

OPINION 6
THE SINKING OF
A PAPER BOAT**WORLD 8**
MYANMAR JUNTA ATTACKS
TOWN THAT RESISTED COUP**SPORT 12**
NAPOLI KEEP
CL HOPES ALIVE

NEW DELHI, MONDAY MAY 17, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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MANOJ
BAJPAYEE IS
ON A BREAK
10 VIVACITY**Covid-19
IN INDIA**TOTAL CASES: **2,49,64,925**
(+2,81,683)DEATHS: **2,74,411** (+4,092)RECOVERED: **2,11,67,609**
(+3,78,388)ACTIVE: **35,12,660**MAHA: **53,78,452** (+34,389)K'TAKA: **22,03,462** (+31,531)KERALA: **21,47,968** (+29,704)UP: **16,19,645** (+10,505)DELHI: **13,93,867** (+6,456)**Oxygen thief
Navneet Kalra
arrested**

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Businessman Navneet Kalra, who is accused of hoarding and black marketing oxygen concentrators in the national Capital, was arrested by the Delhi Police from his brother-in-law's farmhouse in Gurugram on Sunday evening.

On May 7, about 105 oxygen concentrators were recovered from two upscale restaurants Khan Chacha and Townhall in South Delhi's Khan Market area. The restaurants are owned by Kalra. On Saturday, the police had transferred the case to the Crime Branch.

After the arrest of Kalra's four associates — Gaurav, Satish Sethi, Vikrant and Hitesh — from Lodhi Colony in South Delhi on May 5, the next day, 419 more oxygen concentrators were recovered from another restaurant owned by Navneet Kalra and a farmhouse in South Delhi.

**Kafan demand
rises by 30 fold**Covid deaths keep
looms running
round the clock

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

There are things one takes for granted, like the cloth used to cover a body. Not any longer. The "kafan" (shroud), generally a thick, white, unstitched piece of cloth, is suddenly dearer. It is on account of the unusual spike in the number of deaths owing to Covid-19. More people are buying the cloth to drape their dear ones on their final journey than for the living these days.

In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, small handloom and machine loom units are busy making bolts of "kafan". The production has been ramped up to meet the surge in demand. While these units produced 10,000 individual pieces of the shrouds a month, they are coping with the demand for a similar number every day. That's not it. They need to be cut to size, packed and transported as fast as possible.

Such looms in Bihar's Gaya are functional round-the-clock. The labourers have no shift breaks. They are meeting the challenge to dispatch the stuff not only to various places in Bihar, but Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal and even the north-eastern States.

An official of the Handlooms and Textile Department of Uttar Pradesh said that the demand of one lakh "kafan" per month man-



ufactured in Lohta area of Varanasi, Mau and Azamgarh has now nearly trebled. The powerloom units of these areas supply to entire northern India, from the Poorvanchal region to Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and other parts of southern India.

"Nowadays these are done on powerloom and it's no more a handloom material. Raw materials come from Gujarat and then made in looms of UP, Bihar and then supplied to most parts of India," said the official.

Underlining a factor of class divide, the official said as the making of the product is not a profitable one, it is mostly confined to areas where cheap labour is available, like in Bihar, UP and West Bengal. Manpur in Gaya is known as

the Manchester of eastern Bihar and the workers here are doing overtime to meet the demand for about 50,000 "kafan" per day for adjoining areas and other States. Besides cotton, the units from here also make shrouds out of polyester and silk.

"We have been working round the clock. Pained to make bolts of kafan. The demand is high, but we have been supplying with full integrity and at same price as earlier. No black marketing for this product," said Dwarika, who owns a small unit at Patwatoli, Gaya, which has several small units.

He said all religions require this piece of cloth and the price could vary from place to place and depending on sizes range from ₹100 to ₹1,000.

*Continued on Page 2***Teleconsultation, surveillance
to combat Covid in rural areas**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As rural areas have become a new hunting grounds for deadly coronavirus, the Centre on Sunday issued guidelines calling for door-to-door surveillance, teleconsultation for asymptomatic cases, and active

surveillance for influenza-like illness periodically by ASHA workers among others.

Releasing the guidelines, the Union Health Ministry said there is a need to strengthen primary-level healthcare infrastructure at all levels to intensify Covid-19 response

in these areas while continuing to provide other essential health services.

In every village, active surveillance should be done for influenza-like illness/severe acute respiratory infections (ILI/SARI) periodically by ASHA workers with help of the Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC).

The advisory comes a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chairing a high-level meeting on the Covid-19 situation, directed Government officials to make a distribution plan for oxygen supply to rural areas and scale up health infrastructure to manage the disease burden in those regions.

Continued on Page 2

Governments are looking to combat.

ASHA workers risk their lives each day in exchange of a meagre sum of ₹2,250 per month. However, they have to face pay cuts for taking more than 10 days off leave even in this time of crisis.

Rural communities face unique challenges in responding to the pandemic due to medical workforce shortage, fewer hospital beds per capita, limited access to tele-medication, and populations that are at elevated risk for Covid-19 related deaths due to age or chronic disease prevalence.

*Continued on Page 2*Ensure bodies are not
thrown in Ganga, but
given proper funeral,
Centre tells States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has directed States to prevent dumping of dead bodies in the Ganga and focus on their safe disposal and providing support for ensuring dignified funeral.

Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Pankaj Kumar, reviewed the position and action taken in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in this regard.

He highlighted the instructions and wanted expeditious action and also underscored the need to give equal attention to such incidents in urban as well as rural areas along the Ganga and other rivers.

He said after knowing the progress from the States, CWC, CPCB and State Pollution Control Boards would also give their feedback.

Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, Director General National Mission for Clean Ganga, stated that the situation is being followed up with several districts like Unnao, Kanpur rural, Ghazipur, Ballia and Buxar, Saran in Bihar.

*Continued on Page 2***CAPSULE****BIGGEST CONSIGNMENT
OF OXYGEN ARRIVES**

New Delhi: Setting a new record, the biggest-ever single consignment of 3,600 oxygen concentrators landed in New Delhi from China on Sunday amid Covid-19 crisis in India.

**30 DIE IN VK SINGH'S
VILLAGE IN 2 WEEKS**

Bhiwani: Over 30 people have died in Union Minister VK Singh's ancestral village in Bhiwani in Haryana in the past two weeks, the sarpanch said on Sunday as the unusually high number of deaths raised concern that Covid-19 could be the cause.

**Covaxin works against
all India, UK variants**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indigenously developed Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine — Covaxin — has produced neutralising titres (concentration) against all key emerging variants tested, including the B.1.617 and B.1.1.7, first identified in India and the United Kingdom, according to a study published in peer-reviewed medical journal Clinical Infectious Diseases.

A modest reduction in neutralisation by a factor of 1.95 was observed against the

B.1.617 variant compared to the vaccine variant (D614G).

Bharat Biotech joint managing director Suchitra Ella cited it. However Ella added that despite this reduction, neutralising titre levels with B.1.617 remain above levels expected to be protective.

"No difference in neutralisation between B.1.1.7 (first found in the UK) and vaccine strain (D614G) was observed," Ella said.

These findings are from a study conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of Virology — ICMR.

Cong's Satav dies
of Covid-related
complications

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/PUNE

Congress Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Satav succumbed to Covid-19-related complications on Sunday after battling with it for three weeks.

Satav, who represented his home State of Maharashtra in the Upper House, had tested negative last week.

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Cabinet colleagues, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi condoled the death of 46-year-old Satav.

**Tauktae disrupts
LIFE, VACCINATION**

Electric poles fell due to heavy rain and wind from Tauktae cyclone, at Bidarhalli near Chikmagalur on Sunday PTI

**Cyclone claims 8
lives, inoculation
drive suspended
in coastal areas**

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The anti-Covid inoculation drive in most parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu was affected on Sunday due to the cyclonic storm 'Tauktae' that displaced thousands of people and claimed eight lives so far.

Keeping in view of India Meteorological Department's warning, most of the coastal regions in these States suspended the drive for two days-Sunday and Monday.

The inoculation was suspended for two days — Sunday and Monday in Mumbai, Palghar, north Konkan, Thane, Ratnagiri districts in Maharashtra. Gujarat has also suspended the drive for two days. The drive was also affected in Kerala, Goa, Tamil nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka.

Heavy to heavy rainfall, gusty winds with 145 to 175 kmph, disruption in power supplies, floods in low lying areas, water logging and blockage of roads due to fallen trees impacted the inoculation drive.

As per preliminary reports, the cyclone has claimed lives of eight people (two in Kerala, two in Goa and four in Karnataka), uprooted a large number of trees, electricity poles and damaged a large number properties so far.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Tauktae which has taken the form of a "very severe cyclonic storm" is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and reach the Gujarat coast on Monday evening.

*Continued on Page 2***IAF, Navy poised for action**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bracing for Cyclone Tauktae, the Government has put the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Navy on stand-by with nearly 40 planes

ready to be deployed at a short notice. The IAF planes on Saturday morning airlifted teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to some parts of Gujarat where the cyclone is

likely to hit.

Giving details here on Saturday, official said the Navy's ships, aircraft, helicopters, diving and disaster relief teams are on standby for "rendering full support to the State Government."

Continued on Page 2

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DRDO anti-Covid drug 2-DG to be out today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The first batch of anti-Covid drug 2-DG — developed by the DRDO — will be released on Monday by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, officials said.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DGCI) has approved the oral drug for emergency use as an adjunct therapy in moderate to severe coronavirus patients, the Defence Ministry said earlier this month.

The officials said the first batch of the drug will be released by the two ministers at an event at the headquarters of the Defence Research and

Development Organisation (DRDO) here. The ministry, on May 8, said the clinical trials of the drug, 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG), showed that it helps in a faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependency.

The approval of the drug has come at a time when India is grappling with a record-breaking wave of the coronavirus pandemic that has stretched the country's health-care infrastructure to its limit.

"In the ongoing second Covid-19 wave, a large number of patients are facing severe oxygen dependency and need hospitalisation. The drug is expected to save precious lives

due to the mechanism of its operation in the infected cells. This also reduces the hospital stay of Covid-19 patients," the ministry had said.

The anti-Covid therapeutic application of the drug has been developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a leading laboratory of the DRDO, in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) in Hyderabad. The drug comes in a powder form in a sachet and is taken orally by dissolving it in water, the ministry said.

In efficacy trends, it said, patients treated with 2-DG showed a faster symptomatic cure than the standard of care (SoC) on various onset points.

Corona fear! 30 deaths in two weeks in VK Singh's village, says sarpanch

PTI ■ BHIWANI

Over 30 people have died in Union Minister VK Singh's ancestral village Bapora in past two weeks, its sarpanch said on Sunday as the unusually high number of deaths raised concerns that Covid-19 could be the cause.

Village head Naresh Kumar said many of these people had showed symptoms of the disease, but only three tested positive. "They had symptoms like fever and cough but did not get themselves tested. So the real cause behind their deaths remains unknown," he said.

He said many of them were elderly. District authorities have stationed an ambu-

lance in the village in Bhiwani district and have screened all residents for the disease, an official said.

According to the sarpanch, the village with a population of about 20,000 normally sees "one or two deaths" in a week. But there were many more during the past fortnight.

One day, there were seven or eight deaths in the village, he said, and all cremation spots were occupied. "This was frightening for the villagers," he said. He said many villagers had been reluctant to undergo the coronavirus test. Health department officials have now stepped up testing and screening in Bapora to check the spread of the infection, he said.

Now online booking on CoWIN for 2nd vax dose not before 12 weeks

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Requisite changes have now been made on the CoWIN digital portal, making online or on-site appointments for Covishield vaccine not possible if the period after first dose for a beneficiary is less than 84 days, it was announced on Sunday.

The Union Health Ministry said: "CoWIN digital portal has been reconfigured to reflect change in dose interval of Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks."

However, already booked online appointments for second dose of Covishield will remain valid and are not being cancelled by CoWIN, but the beneficiaries are advised to reschedule their appointments for a later date beyond the 84th day from the date of first dose of vaccination.

The Central Government

has reiterated to the states and UTs that the online appointments booked for second dose of Covishield prior to this change of the interval between the two doses, must be honoured, and field staff instructed that, if such beneficiaries do come for vaccination, the second Covishield dose must be administered and the beneficiaries must not be turned away.

They have also been advised to undertake awareness activities to inform the beneficiaries about this change.

The Covid Working Group chaired by Dr NK Arora had recommended extension of the gap between the first and second doses of Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks.

This has been accepted by the government on May 13 and it has communicated this change to states and Union Territories, Arora said.

Immediate de-escalation need of the hour: India on escalating tension between Israel and Gaza

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

Amid escalating tensions between Gaza and Israel, India on Sunday urged "both sides" to show extreme restraint and refrain from attempts to unilaterally change the existing status-quo, underlining that "immediate de-escalation" is the need of the hour.

The UN Security Council held an open meeting on the situation in the Middle East on Sunday, during which UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres termed the tensions as the "most serious escalation" in Gaza and Israel in years.

Describing the current hostilities as "utterly appalling", the UN chief asserted that "fighting must stop. It must stop immediately. Rockets and mortars on one side and aerial and artillery bombardments on the other must stop. I appeal to all parties to heed this call." India's

Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador TS Tirumurti said continuing violence, which began in East Jerusalem a week back, is now threatening to spiral out of control.

"The events of the last several days have resulted in a sharp deterioration of the security situation," Tirumurti reiterated India's strong support to the just Palestinian cause and its unwavering commitment to the two-State solution, while also stressing India's strong condemnation of all acts of violence, provocation, incitement and destruction.

"Immediate de-escalation is the need of the hour, so as to arrest any further slide towards the brink. We urge both sides to show extreme restraint, desist from actions that exacerbate tensions, and refrain from attempts to unilaterally change the existing status-quo, including in East Jerusalem and its neighbourhood," he said.

B.1.617 variant found in 22% cases in samples sent by PGIMER

Chandigarh: The presence of the double mutant variant of the coronavirus has been found in 22 per cent samples that were recently sent by the PGIMER here for sequencing.

Reports of sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 from 23 swab samples that were sent were received from the National Centre for Disease Control, New Delhi, last Thursday.

"Presence of the double mutant B.1.617 variant having the signature mutations L452R and E484Q has been confirmed in 22 percent (5/23) of the samples after sequencing," PGIMER Director Jagat Ram said on Sunday. A PGIMER release quoting Ram stated that the B.1.617 variant, first identified in India last year, had been found in more than 40 countries and recently classified as a "variant of concern" by the World Health Organization. **PTI**

STATES UNDER LOCKDOWN OR SIMILAR CURBS

WEST BENGAL JOINED THE STATES THAT HAVE IMPOSED A COMPLETE LOCKDOWN TO CONTAIN THE COVID PANDEMIC, WHILE MANY OF THEM HAVE EXTENDED THE RESTRICTIONS



- DELHI** is under lockdown from April 19 till May 24
- HARYANA**, which was under lockdown from May 3, has extended it till May 24
- CHANDIGARH** administration has extended night and weekend curfew restrictions till May 18
- PUNJAB** has extended all existing Covid restrictions in the State till May 31, including night curfew
- UTTAR PRADESH** had extended the partial coronavirus curfew till 7 am on May 24.
- BIHAR** on May 4 imposed a lockdown till May 15 which has now been extended till May 25
- JHARKHAND** had extended lockdown-like restrictions with stricter provisions till May 27
- ODISHA** is under a 14-day lockdown from May 5 till May 19
- WEST BENGAL** Government announced a complete lockdown from May 16 till May 30
- RAJASTHAN** has imposed a strict lockdown in the State from May 10 to 24
- MADHYA PRADESH** had imposed 'Janta curfew' till May 17 with only essential services allowed. It has now been extended for varying periods in various districts
- CHHATTISGARH** Government has asked authorities in all the 28 districts to extend the Covid-19 lockdown till May 31
- GOA** Government has imposed a curfew from May 9 to May 24
- GUJARAT** on May 11 extended the night curfew and other day-time restrictions in 36 cities till May 18
- MAHARASHTRA** has extended the lockdown-like restrictions till June 1
- ASSAM** on May 12 ordered shutting down of all offices, religious places and weekly markets for 15 days in urban and semi-urban areas of the State, besides banning the movement of people from 2 pm to 5 am
- NAGALAND** has imposed a week-long total lockdown from May 14 till May 21
- MIZORAM** has extended the lockdown imposed in Aizawl and other district headquarters from May 10 till May 24
- ARUNACHAL PRADESH** on May 15 extended the lockdown in the State capital for another two weeks and enforced strict measures including, curfew throughout the state to contain the spread of the virus
- MANIPUR** Government has imposed curfew in seven districts from May 8 till May 17
- MEGHALAYA** extended lockdown in the worst-affected East Khasi Hills district till May 24
- SIKKIM** Government decided to clamp a complete lockdown across the tiny Himalayan state from May 17 to May 24
- JAMMU & KASHMIR** administration has extended curfew till May 24
- LADAKH** has extended Covid curfew by another week till May 24
- UTTARAKHAND** has imposed a strict Covid curfew from May 11 to May 18
- HIMACHAL PRADESH** has extended the coronavirus-induced curfew in the State till May 26
- KERALA** has extended the total lockdown being enforced in the State from May 8 to May 23
- TAMIL NADU** is under lockdown from May 10 to May 24
- PUDUCHERRY** has extended lockdown from May 10 to May 24
- KARNATAKA** is under complete lockdown till May 24
- TELANGANA** has imposed a 10-day lockdown from May 12
- ANDHRA PRADESH** has imposed curfew from 12 noon to 6 am till May 18 **PTI**



Fishing boats anchored due to cyclone Tauktae alert, at Mora Jetty Uran, in Navi Mumbai on Sunday

PTI

Kafan demand rises by 30 fold

From Page 1

According to Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) sources, the increase in demand of the "kafan" is "indeed unfortunate".

The CCI, however, is concerned about the continuous drop in cotton yarn prices since the beginning of May due to non-operational hosiery and garment markets that had witnessed a peak at the beginning of the year following the tapering down of the first surge of Covid-19.

Prices of almost all counts of yarn have dropped by at least ₹10 a kg as demand is low due to the second wave of coronavirus.

Production in textile mills has dropped and it is impacting yarn offtake, according to Anand Poppat, a cotton trader from Gujarat.

The Cotton Association of India says the last six months were a favourable period for Indian spinning mills because there was a huge shortage of cotton yarn due to last year's Covid-19 lockdown and huge demand for yarn came from domestic and international markets.

ASHA lone ray of hope for Covid ravaged villages

From Page 1

Home to nearly 70 per cent of India's population, villagers have little access to healthcare and are struggling to support themselves through the economic slowdown and jobless migrants.

States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh are still witnessing the most number of

returning labourers - now they are also witnessing the sharpest rise in new cases. Infections have now spread to 98 of the country's 112 poorest rural districts, according to various reports.

Various districts in the country have a skeletal health infrastructure, with most villagers accessing hospitals in nearby cities. India spent just 3.7 per cent of gross domestic product on health care in 2016, putting it in the bottom 25 countries globally, according to the most recent World Bank data.

Teleconsultation, surveillance to combat Covid in rural areas

From Page 1

The guidelines also asked the community health officer (CHO) to determine the seriousness of the infection by teleconsultation and recommend cases with comorbidities and low oxygen saturation to higher centres. It also said the CHOs should be trained in performing rapid antigen testing (RAT) and the kits should be made at all public health facilities.

"These patients should be counselled to isolate them-

selves till test results are available. Those asymptomatic but having history of high-risk exposure to Covid patients (exposure of more than 15 mins without a mask within 6 feet distance) should be advised quarantine and tested as per ICMR protocol."

The guidelines also talk on focusing on contact tracing as per Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme's (IDSP) guidelines, adding those testing positive should be allowed to quarantine at home by following the protocols issued by the ministry.

Stressing on the need to monitor oxygen saturation levels, the ministry directed the VHSNC to mobilise resources through local PRI to make provisions for these equip-

IAF, Navy poised for action

From Page 1

The IAF has kept 16 transport aircraft and 18 helicopters on operational readiness in peninsular India.

These measures are in preparation for the Cyclone Tauktae which is expected to cause very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall along the western coast of India in the next few days.

One IL-76 aircraft has airlifted 127 personnel and 11 tonnes of cargo from Bhatinda to Jamnagar. A C-130 aircraft has airlifted 25 personnel and 12.3 tonnes cargo from Bhatinda to Rajkot.

Two C-130 aircraft have airlifted 126 personnel and 14 tonnes cargo from Bhubaneswar to Jamnagar.

Additionally, IAF Covid relief operations have been focused in these coastal areas for the coming few days, as bad weather is likely to affect air operations later.

The cyclone relief operations are in addition to those underway for Covid relief where more than 40 aircraft are working round the clock ferrying much needed oxygen from abroad besides airlifting medicines and other

such equipment to various parts of the country.

According to the Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), the cyclone in the Arabian Sea is likely to intensify into a severe cyclonic storm and further intensify into very severe cyclone storm late hours of May 15 or early hours of May 16.

It is likely to move North-North-West and cross between Porbandar and Naliya on May 18, IFC-IOR said on social media.

As regards the IAF operations to fight the corona, they said the force so far has carried out 778 sorties accumulating 1,147 hours and airlifted 490 oxygen tankers with 8,343 MT capacity and 209 MT of other equipment.

The IAF transport planes flew 30 sorties accumulating 633 hours and transported 104 containers with 872 MT as well as 352 MT of other equipment from foreign countries.

The IAF was pressed in to service on April 22.

On the Navy's efforts, they said it has deployed nine warships to bring oxygen from foreign shores.

Tauktae disrupts life, vaccination

From Page 1

The IMD said Tauktae would cross Gujarat's coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district by early Tuesday morning and tidal waves are likely to inundate several coastal districts during the landfall.

The cyclone has damaged thousands of properties and displaced over 3 lakh people in six states. Cyclone Tauktae is very likely to cross Gujarat coast between Porbandar & Mahuva (Bhavnagar district) around 18 May afternoon or evening.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had announced that there would be no inoculation on May 16-17 considering the IMD's cyclone warning. The vaccination programme will now be implemented on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, the BMC said.

Considering the warning, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has shifted more than 500 Covid-19 patients to state and civic-run hospitals in Mumbai. The IMD has issued an orange alert for Mumbai and heavy to heavy rain is expected. Inoculation drive also impacted north Konkan, Thane, Ratnagiri, Palghar and several other districts in Maharashtra due to

gusty winds and heavy rainfall. Inoculation remained affected in Gujarat due to bad weather on Sunday. The Vijay Rupani government on Sunday has suspended the vaccination on Monday and Tuesday as the health staff will be kept on standby for the next two days to meet any emergency arising out of the cyclonic storm. The government has asked hospitals treating COVID-19 patients to ensure a power backup and arrangements are also being made to ensure uninterrupted generation of medical oxygen in the eight manufacturing units and its supply.

The drive was also affected in Goa. Water entered the Goa medical college, (where 82 patients died of shortage of oxygen or logistic issues in the last one week). Power supply in most parts of Goa was disrupted as hundreds of electric poles were uprooted due to the high-speed winds.

Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant said that it will take two days to restore power supply across the state. Due to heavy rain and strong winds, water entered through windows in Goa Medical College's Super Speciality Block which was inaugurated two days back for Covid-19 patients. As a precautionary measure, the

patients were shifted to a safer place. Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment at hospitals and requiring oxygen cylinders need un-interrupted supply of oxygen. All air operations were suspended for a day at Goa International Airport on Sunday.

In Kerala, inoculation drives remained affected Mankombu, Thekkedara, Vejpara and Poovam, Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Malappuram on Sunday. According to preliminary reports, two people died in Kerala on Sunday as a result of heavy rains accompanying the storm. The two deaths were reported from Ernakulam and Kozhikode districts.

Waterlogging in several parts of Alappuzha and water enters houses in low-lying areas of Mankombu, Thekkedara, Vejpara and Poovam. In Karnataka, vaccination was suspended in over 70 villages in seven districts including Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu and Hassan.

In Karnataka, inoculation drives were cancelled in Udipi, Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Shivamogga, Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru districts due to heavy rainfall, waterlogging, disruption in power supplies.

Ensure bodies are not thrown in Ganga, but...

From Page 1

However, some cases are also reported from other districts as well. He asked the State missions to follow up action taken with all districts.

He said there is need to strengthen enforcement, maintain vigil and also take proactive action to facilitate and support the families for cremation of dead bodies and asked State missions to specifically report on this. If needed, Project Directors can assess and also give support to District Ganga Committees for this out of NMCG funds available with them while keeping NMCG informed. Uttar Pradesh was represented by

Rajnish Dubey, Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development and Anurag Shrivastava, Principal Secretary, Jal Shakti, Government of Uttar Pradesh and Project Director, State Ganga Mission. Shrivastava shared that all the district magistrates in the states have been alerted about the issue and NMCG's instructions have been shared.

These district magistrates are getting patrolling carried out to prevent dumping of dead bodies in the Ganga. He also informed that 13 crematoriums under Namami Gange in addition to existing ones are made available for cremation of



the dead.

It was informed that orders have been issued for financial support in urban areas. Dubey shared that similar orders for financial support of Rs 5,000 have also been issued by

Panchayati Raj Department for rural areas, similar to urban areas, and SDRF and other forces have also been asked to do patrolling. Authorities are in touch with Panchayats and ULBs.

Keep ration shops open for longer period, States told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Worried over the reports that the ration for the month of May and June had not been distributed to the people facing enormous hardship due to the pandemic and the lockdown, the Government on Sunday asked the State Governments to keep ration shops, also called fair price shops, open for a longer duration on all days to ensure timely and safe distribution of both subsidised and free food grains to the poor.

Many ration card-holders say the facility has not begun yet despite announcements by the Centre and the State Governments. The delay in distribution of rations is forcing people to buy food grains from the open market at non-subsidised prices. Besides, ration card holders are also not getting any information about when food grains would be distributed.

Besides, the ministry has received several representations that during the current lockdown in some States/UTs, ration shops' timings have been curtailed due to which the intended beneficiaries might not be getting adequate time to lift their entitled food grains. Most of the States and UTs are under lockdown-like situation and ration shops are not allowed to open.

"In view of the ongoing



lockdown in some States/UTs, that may curtail the functioning hours of Fair Price Shop (FPS), an advisory has been issued on 15th May, 2021...to keep the FPSs open, preferably on all days of the month," the Union Food Ministry said in an advisory to States and Union Territories.

The Centre is distributing highly monthly subsidised foodgrains of 5 kg per person at ₹1-3 per kg via ration shops to over 80 crore poor under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Over and above this, additional 5kg of free grains are being distributed to the same beneficiaries under the PMGKAY (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana) scheme for two months — May-June in order to minimise economic hardships being faced by the NFSA beneficia-

ries during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the advisory, the Centre has asked States to keep the ration shops open for distribution of foodgrains under the NFSA as well as PMGKAY scheme in a staggered manner throughout the day, maintaining proper social distancing and adhering to all Covid-19 protocols, it said.

To facilitate this, States have been requested to ensure that FPSs are exempted from the restricted hours of opening of regular markets as foodgrains are covered under essential items, it added. Further, the Centre has asked states to take necessary steps for timely distribution of foodgrains at their FPSs without causing hardships to the beneficiaries, and to give wide publicity to the measures undertaken in this regard.

Tauktae wreaks havoc across Kerala, K'taka, Goa Likely to reach Gujarat coast today evening

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gale-force winds, heavy rainfall and high tidal waves swept the coastal belt of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa as Cyclone Tauktae hurtled northwards towards Gujarat on Sunday, leaving four people dead, damaging hundreds of houses, uprooting electricity poles and trees and forcing evacuation.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Tauktae which has taken the form of a "very severe cyclonic storm" is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and reach the Gujarat coast by Monday evening. The IMD said Tauktae would cross Gujarat's coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district by early Tuesday morning and tidal waves are likely to inundate several coastal districts during the landfall.

"The very severe cyclonic storm Tauktae over the east-central Arabian Sea moved nearly northwards with a speed of about 11 kmph during the past six hours," it said.

"It is very likely to intensify during the next 24 hours. It is very likely to move north-northwestwards and reach the Gujarat coast in the evening hours of May 17 and cross the State coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar dis-

trict around May 18 early morning," the IMD said.

With the cyclone intensifying, the wind speed along and off Gujarat coasts in Porbandar, Junagadh, Gir Somnath and Amreli districts will reach 150-160 kmph gusting to 175 kmph by Tuesday morning. It will reach a speed of 120-150 kmph gusting to 165 kmph over Devbhoomi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar districts during the same period, the IMD said.

"Gale winds with speed reaching 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph are likely to prevail along and off Valsad, Navsari, Surat, Bharuch, southern parts of Ahmedabad, and Anand districts, as well as Dadra, Nagar Haveli, Daman (Union Territories) from May 17 midnight till Tuesday morning," it said.

A nearly 3-metre-high tidal wave is expected in Junagarh, 1-2.5 metres above astronomical tide is likely to inundate coastal areas of Diu, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Bharuch, Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad, Anand, Surat and about 0.5-1 metres over Devbhoomi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Porbandar, Kutch and the remaining coastal districts of Gujarat during the time of landfall, the IMD said.

An estimated 1.5 lakh people are being shifted from low-lying coastal areas in Gujarat

Amit Shah holds review meeting with CMs of Tauktae-hit States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday held a review meeting with Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Administrator of Daman & Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli to assess the preparedness to deal with the situation arising out of Cyclone "Tauktae".

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba chaired a meeting of the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC).

The meeting was held through video conferencing with Chief Secretaries of the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu as well as Advisors to the Administrators of the Union Territories of Lakshadweep and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. Secretaries of various Union Ministries also attended the meeting.

Chief Ministers Uddhav Thackeray and Vijay Rupani apprised Shah of the cautions and relief measures undertaken at coastal areas. "Shah said that a 24x7 control room is functioning in MHA, which can be contacted at any time for any assistance by the States. He said Indian Coast Guard, the Navy, Army and Air Force units have also been put on standby and surveillance aircraft and helicopters are carrying out aerial sorties.

Union Home Minister directed the senior officers to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely evacuated and all essential services maintained, including health and oxygen facilities, power, telecommunications, drinking water etc. and that these are restored immediately in the event of damages caused to them," said the MHA.

Reviewing the preparedness of the Central and State

agencies, Cabinet Secretary stressed that all measures should be taken to evacuate people in areas affected by the cyclone, so as to ensure zero loss of life and damage. Preparatory arrangements to restore power, telecom and other important services should be ensured. Gauba also emphasised that all steps should also be taken to avoid disruption of functioning of hospitals and Covid Care Centres and maintenance of regular supply of oxygen to them.

Necessary arrangements have been made in this regard to ensure uninterrupted functioning of hospitals and Covid Care Centres, along with ensuring generation and supply of oxygen to Covid facilities across the country.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) informed that they have deployed and made available 79 teams in the affected States.

and extremely heavy rainfall in Raigad on Monday.

Four deaths have been reported from Karnataka's Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga districts in cyclone-related incidents. The water level in many dams across Kerala showed a rising trend after heavy rains in the

Modi talks to CMs, takes stock of Covid Status

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday spoke to the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry on the Covid-19 situation in the States and the Union Territory as they briefed him on the measures being taken to contain second wave of Covid-19.

Modi, who has been regularly speaking to Chief Ministers to take stock of the pandemic situation in States and Union Territories, has told the States that localised containment strategies were the need of the hour.

Besides, he has asked the States to ensure oxygen supply in rural areas.

According to sources, the Chief Ministers informed the Prime Minister that central guidelines were being followed and vaccination being accorded the highest priority.

The Prime Minister is to start next week his direct interaction with the District Magistrates of 54 districts to workout Covid19 strategy following its second wave.

With 3.11 lakh fresh coronavirus infections, India saw the lowest rise in daily Covid-19 cases after a gap of 25 days, while the death toll rose to 2,70,284 with 4,077 new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry.

NIA raids four locations in Madurai Facebook post case



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday conducted searches at four locations in Tamil Nadu in connection with Madurai fundamentalist Facebook post case.

The case relates to incriminating Facebook post by accused Mohammad Iqbal, an extremist advocating ideology of ISIS and Hizb-Ut-Tahrir terror groups.

The searches were conducted at Kazimar Street, K Pudur, Pethaniyapuram and Mehboob Palayam in Madurai.

During the searches, sixteen digital devices including laptop, hard discs, mobile phones, memory cards, SIMs, pen drive, and many incriminating books, pamphlets and documents were recovered, the NIA said.

The case was originally registered by Madurai police under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The NIA had re-registered the case on April 15 this year and took over the investigation.

Investigation has revealed that the posts on the Facebook page "Thoonga Vizhigal Rendu is in Kazimar Street" was uploaded by the accused Md. Iqbal for denigrating a particular community, it said.

"The posts were designed to incite communal disharmony among different religious groups in a manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order," it said.

Accused Md Iqbal alias Senthil Kumar of Kazimar, Street, Madurai, was arrested on December 2 last year and is presently in judicial custody.

States, UTs asked to use IoT tools ensure water supply to villages

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM) has asked all States and Union Territories (UTs) to roll out sensor-based IoT solutions to measure and monitor water supply in rural areas, so as to ensure water service delivery in rural homes by addressing various issues that cause disruption on a regular basis.

In a statement, the Jal Shakti Ministry said: "India has one of the most vibrant Internet of Things (IoT) eco-systems in the world, with various supporting enablers making it conducive for companies seeking to serve the global demand beyond national boundaries. The Government of India has introduced a number of initiatives to leverage the benefits of these disruptive IoT technologies in multiple sectors."

To utilise this expertise, the NJJM, and the Ministry had set up a Technical Expert Committee to prepare a road map for measurement and monitoring of water service delivery systems in the rural areas. The committee has eminent members from academia, administration, technology and specialists from the water supply sector.

The committee met 11 times and despite the Covid pandemic, finalised the report,



which has shared to the states/UTs and provides a framework to design, develop and establish a coherent system that is able to exchange the data at local and central level.

The broad framework will help the States/UTs in firming up the desired standards to meet the requirement of change from mere infrastructure to ensuring water service delivery. The NJJM, in partnership with state governments and sector partners, has started facilitating sensor-based water supply systems on pilot basis in several villages.

The data from 11 pilot locations about the daily water supply, its quantity and regularity are shown on the Jal Jeevan Mission dashboard.

"Many States like Bihar, Punjab, Haryana have come forward for the implementation. Sikkim, Manipur, Goa have completed basic survey works. Gujarat has begun navigating the sensor-based rural

water supply systems in 1,000 villages. A technology grand challenge launched by NJJM in partnership with MEITY, Government of India, is going to be showcases in 100 villages in states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Manipur," the Ministry said.

The data collected from the field locations will be transmitted to the state and Central server and can be used to monitor the functionality (quantity, quality and regularity of water supply) at the state and Central level. This will ensure to minimise service delivery outage and water loss and monitor the quantity and quality on a long-term basis.

The additional advantage of this data would be to analyse the demand pattern of the user groups over time and use this information for demand management at the aggregate level.

Modi wanted to become 'Vaccine Guru': Congress

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the Government's handling of the Covid pandemic, the Congress on Sunday also faulted its vaccine policy, saying the muddle arose because the "Prime Minister wanted to become the vaccine guru".

Addressing a virtual press conference, Congress spokesman Pawan Khera said: "The Government of India did not manage the crisis as well. When it came to negotiation with vaccine manufacturers, when it came to putting in place a vaccine policy, everything was centralised. Actually, it was not even centralised, it was individualised, because someone wanted to be a 'Vaccine Guru'. Narendra Modi wanted to be known as a 'Vaccine Guru'."

He said that India was not short of oxygen but the government delayed setting up of 162 onsite oxygen plants across 14 states by 8 months and "when the crisis hits hard, the State Governments were blamed".

Citing the eight-phase West Bengal Assembly elections, the



"super-spreader rallies" and the Kumbh Mela, Khera said that questions were being asked on the Government's decisions. "You can't have centralised decision-making and decentralised responsibility, both have to be decentralised, both have to be in tune with each other."

"Today, because of you, different states are negotiating with the same companies, vaccine manufacturers for their people. They will all get different prices... Why? Who will be answer these questions too?" he asked.

Khera alleged that when the nation was getting overwhelmed by the pandemic, one man with his government "still busy trying to save a fake image that he has built of himself. His fake image cannot be more important than my real life, than the real lives of my family members, my friends, my loved ones..."

Nishank receives int'l honour, dedicates it to Covid warriors

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has been honoured with "International Invincible Gold Medal" of 2021.

In a statement to the media, Tony Nader, president of Maharshi Organisation world-wide and various Maharshi Universities, said that Nishank has been recognised for his extraordinary commitment and outstanding service to humanity through his writings, social and illustrious public life.

The decision was made after due deliberations by a high-powered committee duly constituted under the leadership of Nader, who is the global head of the organisation.

The statement further praised the relentless efforts and great commitment of Nishank to propagate ancient Vedic values, wisdom and traditional knowledge in the most scientific manner.

Nader lauded Nishank for his continuous support and



commitment to world peace through Veda and world peace programme.

The honour was announced at a two-day virtual session which was attended by representatives from over 110 countries. The award will be formally presented to the Minister on Guru Purnima this year.

Nader also congratulated the Minister for the most innovative, creative, scientific and inclusive New Education policy.

He added that the new education policy crafted by the government will go a long way in establishing human values globally as the base of modern education.

Accepting the award, Nishank said that he was grateful to the selection committee.

He dedicated his award to all the corona warriors who are

risking their lives to save the patients in this difficult time.

In his emotional address, Nishank said that he has just come out of covid infection. He has felt the pain and closely observed the dedication, struggle, duty, service of our doctors, nurses, health workers.

In order to save the lives of others, they put their lives in danger. He said, "We will definitely win on the strength of our Corona warriors."

Nishank said that he is very happy that his writings, social and public service have been appreciated.

He said he was committed to promote scientific research on Indian traditional knowledge and india's eternal life values of life so that it can benefit humanity.

Thanking Nader for his positive views on education policy, Nishank said that this policy not only help India to meet the upcoming global challenges but will establish the country as Vishvaguru in times to come.

PC questions Govt on fall in daily Covid jabs

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday questioned the Narendra Modi Government on the decline in the number of daily vaccination while taking a jibe at Health Minister Harsh Vardhan over the shortage of vaccines.

"Why is the number of vaccinations administered going down every day? It was only 11,60,000 doses on Friday, bringing down significantly the daily average of May. It is a far cry from the 42 lakh doses administered on April 2."

"The only reason and explanation is shortage of vaccines. Of course, the loyal and obedient Union Health Minister will flatly deny any shortage of vaccines!" Chidambaram said.

Harsh Vardhan on Saturday reviewed public health response to Covid-19 and progress of vaccination in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra



Pradesh and Gujarat.

All the 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.

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."

Nadda flags off medical supplies to Himachal, praises Anurag Thakur's role

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

BJP national President JP Nadda on Sunday flagged off a large quantity of Covid-19 relief materials to Himachal Pradesh under the party's 'Seva Hi Sangathan 2.0' campaign.

The Covid relief materials comprise nearly three lakh three-ply face masks, 50,000 N-95 face masks, 25,000 gloves, 10,000 face shields, 7,000 PPE kits, 6,000 oxygen mask, 3200 NRMs, 1500 oxygen regulators, 250 nasal cannula and other medical items.

The BJP National President also flagged off consignment of medical equipment procured 17 mobile medical units under the "Saansad Mobile Swasthya Seva" with the help of Union Minister of State for Finance &



Corporate Affairs, Anurag Thakur.

Nadda praised the efforts of Thakur for this noble initiative in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As we all know that the Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as the biggest medical and health crisis in the history of mankind but all Indians under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have unitedly

fought this war against the pandemic and soon we will emerge victorious in this war against Covid," he said.

He urged all BJP office bearers, leaders and workers of Himachal Pradesh to ensure last mile delivery of all medical aid and other assistance in the state so that every single needy and poor person gets relief and are not left unattended from getting the medical supplies and relief materials.

Maha logs 974 deaths

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 triggered daily deaths jumped to a staggering 974— the second highest-ever number of fatalities recorded in Maharashtra, on Sunday, even as the infections came down further to 34,389. A day after Coid-19 claimed 960 lives and left 34,848 others infected, the number of daily deaths went up by 64 to touch a figure of 974, while the infections went down marginally to 34,389.

It may be recalled that on April 28, the number of daily deaths breached the threshold of 1,000 in Maharashtra to reach the figure of 1035, which has been the highest-ever number of deaths recorded since the break out of Covid-19 in March-April last year. The daily tally on that day was a consolidated figure that had included 50 earlier deaths which had earlier not been accounted.

With 974 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 80,512 to 81,486. Similarly, with 34,389 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 53,44,063 to 53,78,452.

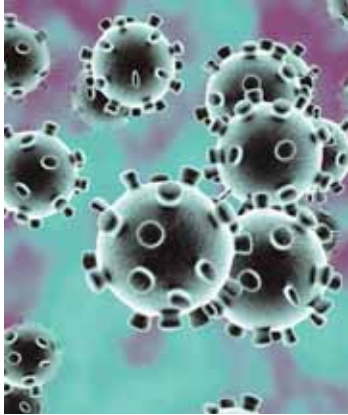
As 59,318 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up from 47,67,053 to 59,318. The recovery rate in the state went up from 89.2 per cent to 89.74 per cent.

The total “active cases” in the state dropped from 4,94,032 to 4,68,109. The fatality rate in the state went up from 1.51 per cent to 1.52 per cent.

With 60 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 14,164 to 14,224, while the infected cases went up by a relatively low 1535 to trigger a jump in the infections from

6,86,295 to 6,87,830.

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 93,245 to 82,397. Mumbai with 33,574 active cases stood second in the State.



Situation in Kerala grim as 29,704 more test Covid positive

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Covid-19 situation in Kerala continued to be critical as the number of new cases showed that 29,704 persons were afflicted with the pandemic in the last 12 hours that ended at 6 pm on Sunday. The department of health said in its release that 89 lives were claimed by the pandemic and the Test Positivity Rate remained at 25.61 per cent.

In a simultaneous development, the Centre expressed its doubts over the figures released by the Government of Kerala and asked Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to be transparent in the details

about the pandemic which he shared in his media briefing.

V Muraleedharan, Union Minister of State for external affairs, who is the uncrowned king of Kerala BJP, in a statement expressed reservations and doubts over the claims made by Vijayan viz-a-viz the pandemic. He reminded the Kerala Government that this was the time to be transparent in all details connected with the state of Covid-19 in Kerala. “This alone will help all of us in fortifying a preventive mechanism to spread the transmission of the disease. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that this was the time to be honest and transparent.

The death tally from Kerala is a matter of serious concern,” said the Union Minister.

59 fall prey to virus in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Covid-19 situation in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir continues to be grim even as elaborate measures are being taken to contain the spread of virus to rural pockets in the coming days.

The region reported 59 more deaths on Sunday and the positivity rate climbed further up to 11.27 per cent. A total number 3,934 patients returned home and 4,141 fresh cases tested positive taking the active caseload to 51,623.

The twin capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar continue to record the highest number of cases but the health administrators are more worried over the fact that the virus is spreading rapidly across several rural pockets in both the divisions.

Meanwhile, a three member central team of experts from National centre for Disease control (NCDC) and PGI Chandigarh visited Government Medical College and Associated hospitals in Jammu to ascertain the reasons for surge and assist UT Government in Covid-19 control and containment measures.”

The team members Dr. Pranay Verma, Joint Director, Epidemiology Division, NCDC, Delhi, Dr. Mahesh Waghmare, Microbiology NCDC, Delhi and Dr. Navneet Sharma, Professor, Dept. of Internal Medicine, PGIMER Chandigarh also met GMC, Principal Dr Shashi Sudan Sharma and NHM, J&K Director Ch Mohammad Yasin and collectively analysed the data before recommending measures to contain the spread of virus and check the high mortality rate across Jammu region.



On the other hand, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha also visited Government Medical College, Jammu to take stock of the situation amid rising number of complaints related to poor patient care services in some of the Covid-19 wards.

During his visit, LG Manoj Sinha was informed that as many as 250 nurses would join GMC Jammu within three days, substantially adding to the available healthcare workforce.

Referring to the availability of Oxygen supply, the Lt Governor sought the status of two new Oxygen plants which are being set up by the J&K UT administration at GMC Jammu to augment its oxygen capacity.

While reviewing the progress being made for establishing an additional 100-bedded Covid ward, the Lt Governor directed the Principal and senior doctors of GMC Jammu to ensure the operationalization of the said facility at the earliest.

The Lt Governor also enquired about Covid care facilities, availability of oxygen support beds, functionality of

Oxygen Generation Plants, besides compliance of earlier directions including regular rounds of HoDs and senior doctors in the wards to examine the patients.

Earlier, the Lt Governor visited Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) 500-bedded under construction Covid hospital site at Bhagwati Nagar and took first-hand appraisal of the on-going work.

The fully air-conditioned make-shift Covid facility with 125 ICU beds and ventilators will be completed by May 25, 2021.

The Lt Governor directed the Health Department to provide all support to DRDO, including arrangements of health related facilities, hiring/posting of doctors, paramedics, and other healthcare workforce well before the formal functioning of the hospital.

It was informed that Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) tanks with a capacity of 40 metric tons (2 tanks of 20 metric tons each) would be installed in this Covid care facility, besides the whole structure is prefabricated and fire retardant.

Bengal imposes strict lockdown,158 violators held

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Bengal reported a massive spike in death rate due to corona infection in the 24 hours intervening Saturday and Sunday even as the State administration went about imposing a strict lockdown that saw multiple arrests and seizures of vehicles in Capital Kolkata and elsewhere.

The State reported 144 deaths crona deaths between Saturday and Sunday—the highest so far—as 19,511 people tested positive for the disease. This is the lowest single-day spike reported in the preceding 10 days, Health Department sources said.

While Kolkata reported 3,951 new cases with 30 deaths the North 24 Parganas adjoining the State Capital witnessed a record 35 deaths with 4,279 infections sources said on Sunday morning adding the number of active cases in Bengal stood at about 1.3 lakh.

Meanwhile, even as the police administration imposed strict lockdown all over the State 158 people were arrested in Kolkata under Pandemic laws for breaking the lockdown protocol. The police also seized 58 vehicles for violation of Government orders.

All government and private offices, shopping complexes,



Ferries stay anchored on the Ganga river during the Covid-induced lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday PTI

malls, spa, beauty salons, sports complexes, pubs, cinema halls have been asked to remain closed. Only emergency and

essential services related to healthcare, law and order, courts, power, drinking water and media would function.

The lockdown started from 6 am on Sunday and was likely to continue at least till 6 pm on May 30.

The State Government has already postponed the Secondary (Class X) and Higher Secondary (Class XII) exams that were scheduled to take place in the month of June. “No secondary and higher secondary examinations will be held in June,” Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay said adding, “The future dates of the examinations will be notified” by the respective West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBSE) and West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education.

Cong MP Rajeev Satav dies of post-Covid complications

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a shocking development, Congress’ promising leader and Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Satav died of post-Covid complications, after having battled for life for 24 days at Jehangir hospital in Pune Sunday morning.

A close associate of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, 46-year-old Satav had been admitted to the hospital on April 16 after he tested positive for Covid-19.

After he recovered from Covid-19, his condition suddenly worsened and he was put on a ventilator.

Satav, who developed Covid-19 pneumonia lung fibrosis after his recovery from the pandemic, was in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Hospital for more than a week now. His end came in the morning.

Satav, who is the son of former State Minister Rajani Satav, is survived by his wife and two children.

State Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat, who had visited Jehangir Hospital and met the doctors attending on Satav on Saturday, said that the latter had experienced some uneasiness on Saturday night but his impression was that the party MP would recover soon. Health Minister Rajesh Tope had said on Friday that besides Covid-19, Satav was also being treated for additional complications with the help of experts.

Given that Satav was very close to the Gandhi-Nehru family, Rahul and Priyanka used to be in regular touch with the doctors to inquire about his progress, party and family sources said. “I’m very sad at the loss of my friend Rajeev Satav. He was a leader with huge potential who embodied the ideals of the Congress. It’s a big loss for us all. My condolences and love to his family,” Congress leader

Rahul Gandhi tweeted.

“In Rajeev Satav we have lost one of our brightest colleagues. Clean of heart, sincere, deeply committed to the ideals of the Congress & devoted to the people of India. I have no words, just prayers for his young wife & children. May they have the strength to carry on without him,” Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tweeted.

After being elected to the Maharashtra Assembly

from Kalmanuri constituency in 2009, Satav was elected to Lok Sabha from Hingoli constituency in 2014. He did not contest the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. However, the Congress got him elected to Rajya Sabha subsequently.

Satav, who was the Indian Youth Congress president from February 2010 to December 2014, was the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in charge of Gujarat. He was also a permanent Invitee to Congress Working Committee, the highest decision making body of Indian National Congress.

Meanwhile, mourning Satav’s death, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said: “Congress leader and CWC special invitee Rajiv Satav’s death has come as a big shock for all of us. He was a young, upcoming and talented leader. He had effectively discharged his role of observer assigned to him by his party during Gujarat elections. In his death, Maharashtra has lost a most promising leader.”

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that in the untimely death of Satav, Maharashtra had lost a promising and well-poised leader. Satav forged friendships going beyond political affiliations. He had complete faith in parliamentary democracy and was known as a studious leader,” the Chief Minister said.

Condolences pour in

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, senior leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, State Congress leaders were continuously in touch with the hospital treating the rising star of the grand old party, Rajeev Satav, and his sudden demise has come as a rude shock to the Congress and significantly Rahul Gandhi.

After the exit of youngster like Jyotiraditya Scindia and the loss of trust on Sachin Pilot who led a revolt in the party almost year ago, Satav was the Man Friday of the Gandhi family and had almost filled “that” space which had also seen stalwarts like Ahmed Patel who also succumbed to covid last November. AICC sources said Sonia and the Gandhi siblings were everyday enquiring the health status of Satav who had been admitted in Pune’s Jehangir hospital.

In her condolence message, Sonia Gandhi said she is deeply pained by the tragic loss of the party leader, “who was a trusted colleague and a friend to all of us”. She said it is also a personal loss to her. “Rajeev Satav was only 46 years old yet he rose from the grassroots to holding many responsibilities in a short time due to his unfailing dedication, sincerity and hard work,” she said.

Satav had recently made into the party’s highest decision making body, the Congress Working Committee, He was elected to Lok Sabha from Hingoli in Maharashtra in 2014 but did not contest in 2019. However, the Congress got him elected to Rajya Sabha. He was son of former state minister Rajani Satav. Satav was Congress General Secretary and incharge of party affairs in Gujarat. He was earlier president of Indian Youth Congress. He had his higher education in Pune.

Condolences poured in from various quarters including Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers and Congress leaders.

“We are deeply saddened by the demise of Rajya Sabha MP and compatriot, Rajeev Satav. His unwavering dedication towards the nation and the party carried out with pure simplicity will be greatly missed. Our condolences to his family, friends and followers. May he rest in peace,” the Congress tweeted from its official handle.

All India Congress Committee general secretary K C Venugopal said the Congress has lost its frontline warrior, Congress Working Committee member, MP and a most promising young leader. “I am devastated by the irreparable loss. The party will forever miss his indelible dedication, connect and immense popularity,” he said. Congress chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala said he is speechless as Satav is a huge loss to him both politically and personally as he was a close friend.



Kochi: The Christian community in Kerala is upset over the CPI(M)-led LDF Government over the ‘disrespect’ shown to Soumya, a 32-year-old home nurse who was killed on last Tuesday in a missile attack by Hamas, a terrorist organisation in Israel and was described as an angel by that country’s Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Soumya, hailing from Idukki in the State has been employed as a home nurse and was killed while taking care of her Israeli employer. The Hamas terrorists had unleashed missile attacks against Israeli families in Gaza in which Soumya was killed.

Though Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and former Chief Minister Oommen Chandi had posted messages condoling the death of Soumya, the messages were deleted within minutes when it was known that she was killed by the Hamas terrorists.

Her body was brought to New Delhi on Saturday by a special Israeli aircraft and was received by union



Jonathan Zadka, Israeli Consul-General, paying homage to the mortal remains of Soumya

Minister of state for External Affairs V Muraleedharan and officials of Israeli embassy in New Delhi. Later in the day, her mortal remains were flown to Kochi in a Air India flight where it was received by her relations. But no one from the State Administration was present at Kochi airport or at her residence in Idukki to console the family members.

The Israeli Consul General, Jonathan Zadka and officials from the embassy had accompanied the body from New Delhi to Idukki as a mark of respect to Soumya who leaves behind

her husband Suresh and nine-year old son.

“Honoured to pay my respects and convey our sympathies to the family and friends of Me Soumya Santosh as she was laid to rest in her home town Keerithod. May she rest in peace. Our prayers are with the family that lost an angel in a cowardly Hamas terror attack”, said Zadka in a message posted on social media.

Christian Association and Alliance for Social Action (CASA), an umbrella organisation of various Christian factions in the State expressed their grief over the gruesome killing of Soumya and condemned the Hamas action in the strongest of words.

“Our sister was working as a home nurse in Israel and was murdered by the Hamas terrorists.

What was more shocking was the youth wing of the CPI(M) celebrating the murder instead of condemning such dastardly act,” said Kevin Peter, convener of CASA in a statement. **PNT**



Farmers carrying strawberries after picking them from their farms during the ongoing lockdown to contain the spread of the coronavirus on the outskirts of Srinagar on Sunday PTI

Treatment for black fungus at Bowring Hospital, Govt to form expert panel: Min

Bengaluru: Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar on Sunday said it has been decided to start treatment for “black fungus” at Bowring Hospital here on a pilot basis, and later extend the treatment to medical colleges and district hospitals.

Noting that the treatment for black fungus infection is a bit costly, the Minister said he would discuss with the Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa regarding free treatment as he has also said a committee of experts would be set up to prepare a roadmap for treatment of those infected and how to curb the infection.

“Mucormycosis or black fungus is commonly seen among those who have less immunity or because of use of steroids. Those who have diabetes and are infected by Covid 10-15 days after they take

steroids, the infection begins through the nose and spreads to the eyes and its parts like optic nerves and optic chiasm,” Sudhakar said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said there is danger of losing vision because of this and if timely treatment is not taken there are chances of death.

“After the infection was noticed in Maharashtra, we held discussions with eye specialists and experts (ophthalmologists) and from Monday at Bowring hospital, we are starting treatment for it,” he said adding: “We are starting on a pilot basis, and will later continue in all medical colleges and some district hospitals.”

Noting that Amphotericin B, the drug for black fungus infection is a bit costly, the Minister said a patient would require seven weeks of continued treatment to be cured and

treatment may cost ₹ 2-3 lakh per person.

“I will discuss with the Chief Minister and will suggest free treatment. Ultimately, he will decide,” the Minister said adding those with black fungus issues should immediately consult doctors. The Centre is rationing the Amphotericin B drug and would be distributed to the State also, Sudhakar said adding that it was decided at the Covid task force meeting on Saturday to request the Centre to provide 20,000 vials of the drug.

He said he was in constant touch with Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers D V Sadanada Gowda and his Ministry in this regard and would also talk to the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

“There is no need for people to worry, but those with

diabetes or other secondary infections, those who are immuno-compromised, with TB, HIV, cancer, with kidney or any other organ transplant, I advise all of them to exercise caution and not to use steroids without the doctor’s consent,” he said.

Also, he advised doctors to exercise caution while administering steroids to such patients. In response to a question, the Minister said it was difficult for now to say exactly as to how many are affected by black fungus or died of it, as people with such issues may have gone to private eye doctors. He said he was constituting by Monday a committee consisting of eye specialists (ophthalmologist), endocrinologists, diabetologists on how to bring black fungus infections under control and how to treat patients with such infections. **PTI**


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PAPER WITH PASSION

Keep going

Despite reverses, the nation needs to keep reminding of the goal ahead: Keep ourselves healthy

On April 19, at a virtual event organised by the All India Management Association, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar fielded a question from industrialist Sunil Munjal about India exporting or donating vaccines without first satisfying the domestic demand. The Minister said: "So ask yourself this question — can I go around and say 'guys, keep your supply chains flowing towards me and, by the way, the end product of the supply chain I am asking you raw material for — vaccine — but I am not going to give you the vaccine'. If you get into this, why are you exporting at all; then someone else will ask why am I exporting to India and that is so short-sighted and only really irresponsible, really non-serious people will make that argument and, by the way, there are some around as you would have noticed." What he did not tell Munjal was that the vaccine doses donated by India, that is, given free to several foreign countries, were only 10.75 million out of a total 66.37 million doses shown as "Made-in-India vaccine supplies" on the Ministry of External Affairs website. A substantial part of it, 35.79 million doses to be precise, are commercial and licensing liabilities of the two vaccine manufacturers, the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech. Another 19.86 million doses are vaccines sent abroad because of the agreement the manufacturers had signed to obtain raw materials for producing the vaccines.



The last two types of supplies were tagged along with the free doses supplied. The vaccine diplomacy of New Delhi, called "Vaccine *Maitri*", began on January 21 and lasted till April 16. In this period, India had supplied abroad all the vaccine it possibly could and the rationale for this comes from no less a person than Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. At the inaugural Raisina Dialogue on April 13, he said: "...this year, despite many constraints, we have supplied vaccine to over 80 countries. We know that the supplies have been modest. We know that the demands are huge. We know that it will be a long time before the entire humanity can be vaccinated. At the same time, we also know that hope matters." During this period, doses were sent to 95 countries across the world. Now comes the part where the Government did not do what it was supposed to do during this period of "Maitri". On May 11, the cumulative doses given to Indians stood at 17.51 crore and no more orders were placed in this period even though shortages were being reported. In early May, the Government said it was still to receive 23 million doses from its previous order and placed fresh orders of around 160 million doses. These orders, for May, June and July, are supposed to be met by July. The manufacturers have their own compulsions meeting the orders in time and the vaccination drive awaits vaccines, free or paid for, in the meantime.

PICTALK



The faithful gather at St Peter's Square at the Vatican

AP

Too young?

The Myanmar people, most of them born after Suu Kyi came into the frame, are kicking up dust

The younger generation is leading the fight against oppression and exploitation around the world. Be it the students of Hong Kong or the youth of Myanmar, they are out to defend their democratic right at the cost of their lives. Ever since the Myanmar Army seized power in February this year, it unleashed a regime of terror. But the terror has not intimidated the young Myanmar. Thousands of people, mostly young, have been protesting and demanding the restoration of democracy. More than 770 civilians had been killed and over 3,738 detained. Yet the morale of the protestors is as high as ever.



As they say, democracy dies in the darkness; the young ones are keeping the torch lit. And they are doing it in style by making good use of social media to tell the world what is happening in Myanmar. They are finding ingenious ways to thwart the might of the State and military. Anti-coup protesters are exploiting the military's patriarchal values to their advantage. The Myanmar Army is rather conservative and ill-trained to deal with civil disobedience. Or, is it?

Yes, true that they would not go under the women's clothesline as it brings in bad omen. The protestors would circle their protest site by wires and hang women's clothes as protection. The Army may have bullets but they have bottles filled with petrol to keep them at the bay. Of course, it is not enough, but it has kept their fight going; it works. The social media campaigns are telling the world about the Army's wrongdoings. They post everything, their atrocities, and highhandedness. They have already won the moral high ground. But young Myanmar is not only fighting the army for restoration of democracy alone, it is also fighting a stagnant social system that is sexist and oppressive, mired in superstitions and dogmas. Generation Z typically less than 25 years of age is also working for a more fair, inclusive future. Myanmar is Southeast Asia's most traditional society. It has an archaic family structure, respect for authority, and gender inequality. Spousal rape and domestic violence are still legal and pervasive in Myanmar. Yet Myanmar's Generation Z activists are defying many of the social norms with their protests and taking down gender stereotypes. Every nation must fight its own evils and that is perhaps what is happening in Myanmar today. It is as much a fight against the Army as it is against the social disorder that has not been challenged for centuries.

The sinking of a paper boat

In these pandemic times, do we remember that we had a time filled with the zest for life, ambitions and hope? Where is it now?



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

It was the summer of the 71. Agra, my hometown, was flooded. Our house, on a higher ground, was a bit less affected; nevertheless, water had entered the ground floor and we were perched on the top. As the rescue boats went by, we children were busy floating paper boats as playthings. They were, though inanimate, like our aspirations and thoughts. The boats, of course, couldn't do a long course. But our imagination did. Those days we children had so much to do, so much to learn from the life around us that there was never a dull moment. Indeed! , for the children who spent their childhood around 50 years back, they had a childhood quite different from the current crop.

Innocence! That's was all we had. The world around us was our playground. It was all real; there was nothing virtual about it. Yes, we children knew so little about everything else that was not in our immediate vicinity. But that was fun, exploring on our own and enjoying every bit of it. Unlike now, the phones were unheard of. We had wired phones instead, which we made with a thread and two matchboxes.

But the connections they provided were pretty strong. The parents at that time were different, too. They hardly cared what the child studied at the school unless a complaint from the school came in. They would often forget the standard in which their child studied. The only day the father would come into the picture was when you got your annual report card.

And his only concern was that if the child was promoted to the next class. Else, the ear-twisting took place. That was more or less summed the early education. Playing *I Spy* or *Hit&Run* was the best pass time. Children's extracurricular activities involved spreading *papads* and chips in the sun. The packaged chips would come much later. Eating out meant having *golgappas* at the street vendor. Of course, the *kulfiwala* occasionally announced his arrival with a



bell and we ran to have it.

Entertainment was hard to come by. We waited for the circus to arrive in town and made plans to go see it. We watched it with disbelief, often replicating the feat and hurting ourselves back at home. The *melas* were again something that we looked forward to. The charm, of course, was the merry-go-round and the giant wheel. It made us dizzy but then enjoyment doesn't come cheap.

Those were the years of innocence and ignorance alike. As we grew up, we realised how little we knew about anything, yet we had learned so many lessons of life that stay with us forever. The parents did not care about the studies of their children; they cared about their health and so saw to it that the children ate everything cooked at home. The kids, too, contributed to the household chores willingly, or unwillingly in my case, but learned that anyway.

The elderly were no pariah either. The granny would tell endless ghost stories and



THOSE WERE THE YEARS OF INNOCENCE AND IGNORANCE ALIKE. AS WE GREW UP, WE REALISED HOW LITTLE WE KNEW ABOUT ANYTHING; YET WE HAD LEARNED SO MANY LESSONS OF LIFE THAT STAY WITH US FOREVER. THE PARENTS DID NOT CARE ABOUT THE STUDIES OF THEIR CHILDREN; THEY CARED ABOUT THEIR HEALTH

we believed them all. For us, there was a ghost on every *peepal* tree, and the *djinns*, *churails* and *dayans* were watching us when we returned late. Caring for them came naturally, partly out of affection and partly out of greed for stories and money that the parents refused. There was a close bonding with them. They became part of you.

Now that when I see my kids growing, I realise the children and their childhood have undergone a sea change. They are informed but not innocent. They can get you the information you might have not known till your graduation. They don't play with matchboxes or waste time decorating Janmashtami models. They are always with their gadgets. They play with them or, rather, live with them. Life has turned virtual. It is a digital degeneration of sorts where you know a lot yet you are rudderless as the framework that comes with human interaction is missing. The pizza-burger generation is more about flaunting its feat

rather than enjoying it. The pictures of restaurants and places visited on the trip find floating on Instagram and Facebook. They might not see *churails* and *dayans* but have demons in their head which tell them to seclude them from the rest. You won't know if your child is at home because he is too much engrossed with the mobile that he needs no one else.

Last year in the monsoon, I told my young daughter how we floated paper boats in the puddles. She said that she did not know how to make one. I was excited as she showed some interest. I said, I will make one for you. I made one, gave it to her, and asked her to set it afloat. Fifteen minutes later, she was with her phone again, chatting. I asked whatever happened to the boat she was supposed to play with. "It sank," she said with a flat face and submerged into her phone again.

(The writer is a columnist and documentary film-maker. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE AIR INDIA DISINVESTMENT PLAN

Sir Cairn says it remains open to talks with the Government to resolve the dispute, but it is not unusual in legal proceedings of this nature to seek attachment of the alleged assets of the debtor in foreign jurisdictions. Air India operates flights from India to New York, Chicago, Washington DC and other cities in the US. The suit brought by Cairn would seek to seize airplanes or other immovable assets, like sales offices that the carrier operates in some of these locations. As we all know, Air India has long been a loss-making entity and the Government has indicated that it is in an advanced stage of being disinvested with multiple parties having submitted offers, including the Tata Group.

This action against Air India could put a roadblock to that process as the Government was hoping to conclude the sale by September this year. Secondly, this can be seen as yet another setback in a continuing story of the retrospective tax law damaging India's international reputation when it comes to doing business.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Sir It is a matter of profound sadness that while the world is battling the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel is resorting to aerial bombardment in Gaza, inflicting casualties on the Palestinians. It exemplifies man's inhumanity to man and man-made suffering in this time of a global pestilence. The Israeli air strikes on Gaza have claimed the lives of at least 162 Palestinians, including 41 children. Of particular poignance is the fact that children become the victims of this escalation in violence. Every single death in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a tragedy for which the right-wing dominated, repressive Israeli Government is responsible.

The interception of most of the rockets fired towards Israel by Hamas indicates the difference and disproportion in military power between the two sides. With 'unwavering support' from the Biden Administration, Israel is emboldened to

We are together in it, or not?



We, for the past several days, see that many people have been criticising Modi ji on the Corona issue. If these people can come forward and do some positive work in the interest of our country, that would be more than welcome. After all, what do they get from speaking against Modi? The Opposition also has a limit in democracy and if someone uses it only for their sole benefit, then that too is a travesty.

It is the absolute duty of every citizen of India that when calamity occurs, we all must fight together against it. Of course, the Central

Government must prepare it to deal with the disaster before it becomes a burden on the Centre.

It becomes the duty of every citizen of the country to serve it in this battle, at least at their own level, but do we actually do it? We need to change ourselves. Small efforts, on the part of each one of us, will have to be made. There are many villages in Haryana where small support groups are engaged in serving the people. The administration is also sending them help and they have also made arrangements at their level. Such work is also a unique quote of reflexes and dedication to society. If such support groups are raised above the rural level politics and taking everyone in confidence, then there should be no solution to any problem.

I, as a citizen, request you to do as much as you can. The country is currently facing a major crisis. In this order, many progressive things are being done by the system and the Government. Obviously, there are things untended. But let's not focus on the negatives.

Satyavan Saurabh | Bhiwani

continue its air offensive "as long as necessary". The issue at the heart of the conflict is Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. It is true that advanced warning and time to evacuate were given. There are global protests in support of the people of Palestine. Let's just hope for better sense to prevail across.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

LET'S NOT NEGLECT THE DECEASED

Sir — This refers to the news report, "Innumerable bodies float" (May 15). Bidding farewell to the dead through funeral rites was one of the earliest signs of our civilisation. The people wish peace for the dead through rituals according to their cultural and religious beliefs, it is a way of coping with the unknown. Social bonds are confirmed in the period of mourning through sharing and

support. But what seems unbearable is that people are being forced to bury bodies in the shallow soil of water banks or let them float away, something partially cremated and sometimes not at all.

It is as though the roots of the society are being torn apart, for the cultural and psychological damage caused by this unprecedented crisis is incalculable. If helpless citizens are unable to accord their loved ones even the minimum dignity in death because, perhaps, no one is around to take the bodies for cremation, or they can't afford the soaring prices of wood or the funeral — profiteers never rest — and have to throw bodies into the river.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes. Which society will condone or actions? They lost their father who died while being in Govt custody.



People's Conference chairman — Sajad Lone



We are concerned about the intercommunal violence across Israel

US President — Joe Biden

Stay safe, wear your masks and get vaccinated as soon as possible and follow all COVID guidelines



Actor — Madhuri Dixit-Nene



We have got a tour against India in mid-September. So, there are a couple of camps.

Australia bowler — Megan Schutt

Hello there! Missing all my red! With the last entire year being covered in masks, and continuing to do so...missing a bit of the #redlipstick action.



Actor — Raveena Tandon

FIRST COLUMN

SHOULD YOU COUNT ON MUTUAL FUNDS?

Research shows that past returns and the age of the mutual fund have an impact on your savings



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Mutual funds are gaining popularity as a preferred investment avenue among Indians over the last decade. Particularly over the last five years, the industry has witnessed a huge increase in the number of folios which grew to 44.2 million from March, 2014 to June, 2019. What makes this growth interesting is the fact that it had largely come from the segment of individual investors, including both retails investors and high network individuals (HNIs). This segment registered a growth rate of 15.5 percent during this period, which in turn contributed to a 27 percent rise in assets under management (AUM) of individual investors from ₹4 lakh crore in March, 2014 to ₹4 lakh crore in June, 2019. Since mutual funds have become one of the preferred investment destinations or investor, it is important to choose funds that will perform better than others.



inflows, it means that more money has been invested into the funds and vice versa. Net flows are important as they provide the performance report of mutual funds. High net inflows are significant as they lead to higher AUM, which in turn increase company's profits. On the other hand, high net outflows, might lead to some tactical changes like changing the fund manager or the investment philosophy. Increase in the collective net inflows also leads to increase in the size of some individual mutual funds and also the size of the mutual fund industry as a whole. In addition, net flows can also provide an insight into the general collective predictive capacity of investors. So, an overall net inflow into any mutual fund may forecast its positive performance. So, if net flows are so important for any mutual fund, what determines that it gets positive inflows? Research shows that factors like past returns, the age of the mutual fund, higher expenses like higher advertising costs, lower fees and size of the fund family. Some strategic decisions, like changing the name of the mutual fund to match the current season trend also bring in extra inflows.

Size plays an import role in the performance of mutual funds. Several studies suggest that younger or new funds have higher performance as they enter the industry with higher skill sets and their relatively smaller exposure to market makes sure that any adverse market movements would have less impact on the performance. In addition, the increasing size of the industry also has an adverse impact on the performance. The larger the industry size, the lesser is the potential of any profitable trades, as adjustments to any anomalies, which may lead to any profit making, quickly happen, leading to less chances of booking profits.

Skill of the fund and the fund manager are an important determinant of mutual fund performance. Fund managers' compensation also contributes its performance. In cases where the compensation depends on performance, such mutual funds, due to an active strategy, end up generally becoming high performance funds and perform better than funds where managers use passive fund management style. So, a fund manager's skill in stock picking helps in generating a higher return.

Several studies show a predictive pattern of mutual fund analysis based on the above discussed determinants. Small investors should take advantage and make use of the skills of the funds and fund managers to beat the benchmark and hope to generate higher returns.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

Corona: Some real, though some hype

Somehow, the States and the Union Government are passing on the impression that they have been unable to meet the challenge of the virus. But why?

Thoughts of prospective troubles hardly come true, and most people die of visceral fear of spectre or something that doesn't exist. "Ninety per cent of our problems are caused by our own thoughts," says Hilda de la Rosa, a South African popular author and motivational speaker. She says, entrapped in our thought processes, we find it arduous to extricate ourselves from the thinking pattern we have imbibed over years. Unaware of the facts about morbidity and mortality due to Covid or otherwise, most people are caught with the fear psychosis that is taking a larger toll than the pandemic itself. The predicament has shaken people of all description. The pandemic 2.0 is hitting Indians with greater intensity and virulence but a sensible and broader perspective can reduce the hype and assure the implications of the current crisis are not as dismal as being made out.

Certain mystery shrouds the resurgence of Covid 2.0 with new strains. True, the plateauing of Covid cases in India by last fall led to public and government complacency about continuing risks. And the the government toned down restrictions. As the going seemed manageable, shops, restaurants, wholesale and retail markets, malls, schools, public transport, businesses and public establishments tended to function normally. Export of jet fighters, plans to lay 75,000+ stations to charge electric vehicles, supply of domestically produced Covid vaccine to 87 countries and medicines to over 150 countries meant progression towards a vibrant economy and making of "atmanirbhar" nation. Naturally, the Indian buoyancy and optimism was not palatable to arms, oil, and pharma lobbies, as they could lose huge businesses in India; apropos of 5-billion-dollar PPE and masks deals alone came to a naught in one shot, oil companies were next. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who repeatedly said and meant 'desh nahi lutne dunga, desh nahin bikne dunga' was a common enemy who would not bend like Donald Trump of the US. For the global business magnates to flourish in India, Modi's downsizing with the aid of domestic disgruntled elements appeared the only option. To support them was neighbouring China. Possibility of China-sponsored biological war behind the abrupt rise in Covid cases in India bypassing the neighbouring countries with identical life style during April 10-15 cannot be ruled out. Accompanying this was the opposition's refrain of failure of Modi government to deal with Covid, enthusiastically supported by Western media. On April 20, international media showed 'large scale' cremations and highlighted deficiencies in Indian health care sector. Strangely, at this hour, Pakistan also offered to help India.

The anti-government chorus was endorsed by UNICEF executive director Henrietta Fore on May 4: "The tragic situation in India should raise alarm bells for all of us." Most recent is the editorial in the medical journal *Lancet* summarily undermining the government's efforts in dealing with Covid; the vindictive portion being, "Modi's actions in attempting to stifle criticism and open discussion during the crisis crisis are inexcusable". The statement suggesting the government "own up to its mistakes" is the tone of a hardcore political adversary and in bad taste, unbecoming of a medical publication. Reports about Chinese instigations behind the sordid coverage and observations on India's handling of Covid



AT HOME, DURING COVID 1.0, THE OPPOSITION DECRIED LOCKDOWNS FOR ITS ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS ON LIVELIHOODS. IN THE SECOND WAVE, AFTER THE STATES WERE ALLOWED TO DECIDE AT THEIR OWN LEVEL, THEY CHOSE LOCKDOWN. THEY ALSO CRITICISED THE EFFICACY OF VACCINE, THEN TOOK IT ONE BY ONE

The author is a blogger at www.bluntspeaker.com and writes on health, spiritual, and social issues.



shall be revelatory.

At home, during Covid 1.0, the Opposition decried lockdowns for its adverse implications on livelihoods. In second wave, after States were allowed to decide at their own level, they chose lockdown. They also criticised the efficacy of vaccine, then took it one by one. The purpose was creating a public impression that government is unwilling and unfit to manage Covid crisis, something not in national interest.

Ambiguity in identifying the precise aetiology, genesis and manifestations of Covid 2.0 further tends to destabilise the poise of lay public. The doctors find it expedient to classify routine health issues as Covid in keeping with trends. The head of a prestigious health facility, Dr Arvind Kumar of Medanta, Gurugram: Consider any one of symptoms like sneezing, headache, fever, throat soar, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of smell or taste, skin patches, body ache as Covid case unless proved otherwise, and begin with self-isolation without wait for lab reports - even negative reports with either symptom must be treated as Covid. Such precepts further down the already diminishing morale of the patient and his kith and kin that needs bol-

stering in the nerve breaking era we are passing through.

As for the numbers game in Covid, national morbidity and mortality data across states in specific time frames are subject to wide fluctuations because transmission of Covid is multifactorial in nature involving the vision of the government at the strict measures it takes to control the pandemic including health facilities. Thus, it shall be naïve to pronounce judgement on the performance of the governance based on infections and death data of few days, weeks or even months; policies and actions take long to show results. Taking the Covid data of April 28, 2021, though numerically India witnessed largest daily deaths (3647) compared to USA (954), Germany (320), France (344) and Italy (344), the deaths per crore population turns out to be mere 26 for India and 29, 38, 48 and 57, respectively, for these countries (source: worldometers.info). Thus, the narrative that India is worst hit by Covid smacks of foul play to tarnish the image of India.

Doctors are not knowalls in health matters but in a few weeks after Covid 2.0, how do they presume that all non-Covid diseases

have eclipsed altogether. Based on 2017 data, World Economic Forum analysis revealed 25,270 daily deaths in India, second to China at 28,036. The estimated global annual death toll for tuberculosis of all kinds in 2019 stood at 14.18 lakh and 79,144 in India; for HIV-related diseases the annual death toll was 5-9 lakh globally and 69,000 for India in 2017. These figures shall not be significantly different for 2020 and 2021. A fair, comparative assessment of quantitative changes in morbidity and mortality in pre-Covid and it a time frame shows that the Covid death toll as reported is misleading and ignores mortality from classical diseases. The actual Covid toll is not of the level we are told to make out.

The fear against COVID is largely visceral. It is the spectre of COVID that is the real threat, and not the virus itself. The virus with a life of around seven days is an issue only in about three to five per cent cases where specialist handling is required. We are undergoing times when each section of country has to lend a helping hand. Let us face the facts squarely, keep our peace and hope for the best.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGE OF OXYGEN IN THE STATE NOW, AND I ALSO I ONCE AGAIN APPEAL TO THE FARMER LEADERS TO SUSPEND THEIR PROTESTS.
HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER
— MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR



THE SITUATION IN HARYANA IS WORSE THAN THAT OF NEIGHBOURING DELHI. HEALTH MINISTER ANIL VIJ SHOULD RESIGN FOR FAILING TO HANDLE THE SITUATION.
INLD LEADER
— ABHAY SINGH CHAULTALA

Time to take hypertension, a COVID-19 comorbidity, head-on

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes; just stick around with a few simple tips



VIKAS MAHATME

In India at least one in three adults in India have hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. The ongoing pandemic has revealed how people with hypertension are at greater risk of becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19. Research indicates that most people are unaware that they have high blood pressure and even if diagnosed, they are either irregular with their medication or discontinue taking it after a while. Studies have also shown that patients with hypertension but not on medications had a significantly higher risk of mortality compared with those on medication, if they got Covid-19.

In the past World Health Organisation (WHO) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have issued various warnings and guidelines for people with chronic

conditions, particularly hypertensives to ensure they continue their treatment - through telemedicine whenever possible and keep taking the prescribed medicines. On this World Hypertension Day, it is critically important for India to pay attention to this silent killer and take adequate precautions.

Dos and don'ts:

Secure your supply of blood pressure medicines. Keep a stock of at least 90 days.

Continue to take medicines for blood pressure and other chronic conditions such as diabetes as prescribed by the doctor.

If possible, regularly measure your blood pressure at home. If it fluctuates, consult your doctor remotely. Do not change your treatment without a medical opinion.

Avail of telemedicine facility if you develop coronavirus



symptoms or feel unwell. In the last one year, 35 lakh Indians have dialled E-Sanjeevani, the government's telemedicine platform for a medical consultation.

Avoid consuming excess salt in your food

Risk Factors associated with hypertension

Hypertension can lead to severe health complications and increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and sometimes death. It is a primary risk factor for cardiovascular disease, including stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and aneurysm. Uncontrolled hypertension may affect eyes; leading to Hypertensive Retinopathy which may lead to irreversible blindness. Keeping blood pressure under control is vital for preserving health and reducing the risk of these dangerous conditions.

High blood pressure is often symptomless and quietly damages blood vessels leading to serious health problems. While there is no cure, using medications as prescribed and making lifestyle changes can enhance your quality of life and reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and more.

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes. If you already have high blood pressure, the same lifestyle changes combined with medication therapy (as recommended by your provider) can also help you control it. Certain individuals are more likely to develop high blood pressure than others if they have a family history of hypertension or consume diets rich in salt, saturated fats, consume tobacco or alcohol and are overweight. Stress

can also raise your risk of developing high blood pressure. Hypertension typically develops over the course of several years. Usually, you don't notice any symptoms. But even without symptoms, high blood pressure can cause damage to your blood vessels and organs, especially the brain, heart, eyes, and kidneys.

The first criteria to deal with hypertension or high blood pressure is early detection. Regular blood pressure readings can help you and your doctor in noticing any change. If your blood pressure is elevated, the health provider may need to keep checking it for over a few weeks to see if the number stays elevated or falls back to normal levels. Treatment for hypertension includes both prescription medication and healthy lifestyle changes.

The author is a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

Israeli strikes kill 42 in Gaza City

PM Netanyahu warns war against Hamas will go on

AP ■ GAZA CITY

Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 42 people Sunday, medics said, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signaled the fourth war between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza would rage on despite international efforts to broker a cease-fire.

In a televised address, Netanyahu said Sunday evening the attacks were continuing at “full-force” and will “take time.” Israel “wants to levy a heavy price” from Gaza’s militant Hamas rulers, he said, flanked by his defense minister and political rival, Benny Gantz, in a show of unity.

The Israeli air assault early Sunday was the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and Hamas nearly a week ago, marking the worst fighting here since the devastating 2014 war in Gaza.

The airstrikes hit a major downtown street of residential buildings and storefronts over the course of five minutes after midnight, destroying two adjacent buildings and one about 50 yards (meters) down the road. At one point, a rescuer shouted, “Can you hear me?” into a hole in the rubble. “Are you OK?” Minutes later, first

responders pulled a survivor out and carried him off on an orange stretcher. The Gaza Health Ministry said 16 women and 10 children were among those killed, with more than 50 people wounded, and rescue efforts are still underway.

Earlier, the Israeli military said it destroyed the home of Gaza’s top Hamas leader, Yahiyeh Sinwar, in a separate strike in the southern town of Khan Younis. It was the third such attack in the last two days on the homes of senior Hamas leaders, who have gone underground.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as international mediators work to end the fighting and stave off an Israeli ground invasion of the territory. But targeting the group’s leaders could hinder those efforts. A U.S. Diplomat is in the region to try to de-escalate tensions, and the U.N. Security Council is set to meet Sunday.

In its airstrikes, Israel has leveled a number of Gaza City’s tallest office and residential buildings, alleging they contain Hamas military infrastructure. Among them was the building housing The Associated Press office and those of other media outlets.



Palestinian rescue a survivor from under the rubble of a destroyed residential building following deadly Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City, Sunday

Islamic nations slam Israel — and each other’s ties to it

AP ■ DUBAI

A league of Muslim nations on Sunday demanded that Israel halt attacks killing Palestinian civilians amid heavy fighting between it and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, even as fissures between countries over their recognition of Israel emerged.

A statement by the 57-

nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation hewed closely to previous ones issued by the Saudi-based group, including backing the decades-old call for Palestinians to have their own nation with East Jerusalem as its capital.

However, recent normalization deals between Israel and some nations in the group — as well as their own concerns about

Hamas — saw diplomats at points instead criticize each other.

“The massacre of Palestinian children today follows the purported normalization,” Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said. “This criminal and genocidal regime has once again proven that friendly gestures only aggravate its atrocities.”

UN head ‘deeply disturbed’ by Israeli airstrike

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is “deeply disturbed” by the Israeli airstrike that destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City housing offices of several international media organisations and residential apartments, and

is “dismayed” by the increasing number of civilian casualties.

“The secretary-general reminds all sides that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs,” spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Saturday.

Refugees arriving in US unlikely to exceed cap set by Trump

AP ■ SAN DIEGO (US)

President Joe Biden, under political pressure, agreed to admit four times as many refugees this budget year as his predecessor did, but resettlement agencies concede the number actually allowed into the US will be closer to the record-low cap of 15,000 set by former President Donald Trump.

Refugee advocates say they are grateful for the increase because it’s symbolically important to show the world the US is back as a humanitarian leader at a time when the number of refugees worldwide is the highest since World War II. But they’re frustrated, too, because more refugees could have been admitted if Biden hadn’t dragged his feet.

“About 10,000 to 15,000 is what we’re expecting,” said Jenny Yang of World Relief,

adding that Biden’s inaction for months after taking office in January was “definitely problematic”.

“That delay meant not being able to process refugee applications for four months. We weren’t able to rebuild for four months, so it really was unfortunate,” Yang said.

Biden first proposed raising the cap to 62,500 in February in a plan submitted to Congress, but then refused to sign off on it for two months before coming back April 16 and suggesting he was sticking with Trump’s target.

Democratic allies and refugee advocates lambasted him, saying he was reneging on his campaign promise in the face of bipartisan criticism over his handling of an increase in unaccompanied migrant children at the US-Mexico border.

Nine killed in shootout between two tribal groups in Pakistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

At least nine people were killed and five others injured in an exchange of firing between two tribal groups in Pakistan’s Sindh province, according to a media report on

Police said the bodies and injured have been shifted to the hospital

Sunday. The shootout happened on Saturday between Jagirani and Chachar tribes in Kandhkot over long-standing enmity, ARY News reported.

According to police, nine people were killed as a result of firing between them over long-standing enmity.

Police said the bodies and injured have been shifted to the hospital. Tensions between the two groups spread fear and panic in the area. A heavy contingent of police arrived in the area to defuse the tension.

Myanmar junta attacks town that resisted coup

AP ■ BANGKOK

The US and British embassies in Myanmar expressed concern about reports of fierce government attacks on a town in a western Chin state, where the ruling junta declared martial law because of armed resistance to military rule.

The fighting began around 6 am Saturday when government troops reinforced by helicopters began shelling the western part of the town of Mindat, destroying several homes, said a spokesman of the Chinland Defence Force. It is a locally formed militia group opposed to the February coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Helicopters also took part in the attack, according to the spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons. “Mindat town is now under siege and is bracing for an all-out assault by the junta troops from air and by land,” said a statement by the Chin Human Rights Organisation.

The shadow National Unity Government, set up by lawmakers who were blocked by the army from taking their seats in Parliament, warned that “within the next 48 hours, Mindat can potentially become a battleground and thousands of people are facing the danger of being displaced.” Many have

already left the town of about 50,000 people, said a resident contacted by phone who was also fleeing.

The Mindat Township People’s Administration, another opposition grouping, claimed that 15 young men had been seized by government troops and used as human shields. It said at least five defenders of the town had been killed in clashes and at least 10 others wounded.

None of these details could be independently verified, but a Myanmar state television broadcast Saturday night reported that fighting was going on, and acknowledged the town’s defenders have been putting up stiff resistance against the army.

“The military’s use of weapons of war against civilians, including this week in Mindat, is a further demonstration of the depths the regime will sink to to hold onto power,” the British Embassy said on Twitter. “We call on the military to cease violence against civilians.”

The US Embassy said it was “aware of increasing violence in Mindat, including reports of the military shooting civilians,” and urged that evidence of atrocities be sent to UN investigators.

Detailed tallies compiled by several different watchdog groups say government security

forces have killed upwards of 750 protesters and bystanders as they have tried to suppress opposition to the military’s seizure of power.

In April, security forces were accused of killing more than 80 people in one day to destroy street barricades that militants had set up as strongholds in the city of Bago.

In many or most cases, police and soldiers were trying to break up peaceful protests, though as they increased the use of lethal force, some protesters fought back in self-defense. In recent weeks there has been an upsurge in small bombings in many cities, mostly causing little damage and few casualties.

The junta says the death toll is less than 300, and the use of force was justified to quash what it calls riots.

Mindat’s resisters are only lightly armed, mostly with a traditional type of single-shot hunting rifle, but the territory around the town is mountainous and wooded, favouring defenders over attackers.

The report on state television MRTV listed past attacks on government forces and installations, most recently on Thursday, when it claimed a force of about 100 blocked security forces from entering the town, destroying one vehicle and leaving an unspecified number of security forces dead and missing.

China slams ‘hasty’ withdrawal of US troops from Af, urges UN to play ‘due role’

Beijing: China has said that the “hasty” withdrawal of the US troops from war-torn Afghanistan has severely affected the peace process and the regional stability as it called on the UN to play its “due role” and urged the SCO to pay more attention to the situation.

The issue of US withdrawal from Afghanistan figured in the telephonic conversation between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Pakistan counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Saturday, Wang said that the “hasty withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan”, which is expected to be completed by September this year, has severely impacted the Afghan domestic peace process and negatively affected the regional stability.

Under such circumstances, China expects the United Nations to play its “due role”, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Wang as saying. He, however, did not elaborate the UN’s “due role”. Wang also said that the eight-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), of which India and Pakistan are members, should pay more attention to the situation and Afghanistan’s neighbours. AP

GLOBE TROTTER

FOUR KILLED AS HEAVY RAIN, FLOOD HIT LANKA

Colombo: At least 4 persons have died and over 11,500 others affected due to heavy rains and floods prevailing in several parts of Sri Lanka for the last few days.

SENIOR JAMAAT LEADER ARRESTED IN B'DESH

Dhaka: A senior leader of the hardline Jamaat-e-Islami group has been arrested in Bangladesh for allegedly instigating violence in March during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to the country, police said on Sunday.

NEPAL’S COVID DEATH TOLL CROSSES 5K MARK

Kathmandu: Nepal recorded 145 new Covid-19 fatalities in the last 24 hours, pushing the death toll to 5,001, the Health Ministry said. The total coronavirus tally stands at 4,55,020 with 7,368 new cases, it said. Of the total new cases, 2,609 were reported from Kathmandu Valley in the last 24 hours. While 3,39,756 people have recovered so far, 1,10,263 others are undergoing treatment at various home and institutional isolation centres.

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI LABOUR DEPARTMENT, 5-SHAM NATH MARG, DELHI-110054. PUBLIC NOTICE

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 Act is applicable to every establishment in which five or more inter-State migrant workmen are employed.

All principal employers employing (or have employed during last 12 months) the workers through outsourcing are required to mandatorily register with Labour Department through e-district portal of Govt of Delhi on the link: <https://edistrict.delhigovt.nic.in/>.

Every interstate migrant workmen shall be issued passbook by the contractor containing details of employment and shall be provided other benefits as provided in the Act. Please fulfil your obligation towards these migrant workers and also furnish details of Migrant Workers to the Labour Department for their benefit.

Labour Department has made operational Shramik Helpline (155214) where a migrant workman can seek assistance and guidance. Sh. Gurmukh Singh, Joint Labour Commissioner (Ph. No: 01125492133 and email: labdlcsw@gmail.com) is Nodal Officer in respect of Migrant Workmen and can be contacted for redressal of any grievance.

DIP/Shabdarth/0062/21-22

Labour Commissioner

Afghan ceasefire ends amid calls for fresh peace talks

Kabul: A three-day cease-fire marked by violent attacks — most claimed by the Islamic State group — ended Sunday in Afghanistan amid calls for renewed peace talks between the government and Taliban.

Taliban political spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the negotiating teams of the government and the Islamic Emirate, as the Taliban refer to their ousted regime, met briefly Saturday in the Middle Eastern State of Qatar. They renewed their commitment to finding a peaceful end to the war and called for an early start to talks that have been stalled, he said.

The US has been pressing for accelerated talks as it withdraws the last of its 2,500-3,500 soldiers and NATO’s remaining 7,000 allied forces.

Even as the Taliban and government signed on to the cease-fire, which was declared to mark the Islamic holiday of Eid-al-Fitr, violence continued unabated in Afghanistan.

A bombing Friday in a mosque north of the capital killed 12 worshippers, including the prayer leader. Another 15 people were wounded. The Taliban denied involvement and blamed the government intelligence agency.

In a statement Sunday, the

IS affiliate took responsibility for the mosque attack, saying its fighters planted an explosive device in “a worship place for disbelievers Sufis,” killing the “apostate Imam,” or prayer leader. The statement claimed 40 worshippers were wounded.

The IS also claimed it blew up several electrical grid stations over the weekend. That left the capital Kabul in the dark for much of the three-day holiday that followed the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

In posts on its affiliated websites, IS claimed additional attacks over the last two weeks that destroyed 13 electrical grid stations in several provinces. The stations bring imported power from the Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The attacks have left nine provinces including Kabul with disrupted power supplies, said Sanger Niaza, a government spokesman. There was also concern that local warlords, demanding protection money from the government to safeguard stations in areas they control, may have been behind some of the destruction.

At least one local warlord was arrested last year after demanding protection money. On Sunday in the mostly

Shiite neighbourhood of Dasht-e-Barchi, parents of scores of young girls killed in a brutal May 8 bombing demonstrated to demand the government provide them with greater security. They said 90 people were killed, most of them students of Syed Al-Shahda girls school, in the bombings outside the school.

No one took responsibility but the IS affiliate has declared war on the country’s minority Shiites.

The seemingly unstoppable violence in Afghanistan has residents and regional countries fearful the final withdrawal of US and NATO soldiers could lead to further chaos. Washington said it wants its last soldier out of Afghanistan by September 11 at the latest, but the withdrawal is progressing quickly and a Western official familiar with the exit said it is likely to be completed by early July.

He spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the withdrawal are not being made public. On Saturday, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed concern about the rapid withdrawal of US and NATO forces in a phone call with Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi. AP

German expert: New Covid jabs needed in 2022

Berlin: The head of Germany’s independent vaccine advisory panel says it’s likely that everyone will have to get vaccinated again next year against Covid-19. Thomas Mertens told the Funke newspaper group in comments published Sunday that there isn’t yet enough data to say when exactly booster shots will be needed, and officials will have to wait a few months to see whether protection against the coronavirus weakens in some groups.

Nearly 30.4 million people in Germany, or 36.5 per cent of the population, had received at least one vaccine shot by Friday

But he stressed that “the virus won’t leave us again” and so the vaccinations currently under way won’t be the last. He added: “In principle, we have to prepare for everyone possibly having to refresh their vaccine protection next year.”

Nearly 30.4 million people in Germany, or 36.5 per cent of the population, had received at least one vaccine shot by Friday. More than 9 million, or 10.9 per cent of the population, had been fully vaccinated.

Bangladesh extends lockdown till May 23

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday extended ongoing nationwide lockdown till May 23 to contain the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bangladesh clamped a week-long nationwide lockdown on April 5, suspending public transport and shutting markets to combat the surge in coronavirus cases in the country. The restrictions were later extended till April 28, then till May 5 and then till May 16.

“Lockdown restrictions are extended from May 16 in light of the current state of the pandemic,” the Cabinet Division said in a notice on Sunday.

All offices and organisations related to revenue collection have been included under emergency services, which will be out of the purview of the restrictions, the Daily Star newspaper reported.

Besides, shops that sell food items, hotels and restaurants will only be allowed to provide takeaway or online services during the period, the circular said.

Sharks use Earth’s magnetic field as a GPS, scientists say

Portland: Sharks use the Earth’s magnetic field as a sort of natural GPS to navigate journeys that take them great distances across the world’s oceans, scientists have found.

Researchers said their marine laboratory experiments with a small species of shark confirm long-held speculation that sharks use magnetic fields as aids to navigation — behavior observed in other marine animals such as sea turtles.

Their study, published this month in the journal Current Biology, also sheds light on why sharks are able to traverse seas and find their way back to feed, breed and give birth, said marine policy specialist Bryan Keller, one of the study authors.

“We know that sharks can respond to magnetic fields,” Keller said.

“We didn’t know that they detected it to use as an aid in navigation ... You have sharks that can travel 20,000 kilometers (12,427 miles) and end up in the same spot.” The question of how sharks perform long-distance migrations has intrigued researchers for years. The sharks undertake their

journeys in the open ocean where they encounter few physical features such as corals that could serve as landmarks.

Looking for answers, scientists based at Florida State University decided to study bonnethead sharks — a kind of hammerhead that lives on both American coasts and returns to the same estuaries every year.

Researchers exposed 20 bonnetheads to magnetic conditions that simulated locations hundreds of kilometers (miles) away from where they were caught off Florida. The scientists found that the sharks began to swim north when the magnetic cues made them think they were south of where they should be.

That finding is compelling, said Robert Hueter, senior scientist emeritus at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, who was not involved in the study. Hueter said further study is needed to find how the sharks use the magnetic fields to determine their location and whether larger, long-distance migrating sharks use a similar system to find their way.

AP

GDP growth may be below 9pc in FY22: Care survey

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A mid a raging second wave of Covid-19 and subsequent restrictions on business activities imposed by several states, economic recovery is beginning to lose steam and the country's GDP growth is likely to be below nine per cent for the current fiscal, according to a survey.

At least 80 per cent of the respondents expect consumer demand for non-essential items as well as investment to be severely impacted due to the current Covid situation, the survey conducted by Care Ratings said.

"The economic recovery is beginning to lose steam with infection rates scaling record highs. Almost seven out of 10 respondents expect GDP (growth) to be below nine per cent for FY22," it said.

According to the study, the majority of respondents expect the lockdown



announced by several states will stay till May-end.

Altogether, 54 per cent of the people, who participated in the survey, believe that the lockdown is a solution to the current COVID-19 situation in the country, it said.

Little more than three-fourth of the respondents feel that the current lockdown is not as stringent as the restrictions imposed last year, it

added.

Another rating agency CRISIL said India's GDP growth is likely to drop to 9.8 per cent in a moderate scenario, assuming the second wave of coronavirus disease peaks by May- end.

The economic growth may slip further to 8.2 per cent in the severe situation when the second wave of the pandemic peaks by June-end, it added.

M-cap of 8 most valued companies plummets over ₹1.13 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the top-10 most valued companies witnessed a combined erosion of ₹1,13,074.57 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and HDFC Bank emerging as the worst hit.

Among the top-10 most valued companies, only Reliance Industries Limited and State Bank of India managed to book gains on a weekly basis.

During the holiday-truncated trading week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent.

The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services tumbled ₹30,054.79 crore to ₹11,28,488.10 crore.

Infosys witnessed an erosion of ₹15,168.41 crore, taking its market worth to ₹5,61,060.44 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank eroded

by ₹15,139.12 crore to ₹7,65,035.49 crore and that of Kotak Mahindra Bank plummeted by ₹14,398.04 crore to ₹3,38,358.80 crore.

The valuation of HDFC dived ₹13,430.38 crore to ₹4,36,879.75 crore and that of Bajaj Finance tanked ₹9,844.62 crore to ₹3,21,592.05 crore.

The m-cap of Hindustan Unilever Limited diminished by ₹8,505.43 crore to stand at ₹5,58,445.28 crore and that of ICICI Bank dipped by ₹6,533.78 crore to ₹4,13,243.07 crore.

In contrast, Reliance Industries added ₹3,518.62 crore to take its valuation to ₹12,27,855.04 crore and State Bank of India added ₹2,052.66 crore to help its m-cap reach Rs 3,21,732.25 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries retained the most-valued company title followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, Hindustan .

SBI to sell three NPA accounts next month for recovery of over ₹ 235 cr



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The State Bank of India (SBI) will sell three bad accounts to asset reconstruction companies or other financial institutions next month to recover dues of over ₹235 crore, according to a sales notice.

In terms of the bank's policy on sale of financial assets, in line with regulatory guidelines, SBI said it has placed Heavy Metal and Tubes Ltd, Khare and Tarkunde Infrastructure Pvt Ltd and Elize International Ltd for sale to

recover a total of ₹235.32 crore.

Heavy Metal has outstanding dues of ₹116.91 crore to the bank, Khare and Tarkunde owes ₹99.84 crore and Elize International ₹18.57 crore. The bank has set the reserve prices for these NPA accounts for sale at ₹27.50 crore, ₹15 crore and ₹8 crore, respectively.

The e-auction of Heavy Metal and Tubes; and Khare and Tarkunde will take place on June 7, while that of Elize will be on June 8.

SBI said the interested

ARCs/banks/NBFCs/FIs can conduct due diligence of these assets with immediate effect, after submitting expressions of interest and executing a non-disclosure agreement with the bank.

Ahmedabad-based Heavy Metal and Tubes is engaged in manufacturing of stainless steel tubes and pipes, while Nagpur-based Khare and Tarkunde is engaged in real estate business.

Elize International is a Kolkata based company engaged in manufacturing of clothing.

Amazon helps sellers procure oxygen concentrators for customers in India



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce major Amazon is working with sellers on its marketplace in India to help them procure about 9,000 oxygen concentrators for customers in the country.

The first batch of 1,000 oxygen concentrators have already landed in India, and are now available for purchase for consumers and business customers. The rest are expected to come through in the second half of the month.

Sellers on Amazon will now be offering oxygen concentrators along with other genuine and high-quality products like oxymeters, thermometers, masks, gloves, sanitizers and disinfectants for customers across India, Amazon India said in a blog-post.

"To address the growing customer demand and shortage of critical medical equipment, Amazon India is working with sellers on its marketplace to help them bring in about 9,000 oxygen concentrators for customers in India," it said.

Amazon's global procurement teams are helping interested sellers from India connect with global suppliers to enable them to procure oxygen concentrators, while simplifying supply chain complexities and facilitating the overall process, it noted.

"In the last few weeks, we have seen up to a 70x increase in search volume for oxygen concentrators and we are collaborating with our sellers to ramp up inventory of critical medical equipment including oxygen concentrators for our customers. Our focus is to enable an easy and convenient access to genuine, high quality products for our customers in their time of need," Amazon India Vice President Manish Tiwari said.

India is registering a high number of COVID cases daily that has put extreme pressure on the healthcare infrastructure of the country.

The massive rise in infections in the second wave of the pandemic has led to hospitals in several states reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds and people turned to social media to procure oxygen cylinders, hospital beds, plasma donors and other resources.

Previously, Amazon had announced importing and donating 100 ventilator units, and that it is bringing in over 10,000 oxygen concentrators and BiPAP machines to India in collaboration with multiple partners.

The medical equipment will be donated to hospitals and public institutions to augment their capacity to help COVID-19 infected patients across multiple cities.

Go Airlines might face turbulence from possible floating-rate plane leases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The IPO-bound Go Airlines is set to induct 22 new planes in less than two years but expects that a possible shift to floating-rate aircraft leases might have an adverse impact due to higher interest rates.

The low-cost airline has filed draft papers for an initial share sale worth ₹3,600 crore and will be the first domestic scheduled carrier to get listed on domestic bourses in nearly six years.

Apart from the prospects of moving to floating-rate leases for new planes, issues related to brand 'GoAir' and certain related trademarks, and indebtedness, are among the risk factors mentioned in its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP).

All its 55 planes as of March 31, 2021, were under operating and fixed-rate leases but the airline anticipates that future leases could be based on floating rates.

The airline, which

announced rebranding itself from 'GoAir' to 'Go First', expects to add eight new aircraft in fiscal 2022 and 14 in the next financial year ending March 31, 2023.

These planes will be part of the order placed for 98 A320 neos. Currently, the carrier's fleet has a mix of A320 neos and A320XLRs.

While noting that its indebtedness could adversely affect its business, Go Airlines said that it might be required to switch over to floating-rate leases for planes in the future.

"All our 55 aircraft as of March 31, 2021, are under operating leases under fixed-rate leases and we may be required to obtain floating-rate leases for future aircraft leases.

As a result, a significant increase in interest rates may increase our obligations under any floating-rate leases and may adversely impact our results of operations," as per the DRHP.

As of April 19, 2021, the company's aggregate indebted-

ness on a consolidated basis stood at Rs 8,160.09 crore.

According to the DRHP, the brand 'GoAir' and certain related trademarks, are registered in the name of Go Holdings, in which one of the promoters Jehangir Nusli Wadia has 99 per cent stake.

During the re-branding transition period and thereafter, it might use trademarks/service marks, that primarily consist of the terms 'Go', 'GoAir' and 'Fly Smart'.

As per the DRHP, in March 2021, Go Holdings made two applications to the Registrar of Trade Marks, for registration of two word marks used exclusively by our company, namely 'Go Airlines' and 'www.Goair.in'.

In April 2021, Jehangir Nusli Wadia made an application to the National Internet Exchange of India, to transfer 115 domain names registered in the name of the company, from one domain registrar to another domain registrar, namely Net4India Ltd to Network Solutions.

Govt may table amendment to DICGC Act in monsoon session

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to ensure timely support to depositors of stressed banks, the government may bring amendment to DICGC Act in the monsoon session with the objective to provide account holders easy and time-bound access to funds to the extent of the deposit insurance cover.

Last year, the government raised insurance cover on deposit five-folds to ₹5 lakh with a view to provide support to depositors of ailing lenders like Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank.

Following the collapse of PMC Bank, Yes Bank and Lakshmi Vilas Bank too came under

stress leading to restructuring by the regulator and the government.

The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is almost ready, sources said.

It is expected that the Bill will be tabled in the upcoming monsoon session after being vetted by the Union Cabinet, sources added.

Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immediate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks.

As per the current provisions, the deposit insurance of up to Rs 5 lakh comes into play when the licence of a bank is cancelled and liquidation process starts.

DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, provides insurance cover on bank deposits.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget speech in February said the government had approved an increase in the Deposit Insurance

cover from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh for bank customers last year.

"I shall be moving amendments to the DICGC Act, 1961 in this session itself to stream-

line the provisions, so that if a bank is temporarily unable to fulfil its obligations, the depositors of such a bank can get easy and time-bound access to their deposits to the extent of the deposit insurance cover. This would help depositors of banks that are currently under stress," she had said.

It could not be presented in the Budget session due to curtailment of the last session following the spread of second wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

It is to be noted that the enhanced deposit insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh is effective from February 4, 2020. The increase was done after a gap of 27 years as it was static since 1993.

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.

Petrol, diesel price hiked again; petrol price nears ₹99 in Mumbai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol price on Sunday was increased by 24 paise per litre and diesel by 27 paise, pushing rates across the country to record highs and that of petrol in Mumbai to near Rs 99 a litre.

The increase led to rates in Delhi climbing to Rs 92.58 per litre and diesel to Rs 83.22, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Rates had already crossed Rs 100-mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and with the latest increase, price in Mumbai too was inching towards that level.

A litre of petrol in Mumbai now comes for Rs 98.88 and diesel is priced at Rs 90.40 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as

VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

This is the ninth increase in prices since May 4 when the state-owned oil firms ended an 18-hiatus in rate revision they observed during assembly elections in states like West Bengal.

Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan had the costliest petrol and diesel in the country at Rs 103.52 per litre and Rs 95.99 a litre, respectively.

In nine increases, petrol price has risen by Rs 2.19 per litre and diesel by Rs 2.49.

Since March last year when the government raised excise duty on fuel to an all-time high, petrol price has increased by a record Rs 22.99 per litre (after accounting for a handful of occasions when rates fell) and diesel by Rs 20.93.

Telecom operators urge Haryana Govt to curb rumours linking Covid-19 spread to 5G

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on Sunday said it has urged the Haryana government to curb misinformation being spread regarding 5G testing being responsible for the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a letter to Haryana Chief Secretary Vijai Vardhan, the telecom operators has said some miscreants are spreading rumours that deaths and health problems faced by people due to Covid-19 are caused by testing of 5G and not coronavirus.

These rumours are spreading at a time when 5G testing has not even started in the country and the government has only given permission for doing 5G testing, which is yet to start, the COAI said in a statement here.

Telecom operators have kept Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh out of their list of

places for doing testing of the 5G network, the association said.

Recently, Haryana BKU chief Gurnam Singh Chudani has hinted that the COVID-19 spread might be due to 5G testing being done.

The COAI letter stated, "We would hereby like to highlight that these types of rumours have spread over the past two weeks, mainly in semi-urban and rural areas. There has been a rise in such misinformation in the state of Haryana."

The letter stated that there have been incidences in Haryana wherein the farmer groups are also getting agitated over the myth of linking the COVID-19 pandemic with 5G services. Several farmers from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh have been sitting on three borders near Delhi for about six months demanding repeal of the new three farm laws.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that the cancellation period of following earlier announced cancelled trains due to operational reasons, has been extended upto 24.05.2021 as under:-

EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION OF UNRESERVED MEMU/EMU EXPRESS TRAINS
Train No. & Name
04184/04183 Delhi Jn - Tundla Jn - Delhi Jn MEMU Special Express
04417/04418 Hathras Qiloh - Delhi Jn - Hathras Qiloh MEMU Special Express
04427/04428 Hathras Qiloh - Hathras Jn - Hathras Qiloh MEMU Special Express
04415/04414 Aligarh Jn - New Delhi - Aligarh Jn EMU Special Express
04420/04419 Ghaziabad - Mathura Jn - Ghaziabad EMU Special Express
04444/04443 New Delhi - Ghaziabad - New Delhi Special Express

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

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www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
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RailMadad Helpline No. : 139
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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"



Currently, India is witnessing a digital revolution. A huge part of our country's population is getting accustomed to the use of several digital platforms. Access to the internet has acted as a catalyst in this process. It has flooded the online platforms with a variety of content. Currently when an exceedingly large number of videos and written content is created and uploaded every day, the audio contents comprising podcasts, audiobooks, etc. are also rapidly gaining popularity and recognition. According to KPMG, India is the third-largest podcast-listening market globally and is expected to be valued at ₹17.62 crore by 2023, growing at a CAGR of 34.5 per cent.

Since the onset of the Coronavirus and subsequently during the pandemic-induced lockdown, the demand for Indian regional audio content has increased considerably. More and more people are opting for podcasts that offer regional content in regional languages, along with the national and global ones for wide-ranging purposes including entertainment and e-learning. This format has shown its potential to cater to the needs of India's diverse population.

For aeons, listening has been a key element in the learning process. It

LEARN WHILE YOU LISTEN

The last several years have seen the rising popularity of podcasts. Touted to be the digital make-over of the radio, these have many advantages that cannot be ignored, says DUSHYANT KOHLI

enables us to visualise everything better based on the tone of voice as compared to written text. Listening also involves comparatively less effort than reading, thereby, contributing to an enhanced understanding with better attentiveness. Moreover, it is a known fact that people prefer listening to news and stories in their regional languages. It helps them process information seamlessly. As highlighted earlier, even podcasts are going the vernacular way to cater to the demand of a wide range of information. And this development is making them an integral part of people's daily lives.

When compared to traditional formats such as radio, interactivity has also become a noteworthy feature of



this digital advancement. Overall, it has made learning an easy and joyful experience.

Benefits of podcasts

There are numerous ways through which podcasts are able to fulfill the aspirations of the common masses.

The contents available on podcasts are made to custom-fit the needs of people from different regions. The verbal presentation of information becomes easy to understand and consume. At the same time, the cost-effectiveness of podcasts is a boon. They are mainly in the form of digital files that can

be downloaded or streamed easily over online platforms. Subscribing to high-quality audio content is also an option that users are preferring over reading these days.

Time-efficiency is possibly one of the best factors behind audio format's rapidly growing use. For instance, the working population of our country, which spends a few hours travelling every day, can make productive use of that time by listening to some news or learning a new language via podcasts. This will enable them to stay updated while utilising their precious time, thereby, allowing them to keep pace with the fast-moving world. Being available remotely, such podcasts can be listened to anytime, anywhere and do not come with the limitation of location-specific traditional channels. They can also be tapped via various digital devices which is an added advantage. Furthermore, there are plenty of options available to choose from according to personalised listening needs such as educational content, inspirational content, news, audiobooks, entertainment based podcasts and a lot more. All these are adequate to provide enough options for one's needs.

There are several other features of podcasts that improve and enhance the learning and listening experience of a person. The audio contents are so engaging that it has the potential to increase the concentration power of students. Educational material, using the audio-guided format, is known to pique the interest of students to the extent that even tough topics become relatively easy for them to understand. Today, with the increased use of smartphones, relevant podcasts can be conveniently downloaded and listened to. It is being widely adopted as a teaching and learning resource. A prime advantage that comes with the use of audio contents is that audio format also minimises the scope of visual impairment, which is a key challenge these days owing to increased exposure to digital devices. Therefore, learning through listening should be encouraged even more.

In a nutshell, podcasts are a true gift of the digital revolution. They are giving time-tested formats such as radio their new digital makeover with the touch-of-a-button experience. It barely comes as a surprise that there is an increasing number of takers for podcasts across the world.

(The writer is the *Coo of Khabri.*)

WEBBED



DOCTOR SLEEP

In this sequel to *The Shining*, Danny, now a traumatised adult, is sought out by a young psychic as evil beings that feed on their powers close in. Starring Ewan McGregor, Rebecca Ferguson and Kyliegh Curran, the film releases today on Netflix.



SARDAR KA GRANDSON

A devoted grandson's mission to reunite his ailing grandmother with her ancestral home turns into a complicated, comic cross-border affair. Starring Arjun Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh and Neena Gupta, the film releases on May 18 on Netflix.



DOG GONE TROUBLE

The privileged life of a pampered dog named Trouble is turned upside down when he gets lost and must learn to survive on the big-city streets. The film releases on May 28 on Netflix.



Why Shilpa said no to grocery savings?

Whether it be sumptuous kitchen delicacies, useful backyard garden *gyaan* or power yoga punches, actor Shilpa Shetty has proven that she can never go wrong when it comes to nutrition that's packed with taste and health. But, what does she do when her brother-in-law orders groceries with a 100-rupee *bachat*?

Seen these days in a humorous television commercial for Nourish Chakki Fresh Atta with Extra Chokar by BL Agro Industries Limited, Shetty embodies every ounce of the wisdom of the modern Indian woman, especially when it is about making smart choices for the family. In her signature comic style, she educates her brother-in-law on the consequences of choosing ordinary food products with an interesting *Do Baatein* approach.

Dressed traditionally and elegantly in a pink kurta, the fitness icon takes the dining table talk one notch higher by convincing her family to look at the bigger picture while ordering *atta* or flour. In a rather endearing *bhabhi* avatar in the Nourish commercial, she drives home the message that we are what we eat; and immunity is not built by eating just about anything from the market shelves.

When it comes to healthy food choices, there's hardly anyone better than the fitness icon to explain the importance of choosing better. The TVC is the first in the series of three and has garnered close to 1.4 million views on YouTube within two weeks of being launched. Shilpa Shetty's fitness mantra? *Saadharan Chhodo, Nutrition Chuno.*

—JANS

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed a significant transition in Indian cinema. While it was once widely believed that only a male star can turn a film into a blockbuster, today this formula has been rendered obsolete. Actresses are at the forefront now, and are taking up dominant, substance laden roles in order to be the ultimate voice of change. Celebrating the women of Bollywood, today we have listed five actors who stole the show with their knockout performances over the years.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas

A well known name across the globe, Priyanka Chopra Jonas has been breaking glass ceilings for the longest time and certainly needs no introduction. Her global superstardom and massive fanbase is proof that she's unstoppable. In her two-decade long Bollywood career, Chopra has delivered several path breaking performances in *Aitraaz* (2004), *Fashion* (2008), *Kaminey* (2009), *7 Khoon Maaf* (2011), *Agneepath* (2012), *Barfi!* (2012), *Mary Kom* (2014), *Dil Dhadakne Do* (2015), *Bajirao Mastani* (2015), *The Sky Is Pink* (2019) and the latest global release *The White Tiger* (2021) among many others. The National and Filmfare Award winning actress will be next seen alongside Keanu Reeves in *Matrix 4*. Other notable future releases include *Text For You*, an English remake of the 2016 German film *SMS für Dich*, and Russo Brothers' *Citadel*.

Yami Gautam

Ever since her dreamy Bollywood debut with *Vicky Donor* in 2012, Yami Gautam

WINDS OF CHANGE

The women of the film industry are changing the once prominent notion that a male star is a must for box office success

has managed to strike the right chord with the audience. In her career spanning over eight years, Yami has successfully established herself as one of the most versatile actors in the industry today. She is credited for various potent performances in films such as *Badlapur* (2015), *Kaabil* (2017), *Uri: The Surgical Strike* (2019), *Bala* (2019) and her recent release on Netflix, *Gunny Weds Sunny* (2020). Meanwhile, she is ready to take the box-office by storm with several releases lined up for this year. Taking note of her recent performances, Yami seems to be in no mood to stop and is sure to continue surprising cinephiles with her performances. Yami's latest project, a spooky adventure comedy titled *Bhoot Police*, which is scheduled for release on September 10, has her starring alongside Saif Ali Khan, Arjun Kapoor, Jacqueline Fernandez and Javed Jaffrey. Other noteworthy forthcoming releases include *Lapata*, *A Thursday* and *Dasvi*.

Taapsee Pannu

Think Taapsee Pannu and you know we are talking about a stellar, versatile performer. The Filmfare Award winning actress made a lot of noise with her 2020 release *Thappad* which is undoubtedly her most powerful performance till date. Taapsee is also known for her roles in films like *Saand Ki Aankh* (2019), *Manmarziyaan* (2018), *Mulk* (2018) and *Pink* (2016). The experimental actress has a couple of interesting projects in her kitty

including *Loop Lapeta* (an official remake of the 1998 German thriller *Run Lola Run*), *Rashmi Rocket*, *Dobaaraa*, *Haseen Dilruba* and Rahul Dholakia's directorial biopic on Mithali Raj entitled *Shabaash Mithu*.

Alia Bhatt

Hailed as one of the most bankable new age actors in the industry today, Alia Bhatt is known to be a directors' favourite. Over the years, Alia has delivered some extra-

ordinary performances in her career ranging from Imtiaz Ali's *Highway* (2014) and *Udta Punjab* (2016) to Gauri Shinde's *Dear Zindagi* (2016), Meghna Gulzar's *Raazi* (2018) and Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* (2019). Over the years, she has surprised critics and the audience alike with her performances. After making her debut with *Student of the Year* in 2012, she has grown to become a household name in a span of just eight years. Her forthcoming releases include Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, *Brahmastra*, S.S. Rajamouli's *RRR* and Karan Johar's ambitious project *Takht*.

Anushka Sharma

Known for always giving something new to the audience, Anushka has time and again won hearts with author-backed roles, right from her debut in *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* (2008) alongside Shah Rukh Khan. The actor who turned producer with *NH 10* (2015), which featured one of her most impactful on-screen characters, has delivered various powerful performances including *Sultan* (2016), *Sui Dhaaga* (2018) and *Zero* (2018). According to reports, Anushka will be next seen in the biopic of Jhulan Goswami, the former captain of the Indian women's cricket team, tentatively titled *Chakdaha Express*.



TRENDBLAZER



MANOJ BAJPAYEE ON A BREAK

Actor **MANOJ BAJPAYEE** posted a gamut of pictures on Instagram on Saturday of mountain tops and a rainbow, while refraining from informing fans of his current location.

"Away from everyone and everywhere," he wrote as caption for the images.

On the work front, he was recently seen playing a cop in the digital film *Silence... Can You Hear It*. He will soon be seen in the second season of the popular web series *The Family Man*.

fairtalk

HIMANSH KOHLI



'I remember my father used to counsel me and we used to have a talk regarding everything. We used to have even the most awkward conversations so that I don't make mistakes in the future. It's necessary to open up to your parents because the advice they give will always be in your favour. They would never let you do anything bad.'

dailytalk

GUL PANAG



'I have always done films that spoke to me and I was able to leverage my film career to do many other things. So, I made my film career an enabler of doing other things such as being a producer, entrepreneur, public speaker, motivational speaker. It's incumbent for me to make sure that I make choices wisely as an actor.'

KATY REGRETS OBSESSION WITH BOYS

KATY PERRY, who revisits her teenage years in the video of her latest single, *Electric*, says she would have liked it a lot more if she was less obsessed with the opposite sex when she was younger.

"I stumbled, I fell, I made mistakes. I learned from all of it. But I was pretty boy crazy. I think I was always searching for real love and true love," Perry said.



Good Samaritans step up

As the healthcare system gets overburdened, citizens of Rajasthan are helping the state government in the fight against COVID-19.
By Dr ABHA SHARMA

Last year, when the novel Coronavirus raged havoc in our country, many people based in metropolitan cities opted to shift their parents or vulnerable family members to their native villages. For these places were considered safer and not much affected by the pandemic. One year later, the deadly virus has crossed urban boundaries to hit the rural hinterland with a vengeance. Now staying 'far from the city crowd' doesn't sound like an ideal option.

Who would like to take the risk of falling sick in a village or town given the near collapse of health infrastructure due to the rising COVID-19 cases?

Last month has seen a worrying surge in cases in rural areas of Rajasthan. Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota, Alwar and Bikaner are the worst hit districts in this western Indian state. The village chaupals, which witnessed elders recalling the harrowing tales of the devastating famine of 1856, now swear that this deadly virus is indeed a greater demon.

There has been a reported 15 per cent increase in COVID-19 cases in rural areas of Rajasthan during the last month. As per a rough estimate, almost 35 per cent of the total COVID-19 cases in the state are now being reported



from rural areas. Referring more and more patients from villages to cities is putting additional stress on urban medical infrastructure where both government and private hospitals are already running short of beds, oxygen and other life saving equipment.

From a partial lockdown (Red Alert Self-discipline fortnight) already in place since April, the state government has now announced a "strict, complete lockdown" from May 10 for two weeks. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said at a press conference, "The decision to impose strict lockdown has been taken due to the rising COVID-19 cases in rural areas, increasing instances of youth

getting infected and the overall worrying surge in number of COVID-19 deaths." To break the chain, gatherings must be stopped, he added.

No more work on MGN-REGA sites while the construction material shops too will remain shut, except for some industrial units. In addition, a total ban on *Band-Baja-Baraat* and a cap of 11 persons, if any weddings are to be solemnized. Akha Teej or Akshya Tritiya, one of the most auspicious days for holding weddings across Rajasthan, will not witness any community weddings this season.

During last year's lockdown there were unfortunate instances of assaults on front-

line health workers and some migrants losing lives while walking long miles to get back home. The focus last year was on distributing food, ration supplies or masks and sanitizers. That scenario has completely changed this year, where there is a greater demand for health services. That's why several volunteer groups are trying to help people through helplines and social media.

Public representatives, government officials and philanthropists are also donating funds to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to help fight the crisis. Help is pouring in from MPLAD/MLA funds to facilitate purchase of oxygen cylin-

ders, concentrators, PPE kits, N-95 masks, sanitizers and other lifesaving equipment.

While some organisations have come up with complimentary telemedicine services, some others have decided to provide oxygen concentrators/plants. "Given the shortage of oxygen, we have decided to donate at least 10 oxygen concentrators to help patients, who are in queue for a hospital bed with oxygen support," said Suresh Kalani of the Jaipur based Rajesh Kalani Foundation.

There are other good Samaritans who continue catering to the needs of COVID-19 patients in home isolation, by getting them food, groceries, medicines etc. On the con-

trary, there is no dearth of people who don't mind breaking the rules. Not wearing a mask, let alone properly, is a common phenomenon. Those loitering around with no justified reason are being quarantined by the police and being released only when they test negative. Such quarantine centers have been set-up in nearly all districts and sub-divisional headquarters.

Last year, the whole world awaited a vaccine as the ultimate ray of hope. We now have the vaccine and greater control over COVID-19 management, but this killer second wave has enveloped us with greater despair and gloom. It is not only more infectious but more virulent and is impacting even young people, with new mutations of the novel Coronavirus coming to the fore.

Overcome by her father's death due to COVID-19, a daughter in Barmer district of Rajasthan jumped into the funeral pyre and is now struggling for life having sustained 70 per cent burn injuries. In another incident, afraid of infecting their only grandson, COVID-19 positive grandparents in Kota reportedly committed suicide by jumping before a train.

People with access and understanding of social media platforms are reaching out for help on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Aware and responsible citizens are helping others with verified information on hospital beds, oxygen supplies, blood plasma, and medicines. This is missing in rural areas. People are not only suffering due to lack of infrastructure but also because of lack of information. It is important that relevant information is made available and accessible to rural communities so that they can break the chain of this deadly virus.

—Charkha Features



Life is short, make the most of it

Even a small act of kindness can contribute towards your moral progress, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

It is an incontrovertible fact of life that anyone who is born would die one day. Another important fact is that everyone is judged or would be judged by one's actions. The recent deaths of many notable personalities across the world during the pandemic witnessed a large number of VVIPs coming to pay their respectful homage, and of thousands of people expressing their feeling of deprivation, show how these personalities had carved a niche for themselves in the hearts of the people by their certain uncommon charismatic acts. These events of the demise of world-famous personalities that saddened the hearts of millions should indeed have provided people some moments for earnest introspection and deep reflection on their own personal life and acts. If people developed this into a sort of a good habit to consider such occasions as hidden reminders by the Cosmic Order, by whatever name it be known, they would become more sane than mundane and profane. They would, gradually, be uplifted to be themselves, the veritable saints rather than pay only lip-service to saints and be lost in the strong surge of grief and remorse. It has been well-said that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. So, such events, seen in a right perspective, could have served as rungs of a ladder to rise high. Death of these personalities that gave their admirers a jolt, could have served to push them high but lethargic as human nature is in this age, soon people would return to their earthly ambitions, petty objectives. Most would again go into a deep slumber of ignorance as earlier. For, this also is a fact of life that the mood of giving up negative habits or evil intentions is only evanescent and like white froth on the surface of dirty water. And very soon, one takes again to wanton and wild ways.

Whatever be one's philosophy of life, the truth is that even a small act of kindness paves the path of one's moral progress. It enables one to pay one's debt to the society, to leave a lasting impact on the sands of time and to earn the blessings of thousands or millions of men and women. So, the reward for one's virtues is greater than the reward for any other thing. Since the afore-mentioned virtues are considered as sublime or angelic, people reward such a person generously with their heart-felt devotion and ever-growing respect. One of these lessons could be learnt by asking the self this question: If a human being is a mere body and brain, whom do people pay homage to when the body and the brain become dead? For whom do they pray to the lord to give peace? If a person sincerely believes that there exists no entity other than the material, then where do the virtues or moral values, such as compassion, love, kindness... abide? Are these the qualities of matter that take some complex forms as a body and brain? On what basis can one substantiate or establish the mere assumption that these are qualities of things that are material? Aren't moral considerations often in conflict with attractions that relate to flesh, thus, indicating that the two are separate? Does not sometimes a person think of sacrificing life (body and brain) for a moral cause? Can a social order be run merely on the belief that man is an evolved form of matter? Do the moral and ethical principles not pertain to something that aspires for a higher and nobler order and makes efforts to be above the bondages of the material world?

If one argues with oneself on these or similar lines and takes into consideration the reported accounts of reincarnations, hypnotic regressions, near-death and out-of-body experiences, and the nature of moral values that are meant to regulate the body and the brain and are non-physical and of a higher order, then one will easily conclude that the real actor in the drama of life is a non-material entity, called the soul, self or atman. The body serves the purpose of a costume and also as an assemblage of instruments that are required by the soul to act and to make efforts. The body also serves as a medium for experiencing pleasure and pain. If one adopts this truth, one would be above all kinds of sorrow and miseries. This would also remind him/her that this life can come to an end at any moment and we should not postpone good acts but engage ourselves into these soulfully.

Women with infertility issues need to make a drastic shift in their lifestyle and eating habits. One can start with giving up dairy products, meats, seafood and eggs from their diet. It has proven beneficial for women dealing with various menstrual disorders.

Ayurveda and PCOD/PCOS

Nowadays, four out of seven women complain of PCOS or PCOD, infertility or menstrual disorders. Therefore, women must adapt plant-based diet. One must include carrot, beetroot and spinach in their diet. They can make a soup and drink it every night for a 28-day cycle. It helps to purify the blood and rectifies the damage done to the uterus. Spices like fenugreek, carom seed in your dals or soups can work wonders for these women.

Seeds like chia seeds, flax seeds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds and sesame seeds are excellent source of protein for women following plant-based diet. Cumin seeds and fennel seeds help women prevent UTI. Coriander seed and cardamom seeds have proven to be best remedies for period cramps.

Fruits like pomegranate and Black grapes also help in purifying the blood that carries fresh oxygen to the uterus, thus helping to repair damaged tissues, muscles, and nerves.

One can also consume saptashayam kasayam or Sukhumarum kasayam for 3 - 4 month. It has proven to show good results for all gynaecological health issues. This should be practiced with yoga and exercise to strengthen the core muscles around the uterus and pelvic. Asanas like the Camel Pose, Boat Pose, and Butterfly also help to build strength around the core.

—IANS

Ayurveda to treat PCOS/PCOD



Polycystic ovarian syndrome or disease (PCOS/PCOD) is a common condition in women in their reproductive age caused due to hormonal imbalance. This hormonal breakdown results in irregular or prolonged menstrual periods, excessive body hair, acne, and hair loss. Because of this, Polycystic ovaries may fail to develop follicles and regularly release eggs, causing difficulty in conceiving. Ayurveda Diaries, on Tata Sky Fitness explains ayurvedic ways to treat these problems:

Ayurveda and infertility

Both men and women face issues of infertility. However, one of the reasons for infertility is the irregular metabolic fire that results in PCOS and ovarian disorder that is results in PCOD. This disorder can be treated by various ayurvedic products.

Men can consume products like Ashokarishta, Ashwagandha, Shatavari and Guggul that helps them to build and strengthen vigour, increase vitality and metabolism. Also, products such as Kaunch, Musli and Shilajit help men in healing infertility.

A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.
—Albert Einstein

OLDER ADULTS ADAPTED TO TECH IN LOCKDOWN

The COVID-19 lockdown led several older adults to adapt and engage with technology such as Zoom, WhatsApp or FaceTime, to stay in touch with loved ones or participate in exercise classes or religious groups, finds a new study.

The participants reported that lockdown had led them to engage with neighbours and other members of their communities for the first time, while several said social distancing had brought an additional meaning to life, by highlighting what was important to them.

"Those who engaged in such activity were able to prevent high levels of loneliness, therefore, helping older adults to increase their digital literacy and use of remote social interactions could be a really important tool for addressing loneliness," said researcher Anna Whittaker from the University of Stirling.

According to the research, understanding the coping mechanisms adopted by some over the 60s during the pandemic will play a key role in developing interventions to help tackle loneliness, isolation and well-being in the future.



DENTAL PROCEDURES SAFE DURING PANDEMIC

Want to go for a dental check-up but afraid due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic? Take heart, according to a small study SARS-CoV-2 infection risk at the dentist's office is low.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus behind COVID-19, spreads mainly through respiratory droplets, and dental procedures are known to produce an abundance of aerosols, leading to fears that flying saliva during a cleaning or a restorative procedure could make the dentist's chair a high-transmission location.

Researchers from the Ohio State University in the US, set out to determine whether saliva is the main source of the spray, collecting samples from personnel, equipment and other surfaces reached by aerosols during a range of dental procedures.

"Getting your teeth cleaned does not increase your risk for COVID-19 infection any more than drinking a glass of water from the dentist's office does," said lead author Purnima Kumar, Professor of periodontology at Ohio State.



MIXING COVID VACCINE DOSES SAFE

Mixing COVID-19 vaccine doses — second dose from a different brand than the first — is safe, but may present more frequent mild side-effects such as a headache, chills or a fever, showed results of a preliminary study published in the Lancet.

The study led by University of Oxford researchers, earlier this year, began to investigate the effect of alternate doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and the Pfizer vaccine. The team examined more than 800 adults aged 50 and over who had received mixed vaccine doses at a four-week interval.

When given at a four-week interval, both of the 'mixed' schedules (Pfizer-BioNTech followed by Oxford-AstraZeneca, and Oxford-AstraZeneca followed by Pfizer-BioNTech) induced more frequent reactions following the 2nd, 'boost' dose than the standard, 'non-mixed' schedules.

However, the adverse reactions were short lived and there were no other safety concerns, the researchers said.



BLOW CONCH SHELLS TO KEEP VIRUS AT BAY

Yoga experts are now advising people to blow conch shells in order to strengthen the respiratory system.

The age-old practice of blowing conch shells, known as *shankh*, after prayers, is said to help in fighting COVID by enhancing the lung power.

Yoga expert, Ratan Sinha of Prayagraj, said, "Blowing a conch shell is a part of Hindu and Buddhist tradition. Our elders blew the *shankh* regularly and their lungs were strong. They rarely suffered from respiratory problems.

On Sinha's advice, people in three Lucknow neighbourhoods at Stanley Road, Darbhanga and Civil Lines area have started blowing conch shells on a regular basis. The members of the group admit that there is no scientific evidence to prove that blowing conch shells helps prevent COVID-19 but they say it definitely helps one in lung exercise.



BREATHING EXERCISES AID KIDS WITH ADHD

Yoga and breathing exercises have a positive effect on children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a new study suggests.

The researchers, including Sergey Kiselev from the Ural Federal University, say that after special classes, children improve their attention, decrease hyperactivity, they do not get tired longer, they can engage in complex activities longer.

"Exercise has an immediate effect but there is also a delayed effect. We found that exercise has a positive effect on regulation and control functions in children with ADHD and one year after the end of the exercise," Kiselev said.

"This happens because the child's correct breathing is automated, it becomes a kind of assistant that allows a better supply of oxygen to the brain, which, in turn, has a beneficial effect on the behaviour and psyche of a child with ADHD," Kiselev added.



RAFA RULES IN ROME

Nadal beats Djoker in final to win the Italian Open title for 10th time



Rafael Nadal celebrates after defeating Novak Djokovic at their final match of the Italian Open tournament in Rome on Sunday. **AP**

Rafael Nadal beats a tired Novak Djokovic 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 for a record-extending 10th Italian Open title on Sunday. The Spaniard recovered from a potentially dangerous fall after tripping over a raised line to take the latest installment of the most-played rivalry in modern men's tennis. It also re-established Nadal as the overwhelming favorite for the French Open, where he will be aiming for an even harder-to-believe 14th title starting in two weeks. Nadal beat Djokovic in straight sets in last year's Roland Garros final. The top-ranked Djokovic spent nearly five hours on court Saturday, when he had to rally for a rain-delayed quarterfinal victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas before winning another three-setter over local favorite Lorenzo Sonego in the semifinals. Nadal played only once on Saturday, beating Reilly Opelka in 90 minutes. It was the 57th meeting between Nadal and Djokovic, which is the most matches between two men in the Open era. It was also their ninth meeting in Rome, where they have

Kohli best batsman in world: Paine

Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness. Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting sub-plot during the historic showdown in which India became the first Asian country to win a Test series Down Under. "For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world," the 36-year-old



Paine said on the *Gilly and Goss* podcast. "He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good and he is so competitive. "But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, He is certainly someone I will

always remember," he added. Interestingly, last year Paine had said that Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me". He had also stated that the Australian team "loves to hate" the superstar for his awe-inspiring abilities with the bat.

Finally, Hussey leaves for home

Having recovered from Covid-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey left for Australia on Sunday via Doha, a top official of the IPL franchise said. Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for Covid-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday. "Yes, Hussey has left for Australia via Doha by a commercial flight. He left in the early hours of Sunday," CSK CEO K S Viswanathan said. Hussey, who had first tested positive for Covid-19 during the now-suspended IPL, is expected to reach home on Monday. Hussey aside, the other Australians involved in the 2021 edition of IPL took a detour to Maldives and quarantined there before heading back to Australia.

Swiatek crushes Pliskova 6-0, 6-0

Polish teenager Iga Swiatek crushed Czech ninth seed Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-0 to win the Italian Open on Sunday. The 19-year-old reigning French Open champion took just 45 minutes to dispatch the 2019 Rome winner two weeks before she opens her title defence in Roland Garros. Swiatek, ranked 15, claimed her third WTA title having followed her Roland Garros success with a win in Adelaide in January. "I'm really, really happy," said an emotional Swiatek. "I'm overwhelmed, at the beginning of this tournament I would not have dreamed of winning it." Swiatek swept through the first set in just 20 minutes, with Pliskova winning just four points. Pliskova tried to fight back



in the third game of the second set, holding a double break to go 2-1, but the Polish player ruthlessly snuffed out any return. "I will just quickly forget about today," said Pliskova, the world number nine, who was playing in her third consecutive Rome final.

India Eves likely to tour Oz in Sept

New Delhi: The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September. Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20s. "We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said on *No Balls: The Cricket Podcast*, hosted by Kate Cross and Alex Hartley. "So, there's a couple of camps. I believe we are doing one in Darwin, which will be really cool... And then the tour against India. And then pretty much from there things get crazy with Big Bash, WNCL, Ashes, World Cup, and hopefully the Commonwealth



Games." The BCCI, in its last Apex Council meeting, had also approved the tour of Australia ahead of the World Cup in New Zealand next year. A home series against the Windies was also cleared. The tour of Australia was originally planned for January this year but was postponed after the World Cup was put off to 2022 amid the Covid-19 pandemic. **PTI**

shortpasses

BREMEN SACK KOHFELDT
BREMEN: Werder Bremen on Sunday sacked head coach Florian Kohfeldt and replaced him with club legend Thomas Schaaf for their final league game this season after the club slipped into the bottom three of the Bundesliga. After four years in charge, Kohfeldt has been shown the door with just next Saturday's home game against Moenchengladbach left as Bremen fight to stay in Germany's top flight.

ZIZOU IS LEAVING REAL
MADRID: Spanish media claimed early Sunday that Zinedine Zidane has already told his players that he intends to quit as coach at the end of the season. According to Onda Cero radio and Goal online, the Frenchman, who has a contract until 2022, informed his squad a week ago that he was going to leave when the season ends next week.

TEJASWIN CLINCHES GOLD
NEW DELHI: Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a Gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA. Representing Kanساس State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record.

SPOTIFY BID TO BUY ARSENAL
LONDON: Spotify co-founder Daniel Ek said Saturday a formal offer to buy Arsenal had been rejected by the Premier League club's American owners. In a statement on Twitter, the Swedish tycoon said the club's owners, Kroenke Sports and Entertainment (KSE), had rebuffed his bid.

N KOREA OUT OF WC QUALIFIERS
SEOUL: North Korea have pulled out of next month's qualifying matches for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the AFC said on Sunday. No reasons were given for the withdrawal but South Korean media reported earlier this month that Pyongyang had said it would skip the qualifiers over coronavirus fears.

KAYLEE NARROWLY MISSES WR
SYDNEY: Australian Kaylee McKeown narrowly missed the 50 metre backstroke world record on Sunday while setting the year's best time in the 200m individual medley as she ramps up preparations for the Tokyo Olympics.

TEAM SELECTION ON JUNE 15-16
NEW DELHI: The Indian para-athletics team for the Tokyo Paralympic Games in August-September will be picked during a to-day trial to be held in New Delhi on June 15 and 16, the national governing body Paralympic Committee of India said on Sunday. Agencies

AP ■ MADRID

Luis Suárez scored an 88th-minute winner as Atlético Madrid rallied to beat Osasuna 2-1 on Sunday and move one win away from claiming its first Spanish league title since 2014. Atlético enters the final round two points in front of Real Madrid, which stayed in contention by winning 1-0 at Athletic Bilbao. Madrid has a better head-to-head tiebreaker against its city rival. Barcelona dropped out of contention for the title after losing 2-1 to Celta Vigo at

Atlético in pole position for title

home. It proved to be an extremely frustrating opening half for Atlético, as both Luis Suárez and Saul saw efforts hit the post amid a host of other missed chances from their 16 efforts on goal. And it looked like it wasn't to be their day when Stefan Savic had a goal disallowed by VAR on the hour mark for a close offside call before Yannick Carrasco suffered the same fate moments



later. In typical Atlético fashion, they then fell behind to an Ante Budimir header as it looked like being a case of the same old story for the Colchoneros. However, Diego Simeone's men flipped the contest on its head in jaw-dropping fashion as Renan Lodi first levelled on 83 minutes before Suárez was picked out in the area to slide into the bottom corner for a mas-

sive late winner. Atlético lead rivals Real Madrid by two points going into the final game, with their rivals also possessing a better head-to-head record, meaning a draw may not be enough but aware that a win over Valladolid would secure the title. At Camp Nou stadium, Barcelona's title hopes came to an end as a Santi Mina double condemned them to defeat.

Barcelona's main man Lionel Messi gave them the lead with a rare header after Sergio Busquets picked him out with an excellent cross but it wasn't one that lasted long. Celta levelled when Mina was given too much time to pick his spot from the edge of the area and find the corner of the net and it was that same man who came up with the last minute winner to kill off Barça's league challenge in definitive and disappointing fashion. The defeat means they are now guaranteed to finish the season in third place.

Alisson wins for Liverpool



Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker scores his side second goal against West Brom. **AP**

AFP ■ WEST BROMWICH
Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker scored a 95th minute winner as the Reds beat West Brom 2-1 on Sunday to keep a place in next season's Champions League in their own hands. Jurgen Klopp's men would have needed favours from Leicester and Chelsea in their final two games of the campaign had they failed to beat the already relegated Baggies. But the Brazilian was sent forward for a corner deep into stoppage

time and headed home Trent Alexander-Arnold's delivery. Liverpool moved one point behind fourth-placed Chelsea and three behind Leicester. With Leicester and Chelsea still to face off in a repeat of the FA Cup final, won 1-0 by the Foxes on Saturday, victories over Burnley and Crystal Palace will take Liverpool into the top four.

as Tottenham Hotspur beat Wolves 2-0 to maintain their hopes of a top-four finish. England captain Kane fired Spurs ahead on the stroke of half-time before Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg doubled their lead in the 62nd minute. Victory left Spurs in sixth place, five points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, with a maximum of six points available to them from their final two league games. The top four in the Premier League are assured of a place in the 2021/22 Champions League. Kane gave Spurs the lead running onto Hojbjerg's through ball behind centre backs Conor Coady and Romain Saiss. The Spurs star side-stepped Coady's challenge and rounded goalkeeper Rui Patrício, before curling the ball into the corner of the net. Hojbjerg made it 2-0 just after the hour when he followed up Gareth Bale's shot and tapped the ball in after Patrício could only parry. Earlier, Crystal Palace twice came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2, with Tyrick Mitchell's first goal for the club sealing victory six minutes from time.

IPL helped Shami get his rhythm back

New Delhi: Veteran India pacer Mohammed Shami found his "rhythm" during the now suspended IPL and feels the UK tour will be a successful one for the team if it is able to replicate the stellar performance of the last six months. India will leave for the UK on June 2 for three and half months during which they will play six Test matches starting with the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18. With the Covid-19 wreaking havoc across the globe, the soon to be 31-year-old Shami said that too much of planning in these times is of no use. "See, there is no point in planning too much as certain things are not in our control. Who would have thought that the pandemic would virtually destroy two years of our lives — hence I prefer to take it by each series or tournament as the case may be," the pacer told *Gulf News*. "We have played some extraordinary cricket in recent times as an unit and naturally, the confidence level is high on the eve of our departure for England. "If we can reproduce some of the form which we did over last six months, I am confident it will be a great summer for us," said the man, who has 180 wickets from 50 Tests.



Napoli keep CL hopes alive

AFP ■ FLORENCE
Juventus are fifth, one point behind Napoli, but still in the running for a top four finish after a 3-2 win over newly-crowned champions Inter Milan on Saturday, with one match left this season. Napoli's final game will be at home against midtable Hellas Verona, as they look to return to elite European football after missing out last season. Juventus play their final game at Bologna desperate to avoid missing out on the Champions League for the first time in a decade. Lazio will not play among the European elite next season after a 2-0 derby defeat to Roma on Saturday. AC Milan, are a point behind Napoli, occupying in the final Champions League berth, and play 16th-placed Cagliari later on Sunday.