

WORLD 7

JAPAN, US, FRANCE HOLD MILITARY
DRILL EYEING CHINA PRESENCE

MONEY 8

GST COUNCIL TO
MEET ON MAY 28

SPORT 10

ENG IPL STARS LIKELY
TO MISS NZ TESTS

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Delhi's death rate 4th in world; Maha follows suit

UP too has high Covid fatality rate

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

When it comes to death, Delhi has emerged as one of the most favorite hunting grounds for coronavirus across the globe. With a case fatality rate (CFR) of more than 5 per cent, the national Capital is now only behind Poland, Mexico, and Romania on the daily casualty chart. Delhi's CFR is way above the national average of 1.2 per cent.

While the caseload continued to show a downward trajectory across the country, the rise in CFR is worrisome. On Saturday, Maharashtra too recorded a high CFR of 2.6 per cent. The daily Covid-19 infections dropped further to 34,848 in Maharashtra, while the number of daily deaths surged to 910 in the State.

Delhi's neighbour Uttar Pradesh also recorded a relatively high case fatality ratio of around 2 per cent. The State logged in a caseload of 12,513 and a death tally of 281 during the last 24 hours.

On Saturday, the national Capital recorded 6,430 new



Covid-19 cases and 337 fatalities. This translates into a fatality rate of 5.22 per cent, which is only behind Poland, Romania and Mexico in the global arena and way above the other States in the country.

On Friday, Romania recorded 105 deaths as against 835 fresh Covid-19 cases for a case fatality rate of a whopping 13 per cent. Romania is followed by Poland which has a case fatality rate of 8.76 per cent. The country recorded 3,289 cases and 289 deaths on Friday. Poland is closely followed by Mexico which has a CFR of 8.56 pc (311 deaths and 3,632 cases).

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Delhi Govt to set up 11 oxygen banks; home delivery in 2 hours

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government is setting up oxygen concentrator banks for patients in home isolation. At least 200 oxygen concentrators will be set up in each of the 11 districts and oxygen will be delivered in two hours to patients in need, said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday. "Patients who are not enrolled under the home isolation protocol of the Delhi Government may call 1031 and avail the oxygen concentrator facility," he said.

Kejriwal said, "If patients in home isolation require oxygen,

our team will ensure the oxygen concentrator reaches their home within two hours. A technician will also accompany the team who will explain to the family members how to use the oxygen concentrator. However, our team of doctors will first ensure whether the person needs oxygen."

Covid-19 IN INDIA
TOTAL CASES: 2,46,79,908 (+3,07,423)
DEATHS: 2,70,254 (+4,010)
RECOVERED: 2,07,82,276 (+3,55,605)
ACTIVE: 36,17,185
MAHA: 53,44,063 (+34,848)
K'TAKA: 21,71,931 (+41,664)
KERALA: 21,18,264 (+32,680)
UP: 16,09,140 (+12,513)
DELHI: 13,87,411 (+6,430)

Industrialist Prakash Hinduja fined ₹1,270 crore for tax violations by Geneva court

J GOPIKRISHNAN ■ NEW DELHI

A court in Geneva has fined Indian industrialist Prakash Hinduja 157 million francs (₹1,270 crore) for tax violations.

According to Swiss newspaper *Gotham City and Le Temps*, the Geneva Court imposed the fine on Hinduja for claiming tax exceptions by showing his Monaco residency, while he was actually living in Geneva.

"The Geneva tax authorities suspect the billionaire of Indian origin Prakash Hinduja of staying in his villa in Cologny (GE) until April 2018, when he had officially settled in Monaco in 2007," reported *Gotham City*.

"In July 2018, the Geneva public prosecutor sought to collect information on Prakash Hinduja and members of his family on behalf of the cantonal

tax authorities, in the context of criminal proceedings, according to a judgment of the Federal Court rendered on April 21 (5A_1042/2020).

In April 2019, the Federal Tax Administration opened its own investigation into this case, which targets several individuals. The following month, the Geneva tax authorities declared two receiverships, amounting to 154 million francs for cantonal and municipal taxes, and 3 million for federal taxes" reported *Le Temps*.

Hinduja Group controls Ashok Leyland, IndusInd Bank and Gulf Lubricants. The Indian origin conglomerate having business across the world was started by late PD Hinduja in early 1940s. The Hinduja Group's companies are controlled by holding companies situated in tax havens like Mauritius and Geneva.

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From Kerala to Bengal, impact of elections on Covid-19 surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The impact of aggressive campaign and massive mobilisation by political parties

in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry in the run-up to the Assembly polls are seen as the principal reasons for massive spread of

corona in these States and Union Territory.

The judiciary, World Health Organization, and health experts have unequivocally agreed that the election-related mobilisation paved the way for a later day Covid-19 surge.

Here is a reality check:

3% positivity rate before Bengal campaign, 31% after elections

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With corona cases spiraling up by the day, Bengal health data experts have started questioning whether March-May electoral extravaganza played the main villain in pushing up cases in the State.

According to State Government reports, while in the second week of March when election campaigns had just started the rate of corona infections was just about 3-4 per cent of the total RT-PCR tests done, the figure leaped up to 31 per cent in the first week of May when the election process ended.

Total cases: 10,94,802
Total Deaths: 12,993
Case fatality ratio: 1.2%
Recovery rate: 86.8%
Avg growth rate: 2%

"You do not need rocket science to prove that election rallies with thousands of people made a perfect recipe for disaster and the disaster is in front of you to see ...Bengal had a pretty controlled affair till the month of March and the cases started jumping up with each electoral phase..." said Dr Kajal Krishna Dey.

Continued on Page 4

Recuperating Kerala relapsed

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

On February 26, 2021, while then Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora addressed a nationally televised Press meet to announce the poll schedule for the Assembly election to be held in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and also the Union Territory of Puducherry, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was in a relaxed mood.

Kerala had almost recovered from the Covid-19 cases which shot up during the Onam and Christmas festivals. Minutes before he left for a public meeting at the Capital city to launch the State-wide election campaign of the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic

Total case: 4,41,191
Total death: 743
Case fatality Ratio: 0.3%
Recovery ratio: 78.5%
Avg growth rate: 1.9%

Front, Minister for health KK Shylaja mailed him the details of the day's Covid figures.

It read that the State had diagnosed 3,671 new cases while 14 deaths were recorded from across Kerala. The positive rate was 5.41 per cent. The figures, new cases or fatalities, were comparatively lower than the national average and the scenario on that Friday did not warrant any apprehension, member of the task force had told him.

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TN contained virus, polls unleashed it

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has seen both the extremes of the pandemic Covid-19 during the last year. The State succeeded in controlling the transmission of the pandemic in the initial days when delegates of Tablighi Jamaat congregation held at New Delhi returned to Tamil Nadu in the first week of March 2020. Though the pandemic peaked by mid-2020 the total lockdown, had helped the authorities in bringing down the number of newly diagnosed cases from 40,000 in mid-2020 to below the 500 marks by February 2021.

Total cases: 15,31,377
Total Deaths: 17,056
Case fatality ratio: 1.1%
Recovery ratio: 86.1%
Avg Growth rate: 2.1%

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PUDUCHERRY SEES 60 TIMES JUMP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On February 26, when the Election Commission of India announced the schedule of Assembly polls, the Union Territory of Puducherry recorded just 29 Covid-19 cases and zero death. The total caseload stood 39,669 and the death figure at 667. Ten and a half weeks down the line, the UT has seen 60 times jump in corona cases. The UT is recording at an average of 1,800 new cases and 25 deaths every day during the last week.

Total cases: 80,947
Total death: 1,099
Case Fatality ratio: 1.4%
Recovery ratio: 77.1%
Avg growth rate: 2.4%

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Poll fever changed it all in Assam

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam lived with little trace of coronavirus till the electioneering picked up and leaders descended on the State from all parts of the country amid massive mobilisation of people and resources on the ground.

When the poll schedule was announced on February 26, the State recorded just 34 cases and one death in a 24-hour period. People lived without any fear of Covid, which was just beginning to show an uptick in other parts of the country in the early second week of February.

But that was it. The poll fever changed it all.

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CAPSULE

IMD: CYCLONE TAUKTAE MOVING TOWARDS GUJ
Mumbai: Cyclonic storm Tauktae has intensified and is heading towards the coast of Gujarat and the Union Territory of Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, though it could bring gusty winds and showers to Mumbai, the IMD said.

TOP JAMAAT LEADER HELD IN B'DESH
Dhaka: Top Jamaat-e-Islami leader and listed 1971 war criminal Shahjahan Chowdhury has been arrested by the police for allegedly instigating the violence unleashed by radical outfit Hefazat-e-Islam on March 26 during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh.

Israeli airstrike destroys Gaza tower housing AP, other media



A ball of fire erupts from a building housing various international media, including *The Associated Press*, after an Israeli airstrike on Saturday in Gaza City

AP ■ GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP

An Israeli airstrike on Saturday targeted and destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City that housed offices of *The Associated Press* and other media outlets. Hours later, Israel bombed the home of Khalil al-Hayeh, a top leader of Gaza's ruling militant

Hamas group.

The Israeli military said Al-Hayeh's home served as part of what it said was the militant group's "terrorist infrastructure." Al-Hayeh is a senior figure in the Hamas political leadership in Gaza, and the attack marked a further escalation, signaling that Israel is going after Hamas' top leader-

ship, and not just military commanders. His fate after the strike was not immediately known. Earlier, AP staffers and other tenants safely evacuated the building after the military telephoned a warning that the strike was imminent within an hour.

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Modi orders audit as many ventilators lying unutilised

PM stresses on curbing spread in rural areas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday took serious view of reports about ventilators lying unutilised in storage in some States and directed that an immediate audit of installation and operation of ventilators provided by the Central Government should be carried out.

Chairing a high-level meeting to take stock of the Covid-19 situation in the country, the Prime Minister asked for a distribution plan for ensuring oxygen supply in rural areas where, he said the spread of virus must be prevented.

The Prime Minister asked States to be "transparent" while



reporting their cases "as high numbers does not mean that they have not done enough to contain the virus."

He said localised containment strategies are the need of the hour and instructed that testing needs to be scaled up further, with use of both RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen tests, especially in areas with high test positivity rates.

Modi asked for augmentation of healthcare resources in rural areas to focus on "door to door testing and surveillance."

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India's corona situation 'hugely concerning', says WHO chief

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

India's Covid-19 situation remains hugely concerning, with several States continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Friday, warning that the pandemic's second year will be "far more deadly" than the first for the world.

Ghebreyesus added that the WHO is responding to the Covid-19 surge in India and has shipped thousands of oxygen concentrators, tents for mobile field hospitals, masks and other medical supplies.

"India remains hugely concerning, with several states continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths," he said at the daily media briefing.

"And we thank all the stakeholders who are supporting India," the WHO Director-General said.

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Steroid misuse sets off black fungus attacks post Covid: Guleria

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Misuse of steroids is a major cause behind rising cases of black fungus, also known as mucormycosis infection, among vulnerable Covid-19 patients, including those suffering from diabetes, AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria on Saturday said, asking the doctors to follow Government protocol while dealing with such drugs.

He said that patients who are diabetic or Covid-19 positive and are taking steroids have an increased chance of contracting the fungal infection as it could lead to weakened immune systems.

"It is thus all the more important to properly follow protocols of infection control practices at hospitals," he said, indicating that during Covid-19, patients prescribed heavy and prolonged steroid doses can have weakened

immune systems.

Mucormycosis spores are found in soil, air, and even in food, said the AIIMS chief while addressing a press conference here on Saturday. He said that the black fungus can affect the face, infecting the nose, orbit of the eye, or brain, which can even cause vision loss. He added that it can also spread to the lung.

In a new advisory over black fungus infection, the Centre has asked people to be extra careful regarding infection protocols since the fungus enters the body through a cut, scrape, burn, or other types of skin trauma when the skin comes in contact with fungal spores in the environment.

Dr Guleria also said that the mucormycosis fungal spores are of low virulence and usually do not cause infection.

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‘I’m having loads of fun working with kids’

LAVINA TANDON, who plays Jhanjharika in Nikki Aur Jadui Bubble, a fantasy show on Dangal TV, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about her role, the challenges faced and fun that she is having shooting with the kids

■ What is Nikki Aur Jadui Bubble about?

It is a kids' fantasy show where there is the real world and the magical one which merge together. Sometimes our characters are in the real one sometimes in the magical. It is about a girl, Nikki; it's her story. Her father is a great magician and passes on his talent and world to his father without him realising this.

■ What's your character here?

I play the grey shade here — Jhanjharika. I am also a magician and a powerful one at that amongst the women in the world of magic. She was not always evil but then a competition took place and she lost. She wanted the coveted bubble which has immense power and the bubble went to Nikki's father played by Himmanshoo Malhotra. From here on, my character becomes negative and I become the evil witch and my job is to trouble everyone.

■ How did you come on board the project?

I was shooting for another project as an assistant intern. But I keep getting scripts since I have done other shows. I have worked for Dheeraj Kumar earlier as well and my experience was good and saw no reason to say no. I went and gave the audition. After three weeks I got a confirmation call. But I was shooting in Goa for a web series and told the team that once I am done, I will be on board.

■ It is a kid's fantasy show, are you having lots of fun?

We had lots of fun. There are no adults in the scenes with me. There are adults but we are never in the same frame. The good is that there is gossip, the atmosphere is stress-free. There is a negativity like there might be in other

adult shows — she got this costume, I didn't; she got this jewellery, I didn't. There is no such thing here. Kids are natural, they have no pretense. They come, shoot and go back to their studies. We spent a lot of time together and chatted and generally had fun. I learnt a lot from them as well. They are so full of energy.

■ Were there any challenges since you are working with kids?

There were no challenges working with the kids like I said the kids in the show are extremely intelligent. I psyched myself saying that it is a kids' show so I need to have patience working with them. But they are quick learners. The challenge came in the form of getting into the look. I have two —one the normal and the other the evil witch. Switching and change in costume was time consuming.

■ How did you get into acting?

I never had plans to get into acting. Acting chose me. I was 12 when my mother's friend was coordinating for a show — *Tum Bin Jaaon Kahaan* on Zee TV — that had a requirement for a girl with curly hair. It was a show by Aruna Irani Production House. I went for the audition and got selected. The minute I stood in front of the camera they chose me since I fit their character to a T. I shot 70-80 episodes. But then my Class VII finals came and I had to leave the show. But I kept getting work sometimes back-to-back.

■ Hero Bhakti Hi Shakti Hai was a role you did and grabbed eyeballs. What made the show popular?

It was one of the few superhero shows. Back then, there was just *Shaktiman*. *Hero Bhakti...* became

popular because the story was interesting and attracted the kids. Also, every week there was a new character that kept the interest. Kids back then watched TV. Today, they are glued to their mobiles, video games and social media.

■ Is there a role that you hated doing?

No, not really. I never put myself in a position where I ended up hating doing something. Acting is my profession. If I don't love I can't do justice to the characters I have done.

■ What's next?

At present, I am not willing to work on anything due to the pandemic. I was even scared to go out to buy groceries let alone step out to shoot. But I am committed to *Nikki Aur...* so I will shoot for it but no new projects for the time being.



WEEKLY NATTER

ASIM RIAZ TURNS RAPPER

The heartthrob of the young generation, Asim Riaz has a huge surprise in store for us. The livewire who has amassed the love of people as an actor and featuring artist has yet another talent that he stages for the world on Eid. Riaz debuts with a fiery rap titled *Back To Start* released under India's leading record label, Sony Music India.

The teaser of the rap that dropped not long ago got the Asim Riaz squad excited scaling up the anticipation around it as it releases today. Making this year's Eid special, Asim opens about his struggle and hustle in his debut as a

rapper through the song. *Back To Start* has been penned and performed by Asim.

Asim says: "We take a look around us and we see that everything is changing and so much of the good change is being embraced. I had *Back To Start* with me since 2015 and I wanted to polish it till I was ready to put it out there for the listeners. I'm very pumped that it's releasing. My wish for everybody this Eid is to have the strength to embrace changes and hustle their way forward."

Released by Sony Music India, *Back To Start* is now available on all streaming platforms.

CINDERELLA TO LAUNCH WORLDWIDE IN SEPTEMBER

Kay Cannon's *Cinderella* featuring an all-star cast including Grammy nominated singer/songwriter Camila Cabello, Idina Menzel and Billy Porter, will launch exclusively around the world in over 240 countries and territories on Prime Video this September. The highly anticipated musical incorporates pop songs from contemporary global artists and original songs by Camila Cabello and Idina Menzel.

"*Cinderella* is a classic we all know and love, but this time with a modern unique twist and starring the sensational Camila Cabello and an all-star cast. Producer James Corden and the filmmaking team have taken this beloved fairytale and revamped it with a fresh, empowering perspective that will resonate with audiences and families around the world. We couldn't be more

excited for our global customers to sing and dance along to director Kay Cannon's reimagination of this classic story," said Jennifer Salke, Head of Amazon Studios.

Cinderella is a musically-driven bold new take on the traditional story you grew up with. Our heroine (Cabello) is an ambitious young woman, whose dreams are bigger than the world will allow, but with the help of her Fab G (Billy Porter), she is able to persevere and make her dreams come true.

Written for the screen and directed by Kay Cannon with covers of songs written by some of the top-selling musical artists of all time, *Cinderella* has an all-star cast that includes Idina Menzel, Minnie Driver, Nicholas Galitzine, with Billy Porter and Pierce Brosnan. Producers are Leo Pearlman, James Corden, Jonathan Kadin and Shannon McIntosh.

RASHMI AGDEKAR BECOMES CAUSE AMBASSADOR

After many Bollywood celebrities being tested positive for Covid-19 and understanding the hard times actress, Rashmi Agdekar opens up about duty towards fighting the disease and helping the country by being a cause ambassador. Agdekar has blown the audience's mind with her brilliant performance. The young and talented actress started her acting career in 2017, in the web series *Dev DD*. Since then she has played various critically acclaimed roles in several web series and movies. Celebrities like Varun Dhawan and Kartik Aryan have also joined initiatives as cause ambassadors are contributing during these tough times by sharing verified information with their followers, Rashmi Agdekar herself being a Covid survivor understands the need to support people at this hour and has

therefore become the cause ambassador for the campaign *Find a Bed*. The actor says: "In these tough times, many volunteers, NGOs, students, entrepreneurs etc are doing a lot of groundwork and helping people in need. If all these people are doing the actual hard work, the least I can do is amplify it. As a responsible citizen, it is my duty to spread awareness as much as I can in my capacity during this second wave. Being a Covid survivor myself, I know how much it takes a toll mentally and physically. Anyone in need of beds in their area or nearby can use this website (www.findabed.in) to search. This will hopefully reduce the stress of running from one hospital to another in an emergency."

On the work front, Rashmi Agdekar played the lead role in the MX player web series *I'mMature* which was critically acclaimed. The young and talented actor made her big-screen debut in Bollywood with *Andhadhun*.

TELLY TALE

DANCE IT OUT

Colors' *Dance Deewane* is a show that never stops to surprise, impress and entertain the viewers. In the upcoming episode, special guest dancers who garnered a lot of fame with their deewangi for dance like Yogesh Shaw, Alok Shaw, Siza, Kishen Bilagali, Rupesh Bane, Tejas Varma, Sagar, Jayshree, Mukul, Akash and Vaishnavi will perform in pairs with the *Dance Deewane* contestants. The performances surely will be filled with entertainment, passion, and a whole lot of swag.

The most highlighted dance performances of the evening were by Alok and Aman who impressed Madhuri. Even Gunjan's performance with Sagar



Bora on the *Mirchi* song was spellbinding. After Gunjan's performance, Dharmesh Yelande couldn't hold back his praises and was in complete awe of her. He said: "I'm speechless. The stage is different every time and the level at which you dance is very high. I would like to thank Sagar too as he is so good and catches the audience's attention. When he performs in his group, we only look at him. Today I could feel that my one eye was on Gunjan and the other on Sagar because this *jodi* is just amazing."

Pallavi and Siza sent Madhuri Dixit on a nostalgia trip when they performed a medley of her songs choreographed by her guru Saroj Khan. Madhuri was extremely touched and gave them ₹101 as token of appreciation. The chocolate boy of *Dance Deewane* season 1 Kishen Bilagali danced on an extremely scintillating performance with Arundhati, the dance raised the temperature of the set.

'I HAVE NEVER DONE A SCREEN TEST'

Over the past few years, Raima Sen

has performed a host of impactful roles in movies and OTT series and has dazzled audiences with her beauty and stellar acting skills. For those eagerly awaiting her next project, Raima will be seen next in Amazon Prime Video's upcoming series *The Last Hour*. Raima shared her experience of getting auditioned and her selection for Nyima's role.

Talking about Nyima's character and on bagging the role, the actor spoke about her experience of giving a screen test for the first time and shared her thoughts on it. Giving it her best shot with the help of a stellar director Amit Kumar by her side, it sure seems that Raima had a blast on set with the cast and packed a punch on the show that is all set to keep us on the edge of our seats.

On auditioning for the role and her character, Raima shares: "In all these years in the industry, I have never done a screen test. When I learnt that Amit 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 first thought I am never going to get this part but surprisingly, I got a confirmation call from him in a couple of days. I am very happy and excited to be a part of this series. With all my work, I've always tried to understand the vision of the director and then added my own individuality to it which helps me stay focused on my character. My director Amit told me what he expected from the character, but at the same, asked me to keep it real and feel it. His guidance and my vision helped me get the best out of me. It was such a great experience shooting for the series."

The Last Hour stars Sanjay Kapoor, Shahana Goswami, Karma Takapa, Robin Tamang, and Shaylee Krishen along with Raima Sen. It will be exclusively stream on Amazon Prime Video from the May 14, 2021 in more than 240 countries and territories.

HIBA'S FAVOURITE SEHRI DELICACY

Hiba Nawab aka CP in Sony SAB's Jijaji Chhat Parr Koi Hai was in Bareilly with her family and friends during Ramadan.

Get up close and personal with Hiba as she gets candid about her favourite Ramadan memory, the food she loves, and how is she spending her Ramadan in her hometown this year.

Talking about the holy month of Ramadan, she said: "I believe the most



vital part about this sacred month is fasting and praying, which means *ibadat*, by keeping *rozas* and by reading the Quran. We celebrate this month by cherishing each and every moment and by worshipping. I think it is essential to help people in need and do charity. My fondest memory for the holy month of Ramadan dates back to the days I observed my first roza. I was eight years old and was super excited about it. We eat some delicious dishes this month, and this year I am in Bareilly with my family and friends after so long to celebrate the month of Ramadan and Eid. I avoid eating fried food across the year, but I grab a bite of spicy and fried food to my heart's content during this time of the year. My favourite *sehri* delicacy is *khajla*, I love to eat sweet dishes as I have a sweet tooth. My resolution for Ramadan is to do more of *ibadat*."

ATHARVA ASKS A TRICKY QUESTION

Sony SAB's *Wagle Ki Duniya* —



Nayi Peedhi Naye Kissey continues to keep the audience glued to the show with exciting and relatable day to day. In the upcoming episodes, we see how Atharva gets frustrated with his parents as they keep calling him a 'kid' in certain situations but 'old enough' as per their convenience otherwise.

Atharva feels his parents' behaviour is unfair towards him as they change their stance about his age and maturity according to the situation, which irritates him. As a protest, the innocent Atharva decides to go on a hunger strike. Rajesh and Vandana try to calm him down and request him to not go on a hunger strike so instead Atharva puts a condition, that for the next three days if anyone refers to him as 'old enough', the person will have to perform an act of punishment as decided by him.

The question is, will the Wagles' come to a common conclusion for this problem or will Atharva's frustration increase? What is the punishment Atharva has in mind?

Pariva Pranati, essaying the role of Vandana, said: "As artists, we always endeavour to bring a smile on the faces of our fans and I feel so lucky and blessed that with the role of Vandana, I am able to do it. The upcoming track is very interesting not only for the kids who love the show but also for the parents as well. We have all faced this situation growing up, parents wanting us to behave maturely in certain situations and enjoy like a kid in certain other. The challenge put by my son, Atharva would be interesting to watch and the climax of that challenge would be very intriguing in a way that would reveal a different facet of Atharva. We all are working very hard and putting our heart and soul into the episodes. I would like to request the audience to keep watching the episodes from the comfort of their homes!"

Sheehan Kapahi, essaying the role of Atharva, said: "Baccha ya Bada? This is a confusing question, and the upcoming track will address this dilemma brilliantly. Throughout our show's journey, we have always tried to bring highly relatable topics, which I feel has struck the right chord with our viewers. For kids of my age, this is the biggest question in our minds, and for our parents, they are probably facing similar questions too. How will my parents react to this question? The upcoming episodes will unravel the mystery."

Plan Your Stay At Home Sunday

Give your Sundays a perfect start by cooking some delicious meals. How about Fluffy Banana Walnut Pancakes or Almond Cinnamon Tart for breakfast? Here are the recipes.

FLUFFY BANANA WALNUT PANCAKES

Ingredients
Maple Walnut Cream:
■ 1/2 cup California walnuts
■ 1/4 cup water
■ 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
■ 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
Pancakes:
■ 1 medium-size very ripe banana
■ 3/4 cup milk
■ 2 tablespoons melted butter, plus additional tablespoon for skillet
■ 1/3 cup liquid egg whites
■ 1 cup flour
■ 2 tablespoons sugar
■ 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
■ 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
■ 1/4 teaspoon salt
■ 1/3 cup chopped California walnuts
Preparation:
■ To prepare maple walnut cream, place all ingredients in a



small food processor and process until light and fluffy.

■ Mash banana with a fork in a large bowl and stir in milk and melted butter. Stir together dry

ingredients in a medium bowl and stir into banana mixture, being careful to not overmix. (A few small lumps are ok)

— California Walnuts

ALMOND CINNAMON TART

Ingredients
■ 1 cup almond flake
■ 150 gm monaco biscuit
■ 2 gm cinnamon powder
■ 200 gm fine sugar
■ 200 ml fresh cream
■ 60 gm unsalted butter
Method:
■ Roast the almond flake in preheated oven at 180 degree celsius for 4 minutes or till golden in colour.
■ For toffee sauce, caramelise sugar, add 40 gms of butter followed by cream and thoroughly mix it
■ For monaco crumble, crush biscuits and mix 20 gm of butter with it. spread this mixture in 6inch mould and bake at 160 degree celsius for 10 min.
■ In a bowl mix, roasted almond slivers and toffee sauce and pour this mix over biscuit crumble in the mould.
■ Bake the mix set in mould in a preheated oven at 180 degree celsius for 15 min.



■ Serve once done and demould the tart. serve with

vanilla bean ice-cream.
— Almond Board of California

Govt releases ₹1,051 cr as assistance to MCDs



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has released ₹1,051 crore as assistance for municipal corporations in the national Capital to disburse salaries to employees including health-care workers who have not paid for long amid the pandemic. “We hope that the MCD’s leadership will guarantee this assistance is not used for any other activities and diverted in any way but is used to pay the salaries to employees involved in Covid-19 duty,” said Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. The Deputy Chief Minister said that corporations have not been distributing salaries to

their employees despite all the work they have been doing in the midst of the pandemic. This was due to the incompetence and corruption that were rampant in the corporations. “It is unacceptable if they are unable to pay the salaries of the medical staff, doctors and nurses who are putting their lives on the line to save people in these unprecedented times,” he said. Sisodia said that total financial assistance earmarked for the MCDs was ₹1,051 crore, out of which ₹366.9 crore would be given to the East Delhi Municipal Corporation, ₹432.8 crore to the North Delhi

Municipal Corporation and ₹251.6 crore to the South Delhi Municipal Corporation. “Delhi’s Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal has ensured aid and support to all dedicated frontline workers who are on Covid duty despite the scarcity of resources due to Covid-19,” he said. Replying to Sisodia, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that the Delhi Government has released the funds for the first quarter of the current financial year 2021-22 for the three municipal corporations after a delay of almost 44 days. “This fund should have been released on the first day of April but the Delhi Government intentionally delayed it and even today it has been released after the Lieutenant-Governor’s intervention,” he said. Kapoor said that not only sanitation and healthcare workers but even teachers besides other staff of the MCDs are deployed on Covid-19 duty as frontline workers and it would have been better had the Delhi Government given an additional ₹1,000 crore as Covid-19 contingency fund.

Delhi sets up unified Covid war room

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Saturday launched the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) against Covid-19. With the integrated war room, the Government will have real-time data regarding hospitals, ICU beds, availability of oxygen and vaccines, tracking through GPS which help in decision-making. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, “All vaccine, oxygen and hospital related data and information regarding the number of patients in a particular area, how many of them are active and how many have recovered, their geographical distribution, all this data is being captured and analysed on a real-time basis. This is a good start because if a Government takes decisions in the air, then they are never successful. If the Government takes those decisions based on data, then they will be more successful, effective and influential as it will be informed decision-making.” He said, “This is just the beginning. This will be made more robust as and when we collect more data. I believe that this is a great initiative and I congratulate all those officers



who have worked hard on this, to make it a success.” This is inclusive of all private and Government hospitals and Covid care centres. This data will also be made available to those departments of the Government that are working on coronavirus-related information, through an app. “If this data is not made available to the officers, then how will decisions be taken? It will also be reviewed as to how much data will be given out to the general public,” Kejriwal said. On being asked about the possibility of a third wave of the pandemic, Kejriwal said, “If

you are to see the second wave, the cases are reducing in Delhi but our efforts are not declining. On Friday, we started 500 ICU beds in front of LNJP Hospital. Similarly, three days ago we started 500 ICU beds. We are going to install new oxygen beds also. Our efforts will not decline no matter what, because we know nothing of this disease’s trajectory. So, our preparations will continue. Even the Covid care centres that were made after the first wave but some of which were closed down, will now be made permanent and will be strengthened even further.”

‘Still grappling with the virus, need more jabs’

For the 18-44 age group, the stock of Covaxin has finished and Covishield’s stock will last for eight days- MLA Atishi



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Am Aadmi Party (AAP) senior leader and MLA Atishi said on Saturday that a fresh stock of vaccines, including 1,73,760 doses of Covishield arrived in the national Capital for people in the 45 plus age group and for healthcare workers. Presenting the vaccination bulletin, the AAP leader said that Covaxin’s stock was depleting fast and there were shots left for three days only. However, there was enough Covishield stock for six days for those in the 45 plus age group and for healthcare workers.

For the 18-44 age group, the stock of Covaxin has finished and Covishield’s stock is available for eight days, she said, adding that the total doses administered remained at 43,67,243 in Delhi until now. Citing the position of the remaining stock of Covid vaccines in Delhi, Atishi said: “We all are aware of the fact that Delhi has been one of the most severely affected States in the pandemic and we are still grappling with the virus. It is my humble appeal to the Centre to supply sufficient vaccines, especially for those in the 18-44 age groups.”

Manohar Lal Khattar to inaugurate three Covid care centres

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar will inaugurate three temporary Covid care centres in Gurugram on May 16 and 17. With these three centres, 500 extra beds will be available for the treatment of Covid patients in the city. Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg said that Khattar will inaugurate these hospitals at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Sector 38, Sector-67 and at the Government Girls College in Sector 14, during his two-day visit to Gurugram. Garg said that the 100-bed hospital at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium has been set up with the help of the Vedanta Group. It will have 80 beds with oxygen facility and 20 beds with ICU facility. The Vedanta Group has provided the medical equipment, while the doctors have been arranged by an NGO called ‘Doctors for You.’ Apart from this, doctors from the Civil Surgeon’s Office will also be present there. Similarly, the 300-bed Covid Care Centre in Sector 67

has been set up with the joint efforts of M3M, the CII, the Indian Air Force and ‘Doctors for You.’ The Chief Minister will inaugurate both these facilities on May 16. Apart from these, Khattar will inaugurate a 100-bed temporary hospital in collaboration with the Hero Group at the Govt College on May 17. This hospital has been built in the college auditorium and oxygen-rich beds have been arranged for corona patients. Here the district admin will fulfil the requirement of oxygen, but the Hero Group has also made arrangements for 100 oxygen concentrators, medicines and doctors in collaboration with ‘Doctors for You.’ The Civil Surgeon’s Office will be supervising the operations here. “Cleanliness and disposal of biomedical waste at these centres will be handled by the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram and the security arrangements will be looked after by the district police. The volunteers of Gurujal Society and civil defence will also cooperate in the operation of these centres. If any patient becomes serious, then we will shift them to hospital,” Garg said.

Positivity rate at 11.32% but 337 more succumb



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital reported 337 more coronavirus deaths and 6,430 infections on Saturday, even though the positivity rate hit 11.32 per cent. These 6,430 new cases came from 56,811 tests, including 46,774 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests. As many as 11,592 people recovered from the infection during the period, the health bulletin said. According to the bulletin, there are 66,295 active cases and 42,484 of the patients are in home isolation. The number of cumulative cases stands at 13,87,411 and the death toll is at 21,244.

As per the data, over 12,99,872 people have either recovered, migrated or have been discharged from hospital. Of the 24,018 hospital beds for coronavirus patients in the city, 7,223 are vacant. On April 22, a positivity rate of 36.2 per cent, the highest so far, was recorded and the highest number of deaths, at 448 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.

Non-bailable warrant issued against wrestler Sushil Kumar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Court on Saturday issued ‘Non-Bailable Warrant’ (NBW) against Olympic medalist, Indian wrestler Sushil Kumar, who is absconding ever since his role surfaced in a brawl that led to the murder of a 23-year-old budding wrestler. Sources said that a reward is likely to be announced on information that leads to his arrest. “The Investigating Officer (IO) on Saturday moved an application before the court to issue an NBW against Sushil Kumar and six others which was approved,” said a senior police officer. After the IO served a notice to Kumar to join the investigation, he switched off his phone and has been on the run since then. Police teams are conducting raids in neighbouring Haryana and at his friends’ residences. The Delhi Police on Friday had written a letter to the Delhi Government stating that their official, Sushil Kumar, and his associate, Ajay Kumar, who is a physical education teacher, have been named by the victims and departmental action should be taken against them. Kumar was



appointed ‘Officer on Special Duty’ at Chhatrasal Stadium by the city Government. Sources said that in order to avoid arrest Kumar, is changing his location frequently. It has been learnt that Sushil left for Haridwar and then Rishikesh after the incident. He stayed at an ashram in Haridwar and later, he returned to Delhi and is now constantly changing locations in Haryana. He was at an ashram in Sonapat two days ago. Last week, a 23-year-old wrestler Sagar Dhankad died and his two friends — Amit Kumar and Sonu — got injured after they were allegedly assaulted by other wrestlers in the parking of the Chhatrasal Stadium in the northern part of the city. A quarrel had taken place allegedly between Kumar, Ajay,

Prince, Sonu, Sagar, Amit and others. Thereafter, police registered a case under relevant Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Arms Act at the Model Town police station in this regard. The victims have alleged that Kumar was present at the spot when the incident took place. The victims in their statements have added that Kumar and his associates abducted Sagar from his house in Model Town to teach him a lesson for bad-mouthing him in front of other wrestlers, police said. Police had apprehended one Prince Dalal (24), a resident of Jhajjar in Haryana, in this case and had impounded a double barrel gun. Police recovered two double barrel guns, seven live cartridges, two wooden sticks and five cars.


15 arrested for putting up anti-Modi posters

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI


Delhi Police has registered 17 First Information Reports (FIRs) and arrested 15 people for allegedly pasting posters critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s decision to send Coronavirus vaccines abroad as part of India’s “vaccine diplomacy.” The posters, with the message “Modiji humare bachon ki vaccine videsh kyu bhej diya (Modi why did you send the vaccines meant for our children to foreign countries?)” were pasted in several parts of the national Capital.



According to a senior police officer, on Thursday, police received specific inputs regarding the posters, following which police officials of all districts were put on alert. “Based on further complaints received by the police across the city, as many as 17 FIRs were registered under Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and other relevant Sections including Section 3 of the Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, across various districts,” said the senior police officer. “More FIRs are likely to be registered if further complaints are received in this regard. As of now, an investigation is underway to ascertain as to on whose behalf these posters were being put up at various places across the city and accordingly further action will be taken in the matter,” the officer added. Giving the details, police said three FIRs were registered in North East Delhi and two persons were arrested from there. “Three FIRs were registered in West and another three FIRs in Outer Delhi while two FIRs were registered in the Central part of the city and four persons were arrested,” said police. “Two FIRs were registered in Rohini and two persons were arrested, while one FIR was registered in East Delhi and four persons were arrested. One FIR was registered in Dwarka and two persons were arrested,” police said.



Haryana Government's Commendable Steps to Help People During Covid-19




Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

Ch. Devi Lal Sanjeevani Hospital, Hisar

Inauguration by
Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana
Presided over by
Sh. Dushyant Chautala
Deputy Chief Minister, Haryana
August presence
Sh. Anil Vij
Health Minister, Haryana
Sh. Ranbir Gangwa
Vidhan Sabha Deputy Speaker, Haryana
Sh. Brijendra Singh M.P., Hisar **Sh. Kamal Gupta** M.L.A., Hisar


Sunday, 16th May, 2021

Oxygen Supply by 

Guru Teg Bahadur Sanjeevani Hospital, Bal Jattan, Panipat

Inauguration by
Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana
Presided over by
Sh. Dharmendra Pradhan
Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel
August presence
Sh. Anil Vij
Health Minister, Haryana
Sh. Sanjay Bhatia M.P., Karnal

Sunday, 16th May, 2021

Oxygen Supply by 

COVID Hospitals & Centres setting up in Gurugram

- Hospital with facility of 100 oxygen-equipped beds in collaboration with Hero Group and Doctors For You, NGO in Govt. Women College, Sector-14, Gurugram.
- COVID Field Hospital of 100 bed capacity in collaboration with Vedanta Group in Tau Devi Lal Stadium Medicity, Sector-38 with 20 I.C.U beds and 80 oxygen-equipped beds at one place.
- COVID Care Centre with 300 bed capacity in Sector-67, Gurugram with joint collaboration with CII, M3M, Indian Air Force and Doctors For You, NGO.




Inauguration by
Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana
August presence
Rao Inderjit Singh
Union Minister of State (Independent Charge)

16th & 17th May, 2021

Both COVID hospitals with 500 beds capacity each are built at a cost of approx Rs. 28.5 Crore (per hospital)

Other New Hospitals in the State for COVID Patients

- In Faridabad, 100-bed hospital started at Medical College, army doctors and paramedical staff have been given its responsibility.
- In Karnal, A new Field Hospital with 100 oxygen-equipped beds started.
- In Assandh, arrangement of 20 oxygen-equipped beds at Community Health Centre and 10 oxygen-equipped beds at COVID Care Centre.
- In Sirsa, 150-bed COVID Care Centre started at Baba Tara Charitable Hospital and Research Center.
- In Rohtak, 400 oxygen-equipped beds installed in P.G.I., Rohtak, 600 other oxygen-equipped beds to be installed soon.
- 70-bed hospital set up at Mankind Pharma in Civil Line, Gurugram also having facility of oxygen.

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana  www.pharyana.gov.in  @Cmohry  @DiprHaryana

Stay Alert, Stay Safe

No denial of jab or essentials for want of Aadhaar: UIDAI

New Delhi: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on Saturday said in a statement that no one will be denied vaccine, medicine, hospitalisation or treatment for want of Aadhaar.

The statement has come in the present Covid-19 pandemic situations against certain reports suggesting that vaccination and a few other essential services like hospitalisation were being denied to the residents for want of Aadhaar.

UIDAI said that in the Covid pandemic circumstances, no one shall be denied a service/benefit just because he/she doesn't have an Aadhaar.If one does not have Aadhaar or if Aadhaar online verification is not successful due to some reason, the concerned agency or department has to provide the service as per Section 7 of Aadhaar Act, 2016 and the Cabinet Secretariat OM dated 19th Dec 2017, UIDAI said in a statement.UIDAI said that Aadhaar should not be misused as an excuse for denial of any essential service.

There is a well established exception handling mechanism (EHM) for

Aadhaar and it should be followed to ensure delivery of benefits and services in the absence of Aadhaar.

If a resident does not possess Aadhaar for some or the other reason, she/he must not be denied essential services as per Aadhaar Act.

UIDAI said that Aadhaar is meant to bring transparency and accountability in public service deliveries through effective use of technology and there are exception handling regulations issued by UIDAI vide its circular dated October 24, 2017 to ensure that no beneficiary is denied of benefits/services for the want of Aadhaar.Also, relevant provisions are there in the Aadhaar Act under Section 7 to ensure that there is no exclusion and no denials.

Further, the Cabinet Secretariat OM dated December 19, 2017 has clearly explained the exception handling mechanism by using alternate means of identification for extending benefits and services to the residents who do not possess Aadhaar or in cases where Aadhaar authentication is not successful due to any reason. **PTI**



The doors of Gangotri Dham opened on Saturday with full religious rituals during the auspicious occasion of Baishakhi Shukla Tritiya. The prayers will continue with Covid protocols after opening of the doors of the four dhams **PTI**

Guj sees 9,061 new cases

Ahmedabad: The Covid-19 tally of Gujarat reached 7,44,409 after 9,061 cases were detected on Saturday, while the number of people who were discharged during the day stood at 15,076, an official said.

The number of deaths from the infection on Saturday was 95, the first time the daily fatality count had fallen below the 100-mark since April 17, he pointed out. The state's toll stands at 9,039, and the recovery count is

6,24,017, which is 83.84 per cent of the tally, leaving it with an active caseload of 1,11,263, including 791 on ventilator support, the official added.

"Ahmedabad saw 2,460 cases, followed by 1,034 in Vadodara, 806 in Surat, 476 in Rajkot, 433 in Junagadh among other districts. Of the deaths recorded during the day, Surat led with 14, followed by Ahmedabad with 12, Rajkot 10, Vadodara nine, Jamnagar seven," he said. **PTI**

Punjab: Man carries daughter's body on shoulders, video goes viral

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

A video of a daily-wager carrying the corpse of his 11-year-old daughter on his shoulders in Punjab's Jalandhar has gone viral on social media, prompting district authorities to order a probe into the incident.

In the video, which was shot by some passersby on May 10, Dilip can be seen carrying the body of his daughter Sonu on his shoulders to the cremation ground for her last rites. His son was also with him.

Talking to the media on Saturday, Dilip said his daughter had not been well and he took her to a hospital in Amritsar for treatment on the advice of doctors at a Jalandhar hospital.

He said his daughter died on the evening of May 9 at the Amritsar hospital. After he brought the body to his room in Ram Nagar in Jalandhar, his neighbours did not come forward to help him fearing that the girl was a Covid-19 patient, said Dilip, who hails from Odisha.

Woman gangraped by 3, hunt on for suspects

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A 22-year-old woman was allegedly gang raped by three unidentified men in Faarrukhnagar area some 20 km away from the Gurugram city late on Thursday night. The accused had filmed the act which prompted the police to register a case and form teams to identify and nab the suspects.According to the police, the victim, a native of Samastipur district in Bihar, was currently residing with her sister in Sector-52 in Gurugram.

The victim told the police that On Thursday she along with two male friends from the muslim community travelled to Judola village of Faarrukhnagar area on their motorcycle to looking for meat to celebrate Eid on Thursday night at around 11.00 pm."When we reached Jamalpur Chowk, we noticed that three men in a Mahendra Scorpio were chasing our motorcycle and later they forcibly stopped our bike.

The three men stepped outside their vehicle and thrashed my friends Abul Shekh and Ajijul," the woman told the police."Later the

three accused allegedly forcibly dragged the trio inside the vehicle to a room located at an isolated plot in Judola village where three beds were also present. there they held woman's male friends hostage and forced themselves on her in turn. They accused had also beat the woman's friend Ajijul and forced him to rape her while doing so the three men had also filmed the video of the incident," she told the police said.

"The victims told the accused that they were friends and looking for meat to celebrate Eid on Thursday but theyforcibly raped her and snatched their mobile phones and motorcycle and later they dropped them near Sapphire Mall in Sector-83 and fled the spot. The victims somehow informed the police" Poonam Hooda, station house officer (SHO) of Manesar women police station said.The police said that they have identified the culprits who are all residents of Judola village of Faarrukhnagar and one of them runs a road side dhaba. The vehicle belongs to their friend and they were going to attend a marriage when they committed the crime.

India's corona...

From Page 1

India is in the midst of a deadly wave of the coronavirus pandemic, with 3,43,144 people testing positive for the virus on Friday, taking the country's caseload to 2,40,46,809. The death toll stands at 2,62,317.

India's Covid-19 tally crossed the 10 million mark on December 19 and in under six months it has doubled, surpassing the grim milestone of 20 million cases on May 4.

Ghebreyesus pointed out that the emergency-like situation was not restricted to India.

"Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Egypt are just some of the countries that are dealing with spikes in cases and hospitalisations," he said adding that some countries in the Americas still have high numbers of cases and as a region, the Americas accounted for 40 per cent of all Covid-19 deaths last week.

There are also spikes in some countries in Africa. "These countries are in heightened response mode and WHO will continue to provide support in all ways possible," he said.

Noting that Covid-19 has already cost more than 3.3 million lives across the world, Ghebreyesus said, "We're on track for the second year of this pandemic to be far more deadly than the first.

Israeli...

From Page 1

Three heavy missiles struck the 12-story building, collapsing it in a giant cloud of dust.

For 15 years, the AP's top-floor office and roof terrace were a prime location for covering Israel's conflicts with Gaza's Hamas rulers, including wars in 2009 and 2014. The news agency's camera offered 24-hour live shots as militants' rockets arched toward Israel and Israeli airstrikes hammered the city and its surrounding area this week.

"The world will know less about what is happening in Gaza because of what happened today," AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said in a statement. "We are shocked and horrified that the Israeli military would target and destroy the building housing AP's bureau and other news organizations in Gaza."

"This is an incredibly disturbing development. We narrowly avoided a terrible loss of life," he said, adding that the AP was seeking information from the Israeli government and was engaged with the US State Department to learn more.

The building also housed the offices of Qatari-run *Al Jazeera TV*, as well as residential apartments. The Israeli military said Hamas was operating inside the building, a standard explanation, and it accused the militant group of using journalists as human shields. But it provided no evidence to back up the claims.

Hours earlier, another Israeli air raid on a densely populated refugee camp killed at least 10 Palestinians from an extended family, mostly children, the deadliest single strike of the current conflict.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists demanded Israel "provide a detailed and documented justification" for the strike.

"This latest attack on a building long known by Israel to house international media raises the specter that the Israel Defense Forces is deliberately targeting media facilities in order to disrupt coverage of the human suffering in Gaza," the group's executive director, Joel Simon, said in a statement.

Since Monday night, Hamas has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, which has pounded the Gaza Strip with strikes. In Gaza, at least 139 people have been killed, including 39 children and 22 women; in Israel, eight people have been killed, including a man killed by a rocket that hit in Ramat Gan, a suburb of Tel Aviv, on Saturday.

The latest outburst of violence started in Jerusalem and spread across the region over the past week, with Jewish-Arab clashes and rioting in mixed cities of Israel. There were also widespread Palestinian protests Friday in the occupied West Bank, where Israeli forces shot and killed 11 people.

Poll fever changed it all in Assam

From Page 1

The campaigns, which directly and indirectly, involved tens of thousands of people on a daily basis, provided corona the perfect manure for growth. On April 6 when the three-phase poll ended,

Assam was still recording a two-digit caseload (92), but the virus had spread far and wide during the six-seven week of campaigning. With every passing of day more and more cases began to surface and the death count also rose proportionately.

The State is witnessing 4,000-plus cases and 75 deaths per day during the last one week. There will be few instances of such multiplication of cases in any other parts of the country.

For example take the case of Maharashtra, the worst affected state in the country. On February 26 the State recorded 8,333 cases and 48 deaths. Subsequently, the state recorded nearly 70,000 cases at the peak, which translates into a below nine-time rise. Compare that with Assam's phenomenal growth of nearly 1,225 per cent, and the impact of poll mobilisation on the spread of corona is crystal clear.

Modi orders audit...

From Page 1

There were reports that a high number of imported ventilators have not even been unpacked weeks after they arrived in the country. The PM further said that refresher training for properly operating ventilators should be provided to healthcare workers if necessary.

He also spoke about empowering ASHA & Anganwadi workers with all necessary tools. Modi asked for guidelines to be made available in easy language along with illustrations for home isolation and treatment in rural areas.

Top officials briefed the Prime Minister saying testing has gone up rapidly in the country, from around 50 lakh tests per week in early March to around 1.3 crore tests per week now. Modi has been taking regular high-level meetings to review of Covid19 situation with a focus on Oxygen supply, increased vaccination and ways to prevent spread of Covid19 in rural areas.

PUDUCHERRY...

From Page 1

Puducherry has seen more than 60-time rise in the number of cases during this period, the better part of which was in the throes of aggressive poll campaigning. The poll in the UT took place on April 6.

While it's true that on April 6, the State was relatively safe from the scourge of corona, but the data were misleading. The UT recorded no fatality on that date and the caseload on that day was just around 225. But the bomb exploded after the polls when infections began to spread. In the last one week, the number of new infections has grown by an average of 2.4 per cent every day and the case fatality ratio is 1.4 percent, way ahead of country's average of around 1.2 per cent.

TN contained...

From Page 1

The day the Chief Election Commissioner announced the poll schedule for the State, Tamil Nadu had logged 481 new cases with five deaths. The State had 4,046 active patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

Dr C V Krishnaswamy, eminent physician, who had been monitoring the "progress" of the Covid-19 curve from day one itself, had declined to make any comment when the poll dates were announced. "This is not the ideal time to hold the election in Tamil Nadu. But I do not know the nitty gritty of politics and you may kindly leave me alone," Dr Krishnaswamy had told The Pioneer on that day.

On March 14, the State diagnosed 759 new persons with pandemics. There were four deaths recorded from all over the State with test positivity rate of 1.13 per cent. By March 21, the number of new persons diagnosed with Covid-19 rose to 1,289 with 9 fatalities. Since then there was no going back in Tamil Nadu. By March 28, the figures read 2.194 new cases, 11 deaths and TPR 2.58 per cent. Campaigning was approaching the peak as face masks had altogether disappeared and there were no social distancing norms.

Data provided by the Directorate of Health and Preventive Medicine in subsequent days showed a steady and speedy hike in the transmission of the pandemic. While on April 6, there were 3,645 new cases and 15 deaths, the TPR

rose to 4.54.

By April 20, the figure for new cases neared the 11,000 mark (10,986 to be precise) and 48 deaths were logged. The TPR was 11.07 percent. On May 7, the State saw the number of new patients reaching 26,465 with 197 deaths and 18.21 per cent TPR.

Since May 9, the State has declared total lockdown which has been extended to May 24.

"It was the peak of callousness and irresponsibility that made the authorities go ahead with the election.

The free-for-all campaign in Tamil Nadu was not unknown to the authorities in the State. They should not have gone ahead with the poll at this juncture," said Dr T Jacob John, a renowned virologist who headed the Christian Medical College Vellore.

Plasma therapy...

From Page 1

In the absence of any cure of Covid-19, patients and their relatives have been desperately seeking plasma donors, making requests on social media like twitter. In fact since last year during the Covid-19 spread, States like Delhi and Maharashtra set up the plasma bank, for donors and needy.

However, the Union Health Ministry's AIIMS-ICMR National Covid Task Force guidelines issued on April 22 had allowed the "off label" use of plasma therapy at the stage of early moderate disease, i.e, within seven days of the onset of symptoms, and if there is availability of a high titre donor plasma.

Disagreeing with the Ministry's protocol, a group of 18 clinicians and public health professionals last week wrote to the Central Government asking it to change guidelines in this regard. Agreeing with the study, Dr CS Pramesh, Thoracic surgeon and director of Tata Memorial Hospital tweeted, "We have to

let science decide our treatment policy. Not personal opinions, eminence, or experience. And based on very good science, we now know that #ConvalescentPlasma is not useful in Covid-19."

As per the study, between 28 May 2020 and 15 January 2021, 13,127 (81 per cent) of 16,287 patients enrolled into the recovery trial were eligible to receive convalescent plasma. Of this, 1,569 (12 per cent) were randomly assigned to the REGN-COV-2 group and are not included in the study. Of the remaining 11,558 patients, 5,795 were randomly assigned to the convalescent plasma group and 5,763 to the usual care group.

Outcomes were assessed at 28 days after randomisation, with additional analyses specified at 6 months.

The study found no significant difference in 28-day mortality between the two groups: 1,399 (24 per cent) of 5,795 patients died in the convalescent plasma group and 1,408 (24 per cent) of 5,763 patients died in the usual care group. The median time to discharge was 12 days in the convalescent plasma group and 11

days in the usual care group.

"Patients in the convalescent plasma group had a similar probability of being discharge alive within 28 days compared with the usual care group (3832 [66 per cent] of 5,795 patients in the convalescent plasma group vs 3822 [66 per cent] of 5,763 patients in the usual care group," the study said.

Even in terms of progressing to secondary outcomes, which include requiring intrusive medical ventilation, the study found no difference in the two groups.

"The number of patients progressing to the pre-specified composite secondary outcome of invasive mechanical ventilation or death was similar in the two groups (1,568 [29 per cent] of 5493 patients in the convalescent plasma group vs 1568 [29 per cent] of 5,448 patients in the usual care group," the study said.

"The results of this large, randomised trial show that convalescent plasma did not improve survival or other clinical outcomes in patients hospitalised with Covid-19," the study said.

Steroid misuse sets...

From Page 1

There were very few cases before Covid-19, but a large number of cases are only being reported in recent times due to the coronavirus disease infection, which affects immunity. Since steroids like dexamethasone also repress the immune system, it is necessary to be extra careful regarding its use, now more so than ever.

The statement follows several deaths being reported from the country due to infections caused by the black fungus.

Earlier in the day, the Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij said black fungus has been declared a notified disease in the state. "Now, if any cases of this disease are found, the doctors will have to report them to the concerned chief medical officer (CMO)," Vij said.

Dr Anoop Misra, Chairman. Fortis CDOC Hospital for Diabetes and Allied Sciences said, "physicians should use steroids judiciously, and use insulin aggressively to control sugar. Once that is done, black fungus will not occur."

Experts say that those with compromised immune systems, for example, those with blood cancer undergoing chemotherapy or bone-marrow transplant (BMT) patients who can't form neutrophils-a type of white blood cell that defends against infections-in the initial weeks, are vulnerable to black fungus.

Recuperating...

From Page 1

On February 27, there were 3,792 new cases diagnosed in Kerala while the death figures stood at 18. The Chief Minister asked the people in the State not to violate the protocols and guidelines prescribed by the Government during the campaign. It is not known whether the message has gone down well with the people.

On March 15, the number of new patients had come down to 1,054 while the fatalities reported in that day stood at 11. "Since then the flood gates were opened and there was no looking back. While election campaign peaked, all leaders cutting across party lines threw the protocols to the winds and that's why we are in a grave situation as on today," said Dr Rajeeve, physician, who leads the rapid response team of medical doctors and health workers in Ernakulam district. He said the open violation of the dos and don'ts has resulted in the triple lockdown of the

district and extension of lockdown in the State.

Dr D Reghu, head of the department of pathology, Government Homeopathy College, Trivandrum fully agreed with Dr Rajeeve. "There should have been stringent regulations in place. The leaders themselves should have set an example to the followers and cadres by observing these guidelines with diligence," said Dr Reghu, who is the secretary of Arogya Baharati.

The figures for March 30 showed 2,389 new cases with 16 deaths and TPR (Test positivity ratio) of four per cent marked the arrival of Covid's second wave in the State. The festival of democracy came to a close on April 6 while the festivities of Vishu ended on April 15. "The balance sheet for April 15 read 8,126 new cases, 20 deaths and TPR of 13 percent. Since then it was a north-bound journey," said Dr Madhu, senior Government Physician at Ernakulam. He is of the view that the Government and the ECO should have decided to postpone the polls till the pandemic subsided.

Delhi's ...

From Page 1

Some of the worst affected nations like the USA and Brazil recorded a CFR of below 3 per cent on Friday.

The Delhi abnormally high CFR is by no means a case of aberration. The same trend has persisted for over a week. A week-long calculation shows that the national Capital recorded 88,114 cases between May 7 and 14 with an average of 12,600 per day. During this period, Delhi recorded 2,178 cases. The CFR for the weeks stands 4 plus pc, which is again very high on every count and comparison.

Compared to Delhi, Kerala has the lowest case fatality rate of .5 per cent even though the State is recording high number

of cases every day.

The situation in the national Capital is baffling because the state government has resolved the oxygen crisis and also taken steps to ensure that issues related to unavailability of beds don't come in the way of hospitalisation of any serious patients.

Incidentally, at the peak of the first corona wave in November last year, Delhi had recorded a CFR of around 1.2 per cent. The national capital recorded 6,746 new Covid-19 cases on November 20, 2020, with the day's death count of 121. At that time, several experts had claimed that the rise in the death count was due to pollution caused by stubble burning. Now that there has been a near three-fold rise in the CFR, nothing on the surface explains this spike.

Industrialist ...

From Page 1

Two months ago, apart from Swiss newspapers, London and Mauritius newspapers reported the charges by Geneva and Mauritius tribunals against Prakash Hinduja's son Ajay Hinduja.

The reports flagged the illegalities in holding companies in Mauritius which controls the entire firms of Hinduja Group. Apart from the violations in Mauritius, Sunday Telegraph of London reported in a case of alleged forgery against billionaire businessman Ajay Hinduja, which has added to the woes of one of India's richest families.

According to the story published on Sunday (February 7), Ajay was subject of a criminal order in a Geneva court in December 2019 on a charge of forging a document at a bank. The Swiss prosecutor believed there were grounds to proceed against Ajay Hinduja, who has denied any wrongdoing. The Geneva

prosecutor's office confirmed that he had challenged and the matter is due to be heard in court, but has been delayed due to Covid. The four Hinduja brothers -- Sirichand P Hinduja, Gopichand Hinduja, Prakash P Hinduja and Ashok P Hinduja -- are for the past two years bickering over transfer of shares to the next generation. It is mainly because of the e family tussles that Ashok Hinduja and Prakash Hinduja's son Ajay are facing legal troubles in Mauritius and Geneva courts.

According to lawyers, Sirichand and Gopichand are unhappy with the handling the affairs of the operation of the companies across the World.

The family disputes started in November 2020, when Ajay stood for re-election as Director in the Annual General Meeting of the Mauritius-registered company IndusInd International Holdings Ltd or IIHL. His uncle, Ashok Hinduja who lives in India chaired the board. Other elder brothers are settled in London and Switzerland.

3% positivity...

From Page 1

To quote from Bengal Government records, the State had registered a single day spike of 812 cases with the death of two persons on March 27 the first election day. By April 4 the number of daily spike had reached 2,000. By April 11 it had breached 4,000 mark. And then in a week's time it had more than doubled. In the next one week the total number of daily cases had witnessed a near 100 per cent rise with more than 15,000 cases.

While in the first week of May the figure was hovering around 17,000 the number has crossed 21,000 post Friday, Health Department sources said, adding, however, that the percentage rate of daily spike had come down by a fraction in the past few days to about 30 per cent.

To hammer home their point, the Government health experts said the rate of increase has been higher particularly in the areas that witnessed large rallies:

For instance North and South 24 Parganaas, East Midnapore, Howrah, Nadia and Capital Kolkata.

The number of samples tested in the 24 hours intervening Thursday and Friday for the first time exceeded 70,000 (70,473) with the number of active cases going up to 1,28,684. Kolkata and North 24 Parganas have recorded the highest number of 44 deaths. The death toll in the State has also mounted to 12,993 after 136 more people died on Friday.

"In the first wave, we managed to save rural areas of the state but this time the situation is alarming essentially because of rallies and roadshows ...the doctors had been repeatedly asking the politicians to

avoid large rallies but they would not listen," which is why we are in such a mess ... otherwise Bengal was in a comparatively better situation," said Dr Sibashis Banerjee.

Criticising the Election Commission for holding elections in 8 phases TMC MP Saugato Roy said, "We asked them to bring it down to 3 or 4 phases because of the pandemic situation but they would not listen ...everyone knows why ... now the people will have to bear the brunt."

Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury too said, "We had asked the poll panel to stop elections after the fourth phase till the situation improved but they did not listen to us."

In fact it required two strong orders from Madras and Calcutta High Courts for the elections to take steps towards curbing big rallies. But by then the damage had been done, experts said.

Govt's bad jab policy will ensure 3rd wave: Rahul



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Saturday called for a national vaccine strategy and claimed that the Government's "disastrous" inoculation policy will "ensure a devastating third wave" in the country.

He also accused the prime minister of making "mother Ganga cry" after bodies of suspected coronavirus victims were found floating in the river.

"The Government of India's (GOI's) disastrous vaccine strategy will ensure a devastating third wave. It can't be repeated enough - India needs a proper vaccine strategy," he said on Twitter.

Tagging media reports claiming that over 2,000 bodies have been found in 1140 km area along the Ganga, he alleged, "One who used to say 'Ganga' has called him has made Mother Ganga cry."

Rahul and the Congress have been attacking the prime minister and his government over its vaccine strategy and handling of the pandemic.

Senior Congress leader and former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram too slammed the government over the issuance of 1.23 lakh death certificates between March 1 to May 10 this year in Gujarat and



said that government, in conjunction with some state governments, is suppressing the actual numbers of new infections and Covid-related deaths.

"The increase was an alarming number of about 65,000 death certificates. This increase cannot be explained as a natural annual increase in the number of deaths. It can only be attributed to a pandemic or any other natural disaster," the Congress leader said.

Hitting out at the government, Chidambaram said that the party's suspicion on the actual death toll were confirmed by the fact that hundreds of unidentified bodies have been found floating on the river Ganga and nearly 2,000 unidentified bodies have been found buried on the sands along the river Ganga.

"We have a strong suspicion that the Government of India, in conjunction with some State Governments, is suppressing the true numbers of new infections and 18 Covid-related deaths," he alleged.

He said, "If our suspicions are true, this is a grave misdeed

apart from being a national shame and a national tragedy." Chidambaram said that Central government and the Gujarat government owe an explanation to the people of India. "We demand answers and an explanation," he added.

Chidambaram also said that the National Human Rights Commission should collect the true numbers from every state about the death certificate issued last year and this year.

In a separate tweet, Rahul Gandhi appealed to people to stay safe after cyclone Tauktae warning was issued by the government in many states. He also appealed to Congress workers to provide all assistance to those in need.

"May 15 Cyclone Alert has been issued in Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka. Cyclone Tauktae is already causing heavy rains in many areas.

"I appeal to Congress workers to provide all possible assistance to those in need. Please stay safe," he said on Twitter.

Tauktae ravages Kerala's coastal areas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As winds influenced by cyclonic storm 'Tauktae' (pronounced as 'Tau'Te') in the Arabian Sea have left a trail of destruction in Kerala's coastal areas on Saturday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the cyclone 'Tauktae' has intensified and likely to intensify into a 'very severe cyclonic storm' in the next 12 to 15 hours with a wind speed of 120 to 130 kmph gusting to 145 kmph. It is also expected to move north north-westwards and cross the Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Naliya as a very severe cyclonic storm around May 18 afternoon or evening. The IMD has placed a 'cyclone watch' for south Gujarat and Diu coasts.

This is the first cyclonic storm this year as India fights a deadly second wave of Covid, which has led to a frightening surge in the country's caseload over the last two months. Many flights have been cancelled for Kerala, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad due to bad weather on Saturday. Officials said that Tauktae intensified very rapidly from a depression to a cyclone on Friday. "There were two more cyclones in the past with similar tracks. One in 1933 between May 13 to 19 and another in 1975 between May 20 and 21," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reviewed the preparedness of states, central ministries and agencies concerned to deal with the situation arising out of cyclone 'Tauktae' and asked them to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely evacuated. He also called for

The IMD said the cyclonic storm will be a very severe cyclonic storm from May 16-18 and cross the Gujarat coast on May 18

ensuring maintenance of all essential services such as power, telecommunications, health and drinking and their immediate restoration in the event of damages caused to them, a statement said.

The IMD said the cyclonic storm will be a very severe cyclonic storm from May 16-18 and cross the Gujarat coast on May 18. Along with Gujarat, coastal areas of Goa, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have been put on alert after the IMD said the impact of the cyclone will be felt in the southeast, east-central and northeast Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep islands, Maldives area, triggering heavy rainfall in coastal and adjoining districts of all states.

"Very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall 'causing flash floods and landslides' over the coastal districts of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa till Sunday and Saurashtra, Kutch in Gujarat on Tuesday and Wednesday is expected, the IMD has said. Fishermen have been asked to avoid heading to Arabian Sea till Tuesday, tourism activities have been restricted and necessary precautions have been advised for naval operations in anticipation of rough sea. Tidal wave of about 2-3 m above

astronomical tide is likely to inundate coastal areas of Morbi, Kutch, Devbhoomi Dwarka and Jamnagar districts and 1-2 meters along Porbandar, Junagarh, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Bhavnagar and 0.5 to 1m over the remaining coastal districts of Gujarat, IMD has warned. The cyclone is likely to cause rain - of varying intensity - in parts of Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan too.

Due to the bad weather, Air carriers like Vistara and IndiGo have already issued a travel advisory to passengers travelling to and from Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Goa, and Ahmedabad. As per the advisory issued by Vistara on Saturday, flights to and from Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Goa and Ahmedabad might be impacted till May 17 due to the adverse weather conditions expected over the Arabian Sea triggered by cyclone Tauktae. Due to the adverse weather conditions expected over the Arabian Sea, flights to and from Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Goa and Ahmedabad are likely to be impacted till May 17, 2021," it said. IndiGo also issued a travel advisory stating that flights to and from Kerala's Kannur. The airline tweeted, "Travel Advisory: Due to Cyclone Tauktae, flights to/from Kannur are impacted. You may visit Plan B to opt for alternate options or get a refund."

According to the IMD, over Devbhoomi Dwarka, Kutch, Porbandar, Junagarh, Gir Somnath and Jamnagar

districts of Gujarat extensive damage is expected on May 18. There could be total destruction of thatched houses or extensive damage to kutcha houses; some damage to pucca houses; threat from flying objects; bending/ uprooting of power and communication poles; major damage to kutcha and pucca roads; flooding of escape routes; minor disruption of railways; overhead power lines and signalling systems; widespread damage to salt pans and standing crops etc. Similar damage is also expected in Amreli, Rajkot and Morbi districts.

Visuals showed that from Thiruvananthapuram in the south to Kasaragod in the north, hundreds of families living close to the sea have had to abandon their homes and rush to relief camps set up by the state government in the face of massive sea-incursions. Several houses close to the sea in districts like Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Alappuzha have been partially or completely damaged by the impact of the cyclone.

In cities like Kochi, Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram, there are widespread reports of waterlogging due to overflowing drains and canals. Rupturing of trees and electric posts have resulted in power outages and damage to vehicles,

Airports Authority of India (AAI) has took stock of the preparedness of western coastal airports in. Southern Region and Western Region airports through a Video Conference and directed the concerned airports to take all precautions and plan preparedness.

India will have 51.6 crore vaccine doses by end of July: Vardhan

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday said India will have 51.6 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses by July end including the 18 crore doses already administered.

Vardhan reviewed the public health response to Covid-19 and progress of vaccination with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

These states are depicting a higher growth rate in the number of daily cases, rise in positivity, high mortality and saturation of healthcare capacity.

The Minister highlighted the critical challenges faced by the states.

Vardhan expressed a strong view that the present plateauing of Covid cases should not be taken as a sign for complacency but as a breathing space to expand, revamp and improve Health Infrastructure.

State health administrators were advised to increase ICU



and oxygenated beds, undertake oxygen audits, take stock of availability of medicines in the state and strengthen their medical workforce.

A common point of consensus among the state health Ministers was that vaccines had resulted in milder forms of Covid thereby preventing loss of precious lives.

Taking note of the fact that all the states require more vaccines to expand their vaccine coverage, Vardhan said, "Production is being steadily ramped up to cater to

increased demand while vaccines that are being produced now continue to be equitably apportioned and swiftly sent to states/UTs."

Detailing the ramping up of vaccine production, he said, "We will have 51.6 crore vaccine doses by the end of July including the 18 crore doses already administered. Sputnik has been approved.

This along with the slated approval of the new vaccine of Zydus Cadila, Serum Institute of India- Novavax vaccine, Bharat Biotech's nasal vaccine

and the Genova mRNA vaccine will push the availability of Covid vaccines to 216 crore doses in the August-December period."

Union Minister of State for Health, Ashwini Kumar Choubey assured his colleagues in states that the Union government will listen to all their requirements and try to fulfill them as per capacity.

States were advised to ensure complete utilization of available vaccination slots for 45+ age-group, health care workers, frontline workers with awareness campaigns for conveying the importance of completing the second dose of vaccine.

It was reiterated that States need to focus on reduction of vaccine wastage as that will be factored in subsequent allocations to that state.

States were advised to constitute a 2/3-member team at State level on the lines of the dedicated team at Union Health Ministry to regularly coordinate with manufacturers for timely supplies of vaccine through 'other than government of India channel' and also to coordinate with private hospitals for their procurement.

The Union Health Ministry has already shared the list of private hospitals along with doses contracted and supplied with state/UTs.

CRPF directs med wing to brace up for 3rd Covid wave

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid estimates of prediction of a third wave of Covid-19, the CRPF headquarters has directed its medical directorate to prepare for this and keep the infrastructure created during the first wave of the pandemic as also the equipment fully operational to face the eventuality.

The whole nation is hit by the second wave of Covid and the CRPF has also not been left untouched by this. During the course of the pandemic, the paramilitary has put in all the efforts to strengthen medical infrastructure which was developed during the first wave and has succeeded to some extent, officials said.

"Factoring in the prediction of the third wave, the Competent Authority has desired that top priority must be given to maintenance of infrastructure/equipment developed so far and they should be kept functional and in working order, and regularly reviewed and audited in a compact manner, a senior official said.



The headquarters has also directed all the sectors, medical directorates and composite hospitals to take requisite action and submit a report of action taken for perusal of the Director General Kuldeep Singh, they said.

In a record of sorts, the 3.25 lakh-strong force has completed the vaccination against Covid-19 with both the doses barring about 8,500 personnel who could not be

administered the doses due to temporary postings or comorbidities. Those left from vaccination are being sought to be inoculated in top priority after stabilising their comorbidities fixing posting issues.

The CRPF is the lead agency for counter-insurgency, anti-terror operations and law and order duties. It has a strong deployment in Jammu and Kashmir, Naxal-hit States and the Northeast.

Plea in SC seeks using PM Cares Fund for oxygen plants, vaccines

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been moved in the Supreme Court seeking directions to utilise PM Cares Fund for the purpose of installation of oxygen plants, procurement of Covid-19 vaccines and other essential equipment at 738 district hospitals across the country.

The plea added that it was already announced on April 25 that PM Cares Fund would allocate money to set up 551 oxygen plants using pressure swing adsorption at public health facilities.

The plea has been filed by advocate Viprava Sharma also urged the top court to issue directions to the states/UTs to ensure that all the private/charitable hospitals within their jurisdiction to procure, installed and commissioned the subject medical plant with essential backups and thereby, have become self-sufficient in having more than adequate inhouse basic and essential life support service of medical oxygen with in the shortest possible time.

a stay on April 24 notification issued by the Centre to the extent it capped the exemption from import duty granted to medical equipment, for a period of three months.

The plea said: "Three-month time period is too short a period from the standpoint of logistics involved in importing these highly sophisticated medical equipment in India by over 300 concerned notable hospitals throughout the country."

"Pass appropriate urgent directions to the respondents to ensure forthwith setting up of electric and all other kinds of crematoriums in all cities within their respective administration and also they also forthwith undertake to maintain/improve the existing electric crematoriums all of which have been used much beyond their respective capacities and may soon get non-functional," added the plea.

The plea also asked the top court to direct states to set up electric and other crematoriums in all cities and additionally, maintain and improve the condition of existing facilities.

Covid situation in country stabilising, says Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With 11 States reporting over one lakh active Covid-19 cases while eight have active cases between 50,000 and one lakh and 17 have less than 50,000 cases, India is presenting a mixed trend of Covid-19 situation in the country even as the Government on Saturday asserted that overall, the situation is stabilising.

India in a day recorded 3,26,098 Covid-19 cases that took the tally to 2,43,72,907, while 3,890 new fatalities pushed the death toll to 2,66,207.

The Central Government officials at a press conference here also took a dig at the Delhi Government for reporting Single-dose vaccination coverage among healthcare workers below the national average of 89 per cent.

"Single dose vaccination coverage is 95 per cent in Rajasthan, 96 per cent in Madhya Pradesh and 99 per cent in Chhattisgarh. In Delhi, it stands at 78 per cent, which is 11 per cent below the national average. It should be taken to above 95 per cent," Dr VK Paul,

Niti Aayog (Health) member said.

Similarly, he said, overall single-dose vaccination coverage among frontline workers stands at 82 per cent in the country. It is 93 per cent in Gujarat, 91 per cent in Rajasthan, and 90 per cent in Madhya Pradesh -- well above the national average. He said, it stands at 80 per cent in Delhi which has been complaining of shortage of vaccines for its citizens.

Talking about the overall Covid-19 situation in the country, he said it is stabilizing and the government will work towards ensuring further stabilization.

"Some states have shown a clear pattern, in some states there are concerns and in some others there is a trend towards an increase. It is a mixed picture. But overall, the situation is stabilising and we hope and we will work towards ensuring further stabilisation and rapid decline of this pandemic."

He said that ten states account for 85 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in the country.

The official said 11 states have over one lakh active

COVID-19 cases, 17 have less than 50,000 cases while eight have active cases between 50,000 and one lakh.

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, which are recording a high number of novel coronavirus cases, are also reporting decline in the number of active cases.

Twenty-four states have a COVID-19 positivity rate of more than 15 per cent while Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have reported a major drop in case positivity, he said.

The active cases have reduced to 36,73,802 and comprise 15.07 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 83.83 per cent, he stated.

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health, said a total of 18.04 crore vaccine doses have been administered so far in the country. This includes 12.74 crore people above the age of 45 years, 1.62 crore healthcare workers, 2.25 crore frontline workers and 42.59 lakh people between the age of 18-44 years who have received their first dose.

110 medical cadets commissioned as officers join battle against Covid-19

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The medical cadets of the Armed forces commissioned as Medical Officers on Saturday have joined the battle against Covid-19. They will be leaving immediately to join as interns in 31 Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) hospitals across the country, which are also designated for Covid care.

The Defence Ministry said 110 medical cadets, including 21 female cadets, of the 55th batch of the Armed Forces Medical College were commissioned as Medical Officers into the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) on Saturday. The cadets were commissioned by Commandant, AFMC Lt Gen Nardeep Naithani in a brief ceremony. Ninety four cadets were commissioned into the Indian Army, 10 in the Indian Air Force and six in the Navy. The Passing Out Parade had to be called off for the first time since 1982, keeping in mind the Covid-19 restrictions.

In his commissioning

address, Lt Gen Naithani congratulated the newly commissioned officers for joining AFMS which is the finest integrated medical organisation in the country. He complimented the parents of the students for the success of their children. He added that it has the unique distinction of having the entire batch that entered AFMC in 2016 graduating together with 100 percent success, which by itself is the best tribute to the teachers at AFMC.

The Commandant reminded the graduating batch that they were joining the medical profession at a time when the country was passing through a difficult phase. He exhorted them to use their knowledge and skills acquired at AFMC to provide the best possible care to their patients as they join the nation's battle against Covid-19.

Lt Gen Naithani expressed confidence that given their academic rigour and training, the newly commissioned Medical Officers would always measure up to the highest standards expected from military doctors.

Experts for action as WhatsApp privacy policy comes into effect

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

With the controversial WhatsApp privacy policy coming into effect from Saturday for its over 2 billion users, including more than 400 million in India, industry experts emphasised that the Government must implement stricter data privacy rules and restrain the Facebook-owned app as was done while banning Chinese apps to protect the sovereignty of the country.

Giving an interim solace for those who do not accept the new policy, WhatsApp has said that its users will not immediately lose their accounts or face curtailed functionalities on the platform on May 15, but they will have to eventually go through limited functions if they fail to accept the new norms in the due course of time.

On Thursday, a senior Ministry of Electronics and IT official said during an Assocham event that the Government is pro-actively looking at a best possible action over the new WhatsApp privacy policy.

MeitY Special Secretary and Financial Advisor Jyoti Arora stated that the ministry is aware about the fact that Germany has banned the privacy policy of WhatsApp.

"There is no judicial order in favour of WhatsApp. In view of the unlawful nature of this privacy policy, the government should restrain WhatsApp as was done while banning Chinese apps to protect sovereignty of India," said Advocate Virag Gupta, who is arguing K.N. Govindacharya's matter before the Delhi High Court for disclosure of details of designated officers of social media companies.

Govt suppressing actual number of Covid-related deaths, alleges Chidambaram

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader and former Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram on Saturday slammed the Central Government over the issuance of 1.23 lakh death certificates between March 1 to May 10 this year in Gujarat and said that the Government, in conjunction with some State Governments, is suppressing the actual numbers of new infections and Covid-related deaths.

Addressing a press conference here virtually, Chidambaram said, "On May 14, Divya Bhaskar, a Gujarati language newspaper, published a news story that sent shock waves throughout Gujarat and the country."

He said that the thrust of the story was that during the period March 1 to May 10 of this year (2021), Gujarat issued about 1,23,000 death certificates as against about 58,000 death certificates issued during the same period last year (2020).

"The increase was an alarming number of about 65,000 death certificates. This increase cannot be explained as a natural annual increase in the number of deaths. It can only be attributed to a pandemic or any other natural disaster," the Congress leader said.

He said that the Congress had independently verified the two numbers referred to for the period of 71 days.

"We have collected the numbers from 33 districts (including the cities), the sum of the number of the death certificates nearly tallies with the numbers published by Divya Bhaskar -- 1,23,873 in 2021 versus 58,068 in 2020.

"During the period March 1, 2021 to May 10, 2021, the government of Gujarat has officially admitted to only 4,218 Covid-related deaths," he said.

"The difference between the increase in the number of death certificates (65,805) and the official Covid-related deaths (4,218) must be explained. It cannot be explained as 'natural annual increase' or 'due to other causes'. We have a strong suspicion that the bulk of the increased number of deaths is due to Covid and the state government is suppressing the true number of 18 Covid-related deaths," Chidambaram said.

Bengal announces full lockdown till May 30

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

With the number of corona cases galloping up to about 22,000 cases per day, the Bengal Government on Saturday announced a full lockdown till May 30.

"The Government has taken the steps in view of rising number of cases," Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay said

Bandopadhyay said the State would go for a full lockdown whereby all the private offices, schools and colleges would remain closed. The bazars selling vegetables, fruit etc would remain open as usual from 7-10 am every day while the local trains, metro services, inter-state bus and train and ferry services would remain closed he said. The local trains had already been suspended last week.

While intra-state goods trucks movement would be



People sit on the top of the buses to go to their native places, ahead of Covid-induced complete lockdown, at a bus stand in Howrah on Saturday

PTI

restricted to essential supplies no private cars, taxis and auto movement would be allowed, he maintained adding the auto repairing shops and petrol pumps would however remain open. The banks would function from 10 am to 2 pm and cinema, bars eateries, spas, malls and parlours would also remain closed he maintained adding anyone violating the

orders would be dealt with strongly under pandemic laws.

Meanwhile, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday lost her second brother- Ashim Banerjee to corona infection. He was undergoing treatment at a city private hospital in South Kolkata. He was cremated at the designated Nimtalla Mahasmashan (funeral) Ghat.

63 more die of Covid in J&K, toll 3,090

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the arrival of the high level team of experts from New Delhi to study the high mortality rate of Covid-19 patients in Jammu, 63 more patients succumbed to the deadly virus taking the tally of deaths to 3,090 while total active positive cases stood at 51,475 as 3,677 fresh cases of coronavirus were detected across the region on Saturday.

Significantly, 4,140 more Covid-19 patients recovered and were discharged from various hospitals including 1,086 from Jammu Division and 3,054 from Kashmir Division.

Meanwhile, the corona curfew was also extended by the UT administration till May 24.

On the other hand to cover the left over population in the age group of 45 plus across Jammu district special vaccination camps are being organised across 100 centres in Jammu to vaccinate them.

So far around 98% of estimated 45+ population in Jammu

given first shot till date.

According to a statement issued by the office of Principal, Government Medical College, Jammu, "As per the recent sequencing data analysis of positive Covid-19 patients received from NCDC, New Delhi, B.1.617 variant is responsible for the recent surge in Covid-19 cases in Jammu division.

Dr. Shashi Sudhan Sharma said that the Department of Microbiology at GMC, Jammu besides testing of Covid-19 samples is also coordinating with NCDC New Delhi for routine sequencing of positive sample and as per the latest report received from them UK Variant was reported in >60% samples in March, 2021.

However, in April the %age of UK Variant dropped to 47% and B.1.617 increased from 5.8% to 38%.

Dr. Sharma further added that till date 434 samples have been sent to NCDC from Jammu Division among which a report of 64 samples is still awaited.

Goa Govt takes control of Covid admissions in private hospitals

Panaji: The Goa Government on Saturday decided to take over the rights to admission in all the 21 private hospitals in the State treating Covid-19 patients from May 17 citing various violations of norms.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said the move will ease the load on facilities like the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH). A total of 75 Covid-19 patients had died during treatment at the GMCH in the last four days, ringing the alarm bells in the administration.

Explaining the rationale behind the State Government's decision, Sawant said private hospitals were not reserving 50 per cent of their total beds for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. "We have also come across the instances where in private hospitals were not providing Covid-19 treatment under the DDSSY scheme (the medical insurance scheme of the state government)," he told reporters.

There are instances wherein private hospitals were found charging patients exorbitantly, he said. Sawant said the government will only take over the rights of admissions in these hospitals while their management will remain with their owners. "There are 21 private hospitals which have been providing treatment to Covid-19 patients in Goa," he said.

The chief minister said Covid-19 treatment in private hospitals would be covered under the DDSSY (Deen Dayal Swasthya Seva Yojana) scheme. "We will ensure that 50 per cent of beds in the private hospitals will be kept reserved for treating Covid-19 patients. This will help to ease the load on facilities like the Goa Medical College and Hospital," Sawant added.

PTI

Goa sees 3,512 recoveries

PTI ■ PANAJI

Goa on Saturday reported 3,512 recoveries against 1,957 fresh coronavirus positive cases, while 58 patients died, a health department official said.

Goa's overall caseload now stands at 1,34,542 while the death toll reached 2,056, he said.

A total of 3,512 patients recovered during the day, taking the number of recoveries in Goa so far to 1,01,712, the official said, adding the coastal state is now left with 30,774 active cases.

With 5,571 new tests, the total number of samples examined so far in Goa went up to 7,53,271, he added.

Goa's Covid-19 figures are as follows: Positive cases 1,34,542, new cases 1,957, death toll 2,056, discharged 1,01,712, active cases 30,774, samples tested till date 7,53,271.

No decision yet on lockdown in Tripura, says CM Biplab Deb

Agartala: Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb said on Saturday that no decision has been taken yet on imposing lockdown in any part of the state, even as Covid-19 cases continued to jump.

Speaking to reporters while visiting Covid care facilities in the Sepahijala district, Deb said such a decision is taken when healthcare experts and the administration collectively feel the necessity.

"There is no decision on lockdown yet," he said, adding that all updates will be made public.

In the Sipahijala district, 200 new beds have been prepared at two Covid care facilities,

and more than 1,400 beds are being prepared at two other centres.

Meanwhile, a door-to-door survey has started in three containment zones in the Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC) area.

The State Government has decided to conduct rapid antigen tests in all houses in the AMC area, Health Department officials said.

Tripura recorded 449 new Covid-19 cases on Saturday, pushing the tally to 40,055.

The number of active cases climbed to 3,781.

With three more fatalities, all in the West Tripura district, the death toll rose to 426. **PTI**



Jammu & Kashmir highway wears a deserted look during lockdown, on the outskirts of Jammu on Saturday

PTI

59,073 more patients discharged in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

The daily Covid-19 infections dropped further to 34,848 in Maharashtra, while the number of daily deaths surged to 910 in the State.

A day after daily deaths dropped from 850 to 695 and number of infections dropped from 42,582 to 39,923, Maharashtra logged 910 deaths and 34,848 new cases.

With 960 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 79,552 to 80,512. Similarly, with 34,848 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 53,09,215 to 53,44,063.

As 59,073 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 47,07,980 to 47,67,053. The recovery rate in the State went up from 88.68 per cent to 89.2 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 5,19,254 to 4,94,032. The fatality rate in the state stood at 1.51 per cent.

With 62 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 14,102 to 14,164, while the infected cases went up by a relatively low 1450 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,84,845 to 6,86,295.

The situation in Pune improved a bit as the "active cases", which had come below

one lakh mark early this week, improved once again as the "active cases" dropped from 96,028 to 93,245.

Nagpur with 36,560 active cases stood second in the state, followed by Mumbai (34,083), Thane (29,654), Ahmednagar (30,221), Satara (21,283), Nashik (20,218), Solapur (21,093), Beed (12,076), Jalgaon (11,016), Chandrapur (11,008), Latur (8799), Aurangabad (8043), Parbhani (7222), Jalna (7123), Osmanabad (6108) and Buldhana (6295). Of the 3,08,39,404140 samples sent to various laboratories across the State so far, 53,44,603 have tested positive (17.33 per cent) for Covid-19 until Saturday.

FADNAVIS' LETTER TO SONIA GANDHI ON COVID-19

Maha Cong hits back, dares Fadnavis show courage to show mirror to Modi

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Miffed by a letter written by former chief minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis to Congress president Sonia Gandhi advising her party not to indulge in politics over vaccination but to play the role of a constructive Opposition, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Saturday dared Fadnavis to show courage and write a similar letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Covid-19 situation in the country.

Hours after Fadnavis shot off a four-page letter to the Congress president, Patole charged that by writing a letter to Sonia Gandhi, the BJP leader was trying to push under the carpet the "sins" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of converting the country into a cremation ground.

Charging that the Modi government had miserably failed in handling the Covid-19 crisis in the country, Patole said: "Rahul Gandhi had warned way back on February 12, 2020 of a Corona Tsunami, but BJP leaders like Modi and Fadnavis did not take him seriously. The result is that a staggering 4 lakh infections and more than 4,000 deaths are being reported every

day in the country. The Modi government's arrogance and mismanagement of affairs is responsible for the curry situation in the country"

"By writing a letter to Sonia Gandhi, Modi is trying to push under the carpet the "sins" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of converting the country into a cremation ground.... Instead of writing a letter to the Congress president, Fadnavis should be asking his party's chief minister as to how 'Navami Gange' has turned into 'Shavami Gange', Patole said.

Dubbing Modi as a "liar" for claims that the Centre had provided more than stocks of Remdesivir and Oxygen to states, Patole said that the Supreme Court had called the BJP's bluff by passing strictures over its false claiming in handling the Covid-19. "The Centre had claimed that utilising money from the PM's Care fund, it would set up Oxygen plants. But not even one plant has been set up in Maharashtra. In fact, Maharashtra which needs 1750 metric tonnes of medical oxygen, the state itself produces 1,200 metric tonnes of Oxygen. Such is the sad state of affairs that the Centre is not able to provide the remaining 550 MT of Oxygen to the state," the

state Congress chief said.

Charging that the BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh were hiding information relating to Covid-19 infections and deaths, Patole asked: "Please let us as to how many Covid-19 tests in these BJP-ruled states. How many patients are getting Oxygen? How many deaths have taken place in the BJP-ruled states? Fadnavis should write a letter to the BJP president and statistics in this regard".

Patole said that there have been 1,23,871 deaths in just 71 days in Gujarat, the government there pegged the number of deaths at 4,218, and blamed the ego and greed of the BJP government at the Centre for the mess. "The BJP-ruled state governments of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar are using JCBs to remove bodies of the people who died of Covid. And the bodies are floating in river Ganga," he said.

Patole said that while the Centre had claimed it had made an allocation of ₹35,000 crore, the private vaccine manufacturers were selling vaccines to the centre at ₹150 per vaccine, ₹400 per vaccine to the state government and Rs 600 to individuals.

Govt, admin, public — all dropped guard after first Covid wave, says RSS chief

PTI ■ NEW DELHI:

After the first wave of Covid-19, the Government, administration and public dropped their guard which led to the current situation, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Saturday and urged people to stay positive and proactive to fight the pandemic.

Addressing a lecture series 'Positivity Unlimited', Bhagwat said the country should stay united and work as a team in these testing times, instead of pointing fingers at each other. "We are facing this situation because, whether it was the Government, administration or public, everyone dropped their guard after the first wave despite indications from doctors," he said.

Bhagwat said there is talk of a third wave. But, "we will not be scared. We shall stand like a rock."

"We have to stay positive and take precautions to keep ourselves Covid-19 negative in the present situation," he said.

The RSS chief said that this is not an appropriate time to point fingers and all should avoid making irrational remarks.

Won't allow inimical elements to disturb peace in Valley over Gaza war: J&K Police

Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir police on Saturday warned 'inimical' elements against disturbing public peace and order in the Kashmir valley in the garb of prevailing situation in Palestine.

A young mural artist, Mudasir Gul, was also picked up by the J&K police as he had painted a wall graffiti on the request of few local residents in Padshahi bagh area.

Gul had reportedly painted a face of a sobbing woman, wearing Palestine's flag as the headscarf, and wrote "We Are Palestine". Local reports claimed, Gul was directed by the local police officers to deface the graffiti on his own. Few other residents in the area who had participated in raising slogans and attempted to stage a demonstration in solidarity with Palestine were also rounded up by the police. Posting a series of tweets J&K

Police said, " we are keeping a very close watch on elements who are attempting to leverage the unfortunate situation in Palestine to disturb public peace and order in the Kashmir valley".

Claiming that restoring peace remains their top priority J&K Police in another tweet said, "We are a professional force and are sensitive to public anguish. But J&K police has a legal responsibility to ensure law and order as well. It, however, wouldn't allow cynical encashment of the public anger to trigger violence, lawlessness and disorder on Kashmir streets". "Expressing opinion is a freedom but engineering and inciting violence on streets is unlawful. All irresponsible social media comments that results in actual violence and breaking of law including Covid protocol will attract legal action". **PNS**

ISRO team suggests measures to restart O₂ production at Sterlite Copper

Chennai: An expert team from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Saturday visited Vedanta Ltd's copper smelter plant Sterlite Copper and suggested measures to set right the technical snag that halted oxygen production, the company said.

Oxygen production at Sterlite Copper located in Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu was stopped on Friday due to

a technical snag. According to Vedanta, an expert team from ISRO came to the smelter plant to support the ongoing efforts and collaborate with the company's technical team.

"They have suggested some measures to help rectify the production snag. This has helped fast-track the repair process for which we are thankful to the local administration, who was instrumental in facilitating this cooperation," the company said.

ISRO team suggested various measures to restart oxygen production, Vedanta said.

On Friday the company said a technical snag had developed in the cold box in the oxygen plant, leading to a temporary pause in production.

"The possibility of minor technical fluctuations was anticipated given that the plant has been unattended for three years," the company said in a

statement.

On Thursday the company said one of its oxygen plants commenced production from May 12. "The first tanker carrying 4.8 tons of liquid oxygen is going to Tirunelveli/Thoothukudi. We will be dispatching two oxygen tankers on a daily basis to begin with, and gradually scale this up as we expand production," Vedanta had said. **IANS**



Children enjoying in the Arabian Sea at Badhwar Park area. As per IMD, depression in the Arabian Sea likely to intensify into cyclonic storm 'Tauktae' on Saturday

PTI

Govt relaxes certain norms to fast track approvals for imported cylinders, pressure vessels for medical O₂

New Delhi: The Government on Saturday eases certain norms under Gas Cylinders Rules, 2016 to fast track approvals for imported cylinders and pressure vessels for storage and transportation of medical oxygen amid rising Covid cases.

The relaxations would be valid for six months or till further orders of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), an official statement said.

The department said that the certification of Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organization (PESO) will not be mandatory before importing consignment of oxygen cylinders, and containers.

The certification of PESO will be required before use of the oxygen cylinders, which entails weight and hydro testing, it added. "The Indian missions should, however, ensure that the oxygen cylinders should comply with India or international standards before shipment," it said. In case of filled cylinders, the agency exporting to India would have to certify that the oxygen filled in the cylinder is of such purity and concentration that is fit for medical use.

The certification would be attested by the Indian mission in the exporting country and soon upon arrival in India, such filled cylinders will be inspected on sample basis by an

empanelled agency of PESO. "All the filled cylinders must be verified for quality of gas filled therein under the supervision of medical/ Food and Drugs Controllers and if quality of gas conforms to their requirement of medical oxygen, cylinders may be sent directly to hospitals for use," the department said.

Regarding PSA (pressure swing adsorption) installations at hospitals with filling facilities or at COVID centres, it said PSA plants where generated oxygen is directly supplied to hospital and no filling of cylinders is taking place, in such cases the facilities do not need any permission or license under PESO rules. **PTI**

Gehlot: Create special strategy to prevent infection in Jaipur

Jaipur: Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has expressed his deep concern over the continuous increase in the number of Covid patients in the State Capital, and directed the officials to formulate a special plan to prevent the spread of infection in Jaipur. He directed to further strengthen the arrangement zone, more testing, contact tracing etc. in the entire district to control the situation of Covid infection in Jaipur.

Gehlot was conducting a high level review on Friday night through video conference on other related topics including Covid compression, lockdown and availability of resources. He said the number of active cases in Jaipur has



increased from 18 thousand to more than 51 thousand in the last three weeks and it is a matter of great concern to keep the positive rate around 30 percent continuously. "We need to devise a new strategy for effective prevention on this."

Israeli airstrike on Gaza home kills 10

AP ■ GAZA CITY

An Israeli air raid in Gaza City killed at least 10 Palestinians, mostly children, early on Saturday in the deadliest single strike since the battle with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers erupted earlier this week. Both sides pressed for an advantage as cease-fire efforts gathered strength.

The latest outburst of violence began in Jerusalem and has spread across the region, with Jewish-Arab clashes and rioting in mixed cities of Israel. There were also widespread Palestinian protests Friday in the occupied West Bank, where Israeli forces shot and killed 11 people.

The spiralling violence has raised fears of a new Palestinian "intifada," or uprising at a time when there have been no peace talks in years. Palestinians were set to mark Nakba (Catastrophe) Day on Saturday, when they commemorate the estimated 7,00,000 people who fled or were driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. That raised the possibility of even more unrest.

US diplomat Hady Amr arrived on Friday as part of Washington's efforts to de-escalate the conflict, and the UN Security Council was set to meet Sunday. But Israel turned down an Egyptian proposal for a one-year truce that Hamas

rulers had accepted, an Egyptian official said Friday on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

Since Monday night, Hamas has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, which has pounded the Gaza Strip with strikes. In Gaza, at least 126 people have been killed, including 31 children and 20 women; in Israel, seven people have been killed, including a 6-year-old boy and a soldier.

Rocket fire from Gaza and Israel's bombardment of the blockaded Palestinian territory continued into early Saturday, when an airstrike on a three-story house in a refugee camp in Gaza City killed eight children and two women from an extended family.

Mohammed Abu Hatab told reporters his wife and five children had gone to celebrate the Eid al-Fitr holiday with relatives. She and three of the children, aged 6 to 14, were killed, while an 11-year-old is missing. Only his 5-month-old son Omar is known to have survived.

Children's toys and a Monopoly board game could be seen among the rubble, as well as plates of uneaten food from the holiday gathering.

"There was no warning," said Jamal Al-Naji, a neighbour living in the same building. "You filmed people eating and then you bombed them?" he



An Israeli airstrike hits the high-rise building housing *The Associated Press'* offices in Gaza City on Saturday

AP

said, addressing Israel. "Why are you confronting us? Go and confront the strong people!"

Shortly afterward, Hamas said it fired a salvo of rockets at southern Israel in response to the airstrike.

A furious Israeli barrage early Friday killed a family of six in their house and sent thousands fleeing to UN-run shelters. The military said the operation involved 160 warplanes dropping some 80 tons of explosives over the course of 40 minutes and succeeded in destroying a vast tunnel network used by Hamas.

Palestinian march in Paris defies ban, is met by tear gas

Paris: French riot police fired tear gas and used water cannons Saturday in Paris as protesters supporting Palestinians in the Gaza Strip defied a ban on marching in the French capital. Hundreds of people marched peacefully in other cities in France and elsewhere in Europe.

In Paris, protesters scattered and played cat-and-mouse with security forces in

the city's northern neighborhoods after their starting point for a planned march was blocked.

Paris police chief Didier Lallemand had ordered 4,200 security forces into the streets and closed shops around the kick-off point for the march in a working-class neighborhood after an administrative court confirmed the ban due to fears of violence.

AP

Japan, US, France hold military drill eyeing China presence

AP ■ KIRISHIMA TRAINING AREA (JAPAN)

Dozens of Japanese, American and French troops landed amid pouring rain from a CH-47 transport helicopter onto a grassy field at a training area in southern Japan, part of Saturday's joint scenario of defending a remote island from an enemy invasion.

The three nations' first joint drills on Japanese soil — dubbed "ARC21" and which began Tuesday — come as they seek step up military ties amid growing Chinese assertiveness in the region.

Japanese soldiers and their counterparts from the French army and the U.S. Marine Corps also conducted an urban warfare drill using a concrete building elsewhere at the Japanese Self-Defense Force's Kirishima Training Area in the southern Miyazaki prefecture. Around 200 troops took part in Saturday's exercises.

On Saturday, the three countries were also joined by Australia in an expanded naval exercise involving 11 warships in the East China Sea, where

tensions with China are rising around the island of Taiwan.

The drills come as Japan looks to bolster its military capabilities amid a deepening territorial row with China in regional seas. Japan is increasingly concerned about Chinese activity in and around Japanese-claimed waters surrounding the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands, which Beijing also claims and calls Diaoyu. Since the end of World War II, Japan's constitution has limited the use of force to self defense. Japan in recent years has continued to expand its military role, capability and budget.

Japan's Vice Defense Minister Yasuhiko Nakayama, who observed the exercise, stressed the significance of French participation in the joint exercises regularly held between Japan and the U.S., and often with Australia.

"It was a valuable opportunity for the Japanese Self-Defense Force to maintain and strengthen its strategic capability necessary to defend our remote islands," Nakayama said.

UN chief: Foreign fighters in Libya are violating cease-fire

United Nations: The UN chief said foreign fighters and mercenaries remain in Libya in violation of last October's cease-fire agreement and called for their withdrawal and an end to violations of the UN arms embargo, saying these are "critical elements" for lasting peace in the north African country and the region.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a report to the UN Security Council obtained Friday by The Associated Press that the smooth transfer of power to a new interim government, which took power in March, "brings renewed hope for the reunification of the country and its institutions" and for a lasting peace.

But he said progress must continue on the political, economic and security tracks to enable elections to go ahead on December 24. Libya has been wracked by chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, and split the oil-rich North African country between a U.N.-supported government in the capital, Tripoli, and rival authorities based in the country's east, each backed by armed groups and foreign governments.

AP

Saudis to host meeting of Muslim nations' FMs

Dubai: Saudi Arabia has called for foreign ministers of the world's largest body of Muslim nations to hold a meeting Sunday. The gathering is to discuss Israeli acts of violence against Palestinians and the Israeli police's use of force against protesters at Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

The kingdom will host the virtual summit, gathering ministers of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation "to discuss the Israeli aggression in the Palestinian territory," particularly acts of violence in the vicinity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the body said Saturday.

The Saudi-headquartered OIC includes countries Iran, Turkey, Indonesia and a range of Muslim majority nations.

The sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, is a sensitive and emotive issue for Muslims around the world. The OIC was formed 51 years ago in response to a Jewish extremist arson attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem.

AP

Indian-American policy expert Neera Tanden appointed WH senior adviser

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Indian-American policy expert Neera Tanden has been appointed as a senior adviser to US President Joe Biden, two months after she withdrew her nomination as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget due to stiff opposition from Republican senators.

Tanden has been entrusted with two tasks — launch a review of the US Digital Service, and plan contingencies that could result from the Supreme Court's consideration of Republican lawsuits seeking to strike down the Affordable Care Act.

Tanden, 50, is currently the president and CEO of a progressive think-tank, Center for American Progress (CAP). She expected to join the White House team on Monday.

"Neera's intellect, tenacity, and political savvy will be an asset to the Biden administration," CAP founder and director John Podesta said.

He said the White House has made remarkable progress combating numerous once-in-a-generation challenges — from vaccinating millions of Americans to delivering real



social media outbursts against several lawmakers, including those from her own Democratic Party. She became the Biden administration's only Cabinet nominee rebuffed by the Senate.

Tanden previously served as a senior adviser for health reforms at the US Department of Health and Human Services. She worked with Congress and stakeholders on particular provisions of former President Barack Obama's signature legislative achievement, the Affordable Care Act.

Before that, Tanden was the director of domestic policy for the Obama-Biden presidential campaign, where she managed all domestic policy proposals. Tanden also served as policy director for Hillary Clinton's first presidential campaign. Before the 2008 presidential campaign, Tanden served as legislative director in Clinton's office, and deputy campaign manager and issues director for Clinton's 2000 Senate campaign.

In March, she faced a tough time for the confirmation of her nomination as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) over her past

GLOBE TROTTER

12 KILLED IN TORNADO STRIKES IN CHINA

Beijing: Twelve people were killed and over 300 injured when two powerful tornadoes walloped Chinese cities of Wuhan and Suzhou on Friday night, leaving a trail of destruction of houses.

PAK: 11 DEAD AS VEHICLE PLUNGES INTO CANAL

Lahore: Eleven people, including seven children, of the same family were drowned after their vehicle plunged into a canal in Pakistan's Punjab province, rescue authorities said. The accident happened on Friday in Sheikhupura district, some 50 kms from Lahore, when the vehicle heading towards Khanqah Dogran from Qila Didar Singh skidded off the road and plunged into the canal.

ETHIOPIA AGAIN DELAYS NATIONAL ELECTION

Nairobi: Ethiopia has again delayed its national election after some opposition parties said they wouldn't take part and as conflict in the country's Tigray region means no vote is being held there.

Kid reporter who interviewed Obama at White House dies at 23

West Palm Beach (US): The student reporter who gained national acclaim when he interviewed President Barack Obama at the White House in 2009 has died of natural causes, his family says. Damon Weaver was 23 when he died May 1, his sister, Candace Hardy, told the Palm Beach Post. Further details were not released. He had been studying communications at Albany State University in Georgia.

Weaver was 11 when he interviewed Obama for 10 minutes in the Diplomatic Room on Aug. 13, 2009, asking questions that focused primarily on education. He covered school lunches, bullying, conflict resolution and how to succeed.

Weaver then asked Obama to be his "homeboy," saying then-Vice President Joe Biden had already accepted.

"Absolutely," a smiling Obama said, shaking the boy's hand. He used that meeting to later interview Oprah Winfrey and athletes like Dwyane Wade.

"He was just a nice person, genuine, very intelligent," Hardy said. "Very outspoken, outgoing. He never said no to anybody." Weaver got his start in fifth grade when he volunteered for the school newscast at K.E. Cunningham/Canal Point Elementary in a farm community on the shores of Lake Okeechobee.

AP

China successfully lands its rover on Mars



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, members at the Beijing Aerospace Control Centre celebrate after China's Tianwen-1 probe successfully landed on Mars, at the centre in Beijing, Saturday

AP

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Saturday successfully landed a spacecraft on Mars after surviving "nine minutes of terror", becoming the second country in history to have a rover on the red planet.

The rover, Zhurong, named after a god of fire in Chinese mythology, successfully landed at the pre-selected area in Utopia Planitia on Mars, the official Xinhua news agency reported on the Communist giant's latest achievement in its ambitious goals in space.

The six-wheel solar-powered Zhurong rover weighs about 240 kilogrammes and carries six scientific instruments. It will be later deployed from the lander for a three-

month mission in search of life on Mars' surface.

Tianwen-1, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, was launched on July 23, 2020. It was the first step in China's planetary exploration of the solar system, with the aim of completing orbiting, landing and roving on the red planet in one mission.

The China National Space Administration (CNSA) said in a statement that its rover has successfully landed on Mars on Saturday after "nine minutes of terror".

The lander, carrying a Mars rover, touched down at its pre-selected landing area in the southern part of Utopia Planitia, a vast plain in the northern hemisphere of Mars, at 7:18 a.M. (Beijing Time), the CNSA said.

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CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

e-Tender Notice दिनांक: 15.05.2021
Office of the (Executive Engineer (Test), Ganga Valley, UJVNL, Haridwar), invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below :

Tender No. - 01/UJVNL/EE(Test)/GV/2021-22
Name of work- Supply Installation Testing and Commissioning of Fixed Type On Line DC Insulation Monitoring System for Chilla Power House
Estimated cost: 78,40,698.00 + GST
Date of availability of bid document on website: 17.05.2021 (11:00 Hrs)
Last date for submission of bids on website: 17.06.2021 up to 17:00 Hrs
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in" **Executive Engineer (Test),**
"Avoid Wasteful use of Electricity"

INDO COTSPIN LIMITED			
REGD. OFFICE : 78 K.M. DELHI MILE STONE, NH-1, G.T. ROAD, VILLAGE JATTIPUR, POST BOX NO. 3, POST OFFICE SAMALKHA, PANIPAT -132103 (Haryana) CIN:- L111HR1995PLC032541 Website:www.indocotspin.com Email ID:rajpalaggarwal2000@yahoo.com, info@indocotspin.com Statement of Standalone Audited Financial Results for the Quarter/Year Ended March 31, 2021			
PARTICULARS	(Amount Rs. in Lacs)		
	31.03.2021 Audited	31.03.2021 Audited	CORRESPONDING 3 MONTHS ENDED IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR 31.03.2020 Audited
Total Income from operations (net)	313.72	816.08	997.37
Net Profit/(Loss) from Ordinary activities after Tax	17.25	4.77	10.64
Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Extraordinary Items)	17.25	4.77	10.64
Paid Up Equity Share Capital Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve as shown in the Balance Sheet of Previous Year)	420.05	420.05	420.05
Earnings Per Share (before Extraordinary Items) (of Rs. 10/- each): Basic and Diluted (in Rupees)	0.41	0.07	0.25
Earnings Per Share (after Extraordinary Items) (of Rs. 10/- each): Basic and Diluted (in Rupees)	0.41	0.07	0.25
NOTE: (i) There is no qualification on the audit report for the quarter/ year ended 31st March, 2021 (ii) The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly/Year Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The Full format of the Quarterly/Year Financial Results is available on the Stock Exchange websites: www.bseindia.com , tele-91-9896034879			
For Indo Cotspin Limited Sd/- Bal Krishan Aggarwal Managing Director DIN No. :00456219			
Place: Panipat Date: 15/05/2021			

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता
लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड, बलीदाबाजार (छ.ग.)

ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

ऑनलाईन निविदाएं आयटम दर पर अनुबंध हेतु नीचे उल्लेखित कार्य के लिये छत्तीसगढ़ के राज्यपाल की ओर से अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता के कार्यालय में एकीकृत पंजीवन व्यवस्था में सभी श्रेणी के पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से आमंत्रित की जाती हैं:-

क्र.	निविदा सूचना क्र. / दिनांक	सिस्टम क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)
1.	02 / 07.05.2021	76700	EMPANELMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AGENCIES (ISAs DWSM) FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF JAL JEEVAN MISSION IN THE DISTRICT BALODABAZAR-BHATAPARA OF CHHATTISGARH	623.48

1. बिड प्रारंभ तिथि — 12.05.2021

2. बिड सबमिशन की अंतिम तिथि — 25.05.2021

उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्य की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, घरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विवरण, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> में देखे जा सकते हैं।

हस्ता / —
कार्यपालन अभियंता
लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड
बलीदाबाजार-भटापारा (छ.ग.)

R.O. No:- 60572/12
R.O. Date:- 13/05/2021

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL
HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR
Telefax :- 0194-2496089, Email Id:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

(Short-term)

GIST of E -NIT NO: MHCHD/TS /2021-22/20/e-tendering Dated:-12-05-2021
For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K U T-tenders are invited from registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:-
Name of Work:- SITC of Open-well Submersible Pumping Units along with allied Mechanical works for water supply at Govt. Chest Disease Hospital, Srinagar.
Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs) :- 1.45
Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 200
Time of completion (in Days) :- 05
AA Accorded Vide No :- 08-MCS of 2021, Dt: 27-04-2021
TS. NO :- MHCHD/TS15 of 05/2021

1. The tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from **12-05-2021 (18.00 hrs).**

2. The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from **13-05-2021 (10.00 hrs). to 19-05-2021 (14.00 hrs)** in two (02) cover.

3. The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on **19-05-2021 (16.00 hrs)** or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar

No. DIPK-1587/21 Dated:- 15.05.2021

GST Council to meet on May 28

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a growing chorus over the GST Council meeting not being convened for over seven months, the Union Finance Ministry on Saturday announced that the next meeting of the panel that decides on taxes on goods and services will be held on May 28.

After over a dozen central and state levies such as excise duty, service tax and VAT were subsumed in a nationwide Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017, the Council, headed by Union Finance Minister and including representatives of all states and union territories, was mandated to meet every quarter to deliberate on issues at hand.

The GST Council last met on October 5, 2020 to finalise contours of borrowings by states to meet shortfall in tax revenues. The meeting got extended and ended on October 12.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will chair the 43rd meeting of the GST Council on May 28, her office tweeted.

“Smt @nsitharaman will chair the 43rd GST Council meeting via video conferencing at 11 AM in New Delhi on 28th May 2021. The meeting will be attended by MOS Shri @ianuragthakur besides Finance Ministers of States &

UTs and Senior officers from Union Government & States,” it said.

Opposition party-ruled states have been complaining about not holding the GST Council meeting in recent weeks. West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra earlier this week wrote to Sitharaman seeking urgent convening of the meeting to discuss the issue of compensation shortfall to states

and other pending items.

“You are kindly aware that the GST Council was mandated to meet once in every quarter. Unfortunately, this solemn mandate has been violated twice over, by not calling a meeting of the Council for two consecutive quarters - not even virtually.

“This has undermined a federal institution, where all states are represented irrespective of political parties, regions or size of population, along with the Government of India. I fear that not holding meetings regularly also lead to a trust deficit,” Mitra wrote.

When GST was implemented, states were promised that they will be compensated for any shortfall in tax revenues arising out of their taxes being subsumed in a national GST, for the first five years.

This was to be done by levy of a cess, on top of the GST rate, on certain luxury and sin goods.

Power consumption grows nearly 19 pc in 1st fortnight of May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Power consumption in the country grew by around 19 per cent in the first fortnight of May to 51.67 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to the power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first fortnight of May 2020 was 43.55 BU. The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

During the first fortnight of May this year (from May 1 to 14), peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded growth of over 15 per cent over 146.54 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 13, 2020).



The power consumption in April grew nearly 40 per cent to 118.08 BU.

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

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

Similarly, peak power demand met or the highest power supply in a day also slumped to 132.73 GW in April last year from 176.81

GW in the same month in 2019, showing the impact of lockdown on economic activities.

Power engineers body demands mass vaccination

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Power Minister R.K. Singh requesting that all the states be directed to hold mass vaccination camps to cover electricity personnel on top priority basis and be treated as frontline workers.

Shailendra Dubey, Chairman AIPEF said as many as 1,000 power sector employees and engineers have succumbed to Covid-19 and more than 15,000 have been infected from the virus.

In Maharashtra, a total of more than 7,100 power employees are Covid positive and about 210 have died. While, in Uttar Pradesh, more than 4,000 power sector employees are suffering from coronavirus and there have been 140 casualties.

Covid pushes India's Pharma industry growth to 59% in April



IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The fresh wave of Covid-19 in the country has pushed up sales of medicines and resulted in exponential growth for the pharmaceutical sector.

According to total sales audit data from world's largest pharmaceutical market research firm IMS Health, the Indian Pharma Market (IPM) grew 59 per cent yoy in April, 2021 vs 16 per cent yoy in March, 2021 due to the low base effect in April, 2020 and sharp surge in Covid-19-relat-

ed sales. On the MAT (moving annual turnover) basis, IPM grew 9.6 per cent, primarily driven by pricing growth of 4.3 per cent and new product launch growth of 4.6 per cent. Volume growth was muted at 0.8 per cent.

According to a report from Emkay Global Financial Services, all major therapies posted high double-digit growth in April 21.

Within Chronic therapies, Cardiac therapy grew 22 per cent.

NTPC augments Covid care facilities across India, adds over 500 oxygen beds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned NTPC has augmented COVID care facilities across the country and added more than 500 oxygen supported beds besides 1,100 isolation beds at its plants in different states.

The company has set up COVID care centres with facilities of 200 oxygen supported beds and 140 isolation beds in Badarpur, Noida and Dadri, it said in a statement.

It has also set up a 500-bed COVID health centre at Sundargarh in Odisha where 20 ventilators have been provided. “NTPC Ltd has added more than 500 beds with oxygen support and more than 1,100 isolation beds across plants in various states to provide support to the critical COVID care,” the statement said. Besides the COVID care centres that are operational in Dadri, Korba, Kaniha, Ramagundam, Vindhyachal, Barh & Badarpur, NTPC will



be setting up additional facilities at North Karanpura, Bongaigaon and Solapur as well. Other hospitals are on their way to increase the number of beds with oxygen facilities, it said. Meanwhile, NTPC has inoculated over 70,000 employees and associates across its operations. The massive vaccination drive continues across plant locations.

NTPC has also started vaccinating those who are in the age bracket of 18-44 at many of its plant locations. Vaccination drives have been undertaken across NTPC stations in coordination with respective state administrations. The company is running 24x7 control rooms across plants for better coordination for patients across sites which is coordinated by a special task force.

The task force also helps in coordination for hospital beds and other treatment facilities across various empanelled and non-empanelled hospitals. The control rooms also coordinate for procurement of medicines, hospital equipment and services.

NO NEGATIVE RT-PCR REPORT

4 pilots spends 21hrs in aircraft

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Four pilots as well as cabin crew members of SpiceJet's Delhi-Zagreb flight had to reportedly spend 21 hours, almost a day onboard the aircraft they operated from Delhi to Croatian capital Zagreb this Tuesday before flying the Boeing 737 back home as there was a sudden change in rules making negative RT-PCR test results mandatory for anyone coming from India.

The crew were not allowed to come out of the plane and they conducted the return flight to Delhi -- after the 21-hour rest period -- without passengers or cargo. The two commanders and as many first officers had to spend their layover inside the aircraft in Zagreb airport before flying the plane back to Delhi without any passengers or cargo. “Prior to departure from



India, email confirmation was received from Croatian authorities that RTPCR is not required for crew,” the airline's spokesperson said. SpiceJet says the crew was on board for 21 hours.

On arrival in Zagreb on Tuesday, the crew, including four pilots, as well as cabin crew members, was told that the

orders have changed. “Due to sudden and massive increase in COVID cases in India, they were then instructed that RTPCR test is required. This came as a surprise,” the airline's spokesperson said.

SpiceJet had operated flight SG-9035 on May 11 on Delhi-Tbilisi-Zagreb with two sets of pilots, meaning four pilots. As

the crew had not undergone the mandatory RT-PCR test, Croatian authorities did not allow them to alight from the aircraft, said people in the know.

Since the crew could not fly back immediately due to the FDTL (flight duty time limitation) restrictions, bedding, food and water was provided in the aircraft, according to the spokesperson.

“Aircraft was cleaned. DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) permission was obtained. Crew rested in the aircraft for 21 hours (as mandated by regulation).”

The unfolding Covid catastrophe in India has seen some countries suddenly change their rules for crew and passengers from the country. Sometimes these changes happen when aircraft are on their way from India to those countries.

India to become major production hub for ACC batteries: ICEA

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) has welcomed the Rs 18,100 crore Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme that has been approved for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery storage in the country.

In a statement, ICEA that represents mobile and component manufacturers such as Apple, Motorola, Nokia, Foxconn, Wistron, Flextronics, Lava, Vivo and others, said that it would promote newer and niche cell technologies in the country.

“We at ICEA believes that the PLI scheme would give thrust to ‘Make in India’ initiative and will attract huge investments of Rs 45,000 crore plus in the coming years. With this push for ACC batteries, the sector would witness robust growth in the coming years,” said Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman, ICEA.

ACC batteries are the new generation of advanced storage technologies which stores electric energy as electrochemical and convert it back to electric energy as and when required. The ACC covers major sectors, which are consumer electronics, mobiles, electric vehicles, advanced electricity grids, solar rooftop etc.

Mohindroo said that we need to work on securing the raw material supplies for these core technologies specially lithium and cobalt.

“Our import burden of Rs 20,000 crore will also turn into a big opportunity and would make the country a major hub in producing clean energy,” he added.

The ACC battery storage manufacturers will be selected through a transparent competitive bidding process.

The manufacturing facility would have to be commissioned within two years. The incentive will be disbursed thereafter over five years.

Airtel rolls out Covid support initiatives for customers on its digital platform



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel has rolled out a range of Covid support initiatives for customers by leveraging its digital platform.

With this, the telco joins a growing list of companies that have introduced digital tools to help people amid the deadly second wave of the pandemic.

Airtel has integrated easily accessible bouquet of Covid support resources and related information in the Airtel Thanks app's Explore section, the company said in a statement.

“Covid SOS aggregates verified and updated contacts

for important supplies such as medicines, oxygen, plasma donors, ambulance, hospital beds, and testing centres. With a few clicks, the platform connects users to these service providers/resources and tries to ensure that users do not have to waste precious time to access this data,” the statement said. The information available on ‘Covid SOS’ is verified by their teams,

it said and added the platform is powered by Airtel IQ. “Airtel Thanks users can also book a vaccination slot for themselves and their loved ones through the app,” the statement said.

Covid Care: Boeing plans to set up field hospitals in India

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Aerospace major Boeing has tied-up with state governments along with NGOs to set up field hospitals in India to treat Covid patients.

Accordingly, the aerospace major has been in talks with five state governments to provide such facilities in their jurisdictions.

In the last few days, Boeing India has reached out to UP, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu state governments.

The initiative as part of Boeing's India Covid relief commitment envisages setting up of such facilities in each of five states which are facing the pandemic resurgence.

As part of the programme, the funding, land and utilities,

facility, equipment, doctors as well as medicines will be provided through a partnership model by the joint effort of Boeing, the concerned state government and NGO partners, ‘Doctors for You’ and ‘Care USA’.

The state governments will provide the infrastructure and utilities while ‘Doctors for You’ will provide the medical infrastructure and staff.

The first such facility is expected to come as soon as possible.

“We are in conversations with local and international relief organisations to deploy Boeing's \$10-million emergency assistance package to support India's Covid-19 response,” said Salil Gupte, president, Boeing India.

“As part of that effort, we’re

working with medical, government and public health experts across India to provide relief, including medical supplies and emergency health care to communities most impacted.”

Last month, Boeing announced a \$10 million emergency assistance package to support India's Covid-19 response.

At present, Boeing has 3,000 employees in India.

The company develops, manufactures and services commercial airplanes, defence products for customers in domestic civil and military sectors. Lately, India has been heavily battered by record new daily increases in coronavirus infections, prompting lockdowns and restrictive measures.

Jet Airways' annual general meeting on June 8

New Delhi: The annual general meeting of Jet Airways, which suspended operations more than two years ago, will be held on June 8, according to a regulatory filing.

The affairs of the full service carrier, which is currently undergoing an insolvency resolution process, is being managed by resolution professional Ashish Chhawchharia.

The meeting, scheduled to be held on June 8, will consider and adopt the company's audited standalone financial statements for the financial year ended March 31, 2020 together with the reports of auditors.

PTI

WESTERN RAILWAY			
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No.S/18/2021 Date 12.05.2021			
S.N.	Short Description of item	Quantity	T.O.D.
374	Bearing Piece Assy. for Uncoupling Gear	6871 Nos.	24.05.2021
375	Led Signal Lighting Unit route, Shunt, Calling on	143 Nos.	27.05.2021
376	Top Spring Seat for Axle Box	912 Nos.	27.05.2021
377	Pin for FIAT IR Bogie	1694 Nos.	27.05.2021
378	Distributor Valve	275 Nos.	27.05.2021
379	Packing 37mm thick for Height Adjustment	1145 Nos.	27.05.2021
380	Hand Brake Cable assembly.	1145 Nos.	27.05.2021
381	Azithromycin 500mg Tab	245670 Nos.	27.05.2021
382	Meropenem 1g Inj	11840 Nos.	27.05.2021
383	Piperacillin 4g and Tazobactam 500mg Inj	22994 Nos.	27.05.2021
384	Solid MIG/MAG Copper Coated.	18500 Nos.	28.05.2021
385	Indexable Inserts to Sandvik	191 Nos.	28.05.2021
386	18W (4Feet Length) LED Tubular Lamps	5116 Nos.	28.05.2021
387	Secondary Spring Outer for Chair Car	100 Nos.	28.05.2021
388	Branch Pipe	30 Nos.	28.05.2021
389	Foot Step Arrangement	43 Sets	31.05.2021
390	Yaw Damper	575 Nos.	31.05.2021
391	Secondary Lateral Damper	334 Nos.	31.05.2021
392	Primary Vertical Damper	2200 Nos.	31.05.2021
393	Foot Rest Complete	82 Nos.	31.05.2021
394	Security Plate	2600 Nos.	31.05.2021
395	Security plate	610 Nos.	31.05.2021
396	Brake Cylinder	339 Nos.	31.05.2021
397	Yoke for Upgraded High Tensile CBC	1093 Nos.	31.05.2021
398	Brake Beam Complete	568 Nos.	31.05.2021
399	Slack Adjuster Type (ITEM 44)	400 Nos.	31.05.2021
400	Non Asbestos K Type Composition Brake Block	53608 Nos.	31.05.2021
401	Pin/Cotters For BMBS Casnub Bogie	240 Nos.	31.05.2021
402	Modified Flap Door Arrangement	600 Nos.	31.05.2021
403	Automatic Twist Locks	1339 Nos.	31.05.2021
404	Flexible PVC flooring sheet	120 Nos.	01.06.2021
405	Suspension Clamp Body	1000 Nos.	01.06.2021
406	415 V ac 3 phase tower AC system	164 Nos.	01.06.2021
407	"7/8" DIA. Lock Bolt & Collar	21854 Nos.	01.06.2021
408	Pin/Cotters For BMBS Casnub Bogie	240 Nos.	01.06.2021
409	Bolster Bottom Gusset, without 168 Dia.Hole	4 Nos.	01.06.2021
410	Suction Machine with Foot Pedal	1 No.	01.06.2021
411	Hermetically Sealed Compressor Copeland	130 Nos.	02.06.2021
412	3 Phase Induction Condenser motor	253 Nos.	02.06.2021
413	Prevailing Torque Type Nut	567 Nos.	02.06.2021
414	Needle Roller Bearing Assy.	271 Nos.	02.06.2021
415	Pin/Cotters For BMBS Casnub Bogie	240 Nos.	02.06.2021
416	Pin/Cotters For BMBS Casnub Bogie	240 Nos.	02.06.2021
417	Brake Head Pin Assembly For BMBS Casnub Bogie	480 Nos.	02.06.2021
418	POH Kit	2409 Nos.	02.06.2021
419	Load Sensing Device	506 Nos.	02.06.2021
420	PU Paint -Gentian Blue.	22600 Nos.	03.06.2021
421	193 sq mm Catenary Wire	4 KM	03.06.2021
422	Rubber Buffer Spring	451 Set	03.06.2021
423	Intermediate Longitudinal Beam	100 Nos.	03.06.2021
424	Air Spring Assy 180 KN Capacity	14 Nos.	03.06.2021
425	Axle Box Helical Spring for Milk VAN	65 Nos.	03.06.2021
426	POH Kit	594 Nos.	03.06.2021
427	Isolating Cock without Vent	131 Nos.	03.06.2021

Regarding detailed notice EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website www.ireps.gov.in and www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in.
For Principal Chief Materials Manager
Like us: www.facebook.com/WesternRailway Follow us: www.twitter.com/WesternRailway

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Desh Deep Chawla & Mr. Sumit Chawla were joint owners of Property No. 154, area measuring 112.50 sq. mts. in Block-A, Sector-48, Noida, "the said property" by virtue of Transfer deed dated 15.10.2011. Further Mr. Sumit Chawla became the owner of 1/2 share of his late father Mr. Desh Deep Chawla vide a mutation letter dated 21.02.2019, in the record of Noida Authority. All persons including other legal heirs of late Mr. Desh Deep Chawla are hereby informed that above mentioned owner want to sell the said property to someone who is taking loan for purchase the said property from ICICI Bank Ltd., if anybody has any objections upon the ownership of Mr. Sumit Chawla in respect of the said property to sale (Mortgage, and any kind of objection, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. (Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants) 201, 1st Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15 Ph. 011-41112827-28 kumarassociatesadvocates@gmail.com

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY	
E-Tendering Tender Notice No. 19/2021	
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) N.E. Railways Izatnagar For and behalf of president of India invites "OPEN" e-tender through on Line (E-tendering) for the following work. S.N.: 1, Description of Works: Zone No.1. MQP to LC No. 250A (Both In.) Chaulpa colony, Bareilly city colony, station front colony at Bareilly city. Approx. Value: Rs. 52,25,017.00, S.N.: 2, Description of Works: Zone No.1. MQP to LC No. 250A (Ex)) to LC No.244 B (in) Station Colony, Loco sheds Station Bareilly City. Approx. Value: Rs. 34,85,772.00, S.N.: 3, Description of Works: Zone No. 3. L.C. No. 244B to BPR (Both ex.) Loco Colony station colony, S.E./ works /P. way/Sig., ADEN/Line office/IZN, SMG Line, station colony, CBJ Line plant & colony / IZN. Approx. Value: Rs. 57,40,561.00, S.N.: 4, Description of Works: Zone No. 4. Divisional Hospital and medical colony (north of IVRI road) Izatnagar. Approx. Value: Rs. 49,28,974.00, S.N.: 5, Description of Works: Zone No. 5 Divisional office, BRI office etc. including office colony Izatnagar. Approx. Value: Rs. 43,26,021.00, S.N.: 6, Description of Works: Zone No. 6. Mech. Workshop. Including workshop administrative building and store Depot. Izatnagar. Approx. Value: Rs. 70,94,625.00, S.N.: 7, Description of Works: Zone No.7. Officers colony Road no.1 to 7 (Kaliwari) all inclusive at Izatnagar. Approx. Value: Rs. 87,11,938.00, S.N.: 8, Description of Works: Zone No. 8. Kaliwari (Ex) to New modal colony & DSL shed at Izatnagar. Approx. Value: Rs. 70,84,063.00, S.N.: 9, Description of Works: Zone No. 9. Bhojipura (Inc.) to Lalkuan (Ex.). Approx. Value: Rs. 59,22,550.00, S.N.: 10, Description of Works: Zone No. 10. Makrandpur (Ex) Ujhayani (Inc.). Approx. Value: Rs. 48,05,742.00, S.N.: 11, Description of Works: Zone No. 11. Ujhayani to kasganj (Ex.Both). Approx. Value: Rs. 45,68,883.00, S.N.: 12, Description of Works: Zone No. 12. Kasganj (In.) to MHA (Ex.) up to km.253/0, KSJ(In)up to km.417/0 and Jafan colony, Mal godam colony at Kasganj. Approx. Value: Rs. 63,53,674.00, S.N.: 13, Description of Works: Zone No.13. Kasganj L.xing no. 310 to PTI. (Inc.) upto km. 204/0. Approx. Value: Rs. 38,90,700.00, S.N.: 14, Description of Works: Zone No. 14. PTI. (Ex.) to FGR (Ex.). Approx. Value: Rs. 69,20,305.00, S.N.: 15, Description of Works: Zone No.15.	
1. Online e-tender can be submitted up to 15.00 hrs of date 10.06.2021. 2. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) Izatnagar CPROW-28 About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No. 99794845955 Do Not smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train	

YOUNG ONES ON TARGET

While the second wave of COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc, doctors and experts are predicting the onset of the third wave, a killer for children. MUSBA HASHMI reports on how, in the absence of a paediatric vaccine, children can be protected. But for that a robust paediatric healthcare system is crucial



We are stuck right in the middle of what appears to be a very lethal second wave of COVID-19. With not less than 3.5 lakh cases per day, the curve seems to not flatten any time soon. However, the horror doesn't end here. Doctors, scientists and experts have started predicting the third wave of COVID-19 which is expected to wreak further havoc. More so, because it may hit children in a hard way. While this is a major cause of worry, the question here is how prepared are we to tackle the upcoming third wave? The answer might not be what we want to hear.

"Viruses hunt for a susceptible population. With schools closed presently, children will be that group once the educational institutes reopen. This will bring on the third wave which will hit children big time," Dr Arvind Taneja, MBBS, MD (Paediatrics), Diplomat of the American Board of the Paediatrics, Fellowship — Infectious Diseases and Chief Advisor-Senior Consultant, Paediatrics, Rainbow Children's Hospital, tells you.

In the absence of an effective vaccine for children, they become the most susceptible group and masking and sanitising is the only way out.

"When 70 to 85 per cent of the population is immunised 'herd immunity' kicks in to protect people, especially children. Till then masks, social distancing continues to be the norm for children too," he advises.

The need, he says, is to speed up vaccine trials in children. "If adults vaccinated are safe so should children be. We have experienced this with polio, measles, mumps, rubella live viral vaccines for 60 years and viral influenza for 40 years in infants as young as months old," Taneja adds and tells you that pediatric trials of vaccines are expected to be completed by October-December.

"However the onset of the third is wave unpredictable," he says.

The disappointing fact is that we haven't emphasised enough on paediatric care and as a result we are lacking in it.

"India's preparation for paediatric COVID-19 is woefully inadequate. We have very few paediatric hospitals in the country, very few paediatric critical care specialists and pediatric trained nurses. In order to be prepared for the third wave, each major and medium sized city in India should have at least one dedicated children's hospital to care for this fragile population so that we are ready when and if catastrophe such as COVID-19 strikes. This is expected to happen in the third wave," he tells you.

However, the silver lining is that we may expect a decline in cases by May end, as per the doctors.

"According to a study, we may

expect a decline in cases by the end of May in most States. There could be one or two more peaks of Coronavirus cases but they may not be as huge as the current wave. Different States may see peaks at different times. The prediction is that we may see a declining trend by end of this week in India all together. But if we are to check as a nation, with all cumulative figures, we are either at our peak or are very close to it. Different states will have different trajectories," Dr Yash Javeri, Critical Care, Anesthesia and Emergency Medicine, Regency Superspecialty Hospital, Lucknow, tells you.

The third wave, he says, may hit a few States in the next two-three months.

"If we put strict measures in place, the third wave may not happen at all places or might not be as huge as the second wave. It depends on how effectively control measures are implemented at the local level in the States, districts and cities everywhere. In a few months, when the naturally developed immunity of people or the one with the help of vaccination fades, the virus can strike again. The only thing that can stop the virus from bouncing back is how people are guarding themselves," Arya opines.

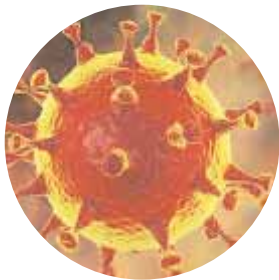
He adds that if people follow COVID-appropriate behaviour in the coming months which includes double masking, using hand sanitiser, maintaining social distancing and avoiding going out unnecessarily then we can probably cut the peak.

"If we are able to vaccinate a majority of population then the magnitude of third wave will be decreased," he says,

However, Dr Animesh Arya, Senior consultant in Respiratory Medicine, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, is of the opinion that it is hard to predict the declining trend. "There is no definite answer as to when we can expect a decline in cases, but epidemiologists feel that with all peaks there will be a fall after two to three months so decline is expected in June. But we can be way off our predictions as in the past," he says.

Many scientists, infectious diseases experts and people from economics and modelling background are trying to predict the third wave, but from a scientific point of view which is based on the previous outbreak of severe epidemics especially Spanish flu, the expectations are all in the press and it may be in September-October. "It is also being assumed children in the age group 12-15 are likely to be affected largely in the third wave as they are naive and the new mutant strain is very potent and it challenges the immunity of people not naturally protected or partially protected by immunisation," Arya explains.

He adds that as we all know building infrastructure of tertiary healthcare is essential to treat sicker patients and prevent mortality, we must not forget that pri-



INDIA'S PREPARATION FOR PAEDIATRIC COVID-19 IS WOEFULLY INADEQUATE. WE HAVE VERY FEW PAEDIATRIC HOSPITALS IN THE COUNTRY, VERY FEW PAEDIATRIC CRITICAL CARE SPECIALISTS AND PEDIATRIC TRAINED NURSES. IN ORDER TO BE PREPARED FOR THE THIRD WAVE, EACH MAJOR AND MEDIUM SIZED CITY IN INDIA SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST ONE DEDICATED CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL TO CARE FOR THIS FRAGILE POPULATION — DR ARVIND TANEJA CHIEF ADVISOR & SENIOR CONSULTANT, PAEDIATRICS, RAINBOW CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



mary aim to contain disease by early detection, extensive testing of all levels of contacts, isolating them and treating them well ahead of time of going into serious complications and mortality remains the key.

With that being said, there are several doctors who believe that children might not get affected as badly as it is anticipated, because all these predictions are based on statistics. Hence, parents need not angst too much. However, this doesn't mean we can put down our guards. All precautions have to be in place, both in the presence or absence of a vaccine.

"There is no evidence that the third wave will hit children. It can happen, but these are only predictions. Though, the symptoms in children are usually mild till date, but this doesn't affect the importance of vaccination for them. We can't anticipate if the symptoms will turn severe in the third wave. However, in the absence of a paediatric vaccine, the only way out is to take precautions. Immunity is another important thing. Children should be given nutritious food, including lots of green leafy vegetables and fruits in their diet. Keep them hydrated. Coconut water, twice a day, can do the job. Avoid junk at all costs. And last, but not the least, increase their Vitamin C intake," Dr Swetha Reddy P, Consultant Paediatrics, Apollo Telehealth, tells you.

Though several States Governments like Maharashtra have already started prepping up for the third wave by setting up paediatric centres, the need is to increase the number of paediatric hospitals, ICU beds and care centres to tide over the third wave with less fatalities and more recoveries.

"To curb the impact of the third wave, the need of the hour is to increase the number of ICU beds and hospitals for children, get more paediatric nurses on board and also to make sure there are ample doctors to attend to children. Our healthcare infrastructure basically needs a revamp, which is definitely not possible at this hour. Hence, now focus should be on building a robust healthcare system, well-equipped with proper staff so that doctors and nurses don't have to deal with fatigue. The strategy should be to vaccinate 100 per cent children before the third wave hits. Also according to observations the mutants have been severely affecting the children," Dr Aashish Chaudhry, Managing Director and Senior Consultant, Dept of Orthopaedics & Joint Replacement, Aakash Healthcare Super Speciality Hospital, Dwarka, says.

One of the many ways to prevent children from the risk of getting infected is to get the parents vaccinated quickly. "It is not the children that carry the virus, it is their parents or families who pass on the virus. There are no reports to back the



YOUNGVACCINE

- While many companies like Bharat Biotech and Pfizer have started the second and third phase vaccine trials on children from two to 18 years, there is still a long way to go for the vaccines to be available in the market for use.
- The Drugs Controller General of India has cleared phase II and III clinical trials of Covaxin COVID-19 vaccine for children from two to 18 years.
- US biotech firm Novavax had also started clinical trials of its proposed Covid-19 vaccine on children.
- Pfizer is running a trial for children 6 months to 11 years old.
- Moderna is also running a trial in the United States and Canada for kids between 6 months and 11 years old.

fact, but this is an observation that is made during the first and second wave. Hence, in order to prevent children from catching the infection, the elders need to get vaccinated with both doses quickly. With the shortage of vaccine, this might seem a Herculean task, however it is the only feasible option to reduce the impact of a possible third wave," Dr Gitali Bhagwati, Consultant and Head, Department of Microbiology and Infection Control, Dharamshila Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, tells you.

And apart from the rest of the measures, we need to prepare an army of young nurses and doctors on standby to move from one city to the other based on

the COVID wave, to support busy hospitals. For this, we need to motivate and encourage them largely, because money alone, won't motivate young people to risk their lives in COVID ICU wards.

And lastly, mildly symptomatic patients should be isolated immediately, in order to reduce the risk of them spreading infection. "In order to flatten the curve and reduce the exposure to vulnerable population of children who are at the higher risk due to lack of herd immunity or passive immunity, mildly symptomatic patients should be provided isolation facilities till they get infection free since the infection rate this time is high," Arya tells you.

RAMAN ALLEGES SMEAR CAMPAIGN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sacked as women's cricket team coach, WV Raman has alleged that a "smear campaign" against him has gained unwarranted traction and urged the BCCI president Sourav Ganguly to stop it.

In a mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy head Rahul Dravid, Raman wrote it will be "extremely disconcerting" if his candidature was rejected due to reasons other than "my incompetency as a coach".

In a surprising move, Raman was not retained as the head coach of the senior women's team by the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) which picked Ramesh Powar for the top job.

It was under Raman that Indian team cherished a runner-up finish at the women's T20 World Cup last year.

"I presume you might have been told different views about my style of functioning and work ethic. Whether those views conveyed to the officials of the BCCI had any impact on my candidature is of no consequence now," Raman wrote in the letter.

"What is important is that the smear campaign seems to have gained some unwarranted traction with some BCCI officials which needs to be halted permanently. I am prepared to give an explanation should you or any of the office bearers require it."

He said he was not used to "moaning and whining" but was bringing up the issues in case the BCCI president wishes to do a course correction.

"If I were to be rejected due to my incompetency as a coach, there is no argument on a judgment call at all. But what will be extremely disconcerting is if my candidature was rejected due to any other reasons," said the former India opener who played 11 Tests and 27 ODIs between



1988 and 1997.

"Especially if it was due to allegations from people who were more focussed on achieving their personal objectives at the expense of the overall hygiene and welfare of the Indian women's team and the pride of the country."

The stylish former left-handed batsman's letter to the two former captains is sure to ruffle a few feathers given that it has always been the coaches who have either stepped aside or sacked following fallout with players, most notably ODI captain Mithali Raj.

While Raman's letter didn't name anyone, it is understood that he was writing about the star culture that prevails in the team, which he said is probably doing more harm than good. "If some people in the sys-

Sthalekar slams BCCI over Veda's treatment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Australian captain Lisa Sthalekar has claimed that the BCCI neither checked on Veda Krishnamurthy after the twin tragedies in her family nor communicated to the bereaved India cricketer its decision to not consider her for the upcoming tour of England.

Earlier this month, the flamboyant middle-order India batter lost her elder sister Vatsala Shivakumar to Covid-19, two weeks after her mother succumbed to the dreaded virus.



On expected lines, she was not included in the Indian Test and ODI team for next month's tour of the United Kingdom, but ICC

Hall of Famer Sthalekar was not convinced with the BCCI's handling of the whole episode.

"Whilst not selecting Veda for the upcoming series may be justified from their point of view, what angers me the most is that as a contracted player she has not received any communication from BCCI, just to even check how she is coping," Sthalekar said in a note on her Twitter handle.

She added, "A true association should deeply care about the players that play the game... Not focus solely on just the game at any cost. So

tem have been highly accommodative to the extent of being seemingly obsequious to an accomplished performer for years on end and if that performer feels constrained to adhere to the culture, then I would leave it to you to decide if the coach was asking for too much.

"In a coaching career spanning 20 years, I have always created a culture in which the team always comes first and insisted on no individual overriding either the game or the team."

He said "paying heed to only one individual's views while disregarding everyone else's over a long period of time has resulted in gaping holes in the process and the system."

"The time has come for you two accomplished former legends to salvage women's cricket falling which things could gather momentum in the wrong direction," he warned.

"I have some suggestions that might help in the improvement of women's cricket. I will be delighted to share those if you are interested," he signed off.

disappointed."

Bengal's wicketkeeper-batsman Shreevats Goswami, who has also had stints in the IPL besides representing the country in the U-19 level, backed Sthalekar.

Goswami said state cricket associations in India don't care about their players.

"I don't think cricket Associations caring about their players are even thought by the management in India, Mental health & communicating with players on drawing a future guide for their players doesn't even cross their mind, I can say this for domestic cricket," Goswami tweeted.

Shafali gets maiden ODI, Test call-ups

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rookie wicketkeeper-batter Indrani Roy from Jharkhand was rewarded with maiden Test and ODI call-up for India's tour of England next month but senior left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad missed out as she is recovering from Covid-19.

The 29-year-old Gayakwad is also nursing an injury.

The Neetu David led selection panel made a course correction with teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and seasoned pacer Shikha Pandey making it to all three squads after their South Africa home series snubs.

"This time Neetu and her colleagues didn't go for any outrageous experiments. Shafali and Shikha were two of the earliest names listed in all three squads. There was one Swetha Verma of UP whose name was discussed but it was found that she hasn't even scored 200 runs in a season," a source close to developments said.

Sneh Rana and Indrani were two stellar performers in the National One Day competition and thus got their call-ups. The controversial picks of the last time like Monica Patel, C Prathyusha have been dropped from the squad altogether in the team selection meeting which was keenly followed by BCCI president

Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah.

Indrani was rewarded for her string of scores which included 103 against Chattisgarh, 86 against Karnataka and 49 against Railways in the final.

Rana on her part was the Player of the Final for her all-round show while representing Indian Railways.

As expected Mithali Raj will lead the team for the one-off Test and three ODIs while Harmanpreet Kaur will take over the reins during the three T20 Internationals.

SQUADS

Test & ODI: Mithali Raj (C), Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur, Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wk), Indrani Roy (wk), Jhulan Goswami, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav.

T20I: Harmanpreet Kaur (C) Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wk), Indrani Roy (wk), Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Simran Dil Bahadur.

▶ shortpasses

LIFTERS TO LEAVE ON MAY 18

NEW DELHI: A two-member Indian team, including Youth Olympics Gold medalist weightlifter Jeremy Lalrinnunga, will leave on Tuesday to take part in the World Junior Championship in Tashkent from May 23 to 31.

SURINDER EYE JR SELECTOR'S JOB

NEW DELHI: Former India batsman Surinder Amarnath has applied for the post of national junior cricket selector, and is banking on his Morocco experience as a coach and selector in early 2000s to get the job.

JEJE PATROLLING RIVER

NEW DELHI: Away from the football field, India striker Jeje Lalpekhlua has been patrolling a long stretch of Tuichang river in Mizoram to prevent "overfishing" and help sustain the livelihood of local fishermen.

INDIA OFF TO QATAR ON MAY 19

NEW DELHI: The Indian football team will leave for Qatar on May 19 after the Gulf country, in a big relief, accepted AIFF request to allow its players to train there ahead of the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers next month.

HOLDER TO MISS INITIAL WI CAMP

ANITGUA: All-rounder Jason Holder, who was part of the postponed IPL with SunRisers Hyderabad, has been rested for the first part of West Indies' three-week high-performance camp that begins on Sunday in St Lucia.

MCKEOWN MISSES SMITH'S WR

SYDNEY: Australian teenager Kaylee McKeown fired a warning shot on Saturday ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, swimming the second fastest women's 100 metre backstroke ever to narrowly miss Regan Smith's world record.

MARY'S QUARANTINE OVER

NEW DELHI: Olympic Games-bound MC Marykom has completed her seven days quarantine period at the national boxing camp in Pune, but will still train in isolation to stay safe, says a coach associated with the camp.

WFI CANCEL SONEPAT CAMP

NEW DELHI: The planned camp for eight Olympic-bound Indian wrestlers in Sonapat has been cancelled due to hard quarantine and they will instead train in multiple European cities, with the national federation allowing each of them a sparring partner of their choice.

IPL BEST IN WORLD: RIAZ

LAHORE: Pakistan pace bowler Wahab Riaz has called IPL incomparable and the No 1 T20 franchise league in the world, but added that bowling standard of the PSL is the best.

OMAR BANNED FROM OLYMPICS

GENEVA: American triple jumper Omar Craddock was banned for 20 months over missed doping tests and will miss the Tokyo Olympics and 2022 world c'hips in Oregon.

AUSSIES MAY LAND IN SYDNEY

MALE: The Australian contingent that was part of the IPL will return home within a day or two and quarantine in Sydney with BCCI likely to foot the bill for travel & quarantine. Agencies

Silverwood will skip Pak, SL series

Thorpe, Collingwood to take reins during busy summer

PTI ■ LONDON

England head coach Chris Silverwood will take a break after his team's two Tests against New Zealand, handing over the reins of the ODI side to his assistants for the home series against Sri Lanka and Pakistan, starting late June.

Having been part of England's tours of Sri Lanka and India earlier this year, Silverwood said he will take a break to refresh himself before returning at the helm for the marquee Test series against visiting Indians, starting in August.

In Silverwood's absence, his assistants Paul Collingwood and Graham Thorpe will take charge of the ODI team for one series each in the home



matches against Sri Lanka and Pakistan from late June to mid-July.

"I'll be passing the reins on for the ODI series. It's not fair on the players if I am operating at less than 100% and it is not fair on myself either," Silverwood was quoted as saying by

the British media.

"Thorpey will do one and Colly will do the other and I'll use it as my break to refresh and get ready for what is ahead of us," he added.

After the two-match home Test series against New Zealand, starting on June 2, England will play 12 white-ball Internationals at home. Their limited overs home series against Sri Lanka begins on June 23 with the first of the three T20Is, followed by three ODIs.

Then, Pakistan's tour of three ODIs and as many T20Is begins on July 16. This will be followed by a five-match home Test series against India beginning August 4, when Silverwood will return at the helm of affairs.

After hosting seven Tests as well as the 12 white-ball Internationals, England is scheduled to tour Pakistan and Bangladesh ahead of the T20 World Cup scheduled for October.

Joe Root's Test team then travels to Australia for the Ashes series, followed by a tour of the Caribbean at the start of next year.

Conway warms up for India with kitty litter on pitch

Auckland: New Zealand batsman Devon Conway is sprinkling kitty litter on practice wickets to simulate spin bowling on the rough, hoping this will help him counter the likes of Ravichandran Ashwin during the World Test Championship final against India next month.

The 29-year-old has been named in the 20-member visiting NZ squad for the two-match Test series against England. The squad will then be trimmed to 15 for the WTC Final in Southampton starting on June 18.

Conway, who impressed in his first International season for his adopted home country last summer in ODIs and T20s, says he has been sprinkling kitty litter on practice wickets to simulate spin bowling pitching in the rough created by bowlers' footmarks.

"Basically the idea is to get the ball to sort of spit out of the rough," Conway, who has featured in three ODIs and 14 T20Is for New Zealand, told *Spark Sport*.

Kitty litter is granulated clay which absorbs waste products of pets like cat or dogs.

"It's a bit harder to play, but good practice. It's about finding a gameplan to combat that and just practice how you're going to play in the game," said the left-handed batsman.

"When it does roughen up and the ball does spit and turn a lot, it's all about being positive."

Conway said he didn't want to rely on just defending against spinners. "If you're going to look to just defend throughout, at some point there might be a ball that's going to have your number."

PTI



Eng IPL stars likely to miss NZ Tests

PTI ■ LONDON

England are unlikely to rush their Indian Premier League players straight from quarantine to the Test squad against New Zealand as they would be lacking red-ball practice, according to reports.

This will mean that the likes of Jos Buttler, Jonny Bairstow, Chris Woakes, Sam Curran and Moeen Ali, who are serving a mandatory 10-day quarantine after returning from the currently-suspended IPL, are likely to miss the two Tests against NZ, starting on June 2.

Their isolation period expires at the weekend, leaving little more than two weeks before the first Test at Lord's.

"The timeline is considered too tight for the (IPL)

returning players, meaning calls up are expected for the likes of Ollie Robinson, Craig Overton and James Bracey," according to a report in *BBC Sport*.

"While fitness levels could be managed, the lack of red-ball practice could be a concern — particularly with other options having spent several weeks competing in the County Championship," said another report in *The Independent*.

Head coach Chris Silverwood on Tuesday will convene his first selection meeting since taking full control of the process from Ed Smith.

England men's cricket managing director Ashley Giles had earlier hinted that players who returned from the suspended IPL are unlikely to feature in the Test series against New Zealand.



People against the Tokyo 2020 Olympics protest around National Stadium



The New Zealand men's cricket team departed for England on Saturday night to play a two-Test series, followed by the ICC World Test Championship final against the Virat Kohli-captained India. NZC posted pictures of the departing team on Twitter and Instagram

Batra in favour of conducting Olympics despite virus fears



People against the Tokyo 2020 Olympics protest around National Stadium

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition to the Olympic Games will be there amidst a raging Covid-19 pandemic but conducting the biggest sporting spectacle in Tokyo will send out a strong message that the world is moving beyond the catastrophic situation, IOA President Narinder Batra said on Saturday.

The Tokyo Olympics, which was scheduled to be held last year, was postponed because of the pandemic. The Indian Olympic

Association (IOA) President, who is also an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, is hoping that the Games will be held as scheduled, from July 23.

"Life has to move on and conducting the Olympics will give a strong message that we have moved beyond the Covid-19 pandemic," Batra said. "Opposition to the Games will always be there but it is now up to the organising committee of Japan and IOC to decide."

"But as far as Indian athletes are concerned we are taking all necessary precautions and have

been preparing to the best of our abilities to put up our best-ever performance in the Olympics," the IOA chief added.

Batra's comment has come after critics from Japan on Friday submitted a petition, calling for the Games to be cancelled as the host nation fights a fourth wave of coronavirus infections.

The IOA chief assured that the travel ban imposed on India by Japan wouldn't affect country's participation in the Games.

Japan on Thursday suspended entry of foreign nationals from 153 nations, including India in the wake of the recent surge in Covid cases across the globe.

"This is a temporary travel ban which has been issued by many countries but when it comes to Olympics, there are different protocols in place which a member nation has adhere to," Batra said.

"I assure all the accredited Olympics-bound Indian athletes that they will face no problem in entering Japan. There are enough guarantees being ensured by the Organising committee and IOC," he said.

"There will be no restrictions for them."



LEWANG40LSKI

Robert Lewandowski, dubbed a “machine” by his wife, has added the Bundesliga record for most goals in a season to the long list of major honours and achievements he has claimed in his illustrious career.

Gerd Müller’s mark of 40 goals in a campaign, set in the 1971/72 season, had withstood the test of time until Lewandowski converted a first-half penalty for Bayern Munich at Freiburg on Saturday.

While Müller set his record over 34 league games, Lewandowski has scored his 40 goals in 28 matches, due to a knee injury last month and squad rotation.

Lewandowski has scored five Bundesliga hat-tricks this term, including a four-goal haul in a 4-3 win over Hertha Berlin in October.

“I have to be honest, I am astonished. I thought Müller’s record would last for forever,” Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said last weekend, after Lewandowski’s treble against Borussia Mönchengladbach.

With 276 goals in 349 games for Bayern and Borussia Dortmund, Lewandowski is already the second-most successful striker in Bundesliga history after Müller, who scored 365 in 427 matches.

Lewandowski was crowned FIFA’s best male player last December, edging out superstars Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

Lewandowski’s 55 goals in all competitions in 2019/20 were key to Bayern winning the treble, as the Poland striker was the first player to be top-scorer in the Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup competitions in a single season.

He was recognised by FIFA after proving himself in the knock-out stage of the Champions League last term.



But Lewandowski was sidelined by a knee injury for Bayern’s quarter-final exit to Paris Saint-Germain last month, as the French giants avenged their 2020 final defeat in Lisbon.

He is set to be the Bundesliga’s top-scorer the sixth time in eight seasons, but Lewandowski was yet to inspire Bayern to European glory until last year.

His four goals for Borussia Dortmund in the 2013 semi-final first leg against Real Madrid helped his former club into the final, but they were beaten by Bayern at Wembley.

In Lewandowski’s first five years at the Bavarian giants, Bayern failed to reach the showpiece match.

But he was crucial to Bayern’s run last term.

He scored and set up Serge Gnabry’s two goals in Bayern’s 3-0 last-16 first-leg win at Chelsea.

When the return leg was played

nearly six months later, Lewandowski had a hand in all four goals — scoring twice and creating two more — in the 4-1 win at the Allianz Arena.

He followed that up by scoring in the historic 8-2 quarter-final rout of Messi’s Barcelona and netted again in the 3-0 semi-final win over Lyon. He finished as the tournament’s top-scorer with 15 goals, two short of Ronaldo’s record for a single season.

His five Champions League goals this term saw him pass Real Madrid legend Raul to leave him on 73 Champions League goals, short of only Messi, on 120, and Ronaldo, who has scored 134 times.

RAW TALENT TO SUPERSTAR

Lewandowski was spotted as a raw 21-year-old playing for Polish club Lech Poznan, where he scored 41 goals in 82 games, and joined Dortmund in 2010.

He made his breakthrough under Jürgen Klopp, helping Dortmund win back-to-back Bundesliga titles in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

He scored a hat-trick in a 5-2 drubbing of Bayern in the 2012 German Cup final, but left for Dortmund’s rivals two years later, having scored 103 goals for the club.

Lewandowski has now scored 293 times in 328 games for Bayern in all competitions.

He is known for his disciplined approach to nutrition and training, resulting in his honed physique.

“My husband is a machine,” said wife Anna, a former Polish karate International who serves as his personal trainer.

Lewandowski is rarely injured and former Bayern captain Oliver Kahn sees him as “an absolute model of professionalism, a condition for staying at the highest level for a very long time”.



Juventus win Derby d’Italia

AFF ■ TURIN

Juventus kept alive its Champions League qualification hopes by winning at Serie A champion Inter Milan 3-2 on Saturday, when Atalanta clinched a place in Europe’s premier competition.

Antonio Conte’s Inter squad had already ended Juventus’ record run of nine straight Serie A titles, and it could have ended his former team’s chances of reaching the Champions League.

Referee Gianpaolo Calvarese had a busy game, awarding three penalties and relying on VAR for assistance. The first spot kick was awarded to Juventus through VAR, which showed Matteo Darmian holding back Giorgio Chiellini with his arm. Cristiano Ronaldo took his second chance from the rebound in the 24th after a poor first effort.

The Inter visitors equalized through another penalty, converted by Romelu Lukaku in the 35th, after Calvarese checked video replays that showed Lautaro Martinez falling under Matthijs de Ligt’s contact.

Cuadrado restored Juve’s lead with a deflected shot before the break.

Chiellini was again in the spotlight when he bundled the ball into his own net under pressure from Lukaku in the 83rd. Calvarese initially awarded the Italy defender a free kick, then showed him a yellow card and awarded the goal after checking replays.

But Cuadrado fell after running into the retreating Ivan Perisic and Calvarese awarded another penalty. The Colombian stayed cool to keep Juve qualification hopes alive.

Zidane casts doubt over Real future

AFF ■ MADRID

Zinedine Zidane hinted on Saturday he could leave as coach of Real Madrid at the end of the season, saying he believes “there comes a time when it’s the moment to change”.

Zidane’s contract expires in 2022 but he has repeatedly refused to confirm he will still be at the club next season.

The Frenchman has a history of surprises after resigning as coach unexpectedly in 2018 before making a shock return a year later.

As a player, he initially announced his retirement from International football in 2004 before coming back for the 2006 World Cup, after which he retired for good.

“You talk about me leaving in 2006 and 2018 and it’s like you think I leave because I’m shirking responsibility or that I quit when things get tough,” said Zidane in a press conference.

“It’s not, the only thing about me is that what I do, I do to the end, and then there comes a time when it’s the moment to change. For everyone, not just for me. For the club, for the good of the club, for the people.

“I don’t leave because it’s easy. It’s not like I turn away and don’t look back. No, there are moments when you have to be there and there are moments when that’s it, it’s finished, it’s time to change. But for the good of everyone, not just for me.”

When it was put to him that it felt like he was saying goodbye, Zidane said: “I can only say the same thing. I don’t know what will happen. I’m here now, yes, and tomorrow we are going to play. Then we will have one match left.

“The rest, I don’t know what will happen. This is Real Madrid. I don’t know if it’s a strength but I am always about the day to day. It’s always been like this.”

FANTASTIC FOXES

Leicester win maiden FA Cup trophy after beating Chelsea in final

AFF ■ LONDON

Leicester won the FA Cup for the first time in the club’s 137-year history on Saturday as Youri Tielemans’s sensational strike beat Chelsea 1-0 in front of 22,000 fans at Wembley.

The largest crowd for a sports event in England since the coronavirus pandemic hit 14 months ago were treated to a goal worthy to win any trophy as the Belgian midfielder blasted into the top corner on 63 minutes.

Kasper Schmeichel produced a stunning save to deny Mason Mount late on and Chelsea also had a goal ruled out by a VAR review for offside.

Five years after the Foxes stunned the Premier League’s giants to become champions, Leicester have now claimed English football’s other prestigious trophy at the fifth time of asking.

Four times they had previously



Leicester’s goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel, right, and Wes Morgan hold the trophy aloft at the end of the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium in London on Saturday

lost the final, but the last of those was 52 years ago.

A historic week for Brendan Rodgers’s men could get even better

as they are on the verge of sealing a place in next season’s Champions League.

The sides meet again in three

days’ time at Stamford Bridge in a pivotal clash to decide who secures a top-four finish in the Premier League.

Chelsea need a quick response after losing for just the fourth time in 27 games since Thomas Tuchel replaced the sacked Frank Lampard in January.

The Blues also have a Champions League final to look forward to against Manchester City in two weeks’ time, but could end the campaign without silverware or a place in Europe’s premier club competition next season.

Chelsea’s success under Tuchel has come thanks to an excellent defensive record, but their struggles at the other end were again exposed.

Tuchel’s men dominated before half-time but laboured to create clear-cut chances despite Leicester losing defensive lynchpin Jonny Evans to injury midway through the first half.

Chelsea face Barca for WCL title

AFF ■ GOTHENBURG

The Women’s Champions League officially moves into a new era next season with the overdue introduction of a group stage, but this year’s final in Gothenburg on Sunday between Chelsea and Barcelona already marks a significant turning point.

After winning the competition in each of the last five years, and seven times in the last decade, Lyon are conspicuous by their absence.

There has been a French or German Champions League winner in each of the 13 years, since Arsenal lifted the trophy in 2007, but this time will be different.

Lyon lost in the quarter-finals to Paris Saint-Germain, themselves beaten in the last four by Barcelona, the Spanish champions.

German hopes ended when Bayern Munich lost in the semi-finals to Chelsea, who have since gone on to win the English Women’s Super League (WSL) and are eyeing European glory to go with it.

Torres stars with hat-trick as City win 7-goal thriller



Martin Dubravka dives but fails to save the goal from Ferran Torres

AFF ■ NEWCASTLE

remain in 16th.

Ferran Torres scored his first Manchester City hat-trick as the newly-crowned English champions twice came from behind to beat Newcastle 4-3 on Friday night.

With a third Premier League title in four years sealed with three games to spare, Pep Guardiola again took the chance to hand a number of his fringe players an opportunity to shine two weeks ahead of the Champions League final.

Goalkeeper Scott Carson was handed his City debut at 35 and a first Premier League appearance for almost 10 years.

But it was Torres who made the strongest case to be involved against Chelsea in Porto on May 29 with a trio of fine finishes.

Victory opens up City’s unassailable lead at the top of the table to 13 points over Manchester United.

Newcastle secured safety in the top-flight last weekend and

LEEDS WIN 4-0

Leeds ended Burnley’s winless run at home to nine games with a 4-0 victory on Saturday that bolstered their bid for a top-10 finish.

Substitute Rodrigo scored two late goals to give Leeds a four-point cushion over 11th-place Aston Villa, which plays at Crystal Palace on Sunday.

Mateusz Klich finished a counterattack by curling in a shot shortly before halftime, and Jack Harrison doubled the lead at the hour mark by getting a touch to flick Ezgjan Alioski’s low shot into the net.

Burney, which won 2-0 at Fulham on Monday to secure top-flight status for a sixth consecutive season, hasn’t won at Turf Moor since a 3-2 victory against Aston Villa on Jan 27.

In other match, Nathan Tella scored his first goal for Southampton in a 3-1 win over already-relegated Fulham.

Nadal storms into 12th Rome final

AFF ■ ROME

Nine-time champion Rafael Nadal advanced to the Italian Open final for the 12th time on Saturday with a 6-4, 6-4 win over American Reilly Opelka.

The Spaniard will play either defending champion Novak Djokovic or Italian Lorenzo Sonego in what will also be his 52nd Masters final.

Playing his 500th clay-court match, Nadal staged off break points in the fourth game of the first set and did not look back to win through in 1hr 32min.

“It’s important for my confidence to be back in a final,” said Nadal, who exited early in Monte Carlo and Madrid.

“I did what I had to do today, it was not an easy or beautiful match to play. “The work is done,” he added.



Two weeks before Roland Garros, Nadal had a tough run to the semi-finals, saving two match points in a 3hr 30min third round battle with Canadian Denis Shapovalov.

But the 34-year-old was rarely troubled by the towering American, who was playing his first Masters semi-final.

Nadal blasted down 11 aces and did not drop serve against a player who had not dropped a set all week.

A break in either set, Opelka’s first dropped this week, put the second seed through to a possible fifth final meeting in Rome against five-time winner Djokovic.

Nadal is looking to equal Djokovic’s record of 36 ATP Masters 1000 titles on Sunday.

He is also attempting to win 10 or more titles at a single event for the fourth time, after Roland Garros (13), Barcelona (12) and Monte Carlo (11).

PLISKOVA TO FACE IGA

Czech ninth seed Karolina Pliskova booked her berth in a third consecutive Italian Open final on Saturday with a three sets win over Croatia’s Petra Martić.

Former world number one Pliskova won through 6-1, 3-6, 6-2 in the semi-final as she bids to reclaim the title she won in 2019 but lost last year after retiring injured while trailing Romania’s Simona Halep in the final.

Pliskova is the only top 10 player left in the draw and will next meet reigning French Open champion Iga Swiatek who beat American teenager Coco Gauff 7-6, 6-3 in the other semi-final.

Earlier Poland’s Swiatek ousted fifth seed Elina Svitolina, a two-time Rome winner, 6-2, 7-5 in 1hr 36min in the match which had been pushed back from Friday because of rain in Rome.

Zlatan out of Euro 2020

AFF ■ STOCKHOLM

Sweden international Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been ruled out of Euro 2020 with a knee injury, the Swedish Football Association confirmed on Saturday.

Ibrahimovic sprained his knee a week ago playing for club side AC Milan who revealed earlier on Saturday that medical experts recommended “conservative treatment for six weeks”.

The 39-year-old forward returned to his national side last March nearly five years after his international farewell.

Sweden open their Euro 2020 campaign against Spain in Seville on June 14, before fur-



ther Group E games against Slovakia four days later and Poland in Saint-Petersburg on the 23rd.

Ibrahimovic’s treatment would last until June 26 at least.

“I have spoken to Zlatan Ibrahimovic who unfortunately has told me that his injury will stop his participation in the European Championship this summer,” Sweden team coach Janne Andersson said in a statement.

“Of course this feels sad, most of all for Zlatan but, also for us,” Andersson added.

The veteran forward injured his knee last week during a 3-0 win over Juventus, and will not play again this season for the club.

Ibrahimovic has 62 goals from 118 appearances for Sweden but has only scored once for Milan since February after missing games through injury and suspension.

The second wave of COVID-19 is leaving death and destruction in its wake. Amidst this chaos there are people who are working round the clock to help those looking for plasma as a treatment to save lives. SHALINI SAKSENA chats up these COVID warriors

Last year, when the virus gripped the world and killed lakhs, a new ray hope came in the form of plasma therapy. Several people came forward and did whatever they could to connect the recipient with the donor. However, in 2020, the situation was not what it is today. Cut to April 2021, the situation is just the opposite.

The demand for plasma donation is sky high. This is when people like Adnan Shah and Chef Sanjay Raina stepped in. The idea to create a Twitter handle — PlasmaNCR — was to field requests and expand plasma donor pools.

“It was quite a spontaneous decision. When the COVID-19 hell broke loose, we saw some requests on Twitter for plasma which were not getting as much attention as requests for hospital beds and oxygen cylinders. We decided that this would be our focus area and PlasmaNCR was born,” Raina says. And it began with him and Adnan Shah, his friend, to assist fellow Kashmiris in NCR in getting a hospital bed. But the moment they saw the scale of unfolding disaster, they decided to help whomsoever they could.

And disaster it is. Shah and Raina work round the clock to help recipients connect with the donors. Shah tells you that he and Raina sleep only four hours each to handle the number of calls they get 24X7.

“I sleep from 12 am to 4 am; Raina sleeps from 4 am till 8 pm. That is how we manage to address the many calls as possible. So much so that my number (07006946304) has now gone viral since then. We want to reach out to as many people as fast as possible in the shortest possible time because every minute is crucial. People can reach out on our Twitter handle where the patient or his family member can share the details and fill out a concise form there. We then reach out to people who can come forward and become donors. At the same time, we are trying to create a donor pool. We started this social cause on the day things went out of control. On Day 1 we got 100 calls and since the number has only been rising. Today, we are getting 1,000 requests. The minute there is a thumbs up on a request it means that we are working on connecting the donor with the recipient. And it is not first come first serve. It depends on the urgency and criticality of each case,” Shah explains.

However, it is not always possible for the duo to close to request at their end. That is when they reach out to others doing similar work to help them out. No request is closed until a recipient is connected with a donor.

“We have been working for the last 26 days. To begin with we were closing 150 request. Today it is 200. The nation is in crisis and it is not possible to give the exact number

since we are also not keeping track



Nitesh Singh, TeamSOS India

of the numbers. When we started this initiative, we never realised that we would get so many calls; never realised that our work would be recognised in Delhi-NCR. Now, we get requests from Mumbai and the Valley as well. We have a contact in Mumbai. whatever calls we get from the city, we direct it to that person. Similarly, we have contacts in Kashmir and ask them to help us when a request comes from that State. We are also trying to lend a helping hand in States where there is a need,” Shah says.

Nitesh Singh, who started Team SOS India in April 2020, tells you that their initiative has 1,723 volunteers spread all across the country today. However, he tells you that this is a small group given the number of requests they get.

“Our team works till 4 am daily to handle the cases we get. To make it easy for us to meet requests, we have three teams — North, Central and South. On an average, we are getting 500-600 requests for beds and 2,000 plasma requests. When I started this last year, it was on my personal number but soon realised I needed a big team and created Team SOS India. The idea is to save one person and in doing so, one is saving one’s soul,” Singh says.

He tells you that the situation at present is not good. “We are getting requests from places people would have never heard of. Take an example — Tanuku, in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh or Machilipatnam. Last year, we weren’t getting any cases from the South. Today, we get five-six requests daily. Also, people are scared this time round,” Singh says.

The challenge or the gap that exists today is in Delhi-NCR. “There is so much negativity around

LIFE SAVIOURS



Sanjay Raina and Adnan Shah, owners of Twitter handle, PlasmaNCR



Bhawna Arora

in the Capital due to shortage of oxygen, medicines and beds. All this makes people of Delhi scared. Then there is Black Fungus scare,” Singh tells you.

Another challenge he faces is that not many donors come forward as they fear they may test positive again. Also, they don’t want their number to be given out.

“In such a situation, a person is assigned to the donor who are volunteers and their extended family. We coordinate everything. Just arranging the donor doesn’t solve the problem. Donation has to go through too. The donor has to go to the hospital where the recipient is, give the patient ID and donate plasma. Since we have been doing this for a year, things are in place,” Singh says who is an educator by profession and teaches students to prepare for JEE.

Singh is on a mission — Mission 2024 — to ensure that nobody dies due to lack of blood. “If I can get 10,000 people from across India who can donate blood, we can meet the challenge of any pandemic,” Singh says. Bhawna Arora, founder of Kamla Arora Blessings Foundation and based out of London tells you that her journey began in 2017 when her mother died due to a rare blood disease in India. “I saw the com-



Nikhil Chawla

plexities to get blood donors. We have been for the last three years working in the donation campaign. Since the pandemic hit in March 2020, we have been working to fetch a donor for the recipient. We have received over 60,000 calls since last year for plasma requests,” Arora says.

Her number (8810618253) has been circulated on social media platforms and she gets WhatsApp messages and Facebook. She and her India coordinator, Vivek Jain (9810063261) manage to attend to the requests between the two on them. “Looking at the demand, we are working day and night. One doesn’t look at the time when there is a life involved,” Arora says.

She tells you that the need of the hour is to give the right advocacy to the people so that they can forward and serve humanity. “Second there is a need to streamline communication between all stakeholders. We live in the time of AI. Why not use it to optimum. There is so much information out there, some verified some not. We need to structure it more so we can serve more people. It is necessary to motivate people to donate as well. There is a need to have one large platform — we need one channel where the needs are met, faith will develop and the people will come forward and do what is required. Things have become competitive today. There are so many people working trying to bring donor and recipient together but we don’t know who is giving value output. The fraud and mistrust is too hampering donors from coming forward,” Arora opines.

Agrees Sarthak Verma of Plasma Connect app. Back then he used to get one or two downloads. “Today,

there are over a 1,000 users. Also back then, few people knew about plasma therapy. Today, there is far more awareness as it has become a critical treatment for COVID-19,” Verma says.

According to him the biggest challenge is the authenticity of the requests made and the donors. “Many brokers have emerged and are charging to connect them with donors. We don’t want such people. It creates mistrust among the donors. When people come to my app now, a form has to be filled in. The information is then verified. This takes care of any false leads and we are able to connect the correct donor with the correct recipient,” Verma says.

For Nikhil Chawla, in the Capital, it all started with a family member needing plasma. “When I was running around trying to arrange for the same I realised the lack of infrastructure and the huge gap between the need for plasma and donors. I contacted everyone on my social media if they were willing to donate plasma and the journey began,” Chawla recalls.

And it has been a tough one for him personally. In the last 15 days he has lost four immediate family members and had thought of giving it up. But then he got a message from a mother thanking him for helping her get in touch with a donor that saved her daughter’s life. “When I lost two of my cousins, *taiji* and *tauji*, I thought all my efforts to create a data and putting it out had come to not. But messages like the one sent by the mother keeps me going,” Chawla says.

He tells you that a donor doesn’t have to go to the hospital to donate plasma. “There are blood banks. The donor can go there, donate blood and walk away with plasma. There are many banks that give plasma in lieu of blood. There is lack of awareness leading to wrong information; people think that if they donate plasma their antibodies will reduce. This is incorrect. The only thing to remember is that one can donate only once a month,” Chawla tells you.

Initially, the idea was to help people around Delhi but he couldn’t turn down a request that came from another city. “It has become an obsession to try and help as many people as possible. I just manage to sleep couple of hours at night. My work is on hold for now. So I am trying to help whoever I can. It brings me peace when I am able to people,” Chawla says.

‘With little exposure, rap culture in Jammu is slow’

Shayaan Bhat aka rapper SHEN B from Jammu, who has released his latest hip hop track Zamaana, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about how he got into music and the challenges he faced



◆ What is Zamaana, the EP, about?

Basically, the EP has all the songs that are really close to me. They talk about things that have happened and experiences that I have been through over the course of time that I have been doing music like bullying, censorship and my faith in God. It is a mix of many things. When I am writing a song, it has many things; it is a journey. I ask myself a set of questions. For example, it could be about society. I then answer these myself. That is how *Zamaana* was born.

◆ The songs highlight issues the youth face like bullying, censorship, self-esteem, corruption and faith. Why choose these subjects?

I have faced a lot of bullying when I was growing up because the way I used to think about the world. My interests were different when I was in school. I was an introvert. I would bunk my school to go to learn music. I loved to spend time playing the instruments. Others kids would make fun of me and say that I was weird. I was fat too that led to bullying as well. Body shaming was so common. People would look down upon me because I am an artist. Where I come from Jammu. There is only one acceptable job, a Government job. People don’t understand art here. I was pressurised to take up a Government job but I rode all that.

◆ From Shayaan to Shen B, how did that happen?

I gave this name to myself. I could have just gone with Shayaan; I love my name. But I wanted to create a totally different persona for myself - one who is expressive and is an extrovert. When I became Shen B, it gave me the power to express myself. I had a few friends who supported me. I had left music for four years to do m masters. I went to Mumbai and worked there but then I came back home because I wanted peace in my life. My friends encouraged me to get back to music and here I am.

◆ How did you get into music?

It has been with me since I was a toddler. My grandparents were musicians so I would say that music is in my blood. I come from an orthodox Muslim family and they don’t encourage music. But I continued to learn. It was only when I turned 22 when my mother told me about our family’s legacy but they stopped due to religious reasons. I got into music because I saw a few people play guitar. I was hooked. I was in Class VIII. I joined them, became drummer and was part of their band.

◆ Why hip-hop?

If I could sing, I would. Unfortunately, I don’t have the voice of a singer. I can just express myself. I had made a rap about a man who had bullied me and it went viral in Jammu and that got me more interested.

◆ What is the hip-hop scene in the city?

It is growing but sadly, those in underground rap have never left the city. There is lack of exposure. But we are slowly getting there. We have gatherings; rappers from other cities come. Since there is no club culture, the rap scene is slow.

◆ What are the challenges faced to be a singer?

When I came back home in 2019, I didn’t know much about rap but I started putting up my music. During the lockdown, we had no Internet. I had to look for locations where I could get good reception to post my music. I lost my mother due to COVID-19. She was my only supporter so things changed for me after that. I also don’t get many gigs. But I am a graphic designer and earn enough to work on my music.

‘Staying safe is need of the hour’

■ Tell us about your experience of being part of Bigg Boss 13.

That was of course, was back in 2019. There was no Bigg Boss in 2020 for obvious reasons. I would say that 2021 is also turning out to be like 2020. To come back to Bigg Boss, the experience was fantastic. It was not the first time that I was offered to part of this reality show. I was offered Bigg Boss 1 and since then it came to me almost every year. But I kept turning it down. I was not ready to be part of the show till 2019. It is a very intense game that one needs to be ready for. When it came to me again, my gut told to be go ahead with it. I am glad that I did it since it is the only season to have the highest rating. I had a lot of fun of doing it.

■ What was the take away from it?

Now that the season is behind me, I can think of only good things it brought me — the good changes. It makes you realise how important family is. One is cut off from the world when one is in the House. You are living in a beautiful luxurious house but there are a lot of restrictions and limitations. It is about survival of the fittest. One has to be prepared to be part of it because it can take a toll on you mentally.

■ You kept refusing and said yes to Season 13. What was the attraction?

I do follow my gut and intuition when it comes to choosing projects. When I was offered the season, I was ready and there was something in me that told me to go for it. I had been offered so many times and felt this was like a now or never for me.

■ You did Nach Baliye as well.

In *Nach Baliye*, I was in my zone. I was known for my dancing. I think I am the only one to have been part of the show twice. It was great to dance with Parag, him being a non-dancer. It was tough to make him get up and dance and I have such love for it.

■ You have done a few reality shows? What’s your take on them? Does it help get noticed in the right circles?

The people who have already been established are the ones who get an

I would say it was my calling. The album was destined to happen because of the way things unfolded and it carved a path for me. Once the song became popular I felt it was something that I was good at, be a good dancer than an engineer

opportunity to show another side to you. Reality show are great but it is different from a talent-based reality show. Shows like this come to artists who are somewhat established. Reality shows, on the other hand give you the opportunity to showcase your talent and get noticed. Bigg Boss does give you an opportunity to stand out, garner attention and have a large fan following. But matters is what you do after that to achieve a high.

■ Does it bother you that people still think of you are the Kaanta Laga girl?

Not at all. Just the opposite. It is wonderful. People spend years to create an identity and with my very first song I was able to make such a strong one and no mater what I did after that, I would forever be the *Kaanta Laga* girl and there is only one *Kaanta Laga* girl in the whole wide world. I am proud to have this tag. It makes me happy that after so many years, people still enjoy the song.

■ Did you think that the song would be such a hit?

Forget back then, it feels so surreal that the song garnered so much attention even today. I find it difficult to believe the popularity and success of the song. I was just a college girls when she was spotted outside her college and offered the music. I had no aspirations to be part of the industry. I did purely

because I wanted to be seen on TV.

■ How did you end up doing a music album?

I was sitting outside my college when I was spotted by director duo Radhika Rao and Vinay Sapru. I was not even looking my best that day but they probably felt I fit the bill. Back then songs were made like films. We spent two-three months preparing. I was such a spoilt brat and didn’t understand the seriousness of the work. It was only when the song became hot that I understood. It was such a fairy tale for me — a Gujarati girl from a middle class family became a star overnight.

■ What was about the album that made you join the industry?

I would say it was my calling. The album was destined to happen because of the way things unfolded and it carved a path for me. Once the song became popular I felt it was something that I was good at, be a good dancer than an engineer. From the dancer, I branched out and did two web series and looking forward to more projects. ■ Things have once again come to a standstill for the industry. How are you coping?

I have understood that I need to deal with the situation since I am not alone. I do have a few projects but they are on hold. *Jaan hai to jahan hai*. Money can be earned again. Staying safe is the need of the hour.



Talktime

SHEFALI JARIWALA

The Kaanta Laga girl, who was part of Bigg Boss 13, speaks with Shalini Saxena about how she ended up doing the music video that propelled her into the industry.



You are only as beautiful as the many beautiful things you do for others without expectation
— Janelle Monae



The impact of the pandemic on the youth is disruptive. While they are actively helping others, they are also simultaneously dealing with immense emotional turmoil of their own, writes Dr CHANDNI TUGNAIT, as she suggests ways to move beyond it to create a life outside of it

THE FIGHT FOR SANITY

The present scenario, with the rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths, is nothing short of a nightmare. Most people are experiencing mixed emotions and a lingering feeling of, “I don't feel like doing anything”. This is not only because of the news and information overload on social media, but also the fact that people are losing their near and dear ones without as much of a hint.

The pain, overwhelm, fears, anger, social isolation and uncertainty are not only impacting the youth but even the kids. The years 2020 and 2021 have changed not just how we live or work but also how our children study and play. While the working youth seem to be grappling with the situation, whether it is loss of a job, business, medical facility, or life, the kids are a witness to it all. The impact is much more than what meets the eye. The confused feelings, unprocessed emotions, unclear thoughts and panicky actions are leaving a deep impact on our mental and emotional health as well.

The immediate and the long-term mental health impacts of the pandemic on the kids is difficult to estimate. However, the cases of anxiety, stress and depression amongst children between the age group of 5-16 years has seen a huge spike in the last one year. While initially they felt relieved with the online classes, the severity of the pandemic and the impact of the changes in their lives (and that of their parents) soon began to dawn upon them. The common complaints that I get from parents these days is lack of focus, lack of physical exercise, over-eating, irritability, anxiety, bouts of anger, fears and sadness in kids.

Ironically, all this is being experienced by the parents as well. No matter how we conduct ourselves in front of our children, they know exactly what is happening around us. The TV, news, social media, conversations on phone and with each other, the quarantine of a family member, life-threatening situations, the panic on our faces — they can sense it all.

The schools are rushing with the syllabus online because the education of the child is important but are we considerate towards their mental health? How are the current experiences and unprocessed emotions going to impact these children as adults?

Our mental health impacts how we respond, feel, think and act. Our behaviour, decision-making and physical health is all linked to our mental health. Hence, it is essential to give love and assurance and impart coping skills to not only the adults but also to the children.

The pandemic has reshaped the world beyond imagination. The suffering in India has gone to the level of basic requirements of food, shelter, medical facility and transport not being met for a large part of the population. The situation is grim with high levels of insecurity and chaos.

Of late, there is propensity for blame towards the authorities. It's never easy to lose a loved one, never. The fear, anger, blame, guilt — the whole gamut of emotions is all justified. But what is also important is to pause for a moment and accept all these emotions and begin to process them. Situation is grim for everyone (in some way or the other). What we need in today's times is prayer, compassion, love and gratitude.

The impact of the pandemic on the youth is disruptive. While they are actively helping others, they are also simultaneously dealing

with immense emotional turmoil of their own.

The fact is that as a country we do not have a strong medical infrastructure *vis-à-vis* our population. We all know this (we knew it all along). But what we didn't know is the severity of the virus and how it could take away our loved ones away from us, forever, in a matter of hours. We are all guilty at some level. We all have to take the ownership for the present situation in order to change it. Despite knowing the safety protocol, a large part of the population didn't follow it. Do we always need a lockdown to exhibit appropriate behaviour? Do we know someone who doesn't wear masks, someone who went for the Diwali party at a friend's house with 20 others, someone who couldn't wait to travel to Goa, Kerala, Maldives, someone who refuted the existence of covid all together?

Now is not the time to find faults with self or others but to change the focus to what good is happening around us and how can we make it better. The brain is extremely powerful in amplifying whatever we focus upon. Till we keep complaining about our present circumstances, our mind will focus on it. The more we talk about it, write about it or feel negative about it, the more we reinforce the same neural pathways in our brain that keep adding to the misery. To change this, let's focus on the good around us.

Look around, there are many people trying to help with oxygen cylinders, connections in hospitals for beds, arranging plasma, food, support, counselling, therapies and more. Not everyone is trying to bribe, blackmail or take advantage of the situation. It is commendable how the youth is also coming forward to offer assistance, structure communities and make a difference.

Research shows that over 70% of the youth is deeply traumatised with the uncertainty the pandemic has created whether it is with respect to life, relationships, social interactions, forms of expression, health and lives of their loved ones or the disruption in future prospects for education and employment for the youth.

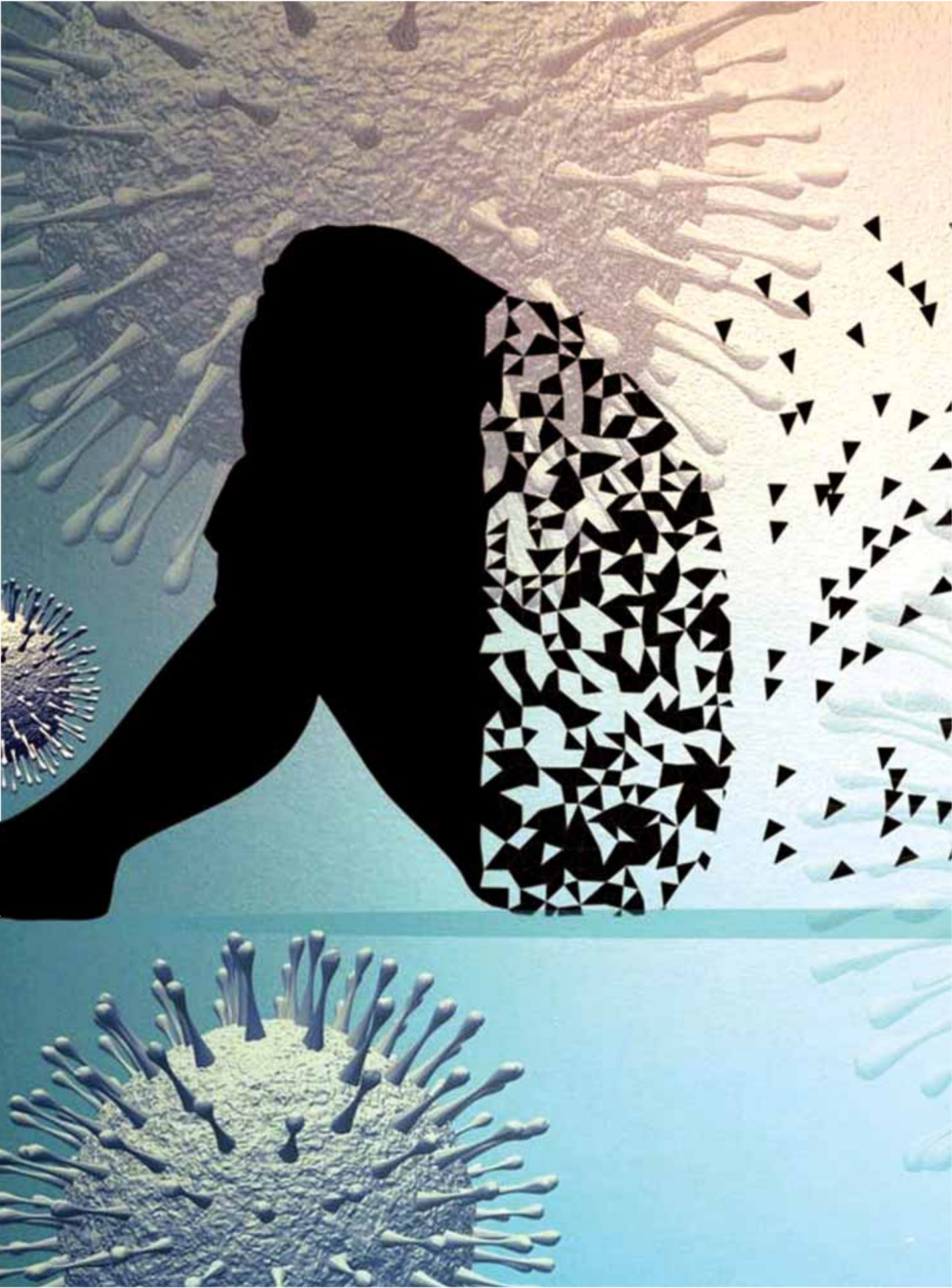
In addition to the grief and loss, there is an impending feeling of doom as over 43% of youth are uncertain about their future career prospects. Many even contemplate suicide. This darkness remains unnoticed as we are fighting to survive this situation.

Despite all odds, the youth is stepping up, raising their voice, offering support, structuring communities, enabling groups and volunteering in ways more than one to fight the situation.

While we should offer them social and psychological support to deal with all this, we should also come up with measures to protect this generation from being permanently scarred by this crisis — physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, financially and behaviourally. Initiatives by the government as well as private sector organisations will help in the long run though immediate support in the form of counselling, therapy, and open communication can go a long way.

The future of our nation lies with our youth and it's of grave importance that we do not take this lightly by letting their life be in a quandary.

There are many people bracing and surviving the virus amidst all the deaths, there



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT OVER 70% OF THE YOUTH IS DEEPLY TRAUMATISED WITH THE UNCERTAINTY THE PANDEMIC HAS CREATED WHETHER IT IS WITH RESPECT TO LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS, SOCIAL INTERACTIONS, FORMS OF EXPRESSION, HEALTH AND LIVES OF THEIR LOVED ONES OR THE DISRUPTION IN FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT FOR THE YOUTH

are many who are offering relentless care and prayers for humanity at large. There is help and compassion in many places, if not all. Hold onto that and allow yourself to be a conduit for more compassion, gratitude and assistance in any way possible instead of fear and uncertainty.

Coronavirus is probably going to be here for a long time. But we have to move beyond it to create a life outside of it, responsibly.

Some points to take into consideration are:

- **Process emotions, don't vent nor bottle them up:** Allow open communication to address the stressors. Listen and express deeply without judgments and in case of chronic stress or anxiety, seek support from an expert.
- **Respond, don't react:** There is already a lot going on in everyone's lives. Don't snap at people at home or even on other people's social media feed. We can share our views without attacking others.
- **Operate from love and compassion and not fears and anger:** Say a kind word, offer support, just hold the space for others to be themselves and accept the situation but do not cause panic with minute-by-minute update of statistics.
- **Be responsible, not reckless:** Follow the safety protocol. Even if you have recovered from Covid, do not act as if all is well. Our actions inspire many others and by being responsible we save not just ourselves but many people around us. The parties, social gatherings, important meetings, can all wait or be done online. Life is precious.
- **Help in any way possible, don't panic:** When someone you know is in a crisis, get valid connects, check the sources, be mindful, take precaution, help in every way possible and pray for the best. This is all we can do

currently. Also, limit the news and social media intake to up to 15-30 minutes a day to be well apprised of the situation and not be engulfed by it.

- **Do your bit, refrain from judging self and others:** Judgment only takes us away from action thereby delaying results. Be proactive and sensitive to the battles everyone is going through.
- **Take care of yourself:** You can't pour from an empty cup. So, take care of yourself — eating habits, sleep, exercise, breathing and mindfulness practices, get vaccinated and be in the attitude of gratitude.
- **Ask:** “What can I do today to make a difference?” instead of complaining.

It's imperative we come together from the space of love, compassion and gratitude to fight the pandemic. There's no other way.

No act is small. No prayer is negligible. No support is trivial. Looking around and complaining and blaming will only cause more pressure on our emotional, mental and physical well-being.

Operate from awareness and take care of self and others. We are undeniably in a crisis and there are faults at every level — from the root to the top. However, this is not the time to find faults and indulge in blame-game.

It's time to focus on “what can I do to make a difference today?” and then purely from a space of compassion, ACT; without worrying about the results.

Will we be able to save the world? I don't know. But what I do know is that with that one act a day, and thirty acts a month, we can create ripples of change. It all matters. Choose change over complaints. We always have a choice.

The writer is a renowned Psychotherapist & the founder of Gateway of Healing and Life Artistry

In conclusion, we can state that there is the omnipotent God to both protect us and reward us, some rogue souls notwithstanding.

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Hawks cash in on Israel-Hamas war

Gaza has once again grabbed the headlines. In East Jerusalem, blood-stained streets and smoldering tyres are telltale signs of a gory fight between the Israeli security forces and the Hamas. The region is witnessing the worst violence since the 50-day war that took place in 2014. Today, the bitter truth for Israel is that Hamas, an Islamic militant group, controls the sensitive Gaza region.

Palestinians live under Israeli settler colonialism. Their fear is based on experience of torture, daily bout of humiliations, constant denial of basic freedoms, absence of dignity of life, living and labour, imprisonment and finally maiming and killing. So it is very natural that every Palestinian born there will have the basic instinct to fight against the Israeli occupation. The hatred is growing towards Israel and its security forces. And if it goes like this for any longer, war-like situation will be a daily affair.

The moot point is what Israel wants? Israel wants total control over East Jerusalem. The current conflict has emerged because of the forced expulsion of Palestinian families from the occupied East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. Some sources say the lands occupied by these families were originally under Jewish ownership. But the Palestinians see this as an extension of an Israeli policy to displace as many Palestinians as possible from Jerusalem. The final aim is to reclaim and retain a majority Jewish identity in the city.

Will Palestine ever get the desired independent land? No, at least for the foreseeable future. It must be said here that the struggle and jihad for Palestine will continue. The Islamic resistance movements like the Hamas, meaning strength, will keep challenging the very identity of the Israeli state. In fact, the Hamas Covenant which consists of 36 articles clearly highlights how the group will take the Islamic movement further. Article 15 of the Covenant says that the jihad for the liberation of Palestine is an individual duty.

It says, "The day that enemies usurp part of Muslim land, jihad becomes the individual duty of every Muslim. In face of the Jews usurpation of Palestine, it is compulsory that the banner of jihad be raised. To do this requires the diffusion of Islamic consciousness among the masses,



Smoke rises following Israeli airstrikes on a building in Gaza City on Friday

AP

both on the regional, Arab and Islamic ummah levels. It is necessary to instill the spirit of jihad in the heart of the nation so that they would confront the enemies and join the ranks of the fighters."

Palestinians have resisted Israeli occupation and colonisation for decades now. Anger on the Palestinian street has grown. People are raising the banner of protest against Israel. They claim that Israel is making concerted efforts to erase the Palestinian identity from the land.

For now, Tel Aviv has rebuffed any discussion for ceasefire. It vows to continue the offensive. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, is in favour of stepping up its Gaza strikes. He said, "At the conclusion of a situational assessment, it was decided that both the might of the attacks and the frequency of the attacks will be increased."

He also commented that "Hamas and Islamic jihad paid... and will pay a very heavy price for their beligerence... their blood is forfeit". This indicates that Israel will continue its offensive. There is a possibility that this will add fuel to the fire over the decade's long crisis in West Asian region.

The spokesman for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said he is saddened by the increasingly large number of casualties, including children, from Israeli air strike in Gaza and of Israeli fatalities from rockets launched from Gaza. He called for maximum restraint by the Israeli security forces. The UN has warned that the planned expulsion of the Palestinian families from East Jerusalem by Israel could amount to war crimes. But it also lashed out at the Hamas for the indiscriminate launch of rockets and mortars towards Israeli population centres.

Meanwhile, the US postponed a UN Security Council meeting on the ongoing flare-up between Israel and the Hamas for the next week. The discussion was supposed to take place this week, but the US is trying to make room for diplomacy so as to avert the worst situation in the contested Gaza territory. The US, a key ally of Israel, has confirmed on multiple occasions that the latter has the full right to defend itself as the terrorist groups from Gaza have launched about 1,750 rockets into its territory. However, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has brushed aside all speculation that Washington

is trying to torpedo the crucial talks altogether. President Joe Biden said, "One of the things that I have seen thus far is that there has not been a significant overreaction."

Around the same time, Israel has been pummeling Gaza with air strikes, levelling buildings leading to killing of dozens of people. Biden has already touted Israel's right to self-defense amid rocket attacks from the Hamas that have killed dozens of people. Thus the White House clarified that Jerusalem must be a place of co-existence.

The European Union, a group of 27 nations, too has criticised the Hamas for the war, by saying that Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel were totally unacceptable. And the EU called on all sides to aim for de-escalation and to prevent more civilian casualties. At the same time, EU foreign policy chief Joseph Borrell condemned eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem. He also called the evictions illegal, saying it only serves to fuel tensions.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson aired his view that "the UK is deeply concerned by the growing violence and civilian casualties and we want to see urgent de-escalation of tensions". Arab League chief

Ahmed Aboul Gheit called the Israeli air strikes indiscriminate and irresponsible.

However, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a known bete noire of the Israel state, said "Zionists understand nothing but the language of force, so the Palestinians must increase their power and resistance to force the criminals to surrender and stop their brutal acts." Meanwhile the 57-member group of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation voiced its concern over the deteriorating security scenario in East Jerusalem.

Now, as international call for restraint has been raised, both the Hamas and Israel must understand that they are simply killing innocent civilians. War is not the solution to the land problem. The current crisis is only offering the radical elements on both sides a chance to advance their agenda.

The massive deployment of ground troops by the Netanyahu Government on the border signals a broader offensive in the coming days. Moving armed forces near Gaza raises the possibility of an invasion and a bloody war. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) is preparing for all kinds of eventualities and an esca-

lation at the moment. Such deployment of forces took place only in 2014.

As the war continues, global media reports that most of the rockets fired by the Hamas are being blocked by Israel's Iron Dome Defence System. However, some of the rockets that got through the superior defence circuit killed only a few people on the side of Israel. On the other hand, the attacks launched by Israel through its air force over Gaza have been more deadly, with a reported death toll over 90 so far. The Iron Dome is designed to selectively deal with rocket attacks. And also this system intercepts those enemy rockets that head for populated areas. The IDF claims that the Iron Dome is around 90 per cent effective. However, the sources say even a high probability intercept rate can make the Hamas efforts to destroy populated areas purely ineffective. It is to be noted here that the Iron Dome system was made with American finance.

The constant struggle for Palestine to establish its sovereign identity has become a permanent irritant for Israel. On the other hand, Israeli attempt to maintain its status quo and further expand and also to evict illegal Palestinian occupants (according to Tel Aviv) from East Jerusalem foment an ever greater war in the region. The Hamas wants the Jews dead and the state of Israel eliminated. For them, it is not about Israel, but this is ultimately about the Jews.

Today, situation in East Jerusalem is terribly unnerving. It is time for the Israeli garrison state to talk peace. The Hamas, only by working as a proxy, will find it really difficult to bring a solution to the Palestinians. Only result would be death of civilians. And the hawks will be happy. When the deadly, Covid-19 is killing millions across the globe, Tel Aviv and the Hamas must not venture out to take more lives anymore.

(Dr Makhan Saikia has taught political science and international relations for over a decade in institutions of national and international repute across the country after specialisation in globalisation and governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He is the chief editor of the Journal of Global Studies, an international research journal)

Tel Aviv's concerted efforts to evict 'illegal' Palestinian settlers from East Jerusalem and Hamas' ceaseless attempts to destroy Israel and Jews are the biggest hurdles in arriving at a peaceful solution. The ongoing war offers the hawks from both sides the much sought-after opportunity as they have some political axe to grind



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

The biggest problem, more relevant to India, is the presence of an extremely high educational hierarchy, which places MBBS course at the top while degrading all other health professionals and scientists. However, when it becomes difficult for qualified doctors to treat patients with the existing knowledge, the role of virologist, geneticist, veterinary doctor, microbiologist, pharmacologist and immunologist becomes crucial to understand the properties and origin of the new virus to develop medicines and vaccines



NIKITA RAWAT

Systemic flaws in Indian health sector exposed

The second wave of Covid-19 has exposed our lack of preparedness for any medical emergency as India has not been able to meet any basic medical requirements that do not need complicated technology or high investment i.e. medicines, oxygen, ventilators, PPE kits, vaccine, etc. Had we faced any other medical emergency related to a virus deadlier than SARS-Cov or some other deadly radiation (as faced by Japan after nuclear attack), probably Indian population would have halved by now.

Covid-19 has provided the nation an opportunity to introspect problems in our health-care system to effectively deal with the ongoing pandemic (which doesn't seem to get over before 2022), and any potential health emergency in the future. Rather than squarely blaming any past or present government at the Centre or State, the purpose of this column is to shake our policy makers to realise the systemic flaws and bottlenecks in the way of development of robust and inclusive health infrastructure in India.

First, we need to recognise that the human health is interconnected with his surrounding environment, including living species i.e. various animals, birds, etc. Rudolf Virchow, a famous German physicist and pathologist, also known as Father of Modern Pathology, coined a term called Zoonosis to refer to any infectious disease which is transmitted from animals to humans. A zoonotic disease is caused by virus, bacteria, fun-

gus, etc, and travels from animals to human. He asserted that there are no dividing lines, nor should there be between animal and human medicine.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's report "World Livestock 2013" states an important fact that 60 per cent of all new infectious diseases that emerged in last three decades are zoonotic diseases. Viral outbreaks in recent years like nipahvirus, ebola virus, swine flu (H1N1) virus, avian influenza (H5N1) virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS CoV) are all zoonotic viruses. According to World Health Organization (WHO), zoonotic pathogens represent a clear threat to global health. The entire world is at higher risk of future pandemics, primarily of animal origin and combating it would require good co-ordination among medical science, veterinary science, environmental science and other biological sciences.

Realising the importance of this coordination, William Osler, the father of modern medicine and founder of the discipline of veterinary pathology, and Calvin Schwabe (chairperson of a new Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the University of California) advocated "one medicine" for all.

The second systemic flaw is more relevant to India. It is the presence of an extremely high educational hierarchy, which places MBBS course at the top while degrading all other health professionals and



Photo: Ranjan Dimri

scientists. This mindset is so deep rooted that any talented student pursuing a course in virology, immunology, nursing, physiotherapy or non-allopathic medical courses, etc, is considered inferior because of his/her inability to secure admission to an MBBS course. On the one hand, this hierarchy demoralises other allied fields, and on the other, it paves the way for undue interference by MBBS doctors in the other fields. This leads to a barrier in the development of these fields. Moreover, Indian doctors despite their huge potential, rarely take up medical research as it is less remunerating compared to consultancy, which is highly paid.

A lot of services that can be taken care of by these professionals cannot be performed by MBBS doctors. When a new and unknown disease first hits

a country, the role of doctors/nurses becomes vital. They are expected to treat/care patients with the existing medications/knowledge. When it becomes difficult to treat patients with the existing framework, then the role of virologist, geneticist, veterinary doctor, microbiologist, pharmacologist and immunologist becomes crucial to understand the properties and origin of the new virus to develop medicines and vaccines. After developing vaccines, nurses play an important role in vaccinating the people. Depending on the kind of disease, if it causes complications relating to mobility, muscular contractures, etc, among patients, then the role of physiotherapist becomes important; and if complications make the patient physically disabled or orthopedically handicapped

then begins the role of prosthetist and orthotist to figure out devices to help them.

The risk of zoonosis has increased due to the present human activities such as demographic alterations, increased movement across various continents, disturbing natural phenomenon and over exploitation of the environment. It brings the environmentalist into the picture. Thus, it is clear that an integrated approach toward a public health emergency is an effective way to deal with the unknown disease. Creating a hierarchy between the professions of the same sector can weaken our fight against any disease.

Moreover, these professionals (virologists, immunologists, orthotics & prosthetics, physiotherapist, occupational therapist) could have played a very crucial role during the

ongoing pandemic to meet the shortage of health workers, by being given a very short training. It is worth mentioning here that the educational courses studied by these professionals have a lot of syllabi common with MBBS course. Unfortunately, we have failed to utilise their huge potential.

Thirdly, India has a huge shortage of doctors which is reflected by the indicator of population served by a doctor, which is one of the highest in the world. Despite availability of huge talent, this artificial shortage is due to unnecessary stringent rules to establish a medical college and limited medical seats. Devi Prasad Shetty, one of the leading cardiologists in India, suggested that the Government can build around 300 new medical colleges without any cost which can offer 30,000 new seats. He argued that medical education can be provided to the students even in a single building and for practical training they can be taken to hospitals. According to him most governments refrain from creating new medical colleges since it requires an investment of around ₹450 crore and a time span of around 5 years. Further, the annual maintenance cost of a medical college is also around ₹150 crore. Educating medical students in a simple building without health infrastructure and training them practically in hospitals is the simplest and most cost-effective way of meeting the current demand for doctors.

Lastly, gradual withdrawal of most successive govern-

ments from health infrastructure has resulted in the shortages of hospital beds, oxygen, ventilators, etc. We can clearly notice an obsession of all governments with health insurance schemes especially for the last two decades, rather than expanding existing public health infrastructure. It is worth mentioning here that health insurance generate additional burden on the existing health infrastructure rather than creating any new health infrastructure. If the same amount that has been spent on health insurances by all governments in last two decades had been used to expand health infrastructure, it would have expanded our medical facilities by around 10 per cent, which would have not only provided a lot of jobs but also saved the lives of lakhs of people. Moreover, we can find numerous reports of misuse of insurance schemes by private hospitals by inflating bills through unnecessary medical testing. This has depleted most of the insurance coverage.

It is high time when all Governments in India (Centre or State) should come together to prepare a roadmap to abolish all systemic flaws in our health system. Let us learn from this pandemic and prepare ourselves better for any other such threat to human life in the future.

(The writer is currently pursuing masters in prosthetics and orthotics from Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities, New Delhi)



YOUR
WEEK
AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week keep your stress level under check to stay in good health. Deal with any problems that come up physically, don't try to avoid them. Be sure to get enough rest. If you need healing, ask for it. Sensitive people need caring, nurturing, massage, and hugs from friends to stay healthy. On the career front, other people may oppose your new ideas or proposals, but if you know that you're right to go ahead. You are enthusiastic, full of energy and want to put your best, but others are not taking it positively. Leave your simplicity behind, be smart and a little articulate. On the personal front, your relationship will move into a lighter, easier, and more balanced phase when you are sure of yourself.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Wednesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Tension and depression might take a toll leaving you an exhausted and under-confident. Reading, meditation and light exercises will bring relief, and good sleep will help to improve your state of mind. Uncertainties and confusion in life will melt away if you have a positive and creative mind. On the work front, you need to make quick decisions. Use your intelligence and logic for good cause, do not waste your time in disputes. The solution to the problem is already there or will come soon. On the personal front, work with cool mind than the raging heart. If in a relationship, this can be a make-or-break period. This is the time to be clear about what you want out of your relationships, and then take steps accordingly.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Saturday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

On the health front, you decide to self-validate and believe in yourself as well as your talents. Your motto for a disease-free happy family will keep you busy. It is time to imagine how totally different and wonderful things can be. Professionally, you are positive and try to bring love and compassion to your work. You are highly intuitive too. People are amazed to see this side to you. Focus on your goals and targets. Be firm and determined. Those in business need to be tough in the money transactions. On the personal front, mind, heart, and emotions are going in different ways. This is a highly emotional time in love relationships. Things can quickly become heated. Treat your lover like a friend. Don't be in a hurry to end or to begin a relationship.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Sunday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week is a good time to enjoy your health and add extra charm to your persona. You are cheerful, hopeful, and full of life. You take good care of yourself, and the people you are concerned with. Compromising on health issues is not advisable. Balancing your work and relations is important. On the career front, be cautious if you are in a job, follow the discipline and set rules for the organisation you are working with, else be ready to face displeasure of your seniors. Businessmen should be careful in money transaction. There appear to be conflicts and confrontations which may make you lose your calm. On the personal front, you may get involved in a great relationship. Romance is in the air.

Lucky number 18
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

You will be positive, creative, and happy go lucky this week. This is an excellent time to flaunt your charm and enjoy the path of personal development. The completeness, sense of vitality and peace of mind will make you a very efficient person. On the career front, you are confident and ready to face any challenges. You will win and attain accolades for your performance this week. You will be in your senior's good books. Do not let this success get into your head. On the relationship front, be careful as there are chances of counterfeit love. Investigate before you take any final decision. Existing relations should clear the doubts and confusions if any to avoid misunderstanding in future.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour Mustard
Lucky day Sunday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

You are likely to change your mind radically about something that you think is wrong with you physically. Do not ignore everything your doctor has told you, rather give it deep thought. Those suffering from serious ailments need to be under the constant observation of doctors. On the work front, getting confused about whether to leave the present job, starting a business, or some undesirable circumstances is likely to take place. Changing subjects or field often gets you nowhere. Find out your interest and potentials. This is the time to be firm in your decisions and keep your eyes and ears open. On the personal front, there are hope and happiness on an emotional level, along with a new sense of security, protection and recovery.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Tuesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week you need a break from normal life. There is a need to slow down the hectic work pace and relax. Do not push yourself when you are tired, it may cause illness and injury. On the career front, you have the benefits of your communication, both verbal or written, and will get a good news regarding your career. Businessmen could acquire a secure position monetarily. Those in service will get the support of their seniors and boss, which is likely to prove a stepping stone in their career. Be cautious, stay focused on what you want to achieve. On the personal front, a new beginning and higher expectations are on the cards. This is the time when you need not put extra efforts into the relationship area.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Saturday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, work on balancing your *chakras* or your body, mind, and spirit. Pay adequate attention to all three. Meditation and Pranayam will work wonderfully. The benefits are far greater than any effort you can put out. Professionally, connections with new people, especially people from other lands, will be beneficial. This is the time for making new business deals, signing new projects and assignments. Crack your potential. Stars are favouring you. Creativity, change, and development are the themes of the week. On the personal front, new ideas and plans will certainly help you to revitalise your relations with loved ones. Love is in the air and you are in full mood to express your feelings. This is a good time to make relations.

Lucky number 7
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Friday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week take some time out for yourself. Healthwise, you are on the right track. Keep doing what you are doing. Learn more about rituals from the past. They will deepen your spiritual understanding and practice and help you to bring balance. On the career front, lots of activity, getting things accomplished are on the cards. You may make your peers look bad. You don't feel tired; being a workaholic is your passion. Keep your behaviour in check, there are chances of using harsh words that create a hostile situation around you. Maintain your cool and equilibrium whatever the situation, that quality will add a feather to your career. On the relationship front, if you are currently committed, it may well rise to new and better heights soon.

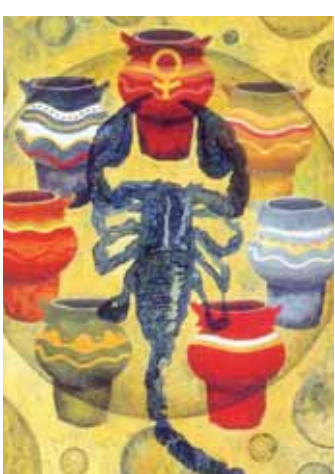
Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Saturday



CANCER June 21-July 22

Listen to your body with great care and attention. You are either overeating or starving yourself to lose weight. Both situations are bad for health. Bringing balance in food habits not only helps you to maintain your weight but it gives you a confident mindset. You are otherwise hale & hearty, enjoy the week. On the work front, investment done in the past is coming to fruition this week. This can be literal such as a bank account returning money to you. You will be reaping what you have sown. You are in the good book of your senior and soon there will be rewards. On the personal front, love and emotions are taking a back seat, you prefer isolation. Those committed must stay connected with their time to keep the spark alive.

Lucky number 4
Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Tuesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

You need to balance your health efforts with your personal and professional responsibilities. Be sure that you are taking time for rest and healing. If you put yourself last on the list of things, your health will suffer. Make sure you are taking adequate sleep too. On the professional front, if you are looking for a job, you have the ability and the skill to find it. If you are already employed, you will find a better position. If there's no room for a promotion at your current job, give serious thought to finding something where there is a possibility. On the relationship front, if you are committed, don't hesitate to speak your mind to your beloved. You stand with pride and express your feelings. This will only improve your relationship.

Lucky number 16
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Thursday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week you are likely to feel stressed out. You may be suppressing your emotions, and this will impact your body negatively. Be careful how, when, and where you vent your emotional reactions. Anything that reduces your stress level will be helpful. Think positive. Stay calm and connected. Anger is a silent killer. On the career front, tension is indicated. Be positive, this is a temporary phase. Those looking for a job change, this is the right time. Execute plans with sincerity. You have the potential to achieve the desired position. On the personal front, the time is right for soul-searching and discovery of the inner realms. It is a very positive time for you and an excellent opportunity to strengthen relationships of all kinds.

Lucky number 22
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Friday

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ASTROTURF

BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

The tale of Ganapati

The Ganapati imagery and the story line running around makes out an interesting reading. He is perceived as having the head of an elephant with a single tusk. He has a small mouse as his mount. Animal forms have been extensively used in Indian tradition to enlighten us on one or the other virtue, vital to qualitative existence, evident in the particular animal's behavioural pattern. The fact that animal behaviour is in public knowledge, it provides easy ground to make an analogy.

Let us first have a brief run into the legend pertaining to his origin. It is believed that Goddess Parvati, Lord Shiva's consort, made a beautiful clay idol in human form. She then infused life into it. He was named *Ganesa*.

The story suggests that our gross bodies are made of earthly matters. When the fundamental element of consciousness becomes available to the form-body, it becomes alive. It implies that left to itself, the gross body made of earthly matter would remain a dead matter. The paradox, however, is that most of us just identify oneself with the gross body, seldom realising that our dynamism is actually rooted to the con-

sciousness element. This eternal truth needs to be understood and acknowledged, is what comes out of this story.

In the above context, it is worth mentioning here once again that as per ancient India's perception, Lord Shiva symbolises the transcendent consciousness — the seed-potential to create life. His consort Parvati, by Herself no different from Lord Shiva, serves as His kinetic side, the immanent consciousness, the power by which She makes life flow. The above legend needs to be understood in this background.

The legend further states that once Ganesa stood guard with the instruction that he should ensure that no body disturbs Parvati while bathing in her private chamber. Meanwhile, Lord Shiva comes to join His consort. Ignorant of the fact that Lord Shiva is his mother's spouse, Ganesa did not allow Him access and rather stood firm in His path. When all persuasions failed, a battle followed in which, enraged Lord Shiva chopped off Ganesa's head. When Parvati learnt of Ganesa's death, her ire got aroused. In a fit of anger, having lost her sensibility, She could have destroyed the whole Universe. Everybody got alarmed.



To pacify Parvati, Narada was sent to her as a messenger. Parvati agreed to relent on two conditions: (a) that Ganesa had to be brought back to life and (b) he should be granted Godly status with all divine rights. In deference to Her wishes, first Ganesa's headless body was bathed and cleaned. Meanwhile, the head was lost in the din of battle. Shiva then sent out his companions with the instruction to kill and bring the head of the first living being in sight. That happened to be an elephant with one tusk. The elephant's head was transplanted on Ganesa's body. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the God trinity personified, respectively assigned with the functions of creation, sustenance and recycling life, joined hands and brought back the dead Ganesa to life. Shiva accepted Ganesa as His son. He also made Him the lord of His companions (the *ganas*), and so is also called Ganapati (the lord of *gana*-s).

Here, how true is the story, is not the point of deliberation. It is actually suggestive of the fact that be it an animal or a human existence, their dynamic existence is rooted in a common factor — the consciousness element. Second, it is only when all constituents of a form-

body are in place that the consciousness element would be manifest. But for a form-existence in place, the consciousness element would not be in reckoning.

Let us now look at the educative import inlaid with this particular symbolism. Elephant is one animal which has sensibilities and emotions akin to a human being. It lives in herd where the order of their leader is strictly obeyed. They remain as possessive of their mates as human beings. They can be seen weeping following death of their fellow being. They are even believed to dig ground and bury their dead. They get enraged if ever their privacy is ever encroached upon. And since they have longest memory, the elephant hits upon the person who encroached his privacy, if ever noticed much later. The elephant exactly remembers the track it followed in the past in search of food or water and will try that option when faced with scarcity. Thus, goes the proverb: "elephantine memory" to mean infallible memory.

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