jabs.

"If this experiment is successful, then this kind of a drive can be done at other locations in Gurugram," Singh said.



An illuminated Jama Masjid on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr in Delhi on Thursday

# Govt staff with med degrees can now practise: Centre



DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Perceiving the acute crisis of medical professionals across the country in view of the second wave of corona pandemic, the Centre has decided to do away with the archaic law which prohibited Central Government employees with medical qualifications and has now allowed such talents to undertake medical practice and also offer tele medical consultation.

However, this has drawn mixed feelings both in the medical fraternity and administration. Some have welcomed the move but some are against it.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said the Central Government employees with medical qualifications can now extend medical advice and help during spare time and on a purely charitable basis. The change in rule may benefit about five percent of total Government servants who are also armed with a medical degree.

In view of the unprecedented rise in the numbers of Covid-19 cases, and to utilise the in-house capabilities available in the Government to contain the spread of Covid-19 virus and to provide relief to the public, it has been decided that the Central Government employees holding recognised qualifications in any system of medicine requires no permission from the Head of

Departments (HoDs) concerned to undertake practice/provide teleconsultation," said a DoPT order dated May 12.

In reference to a February 1964 order of the Home Ministry which prohibited such acts, the DoPT claimed that in recent times it has been receiving queries/requests from Central Government servants for providing teleconsultation services during the current pandemic.

"Indeed this is a good decision as though we (people with medical degree and govt servant) used to advise and suggest the needy whoever approached us. When we used to turn down people citing government rule does not permit us to practice then they used to shrug shoulders on us. In a country like India, there is always a need to allow administrative officers armed with medical degree to practise. Especially during our postings in rural areas we used to realise the need," said a IAS officer who is also MBBS and has been into service for nine years but the rules prevented him to practice at times.

But a section of those who are seniors now expressed that they have already lost the touch and medical profession is not an overnight revision job.

"In a crisis everyone has to be fully hands on for the primary job they are doing. If bureaucrats start to act as doctors their primary task will suffer. Moreover most of

**DoPT claimed that in recent times, it has been receiving queries/requests from Central Government servants for providing teleconsultation services during the current pandemic**

us are not in touch with latest in the medicine/ no CME (continuous Medical Education) We need to be aware of treatments to do justice to patients and also do good referrals. Third where and with who will these 'doctors' consult? What is they are not available for follow ups?," questioned a IAS also a doctor and into the service for two decades now.

The bureaucrat, however, had a piece of advice and suggested that for the purpose it would be better to mobilize all Ayush doctors with a two day crash course to treat mild to moderate cases as they have spent five six years learning medicine.

The DoPT referred to the order that stipulates that the Head of Department may grant permission to Central Government servants holding recognised qualifications in any system of medicine to undertake practice.

"This would be subject to the condition that such practice/teleconsultation is undertaken during spare time, on a purely charitable basis, without detriment to the official duties to the Government servant concerned," the order said.

"However, it is desirable that the government servants should keep their departments concerned informed for record purposes only," it said, adding that this guideline will come into force with immediate effect.

# Isolate jawans arriving from Andhra, T'gana to contain Covid strain, orders CRPF



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF has directed its offices here to separately quarantine personnel arriving from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to check the spread of an "extremely virulent" strain of coronavirus present in these two States

"It is essential to take precautions to ensure this strain does not spread amongst the units. To ensure this, all personnel arriving from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will be quarantined separately from other personnel being simultaneously isolated with coronavirus infection," a senior official said.

The official said the issue of the strain in these two States was discussed during a recent video conference held by CRPF Director General Kuldeep Singh with Inspectors General of States.

All units have been directed to ensure no intermixing of quarantined personnel of these two States occurs with the other isolated cases.

The directive further stresses that any individual showing any illness or signs of discomfort must be immediately taken to the nearest hospital designated as Covid centre by observing all precautions. Such patients from these two

States must be isolated from others affiliated with the pandemic.

"Each unit must always have adequate stock of PPE kits, face shields, masks, gloves and disinfectant chemicals available for taking due care to check the spread of the virus," reads an order on the issue.

The CRPF directorate has also advised the medical branch to sensitise the medical officers and paramedical staff of all the units and take all preventive measures for protection of all the personnel.

Reports had suggested that N440K is a powerful variant reported in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana that spreads rapidly and leads to severe Covid-related complications.

As per reports, it is 15 times more virulent than the original variant. A person infected with the original variant reaches the stage of dyspnea (difficult breathing) or hypoxia (insufficient oxygen supply to body organs) within a week. But a person afflicted with the N440K variant shows these complications within just three-four days.

However, the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) recently denied the variant to be deadly or more infectious than other strains.

# SC directs States to provide dry ration to migrant labourers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the States of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to provide dry ration, adequate transport and set up community kitchens for benefit of the migrant labourers in National Capital Region. The apex court Bench comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and MR Shah directed that this relief measures to migrant workers can be executed through Atma Nirbhar Bharat Scheme or any other scheme or utilizing the concerned State's public distribution system (PDS). The order also said that the three States shall ensure that adequate transport is provided to stranded migrant labourers who want to return home.

"While providing dry ration, the authorities of the States shall not insist on an identity card for those migrant labourers who do not possess (the same) for the time being. On self-declaration made by the stranded migrant labourers, dry ration be given to them," said the apex court's order.

Central government to also consider issuing necessary instructions to Ministry of Railways for transport of migrant labourers, it added. The Bench also said that enough publicity must be given about community kitchens for stranded migrant labourers and two meals a day must be given. The Court directed that all the three States and Central Government must report back on the measures taken.

The order was passed on an application by activists Harsh Mander, Anjali Bhardwaj and Jagdeep Chhokar, who had moved an urgent application before the Supreme Court seeking directions to ensure that migrant workers are not deprived of ration and food security and are able to travel back to their homes at nominal cost. The application was filed in the suo motu case initiated by the top court last year.

# EC sets up panel to identify shortcomings in recent Assembly polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Election Commission has set up a core committee headed by secretary-general of the ECI to identify shortcomings, learning and experiences from recently poll-gone States of Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry. The committee has been asked to submit its report within a month. The Committee will also examine the recommendations of the nine Working Groups (which were set up post Lok Sabha Elections, 2019) in light of experiences in the Poll gone States.

According to the EC, the core committee has been asked to identify shortcomings/gaps in the poll body regulatory regime, if any and the gaps in implementation and enforcement at the level of CEOs/District officials.

"Need for Strengthening legal/ regulatory framework enabling ECI to more effectively ensure compliance of guidelines / directions including the Covid norms; Measures to ensure discharge of responsibility, like enforcement of covid protocol by the agencies/ authorities mandated under respective regulatory/ legal regime to do so irrespective of and in addition to ECI guidelines; Gaps, if any in the guidelines or at implementation level in MCC / regulatory regime leading to avoidance/ non-compliance by the Candidates/ Political parties' stakeholders; Measures to further strengthen the expenditure management regulation for inducement free election and shortcomings in existing framework in providing protection to electoral machinery from pos-

sibility of reprisal after elections', the EC said in a statement.

The Committee has also been asked to collate, analyse experiences, best practices across States/UT and suggest way forward and further reforms required.

The Election Commission came under heavy fire from the Trinamool Congress and the Madras High Court. While the TMC accused the poll panel of favoring the BJP and not clubbing the remaining phases into one, the Madras HC lashed out against the EC and called it the "most irresponsible institution in the country" that have done nothing to prevent political parties from breaching COVID-19 protocol.

"Deputy Election Commissioners of the EC and Chief Electoral Officers of recent poll gone States and few select Special Observers and Observers will be members of the Committee. While finalising its recommendations, the Committee will also take inputs from State Nodal Officers of different divisions like Police, Expenditure, Health authorities as well as from some DEOs, SPs & ROs identified by CEOs, Polling officials, BLOs about the issues and challenges faced at the grass root levels," the EC said.

The Commission had formed nine working groups of CEOs and Commission Officers covering various facets of election process including Electoral Roll issues, Polling Stations management, MCC, Voting processes & Materials inventory, Capacity Building, IT applications, Expenditure Management, SVEEP and Media interface as also Electoral Reforms.

# Covaxin gets nod for phase II/III clinical trial on 2 to 18-year olds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following concerns that the third wave might be more infectious to kids, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has approved Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin for phase II/III clinical trial on those aged between 2 to 18 years.

According to the Union Health Ministry, the trial will be conducted on 525 subjects at various sites, including AIIMS, Delhi, AIIMS, Patna and Meditrina Institute of Medical Sciences, Nagpur. In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two doses at day 0 and day 28.

"The DCGI, after careful examination, has accepted the recommendation of Subject Expert Committee and accorded permission to conduct the Phase II/III clinical trial of Covaxin in the age group 2 to 18 years, to its manufacturer Bharat Biotech," according to the Ministry in a statement here.

It added that the Subject Expert Committee on COVID-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) had on Tuesday deliberated upon Bharat Biotech's application seeking permission to conduct



phase II/III clinical trials to evaluate the safety, reactivity and immunogenicity of Covaxin jabs in children aged 2 to 18 years. The committee after detailed deliberation recommended for grant of permission to conduct proposed Phase II/III clinical trials to certain conditions.

Covaxin is indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). It is being used in adults in ongoing vaccination drives. Covishield — the local version of Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, which is being manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India is also being signed to adults. Recently, Sputnik V was approved to be imported from Russia by Dr Reddy's, but is yet to be widely available in the country.

Meanwhile, Bharat Biotech has submitted to the Centre its production plan for the next four months, informing that it can ramp it up to 7.8 crore doses by August, said an official from the Ministry.

# India must ask Israel to shun aggression: Muslim leaders

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing tensions in Gaza, Muslim leaders of the country have condemned the Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem, Gaza and other places in Palestine and demanded that India must ask Israel to shun aggression.

"We believe that this aggression is part of Israel's terrorist tactics to evacuate Palestinian territories through violent acts and resettle Jewish settlers there, in clear violation of international law. An unjust and cruel campaign is currently underway to evacuate the Sheikh Jarrah area of Jerusalem, and for this, civilians, including children, the elderly, and women, are being subjected to severe atrocities on a large scale. The forcible eviction of Palestinians is a violation of all principles of human rights," said the leaders in a signed statement released on Thursday by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind.

The leaders further said, "We also urge the Government of India, while respecting our country's long-standing foreign policy and its long-standing commitment to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause, to support the oppressed Palestinian people and pressure Israel to renounce its aggressive behaviour."

# BRICS members discuss multilateral framework on Social Security Agreement

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) nations have converged on devising a multilateral framework on the issue of Social Security Agreement (SSA).

Social Security Agreement would help the international workers to port their benefit to their home countries thereby preventing loss of their hard-earned money, said the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

"Further they will be exempted from contributing both in home as well as host countries."

The decisions were taken in the first BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) meeting in which the member nations resolved to enter into dialogue and discussion with each other and take the issue forward towards signing of the agreements. The two-day virtual meeting concluded on Wednesday with India assuming BRICS Presidency this year.

The prime agenda for the discussions were promoting Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS nations, formalisation of labour markets, participation of women in labour force and Gig and platform workers — role in labour market.

The representatives of International Labour

Organization (ILO) and International Social Security Agency (ISSA), who also took part in the meeting, made valuable interventions and suggestions on the agenda issues. They also expressed willingness to provide technical support in facilitating conclusion of such agreements.

On the issue of formalisation of labour market, member nations discussed various initiatives taken by them towards formalisation of jobs and how Covid-19 has enhanced informalisation risk.

On participation of women in the labour force, the member countries resolved to promote participation of women in remunerative, productive and decent work and to extend social security cover to the women workers engaged in informal sector. Impact of Covid-19 on participation of women in labour force was also discussed.

On the issue of Gig and platform workers and their role in labour market, the member nations discussed how the proliferation of Digital Labour Platforms is transforming the labour processes in the world of work.

Challenges faced by them and various measures being taken by member nations including extension of social protection system were also discussed.

# Global road safety body writes to Gadkari to identify 'blackspots' on India's roads

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The International Road Federation (IRF), the Geneva-based global body working for better and safer roads worldwide, has written to Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari urging him to circulate the scientific guidelines developed by the Indian Road Congress (IRC) for identifying and treating the blackspots in the country.

"The blackspots / grey spots removal from the road network definitely makes for a distinct and measurable difference in the road safety outcome in the states as measured through their accident / crash data records. However, the present ongoing blackspot programme delivered till date is without any appropriate scientific guidelines for investigation and rectification being used by the field officers of MoRTH, NHAI and NHIDCL," said K.K. Kapila, President, Emeritus, International Road Federation, in his letter to Gadkari.

"All countermeasures - short term, medium term and long term - adopted by the field officers assigned to remove blackspots are totally ad-hoc without any basis of scientific investigation for the blackspot / grey spot, uniformly across the country."

# Centre channels foreign Covid aid to States, UTs



IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said in a statement that on May 12 medical consignments were received from Kuwait, Singapore, Gilead, Switzerland, Spain, Egypt which included Remdesivir, oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators and ventilators/BiPAP/CPAP.

The statement said cumulatively, 9,294 oxygen concentrators; 11,835 oxygen cylinders; 19 oxygen generation plants; 6,439 ventilators/BiPAP; nearly 4,22L Remdesivir vials arrived till May 12.

On May 12 Remdesivir: 86,595, oxygen cylinders: 4,802, oxygen concentrators: 10, ventilators/BiPAP/CPAP: 141 were received from Kuwait, Singapore, Gilead, Switzerland, Spain, Egypt.

The Centre has allocated and delivered global aid to States/UTs consisting of Covid-19 relief medical supplies and equipment since April 27. Through a streamlined mechanism under the "Whole of Government" approach, various ministries and departments have collaborated for delivering the incoming global aid to the States and UTs.

The Union Health Ministry is monitoring this on a regular basis.

A Coordination Cell has been created in the Health Ministry to coordinate the receipt and allocation of foreign COVID relief material.

This Cell started functioning from April 26. A Standard Operating Procedure has been framed and implemented by the Health Ministry since May 2.

# Actively considering live telecast of SC proceedings: CJI

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N V Ramana on Thursday said he is "actively" considering the proposal to live telecast the proceedings of the Supreme Court.

However, Justice Ramana emphasized that before initiating concrete steps to live telecast the court proceedings, he plans to seek a general consensus among his colleagues in the top court. He was speaking at the launch of a mobile application to grant access of virtual proceedings of the top court

to the media persons. "Transparency is a time-honoured principle when it comes to the judicial process in our country. Hearing of cases have always taken place in public courtrooms, with access being allowed not only to the lawyers and the litigants in a particular case, but also to the general public," said Justice Ramana.

He emphasized that access to the public is important, as court rulings, and more particularly the Supreme Court, have a bearing on the lives of people throughout this coun-



try. "The role of the media assumes importance in the process of disseminating information. Unfortunately, when

COVID-19 struck, the systems which were earlier in place could no longer be relied upon. The judicial system has had to

adapt quickly in order to ensure that justice dispensation does not stop in the country," added Justice Ramana.

He said, "I was a journalist for a brief time. That time we did not have cars or bikes. We used to travel on bus as we were directed not to avail conveyance of organisers of the event."

Justice Ramana also highlighted another feature on the official website and mobile application of the top court. "This new feature, called "Indicative Notes" is aimed at

providing concise summaries of landmark judgments in an easy-to-understand format. This will serve as a useful resource for media persons and the general public who wish to be better informed about the rulings of the Court. Thanks are due to my predecessor Justice Bobde for initiating this," said Justice Ramana.

He cited that small issues are bound to arise, which should not be unnecessarily magnified. "I request everyone to be patient, to be encourag-

ing and supportive to the technical team to ensure that the application works without any problems. I hope that everyone gives the system the requisite time to evolve and expand," added Justice Ramana.

He added that directions have been issued to further rationalise the policy of granting accreditation to media persons.

He pointed out that many staff of the top court were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. "Till date, approxi-

mately 800 Registry staff have tested positive. Six of our Registrars and 10 Additional Registrars have tested positive at different times. Unfortunately, we lost three of our officials to Covid as per the data available, 2,768 judicial officers and 106 Judges of the High Court have tested positive. We are yet to receive the data from two major High Courts. 34 Judicial Officers and three Hon'ble Judges of the High Court have lost their life, battling this pandemic", he added.

# Waive GST on vaccines, drugs, Stalin tells Modi

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

## COVID-19

Chief Minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday to waive the GST on Covid-19 vaccine and other medicines being procured directly by the States. He pointed out that many States were purchasing vaccines and medicines directly from manufacturers to offset the shortage. Stalin pointed out in a letter to the Prime Minister, excerpts of which were released to the media, that the States were facing severe financial crunch because of the Covid-19 pandemic. To offset the

economic crisis, the Chief Minister asked the Prime Minister to immediately disburse the pending GST compensation as well as rice subsidy pending for civil supplies corporations of States. He also wanted the Centre to enhance the States' borrowing limits from three percent of the State's GDP to four per cent. Since the revenue received by the Centre due to levy of cess on petrol and diesel has not been shared with the States, the Centre should provide an ad hoc grants-in-aid to the State to compensate for the loss of revenue due to the pandemic. Stalin said that the increase in borrowing limits by one per cent would help the States garner financial resources to meet the additional expenditure caused by the pandemic. On Wednesday, a high-level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister had decided to issue short-term global tenders for importing Covid vaccines to inoculate all those in the age group of 18-45. The 13 lakh vaccine doses allocated to the State by the Centre would be insufficient to vaccinate all those in the 18-45 age group, said a senior official in the Department of Health and Preventive Medicine.

# TMC takes dig at BJP after its three MPs lose WB polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has scoffed at the BJP's "pitiable condition" where it had to field the sitting MPs and a Union Minister to contest the Assembly elections ... and ended up creating a "world record for electoral egg on face".

Taking a dig at the "world's largest political party", senior TMC leader and party Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien has said that the, "BJP fielded four sitting Lok Sabha MPs, including a Union Minister and a Rajya Sabha MP for Bengal polls. Three lost, two won. Now these two to quit as MLAs. They were elected last week! World's largest party have set a world record for electoral egg on face."

BJP had fielded three Lok Sabha MPs Locket Chatterjee, Nisith Pramanik and Jagannath Sarkar and a Rajya Sabha MP Swapan Dasgupta. It also nominated Union Minister Babul Supriyo to contest from Tollygunge seat in South Kolkata. Save

Pramanik and Sarkar all the other lost to the TMC

O'Brien's comment came in tandem with the resignation of two BJP MLAs Jagannath Sarkar and Nisith Pramanik who preferred to retain their Lok Sabha seats.

The BJP's tally came down from 77 — in the just conclude Bengal Assembly elections — to 75 after Sarkar and Ranaghat MP and Pramanik a Lok Sabha Member from Cooch Behar tendered their resignation after being asked by their parties to retain the MP seats.

After submitting their resignations before Speaker Biman Banerjee, the two MPs (former MLAs) said that they had followed their party instructions. "We have followed the party's decision. Party has decided that we should resign from our assembly seats." Pramanik who defeated former Dinhatu MLA Udayan Guha by a margin of only 57 votes, said. Jagannath Sarkar, won the Santipur assembly seat by over 15,000 votes.

# 109 health workers test Covid positive in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Covid-19 is claiming more and more lives on a daily basis in Kerala. On Thursday, 97 persons succumbed to the pandemic in the State while a total of 39,955 persons were diagnosed with Covid-19, which took the number of patients in the State to 4.38 lakh.

With 97 lives being claimed by the Covid on Thursday, the fatality figure reached 6,150. According to IMD, the next three days will bring in heavy downpour and high sea waves because of the low pressure developed in the Arabian Sea. 109 health workers across the State were afflicted with the pandemic on Thursday. Test Positivity Rate in the State stood at 28.61. Malappuram topped the table of districts with highest number of patients tested on Thursday. Despite the day was

observed as Eid, the Muslim majority district diagnosed 5,044 patients with Covid-19. Malappuram was followed by Ernakulam which diagnosed 5026 patients. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to Prime Minister Modi asking him to immediately release 450 tonnes of oxygen per day taking into account of the precarious situation faced by Kerala.

The letter from the Chief Minister comes within hours of the Centre increasing the daily quota of oxygen to the State from 223 tonnes to 358 tonnes. People from outside the State have been advised not to plan any trip to Kerala because of the precarious condition in the State.

A marriage that took place in Ernakulam district on Saturday last by observing the stringent guidelines issued by the State administration resulted in all the guests except a couple getting afflicted with the pandemic.

# Maha extends curbs till June 1

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government on Thursday extended the near lockdown-like restrictions in the state till June 1 in an effort to break the chain of transmission of virus, even as the pandemic claimed 850 more lives and left 42,582 others infected.

The restrictions, which were to end in the normal course at 7 am on May 15, will continue till 7 am on June 1.

In its order extending the restrictions till June 1, the Maharashtra government imposed some additional restrictions which included a compulsion that any person entering Maharashtra would have to carry a negative RTPCR report "which will have to be issued to them from up to a maximum of 48 hours before the time of the person's entry to Maharashtra".

In case of cargo carriers, not more than two persons (driver + cleaner/helper) will be allowed to enter the state with a negative RTPCR report issued to them at the point of origin of travel 48 hours before their departure. The report will be valid for seven days. The new order has exempted milk collection, transport and processing from the restrictions. It has allowed the personnel engaged in airport and port services needed for movement of cargo related to medicine or equipment needed for Covid management, to travel by local trains, mono and metro services.

Meanwhile, a day after the state recorded 816 deaths and left 46,781 fresh infections, the daily deaths jumped to 850, while there were 42,582 fresh infections on Thursday.

With 850 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 78,007 to 78,857. Similarly, with 42,582 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 52,26,710 to 52,69,292. As 54,535 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 46,00,196 to 46,54,731. The recovery rate in the state went up from 88.01 per cent to 88.34 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 5,46,129 to 5,33,294. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.5 per cent.

With 68 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 13,972 to 14,040, while the infected cases went up by a relatively low 1952 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,81,233 to 6,83,185.



Fishing boats anchored at Vizhinjam Coast following a cyclone alert in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday

# Maharashtra cyber cell busts illegal online sale of fake Remdesivir, Tocilizumab vials

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Cyber police on Thursday ripped the lid off a racket involving an illegal online sale of fake Remdesivir and Tocilizumab vials filled with plain water to gullible relatives of patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

A day after a leading pharmaceutical company lodged a complaint with them that some of its distributors had illegally sold the water-mixed vials of life-saving drugs online, the cyber police registered a First Information Report against various unknown persons and are investigating the case.

The preliminary investigations have revealed that unsuspecting citizens who placed orders on the so-called "dealers" of the life-saving vials online were either defrauded or were sent vials containing water or some other liquid. In its FIR, the police have invoked provisions of the Indian Penal Code, IT Act, The Trademarks Act, Drugs & Cosmetics Act, for indulging in the fraud and playing with the lives of innocent citizens during the Covid-19 period.

The pharmaceutical company had approached the cyber police after it received many complaints from the citizens who had among other things complained that some mobile numbers were posted on various WhatsApp groups or other social media platforms claiming they were authorized dealers of the complainant pharmaceutical company.

The "dealers" offered to deliver the drugs on an advance payment of 50 percent through online transactions and rest on delivery.

Acting on the pharmaceutical company's complaint, the state cyber police immediately launched the investigations on multiple fronts, including shops, telecom service providers, and banks.

"Our preliminary investigations have revealed that many needy citizens had even paid the full money in advance but when they followed-up on their orders for delivery, they got vague replies from the dealers in question. After some times, the phones of dealers were switched off, State Inspector General of Police Yashasvi Yadav said.

# 63 ventilators provided through PM Cares remain uninstalled in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

As many as 63 ventilators supplied to the Government Medical College hospital, Jammu under PM Cares Fund remained uninstalled till date, Principal Dr Shashi Sudhan Sharma informed MoS PMO Dr Jitendra Singh on Thursday while he was chairing a high level review meeting of Covid management measures with all the heads of the institutions of Jammu & Kashmir.

The shocking revelation came to the fore even as 221 patients, admitted in GMC, Jammu have lost their lives due to Covid-19 since May 1.

On Thursday, a total number of 55 patients succumbed to the virus across J&K. In GMC, Jammu alone 16 patients succumbed to the deadly virus.

The total number of active positive cases across J&K stood at 52,848 while positivity rate recorded on Thursday stood at 9.82 percent. Out of 44,329

tests done 4,356 fresh cases tested positive for coronavirus.

On May 3 and May 10, GMC Jammu reported the highest number of 24 and 23 deaths in one single day.

While patients admitted in the Government Medical College hospital, Jammu and their caretakers were clinging on to a faint hope of surviving the Covid-19 pandemic the UT administration rushed a team of experts from SKIMS, Soura to GMC, Jammu to study the reasons behind the high mortality rate on Wednesday.

The senior doctors at GMC Jammu reportedly claimed the patients with severe symptoms were reporting very late giving very little time to the team of doctors to revive them in a short span of time amid limited resources. On Thursday when GMC Principal Dr Shashi Sudhan Sharma was briefing Dr Jitendra Singh about the overall Covid Management she also apprised him about uninstalled ventilators.

# Indian, Pak soldiers exchange sweets at LoC on Eid-ul-Fitr

PNS ■ JAMMU

After several years a traditional exchange of sweets was witnessed between India and Pakistan on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr along the line of control in Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday. During the day jawans of the Indian Army met their Pakistani counterparts at various locations and exchanged pleasantries along with sweets.

In Jammu region, the sweets were exchanged by the representatives of both the Armies in an atmosphere of bonhomie & festivities at Poonch-Rawalakot Crossing Point & Mendhar-Hotspring Crossing Point in Poonch district. Similar meetings were held in Kashmir region at the Tithwal crossing on Kishanganga River in Tangdhar, Kupwara & Kaman Aman Setu in Uri.

Defence PRO in Jammu, Lt



Col Devender Anand said, "the ceremony is seen as a confidence building measure in the backdrop of recently agreed ceasefire between both the countries. The gesture was appreciated by both the armies and expected to promote good will & mutual trust".

"The newly achieved calm along the Line of Control as a result of renewed ceasefire has brought warmth, which has been displayed on several occasions between the two neighbours.

Exchange of inadvertently crossed over youths on three occasions in the last two months at the zero line in Tithwal bode well for the future", Defence PRO in Srinagar said.

The exchange of sweets and pleasantries was conducted with full adherence to all Covid Protocols by both sides, he added.

# Lockdown extended in Bihar till May 25

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday announced the extension of the lockdown in the State till May 25.

Kumar made the announcement after chairing a high-level meeting, convened to take a decision on the lockdown, which was in place from May 5 to 15.

"Reviewed the lockdown in Bihar with colleagues in the council of ministers and officials. The positive outcome of the lockdown is evident. Hence, a decision has been taken to extend the lockdown by another 10 days, from May 16 to 25," the chief minister tweeted in Hindi.

The state has been rattled by explosive growth in its Covid-19 incidence since the beginning of April.

During the period, its total caseload has risen by nearly three times and exceeded six lakh. PTI

## DELHI DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY O/O OF DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER, REVENUE DEPARTMENT (HQ), GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI 5, SHAM NATH MARG, DELHI-110054 Email: ddma.delhi@nic.in Ph. No. 011-23982164

No.1(521)/DDMA(HQ)/Status of Medical Oxygen/2020  
**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
A Centralized Oxygen Cylinder Pool has been created with the efforts of Government of NCT of Delhi with availability of 1400+ Cylinders as on date, at the disposal of all District Magistrates. The list of these cylinders hubs with addresses is as below:-

S.NO.	DISTRICT	LOCATION OF DISTRICT CYLINDER HUB	CONTACT DETAIL OF DTC DEPOT MANAGER
1.	NORTH	Depot Manager, GTK	Sh. Lalit Kumar, 8744073034
2.	CENTRAL	Andhra Education Society, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, ITO	Sh. Devendra Kumar, 9968987397
3.	SOUTH	Depot Manager, Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Depot	Sh. Ravi Kasana, 8744073152
4.	NEW DELHI	Depot Manager, Sarojini Nagar	Sh. B.K. Ghai, 8588863701
5.	SOUTH WEST	Depot Manager, Dwarka, Sec-02	Sh. Manvinder 8744073128
6.	WEST	North MCD (Girls), Primary School Mundka, Delhi-110041	Sh. Satish Tomer, 9711008279
7.	NORTH EAST	Depot Manager, Nand Nagri	Sh. Navneet Choudhary, 8744073036
8.	EAST	Depot Manager, Hasanpur	Sh. R.K. Sharma, 8744073116
9.	NORTH WEST	Depot Manager, Kanjhawala	Sh. Vijay Kumar, 8744073103
10.	SOUTH EAST	Depot Manager, Sukhdev Vihar	Sh. Anirudh Singh, 8920771733
11.	SHAHDARA	Depot Manger, East Vinod Nagar	Sh. Vikas Kumar Sachan, 8744073166

Please note that disbursal of cylinder is subject to availability of cylinder and submission of valid documents by applicant. COVID Positive report is not mandatory for availing filled cylinder. DETAILS OF ALL CYLINDER HUBS WITH ADDRESSES CAN ALSO BE ACCESSED ON <https://oxygen.jantasamvad.org>

Sd/-  
(K.S. Meena, IAS)  
Spl. CEO (DDMA)  
DIP/Shabdarth/0059/21-22

# Raj to float global tender for Covid vaccine

Jaipur: In the State Council of Ministers meeting held through video conference on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, important decisions were taken for speedy procurement of vaccine, medicines, oxygen concentrator and other necessary resources to deal with the situation of corona infection in the State.

The Council of Ministers unanimously approved the proposal to invite global tender to speed up vaccination and ensure availability of vaccine in the state. This will allow 40 million doses of vaccine to be purchased from foreign vaccine manufacturers. For this purchase as soon as possible, the National Health Mission will be made the nodal agency and soon the Expression of Interest (EOI) will be issued.

Necessary to speed up vaccination for life protection The Council of Ministers expressed concern that the Corona Conduction is spreading rapidly. A large number of deaths are also happening across the country.

# French Embassy administering Moderna vaccine in Navi Mumbai sans Govt nod: Malik

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Minister and senior NCP leader Nawab Malik on Thursday created a stir in the political circles here by claiming that the French Embassy in India had procured "non-permitted" vaccine @moderna.tx and was inoculating its citizens and their relatives at Navi Mumbai with a help of a leading private hospital.

Nearly a month after he kicked up a controversy by threatening to seize the stocks of Remdesivir from the exporting firms and supply them to the needy people, Malik virtually joined an issue with the Centre by demanding whether a "non-permitted" vaccine be allowed to be administered to the people.

"Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V are the 3 Vaccines that are permitted in India by our government. According to information received by me, the French Embassy in India has procured the vaccine @moderna.tx and is inoculating their citizens and their relatives at Navi Mumbai with the help of @ApolloHosMumbai," Malik

tweeted. Seeking a clarification from Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, the Minister stated in another tweet: "Question arises, how can a non permitted vaccine be allowed to be administered? If they can get it, why can't Indian Government get it for our citizens too. The Government and the Health Minister @drharshvardhan must clarify".

Slamming the Minister for making non-issues into issue, leader of the Opposition in the State Legislative Council Pravin Darekar of the BJP said: "There are no exact details available about his allegations. As per my information, every embassy has made provisions of Covid-19 vaccines for its own staff working here. However, the Maharashtra government is not taking care of its own people in the State, but wasting time in pointing fingers at such non-issues." This shows the kind of sensitivity this government has towards its people," Darekar said.

Malik's tweets should be seen in the context of the fact that the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government in

Maharashtra, of which the NCP is a part along with the Shiv Sena and Congress, has been vociferous in its criticism of the Narensra Modi government over the shortage of Covid-19 vaccines in the state.

This is not for the first time that Malik has joined an issue with the Centre on matters relating to the handling of Covid-19 situation in the state. It may be recalled that on April 17 2021, Malik had created a sensation by threatening to seize the stocks of Remdesivir from the exporting firms and supply them to the needy people.

Reproducing a letter written by Food & Drugs Control Administration, Gujarat, asking an exporter to make available Remdesivir vials (meant for exports) for meeting Covid-19 needs in its state, Malik had tweeted: "Here is the another proof of step motherly treatment given by central government to #Maharashtra. This is the approval letter to one of the export companies to supply stock of #Remdesivir to the state of Gujarat Only. Can these double standards be explained?"


[www.dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com)
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**PAPER WITH PASSION**

## The vaccine hydra

The Government would do well to centralise the vaccination project and make it free for all citizens

The confusion over the multiple price brands for COVID-19 vaccines in India and their scarcity continues to hamper operations to manage the pandemic. The Prime Minister's Office, which is seized of the issue of rapid vaccinations, stated that the Prime Minister, at a review meeting on May 7, spoke about the need to sensitise States so that the speed of vaccination does not falter. The Health Minister has also asked the States to speed up the vaccination process. There are three issues with the requests from the Centre to the States. One, there is not enough supply of vaccines. Two, the multiple price bands are making the issue complicated, with private hospitals charging a range of high prices while the vaccination is free in the Government-run hospitals.



Three, the procurement of vaccines by the Central and State Governments is confusing as the Centre's policy has ended up making the States and private hospitals compete for the same supply. Twelve Opposition parties have now written to the Centre on how to end the reign of confusion: One, the Union Government should centrally procure all vaccines. Two, there should be a free and universal mass vaccination campaign across the country. Three, invoke compulsory licensing to increase domestic vaccine production. The signatories to the letter also wondered why only ₹5,000 crore of the budgetary allocation of the ₹35,000 crore was spent on vaccines

to date. Untangling the price and procurement beast is easier said than done.

There is no logical reason put forth by the Union Government for the complex pricing and procuring arrangements. The Centre procured all vaccines and distributed them to its centres, State Governments and private hospitals till April 30. Since May 1, the Centre procured 50 per cent of the vaccines while the State Governments, private hospitals and the open market keep vying for buying the remaining 50 per cent from manufacturers. From its share, the Centre is supposed to allocate vaccines to the States, depending on the demand. As to the pricing, the original price of ₹150 per dose was valid only for the first consignment. The Centre then capped the price at ₹250 but it became infructuous after the Centre inexplicably introduced price liberalisation measures. That means private hospitals can charge a person the cost of the dose plus administrative charges and, additionally, any other charges that may become applicable. It is this last criterion that has jacked up the price from anywhere between ₹800 and ₹1,300 per dose. An 18-year-old may not get a dose because the State he is a resident of may be giving priority to the older citizens. A resident of Delhi or Haryana may not be able to get a dose in the neighbouring Uttar Pradesh because the latter allows doses only for in-State residents. Why shouldn't the Centre centralise the entire vaccination project as that would resolve all avoidable complications and put an end to the class divide on account of different price slabs by making the vaccines free to all?

### PICTALK



Mist floats through a neighbourhood in Shimla following heavy rain

PTI

## At it, again!

There is clear and present danger that the Israel-Palestine conflict may get out of hand

The Israel-Palestine conflict never ends; there are only interim periods of a lull while both sides think of fresh ways to inflict damage on the opponent. The Coronavirus and its repercussions notwithstanding, Israel and Palestine are engaged in a bloody conflict that has already taken several lives on either side. It all began on May 12 with Israeli rockets claiming the lives of several Palestinian civilians. In a *quid pro quo*, five Israelis died of Palestinian rocket attacks. It is difficult to say which party started the conflict. Anyway, as they say, truth is the first casualty in any war. Israel's military campaign has been fierce, though there may have been Palestinian provocation. Its military offensive in the Gaza Strip killed 10 senior Hamas military officers. In the counteroffensive, the Islamic militant group fired hundreds of rockets at Israeli cities. Right now, it is an anarchic situation in Israel as the Jewish and Arab mobs are engaged in skirmishes on the streets. The Palestine conflict started with the birth of Israel and has continued ever since. The 'Partition Plan' of the UN created Arab and Israeli territories from the British territory. But it actually laid down the basis of an endless conflict.

All these years, their hate for each other has only grown. However, the current situation has a lot to do with Israel's internal situation as well. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lost credibility and the people want him to go. In such a situation, the Palestine issue comes in handy. This conflict was just waiting to happen. In mid-2020, the UAE and Bahrain agreed to normalise relations with Israel. They signed the Abraham Accords, which was summarily rejected by Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and the Hamas alike. The subsequent elections in Israel and Netanyahu's loss of popularity laid the foundation of the new conflict. After three inconclusive elections, Netanyahu of the Likud party and Benny Gantz of the Blue and White party signed a pact creating a unity Government in April 2020. Despite the formation of the unity Government and promises from Netanyahu that he would step down after 18 months, he didn't. But the average Israeli's hate for Palestine can be easily mobilised which sweeps all wrongs under the carpet. But sometimes war creates its own dynamics and the genie would just not go back into the bottle. Now there are genuine fears that a third *intifada* could unleash.

# Nepal slips into deeper crisis

Having failed to prove majority in Parliament, the Oli-led Government has shoved the country into the throes of uncertainty



RISHI GUPTA

Despite a protracted political battle, the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (UML) failed to prove majority in the Lower House of Parliament on May 10. Prime Minister KP Oli held a series of meetings with the Opposition, including the Nepali Congress and the Janata Samajbadi Party, for support after the erstwhile faction of the CPN(UML) led by former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' withdrew support to the Government. In March this year, the Supreme Court had ordered against the dissolution of the House of Representatives by Oli amid his rift with party chairman Prachanda. This House was elected in January 2018 after Maoist Party chief Prachanda had agreed to merge his party with the Oli-led UML. However, the Government's downfall was inevitable as neither of the leaders had an ideological clarity nor a will to end the race for the premiership.

As Nepal is witnessing a significant health crisis amid the second peak of COVID-19, the political upheaval comes as an extra burden for the Nepalese people. An egoist, authoritarian and assertive Prime Minister, Oli has finally plunged Nepal into a political and humanitarian crisis. The healthcare system in Nepal was already in a shambles after the 2015 earthquake. While the political parties could have worked on improving health, education and employment in the post-earthquake phase, they all chose to deal with personal equations to be in power. In the last 10 years alone, Nepal has seen more than five Prime Ministers, with none completing their tenure.

**Panic Plea:** In a humanitarian plea to the international community, Oli, in an article in *The Guardian*, wrote: "The rise in the number of infections poses a serious challenge to our brave doctors, nurses, other care providers, citizen volunteers and the entire health service system." He added: "(Amid the) constraints of resources and infrastructure, the pandemic is turning out to be an



overwhelming burden. I have, therefore, appealed to the international community to help us with vaccines, diagnostic tools, oxygen kits, critical care medicines and equipment, to support our efforts to save lives." However, one needs to question the Prime Minister and his Cabinet whether they ever planned to bring in people-oriented policies for the nation's welfare. At its best, Nepal lacks all fundamental policy frameworks concerning its disaster management, humanitarian crisis or foreign policy. As a result of Oli's follies, his plea received a mixed response from the international community as in his two years-plus administration, Oli has isolated Nepal from the international community by failing to engage with them to serve the Chinese.

For instance, Nepal's geographical constraints notwithstanding, Oli chose to bad-mouth India's goodwill for political gains and compromised Nepal's integrity by signing the Treaty of Mutual Legal Assistance with China and allowing its embassy to micro-manage local affairs. Besides, corruption charges in the procurement of medical supplies to fight COVID-19 led to the



AS A RESULT OF OLİ'S FOLLIES, HIS PLEA RECEIVED A MIXED RESPONSE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AS IN HIS TWO YEARS-PLUS ADMINISTRATION, OLİ HAS ISOLATED NEPAL FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BY FAILING TO ENGAGE WITH THEM TO SERVE THE CHINESE

Army's intervention last year.

**The Wrong Advice:** Advised by a handful of sycophants, Oli has isolated Nepal from a friendly United States. The latter has stood to the goodwill and democratic aspirations of the Nepalese people. At the same time, the US is irked with Oli after he showed no interest in joining the Millennium Challenge Cooperation (MCC), aiming to provide affordable and green transportation, electricity, regional security, peace and development to partners, only because China calls it a military platform. The US has often requested Nepal to consider the MCC as a priority. Still, all successive Communist Governments, especially Oli, have made it a US versus China deal.

Oli continues to be the acting Prime Minister until other parties are invited to prove their majority to form a new government. Considering Oli's quest for absolute control over the Government and political affairs, he will attempt to derail the formation of a new Government. In the past, too, Oli has misused the office in bringing new laws and dissolving the House.

**Conclusion:** Oli's ultra-

nationalistic outlook and power hunger are at the heart of the people's agony in Nepal. He chose to engage in a verbal spat with India when he could have asked India for humanitarian help last year. On the contrary, India still provided Nepal with vaccines and timely supplies of medical equipment. At present, to its best efforts, India will have the challenge to send prompt help to Nepal considering the crises at home. However, it is a wake-up call for the political leadership in Nepal to balance its foreign policy and bring in policies for the welfare of the people. While Oli holds the biggest responsibility for plunging Nepal into the current crisis, the Maoists, Nepali Congress and the Janata Samajbadi Party equally hold the responsibility for derailing Nepal's developmental process in the past. For a fact, bringing down a democratically elected Government has become popular culture in Nepalese politics.

(The author is an ICSSR Doctoral Fellow at the JNU and Visiting Fellow at the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Kathmandu. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS ARE SUPREME

Sir — The edit 'Two to tango' (May 12) is rational and cogent. As the write-up states, constitutionally our citizens are equal shareholders in the system and, hence, share the blame for the behaviour that crosses all borders of civic responsibility. In our democracy, laws are equally applicable to all, irrespective of political or other social positions of citizens. Therefore, stringent action against the violators is irrefutably paramount. The gargantuan crowd brazenly neglecting or ignoring the COVID protocols has the potential to be a super-spreader within a fortnight. Indeed, religion plays a covetable role in Indian politics and, ergo, those at the helm hesitate to act against the offenders, apparently eyeing the huge vote banks. In our secular democracy, faith is just a personal affair of the citizens and the regime has nothing to do in the people's religious beliefs. The religious doctrines cannot eclipse our constitutional provisions under any circumstances.

The elected regime is bound to exercise its unassailable constitutional authority against any religion or religious outfit/body to protect the secular status of our democracy. Religious freedom can be considered only as a constitutional compromise or privilege for the people. Demanding religious dominance in specific locations, solely considering the majority of particular religion(s) in the designated regions, not only jeopardises the unity and harmony of the people but also breaches the secular clauses of our Constitution.

Thomas KM | Kerala

### BAN BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Sir — The havoc of COVID-19 has raised a series of questions. It has been said that the Corona virus is not natural, rather a biological weapon created in a lab for economic and geographical benefits. We have already witnessed two world wars, besides chemical and atomic attacks, but the third global war would be biological.

In recent reports emanating from America, it has been speculated that China is busy since the last six years in preparing

## The battle is not over yet



This is in response to Prafull Goradia's article, 'Decoding the Bengal election' (May 13). The West Bengal Assembly poll result seems to be great in contrast to the unprecedented success of the BJP in the State just two years ago, when it garnered a rich harvest of 18 MPs during the 2019 general polls and 40 per cent vote share, with the TMC performing marginally better in terms of both seats and percentage. It just goes on to show the damp squib the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo has delivered despite the full power of the Centre getting unleashed upon the State in the past

four months. However, taking a rational look in comparison to the 2016 Assembly polls, it is a massive advancement of the BJP in Bengal — from mere three MLAs to 77 — which is certainly not a joke. And if compared to 2019, the loss of the BJP in vote percentage is also not too drastic — 40 per cent just got reduced by 2-3 per cent, which is only negligible.

Indeed, it had seemed that the BJP would at last conquer the 'last frontier' of Bengal hand-somely. Despite the apparent great success of the TMC, according to the number of seats gained, the situation on the ground is actually not too optimistic. With the "oxygen" of enjoying the status of the only Opposition party within the Assembly premises, coupled with the psychological boost of being the ruling power at the Centre, the Hindu consolidation programme would continue with more vigour and if the BJP retains power in New Delhi in 2024, the TMC surely would have to face much more hurdles in dealing with the saffron brigade in 2026.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

### TELANGANA SHOULD RESCHEDULE LOCKDOWN

Sir — It is a "better late than never" decision taken by the Telangana Government

for imposing a major lockdown in the State to reduce the prevalence of the Corona pandemic amid inadequate supply of vaccines, oxygen cylinders and the other emergency items.

We, however, would like to draw the attention of the Telangana Chief Minister in helping the people going out for medical consultation in the morning hours. He should reschedule the lockdown-free timings as 6 am to 12 noon instead of until 10 am. This is because, generally, the doctors working in the Government or private hospitals attend out-patient cases from 10 am onwards. The Government should consider the problems of the people who do not own a vehicle and depend exclusively on public transport for going to hospitals.

Katuru Durga Prasad Rao | Hyderabad

## SOUND BITE

All the States, including Goa, are facing this major epidemic. Oxygen scarcity has been a headache for the Government.



Union Minister of State  
— Shripad Naik



The sanctions are a swindle on the people, direct oppression on the poorest in society, an abuse of the rights on the sick who lack medicines.

Iranian President  
— Hassan Rouhani

Let's not play Doctor-Doctor at home. Follow only your physician or any reputed doctor. Don't just follow anything floating on whatsapp.



Actor  
— Shekhar Suman



All My tweets are either 4 humanity or countrymen, from the point of view of a guy who has represented India at d highest level.

Former Indian cricketer  
— Irfan Pathan

The federal Government needs to make bold changes and significant investments in order to defend the vital institutions that underpin the American way of life.



US President  
— Joe Biden

Send your feedback to:  
[letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



## FIRST COLUMN

## AN APPEAL: COVID UPS AND DOWNS

It's time for all of us to come together and fight the pandemic selflessly



RAVI CHANDER KOCHHAR

It was towards the end of 2019 that the unknown disaster struck the globe in the form of COVID-19 and since then researchers and scientists have been burning midnight oil to find out how and where it started and how it spread. An answer eludes us even today. The pandemic created havoc around the world, the damages to industry and economies are still being assessed, the world has taken a hit and many countries are still trying to recover from the shock. Now, the second wave has hit the world community with a vengeance and the havoc it has created is worse than the first wave. It is upto the scientific community to quickly analyse how long the present wave will last. During the first wave, thanks to technology, it did not take long for mankind to shift to alternate means of survival and sustain business operations. The education system promptly went into the online mode that has now become the primary mode of teaching. It didn't take long to start virtual laboratory sessions and even the examinations were held online so as to recoup lost offline sessions and save an academic year. Work from home became the name



of the office game, allowing people to run offices and businesses through virtual workshops, seminars and conferences without having to travel at all. Shopping has more or less become an online phenomenon to avoid visits to crowded markets, food too is ordered online like never before and sensing the demand for delivered food, entrepreneurs have expanded the cuisines and culinary fare available for the consumers.

There has been a decline in some businesses in the organised and unorganised sectors, but then many new entrepreneurs have also sprung up ushering in new wave of innovative ideas. Products such as PPEs, masks and ventilators and many more are being made and subjected to innovations, while those never manufactured in the country are being exported under a year. The innovations and new systems, however, eluded the country's medical care apparatus with the health workers struggling to cope up with the pandemic and trying to put their best foot forward to ensure it contained as quickly as possible and ensuring that people respect safety norms and wear masks, maintain social distancing and wash their hands regularly.

The public healthcare system is bursting at the seams and politicising has only made it worse. This is something to be guarded against lest it demoralise the nation. Humanitarian aid is coming from various quarters, including from religious communities, offering volunteer services to provide free food at 'langars', free oxygen supplies and even beds in urgently erected centres. There are also disturbing scenes of over-burdened front line health workers overwhelmed by the scale of the surge. Equally disturbing are reports of black marketing of essential drugs and oxygen, fake admissions, fake medicine and medical equipment. All this adds up to a bizarre situation where the conscience of those indulging in these practices seems to have died. The need of the hour is for everyone to come together keeping politics at bay and fight the pandemic selflessly. Life, not money, is valuable as it will never come back. There is also the need to have a positive mind, it is no small achievement that despite a massive increase in positive cases, the recoveries are also in big numbers.

(The author is Group Pro Vice-Chancellor, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

## Did 'Vaccine Maitri' unfriend Indians?

As India reels under the impact of the second wave of COVID-19, the sense of anger and helplessness among the nation's citizens is only growing



PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI

On January 16, 2021, India had rolled out its vaccine campaign. The country rejoiced, more so, because these were Indian made vaccines, a tribute to all our researchers and a strong endorsement of India's capabilities in the field of medicines. As the phase-wise vaccine programme began, there was a lack of transparency as to how the policy will work — how would the States be allotted the vaccines, would they be free, what is the stock that Indian government has procured and how the supply chain will be handled. However, the cases were falling, there was normalcy returning and there was immense hope that we will overcome the scourge of pandemic with vaccination rollout.

As the phase-wise vaccination started, India first saw vaccine hesitancy and there was wastage being reported from some States. At the same time India began the noble Vaccine Maitri initiative, everyone welcomed it, secure in the belief that the government was in control and had adequate supplies of the vaccine. The Budget Session saw an increasing feeling of having conquered the deadly virus with all ministers in the cabinet praising the Prime Minister for having planned like a *vishwaguru*, increasingly the chorus of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* also started being frequently thrown at the opposition members who questioned the quantity available with India versus those exported, my parliamentary question included. Globally all nations began to place advance orders to vaccine manufacturing companies and built a stockpile for their citizens as early as May, 2020. India only began to purchase from the first week of January, 2021. In the Union Budget the Finance Minister with a lot of fanfare announced an allocation of 35000 crore rupees exclusively for Covid vaccine and said would not hesitate to allocate more if the need arises.

The horror that was unfolding parallelly in Maharashtra sounded an alert to the central government that they were seeing an onset of second wave and had been working to reduce the impact but would need the support from the Central government. These alerts would not come in the way of BJP leaders applauding the PM for his leadership in ending COVID, the Health Minister from saying that it was the endgame for COVID in India. All this while the National Task Force was not even consulted nor a meeting convened. The Election Commission, not to be outdone, went ahead and declared an election festival in five States with a perfunctory warning of maintaining COVID protocols. Oblivious of the fact that the virus was uncontrollable, leaders were busy addressing election rallies. The numbers kept rising, shortage of medical equipment and medicine continued to be flagged but the ministers weren't bothered then but are now busy sharing professional videos to show the work they are doing. Remember, with the Indian Epidemic Act the Centre has an overriding control over the States despite health being a state subject.

The tsunami of second wave hit us hard and we are still reeling because of the impact. The country has been a witness to a total collapse at the Centre, all Ministers having reduced themselves to trolls and any suggestion or feedback being met with an unfortunate, political and whataboutery reply. The ivory tower that they have been confined to refuses to see the death and destruction — they refuse to acknowledge the scale of the problem or the deaths the second wave has left in its wake. We still do not know the number of dead, our crematoriums are full, new places are being iden-



APPROXIMATELY ONE BILLION INDIANS WOULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR VACCINES, ROUGHLY TWO BILLION DOSES, YET THE ORDER TO DATE HAS BEEN FOR MERELY 36.4 CRORE. WE STILL DO NOT KNOW THE WORK DONE BY THE GOVERNMENT TO PROCURE VACCINES FROM ABROAD. THE STATE GOVERNMENTS ARE NOW FLOATING GLOBAL TENDERS TO BE ABLE TO BUILD A VACCINE STOCK FOR THEIR POPULATION

The writer is a member of the Rajya Sabha representing the Shiv Sena. The views expressed are personal.



tified to carry out cremations. There are queues to cremate our dead, there are queues for oxygen supply, there are queues for vaccination, there are queues for beds. The most tragic scenes are being reported from our villages that do not even have basic medical support — forget the ventilators that are needed to save lives — and the bodies of the dead are being disposed of in the rivers. The government unfortunately is not firefighting with a coherent response to the pandemic but is rather concentrating its energy on "setting a positive narrative" because the foreign media has started to ask tough questions.

There is growing anger and helplessness amongst the people. The larger problem is of lower testing, under reporting of cases and a slow vaccine drive. The state Chief Ministers began to raise an alarm of vaccine shortage and only when their voices started rising was it revealed that India had ended up sending out more vaccines overseas, to countries that were seeing lower impact of the pandemic than India, and the Health Department hadn't stockpiled vaccines. It was only on April 28 that the government released funds to Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech for more orders. As per the Minister of State for Finance, the government has totally paid out ₹4745 crores (₹2520 on April 28) for a total of 34.6 crore doses (16 crore on April 28) till date. India has covered 9.9 per cent of its population that has received the first dose and only about 2.6 per cent of those totally vaccinated. For Indian government to call it fastest and largest is yet another blunder.

When the Government, after pressure from all quarters, opened up vaccine for all as well as gave Emergency Use Authorisation to all

foreign vaccines, the assumption was the government would use the funds allocated in the budget to procure these vaccines and ramp up the vaccine drive. This again was not to be as the government left the procurement of vaccines for those in the 18-44 age group to the states and private hospitals at a price decided by the manufacturers. This led to three different price points for procurement for the Centre, State and private players. Today Indians are paying the highest price for these vaccines simply because of the ill-planned and unthought out policy of a central government. The question that needs to be asked is what happened to the allotted budget towards procurement and vaccination, why are the States, already reeling under financial constraints, forced to buy these vaccines at prohibitive costs?

Approximately one billion Indians would be eligible for vaccines, roughly two billion doses, yet the order till date has been for merely 36.4 crore. We still do not know the work done by the government to procure vaccines from abroad. It has been over a month since these EUA were given but yet no clarity when they would be available. The State governments are now floating global tenders to be able to build a vaccine stock for their population. Many States are running out of vaccines and have been forced to either ration the stock or shut down vaccination centres. Just when the drive needed to pick up it has been forced to slow down.

Various hospitals across the country were forced to move the High Courts to ensure their oxygen supply wasn't disrupted. Some hospitals also saw deaths due to shortage of supply of oxygen forcing the Supreme Court to step in and form an oxygen task-

force. Last week the Supreme Court said compelling States to negotiate with manufacturers, on grounds of promoting competition and making it attractive for new manufacturers, would adversely affect those in the 18-44 age group. The Government has called its vaccination policy 'just and equitable'; now it is for the people to realize the truth on ground. The government of India still controls the distribution despite saying it has a hands-off approach in State government procurements. It submitted in the SC that though the States are procuring the vaccines from the manufacturers, the Central government has, in consultation with the vaccine manufacturers, determined the pro-rata population of each State in the age group of 18-44 and each State will procure only that quantity so that there is no disparity in availability of vaccines between the States inter-se either based upon difference in their bargaining power.

The technological barrier has created a digital divide and the price barrier has created a class divide. The only way forward despite the government terming Supreme Court hearing on this matter an overzealousness on part of judiciary to get involved — would be for the courts to form a vaccination task force and get the government to adhere to the same. It is unfortunate that a government which was boasting of its Vaccine Maitri diplomacy and *aatmanirbharta* is now defending the same policy to justify the foreign aid coming in from various countries including Bhutan and Bangladesh, because of its own incompetence to prepare the country for a second wave. Unfortunately, transparency in distribution and allocation is still a distant dream, so is cutting out the red tape for quicker outreach.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHILE THEY WERE ALIVE, THEY DID NOT GET MEDICINE, OXYGEN, BEDS AND TREATMENT. NOW, AFTER DEATH, NO SHROUDS, WOOD OR THE GROUND FOR CREMATION.

— FORMER BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER LALU PRASAD



THE FLOATING BODIES IN GANGA... UNFORTUNATE. THE MODI GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING PIETY AND CONTINUITY OF THE GANGA.

— UNION JAL SHAKTI MINISTER GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

## The culture of political violence in India is not new

The number of victims of political violence in our country is much higher than the number of deaths due to terror attacks

Politicians often capitalise on the emotions and beliefs of common people that can be regional, ethnic, and religious. They become an integral part of the political process. These values and beliefs become extremely intense and often lead to violence in the struggle for political supremacy. This phenomenon can be observed around the world as a means for gaining ultimate power. The issue of political violence has once again come to the fore in the wake of the recent Assembly elections in the five States, including West Bengal.

The struggle for existence has been marked by conflict, violence, oppression, and human rights abuses. In the 18th century, violence was considered almost the only way to achieve political goals. During the French Revolution, the Jacobin rebels tried to over-



RAJESH S KHARAT

throw the established political set up by adopting the formula of political violence and change the power structure. In Colombia, the Marxist-Leninist organisations like FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) resorted to violence for political change since 1964, in Peru, the Shining Path also followed the same tactics and its terror impact is still continues. Thus, one could observe that while some organisations advocate ideology motivated by political violence to achieve their goals, a few others use religion based political violence for their objectives, especially in the Arab-Asian countries.

In most of the developed and underdeveloped countries, the casualties and backlashes of political violence during the general elections or local conflicts is relatively low as compared to acts of terrorism. However, the situation in India

is the opposite. The number of victims of political violence in the Gram Panchayat elections and right up to the General Elections or domestic conflicts like intra-State, inter-State or communal and sectorial and caste conflicts is much higher than the number of deaths due to the terrorist attacks. It is an unanticipated phenomenon because such situation had never existed before, at least not on such a larger scale. Though, there were always exceptions. But a look at the violence in the last 50 years of General Elections in India reveals an astonishing picture of post-poll violence in India.

Between 1970 and 1990, there always were sporadic incidents of violence either during the pre-poll and post-poll period in the border states of India, especially in the Northeast States, viz, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram,



Meghalaya, and Tripura and also in Punjab and the Kashmir Valley. The demand for either right to self-determination or an independent State or a State with autonomous status compelled the rebels to use political violence to achieve their objectives. Moreover, the separatists were also protesting against the Union Government for frequent use of Article 356.

Until 1990, political violence was limited to targeting

Government property or particular officials which eventually forced the government to negotiate. However, the general public was not harmed at a scale that is witnessed today. The assassination of a particular leader of a politically motivated community during the election period began with the 1985 General Elections in Bihar when 63 people, including four candidates, were killed and 200 people were seriously injured. The same was repeated in the next general elections. Between 1990 and 2004 period, as reported, almost 644 people lost their lives in various elections in Bihar. The feudal society, corrupt and weak administration, and political uncertainties provided fertile ground to the local leaders who simultaneously took advantage of the deteriorating economic conditions and exploited a polarised

social space. Political power was seized in Bihar by the 'Bahubalis', who resorted to violence and gave birth to private caste militias, whose activities were a precursor to political violence in India.

Eruption of post-election political violence in West Bengal has dented the very composed image of the state. Despite limitations of economic and commercial prosperity, West Bengal as a state did maintain social harmony and respected faiths and religious sentiments. Though it was never free from conflicts based on communalism or ideological rivalries or caste conflicts, those sentiments and incidents were not used for power struggle. Unfortunately, the series of violence in Nandigram and Singur during the 2011 elections paved the way for using violence to meet political ends. Unlike the developed urban

centres of West Bengal inhabited by the 'Bhadralok', the socio-economic and political atmosphere in its rural parts is yet to see the fruits of modernity. Paradoxically, much of the educated class has either migrated abroad or shifted to more developed parts of India, and for those in Bengal, their political existence is negligible. As a result, the political class in West Bengal essentially comprises the common man and activists with limited exposure to the real world. However, the political awareness and sensitivities of Bengali society are quite high because of their role in and contribution to the Renaissance and national movements.

The political activists remained only activists and followed the orders and diktat given or issued by their party leaders. In a way, political violence is becoming a determining factor in elections.

# Hamas, Israel fighting escalates

AP ■ GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP)

Hamas sent a heavy barrage of rockets deep into Israel in a matter of minutes on Thursday and Israel pounded Gaza with more airstrikes.

The relentless escalation of hostilities came even as Egyptian negotiators held in-person talks with the two sides, intensifying efforts at mediation.

Previous fighting between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers, including a devastating 2014 war, was largely confined to the impoverished and blockaded Palestinian territory and Israeli communities on the frontier. But this round seems to be rippling farther and wider than at any time since the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising, and is tearing apart the country at its seams.

While some rocket attacks have reached the Tel Aviv area, Arab and Jewish mobs have rampaged through the streets, savagely beating people and torching cars. Flights have been cancelled or diverted away



Smoke rises following Israeli airstrikes on a building in Gaza City on Thursday. Weary Palestinians are somberly marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, as Hamas and Israel traded more rockets and airstrikes and Jewish-Arab violence raged across Israel

from the country's main airport.

Weary Palestinians, meanwhile, somberly marked the end of the Muslim holy month

of Ramadan on Thursday as militants fired one barrage of rockets after another and Israel carried out waves of bone-rattling airstrikes. Since the rockets began Monday, Israel has toppled three high-rise buildings that it said housed Hamas facilities after warning civilians to evacuate.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the death toll has climbed to 83 Palestinians, including 17 children and seven women, with more than 480 people wounded. Islamic Jihad confirmed the deaths of seven militants, while

Hamas has acknowledged 13 of its militants killed, including a senior commander.

Israel says the number of militants dead is much higher. Seven people have been killed in Israel. Among them were a soldier killed by an anti-tank missile and a 6-year-old child hit in a rocket attack.

A visit by Egyptian security officials was a significant development in international mediation efforts, which have been key to ending past rounds of fighting. The officials met first with Hamas leaders in

Gaza before holding talks with the Israelis in Tel Aviv, two Egyptian intelligence officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to the press.

Still, both Israel and Hamas seemed determined to press ahead.

Even as word came of the mediators' presence, Gaza militants fired a volley of some 100 rockets nearly simultaneously, raising air raid sirens around southern and central Israel.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties — but the barrage appeared aimed at demonstrating that Hamas' arsenal was still full even after three nights of airstrikes and the killing Wednesday of several Hamas leaders involved in the rocket programme.

"The decision to bomb Tel Aviv, Dimona and Jerusalem is easier for us than drinking water," a spokesman for Hamas' military wing declared in a video message. Dimona is the site of Israel's nuclear reactor. "Our conflict will reach you whenever you turn any aggression against our people," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited batteries of the Iron Dome missile defence system, which the military says has intercepted 90% of the 1,200 rockets that have reached Israel from Gaza so far.

# KP Sharma Oli set to be reappointed as Nepal PM

## As Opposition fails to muster majority support

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

KP Sharma Oli was set to be reappointed as Nepal Prime Minister as the Opposition alliance of Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) on Thursday failed to muster majority support to form the next government. President Bidya Devi Bhandari had asked the Opposition parties to come up with the support of majority lawmakers to form a new Government by 9 pm on Thursday after Oli lost a crucial trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday.

However, as the deadline which ended at 9:00 pm on Thursday, the NC-Maoist Centre alliance has its hopes crashing down as disgruntled Nepal-Khanal faction of the ruling CPN-UML did not forward their resignation, which they had been claiming to do for long as a bargaining chip with embattled former prime minister Oli.

As the time accorded by the President gradually runs out and the deadline approaches, it can well be assumed that Oli is all set to make a comeback, emerging victorious in this Game of Thrones, as the country grapples with unprecedented rise in Covid-19 cases and corresponding fatalities as

the second wave of the pandemic rages on, The Himalayan Times newspaper commented.

Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" held a meeting on Thursday at the former's residence at Budhanilkantha in the outskirts of Kathmandu to discuss the formation of the new government.

Similarly, Prime Minister and chairman of ruling CPN-UML Oli and dissident leader of the party Madhav Kumar Nepal held a meeting in an attempt to make the last effort to patch up their differences.

After Prime Minister Oli withdrew action taken against four dissident leaders, including Madhav Nepal, for working against the party, 28 lawmakers close to the dissident leader withdrew their decision to resign en masse from the House of Representatives, that would pave way for Deuba to stake a claim for the prime minister's post.

Political observers familiar with the latest developments, say chances of Deuba claiming the prime minister's post with the majority support by Thursday night deadline is very dim.

Even if he submits the claim with the support of three political parties, Nepali Congress, CPN-Maoist Centre

and Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP), its legality will be questioned as Mahanta Thakur faction of the JSP is likely to oppose the move. Although Prachanda has extended support to Deuba for the post of Prime Minister, he cannot claim the premiership without the support of undivided JSP. A source close to JSP said that out of 32 lawmakers of the party, Thakur has command over 17.

Earlier, Baburam Bhattarai, a senior leader of JSP-N, said all parties needed to form a new national coalition government and hold elections in one year.

Bhattarai said such a government should not be led by a former prime minister or the current prime minister.

Bhattarai said such a government should be run based on a common minimum programme, should resolve the Covid crisis, and ensure economic relief packages, constitutional amendment, and truth and reconciliation. Given the parties' strengths and particularly the factional feuds in the CPN-UML and the Janata Samajwadi, many say the current numbers game is just a futile exercise and that the country, which has had eight different governments in a decade, would sooner or later head towards early polls, the Kathmandu Post reported.

# As ethnic violence rocks Israel, Arabs cite deep grievances

AP ■ JERUSALEM

As rockets from Gaza streaked overhead, Arabs and Jews fought each other on the streets below and rioters torched vehicles, a restaurant and a synagogue in one of the worst spasms of communal violence Israel has seen in years.

The mayor of the mixed town of Lod, which saw the worst of the violence Tuesday, compared it to a civil war or a Palestinian uprising. Arab experts and activists say the violence was fueled by unrest in Jerusalem that has brought Israel to the brink of another Gaza war, but is rooted in deeper grievances that go back to the founding of the state.

Violence flared again Wednesday night with a wave of apparent revenge attacks. In Bat Yam, a Tel Aviv suburb, a large crowd of ultranationalist Israelis pulled a man from a car who they thought was Arab and beat him until he lay on the ground motionless and bloodied. A hospital said he's in serious condition without identifying him.

Earlier, a group of black-clad Israelis smashed the windows of an Arab-owned ice cream shop in Bat Yam and ultranationalists could be seen chanting, "Death to Arabs!" on live television during a standoff with Border Police. In the northern city of Tiberias, video uploaded to social media appeared to show flag-waving Israelis attacking a car.

Israel's Channel 13 quoted a senior police officer as saying Arabs are suspected of attacking and seriously wounding a Jewish man in the coastal city of Acre amid new clashes there. In a late night television interview, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, whose figurehead office is meant to serve as the nation's moral compass, said the country was gripped by civil war and urged citizens to "stop this madness."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on both Jews and Arabs to cease attacks on each other. "It doesn't matter to me that your blood is boiling. You can't take the law in your hands," he said.

# Final resting place of Sir Ganga Ram in Pakistan to be reopened for public after 10 years: Official

PTI ■ LAHORE

The final resting place of the prominent Hindu philanthropist and top architect Sir Ganga Ram in Lahore will be reopened for the public later this month after authorities took back the land illegally occupied by some people for 10 years, a senior official said on Thursday.

The Samadhi of Sir Ganga Ram is located close to the Taxali Gate of the old city of Lahore in Punjab province.

It was closed for visitors for the past one decade since it was illegally occupied by a group of people.

"We have taken back the possession of the occupied land from the group of people and launched restoration of Sir

Ganga Ram's Samadhi. It will be opened for the public later this month after completion of restoration work," said Fraz Abbas, the Deputy Director of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB).

He said an art gallery will also be opened showcasing the work of the great architect.

"Local Hindus would be invited to its inauguration ceremony after completion of the restoration work," he said.

Born in 1851 in Mangtanwala near Nankana Sahib, some 65 kilometers from Lahore, Rai Bahadur Ganga Ram was a civil engineer and an architect by profession.

He made extensive contributions to the urban fabric of Lahore, capital of Pakistan's

Punjab province. Sir Ganga Ram joined the Government College Lahore in 1869 before Thompson Engineering College at Roorkee, in 1871 to complete his engineering.

Sir Ganga Ram designed the building of the Lahore High Court, Aitchison College, Hailey College of Commerce, Lahore Museum, Mayo School of Arts which is now known as the National College of Arts (NCA), the General Post Office building and the Albert Victor Wing of the Lahore Mayo Hospital.

Sir Ganga Ram had donated land for the construction of a hospital in Lahore. Sir Ganga Ram Hospital was established in 1921 in Mozang area of Lahore. He died in 1927 in London at the age of 76.

# Putin: School shooting in Kazan 'has shaken all of us'

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday said that the deadly school shooting in Kazan "has shaken" the country and ordered the government to revise school security protocols and tighten control over civilian gun ownership.

"The tragedy has definitely shaken all of us," Putin said, speaking at a meeting with government officials via video link Thursday.

"All of Russia... Stands with Tatarstan, with Kazan residents, in the difficult days." A gunman on Tuesday morning attacked a school in Kazan, a city 430 miles (700 kilometers) east of Moscow, sending students hiding under their desks or running out of the building. Nine people — seven students and two school employees — were killed, and

more than 20 others were hospitalized with injuries.

Three wounded children remain in grave condition, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko told Putin at the government meeting Thursday.

The authorities gave no motive as to why 11-year-old Galyaviev, 19, who was arrested in the shooting, carried out the attack at the school he reportedly used to attend.

He appeared in court Wednesday, charged with murder, and was ordered to pre-trial detention for two months. Officials said he legally owned a firearm. Putin said Thursday that in order to prevent attacks like the one in Kazan, the authorities need to "seriously raise the requirements for civilian gun owners and tighten control over civilian gun circulation." AP

# GLOBE TROTTER

## 2 HELD IN B'DESH FOR PLOTTING ATTACK ON PARL

Dhaka: The counter-terrorism police in Bangladesh have arrested two people for plotting an attack on Parliament and instigating others to join them, according to a media report. The arrested persons have been identified as Abu Sakib, 22, a member of the banned militant outfit Ansar Al Islam, while the other Ali Hasan Osama is a radical orator.

## COURT ORDER ISSUED TO BORIS OVER UNPAID DEBT

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office said Wednesday it was investigating a report claiming that there is an outstanding court order against Johnson over an allegedly unpaid debt. Private Eye magazine uncovered an October 2020 county court judgment against Johnson for \$355 pounds (\$755).

## EX-MALDIVES PREZ FLIES TO GERMANY FOR TREATMENT

Male: Former Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed, who was critically wounded in an explosion, was released from the hospital on Thursday and flown to Germany for further treatment, his family and the hospital said.

## INDONESIAN TROOPS KILL PAPUAN REBEL COMMANDER

Jayapura: Two Papuan independence fighters, including a rebel commander, were killed in ongoing clashes between Indonesian security forces and a rebel group in the country's troubled easternmost region, authorities said Thursday. The clashes began last month in restive Papua province after rebels set fire to several schools and killed two teachers in Bogga village in Puncak district. Police and military forces launched a joint operation to find the attackers, who authorities believe belong to the West Papua Liberation Army, the military wing of the Free Papua Organisation.

# CANCELLATION/REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL TRAINS

It is notified for the information of passengers that due to low occupancy and other operational reasons Railways have decided to cancel and reduce the frequency of following special trains, as per the details given below :-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Name	Date(s) of Cancellation (from originating station)	
02486 Shri Ganganagar - Hazur Sahib Nanded Special Express	15.05.2021 till further advice	
02485 Hazur Sahib Nanded - Shri Ganganagar Special Express	17.05.2021 till further advice	
02440 Shri Ganganagar - Hazur Sahib Nanded Special Express	14.05.2021 till further advice	
02439 Hazur Sahib Nanded - Shri Ganganagar Special Express	16.05.2021 till further advice	

# REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Effective From
02065 Ajmer - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express	5 Days/Week	Tri-Weekly (Mon, Wed, Fri)	14.05.2021 till further advice
02066 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Ajmer Special Express	5 Days/Week	Tri-Weekly (Mon, Wed, Fri)	14.05.2021 till further advice
02458 Bikaner Jn. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Wed, Sat)	15.05.2021 till further advice
02457 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Bikaner Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Fri, Mon)	17.05.2021 till further advice
02443 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Jodhpur Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Thu, Sun)	16.05.2021 till further advice
02444 Jodhpur Jn. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Fri, Mon)	17.05.2021 till further advice
02471 Shri Ganganagar - Delhi Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Mon, Wed)	17.05.2021 till further advice
02472 Delhi Jn. - Shri Ganganagar Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Tue, Thu)	18.05.2021 till further advice
04731 Delhi Jn. - Bhatinda Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Mon, Wed)	17.05.2021 till further advice
04732 Bhatinda Jn. - Delhi Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Tue, Thu)	18.05.2021 till further advice

Note:- Presently train no. 02443/02444 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Jodhpur - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express is running between Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Degana - Delhi Sarai Rohilla and partially cancelled between Degana - Jodhpur - Degana, reduced frequencies shall also run as above.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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

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# US hits China and others for repressing religious freedom

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration on Wednesday took aim at China and a number of other countries for repressing religious freedom as it forges ahead with its aim of restoring human rights as a primary focus of American foreign policy.

The condemnation was similar to that lodged by the Trump administration, which had been criticised for prioritising religious freedom over other rights, and reflected con-

tinuity in the US position that China's crackdown on Muslims and other religious minorities in western Xinjiang constitutes "genocide." Yet, a senior official said religious freedom is just one element in the administration's broader human rights strategy.

Much as his predecessor did, Secretary of State Antony Blinken used the release of the State Department's annual International Religious Freedom Report to lambaste China for severe restrictions on

its citizens' ability to worship freely. He also announced a travel ban on a former senior Chinese official the US accuses of persecuting members of the Falun Gong religious sect. "China broadly criminalises religious expression and continues to commit crimes against humanity and genocide against Muslim Uyghurs and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups," Blinken told reporters as he unveiled the report for the calendar year 2020.

# Ex-cops in Floyd death claim witness coercion, harm of leak

AP ■ MINNEAPOLIS

Attorneys for three former Minneapolis officers awaiting trial in George Floyd's death will be in court Thursday to argue pretrial motions, including a request that prosecutors be sanctioned after media reports that Derek Chauvin had planned to plead guilty a year ago, and allegations that they haven't disclosed information about the alleged coercion of a witness.

# Covid-19 levels fall in UK as health officials review variant found in India

PTI ■ LONDON

The number of people infected with the coronavirus in England fell by almost half over the past month marking the lowest level of Covid-19 cases since last year, according to new statistics released in London on Thursday as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said "cautious steps" were being taken on the virus variant first identified in India.

The Imperial College London-led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) study comes as it emerged that the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is holding a review meeting on Thursday to discuss the Variant of Concern (VOC) first identified in India.

# Nepal reports 8,960 cases of Covid in one day

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal has reported 8,960 new cases of coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 431,191, the health ministry said on Thursday.

# Health officials have conducted 20,245 new coronavirus screening tests in the last one day

The Ministry of Health and Population also said that the nation has reported 214 new deaths in the last one day taking the death toll to 4,466. "The cases are continuously on surge with 8,960 new cases recorded in the last one day. The total figure currently is 431,191. Deaths have also gone up to 4,466," the health ministry said in a statement. Health officials have conducted 20,245 new coronavirus screening tests in the last one day, the official said.

# 7% rise in FPIs' holdings in domestic equities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The value of foreign portfolio investors' (FPI) holdings in domestic equities reached USD 552 billion in three months to March 2021, a surge of 7 per cent from the preceding quarter, according to a Morningstar report.

This was largely on the back of robust net inflows from FPIs, coupled with a strong performance of the Indian equity markets.

"As of the quarter ended March 2021, the value of FPI investments in Indian equities stood at USD 552 billion, which was considerably higher than the USD 518 billion recorded in the previous quarter," the report noted.

As of March 2020 quarter, the value of FPI investments in Indian equities was USD 281 billion. However, overseas investors' contribution to domestic equity market capitalisation dropped marginally during the period under review to 19.9 per cent from 20.1 per cent in December quarter.

Offshore mutual funds form an important component of total foreign portfolio investment, apart from other large FPIs, such as offshore insurance companies, hedge



funds, and sovereign wealth funds.

During January-March 2021, FPIs invested a robust USD 7.64 billion in Indian equities. In relative terms, it was much lower than the net inflows of USD 19.21 billion recorded in the previous quarter, but in absolute terms it is a significant amount, nonetheless, the report pointed out.

According to the report, positive domestic and global factors ensured that the interest of foreign investors in the Indian equity markets remains intact. Further, the announcement of the government's pro-growth budget was lauded by investors.

In addition, there was a gush of liquidity in the global financial markets after the US announced a USD 1.9 trillion pandemic relief package. This

ensured regular flows of assets into emerging markets like India.

Also, a rejig in some of the global indexes resulted in flows of assets into Indian equities, the report noted.

However, overseas investors turned net sellers in the month of April and offloaded net assets worth USD 1.6 billion in the wake of second intense wave of COVID-19. "Expectedly, this fanned concerns over the risks to economic recovery caused by the lockdown being imposed in several states to contain the spread of virus," the report said.

While this dashed hope of an early economic recovery, it also spooked foreign investors, leading them to adopt a wait-and-watch stance regarding investing in Indian equities, it added.

# Intense bidding for KG-D6 gas in e-auction on DGH-approved platform

O2C, IOC bag supplies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 14 users across Asectors slugged it on a third party electronic platform for seven-and-half hours to secure natural gas supplies from the eastern offshore KG-D6 block before the oil-to-chemical (O2C) unit of Reliance Industries Ltd bagged most of the supplies, sources said.

Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc of the UK, who are bringing a second set of gas discoveries in their Bay of Bengal KG-D6 block, had offered 5.5 million standard cubic meters per day of additional gas in the auction for a flexible tenure of between 3 to 5 years.

Gas users companies like Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Reliance O2C, GAIL Gas, Adani Total Gas Ltd, Torrent Gas, Torrent Power and gas trading companies like GAIL, Shell and IGS were locked in the intense bidding war on the e-auction that happened on May 5, sources in the Reliance-BP consortium said.

At the end of the

intense bidding war, Reliance O2C walked away with 3 mmscmd of supplies, offering better prices than competitors, they said.

India Gas Solutions (IGS) - a gas sourcing and marketing joint venture of Reliance and BP - bagged another 1 mmscmd, while IOC got a similar volume.

The remaining volume was picked by Adani Gas (0.15 mmscmd), IRM Energy (0.10 mmscmd), GAIL (30,000 cubic meters per day) and Torrent Gas (20,000 cubic meters per day).

This is the third auction that Reliance-BP conducted on a third party independent platform approved by the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). The online web-based electronic bidding platform of CRISIL Risk and Infrastructure Solutions Ltd (CRIS) was also used for e-auction in February this year as well as in 2019.

In the three auctions, Reliance-BP has sold around 18 mmscmd of domestic gas from new fields in the KG-D6 block, which would help substantially reduce reliance on imported LNG, the sources said.

In the May 5 auction, Reliance-BP had asked bidders to quote a price linked to Platts JKM (Japan Korea marker), the

liquefied natural gas (LNG) benchmark price assessment for spot physical cargoes.

The lowest bid that could be placed was JKM minus USD 0.3 per million British thermal unit.

The highest acceptable bid would be JKM plus USD 2.01 per mmbtu.

The bidding, they said, started with a USD 0.45 discount to JKM price and intense competition led to the discovery of a price of JKM minus USD 0.6 per mmbtu (discount of USD 0.6 to ruling JKM price).

The intense competition indicates a preference for domestic gas vis a vis LNG for Indian consumers.

At current prices, the discovered price translates into a price of about USD 9 per mmbtu, but the buyers will be required to pay only the cap or ceiling price that the government has set for such fields.

The government sets a cap or ceiling rate at which natural gas from difficult fields like deepsea can be sold. This cap for the period April 1, 2021, to September 30 2021 is USD 3.62 per mmbtu.

Even though the gas prices for April-September 2021 are capped by the government notified ceiling price of USD 3.62 per mmbtu.

# CAIT asks Piyush Goyal to stop delivery of non-essential items by e-commerce cos



FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) in a communication sent to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has said that going one step further, various e-commerce entities even in the ongoing Covid-19 induced national emergency are delivering non-essential goods in blatant contravention of lockdown guidelines imposed by various State Governments.

The CAIT has also sent similar communications to Chief Ministers of all States urging them to take immediate cognisance of this violation by e-commerce portals.

The CAIT said that the sole purpose of the lockdown is to limit human-to-human interaction and reduce exposure of the general population to the

COVID-19 virus and thereby break the chain of the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, all non-essential activities, including the sale and delivery of non-essential items, are prohibited during the lockdown by ordering the shops to close in all such States.

It said that as a part of "break the chain", the State Govts have banned the sale and delivery of non-essential goods and services. The business community across the country has implemented these orders in letter and spirit even though it has caused severe economic hardship to the traders. It is a matter of great astonishment that some multinational behemoths, in blatant violation of Govt instructions/orders, are selling non-essential goods under the garb of essential goods and are putting at risk.

# Covid Resurgence: Monthly output loss widened in mid-April

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Resurgence of Covid-19 has changed India's macroeconomic narrative from being a linear V-shaped recovery in FY22 to being a story of a lost quarter, says Emkay Global in a report.

Accordingly, the report cited that amid increasing geographical spread of virus, the bottom-up projections now suggest that for every month of current localised lockdowns, the output loss would now be ₹1.25 lakh crore from ₹75,000 crore as per the restrictions seen in mid-April 2021.

"The fall in secondary and tertiary sector capacity utilisation varies between 10 per cent and 40 per cent among states," said Madhavi Arora, Lead Economist, Emkay.

She said the estimates imply a monthly loss of GVA growth by 90 basis points compared with loss of more than 40 basis points in output growth per month during Covid-19 lockdown.

"Clearly, factors such as better adapted firms and policy response, stable financial conditions, vaccine drive, pent-

up demand release and robust global growth spillovers create growth buffers," she said.

"Assuming Covid-19 peaks in May 21 and restrictions ease by Q2FY22, we mark down our FY22 GDP forecast to 9.9 per cent from 11 per cent earlier."

However, she pointed out that the situation is still in a flux, but as per current dynamics the expected Q1FY22 annualised growth is seen at 16.5 per cent from more than 22 per cent estimated before the second wave. Their estimated monthly loss of output of 0.9-1 per cent of GDP is much higher than the estimated welfare cost of universal vaccination at 0.6-0.7 per cent of GDP, thus making a successful vaccine strategy the cheapest policy path to economic normalisation. Lately, India reported record new daily increases in coronavirus infections, prompting new lockdowns and restrictive measures to curb the spread of the pandemic.

The exponential rise in new coronavirus cases in India is a humanitarian crisis. It also raises concerns about the country's economic recovery and currency fluctuations.

# Job scenario worsens, unemployment rate shoots up to 8% in April



FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

As the severe second wave of Covid-19 and the resultant lockdowns bring economic activities to a halt, India's job scenario worsened in April 2021.

As per data published by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), India's unemployment rate rose 8 per cent in April, against 6.5 per cent in March.

"April 2021 turned out to be worse than expectations. We had expected labour participation rate to stabilise at its March 2021 level. The LPR had dropped sharply in March already after a modest fall in February. But, the LPR fell for a third consecutive month in April," CMIE's CEO Mahesh Vyas said.

It fell to 39.98 per cent -- the lowest LPR since May 2020, the month of a stringent nation-wide lockdown. The LPR in April 2021 is therefore the worst since the national lockdown, the CMIE said.

It attributed this fall is the result of the local lockdowns in several states. In Maharashtra, a state that imposed partial lockdowns, saw its LPR fall sharply from 44.2 per cent in March to 40.6 per cent in April. The labour force shrank by 1.1 million in April 2021 to 424.6 million compared to 425.8 million in March. In spite of this smaller labour force looking for employment, a greater proportion failed to find employment.

The employment rate fell from 37.6 per cent in March to 36.8 per cent in April.

# Bitcoin slips below \$50k after Musk says Tesla won't take it

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The price of bitcoin fell below \$50,000 Thursday morning after Tesla CEO Elon Musk tweeted a day earlier that the electric car maker would stop accepting the digital currency as payment for its vehicles.

Musk on Wednesday cited environmental concerns for the change in policy.

"We are concerned about rapid increasing use of fossil fuels for Bitcoin mining and transactions, especially coal, which has the worst emissions of any fuel," Musk said on Twitter. He added that cryptocurrency is a "good idea on many levels" but its promise cannot come at a great cost to the environ-

ment."



He also said that Tesla won't be selling any of the Bitcoin it owns.

The price of bitcoin slipped to \$49,880 in morning trading Thursday, the first time it's been below \$50,000 since early March. Tesla shares were poised for gains early Thursday after falling 4.4% on Wednesday.

Tesla said in February that it had invested around \$1.5 billion in Bitcoin and it planned to begin accepting the digital currency as payment "soon". The fair market value of Tesla's Bitcoin holdings as of March 31 was \$2.48 billion, according to securities filings.

Bitcoin relies on computers, which rely on electricity, to exist.

# Auto dealers seek Govt, RBI support to tide over second wave of Covid-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: Automotive dealers have sought fiscal support, including an extension of GST payment for the next three months, to survive the second wave of Covid-19.

As per industry sources, the automotive dealers' body FADA has written to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, apprising them of the difficulties being faced by the sector while seeking immediate relief measures.

Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, which represents over 15,000 dealers having around 25,000 dealerships across the country, has sought a three-month extension for the delay in filing returns of GST payment, the sources said. Besides, the industry body has urged the RBI to provide guidelines to banks and NBFCs to give a moratorium equivalent to the number of days of lockdown each state has declared for the payment of instalments of term loans, short term loans.

PTI

# Rebranded: GoAir becomes ultra-low cost airline Go First

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Budget carrier GoAir has rebranded itself into ultra-low cost airline Go First.

Accordingly, the airline said that at the heart of this revamp is the full embrace of the ultra-low-cost airline model. The airline cited factors such as single aircraft type across its fleet has positioned it to operate the ultra-low-cost model.

"To communicate this change, Go First also dons a rebranded identity. With this change, Go First is poised for its next phase of growth as an ultra low cost carrier," the airline said in a statement. Besides, the airline is in the process of transitioning all its operations under this new brand. "Go First has stayed resilient during the really tough times of the past 15 months. Even as the times continue to be extraordinary, Go First sees opportunities ahead," said Kaushik Khona, CEO, Go First.

# Comm Min seeks anti-dumping duty on certain rubber imported from 4 countries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry recommended imposition of anti-dumping duty on a certain type of rubber imported from China, European Union, Japan, and Russia, in order to guard domestic manufacturers from cheap inbound shipments.

Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has recommended the duty after

concluding in its probe that "Acrylonitrile Butadiene Rubber" from these regions has been exported at dumped prices into India, which impacted the domestic industry.

"The authority recommends imposition of definitive anti-dumping duties on import of subject goods originating in or exported from subject countries," DGTR has said in a noti-

fication.

The recommended duty is the difference between the landed value of the product and USD 2,086 per tonne.

Apotex Industries Ltd had filed an application before the directorate for imposition of anti-dumping duty on the imports. It had alleged that dumping of the product from these countries are impacting the domestic industry.

# Jio tops in 4G download speed, Vodafone in upload in April: Trai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio topped the 4G speed chart with data download rate of 20.1 megabit per second, while Vodafone was ahead of others in upload speed at 6.7 Mbps in April, according to the latest data from telecom regulator Trai.

Jio has almost three times higher download speed compared to its closest competitor



Vodafone. Though Vodafone and Idea Cellular have merged their

mobile business as Vodafone Idea Ltd, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) still releases separate network speed data of both the entities.

Vodafone recorded download speed of 7 Mbps in April, according to Trai's data updated on May 11. It was followed by Idea and Bharti Airtel with download speeds of 5.8 Mbps and 5 Mbps, respectively.

# ONGC removes marketing margin but refuses to lower gas price

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has agreed to do away with charging users a marketing margin on the gas it plans to produce from its KG basin field but refused to lower the minimum rate, according to tender documents. ONGC, India's top oil and gas producer, last month sought bids for sale of initial 2 million standard cubic meters per day of gas from its KG-DWN-98/2 block (KG-D5). The company asked bidders to quote a rate linked to prevailing Brent crude oil prices. It fixed the floor or min-



imum rate at 10.5 % of the three-month average Brent crude oil price. On top of it, the firm sought USD 0.20 per million British thermal unit.

Potential bidders however opposed the levy of the marketing margin as well as the "high" floor price. Responding to queries raised by bidders, ONGC said the floor price cannot be changed but marketing margin is being dropped.

# Gold prices seen above ₹56,500/10 gm in 12-15 months

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The price of gold is expected to rise above the ₹56,500-level (per 10 gm) over the next 12-15 months, according to a report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"On the domestic front, the post-budget price correction is a good level to enter an immediate target towards ₹50,000 and eventually hitting new highs of ₹56,500 and above over the next 12-15 months," it said.

Gold's volatility in 2021 until now has been no less than any ride in an amusement

park, the report said, adding that after a good rally last year, the market witnessed some profit booking and consolidation at the lower levels amid the US Presidential election uncertainty, vaccine reports from various pharma companies and volatility in dollar and yields.

This led to some profit booking in ETFs and CFTC positions suggesting that speculators too gave up their positions, hence affecting the overall sentiment. Although, with all these uncertainties, the precious metal pack was backed by strong fundamentals which kept the hopes high for all bulls.

# IndiGo starts dedicated Covid Care Centre for employees

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Airline major IndiGo has started a dedicated Covid Care Centre for its employees.

Accordingly, the centre has been set up in collaboration with Columbia Asia Hospital, Gurgaon. "This 13-bedded Covid Care Centre is being set-up to help those Covid-19 positive employees who may need access to an oxygen bed with related medical facilities."

"This is available for use both by IndiGo employees and their immediate family members." Besides, IndiGo launched a 'Plasma Donor Bank' initia-

tive last week, with assistance from employees who have recovered from Covid-19 in the past three months.

"Approximately 110 employees came forward to volunteer for donating plasma." Furthermore, to support its employees and their family members, IndiGo has partnered with hotels, which will serve as a safe and hygienic place for any of their employees who are Covid positive with mild symptoms or are asymptomatic or are staying away from their hometown and want to safely distance from their housemates or family members.

**PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited**  
 Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001.  
 Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website : www.pspcl.in

**Tender Enquiry No. MQP-176/2021-22/PO(M) Dated: 11-05-2021**  
 Chief Engineer/ Metering, C-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala, invites E-tender for supply, installation, Testing, Commissioning, Reading, Analysis and 1 year O&M of 114 number Power Quality Meters complying to IEC 61000-4-30 Class A. For detailed NIT and tender specification, please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 11-05-2021 from 01:00 PM onwards.  
 Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>  
 RO NO. 76155/12/251/2021/4533 C186/21

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क्रमांक - 326/पा.वि./न.पा.नि./2021 रायगढ़, दिनांक 12.05.2021

**:- ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना :-**

नगर पालिक निगम, रायगढ़ वाहन विभाग हेतु 02 नया स्काई लिफ्ट वाहन प्रदाय, कार्य की लागत राशि 63.00/- लाख रु., अमानत राशि 1.90/- लाख रु. निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क 3000.00/- रु. तथा कार्य की समाप्ति 30 दिवस हेतु निर्माणकर्ता/अधिकृत विक्रेता/पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निविदा प्रपत्र 'स' में देय होगा। उपरोक्त वाहन प्रदाय की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, विस्तृत निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी System Tender No. 76943 ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> से देखी जा सकती है, निविदा प्रपत्र के साथ निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क डी.डी. के माध्यम से एवं अन्य दस्तावेज दिनांक 14.06.2021 अपराह्न 04:30 बजे तक स्वीकृत/पंजीकृत डाक से मुहूर्तपूर्व पद्धति से आमंत्रित की जाती है।

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम रायगढ़ (स.ग.)

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क्रमांक 344/पा.वि./न.पा.नि./2021 रायगढ़, दिनांक 13.05.2021

**:- रुवि की अभिव्यक्ति (संक्षिप्त द्वितीय निविदा सूचना) :-**

नगर पालिक निगम रायगढ़ क्षेत्रांतर्गत मुक्तिधाम स्थल में शवदाह हेतु गैस आधारित इन्सीनेरेटर सिस्टम स्थापित करने का कार्य हेतु मशीनरी/उपकरण प्रदाय एवं स्थापना कार्य हेतु निर्माता कंपनियों/अधिकृत विक्रेताओं से एक मुहूर्त आधार पर फार्म 'बी' में ऑफर ई-टेंडर से ऑफर दर स्प्रीड पोस्ट के माध्यम से दिनांक 21/05/2021 को शाम 4:30 बजे तक आमंत्रित किया जाता है तथा प्रस्तुत ऑफर दिनांक 21/05/2021 को शाम 4:30 बजे खोल जावेगा, कार्य की लागत राशि 47.00/- लाख रु. है। इस कार्य हेतु आयुक्त नगर पालिक निगम रायगढ़ के नाम से अमानत राशि रु. 35.500/- एवं निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क राशि रु. 1500/- जमा करना होगा। अन्य जानकारी निगम एवं शर्तें विभागीय website-www.nagarignamraigarh.com में देखी एवं डाउनलोड की जा सकती है।

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम रायगढ़ (स.ग.)



# A STREETCAR NAMED NOSTALGIA

**SAIMI SATTAR** dons rose-tinted glasses to embark on a trip down memory lane on Eid

The silver *kiran* which bordered that masqueraded as a *dupatta* (or a *dupatiya*, as my grandmother would call it since it was a minuscule version of what the older people wore) fascinated me. There was still more than a fortnight to go for Eid and I was barely seven... and excited as only one who has not reached double digits would be about a festival. Sauntering around in my frocks, every day, I would peek a glance at the pale blue *salwar* suit with its matching *dupatta*, silver hair clips, a finger ring and *jootis*, only to be admonished by my mother about my trip in excessive vanity. The excitement, as they say, was palpable days in advance. The festival and the first step into donning a garment which, till that time, was the preserve of the older women in the family was exhilarating, to say the least.

While I was caught up in my daydreams of dressing up, my mother had already embarked on a mission to clean up the already immaculate house. Her penchant for finding dirt in the corner, even now at 70 plus, is nothing short of an urban legend in the family.

But this was just the build-up. On the 29th day of Ramzan, my mother ensured that my father, rather than the retainer whose job it was on other ordinary days, would set out in the morning, armed with a long list of the ingredients for an array of dishes all of which were slow-cooked. *Shami kebabs*, *biryani*, *pasande*, *qorma*, *kofte*, besides the vegetarian fare for those who did not eat meat, at least two types of *sewaiyan*... as well as snacks including *dahi bade*, *namkeen*, dry fruits, sweets, the list just went on. All these were to be eaten with *sheermal*, the slightly sweet, soft *roti* that is typical of the Lucknow-Kanpur belt and poles



apart from the Delhi version. But make no mistake, the denizens of both cities will take serious offense if you pronounce the version from the other to be tastier. The *Kanpuriyas* will deride the Lucknow version as bland and bereft of sweetness that they believe offers just the right balance for the spicy food. The Lucknow *walas* gentle sensibilities — steeped in the *Awadhi tehzeeb* — on the other hand, get assailed by the overt sweetness of the one from their industrial neighbour. But then, I am meandering because as a true-blue *Kanpuriya* (never mind that for more than half my life I've lived in Delhi), I don't have to elaborate

upon which one I hold in disdain and which I can write paens about. Interestingly, chicken, which has become a staple nowadays, did not figure high on the list and was cooked occasionally, if at all. There was also a lineup of beverages to go with the food or the snacks. *Nimbu pani* made with the choicest, plump lemons which were freshly-squeezed, orange squash, courtesy the distribution network that we ran or even coffee that was beaten into stiff peaks (yes, darling new age millennials, *dalgona*, it is).

I was more than happy to ride pillion on my father's scooter during the day on his expeditions to the different markets to pick the

ingredients. The first stop, the vegetable *mandi*, followed by the dry fruits shop, and then the final one at the *khoya mandi* to pick the essential which gave the *sewaiyan* its rich flavour and creamy texture. I did not have the stomach to visit a butchers shop, which was in another direction, so my father conveniently dropped me back home before heading out.

By the time I reached home, a transformation was well underway. The cotton, slightly-old curtains had been changed and replaced by satin ones that our *dholi* had ensured were in pristine condition. Occasional-use China was being taken out, washed and laid on the large *takht* in the kitchen to dry. So, it was time for the alarm to sound out for a seven-year-old to scoot off and not bound about for even a minor accident would have disastrous consequences (first for the crockery, followed by the person). Certainly not in keeping with the happy occasion. So, it was best to stay clear and head over to the other section where the remaining extended family lived (and still does) in the house that was built by my grandfather and added upon by his sons as and when required. And

being the youngest among all cousins helped in diverting oodles of pampering in the right direction (that, being mine, of course).

Before we knew it, it was evening and as the muezzin called out to the faithful to indulge in iftar, the youngsters in the family bounded to the top of the terrace to spot the elusive sliver in the sky which would announce Eid. As many of us know, Eid-ul-Fitr or *meethi* Eid, as many people call it, falls at the end of the month of Ramzan, the length of which is either 29 or 30 days depending on the moon sighting. Everyone competed to spot it and often floating bits of cloud could be mistaken for the satellite, inviting hilarity and ridicule directed towards the one who did. Even after searching for some time, if you hadn't seen it, a confirmation would come by way of two short, sharp bursts of cracker. But the exhilaration in being the first one... priceless.

Moonsighting also meant that the speed at which dishes were being prepped up received a renewed impetus. Onions were to be evenly and finely chopped before being fried in copious quantities of oil to ensure it was perfectly caramelised golden brown for the gravy to turn out just right. Almonds and pistachios were soaked overnight to be peeled and slivered in the morning. *Sewaiyans*, which were probably 1/10th thickness of the commercially packaged and branded *vermicelli* that we get now, were fried in *desi ghee* on a slow fire to ensure the raw smell did not make its way to the dessert nor did it give off an acrid whiff of having been cooked on a high flame.

But I had more important matters to attend to than the kitchen which, in any case, was in the completely reliable hands of my mother as the maid was cast only in an assistants role. However, since the food was still in the prep stage, I, with the selfishness that only the young can muster, pestered my older cousins to take me out so that I could have some intricate *mehndi* patterns made on my palms. Though never a part of the celebration, this is a ritual that has become

an unwritten essential for women of the subcontinent.

At the marketplace, which has existed since British times, the verandahs were (and still are) lined with men sitting on low plastic stools in garish colours. While nowadays, they show you patterns on their smartphones, earlier there were scraggly drawings on paper that were practically falling apart, which were replaced by faded photographs as I grew older. One other thing that has changed is the length of the serpentine queues of women awaiting their turn. After a long wait, I finally did have something on my tiny hands. Though it was far from satisfactory, I returned elated. By this time I was too exhausted and promptly dropped off to sleep but not before noticing that my clothes, shoes and accessories had been laid out in preparation for the next day. Pro hint: No internet, 24x7 cable TV, Netflix or social media to keep us, the 80s kids, up till midnight or even 10 pm.

The sense of elation that you woke up with on the day of the festival when you are young is something that can never be replicated as an adult. Once you are a grown-up, you might just have to satisfy yourself with the poor and really, really distant cousin of that feeling. All the men in the extended family, dressed in crisp white *chikan* kurtas and wearing *itr*, trooped off to the *Eidgah* for the ceremonial prayers. On their way back, they would visit relatives. My father would make sure to come back with fresh flowers to be placed all over the house.

In the meantime, we showered and dressed while a table, practically creaking under the weight of the food, was set up. And it was time for two of my favourite things — sampling the fare in all three households of the extended family and accumulating *Eidi*. That is a gift, usually money, that people gave to those who are younger than them. Happy with the princely sum of ₹2 or ₹5 from each, at the end of the day there was always a competition of sorts to count who had the largest haul (Yes, I am judg-

ing you, iPhone and iPad demanding GenZers). Of course, the system was skewed in favour of the youngest, who received *Eidi* from the maximum number of people, but the calculations could go a little awry if you knew that people gave a larger sum to their immediate kin as well as to those who were recently married or in a somewhat older age bracket.

Soon the guests would start arriving and this needed an intricate balancing act. Some of them had *sewaiyan*, others were partial to snacks, still others dug into just non-vegetarian fare while others partook just vegetarian. My mother knew the preference of each of the never-ending stream of visitors and ensured that everything went off without a hitch. Of course, for children, more visitors translated into a rising graph for *Eidi* and thus, were eagerly awaited, never mind the endless running to and fro from the kitchen to the dining area to replenish snacks (never food, which we could drop, mind you).

At dinner, the married daughters of the house along with their brood usually trooped in. And so, yes, more moolah found its way into our pockets.

Fast forward to 2021, my six-year-old niece is probably looking forward to Eid as much as I did in our ancestral home. But the world has changed and how. The festivities would be low-key. Her *baba* would not be heading out for the congregational prayers, nor would she be riding with him to the market to pick stuff. *Eidi* is bound to witness a severe dip, a second time around, as visitors are not coming in for sure. Yes, one of her aunts would certainly indulge her and decorate her hands with *henna* and she will wear new clothes. The firewall that my sister-in-law creates has ensured some protection for the young one from the pall of gloom that has descended all around us but Eid would certainly not be the same. As someone pointed out, "When more shrouds are being sold than new clothes in the city, do you think we can celebrate Eid?"



## Anurag lauds Sanya Malhotra

Actor Sanya Malhotra has left everyone amazed with her quirky personality and her versatile performances over the years. Sanya, who gained fame portraying Babita Kumari Phogat alongside Aamir Khan in *Dangal*, was last seen in *Pagglait* which released on Netflix in March this year.

The latest to publicly join her list of admirers is Anurag Basu, who praised the actor and her skills in a recent interview. Basu, who worked with Sanya in the multi-narrative Netflix hit *Ludo*, said, "You meet many actors, but individuality is missing. She has a personality that stays with you. Sanya's nervous energy is an asset because she channels it in a constructive manner. She is not insecure about her craft and believes in waiting for better scripts."

The actor will soon be seen in, *Love Hostel*, crime-thriller, alongside Vikrant Massey, Bobby Deol and Meenakshi Sundereshwar opposite Abhimanyu Dassani.

## Lively time to be an actor: Jordan

Over the past decade, Michael B Jordan has gained a massive fanbase with his performances in films like *Fruitvale Station*, *Creed* and the comicbook supervillain Erik Killmonger in *Black Panther*. With inclusivity and diversity taking centre-stage in Hollywood, he feels it is a "lively time" to be an actor right now.

"I think it is always the right time to be an actor. Artists use their platforms to express themselves. For me, I use my platform in a multitude of ways. I think it is a lively time to be an actor right now," Jordan said.

Over the decades, several Indians have forayed the West, especially Hollywood, including Om Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, Amrish Puri, Shashi Kapoor, Aishwarya Rai-Bachchan, Irrfan Khan, Kabir Bedi and Persis Khambatta. In recent times, too, the likes of Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Deepika Padukone, Anil Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan, among many others, have featured in Hollywood projects.

In reverse, Hollywood films dubbed in regional Indian languages have been consistently doing good business in this country.

Tell Jordan language and culture are no longer barriers, and he agrees. "Cinema is a universal language. It is one of those things that everybody can come and participate and share and experience, from all walks of life and from all over the world. Through the use of streaming, internet and social media every-



body is connected to everything that is going on. Everybody has access to the stories you want to tell," Jordan said.

He added, "So, somebody from one side of the globe, who never thought that somebody from the other side of the world would ever see their project or get a chance to hear their story, it's possible to happen."

Jordan's latest release is *Without Remorse*, which takes him into the world of bestselling author Tom Clancy's espionage and military-ops. Directed by Stefano Sollima, the film revolves around Clancy's 1993 novel of the same name and casts him as John Clark.

The film also stars Guy Pearce, Jamie Bell, Jodie Turner-Smith, Luke Mitchell, Brett Gelman, Colman Domingo, Lauren London and Jacob Scipio in pivotal roles. It was released on Amazon Prime Video in April. —JANS

## TREND TOOL



Here's how to choose a workout that fits your needs

## Sweat now, shine later

The process of staying healthy starts with choosing workout that backs your other healthier habits. It is essential that your chosen workout doesn't just help to make you fit, but also keeps energy levels up and provides an overall energy boost.

There are questions that need to be answered when you pick a suitable workout from the fitness basket. Essentially, the answers need to be very honest to avoid any lasting damages later on. The following pointers can be followed.

Understand the goal of your workout. Unless that's not set, chances of picking the wrong workout are possible. The end result gets reflected in an unhealthy and possible damaged body. A

thorough research of exercise forms, benefits and advantages to be gained needs to be researched in a comprehensive manner. It will be conducive in the picking process. Following fads is all okay. But the workout needs to suit ones needs and not get influenced by fads.

Now that the basics have been drummed in the minds, the next step would be to choose the suitable workout from the few options out there.

**CARDIO**  
 An ideal cardio session allows for burning substantial calories. Running or walking is two good ways to do cardio. If weight loss is the chosen end result, then cardio helps start things and warm up for more intense

workouts.  
**YOGA**  
 This ancient Indian exercise method is perfect for ab overall strong and fit body through a mixture of postures.

**PILATES**  
 For stronger cores, mat pilates is the proper choice. Along with toning the core and abdominal muscles, lower back, hips and buttocks, this workout is all about focussing on body strengthening and flexibility and lean muscles building. A flexible and controlled body will be quite possible. In fact, machine pilates combines the benefits of both weight training and yoga.

**HIIT**  
 The workout technique

alternates between small episodes of high intensity exercise and less intense rest. The varied exercises depend on the targeted body part for improvement.

**WEIGHT TRAINING**  
 This is perfect to build strength with weight training. Weights in workout routine can result in sturdy muscles and bones along with lesser injury threat. But weight training is not body building or creating a bulky body, it's about toning the body and building muscle. Muscle building comes from premeditated practice and requires hardwork complete with weight-gain diet and supplements intake.

Choose the right workout for a healthy body. —JANS

## TRENDBLAZER



### SHEKHAR WARNS NETIZENS

**SHEKHAR SUMAN** warned netizens against relying on random forwarded messages on WhatsApp.

"Lets not play Doctor-Doctor at home. Follow only your physician or any reputed doctor. Don't just follow anything floating on WhatsApp. Sieve through it, confirm, reconfirm. There are all kinds of rumours being floated by pharma companies for their own vested interest," Suman tweeted.

### fairtalk



'I think the most important thing is patience. As an artiste, you are always curious to perform but the big question is content. You have to choose the right script. I feel pressured (and think) should I choose this script? I feel internally that I can do better but then I feel if I let this script go, will I get more films? This thought keeps bothering me.'

### dailytalk



'In all these years in the industry, I have never done a screen test. When I learnt that (director) Amit (Kumar) wanted to do a screen test for my character in *Calcutta*, I first avoided it as I have always had a phobia of auditions. Later, I gathered my strength and somehow decided to do it. I thought I was never going to get the part but I did.'

### MEDITATION HELPED ME: ALICIA

Singer **ALICIA KEYS** said that meditation helped her a lot after she became a mom.

"I have to be honest. The first time I tried the meditation, I was so tired that I fell asleep. But the second time, I felt a little spark. I started to notice a richer connection with myself, an ability to go deeper. After years of silence I could hear myself, trust my instincts, know what I wanted, know what I needed and not feel so insecure," she said.





## Choose the right one

Is olive pomace oil healthy for Indian cooking? Let's find out

The year 2020 has been an eye opener in many ways. Not only did it lead to introspection in general, it also changed quite eating habits, fitness and cooking styles. Cooking food is no longer a scheduled task just about cooking and eating, there is awareness, conscience awakening and science attached to it today. Right from raw vegetables, meat and even the oils that are used, consumers today have questions about what they are consuming, the source of raw materials, the formulation and production.

Oil is an essential ingredient used in Indian cooking be it for frying, stir frying, shallow frying, pan frying, grilling, barbecuing, baking, kneading, there isn't a component of cooking where oil doesn't feature, even if it means a slight drizzle. It's where it all starts and ends.

For generations, the traditional mindset in using a particular kind and brand of oil has had a very hand me down' approach, something has been followed ritualistically until recently. Sunflower and groundnut oil have constituted as majority in the cooking oil segment followed closely by mustard oil.

Today, there are a variety of cooking oils available in the Indian market and thanks to exposure to international standards and a whole new category of olive oils. Indian consumers are spoiled for choice but are they making the right one? How does one know the oil they've been using isn't doing more harm than benefitting? While there have been a few constants that have proven to be ideal choices for the palate and health, there are others whose properties are second to none but haven't gained wide spread popularity. One such variant is olive pomace oil.

Olive oil actually comes in a number of forms, colour, taste and acidity level along with three variants: Extra virgin olive oil, refined olive oil and olive pomace oil.

Extra virgin olive oil is a cold pressed olive oil with acidity below 0.3 percent. Owing to its aroma and flavour, it is suitable for making salads, dressings, flavourings or condiments for salads, pastas, rice, vegetables, meat and fish. It is also rich in antioxidants when eaten in raw/cold form. However, it



may not be the right choice for typical Indian e high temperature cooking.

Olive pomace oil is, however, the right olive oil for Indian cooking because of its extraction process. It is stable at high temperatures and contains higher Tocopherol and Squalene than even extra virgin olive oil. Tocopherol and Squalene are forms of Vitamin E which have anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties for the body and is great for skin. Other properties such as its fatty acid profile (eg. monounsaturated fatty acid) are the same as that of extra virgin olive oil that graces the aisle at the supermarket. In fact, it has the same composition as extra virgin olive oil. What's more, it is completely neutral in taste, therefore, making olive pomace oil liquid gold for healthy Indian cooking.

Olive pomace oil is the perfect companion for *desi* food. It is a light oil with a neutral taste and flavour. Indian food encompasses a wide variety of regional and traditional cuisines and they all vary significantly from each other. Olive pomace oil can be used for all Indian cooking and the taste is quite incredible.

While we face the second wave of the pandemic, it's prudent to stay fit, eat right and follow a healthy lifestyle. The choice of cooking oil plays a major part in this. Choosing an oil that has necessary fats and zero cholesterol that are helpful for weight loss and main-

aining a low-calorie diet is what one needs today. Olive pomace oil is 80 per cent monosaturated that can lower the cholesterol level. Monosaturated fats are healthy fats with fatty acid profile (high MUFA) like other olive oils found in olive oil, avocados and certain nuts. Olive pomace oil also brings the additional benefit of Vitamin E for better immunity and tissue repair with Vitamin K for better bone density and health.

Apart from uses in kitchen, it can be used to treat skin problems and hair problems by using a little bit of it on the damaged scalp to treat dryness. Similarly, one can also use it in the bath to rejuvenate dry skin. Olive pomace oil is cost effective in comparison to the other grades of olive oil but when compared to the cost of regular soya bean, sunflower or the peanut oil, it is priced at premium.

So, the next time you go for grocery shopping, take a leap of faith and grab that can of olive pomace oil. It's a health decision that's much overdue!

—JANS

# BEAT THE HEAT

In order to survive the summer and its adverse effect on health, here is a seven-day calendar that can help you cool off with a nourishing diet

When you spend considerable time in the scorching heat, it can cause detrimental effects on your health. As the body temperature increases, it leads to profuse sweating, signs of dehydration, sticky skin, tiredness, headache, dizziness, nausea, cramps, and a quick, weak pulse.

With majority of us currently staying at home during this summer amid the COVID-19 pandemic, staying on top of our health is a priority more so than usual. In order to survive the summer and its adverse effect on our health, we need to keep ourselves cool and healthy with a cooling and nourishing diet.

An adequate intake of water and avoiding food that is dry, salty and fried is essential. Additionally this seven-day calendar can help you to take care of your body during the peak of summer.

### ASH GOURD JUICE

Ash gourd is a great detoxifying agent, and is best when consumed early morning on an empty stomach. It is an excellent summer cooler and helps to hydrate your body. The juice can absorb all the toxins, germs and contamination that may



have accumulated through the course of a day. It also has the potential to flush waste out of our body. Ash gourd juice can also be combined with lime and turmeric for added benefits.

### WATERMELON, MUSKMELON

Watermelon has high water content along with a good amount of lycopene, vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, amino acid, antioxidants and is low in sodium and calories. It helps to lower inflammation and reduce oxidative stress. Remember, as watermelon is slightly acidic in

nature, eating it on an empty stomach and late-night should be avoided. Serving size for an adult is two cups a day.

Muskmelon contains potassium which makes it beneficial for your blood pressure numbers. High fibre and water content of muskmelon also contributes to cooling down body systems and to manage blood pressure.

### CUCUMBER

Cucumber is inexpensive, packed with water and helps to detoxify your body overall body. It is an excellent coolant. This cool and crisp energizing

green will stave off problems of constipation; enhance your immunity and tame inflammation while also calming sunburn. Along with cleansing your body, the presence of silicon and sulphur in cucumber is excellent to support hair growth and volume. The best way to consume cucumber is adding it in salads or drinking cucumber juice.

### YOGURT AND BUTTERMILK

Loaded with the goodness of healthy bacteria like Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium, yogurt and other fermented food helps in brain development and is great to relieve anxiety. It also offers gut-friendly microorganisms that aid in the process of digestion during summers. Eating yoghurt helps in reducing chronic inflammation which is responsible for anxiety, stress, and depression. You can consume curd in the form of smoothies, buttermilk, sweet lassis and raita. Drinking buttermilk helps to cool down your body and improve metabolism. It is also loaded with vitamins, and minerals which help to restore your body's natural energy if you are feeling drained by the heat.

### COCONUT WATER

Coconut water benefits by maintaining electrolyte stability in your body. It's an exceptional summer drink to combat hot weather by keeping you hydrated, and also facilitates in boosting your digestive ability. Additionally, it helps to foster cell growth, regulates blood pressure and above all performs the function of a natural diuretic.

### HERBAL TEAS

Herbs and spices are great to manage excess body heat. This includes Hibiscus tea, Chamomile teas, Mint juices, Amla juices; Orange juice, lime juice etc are very healthy during this season.

### AAM PANNA

It is a vegan drink made from unripe green mangoes. Aam panna has a tangy, sweet taste, which can be flavoured with cardamom or mint etc. It is also rich in various acids, which help regulate the liver and fight diseases like jaundice. The black salt and jeera powder defines the digestive properties of aam panna, and mint helps in keeping the body cool, which makes it perfect for the summer season.

—JANS

## R E C I P E S

### DAHI AUR ANJEER KE KABAB

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Hung curd: 100 gm
- Cottage cheese (grated): 50 gm
- Fresh basil (cut into strips): 1 tbs
- Black peppercorn (crushed): ½ tsp
- Salt to taste
- Refined oil

#### For stuffing:

- Fig (chopped): 10 gm
- Ginger (chopped): ½ tsp
- Black salt

#### METHOD

- Take hung curd in a mixing bowl; add all the above mentioned ingredients (except salt) and mix them with gentle hands.
- Add salt and keep it aside to cool for half an hour.
- Take small quantity of the hung



curd mix on your palm and flatten it.

- For the filling, mix chopped fig, chopped ginger and black salt.
- Place the stuffing onto the flattened patty and make into a sphere. Flatten it again in to a patty shape.
- Shallow fry to perfection.
- Then serve with a dip of your choice.

Courtesy: Jr sous chef Rubal Pupneja at The Samrat Hotel.



### CREEPY COFFEE

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Smirnoff Espresso vodka: 60 ml
- Lime juice: 10 ml
- Coke: 150 ml
- Orange and lime wedge (to garnish)

#### METHOD

- Fill a tall glass with ice cubes.
- Add Smirnoff espresso vodka to the glass and stir.
- Top up with cola and garnish.

Courtesy: Diageo India.

### SHAAMI KEBAB

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Goat mince: 500 gm
- Chana dal: 100 gm
- Ghee: 100 ml
- Ginger paste: 20 gm
- Garlic paste: 20 gm
- Cinnamon: 10 gm
- Mace: 5 gm
- Clove: 2 gm
- Bay leaf: 5
- Green cardamom: 2 gm
- Black pepper: 10 gm
- Salt: 25 gm
- Red chilly: 30 gm
- Finely chopped green chilli: 5 gm
- Lemon juice: 10 ml
- Chopped coriander leaves: 10 gm



#### METHOD

- Soak the chana dal in water for half an hour.
- In a pan, heat ghee. Add the whole spices and sauté till aromatic.
- Add goat mince, ginger and garlic pastes, chilli powder, salt and sauté well.
- Now add the soaked chana dal and combine well. Add water to the mixture, cover and allow it to cook till tender and dry.
- Cool the mince mixture and grind to a paste.
- Add finely chopped onions, green chillies,

- coriander and mix well.
- Divide the mixture into equal-sized balls and create small galettes by hand.
- Heat ghee in a pan, shallow fry till golden brown.
- Serve hot with mint chutney.

Courtesy: Executive chef Rajesh Wadhwa at Taj Palace.

### NALLI NIHAAR

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Goat shank: 1 kg
- Mutton stock: 1.5-2 litre
- Mustard oil: 150 ml
- Cloves: 3 gm
- Green cardamom: 3 gm
- Bay leaf: 2
- Cinnamon: 5 gm
- Sliced onion: 150 gm
- Ginger paste: 40 gm
- Garlic paste: 40 gm
- Red chilli powder: 10 gm
- Yellow chilli powder: 20 gm
- Turmeric powder: 20 gm
- Coriander powder: 50 gm
- Yogurt: 150 gm
- Roasted gram flour: 50 gm
- Garam masala powder:



- In a heavy-bottomed pan, heat mustard oil. Add the whole spices and allow them to crackle.
- Add the sliced onions and cook until golden brown. Add the ginger and garlic pastes. Sauté well.
- Add the goat shanks, along with red and yellow

pan, heat mustard oil. Add the whole spices and allow them to crackle.

- Add the sliced onions and cook until golden brown. Add the ginger and garlic pastes. Sauté well.
- Add the goat shanks, along with red and yellow

chilli powder, turmeric, coriander powder, beaten yogurt and sauté well.

chilli powder, turmeric, coriander powder, beaten yogurt and sauté well.

- Now add mutton stock and simmer on slow heat till the shanks are tender.

- In a separate pan, heat ghee, add roasted gram flour and sauté till the mix is aromatic and lightly golden.

- Add this mixture to the prepared shanks and adjust the consistency of the gravy till nice and creamy. Adjust seasoning.

- Finish with garam masala and saffron.
- Garnish with fresh coriander leaves and ginger juliennes. Serve hot.

Courtesy: Executive chef Rajesh Wadhwa at Taj Palace.

### CARROT CORN PANCAKE

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Carrot (peeled and grated): 1 cup
- Corn (blanched): ¾ cup
- Whole wheat flour: 1 cup
- Onions (finely chopped): 1/3 cup
- Sandwich spread: 5 tbsp
- Coriander (finely chopped): ¼ cup
- Yogurt (whisked): 1/3 cup
- Eggs: 3
- Baking powder: 1 tbsp
- Baking soda: ¼ tsp
- Green chillies (finely chopped): ½ tsp
- Butter as required
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### METHOD

- In a large bowl, add eggs, yogurt and sandwich spread. Mix well. Add carrots, onions, chillies, corn and



season with salt and pepper. Mix it well again.

- In another bowl, add flour, baking soda and baking powder. Blend it.

- Then put the dry flour mixture to the veggie-spread mixture. Mix to form a thick pancake batter. The batter should be of thick creamy consistency. Add coriander leaves and mix well.

- Heat flat griddle or pan. Grease it with little butter.

- Pour a ladle full of pan cake batter and cook for a couple of minutes.

- Gently flip to cook on the other side for another two to three minutes. Take the pancake off the heat. Repeat the same for the rest of the batter.

- Serve hot with Del Monte mint mayonnaise along the side.

Courtesy: Del Monte.

▶ shortpasses

**INDIA RETAIN TOP SPOT IN TESTS**  
DUBAI: India remained the No 1 Test side after the annual update of the ICC team rankings. India head the table after gaining one rating point for an aggregate of 121.

**HERTHA BOOST SURVIVAL HOPES**  
BERLIN: Hertha Berlin took a big step towards Bundesliga survival with a 2-1 win at bottom side Schalke on Wednesday.

**PSG EDGE OUT MONTPELLIER**  
MONTPELLIER: PSG squeaked past Montpellier 6-5 on penalties in French Cup semi-final to keep alive their hopes of ending the season with silverware.

**CHELSEA SLIP UP IN TOP-4 RACE**  
LONDON: Arsenal dented Chelsea's bid to finish in the Premier League's top four as Emile Smith Rowe punished Jorginho's blunder to seal a 1-0 win at Stamford Bridge.

**FANS TO ATTEND LA LIGA GAMES**  
MADRID: Fans will be allowed to return to some stadiums in the top two divisions of Spanish football this weekend, the country's Government confirmed on Wednesday.

**ARCHER RETURNS AFTER INJURY**  
LONDON: England pacer Jofra Archer returns to competitive cricket on Thursday in a County match for Sussex after being out of action for more than one-and-a-half months.

**SERENA TO PLAY IN PARMA**  
ROME: Serena Williams has been given a wild card to play in next week's WTA tourney in Parma after her exit from the Italian Open.

**IRFAN, 4 OTHERS TEST +VE**  
NEW DELHI: Olympic-bound race walker K T Irfan is among five elite track-and-field athletes who have tested positive for Covid-19 at the SAI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

**UCL FINAL NOW IN PORTO**  
LONDON: UEFA announced on Thursday that the Champions League final between Man City & Chelsea had been moved to Porto. Agencies

# Powar returns as India women coach

Ramesh replaces WV Raman, coming back after his last stint ended in bitter fallout with Mithali

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former spinner Ramesh Powar on Thursday replaced W V Raman as the Indian women's cricket team's head coach, regaining the position more than two years after he was sacked owing to a bitter fallout with ODI captain Mithali Raj.

The 42-year-old was recommended by the Madan Lal-led Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) after interviewing eight candidates, including Raman.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announces the appointment of Mr Ramesh Powar as the Head Coach of Team India (Senior Women). The BCCI had advertised for the post and received over 35 applications," a BCCI statement read.

The others in fray were former India wicketkeeper Ajay Ratna and four female candidates including former chief selector Hemlata Kala.

"Looking forward to take india women's cricket ahead. Thanks a lot CAC & bcci for this opportunity," Powar tweeted after his appointment.

The CAC chose Powar for his clear vision for the team, said Lal.

"He has been coaching for a while. His vision for the team impressed us the most. He has a clear cut plan for the team, what he wants to do with it to take it to the next level. He also has full clarity on all aspects of the game. Now he needs to deliver on that," Lal said. It remains to be seen how



Powar works alongside Mithali, who had accused him of bias after the Harmanpreet Kaur-led T20 team dropped the veteran batter for the all-important World Cup semi-final against England.

Mithali, in a letter to the BCCI after the event, had alleged that Powar "was out to destroy and humiliate" her. Powar had hit back asserting that Mithali "threw a lot of tantrums and created chaos in the team".

After being removed from his

position in the women's team, Powar proved himself as a coach and earlier this year, led Mumbai to the Vijay Hazare Trophy after the domestic giants failed miserably in the T20 competition. He has also worked at the National Cricket Academy as a bowling coach.

Asked whether his acrimonious exit from the team and relationship with Mithali was discussed during Powar's interview, Lal said: "We did ask him about it and he said he wasn't at fault. He

is okay working with all the players".

"I was also very impressed with the views of the four female candidates. It showed they are very much in touch and involved with the game. Future is bright for all of them," Lal added.

Powar played two Tests and 31 ODIs for India. In his first stint with the women's team, Powar was at the helm from July to November 2018.

It was under his tutelage that

## Shafali, Radha set to make WBBL debuts

New Delhi: Indian batting sensation Shafali Verma is set to make her Women's Big Bash League debut with two-time champions Sydney Sixers later this year.

The 17-year-old is expected to be joined by left-arm spinner Radha Yadav, who is currently in talks with the Sydney Sixers franchise.

"Shafali's deal is done, it will be announced when the Women's Big Bash schedule is released," a BCCI source said.

"Radha is also in talks with the Sydney Sixers," the source added.

The teenager's father was also required to sign a consent form as Shafali is still a minor.

Shafali joins the trio of T20 skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (Sydney Thunder), opener Smriti Mandhana (Brisbane Heat) and all-rounder Veda Krishnamurthy (Hobart Hurricanes), which has featured in the WBBL.

The world number one batter in ICC women's T20I rankings will also be turning up for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred later this year.

PTI

India qualified for the semi-final of the T20 World Cup that year and also won 14 T20 matches in a row.

Raman, who had replaced Powar in December 2018, now finds himself in a similar situation.

The former India batsman had coached India to the T20 World Cup final last year but it seems the ODI and T20 series loss to the visiting South African team in March cost him the job.

A few selection calls during the series, like the dropping of teenage big-hitter Shafali Verma and senior pacer Shikha Pandey, had raised eyebrows.

"All the best @imrameshpowar with the @BCCIWomen in this spell.. Look forward to seeing the girls soar under your guidance..." Raman tweeted.

Powar's major challenge will be to prepare the team for the ODI World Cup in New Zealand next year.

His first assignment will be a full-fledged tour of the UK starting with India's first Test in seven years from June 16 against hosts England.

The team is also scheduled to tour Australia before the World Cup.

## Atleti move 4 points clear



Madrid: Atletico Madrid held their nerve to beat Real Sociedad 2-1 on Wednesday and move within touching distance of winning La Liga.

Yannick Carrasco and Angel Correa made a dominant first half count for Atletico, who retreated in the second and were left hanging on after Igor Zubeldia blasted in for La Real with seven minutes left.

Victory puts Atletico four points clear of Barcelona in the table and five ahead of Real Madrid, with Zinedine Zidane's side playing their game in hand away at Granada. AFP

## Nadal downs Shapovalov

AFP ■ ROME

Nine-time champion Rafael Nadal saved two match points to defeat Canada's Denis Shapovalov in a three-set battle and advance to the quarter-finals of the Italian Open on Thursday.

Second seed Nadal won through 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) after nearly 3hr 30min on court against the 13th-seeded Shapovalov.

Nadal was trailing a set and 0-3 down in the second set before powering back.

Shapovalov also broke for 3-1 in the third set but Nadal broke back immediately and held on despite two match points against him in the 12th game to force a tie-break.

The Spaniard reached his 16th last-eight appearance in Rome and a 97th ATP Masters 1000 quarter-final.

Earlier, world number one Novak Djokovic swept into the quarter-finals with a straight sets wins over Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in front of spectators who were allowed to watch in the



Foreo Italiano.

The five-time Rome champion won through 6-2, 6-1 in 70 minutes against the 48th-ranked Spaniard with the venue filled to 25 per cent of capacity for the first time amid the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

"It was not good, it was great. I missed the crowd," said the 33-year-old, who next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semi-final which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended

the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 in 1hr 36min.

### BARTY VS COCO

In the women's section, world No 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the quarter-finals with a straight sets win over Russian Veronika Kudermetova.

The top-seeded Australian won through 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka 7-5, 6-3.

## Paine hints at giving up captaincy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian Test captain Tim Paine has hinted at stepping down from the position if his team manages to defeat England in the Ashes series this year and backed former skipper Steve Smith to succeed him.

Smith was Australia's captain before being forced to step down in 2018 owing to his role in the ball-tampering scandal.

"Obviously I don't make that decision but the time I played with Steve as captain he was excellent. Certainly

tactically he is as good as you get," Paine said. "He's probably a bit like me. He was thrown into a very big role at a very, very young age and he probably wasn't quite ready for it. But by the time I came in he was growing into that role

and getting better and better. Then obviously (in) South Africa events happened and he's not doing it anymore. But yeah I would support him getting that job again," he added.

Paine also hinted that he might step down from captaincy if Australia can beat England in the Ashes later this year.

"At least another six Tests," he said referring to the one-off Test against Afghanistan and the five-Test Ashes at home.

"If I feel like the time is right and we've beaten the Poms 5-0, what a way to go out. But it might be a tight series and we might be chasing 300 on the last day and I'm 100 not out and hit the winning runs — and then I might go again."

**BACK HOME ON SUNDAY**  
Male: A group of Australian crick-

## 'India distracted us during Test series'

Melbourne: Australia captain Tim Paine says his team was distracted by the Indian team's "niggling" during the epoch-making Test series early this year which the visitors rallied to win despite being ravaged by injuries.

"...They're very good at niggling you and trying to distract you with stuff that doesn't really matter and there were times in that series where we fell for that," Paine told news.com.au.

"The classic example was when they said they weren't going to the Gabba so we did-

n't know where we were going. They're very good at creating these sideshows and we took our eye off the ball," he added. He was referring to unverified reports which claimed that the visiting side did not want to play the Brisbane Test, if the players had to follow a hard quarantine.

The media reports had relied on source-based information to make the assertion.

India, however, went to Gabba and scripted a record chase of 328 on the final day for a thrilling 3-wicket win, which also sealed the series. PTI

eters, coaches and players-turned-commentators, currently stranded in Maldives, may return home in a chartered flight on Sunday, though they are still waiting confirmation from their Government.

"Under plans currently

being thrashed out..., the group of 38 would be able to take a charter flight out of the Maldives via Malaysia to Sydney on May 16, where they would then serve their mandatory 14-day quarantine period," a report in ESPNCricinfo said.

## Milan put 7 past Torino

AFP ■ TURIN

Ante Rebic scored a hat-trick and right back Theo Hernandez a double as AC Milan thrashed Torino 7-0 on Wednesday to keep their push for a return to the Champions League for the first time since 2014 on track.

The battle for elite European football remains tight with just three points separating second-placed Atalanta and Juventus in fifth.

Atalanta moved back second ahead of Napoli with a 2-0 win over relegation candidates Benevento.

The Bergamo side are equal on points with Milan, with Napoli a further two points adrift in fourth.

"Until you cross the finish line, you can't give up on anything," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose final two games are home against Cagliari and away to Atalanta.

"We've done so much, we have to hold on for a week. The team deserves it and the club deserves it."

Juve are a further point adrift after getting back to winning ways after last week-end's 3-0 defeat at home to Milan.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Paulo Dybala both scored their 100th goals for the

club in all competitions to keep the dethroned Turin giants hopes of Champions League football alive with a 3-1 win over Sassuolo.

Gianluigi Buffon was in the Juventus goal days after announcing his departure at the end of the season.

And the evergreen 43-year-old made history becoming the oldest goalkeeper in Serie A history to stop a penalty, denying Domenico Berardi from the spot after quarter of an hour.

"In football, the champions are always the ones who make the difference, we have a lot of them, tonight they marked the match," said Pirlo of Buffon, Ronaldo and Dybala.

Juventus dropped out of the top-four after their defeat to AC Milan and play Inter Milan and Bologna in their last two matches.

Antonio Conte's Inter extended their unbeaten league run to 20 games, and claimed a 15th consecutive home win, 3-1 over Roma.

Romelu Lukaku scored just before the whistle to bring his tally to 22 goals in this campaign, six less than Ronaldo, with Marcelo Brozovic and Matias also on target.

## GREETINGS TO THE PEOPLE OF HARYANA ON THE OCCASION OF BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF BHAGWAN PARSHURAM JI

14 May, 2021

Govt. of Haryana

"Bhagwan Parshuram Ji is the great symbol of strength and wisdom. He taught us to face every challenge with bravery. Let us take inspiration from Bhagwan Parshuram Ji and combat this pandemic with courage while following COVID-19 guidelines."

**- Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana**

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