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RIGHT COLLEGE

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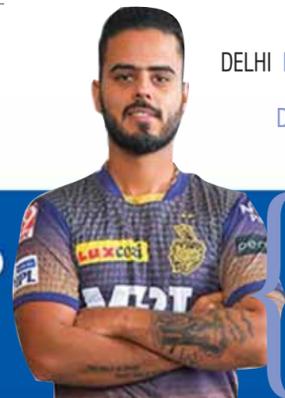
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Lag effect, rural invasion behind Covid death spike

Daily death count reaches all-time high; Covid management in villages a concern, say health experts

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Health experts have pointed out that though Covid-19 cases are on the declining trend, mortality due to lethal virus amid second wave is likely to be on the higher side, at least in the near future. The assessment is based on the fact that on an average there is a two-week lag in deaths from the infection time.

Covid death count reached all-time high of 4,525.

The penetration of coronavirus in rural India is also linked to greater causality due to non-existent health infrastructure.

The fallout of the peak that the country witnessed in the last two weeks will be reflected in the number of deaths. Currently, record deaths are occurring each passing day with over 4,300 on Tuesday.

To make the matter worse, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram are showing the rise in cases and the positivity. So are the rural areas which are besieged with their own set of problems like delayed testing and inadequate treatment



besides poor medical facilities and hesitancy to recognise the disease, said the experts.

Dr Jugal Kishore, the head of community medicine at Safdarjung Hospital, said, "It's only in the past seven days that the cases have started declining from over 4 lakh to 3 lakh. However, one has to keep a watch on those infected as the virus has an incubation period of 4 to 14 days.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,54,95,066 (+2,66,966)
DEATHS:	2,83,276 (+4,525)
RECOVERED:	2,19,79,568 (+3,89,431)
ACTIVE:	32,21,838
MAHA:	54,33,506 (+28,438)
K'TAKA:	22,72,374 (+30,309)
KERALA:	22,00,707 (+31,337)
UP:	16,37,663 (+8,673)
DELHI:	14,02,873 (+4,482)



A signboard blown away by Cyclone Tauktae near Gateway of India in Mumbai on Tuesday

Pyre wood being weighed in gold

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The demand for wood for cremation has increased manifold due to a surge in the number of deaths across India. Each funeral pyre requires about 4-5 quintals of wood. The price of pyre wood has soared from ₹400-500 for about 100 kg to ₹2,000-2,500 in some States.

At an average, one needs to pay ₹10,000-12,000 for wood for cremation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Crematorium operators say that contractors are charging more for wood, and contractors say that suppliers or distributors have increased the prices due to shortage of labourers for chopping the wood during the lockdown and curbs.

The shortage of wood is fuelling black market and price increases.

According to a United Nations' survey, 400-500 kg of

wood is required to cremate a body and 50 to 60 million trees are burned for cremation every year in India. Another study by IIT Kanpur says that only 216 kg of wood is needed.

The price of wood has increased five to six times at Garhmukteshwar Ghat at the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh, due to the increased number of deaths these days.

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Robbers out to loot bereaved at crematoria

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The rise in Covid-19 deaths has led to runaway black-marketing in items like ghee, pitambarai, and kafan, needed to perform the last rites.

The prolonged lockdown and closure of shops dealing with non-essential items, majority of smaller and bigger cities, including the national Capital, has seen a massive rise in the prices of commodities

for cremation of a body.

Hari Shankar Gupta, a resident of Vaishali, Ghaziabad, had to pay ₹4,000 for a piece of kafan at Ghazipur crematorium for his 32-year-old son who succumbed to Covid last week.

Sidharth Tripathi was shocked when he was demanded ₹2,000 for a one kg ghee packet to be used for cremation of his Covid victim father at Baikunth Dham crematorium in Lucknow early May.

For a piece of simple kafan, the very mention of evoked grief and dread, the family members of a Covid-19 victim have to pay through their nose. Soon there could be a serious shortage of kafan.

"We have nearly exhausted the raw material (kapda thaana). If the situation does not come under control, we may presume a crisis for kafan," said Badre Alam, owner of a small powerloom unit and stockist in Chapra Village of Mau.

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Covaxin phase II, III trials on 2-18 years to start in 12 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech will start its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin's Phase II and III clinical trials on 2 to 18 years age group within the next 10-12 days.

India's drug regulator, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), has already given Bharat Biotech the permission to conduct the clinical trials on children in the age group. It will be the first such coronavirus vaccine to be tested on minors in the country.

The development comes against the backdrop of the fear that in the third wave of Covid-19, which is expected in the next few months, it will be children who will be the most affected due to the infection. "Covaxin has been



approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), for Phase II and III clinical trials in the age group of 2 to 18 years. I have been told that trials will begin in the next 10-12 days," Dr VK Paul, Member-Health, Niti Aayog said at a press conference on Tuesday here.

Bharat Biotech had proposed to carry out the clinical trial in the age group of 2 to 18

years. In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two doses at day 0 and day 28. The trial will be conducted on 525 healthy volunteers.

Covaxin, which has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), is being used on adults in India's ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive.

The Centre said it has so far provided, both free of cost & via direct State procurement, more than 20.78 cr vaccine doses (20,78,04,890) to States/UTs. Of this, total consumption, including wastages is 18,83,47,432 doses (as per data available at 8 am on Tuesday, it stated.

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CAPSULE

UP MINISTER VIJAY KASHYAP DIES OF COVID

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Revenue and Flood Control Vijay Kashyap died from coronavirus at Gurugram's Medanta Hospital on Tuesday. Kashyap (56), was an MLA from Muzaffarnagar's Chauthal Assembly seat. He is the third UP Minister who has succumbed to the virus. Last year, UP Ministers Kamal Rani Varun and Chetan Chauhan had died from the infection.

RENOWNED TAMIL WRITER K RAJANARAYANAN DIES

Puducherry: Renowned Tamil writer, novelist and recipient of Sahitya Akademi award K Rajanarayanan, popularly known as Ki Ra, has died.

DIDN'T EXPORT AT COST OF INDIANS: SII CHIEF

New Delhi: Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla has said the SII never exported vaccines at the cost of the people in India.

Vijayan picks new faces in his Council of Ministers

Except one, none has administrative experience; Health Min Shylaja dropped

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M) which swept the recent Assembly election, sprang a surprise on Tuesday by nominating ten party MLAs with no administrative experience as its Ministers. The new Ministry would be sworn in on Thursday at 3.30 pm.

The CPI(M) has 12 nominees in the Council of Ministers, including Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Other than Vijayan, the lone member with

administrative experience is K Radhakrishnan, who was the Minister for Social Welfare in the EK Nayanar-led Government (1996-2001) and Speaker during the VS Achuthanandan Government (2006-2011).

Vijayan shocked the party cadre and followers by dropping KK Shylaja, the Health Minister in the outgoing Government, whose services and leadership in controlling the Covid-19 pandemic were acclaimed by national and international agencies.

It was widely believed that Shylaja who won the election from Mattanur in North Kerala with a record majority of more than 60,000 votes would be inducted in the new

Government. The exclusion of Shylaja from the Council of Ministers has caused wide resentment and the social media has been flooded with messages lambasting the CPI(M). Women activists like Mala Parvathi were quick to take the social media to express their anguish.

In yet another development which too is described as unheard in CPI(M) parlance, Mohammed Riyaz, a first time MLA from Beypore in Kozhikode, has been included as a Minister. Riyaz is the son-in-law of the Chief Minister.

He had married Vijayan's daughter Veena, an IT entrepreneur, in a function held at Cliff House some months ago.

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BJP releases Cong toolkit 'aimed to malign' PM, Govt on Covid care

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday released a "toolkit" which, it alleged, was prepared by the Congress to tarnish the image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his Government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis.

Releasing the "toolkit", BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said in a tweet, "Friends look at the #CongressToolkit in extending help to the needy during the Pandemic! More of a PR exercise with the help of 'Friendly Journalists' & 'Influencers' than a soulful endeavour. Read for yourselves the agenda of the Congress."

Several BJP leaders also tweeted the "toolkit" which went viral on social media. The

"toolkit" purportedly asks Congress workers to use phrases such as "Indian strain" and "Modi strain" on social media and "keep using the term super spreader Kumbh to keep reminding the people that it is

the Hindu politics of the BJP that is causing so much distress".

The toolkit cautions against commenting anything on Eid greetings.

Continued on Page 2

Cong claims toolkit 'fake', files FIR against Nadda, Irani, Patra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday lodged an FIR for "forgery" against BJP president JP Nadda, Union Minister Smriti Irani and BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra for circulating "fake" toolkit on "Covid-19 mismanagement" and "attributing it to

AICC Research Department".

The party wrote to the Delhi Police Commissioner seeking to file a complaint against Nadda and other BJP leaders. The Congress also named BJP National General Secretary (Organisation) BL Santhosh in the complaint.

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₹50K to families with Covid death, ₹2,500/month for kids till they turn 25 yrs: Kejriwal

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Tuesday announced financial assistance to families affected by Covid-19 in the national Capital.

The Delhi Government will provide ₹50,000 ex-gratia, free food grains, monthly pension and education to children of families who have lost a breadwinner to Covid-19.

In his virtual briefing, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that ₹50,000 ex-gratia will be given to the families that have had a Covid death.

He said, "Families that lose an earning member will also get a pension of ₹2,500 along



with the ex-gratia amount," he said. "Every child who has lost both parents to Covid-19 will be given ₹2,500 per month till the age of 25, and will be provided with free education."

Kejriwal said his Government, along with the Central Government's assistance, will distribute free basic food items to both ration card holders and non-PDS amid the lockdown restrictions.

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Sushil not lone sports icon fallen foul of law

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Olympian Sushil Kumar is not the lone sportsperson to be on the run from the law. The list is long.

Wrestler Sushil Kumar's bail plea was rejected on Tuesday a day after the Delhi Police announced a reward of ₹1 lakh on the two-time Olympic medalist who is wanted for alleged murder of a 23-year-old budding wrestler in a brawl at Chattarasal Stadium in the national Capital.

Before the alleged murder sullied his name, Sushil Kumar was a sports icon who inspired a generation of young men, including international wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt, to try wrestling.

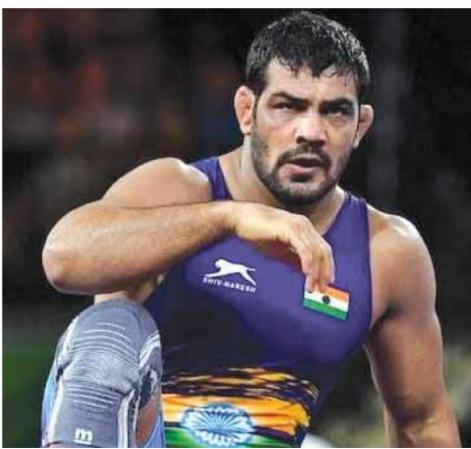
The Delhi Police on Monday declared a reward of ₹1 lakh on information leading to Kumar's arrest. There is electronic evidence where Kumar can be seen "with a stick and hitting" another wrestler Sagar on May 4 along with his accomplices. Since then Kumar has been on the run and the Delhi Police teams are after him. He is believed to be hiding somewhere in Haryana and has refused to join the investigation. A city court has issued a non-bailable warrant against the Olympian.

In 1991, cricketer-turned politician Navjot Singh Sidhu was arrested after he was found guilty by a court for assaulting Gurnam Singh a senior citizen and causing him death in

Patiala. The 57-year-old cricket commentator and presently the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Amritsar East, Sidhu, in December 2006, was sentenced to a three-year prison term for culpable homicide following a road rage incident. He was then the Member of Parliament and subsequently resigned after the court's verdict.

However, in May 2018, Sidhu was acquitted by Supreme Court on the charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder in a 1988 road rage case, but convicted him for voluntarily causing hurt under Section 323 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

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Dr Aggarwal who saved many from Covid loses battle against corona

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

I am having Covid pneumonia which is progressive. But even then remember Raj Kapoor's words: the show must go on... picture abhi baaki hai."

This was the message that Padma Shri Dr KK Aggarwal, an eminent cardiologist and former national president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), gave out in his last video exhorting his medical fraternity to continue taking the Covid-19 menace head on before he himself lost the fight against the pathogen on Tuesday.

The Facebook video, one of the many he had been dishing



despite his own illness. No wonder, his fraternity, politicians, journalists and all those whose lives he touched through his medical expertise and philanthropic activities were shell-shocked by his death at AIIMS, Delhi.

Having taken both the doses of vaccine and being a doctor himself, everybody thought Dr Aggarwal, who was popular in his circle for his affable nature and expertise in his subject, would sail through the Covid wave. However, his condition deteriorated with each passing day and he was put on ventilator support for the past one week.

Continued on Page 2

UP: Covid vaccination registration simplified

IAN S ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh has decided to start registrations at common service centres across districts in order to help people in rural parts of the State register on the CoWin app for vaccination.

State Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said about 1.3 lakh such centres across the State will assist people in registering on the app and eventually, provide the facility of vaccination.

"To increase the pace of vaccination in rural areas, we have decided that common service centres will be roped in to help people register on the CoWin app. Each centre will provide this facility and also



that of vaccination in the near future. The work will be done for free and nobody is to charge for helping someone with the work," the government spokesman said. The state government had announced free vaccination for those in the age group of 18 to 44 years.

Additional chief secretary (information) Navneet Sehgal said that the work of vaccination in rural areas will be rolled out at war footing, as was done for testing.

He said that till now, 1.16

crore people had received their first vaccine shot while 31.6 lakh people had received their second.

Meanwhile, to acquire more vaccines, the government has made crucial changes to its global tender conditions which will now allow companies like Pfizer and Moderna to bid. It has halved the global tender earnest money deposit amount from Rs 16 crore and made changes to temperature and storage conditions.

From storage at 2 to 8 degrees Celsius, the temperature has been reduced to -20 from -80 degrees Celsius.

Companies will have to transport vaccines to the government warehouse and make arrangements for their storage at very low temperatures.

Covaxin doses used up, Covishield for 3 days in Delhi: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will be unable to vaccinate 18-44 years old from next week as Covishield's stock left for three days only, while Covaxin has been used up. Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi on Tuesday said vaccination for the youth will be halted due to shortage of vaccines, and centres will be temporarily shut down. Delhi has administered nearly 46,94,970 doses up until now, the AAP leader said.

Reading from the vaccination bulletin, she thanked the Central Government for supplying the fresh stock of 60,240 doses of Covaxin for 45+ and healthcare/frontline workers. 1,13,142 vaccines were administered on May 17, out of this, 67,487 doses

were given to 18-44, and 45,655 people over 45 and healthcare/frontline workers got their shots in Delhi.

More than 36 lakh were jabbed with the first dose in Delhi, nearly 10,77,526 people have been fully vaccinated with both the shots. On Monday, 1,13,142 vaccines were administered, out of these 67,487 doses were given to the 18-44 age group, and 45,655 people above the age of 45 and healthcare/frontline workers got their shots.

"The immunisation of second doses to people has reduced because of the increased gap of 12-16 weeks between the first and second dose of Covishield. So, the second doses of Covaxin are being administered, while the first doses have lessened quite a bit.

Punjab Govt to renovate places visited by Sikh Gurus under Charan Chhoh

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday said the State Government will be renovating all those places visited by Sikh Gurus under "Charan Chhoh" project.

He said nearly 103 such places in Punjab have been identified which are not only being preserved to keep the future generations in touch with their great heritage and the values that Sikh Gurus promoted. Chief Minister was addressing a seminar organised by KS Raju Legal Trust to celebrate the 400th birth anniversary of the ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur ji.

Besides undertaking a massive forestation efforts as part of celebrations with planting of 60 lakh saplings under current anniversary celebrations of Guru Tegh Bahadur, 75 lakh were planted earlier dur-



ing Guru Nanak Dev's 500th celebrations. Guru Saheb stood for secularism and he was a universally acknowledged spiritual leader and was rightly called, 'Hind di chaddar', he said.

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Additional Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu Dr Jagmohan Raju, and filmmaker Harvinder Sikka also addressed the virtual seminar. The Governor in his presidential remarks referred to Gurujiji's sacrifice which epitomized the values that the Sikhism has imbibed over the centuries

believing in the oneness of mankind. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar began his address with "Waheguru ji ki khalsa, waheguru ji ki fateh", and said that Guru Tegh Bahadur taught a powerful message to the world that you should not forsake those who believe in you.

In his opening remarks the moderator of the session, Jagmohan Singh Raju, Additional Chief Secretary, Tamil Nadu lamented that United Nations has conveniently ignored the genocide perpetrated on the Indian populace over centuries ignoring acts of violence against non-Abrahamic religions like Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. He also appealed to commemorate Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom day as a 'Day of Commemoration in memory of the Hindu and Sikh victims of Genocide and Holocaust.



Pigeons fly during a rainy day near historical Amer Fort in Jaipur on Tuesday

Telangana to resume vaccination only after receiving adequate doses

IAN S ■ HYDERABAD

Health authorities in Telangana said on Tuesday that Covid-19 vaccination in the State will resume only after they receive an adequate number of vaccines.

Director of Public Health and Family Welfare Dr G. Srinivasa Rao said before resuming vaccination, they want to make sure that they have adequate volumes, so that the programme continues without further interruption.

He told reporters that nearly three lakh people are waiting for the second dose of Covaxin but only 50,000 doses are available. The Central government has indicated that that more doses will be supplied in 15

days.

The official said after the time interval between first and second dose of Covishield was increased to 12-16 weeks, no one in the state is due for the second dose of this vaccine yet.

He clarified that doses are allocated to targetted groups according to the guidelines issued by the Central government. Allocation of doses for people above 45 years, or for 18-44 years is decided by the Central government, he said.

Though 4.90 lakh doses were procured for 18-44 age group, no decision was taken so far on who should be vaccinated because the target population is 1.90 crore. The Chief Minister will take a decision who in this age group should

be given priority for vaccination.

Director of Medical Education K. Ramesh Reddy appealed to people not to panic over black fungus infection.

There are 50 black fungus patients at the Government ENT Hospital and the Gandhi Hospital while there are 30 more patients at private hospitals. The Government will form a committee soon to examine requirement of medicines for black fungus patients undergoing treatment at hospitals.

The panel will examine severity of the cases and will give permission accordingly.

People can get the medicine from stockists. He hoped that the situation will stabilise in a couple of days.

Delhi Govt endorses Health Ministry's revised guidelines on home isolation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has endorsed the revised guidelines on home isolation of mild, asymptomatic cases, recently issued by the Health Ministry, according to an official order.

The order issued on Tuesday by the Health Department said it superseded the previous guidelines on the same subject.

The Health Ministry had issued the revised guidelines late April for home isolation of mild or asymptomatic Covid-19 cases, in which it had advised against attempting to procure or administer reme-

sivir injections at home, underlining that it should be administered only in a hospital setting.

The guidelines had also stated that systemic oral steroids are not indicated in mild cases and if the symptoms (persistent fever, worsening cough) persist beyond seven days, the treating doctor should be consulted for treatment with low-dose oral steroids.

Besides, endorsing the recent guidelines, the order also said that the districts are also directed to ensure that every Covid-19 patient, who is home isolated, has a pulse oximeter.

Robbers...

From Page 1

"We witnessed the shortage and blackmarketing of medical facilities during the last one month," said Badre. "In my past experience when we had to arrange such things for last rites for a deceased the total billing for ingredients and items for a male used to be an average of Rs 4,000 and a couple of hundreds more for a female but now it cost more than Rs 10,000 in a place like Delhi. It doesn't matter if the body is a Covid or non-Covid. Rates will apply assuming the deceased has been a Covid casualty. I paid Rs 4,000 for kafan for my son. As the local shops remained closed due to curfews, they had to manage somehow," Gupta said with tears rolling as his son leaves behind a six months old child.

Cong claims...

From Page 1

Congress' national spokesperson Sunil Ahire said BJP "shamelessly concocts forgeries" instead of providing relief "when our country is devastated by Covid".

"BJP is propagating a fake 'toolkit' on 'Covid-19 mismanagement' & attributing it to AICC Research Department. We are filing an FIR for forgery against @jpnadda & @sambitswaraj When our country is devastated by Covid, instead of providing relief, BJP shamelessly concocts forgeries," he tweeted sharing the copy of the FIR. Congress' research department head Rajeev Gowda said the purported "toolkit" on coronavirus was fake. "When our country is devastated by Covid, instead of providing relief, BJP shamelessly concocts forgeries," said Gowda.

Pyre wood...

From Page 1

The management of Garhmukteshwar Ghat said that they have exhausted all stock of wood.

"With an increase in the number of bodies coming in, the requirement for wood has also been increased. We need thicker wood for the pyre to burn properly. But all we are getting are thin logs," he said, adding that there is a huge shortage of labour for chopping trees due to lockdown in the State.

Generally, mango, eucalyptus, sakshauri trees are used for pyre wood. Poor families invariably go for a mix of dry and wet wood which cost 250-300 per quintals. Rich families sometimes also prefer sandalwood. The average daily funeral figures in pre-Covid times, at Ghats Garhmukteshwar were 10-15 which has now rises to 30-35.

"In Varanasi's Manikarnika Ghat, the price of pyre wood has increased from Rs 300-350 per quintal to Rs 1,000-1,500 per quintal as suppliers are not able to meet the demands these days," says Pandit Rajan Mishra of Varanasi Ghat. Currently, 70-90 quintals of wood are now being used daily at Manikarnika Ghat.

Padam Shree awardee Jitender Singh Shunty, who runs Bhagat Singh Sewa Dal trust, which runs a crematorium in Delhi, said that wood contractors are finding it difficult to manage the demand and supply due to high Covid deaths. His crematorium is charging Rs 600 per quintal and most of the wood comes from Uttar Pradesh.

₹50K to families with Covid...

From Page 1

Currently, city has 72 lakh ration cardholders. "The pandemic has hit an ordinary person on every side. The lockdown that we had to impose because of the virus, has led to several challenges. People are losing livelihoods, are running short of food supplies, and if affected with the virus, face problems with respect to hospital admissions," said Kejriwal, adding, "after much deliberation, his Government decided to provide 5kg ration every month to those who have a ration card - 4kg wheat and 1kg rice. This is given against a meager sum of money".

"An additional 5kg ration under the scheme by the Prime Minister, by the Central Government is being provided free of cost. So, both PDS holder and non-PDS will get 10 kgs of ration free of cost for this month, there is no need to show income certificate," Kejriwal said.

"This will be implemented within 3-4 days," he added. The Kejriwal Government, last year, also distributed free of cost ration to non-PDS.

"You must be thinking about how the Delhi Government will get such a huge amount of money for fulfilling and implementing these announcements. In past six years, with our decision making and corruption free approach, we have saved money," Kejriwal said.

"I can understand that you are in trouble. In these difficult times, please know that I am with you. It is my duty to help you whenever you are in trouble," he added.

These announcements will be passed in Delhi Cabinet soon.

Vijayan picks...

From Page 1

This is Riyaz's and Veena's second marriage. The other CPI(M) nominees are MV Govindan, the fire brand party ideologue from Kannur, V Abdul Rehman, KN Balagopal, Veena George, VN Vasavan, R Bindu, P Rajeev, V Sivankutty (son-in-law of late party ideologist P Govind Pillai) and Saji Cheriyan. MB Rajesh, former MP, will be Speaker of the new House.

Bindu (54), a first time MLA from Iringalakkuda was the principal of the famous Sree Kerala Varma College in Thrissur. One of the most glamorous faces in the party, Bindu is the wife of Vijayaraghavan, the LDF convenor as well as the acting secretary of the CPI(M). She is a widely read poetess and literary figure in the State who has a big fan following.

J Chinjurani, K Rajan, P Prasad and GR Anil are the representatives of the CPI. The NCP, Kerala Congress (Mani), Janata Dal (S) and Kerala Congress (J) too announced the names of AK Saseendran, Roshni Augustine, Krishnankutty and Anthony Raju respectively as their nominees to the Council of Ministers. The Indian National League's nominee is Ahmed Devarakoil. Krishnankutty (76) is the oldest while Riyaz (44) is the youngest Minister in the Council of Ministers. Other than Vijayan, no CPI(M) representatives in the previous Government has been accommodated in the Government. The CPI too has nominated fresh faces while Krishnankutty and Saseendran were Ministers in the outgoing Government.

BJP releases Cong toolkit...

From Page 1

The "toolkit", with the Congress symbol on the top right corner, also purportedly advocates the use of "dramatic pictures of the funerals and dead bodies which is already being done by foreign media" "...their reporting can be magnified," it says as it points out that "PM Modi's approval ratings have been high and have not dipped despite the crisis and mismanagement".

Terming the plot as disgusting, Patra said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi wanted to use this opportunity of the pandemic to destroy the image of Prime Minister Modi. He said

even the World Health Organization (WHO) has asked not to call Covid-19 mutant as 'Indian strain', the Congress through its toolkit is going further to describe it as "Modi strain". Patra alleged that multiple toolkits were prepared by the Congress from day one to tarnish the image of India. He shared one toolkit on Central Vista Project saying that it was full of lies and deceit.

BJP president JP Nadra said the Congress was expected to do so and advised it to do some "constructive work". The toolkit, the BJP alleged, was prepared by the research department of Congress.

Dr Aggarwal who saved...

From Page 1

Dr Aggarwal's family mourned his death by issuing a statement noting that ever since he became a doctor, he dedicated his life to the welfare of the public and raising health awareness. "Even during the pandemic, he made constant efforts to educate the masses and was able to reach out to over 100 million people through numerous videos and educational programmes and saved countless lives," the statement said.

It added that Dr Aggarwal "wanted his life to be celebrated and not mourned". He is survived by his wife and two children.

Renowned as the pioneer of streptokinase therapy for heart attacks in India, Dr Aggarwal had introduced the Colour Doppler

Echocardiography technology in India. Dr Aggarwal received the Dr BC Roy Award in 2005 and Padma Shri in 2010. He was the head of the Heart Care Foundation of India and organized the famous "Health Mela" every year in the national Capital. He was also a writer, anchor, orator, columnist and health communicator. Dr Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State and a diabetologist himself, mourned the loss of his "friend and senior colleague" with whom he had an association of nearly three decades.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Rajasthan counterpart Ashok Gehlot also expressed condolences for the "great human being" even as a spate of condolences messages also flooded the social media.

Lag effect...

From Page 1

If the infected patients do not get timely and adequate treatment, their situation may aggravate as the virus this time is more lethal. For instance, Tamil Nadu is reporting 30,000 cases daily and positivity rate at 20 per cent. "There is a need to keep tabs on people in home isolation as many are not turning to hospital, fearing that they will get infected or won't be able to pay hefty hospital bills," Dr Kishore said.

The second wave is already ripping through small towns and villages as reflected in swelling cases and deaths, following the migration of labourers from the urban areas and devotees from religious events. Dr Kishore suggested that the Government should immediately start focusing on rural areas to prevent deaths.

Sushil not lone sports icon...

From Page 1

Another International cricket player and India's T-20 and World Cup winning bowler, S Sreesanth was booked by the Delhi Police for fixing matches. On May 9, 2013, at a match between the Kings XI Punjab and Rajasthan Royals played at Mohali near Chandigarh, pacer Sreesanth ran up to bowl an over with a towel tucked into the band of his trouser.

International Junior Boxing Champion, Deepak Pahal, who won the gold medal in the national event in 2011, turned gangster just to make a name for himself and also earn quick bucks. Pahal, who is now 25-year-old, had competed in the 60kg lightweight division and won another event in 2013 but his crowning moments came when he represented India in the Haydev Aliyev Cup Boxing tournament in Uzbekistan in 2012.

Recently, Pahal skipped his parole and on March 29 and was part of the group that attacked the police to free gangster Kuldeep Fajja in the National Capital. He is on the run again, and following Fajja's underworld by the Delhi Police, his stock in the underworld would suddenly rise.

Lag effect...

There have been reports of a spike in infection and deaths from the hinterland of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, besides a few others.

Dr Rajani Surendar Bhat, senior pulmonologist from Apollo Specialty Hospitals, Bengaluru, stressed on intensifying awareness campaigns in the rural areas. "Having proper medical infrastructure is not enough, human resources are also required. The locals should have the confidence to get into hospital and have a bed with oxygen where they can feel a bit secure. The authorities should reach out to the community, dispelling their fears and ensure early detection and treatment".

Doctors also said that numbers started to rise in late March after the Holi festival, when people dropped their guard. Mortality data in India is poor and deaths at home

Lag effect...

often go unregistered, especially in rural areas.

Dr Om Srivastava, consultant and visiting professor, infectious diseases, Mumbai, said that over a period of time, from November last, we probably became a little bit complacent, thinking the virus was out of our lives. In doing that, we probably did not keep the social distancing we should have. "Delays are putting many patients in the villages at risk. RT-PCR tests are also taking days," Dr RK Dhamija, public health expert from Lady Hardinge Medical College, said, adding that while the first wave of the pandemic in India, which peaked in September, was largely concentrated in urban areas, where testing was introduced faster, the second wave that erupted in February is raging through hinterland, home to about two-thirds of the country's 1.35 billion population.

Lag effect...

In 1983, former Indian shot putter, Iqbal Singh Boparai, shot to fame when he brought home a bronze medal at Asian Athletics Championships. In 2019, the 63-year-old athlete, Boparai, was charged with the double murder of his own mother and wife in his United States home. The bodies of his wife and mother were found inside Singh's home, with the athlete himself covered in blood and suffering from self-inflicted stab wounds.

Another International player, Tanveer Hussain, a snow-shoe racer, was arrested in the United States of America (USA) for sexually abusing a minor girl back in 2017. At the time, Hussain had traveled from India to Saranac Lake in upstate New York, with fellow athlete Abid Hussain Khan to participate in the World Snowshoe Championships.

Hussain was charged with first-degree sexual abuse, a felony, and endangering the welfare of a child, a misdemeanor for engaging in a passionate kiss with the 12-year-old victim and touching her in an intimate area over her clothing. However, he was deported after he had avoided trial by pleading guilty.

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM/ADDENDUM

Due to technical reasons, date of opening of tender is changed in respect of the NIT No. 558-Sig-16/M/Tender/1358 which is scheduled to be opened on 26.05.2021 for the work of "Installation, testing and commissioning of axle counter in connection with (i). Replacement of Analog Axle counter in loop line in SSB-JHI section of Delhi Division. (ii). Provision of Dual detection of HASSDAC in block section of SPR section of Delhi Division". following changes are made:

S.No.	Description	As per NIT drawn	To be read as
1.	Date of Opening	Dated 26.05.2021	Dated 16.06.2021

All other terms and condition will remain unchanged
Tender No.: 558-Sig/16/M/TENDER/1358 Date: 18.05.2021 1063/21
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Rise in black fungus cases among Covid survivors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hospitals in Delhi have reported a rise in the number of black fungus cases or mucormycosis among people recovering from Covid-19 during the second wave and it could be ascribed to "irrational" use of steroids at home without consulting a doctor, medical experts said on Tuesday.

The fungal infection, which affects the brain, lungs, and sinuses, can be lethal to those suffering from diabetes and having compromised immune systems.

According to Dr Suresh Singh Naruka, Senior Consultant, ENT, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, mucormycosis is more prevalent among people with low immunity due to diabetes, kidney disease, liver disorder, old age, cardiac issues, or those on medication for auto-immune disease like rheumatoid arthritis.

"If such patients are administered steroids, their immunity reduces further, allowing the fungus to thrive," he said. Dr Naruka said he has been dealing with three to four patients with severe mucormycosis every day as compared to one or two cases a month before Covid-19 began.

Covid-19 kills one or two per cent of the people infected, while black fungus has a mortality rate of 75 per cent, he



be around 100-110 and thereafter, the level should not rise above 140, he said, adding one should seek medical advice if experiencing symptoms such as unilateral headache, facial pain, pain in the eye, decreased sensation on one side of the face, bloody nasal discharge.

Dr Abhinav Kumar, Head of ENT, Aakash Healthcare, said he has been coming across one or two such cases a day for the last 10 days. Dr Suresh Kumar, Medical Director of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, the Delhi Government's largest healthcare facility, said steroids should be used under medical supervision when oxygen saturation is below 93 per cent.

The hospital said it has four cases of mucormycosis currently. "All these patients have been referred here from private hospitals and nursing homes, which did not have Amphotericin B for their treatment," he said, adding LNJP has stock of three months.

Before Covid, the drug was not being used much. Now, the demand has risen, leading to a shortage of it, Dr Kumar said. Dr Yudhyavir, Assistant Professor (Anaesthesiology and Critical Care), AIIMS, said the drug is not commonly available and is manufactured in lesser quantities.

He said steroids reduce inflammation in the lungs, but

also reduce immunity and increase blood sugar levels in both diabetics and non-diabetic Covid patients.

This is leading to an explosion in the number of black fungus cases.

"This time people are aware of a lot of steroids being used in treatment of Covid and are using them without medical supervision. Even some administration officials are promoting use of steroids, which is dangerous, and leading to cases of mucormycosis," the doctors said.

Another official from the Central Government-run hospital said the healthcare facility has around 30 mucormycosis patients at present.

Dr Mohit Agarwal, Additional Director and Head of Medical Oncology Department, Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, said people have been self-medicating without consulting a doctor.

"Some patients have been taking medicines that doctors had prescribed to their friends or family members earlier. This is leading to inadvertent use of steroids."

The increase in the number of "black fungus" cases this year can be attributed to the high Covid caseload and more severe cases during the second wave. "The use of steroids has increased because of limitations of resources," Dr Agarwal said.

Liposomal, used for the treatment of the fungal infection, is unavailable at most of the pharmacies, he said.

Dr Sumit Mrig, Head ENT, Max Hospital, Saket, said 15 to 20 cases have been reported at their facility in the last three to four days.

"We have operated on 14-15 patients so far and four to five surgeries are planned for Tuesday. The factors responsible are extensive use of steroids to an extent that people have taken them without doctor's advice at home," he said.

Patients from rural areas are also coming in with mucormycosis, Dr Mrig added.

Sugar monitoring is important. The fasting sugar should

be around 100-110 and thereafter, the level should not rise above 140, he said, adding one should seek medical advice if experiencing symptoms such as unilateral headache, facial pain, pain in the eye, decreased sensation on one side of the face, bloody nasal discharge.

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50 cases in Gurugram, health dept concerned

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Several cases of black fungus (mucormycosis) are now emerging in Gurugram which is another concern for the district health department. According to the health department around 50 cases of black fungus have been reported in Gurugram so far and about 50 more patients suffering from black fungus have been identified.

Health officials said black fungus infection is being found in Covid recovered people. Officials also claimed that a few cases of black fungus were also reported in the first wave of corona in the previous year. However, the number of cases of black fungus in the second wave is higher than the first. Cases of black fungus has seen a sharp increase in the last four to five days, health department officials said.

According to officials, to deal with unavailability of Amphotericin B, an anti-fungal drug used to treat the infection, the State health department has also constituted a committee to provide

the medicine to hospitals across the State. "We have 50 cases in the district and we have directed all hospitals in the city to update the numbers daily and informed the health department on priority basis. The health department formed a committee and hospitals can directly apply to the panel asking for Amphotericin B injections," said Dr Virender Yadav, chief medical officer, Gurugram.

"Black fungus basically grows in the internal areas of eyes, nose and then it gradually reaches to the brain. As diabetic patients are already immune compromised they are prone to any fungal infection."

"Along with that the use of contaminated oxygen and steroids during Covid treatment significantly aggravate the possible chances of its occurrence among them," said Dr Satish Kaul, HOD and Director, Internal medicine, Narayana Hospital, Gurugram.

There are now around 20 thousand active Covid patients in Gurugram. Of these, there are about two thousand patients who are suffering

from diabetes. In such a situation, the risk of black fungus is high in these patients.

"The treatment of black fungus or mucormycosis is through anti fungal medications chiefly Amphotericin B. It comes in a different form called liposomal amphotericin B, which penetrates into the brain as well. These are both injections which are given in hospital setting since they can affect kidneys. The liposomal one is more costly. These are available in market but could be short in current scenario," Dr Shashank Vashist, Consultant- ENT, Columbia Asia Hospital, Palam Vihar Gurugram, said.

Doctors recommend that in the case of diabetes after treatment of Covid, control hyperglycemia and constantly monitor blood sugar levels and do not let it increase. Apart from this, doctors recommend that covid patients use steroids quite sensibly.

Do not take it at all without the advice of doctors. Diabetes patients should also take their sugar medicines.

Action against 3 fair price shops' defaulters in Shalimar Bagh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Food and Supply Minister Imran Hussain on Tuesday conducted a surprise inspection of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) in Shalimar Bagh to check availability and distribution of free of cost ration to National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 beneficiaries.

Bandana Kumari, area Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), and Assistant Commissioner (F&S), Food & Supplies Officer and Inspector also accompanied Hussain.

During the inspection, he found three FPSs closed and two FPSs opened, the Minister directed his officer to take action as per law against the defaulting FPSs. One FPS dealer opened his shop during the inspection and the Department's team seized its records for scrutiny after finding shortcomings in them.

Hussain advised FPS dealers and some beneficiaries to maintain social distancing and wear masks in their interest and

in the interest of everyone.

He also enquired from the beneficiaries whether any amount is being charged by FPS dealers for ration distribution. The beneficiaries informed him that nothing is being charged from them by FPS dealers.

F&S Minister also warned that strict action as per law shall be taken against the ration dealers who do not open shops regularly or who collect the cost of food grains illegally or who distribute less than stipulated quantity of ration or who indulge in other malpractices viz diversion of food grains, hoarding, black-marketing, short dispensing of ration, misbehaving with beneficiaries etc.

In Delhi, under the Public Distribution System (PDS) covered by the National Food Security Act 2013, NFS beneficiaries under the PR and PRS category are provided with 5kg of foodgrain every month under regular entitlement, including 4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice.

Cancel air services from Singapore as its new strain dangerous for kids could invade India: CM to Centre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday appealed to the Central Government to immediately cancel all air services with Singapore, saying a new strain of coronavirus there is said to be "very dangerous" for children.

This new strain of virus could invade India in the form of a third wave, he said in a

tweet.

"The new form of coronavirus in Singapore is said to be very dangerous for children. It could reach Delhi in the form of a third wave. My appeal to the Central government: 1. Cancel all air services with Singapore with immediate effect 2. Work on vaccine alternatives for children on a priority basis," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

Cab driver, 2 friends kill Kenyan over ₹600 taxi fare, held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 33-year-old cab driver and his two friends on Tuesday for allegedly beating a Kenyan national to death, following an altercation over a taxi fare of ₹600 in the national Capital.

Police said after killing the 51-year-old passenger, who was later identified as Jama Said Farah, a citizen of Kenya, the cab driver Virender Singh and his friends Gopal (34) and Dilbagh (35), threw his body near a hotel, located near Indira Gandhi International Airport

(IGI) here.

According to Rajeev Ranjan, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), IGI airport, the incident took place on Monday, the same day, the victim had booked a ticket from Delhi to Somalia but he could not fly because he was denied immigration clearance at IGI Airport.

"His body was recovered from a footpath near a hotel on Monday and also found his mobile phone from the spot while his luggage was found to be missing. On contacting the

last dialled number from his mobile, police got in touch with Manoj Sahu, a travel agent who on interrogation, told police that the victim had booked a ticket through him for Monday for Delhi to Somalia. Later, the travel agent informed the victim's daughter about the incident," said the DCP.

"The travel agent also sent a copy of victim's passport which led to his identification. During investigation, the victim's daughter contacted police and informed them that her father was a heart patient and had come to India two weeks

ago for his treatment. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, his treatment was postponed by the hospital. Hence, he was going back to his country via Somalia on Monday but was denied immigration clearance at IGI Airport, as he did not have visa for Somalia and was off loaded by the airlines," said the DCP.

"His daughter also informed police that after being denied immigration clearance, her father took a taxi from the airport terminal for a hotel in Mahipal Pur and since then, she has no contact with him," said the DCP.

Court refuses anticipatory bail to fugitive wrestler Sushil

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Court on Tuesday refused to grant anticipatory bail to absconding Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl that led to the death of a wrestler.

Additional Sessions Judge Jagdish Kumar denied the relief to Sushil against whom a case of murder, abduction and criminal conspiracy has been reg-

istered.

Wrestler Sagar died, while two of his friends Sonu and Amit Kumar got injured, after they were allegedly assaulted by Sushil Kumar and other wrestlers on May 4 night, at the stadium premises in the national capital.

Fearing arrest, the international wrestler moved the Rohini court in Delhi on May 17 seeking anticipatory bail, asserting that the investigation against him is biased and that

no injuries are attributable to him.

In the plea, the sportsman showed his willingness to join the investigation and provide a "true and correct picture of the incident" to help the investigating agency reach a logical conclusion.

"It appears that the statement of the victims has already been recorded and alleged recoveries have already been made. No custodial investigation is required as nothing is to

be recovered at the instance of the applicant," Sushil Kumar's plea stated.

He further claimed to have no connection with the alleged firing that took place during the brawl, adding that the firearm and vehicle found at the place of the incident do not belong to him. However, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava, representing the police, told the court that there is electronic evidence where he could be seen "with

a stick and hitting" the wrestler.

The Prosecutor also asserted that Sushil's passport has been confiscated to alert the authorities as there is an apprehension that he may flee the country.

According to Investigating Officer (IO) Inspector Dinesh Kumar, wrestler's custodial interrogation is required to unearth the chain of conspiracy and recover the weapon of offence from him.

"He is the main accused in the whole incident, who has played a key role in the commission of offence. Data retrieved by FSL experts confirms his active role in commission of crime," the Investigating Officer told the court.

Senior advocate Sidharth luthra, representing the accused, told the court that Sonu, present during the brawl, is a history sheeter, member of Kala Jatharia's gang and has various criminal cases against him.

To recover papers, Kalra taken to 3 restaurants in South Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Crime Branch of Delhi Police on Tuesday took businessman Navneet Kalra, arrested for allegedly hoarding and black-marketing oxygen concentrators, to three restaurants in connection with the case.

"Kalra was taken to Khan Chacha, Townhall and Nege & Ju restaurants in South Delhi from where the concentrators were recovered in connection with the ongoing investigation. Police have seized some documents related to accounts," said a senior police official.

He was also taken for the mandatory medical examina-

tion, police said, adding that Kalra was hiding in Gurgaon from where he was apprehended.

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday declined to direct an expeditious decision on the bail plea of businessman Navneet Kalra, arrested in connection with alleged black marketing of oxygen concentrators, saying "let the law take its own course".

A Delhi Court on Monday had remanded Kalra to three days of police custody, saying his custodial interrogation is required in connection with alleged black marketing and hoarding of oxygen concentrators amid the coronavirus pandemic.

AAP accuses north civic body of not admitting Covid +ve in Balak Hosp, BJP refutes charges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MCD in charge Durgesh Pathak on Tuesday alleged that the north corporation had suddenly stopped admitting covid patients in Balak Ram Hospital without any prior notice.

"The AAP demands to resume the functioning of the Balak Ram Hospital immediately. On one hand the Delhi Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is working round the clock to provide the best Covid care facilities to the citizens of Delhi, and on the other hand the

BJP-ruled MCD is playing with the lives of the people," he said.

It may be noted that the civic agency had declared the hospital a Covid care facility with a facility of around 150 beds.

However, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor denied the charges, saying that the AAP leader is in the habit of creating confusion among masses by leveling baseless charges. "With cases going down in Delhi, patient inflow into hospitals has rapidly gone down. This is the reason why hospital beds are vacant both in hospitals run by MCDs and Delhi Government," he said.



हरियाणा सरकार द्वारा 'ब्लैक फंगस' के इलाज हेतु व्यापक प्रबंध



श्री मनोहर लाल, मुख्यमंत्री, हरियाणा

हरियाणा सरकार द्वारा 'ब्लैक फंगस' बीमारी की गंभीरता को देखते हुये अधिसूचित कर दिया गया है ताकि प्रभावित लोगों को तुरन्त इलाज की सुविधा मिल सके

इस बीमारी के उपचार हेतु निम्न जिलों के लिए इन अस्पतालों को किया गया है अधिकृत

क्रमांक	अस्पताल	जिले
1.	पं. बीडी शर्मा, रनातकोतर संस्थान, चिकित्सा विज्ञान, रोहतक	रोहतक, जींद, महेंद्रगढ़, दादरी
2.	शहीद हसन खान मेवाती, राजकीय मेडिकल कॉलेज, नल्हड, मुह	पलवल (हथौन सब डिवीजन), मेवात और गुरुग्राम
3.	मगत फूल सिंह, राजकीय महिला मेडिकल कॉलेज, खानपुर कला, सोनीपत	सोनीपत, पानीपत
4.	महाराजा अग्रसेन मेडिकल कॉलेज, अग्रोहा, हिसार	हिसार, सिरसा, फतेहाबाद, भिवानी
5.	कल्पना चावला राजकीय मेडिकल कॉलेज, करनाल	करनाल, कैथल, कुरुक्षेत्र, यमुनानगर
6.	वर्ल्ड कॉलेज ऑफ मेडिकल साइंस एंड रिसर्च, झज्जर	झज्जर, रेवाड़ी
7.	आदेश चिकित्सा विज्ञान संस्थान, शाहबाद, कुरुक्षेत्र	अंबाला, कुरुक्षेत्र
8.	महर्षि मार्कण्डेय मेडिकल साइंस और अनुसंधान संस्थान, मुलाना, अंबाला	अंबाला, पंचकूला
9.	ईएसआईसी मेडिकल कॉलेज और अस्पताल, फरीदाबाद	फरीदाबाद
10.	अल-पलाह स्कूल ऑफ मेडिकल साइंस एंड रिसर्च, वीज टिकरी खेरा, फरीदाबाद	फरीदाबाद, मेवात, पलवल
11.	एसजीटी मेडिकल कॉलेज और अस्पताल, बुढेरा, गुरुग्राम	गुरुग्राम, मेवात, रेवाड़ी
12.	एन.सी. मेडिकल कॉलेज, इसराना, पानीपत	पानीपत, सोनीपत

ब्लैक फंगस के मरीज मेल आई.डी. amphobharyana@gmail.com पर निर्धारित प्रोफार्मा* को भर कर और चिकित्सक के हस्ताक्षर उपरान्त दवाई Inj. Amphotericin B. प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।

* <http://haryanahealth.nic.in/defaultnew.html>

सूचना, जन सम्पर्क एवं भाषा विभाग, हरियाणा | www.prharyana.gov.in | @Cmohry | @DipHaryana

Forces save over 300 from Tauktae terror

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Armed forces have swung into action in the right earnest as Cyclone Tauktae raged and the navy and coast guard in a major operation on Tuesday managed to rescue more than 300 people stranded on a barge off Mumbai. Efforts are now on to bring out more than 300 more people now stranded on barges there.

The Army has fanned out in various parts of Gujarat and after cyclone landfall at Diu-Una moved further north six teams of soldiers and engineers rushed to Amreli for relief following request from the district administration. In all more than 2,000 soldiers comprising 180 teams and nine engineer task forces are deployed in at least four districts of Gujarat for rescue and relief efforts.

As regards the ongoing rescue efforts off Mumbai, officials said here the Navy and Coast Guard rescued 314 people on board two barges that went adrift in the Arabian Sea near Mumbai hours before Cyclone Tauktae made landfall.

Three barges and an oil rig with 611 personnel on board had gone adrift on Monday. These included accommodation barge P305 with 273 persons, cargo barge GAL Constructor with 137 personnel on board, accommodation barge SS-3 with 196 personnel on board and the Sagar



Bhushan oil rig with 101 personnel on board, they said.

Naval Ships Beas, Betwa and Teg joined INS Kochi and Kolkata for undertaking Search and Rescue (SAR) operations for Barge P-305, which sank 35 nautical miles from Mumbai.

A barge is a long flat-bottomed boat either under its power or towed by another. An accommodation barge is of shallow draft (vessel whose keel is not far below the waterline) and is used to accommodate personnel on projects where shore accommodation is not available. Offshore accommodation barges are fully autonomous and used mainly in the oil and gas industries.

Rescue efforts were augmented with P-8I aircraft and naval helicopters, who continue to undertake aerial search in the area. Since the commencement of the SAR from Monday, 180 survivors have been recovered so far.

In another operation, an Indian Navy Seaking helicopter was launched to rescue

crew of GAL Constructor, which ran aground North of Mumbai. The helicopter rescued 35 crew members of GAL Constructor.

Rescue operations are also in progress off the coast of Gujarat for three vessels namely Support Station 3, Great Ship Aditi and Drill Ship Sagar Bhushan, which are 15-20 nautical miles South East off Gujarat coast (Pipavav).

INS Talwar has arrived in the area and taken over the duties of 'On-Scene Coordinator' for coordination of the SAR effort. The Western Naval Command, in coordination with the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) has diverted five tugs to render assistance.

They said missions were on even as the sea continues to be extremely rough with sea state 4-5 and winds 25-30 knots (approximately 35 - 55 kmph), posing a challenge to the ships and aircraft involved in SAR operations.

Desi anti-Covid drug 2-DG to find mention in treatment protocol soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's first indigenous anti-Covid drug 2-DG developed by the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) might soon find its place in the national Covid-19 treatment protocol with the Government on Tuesday airing its wish but added that before doing so, it will examine the data of the medicine.

At the presser, NITI Aayog member (health) Dr V K Paul said the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has granted nod for emergency use of the drug after looking at the data. The drug taken orally is said to bring down the severity of the virus load.

The drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose has been developed by Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of DRDO, along with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad.

Paul said, We will examine in Covid-19 National Task Force meeting for adding the drug in the national treatment protocol.

The first batch of the adjunct Covid therapy anti-Covid drug was released by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and handed over to Health Minister Harsh Vardhan here on Monday.

One box each of the sachets of the drug was handed over to Delhi AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria and Lt Gen Sunil Kant of Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS).

Govt planning large-scale vaccine supply, says Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Describing vaccination as key to reducing hospitalisation and mortalities due to Covid-19, Prime Minister on Tuesday told 46 District Magistrates of nine States and one Union Territory that efforts were being made to supply vaccines on a very large scale with an advanced schedule of 15 days to be provided to the States.

The Prime Minister while directly addressing the district officials through videoconferencing, asked them to innovate best ways to cut-down the Covid-19 and gave them free hand to suggest policy changes.

The Prime Minister spoke about how getting vaccinated is instrumental to lowering the severity of the disease and reducing hospitalisations and mortalities.

He said continuous efforts are being made to increase the supply of Corona vaccine on a very large scale.

Modi said the Health Ministry is streamlining the system and process of vaccination and attempts are being made to give a schedule of the next 15 days to the states in advance.

He stressed on the need to stop vaccine wastage.

The Prime Minister asked the officials to compile the best practices and innovative steps so that these may be used in other districts of the country.

Prime Minister appreciat-



steps that were undertaken to manage the recent surge of cases.

Modi also sounded utmost caution as he said currently the number of corona infections are decreasing in

some states as well as increasing in several other states. So he stressed on the need to be more vigilant in the face of decreasing infections. Prime Minister requested the officials to make the relief material easily accessible for the rural population.

The Prime Minister informed field officers that work is being done rapidly to install oxygen plants in hospitals in every district of the country through PM CARES Fund and these plants have already started functioning in many hospitals.

The meeting was attended by the Home Minister, Defence Minister, Health Minister, Chief ministers of Various states, Member (Health) NITI Aayog, Health Secretary, Pharmaceutical Secretary, and other officers from PMO, Ministries and Departments of Central Government.

DMs and field officers from Karnataka, Bihar, Assam, Chandigarh, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, MP, Goa, Himachal Pradesh.

ed the dedication and perseverance shown by the nation's healthcare workers, frontline workers and administrators during the ongoing difficult times, and urged them to continue working with similar vigour moving forward.

You understand the challenges of your district much better. So when your district wins, the country wins. When your district beats Corona, the country defeats Corona, said Modi and commended the officials who were working without taking any leave in spite of contracting Covid-19.

He added that they are inspiration to many and he understands the sacrifices made by them. During the interaction, the officials thanked the Prime Minister for leading the fight against the second wave of Covid from the front. The officials shared their experiences and apprised the Prime Minister about the innovative

Job drive in India can't be completed in 2-3 months, says Poonawalla



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Serum Institute of India (SII) SCEO Adar Poonawalla on Tuesday said that vaccination in a large populous country such as India won't be possible in 2-3 months and asserted that his company 'never exported vaccines at cost of the people of India' SII produces AstraZeneca's Covid vaccine named Covishield in India.

The statement from Adar Poonawalla who is in London came amidst the backlash the Government is facing over the scarcity of Covid vaccines in the country and the decision to export them earlier this year.

The Covid 19 crisis has been difficult on people across the globe, including India. In the past few days, there has been intense discussion on the decision of our Government and Indian vaccine manufacturers including SII to export vaccines, a media statement issued by Poonawalla stated.

The Covid 19 crisis has been difficult on people across the globe, including India. In the past few days, there has been intense discussion on the decision of our Government and Indian vaccine manufacturers including SII to export vaccines, a media statement issued by Poonawalla stated.

We must also understand that this pandemic is not limited by geographic or political boundaries. We will not be safe until everyone globally is able to defeat the virus. Further, as part of our global alliances, we also had commitments to COVAX, so that they could distribute the vaccines around the world to end the pandemic, it added.

Poonawalla, who is currently said to be in the UK, said that in January 2021, India has a stockpile of vaccine doses. Our vaccination drive had started successfully and the number of daily cases were at an all-time low.

SC judge recuses himself from hearing former Mumbai top cop's petition

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

A new bench of the Supreme Court will hear a fresh plea filed by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh seeking transfer of all inquiries ordered against him outside Maharashtra.

On Tuesday, as Singh's plea was taken up by a bench comprising Justices Vineet Saran and BR Gavai, Justice Saran told senior advocate Puneet Bali, representing Singh, Brother (Justice Gavai) has some difficulty in taking up this matter. We will just say place it before another bench.

Justice Gavai added: I can't hear this matter. The bench, without going into the merits of the case, said: List before another bench in which one of us is not a party. Justice Gavai did not cite any reason for not hearing the matter.

In his brief arguments, Bali had contended that inquiries against his client is a witch-hunt and also in complete transgression of the orders passed by the top court as well as the Bombay High Court.

Singh had accused then Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of adopting corrupt practices in posting or transfers in police in addition with extortion of ₹100 crore per month from various establishments.

In a writ petition, Singh alleged that the inquiry officer of the state government is threatening him with false cases unless he withdraws the complaint against Deshmukh. Singh has asked the top court to transfer all investigations already initiated or contemplated against him to the CBI which is presently probing the charges against Deshmukh. He claims to have submitted to the CBI transcripts linked with alleged phone call conversations from the inquiry officer threatening him.

Plea seeks SIT probe into BJP workers' killing, SC asks Bengal Govt to explain its stand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought a response from the West Bengal Government on a petition seeking probe by Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the killing of two BJP workers in the post poll violence that rocked the State.

The petition was filed by Biswajit Sarkar, brother of BJP worker Avijit Sarkar, who was killed in the recent post-poll violence by Trinamool Congress. Wife of another BJP worker Haran Adhikari who was killed by dragging gut from home after election results also filed the petition.

Sarkar and Adhikari were BJP's booth agents. The copetitioner Adhikari's wife in her petition said that on May 2 night, on the day the result was declared, her husband was dragged out from home and murdered by TMC cadre.

Senior Advocate and BJP leader Mahesh Jethmalani argued before the vacation Bench headed by Justices Vineet Saran and BR Gavai

demanding SIT constituted by the apex court must probe into the rampant political killing in West Bengal accusing State Police for non-action.

The mob tied the CCTV camera wire around his neck, strangled him and started beating him with bricks and sticks. They smashed his head and brutally killed him in front of his mother, who seeing her son slaughtered in front of her own eyes lost consciousness and collapsed on the spot, said the petition by Sarkar narrating on his brother's brutal killing. Jethmalani accused that the State is witnessing indiscriminate killing of innocents across the state of West Bengal in a coordinated manner.

Total inaction by the state to not act but also suppress the probe. Police stood idly. No one helped and they were left to die. It was at the behest of the state administration, Jethmalani said. We issue notice. Serve it to the state. We will hear it next Tuesday, the Court said. The petitioners called for an SIT probe since it is impossible to conduct an impartial enquiry in the State.

Rlys ramping up oxygen infra to beat Covid menace

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways has planned a massive capacity enhancement in its 86 hospitals across India. While four Oxygen Plants have been made operational now, 30 are under various stages of processing, even as 52 more have been sanctioned.

An official statement from the ministry of railways said that it was planning massive capacity enhancement in 86 railway hospitals across India which have been identified as Covid hospitals.

General Managers have been delegated further powers, upto ₹2 crore in each case for sanctioning Oxygen Generation plants, said the statement.

It also said a series of measures have been initiated which includes increase in number of beds for Covid treatment have from 2,539 to 6,972. The ICU Beds in Covid hospitals have been increased from 273 to 573.

Invasive ventilators have been added and their number has been increased from 62 to 296. Constant efforts are being



Invasive ventilators have been added and their number has been increased from 62 to 296

made to add critical medical equipment like BIPAP machines, oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders etc in Railway hospitals.

Railways have also issued instructions that Covid affected employees may be admitted to empanelled hospitals on referral basis as per need.

Constant efforts are being made to add critical medical equipment like BIPAP

machines, oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders etc in railway hospitals. The railways have also issued instructions that COVID affected employees may be admitted to empanelled hospitals on referral basis as per need.

This massive capacity enhancement in railway hospitals would usher in better infrastructure to handle medical emergencies, the railways said.

Around 2,000 railway employees have so far lost their lives to Covid with about 1,000 getting infected daily, according to official data. So far, around 4.32 lakh rail employees have been vaccinated.

Online programme starts for cooperative bank officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A five-day online training programme Project Formulation and Appraisal Techniques kick-started here from Monday for the officials of National Federation of State Cooperative Banks Ltd (NAFSCOB), an apex body of State Cooperative Banks and District Central Cooperative Banks.

Bhima Subrahmanyam, President, International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA) and CEO-NAFSCOB who inaugurated the maiden training programme, funded by National Cooperative Development Cooperation (NCDC), said that such interactions aim to benefit the State Cooperative bank staff members. Such virtual workshops are the need of the hour to ensure social distancing norms amidst Covid-19 pandemic, he said.

The training includes a combination of online classes consisting of lectures, discussions and case studies to transfer learning, said Col Bikramjit Singh, Chief Director of Laxmanrao Inamdar National Academy for Cooperative Research and Development (LINAC) which has designed the programme.

He further said that during the session, the participants are being trained on various aspects of the project appraisal ranging from screening of projects, formulating a project, understanding project cycle and project proposal and different elements related. Singh added that this was the first training program under NCDC MoU with NAFSCOB.

Participants in the first batch include officials from The AP State Cooperative Banks Ltd, The Bihar State Cooperative Bank Ltd, The Goa State Cooperative Bank Ltd and The Nagaland State Cooperative Bank Ltd.

Singh said that LINAC, an ISO 9001:2015 certified organization, has so far trained more than 31,000 persons from cooperatives societies.

Demands soar for items required for last rites of Covid-19 victims

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

While the supply has been normal, the demand has shot for items required for conducting the last rites of thousands of Covid-19 victims everyday. Those involved in the business have the opportunity to make money in the absence of a proper regulator on the cremation subject.

Yahan to loot macha hai Bhaiya. Lagta hai Kafan bech kar hi inlog mahal banyega, rued Animesh Kumar who last week cremated his covid victim mother at Baans Ghat Cremation Ground at Patna, Bihar.

Similarly Sidharth Tripathi, a resident of Lucknow, who cremated his father two weeks ago, said the ghee used for consigning the body into flames was being sold over ₹2,000 at cremation ghats.

Shamshad Taj, from Tanda Village in Amedkar Nagar District, owner and suppliers of Kafan for the entire UP explained that if the supply of raw materials gets hampered then it will be difficult for the Kafan makers to supply finished product.

There can be no alternative

to cotton, markin, polyester in making of a Pitambari as these products are considered pious for last rites. No one wants to compromise in last journey of a person, Taj said.

I hope and pray that situation normalise and the supply of raw material was not hampered. And last but not least, there should always be a lesser demand for shrouds, he said.

R K Gupta, a bulk cloth trader in Fatehpuri Cloth Market Old Delhi said the supply of raw materials used to make Pitambari or Kafan has been affected though as the markets are shut. While raw materials for Delhi market comes from Jodhpur Rajasthan, the makers of such items are located in very small towns who must be finding it difficult to weave these necessary items. The price of raw materials and to the best of my knowledge at the makers end remain the same pre and post pandemic but the retailers or those involved in selling these items malign the image of market and nation. Making money out of corpses if a sin, said Gupta who himself recovered from Covid.

He rued t that he had to

give ₹20,000 to ambulance service from Sadar Bazar area to Sonepat.

In the last three to four months, yarn prices have increased by ₹100 a kg and then there is no certainty on the prices as even the fuel cost had been skyrocketing.

The government should take at least temporary measures to bring stability to yarn prices. Weaving is a labour-oriented industry. Yarn prices should be brought under control and weavers should get yarn at affordable prices, mentioned Anand Poppat, a cloth trader from Rajkot, Gujarat.

The textile processors in Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu which is the biggest hub of finished products in India, have appealed to all the political parties to bring down GST for processing and to convert the Rs 200 crore interest-free loan given to Common Effluent Treatment Plants to grant.

According to Raja Shanmugham, president of Tiruppur Exporters' Association, Tiruppur's main demand to political parties is to support the manufacturers to sustain the industry. Most of the workers in Tiruppur are migrant labourer.

Paramilitary forces report 6K plus Covid cases in last 10 days

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Central paramilitary forces have added over 6,000 cases of coronavirus infection during the last 10 days and 34 deaths during the period in which 3,690 patients were cured.

Over 9,300 Central paramilitary personnel continue to be afflicted with Covid-19 as the forces have contracted as many as 76,000 cases of infection from the pandemic that has exacted close to 300 casualties till Monday.

The data for Covid-19 in the paramilitary forces has been consolidated for the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Border Security Force (BSF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), National Security Guards (NSG) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

The combined data of the Covid-19 cases for Central paramilitary forces suggests the number of infected personnel rose from 69,852 cases on May 8 to 75,918 on May 17, adding 6,066 new cases in

a span of 10 days.

Likewise, the death toll from the pandemic rose from 264 to 298, adding 34 casualties during the 10-day period.

The active cases jumped from 9,037 to 9,381 cases during this period. Recoveries from the disease increased from 60,549 to 66,239, adding 3,690 cured patients during the last 10 days.

As on May 8, as many as 69,852 Central paramilitary personnel were infected with Covid-19. Out of this, 60,549 patients had recovered from the disease.

The combined death toll across the paramilitary forces was 264 and a total of 9,037 personnel across the Forces were positive cases till May 8.

The CRPF topped the list with the most number of infections with 19,235 personnel contracting the disease till so far and also recorded the most number of recoveries that stood at 19,235.

The CRPF also recorded the most deaths with 114 casualties in its ranks due to Covid-19. It also has the highest number of active cases at 2,867.

98 per cent Indians vulnerable to Covid infection: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday said that even if there has been continued decline in active Covid-19 cases in last 15 days from 17.13 per cent of total case-load on May 3 to 13.3 per cent, of total population in India at least 98 per cent of population is still susceptible/vulnerable to infection.

The country has reported over 2,63,000 daily cases in the last 24 hours.

There has been a decrease of 27% from the highest peak of single-day cases India noted on May 7 (4,14,000). Nearly 69 per cent of India's COVID-19 cases are limited to only eight states, said Lav Aggarwal, Joint Secretary of Union Health Ministry on Tuesday at a press conference here.

He also added that country's weekly average case positivity rate is 16.9%. Case positivity rate in India is 14.10% and more than 15% positivity rate in 22 states, he

said. Meanwhile, India's Covid-19 death count climbed to 2,78,719 with a record 4,329 fresh fatalities, while the single-day rise in coronavirus cases stood at 2.63 lakh, the lowest in 28 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

The country reported 2,63,533 new cases in a span of 24 hours, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 2,52,28,996, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram showing rise in COVID-19 cases and rise in positivity, the government data shows.

There are 199 districts showing continued decline in Covid-19 cases and positivity since last two weeks, it said adding, eight states have more than 1 lakh active Covid-19 cases, 22 states have more than 15 pc case positivity.

NARADA ARRESTS Monday ruckus: CBI may seek to shift cases out of Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Monday's brouhaha after the Central Bureau of Investigation arrested senior Trinamool Congress leaders, including two Ministers in the high-profile Narada pay-off case, could cast a shadow on the "procedural fate" of other investigations including hit fund, cow and coal smuggling and other cases, CBI sources have said.

According to sources the Central Agency has already mailed to Union Home Ministry a detailed report of the free-for-all indulged by a "disorderly crowd" of TMC men both outside the high-security Nizam Palace housing a number of Central Government offices and Governor's House expressing its apprehensions about the smooth conduct of investigations in all the cases — including the Narada case. Names of some top TMC politicians feature in all these cases.

The agency is prepared with a similar report to be submitted before the High Court and the Supreme Court, sources said.

The CBI is likely to use the Monday's incident to seek a trans-

fer of all the cases outside Bengal sources said.

The Agency was forced to make a virtual production of the accused considering the safety of its officers as an angry crowd of TMC men lay siege to the Nizam Palace, intermittently pelting stones at the central forces guarding the Central Government mansion, sources said adding at one point of time even the CISF authorities had refused to escort the accused to the court fearing security hazards.

In a sudden move that many experts felt had political rather than procedural underpinnings two TMC Ministers, an MLA and a former Minister Subroto Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, Madan Mitra and Sovan Chatterjee — in that order — were on Monday arrested by the CBI in the Narada sting case in which at least a dozen TMC politicians were seen in video footage accepting kick back from a sting journalist faking as a businessman. Incidentally all the four accused had functioned as the Mayor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

A number of those politicians who had later joined the BJP were

however were not arrested on Monday prompting the Bengal ruling outfit to question prejudicial treatment meted out by the Central investigating agency.

In a parallel development even as the TMC prepared to move the Supreme Court to get the Calcutta High Court order staying the bail of four accused quashed the CBI too filed a caveat in the Apex Court seeking a hearing in the case.

In a sudden turn of events the High Court late on Monday evening stayed the release of the four accused who were granted bail earlier in the day by a CBI court. The appeal against the bail order filed by the CBI would come up for hearing in the High Court on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Madan Mitra and Sovan Chatterjee were hospitalised on Tuesday after they complained of breathlessness. Both were admitted to the state-run SSKM hospital where they have been kept on oxygen support.

Hakim and Mukherjee too complained of similar symptoms but were ruled out hospitalization. They had been lodged at the Presidency Correctional Home in Kolkata.

31,337 more test Covid +ve in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The total number of persons diagnosed with Covid-19 across Kerala on Tuesday bounced back to 31,337 on Tuesday while the pandemic claimed 97 lives.

There was a lot of expectation that the lower number of cases logged on Monday would be repeated but the number of new patients showed a hike of almost 10,000 on Tuesday, according to a release by the Department of Health.

The Test Positivity Rate on Tuesday was 23.29 per cent. Malappuram had the highest number of daily counts with 4,320, closely followed by Ernakulam district (3,517).

There was no respite in the number of health workers getting afflicted with the pandemic as 109 of them ended up in hospitals.

More than 1,34 lakh samples were tested during the last 24 hours against the 86,505 tested on Monday.

The only encouraging note from Tuesday's release is the decrease in the number of Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment across the State.

On Tuesday, there were 3.47 lakh patients undergoing treatment in the State against 3.63 lakh on Monday.

Kerala is under total lock down while four districts have been put under Triple Lock Down.

71 fall prey to virus, 3,967 afflicted in J&K in 24 hrs

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A total number of 71 patients succumbed to the deadly coronavirus, 39 across Jammu division and 32 in Kashmir division while overall positivity rate recorded under 10 percent on Tuesday.

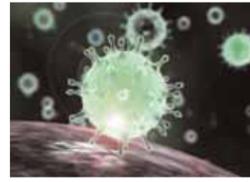
On the other hand, 3,967 fresh cases of coronavirus were detected while a sizable number of 3,823 patients returned after they were recovered fully from different hospitals.

Commenting on the current situation is stabilising in Kashmir.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K. Pole Tuesday told reporters that the rate of daily Covid-19 positive patients has stabilised to some extent and it has plunged by 10-12 percent during the past few days in Kashmir. Out of 3,967 fresh cases, Kashmir division recorded 2,263 cases while Jammu division recorded 1,704 cases.

Commenting on the current situation of the pandemic, Pole said though there are chances that mortality rate may remain the same or increase in the next few days.

He also maintained that the demand for oxygen beds has been



also eased out as the number of beds has been increased at all dedicated Covid-19 hospitals including SKIMS Soura and SMHS Tertiary care hospitals.

Meanwhile, the UT administration on Tuesday accorded formal sanction for creation of 1,366 posts (683 each) of different categories for making two 500 bedded hospitals being established by DRDO operational in Jammu & Kashmir divisions.

GMC, Jammu reeling under acute shortage of manpower on Tuesday said, "a total number of 14 Registrar/Demonstrators, 10 Medical Officers, 06 Research Scientists, 100 Staff Nurses, 25 Lab Assistants, 09 Lab Technicians and 10 Data Entry Operators have been recruited till now".

In addition to this, the recruitment of 150 Staff Nurses, 30 Lab Assistants, 30 Pharmacists, 30 Operation Theatre Technicians, 30 Anaesthesia Technicians, etc. for Emergency Covid Response

Package (ECRP) are under process and these posts will be filled within few days.

Principal GMC Jammu, Dr. Shashi Sudhan Sharma said that recruitment drives for various posts are in process and soon all these posts will be filled.

In another related development, a team consisting of senior officials and doctors will visit Poonch and Rajouri on Wednesday to assess the Covid containment activities there, the status of treatment for Covid positive patients, status of Covid care centres. According to a Government spokesman, "a team led by Hirdesh Kumar, Commissioner/Secretary Transport and having senior medical personnel, will also assess any specific local issues in these two districts including those concerning migrating Gujjars/Bakerwals".

On the vaccination front the UT administration clarified, "J&K has today received fresh consignment of Covishield vaccine. The immunisation drive in Jammu & Kashmir division will continue on a war footing from tomorrow, 19th May. The Government has also ensured for a continuous supply of vaccine doses to meet requirements".



Artists of Red Cross society paint a message to spread awareness about coronavirus pandemic during Covid-induced curfew in Jammu on Tuesday

UP sees 255 more deaths, 8,737 fresh corona cases

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh, which recently saw a spurt in Covid-19 infections, is now witnessing a slide in fresh cases with 8,737 new cases being reported on Tuesday taking the Statewide tally to 16,37,663, a senior Government official said.

The State reported 255 fresh deaths taking the Covid-19 toll to 18,072, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said.

The number of active cases has also come down to 1,36,342, he said, while adding that a total of 14,83,249 people have so far recovered and have been discharged from hospitals bringing the recovery rate in the state to 90.60 per cent.

Among the active cases, 99,891 are in home isolation, he said.

Of the fresh deaths recorded in the state, Meerut reported the highest with 20 deaths followed by Lucknow 19 and Kanpur Nagar 12, Saharanpur 11 and Agra 10 along with others, a health department bulletin said.

The highest number of fresh cases have been reported from Lucknow with 502 followed by Meerut 453, Saharanpur 374, Gautam Buddha Nagar 345, Muzaffarnagar 337, Varanasi 322, Gorakhpur 295, Ghaziabad 289 and Baghpat 238 among others, the bulletin said.

On Monday, over 2.79 lakh tests were performed, Prasad said, adding that UP has become the

first state to conduct over 4.50 crore tests with the latest addition.

The senior official said continuous work is on to check the spread of the virus in the rural areas with the 'gram nigrahi samitis' actively working in this direction.

"The teams of the department have reached 89,512 village so far and infection has been detected in 21,742 villages. Almost 68 per cent villages have been found safe of the virus," Prasad claimed.

The cases have been on a downward trajectory over the past 18 days after recording a peak in the state on April 30 while the positivity rate has also come down, Prasad added.

Sikkim reports 209 new Covid cases, 2 more deaths

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Sikkim's Covid-19 tally surged to 11,689 as 209 more people tested positive for the virus while two more fatalities pushed the death toll to 212, a health department bulletin said on Tuesday.

The new cases were reported from East Sikkim district (165), West Sikkim (32), South Sikkim (11) and one in North Sikkim district, it said.

The Himalayan state now has 3,050 active Covid-19 cases while 8,217 patients have recovered from the disease, the bulletin said.

At least 210 Covid-19 9 patients have migrated to other states.

Sikkim has so far tested 1,05,725 samples for Covid-19 including 580 samples in the last 24 hours.

UP religious leaders to spread awareness against dumping bodies in rivers

IANS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh has decided to take the help of various religious leaders to create awareness among people not to dump bodies in the rivers.

Amid mounting criticism over such incidents, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed officials to initiate a dialogue with religious leaders on the issue.

The Chief Minister said that religious leaders can help the government in creating awareness among people about the environmental and social consequences of dumping bodies in the rivers.

He asked for continued patrolling by water police of the State Disaster Response Force and Provincial

Armed Constabulary around all the rivers of the state and asked them to ensure that the bodies were not disposed of in water under any condition, said a Government spokesman.

The chief minister stressed the last rites should be respectfully performed and financial assistance was also being provided for it, the spokesperson said. Even in case of bodies being left unclaimed, the last rites should be performed according to the religious beliefs, the chief minister said.

A large number of dead bodies have been found floating in the rivers in many districts of the state. There have also been reports of bodies being found shallow buried on the banks of the Ganga.

Black fungus kills 16 people in Aurangabad in 40 days

PTI ■ AURANGABAD

Sixteen patients suffering from Mucormycosis or black fungus, a rare but serious infection, have lost their lives during treatment in Maharashtra's Aurangabad city between April 1 and May 10, a senior municipal official said on Tuesday.

During this period, more than 200 Mucormycosis patients, hailing from various places, were admitted for treatment in health facilities in Aurangabad, the official said.

Among them, 16 patients died of which only four were from Aurangabad city, Municipal Health Officer Dr Neeta Padalkar told PTI.

As per data provided by the Aurangabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), between April 1 and May 10, a total of 201 patients were admitted for treatment of Mucormycosis, also called black fungus, in six medical facilities in the city.

Out of these, 145 patients underwent surgical procedure, while others were treated with

various medical interventions, another official said.

Out of the total infected patients registered with the civic administration, 76 were diabetic, the official said.

Talking to reporters, Dr Padalkar said, 'Mucormycosis is a fungal infection. This fungus is present in the air and when immunity declines and blood sugar increases, this infection may attack a person.' 'Patients detected with this infection are mostly diabetic, who were on oxygen and given steroids during treatment.' She said the fungus, now being found in recovering or recovered Covid-19 patients, goes inside the body through nose and reaches lungs, eyes and the sinuses.

'Over 200 patients were detected with this infection (in Aurangabad) and many of them recovered. Unfortunately, 16 of them have lost their lives,' Padalkar said.

The AMC has set up a group of ophthalmologists, ENT and other specialists for treating this infection, which requires a multidisciplinary approach, she said.

Arunachal Pradesh logs highest one-day spike of 304 new cases

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh recorded its highest single-day spike of 304 new Covid-19 cases, which pushed the tally to 22,106, while four more fatalities raised the toll to 85, a senior official said here on Tuesday.

Accordingly, the number of active cases climbed to 2,346, State Surveillance Officer Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Of the 304 fresh cases, 267 were detected through rapid antigen tests, 22 with the help of RT-PCR and 15 via TrueNat, Jampa said, adding that 123 people were found to have developed symptoms.

The Capital Complex region recorded the maximum number of fresh cases at 89, followed by Changlang at 33, Tawang at 27 East Siang at 21 and Namsai at 19.

Of the four deaths, one each was registered in East Siang, Lower Dibang Valley, Upper Subansiri and Lohit.

At least 214 people recuperated from

the disease since Monday, taking the total number of recoveries to 19,675.

The recovery rate stands at 89 per cent and the positivity rate at 7.22 per cent, the official said. The Capital Complex Region -- comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas -- has the highest number of active cases at 611, followed by Changlang at 204, Lohit at 184 and Lower Dibang Valley at 168.

As many as 5,06,975 samples have been tested thus far, including 4,208 on Monday, the SSO added.

Meanwhile, State Immunisation Officer Dr Dimong Padung said 3,10,761 people have been inoculated so far in the state, including 3,674 people in the age group of 18-44 years.

The administration on Monday imposed a 14-day curfew in the Capital Complex Region with immediate effect, after several people were seen flouting Covid-19 norms.

Groom goes missing, bride marries one of baraatis

Kanpur (UP): In a bizarre incident, the bride got married to one of the 'baraatis' (member of the marriage party from the groom's side) after the groom disappeared mysteriously from the wedding venue.

The incident took place two days ago in Maharajpur area.

According to reports, the 'jaimala' (exchange of garlands) ceremony had taken place and the families were preparing for the main wedding ceremony when the groom suddenly disappeared.

Both the families began frantically searching for the groom and the bride was distraught at the turn of events.

After searching for a while, the bride's family members came to know that the groom was not missing, but had deliberately fled from the spot for reasons best-known to him.

Seeing the bride's family upset, one of the guests from



the groom's side suggested that the marriage should be solemnised with another suitable boy from the baraat.

The bride's family zeroed in on one of the boys and their respective families, after consultations, agreed on the alliance.

The marriage was solemnised at the venue.

Later, the bride's family lodged a complaint against the groom and his family mem-

bers.

Inspector Narwal, Shesh Narain Pandey, said, "We have received a complaint in this regard from both the bride and groom sides. While the bride's side has sought suitable action against the groom and his family members, the groom's father, Dharampal, in his complaint, has sought police help to trace his missing son. Investigations are continuing in this regard."

Minor pregnant after rape for a year

Amethi (Uttar Pradesh): A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped repeatedly by a youth in the past one year.

The matter came to light when the girl complained of stomach pain and was taken to a doctor who found she was seven-months pregnant.

When questioned, the girl said she was raped by the youth several times in the past year and had taken a pill from a local chemist to abort pregnancy, which resulted in pain in the stomach.

The girl has been sent for a medical examination and the Amethi police said that a case has been registered in this connection.

The accused is absconding and efforts are on to arrest him.

Man beaten to death in UP for 'meddling' in husband-wife dispute

Bareilly (UP): A man was beaten to death in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly interfering in a husband-wife dispute.

The incident took place in the Prem Nagar locality in Bareilly on Monday when Naveen was reportedly beating his wife Deepmala with a stick.

When their neighbour, Arjun (24), tried to rescue the wife, the enraged husband started thrashing him instead. Arjun was apparently beaten up so severely that he later succumbed to his injuries at the hospital. His family members had taken Arjun to the police station to lodge a complaint before taking him to the hospital.

Naveen has been booked for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, the police said.

According to reports, Naveen had lost his job last month and was in a foul mood. He often quarreled with his wife. Bareilly SSP Rohit Singh Sajwan said, "We have registered an FIR under the section of culpable homicide and the accused Naveen will soon be arrested. Prima facie it appears that the victim died of a head injury."



A daily wage worker, with her children, walks barefoot on a road, during the second wave of coronavirus in Lucknow on Tuesday



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Watch it!

The irrational use of plasma therapy could raise the possibility of more virulent strains

The Government has dropped plasma therapy on COVID patients from the list of clinical management guidelines which earlier allowed its off-label use in the initial days of the disease. The reason given is that it is ineffective in reducing the severity of the disease or the chances of death. The decision to remove it from the guidelines comes in the backdrop of some scientists warning against the arbitrary use of plasma therapy. Indian vaccinologist Gagandeep Kang and others, in a signed letter, said the irrational and non-scientific use of plasma therapy could raise the possibility of more virulent strains developing. The Government has already come out with scientific explanations why the Remdesivir medication and the use of Ivermectin are also not advisable for use on the COVID patients. If at all Remdesivir is to be used, it should be used in extremely critical cases and, even then, strictly under medical supervision, give between the first and seventh days of the onset of the disease to reduce its severity and not prescribed thereafter. However, there is no ban against its use under any condition and it is this loophole that has led to its mass use. The British and American guidelines discount any efficacy of Remdesivir on mortality of patients or the need for mechanical ventilation. The use of Ivermectin and paracetamol depends on the immunity level and other patient-specific conditions and,



along with Azithromycin, should not be taken without doctor's advice.

Ivermectin's manufacturer, Merck, stated that they found no meaningful evidence for efficacy against COVID. Along with Remdesivir, originally meant to treat Ebola, these are 'repurposed' drugs, essentially made for some other infection but not repurposed to treat COVID-19. With this, the three key elements of Covid "treatment", popularised on social media and believed to be God's gift to patients, are rendered useless. There are hardly any patients whose relatives have not given him or her any or all of the three products in the hope that they will get better. There are reports of people obtaining print outs of ready-made COVID prescriptions, available on the social media, and buying them in bulk and literally hoarding them for use in case anyone contracts the disease. The use of these products spiralled out of control, leading to its scarcity in hundreds of cities and towns of the country, as hospital beds, oxygenated beds and oxygen concentrators and cylinders became scarce. In nearly the majority of the cases, doctors are scarcely consulted before taking a medicine. The doctors themselves, so much under pressure, have been at their wit's end trying to explain to the impatient relatives the relative merits and de-merits of these drugs. After over 1.5 crore positive cases since COVID struck us, and nearly two lakh deaths, we are still grappling with the fundamentals of clinical management and drug protocols. That shows how disoriented the national COVID management plan is.

PICTALK



Visitors take pictures of the 'Hollywood' sign at the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles

AP

Missing childhood

The kids are being forced to miss their childhood. Are we not missing it, too?

As Corona's second wave ebbs, people are already worried about the third one which, as per experts, is going to be tough on children. The third wave or not, kids across the country are going through a rough phase in their life. For over a year, they are locked inside their homes, having little excess to their playgrounds and friends. Almost all the places these kids loved to hang out are out of bounds. This is bad for their physical and mental health. The online classrooms may have saved their year but it is taking the toll on their eyes and daily routines.



Their physical and mental health is at risk. As digital platforms are the only medium at their disposal, many children have got addicted to it. Many parents report noticeable behavioural changes in children, which surely is a grave concern. They are doing everything on it, except studying. The free access to internet has its own perils. Experts feel that exposure to digital media has caused several disorders. Children are showing addiction, aggressive behaviour, anxiety, attention and concentration issues, and depression. These disorders are not generally associated with young children.

What worries most parents is if online education is the only alternative. They feel if their child is learning through online classes, what would have they learned at school? Going to school and meeting other children and teachers is valuable learning in itself. It instills a sense of social bonhomie and disciplines them. A child's growth is not only about the studies but various other curricular activities, which are absent these days. The teacher can have a better understanding of the child's progress on the school premises. Many children tend to take online lessons rather easy. They chat or play games while the class goes on and the teacher can't do anything about it. Many children are losing interest in studies. Even when the schools reopen, it would not be the same life for our children. They would have to relearn to wake up early, get ready, and have breakfast before the school bus arrives. They have almost forgotten outdoor games and how they intermingled with their friends. Corona is not only claiming lives, it is ruining the lives of the next generation. A scare has seeped deep into their minds. The children's childhood is at stake and nobody knows when they will be able to reclaim it.

Nepal needs to quell the mess

Though not highly popular, and ironic, Oli looks better poised to form a Government. And the Himalayan State needs one



ASHOK K MEHTA

The five most powerful and, according to a study of the Nepalese media, easily the most despised Prime Minister Nepal has ever had among the 43 who made it, was sworn in for the third time as a minority Government's Prime Minister on May 14. Oli had defiantly dissolved the House in December and ordered elections for April-May when the Supreme Court restored the House in February, describing his actions as unconstitutional. Instead of resigning on moral grounds, Oli typically refused to do so in the face of massive criticism and revulsion while a full House sat between March 7 and April 19, twiddling their thumbs, and was prorogued a second time.

Against the might of five former Prime Ministers—SB Deuba, Prachanda, Madhav Nepal, Jhala Nath Khanal and Baburam Bhattarai—and the entire Opposition, Oli sailed through the no-confidence vote on May 10 with dissidents within his party and outside, not daring to change the status quo. In this high-stakes political stage show, the Mahanta-Thakur and Rajendra Mahato faction of the Janata Samajwadi Nepal with 15 lawmakers could have been kingmakers providing Oli the magic number of 136 parliamentarians and with independents to comfortably form a majority Government.

The Oli swearing in of a minority Government was made justiciable on grounds of erroneous swearing-in by a pliant president, Bidya Devi Bhandari, when Oli skipped the oath "I solemnly and sincerely pledge". Seven Ministers sworn in a second time had ceased to be lawmakers when Oli lost his confidence vote, since non-lawmakers can be Ministers only once. Another constitutional hassle is about former Maoist and Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa contesting a National Assembly seat. Oli has shown that, like a cat, he has nine lives and will, before June 15, prove his majority in the House. The greatest quirk of Nepalese politics has just played out—a Left Government that was destined to rule with a two-thirds majority for a full term was



crippled by the ego and the lust for power of two ambitious politicians—Oli and Prachanda. A *Nepali Times* survey and *Himal Media* public opinion poll blamed both for putting democracy at risk. A national survey showed 65.5 per cent Nepalese do not trust political leaders, of which 44.9 per cent did not trust Oli. Oli, nurtured by India, was once New Delhi's blue-eyed boy. After the 2015 economic blockade, he switched sides enthusing China's rise in Nepal till his political domination in the party was seriously challenged from within the party. Oli made a tactical tilt towards India last year despite the shrewd counter-manoeuvers of Chinese Ambassador Hou Yanqui.

Oli's biggest challenge is managing his most visible spectacular failure—Covid19 pandemic. His letter to *The Guardian* and interview with the CNN are riddled with factual inaccuracies on the actual state of the pandemic, which is interwoven with the catastrophic spike in India's second wave. Oli's conspicuous lack of governance was exposed during the last one year that included corruption in the acquisition of medical



NEPAL NEEDS A STRONG AND STABLE GOVERNMENT TO FACE THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF THE PANDEMIC AND MISGOVERNANCE. OLI HAS PRIORITISED HIS POLITICAL SURVIVAL OVER THE EXISTENTIAL THREAT OF COVID-19 JUST WHEN INDIA'S CAPACITY FOR ASSISTANCE HAS EXHAUSTED

equipment and the Government misleading people that COVID was viral influenza, whose cure was drinking turmeric laced warm water. Instead of building health infrastructure, the Government invested in building view towers, idols of Hindu gods and goddesses and telling the people that Lord Pashupati will take care of them. Oli has picked up Hindutva as his main agenda for the next election, claiming that Chitwan in Nepal is the real birthplace of Ram. He is playing the devout Hindu, visiting Pashupati temple; the same Oli who once said that the only God was Karl Marx though he did not believe in one.

Nepal needs a strong and stable Government to face the twin challenges of the pandemic and misgovernance. Oli has prioritised his political survival over the existential threat of COVID-19 just when India's capacity for assistance has exhausted and New Delhi has sent out an SOS for oxygen, ventilators and other medical equipment. This is an opportunity for Beijing whose Foreign Minister Wang Yi has conducted at least three virtual meetings of the Saarc

countries, excluding Maldives, Bhutan and India, on COVID-19 assistance. China has donated 8,00,000 doses of its vaccine to Nepal, which has signed a contract of 2 million doses with the Serum Institute of India, of which only 1 million have been delivered.

Engulfed by the pandemic, these are ugly times and made worse by an inept Government whose focus is on regime extension, not defeating the once-in-a-century scourge. By June 15, either the contours of a majority Oli Government should be in sight or a coalition Government of the Opposition parties, failing which the House will be dissolved and fresh elections ordered when 20 months are still left in the life of this House. A majority and stable Government is imperative to fight COVID-19, not any elections, for the time being. Ironically, Oli looks better poised to form a Government.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TAUKTAE HAS HIT US HARD

Sir — The operations at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport remained suspended. For most part of the day in view of the cyclone alert, the operations at the airport were affected.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange alert for Mumbai, warning of "very heavy rains at isolated places with strong winds" as cyclone Tauktae is likely to pass by the Mumbai coast. Even incoming flights were directed to other airports in view of the cyclone warning.

With heavy rains sweeping across the city, the airport side-strips were sluggish and take-offs were diverted through other runways to avoid any risk. Overall, the flight operations were disrupted and the passengers' patience was put to test.

The airport tarmac looked like a railway station and the passengers were at their wit's end to find out the status of their flights. In all, Tauktae has taken a heavy toll on the air operations.

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

ENSURE SAFE CREMATIONS

Sir — It should be decried that the people supposedly pasting posters on the walls of Delhi should be arrested. Besides, it is pertinent to mention that those detained were doing petty jobs, with meagre earnings of ₹150-200 per day. The police took action against them for violating the "lockdown norms" and the "epidemic law" currently. It is true that they were detained only for a few hours and subsequently let free with a warning. The posters stated: "Modi, why did you export vaccines which were meant for our children?"

Some time ago, posters appeared in Canada thanking Modi for the supply of vaccines. Now, the question arises that if the posters circulated abroad are welcome, why should these be seen with a suspicious eye when they are pasted on the walls in Delhi? The use of such posters as a form of protest is intrinsic to democracy. The police of the British days used the same tactics which the Delhi Police is now

Corona: Real or hype?



Even as the pandemic, being so widespread and devastating right from the beginning, has left many citizens physically and emotionally drained, the Centre failing to take the States into confidence and rising up to the occasion and providing succour is a matter of awkwardness.

On the other hand, the recent incidents of electioneering and mammoth public rallies have come as no compliment to the Government. Further, a cacophony of arguments advanced by the leaders on both sides, the Government and the Opposition, haven't helped the citizens, either. This, justifiably, gave vent to anger at those who were in the positions of authority, but lacking mercy, competency or capacity to

foresee the mutant spreading far and wide, besides claiming the lives much faster than anticipated. The Opposition did not come up with any concrete suggestions even as the pandemic started moving into the hinterland, the rural areas, the villages. Knowing well that the road to beat the virus is long and arduous, beset with all sorts of difficulties, the way the Centre conducted itself exposes the deep rot set into the system. There is no denying that the crumbling medical infrastructure due to the lack of oxygen, beds, critical care medicines and facilities and, above all, the shortage of vaccination are all due to both the oversight of the Centre and the States; they utterly miscalculated the calamity. As things stand, the panacea lies in framing an effective long-term adequate policy response by combining the best practices and experiences learnt so far to overcome the shortcomings and pitfalls by taking into confidence all the stakeholders to emerge from the grim situation that the nation finds itself in.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

ARE THE PEOPLE COMPLACENT?

Sir — Despite the spread of COVID-19, the blame game between the stakeholders and the Centre and the State Governments continues to hit the patients hard. But we normally look for diverting the issue rather than making amends for the lapses.

Medical care, cleanliness and availability of medicines are of foremost importance for our nation and our citizens in

these times. We were blaming the Tablighi Jamaat for the first spread of COVID-19 last year. Now, it has gone universal; it has spread all across, with no particular bias.

Many authorities, both administrative as well as medical, have repeatedly sided with the Jamaat members, saying they are being blamed for much more than their due; some of our Jamaat brethren have rather been praised for their humbleness and cooperative attitude.

Corona is a global issue and the fight against it is universal. Instead of developing a scientific temperament and doing our bit to save precious human lives, we are complicating a serious issue through bigotry and politics.

Gundu K Maniam | Ghaziabad

These are many such families wherein the main earning members have died due to COVID. The Delhi Government will provide ₹2,500 per month to each such family

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

SOUND BITE

We have not received Covaxin supply for 18-44 age groups from the Centre and Covishield stock is left only for three days.



AAP leader — Atishi

The pandemic is still raging overseas... I'm not going to take risk with Australians' lives.



Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison

Ghar se nikalte hi... Kuch door chalte hi... Hahahahahahahaha Guys stay home... stay safe.



Actor — Maniesh Paul

Skill is important, but if there is no coordination between players then the skill of players will not be utilised properly



India hockey player — Gurinder Singh

There are many such families wherein the main earning members have died due to COVID. The Delhi Government will provide ₹2,500 per month to each such family



Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal



FIRST COLUMN

THE INSTITUTIONAL DISCORD AMID COVID

A true leader has to take several decisions every day that affect the lives of millions



KALYANI SHANKAR

There is a three-way confrontation going on amidst the raging Covid pandemic. The first is between executive and judiciary, the second is between the Union government and state governments. The third is between the authorities and the public.

As leaders like Theodore Roosevelt and Winston Churchill had realized great power comes with great responsibility. It is the great charge of a leader to shoulder responsibility for making decisions practically every day that will have profound implications for many. COVID control is one such issue. Their natural inclination is to pass the buck (unpleasant decisions) to someone else. Machiavelli, the great strategist once advised: "Princes should delegate to others the enactment of unpopular measures and keep in their own hands the means of winning favours."

Look at what is happening on such an important issue like



containing the pandemic? Last year there was a perfect understanding between the Centre and the States on COVID handling. The Prime Minister consulted the Chief Ministers not once but many times and guided them. The public too stayed indoors during the national lockdown, but come 2021, with elections to the Five states, politics came to the surface. The Prime Minister left it to the states to decide when to impose lockdown at the state level. Soon the states wanted to pass the buck and blamed the centre for lack of vaccine and lack of oxygen. The second wave, which hit the country when least expected in March, has plunged the country into panic as the country was not prepared.

There was a vaccine shortage, oxygen shortage, and bed shortage. The chief ministers like Delhi's Arvind Kejriwal went to court for more oxygen supply by the centre. A victorious West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too attacked the Centre claiming it was shirking its responsibility to make vaccines available to the people. A major row has broken out between the Centre and states over the differential pricing that has been fixed for the purchase of vaccines. DMK leader MK Stalin tweeted calling it "discriminatory". Maharashtra, the worst-hit state in the second wave had also decided to make its plans to counter the increasing vaccine shortage in the state. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan urged the Centre to provide the vaccines free to the states since they were already reeling under the financial impact of the pandemic. Chhattisgarh, which had announced free vaccines to all adults above the age of 18, demanded that the Centre should roll back this decision to avoid states from competing with each other.

In all these confrontations the federal cooperation expected between the Centre and the states has broken down. The States have involved the courts including the apex court for their redressal. This is because they do not want to get any public bashing for not delivering service. The judiciary enters the picture when the executive fails the people. However, the Union and the states as well as the public — all share the responsibility. The Epidemics Diseases Act (EDA), the law which many affected States such as Delhi and Maharashtra put into operation before the Union invoked the NDMA, provides them almost unfettered powers to quell the virus within their State limits. States are at the frontlines. Many states have been quick to respond and also innovate. Some, like Punjab and Odisha, have stuck to their own preparations.

As for the people of India, who have equal responsibility to tackle the pandemic, blaming the States and the Centre is no remedy.

(The author is a senior journalist and political commentator. The views expressed are personal.)

Decoding electoral regionalism in India

Whether the BJP can make itself a part of regionalism, or a new alignment of regional parties shall emerge, is the key question facing the nation



PRASENJIT BISWAS

The Bharatiya Janata Party's loss of an over-hyped Bengal election only created confusion about the best electoral strategy of its victory machine. While in Bengal, it brought the hound of 'Sonar Bangla', it failed to run with the hare of Bengali nationalism. Its image of a prosperous future 'Bangla' lost literally the race with the hare and heir of Bengali intellect-driven, genteel and even maternal nationalism taking pride in its litany of sacrificing freedom fighters in British gallows. The hyped 'sonar Bangla' and 'asol poriborton' of Prime Minister Modi met the firewall of Bengali nationalism that had seen an attempt of taking over Bengal in such metaphors. Bengal sidestepped them by reviving a kind of 'Bengal first and Bengali first' narrative, instead of BJP's thrust on 'Let's make Bengal great again'. The irony of Bengal's election result was so sharp on the BJP that Prime Minister's allusion of Mahatma Gokhale's dictum, "What Bengal thinks today, India will think tomorrow" got rephrased as "what Bengal think in 2021, India will think in 2024". Such is the impact of Bengal results on the mill of rhetorical and political maxims. On the flipside of it, the BJP held onto its project of a unitary powerful centre against Bengal's local and regional connotations of an indivisible Bengali identity.

While the BJP in Bengal did not or rather preferred not to come to terms with Bengali nationalism and its sensitivities, the case of Assam is just the opposite. Like Congress of yore, the BJP in Assam has come to terms with indigenous ethnic nationalism of various communities and tried to arraign them against a common enemy of 'illegal immigrants'. In the case of Bengal, the BJP's emphasis on changed demography in border areas due to illegal immigration from Bangladesh pepped up with Mamata's appeasement towards religious minorities and her neglect of Hindus aimed at altering the settled contours of Bengali nationalism. BJP wanted to create a segment of Bengalis buying ideas of anti-Muslim Hindu nationalism, which got frustrated in the overdrive for taking over Bengal and its precious resources by the political perception of an incoming corporate-business nexus that BJP's Hindi-Hindu nationalism might facilitate. Through this mismatch between Bengali nationalism and corporate driven Hindi-Hindu nationalism in Bengal, Didi just had to allude to Bengal's tradition of social harmony and her robust social security programmes as part of her philosophy of governance. In effect, nothing such as appeasement theory, illegal immigrants, Hindu victimization, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh models of Vikash could stand upto Didi's play of Bengali nationalism. A nationalism that includes all the sons and daughters of the soil of Bengal with their distinctive linguistic and cultural traits brought together under Didi's robust social security programmes covering women, SC, ST, Minority etc. in areas of employment, education, healthcare, housing and under all other kinds of protective schemes launched by her Government. This is how Didi drew larger attention than the Prime Minister in the battleground Bengal raising the possibility of her victory over BJP's monolithic identity based nationalism.

This contest between regional nationalism and Centrist nationalism in Assam assumes a very different shape. Assamese middle class and elite-driven nationalism always constructed an outer limit



THE BJP'S ELECTORAL PLAY OF RELIGIOUS CARD HAS ONLY STIFLED ITS HEADWAYS. BY PITCHING THE NRC AND THE CAA, THE BJP CREATED AN IMPRESSION AMONG THE BENGALIS THAT IT WANTS TO PLAY WITH THEIR 'CITIZENSHIP'. THE PARTY FUELLED ANTI-CAA SENTIMENTS IN ASSAM THAT RESTRAINED IT IN COMPARISON TO ITS PERFORMANCE IN 2016. IT COULD JUST WADE THROUGH BECAUSE THE OPPOSITION LACKED UNITY IN ASSAM

The writer is an independent political analyst based in Shillong. The views expressed are personal.



of Bengalis of East Bengal origin, who are often categorized as Bangladeshis. Based on this perception, the BJP could successfully turn upper rungs of Assamese society against the main opponent Congress' dalliance with All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) of Maulana Badruddin Ajmal as partnering with a party of illegal immigrants. The incumbent chief minister Himanta Biswa Sharma termed Miyas or so called illegal immigrants as a threat to Asomiya Vaishnavite culture and to Asomiya identity at large.

It created a toxic mixture of anti-immigrant sentiments with pro-Asomiya native identity, which can act as the main plank of Assamese ethno-nationalism. It is here that Hindutva nationalism gelled with Assamese nationalism to present itself as an open ally of Assamese nationalism. This strategy of not pursuing a Centrist Hindu nationalism in Assam, in contrast to BJP's Bengal strategy, gave it the biggest electoral benefit. It stopped Congress led alliance in establishing a larger alliance with Assamese nationalist political outfits like the Assam Jatiyo Parishad (AJP) led by erstwhile student leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi and also with Rajjor Dol (RD) led by Akhil Gogoi. Anti-BJP votes suffered a split between Congress and other regionalist outfits like AJP, Rajjor Dol etc. in crucial seats of upper Assam. This success story scripted single-handedly by BJP's new Chief Minister of Assam Shri Himanta Biswa Sharma has catapulted Assamese regional nationalism as an indispensable ally of BJP's centrist Hindutva nationalism.

In Bengal, Hindutva national-

ism's projection of Hindi as its lingo met its toughest political resistance in Bengali linguistic nationalism that abhorred undue dominance by Hindi in Bengal. This emerged as the most important strand of cultural resistance that could make Didi label BJP campaigners as 'outsiders'. In electoral terms, this resistance left Bengal's native Hindi speakers in a dilemma, as their votes lost its counterweight to Bengali voters. Further, BJP's projection of Muslims as illegal immigrants and as tormentors of Bengali Hindus in the partition days and later in East Bengal stirred the dormant Bengali imagination of a unified

Bengali national identity that already rose much above such narratives of violence and division of countries. BJP's mouthing of Bengal-turning-into-Bangladesh internally revived the historic bond between Bengal and Bangladesh. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Bangladesh to offer prayers at Orakandi temple of the Guru of Motua community only substantiated existence of such an umbilical emotional bond, as the Indian PM had to offer prayers to garner Motua votes in Bengal. In effect, the Prime Minister stirred that strand of Bengali nationalist sentiment which rises above territorial and political divisions and finds its 'roots' in larger history, for example, in the episode when Jogen Mandal, the Dalit Bengali leader ceded Dalits from upper caste dominated bhadralok Bengali society. Didi's outsider jibe at such politically pregnant acts of BJP campaign to win over Bengal's Dalits pointed at exclusivism played by outsiders within Bengali linguistic and cultural identity. BJP's attempted exclusivism cre-

ated furore when the image of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the quintessential rebel Bengali bard and the musician was removed from campaign stage of the Prime Minister Modi, while he was delivering a campaign speech barely a kilometer away from poet Nazrul's birthplace. Bengali firewall against exclusivism and outsiders trying to take over Bengal only got vindicated even when Central forces fired at Sitalkuchi, leaving four Bengali Muslims dead.

BJP's electoral play of religious card only stifled its headways. By pitching NRC and CAA, the BJP created an impression among Bengalis that it wants to play with their 'citizenship'. BJP fuelled Anti-CAA sentiments in Assam that restrained it in comparison to its performance in 2016. It could just wade through because the opposition lacked unity in Assam.

It will now be a difficult proposition for Assam's Himanta Biswa Sharma to maintain a balance between BJP's core Bengali Hindu voters and Assamese nationalists, who aim to turn away Hindu Bangladeshis from Assam. The thin electoral marriage between BJP's centrist Hindutva nationalism and Assamese nationalism can break anytime because of BJP's mismatched game of NRC and CAA.

With large number of Covid deaths across India, as the Centre cannot anymore hold its politics of polarization, the election results showed the electoral efficacy of regional nationalism. Whether BJP can make itself a part of this regionalism, or a new alignment of regional parties shall emerge as winning combination is a matter to be keenly watched now.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

FRIENDS, LOOK AT THE CONGRESS 'TOOLKIT' IN EXTENDING HELP TO THE NEEDY DURING THE PANDEMIC. READ FOR YOURSELVES THE AGENDA OF THE CONGRESS: CONGRESSTOOLKITEXPOSED — BJP SPOKESPERSON SAMBIT PATRA



THE EASE WITH WHICH THOSE WHO RAISE QUESTIONS ARE ARRESTED UNDER THE MODI 'SYSTEM', IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THE VACCINE WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM. — CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

The 'grey area' in the gubernatorial domain

The courts have held that MLAs are not public servants under the IPC as they are not paid by the 'executive Government'

The arrest of two Trinamool Congress ministers in West Bengal along with a legislator and former minister and a former Kolkata mayor in connection with the Narada scam has raised Opposition eyebrows over the Governor's propriety. Jagdeep Dhankhar is said to have used what is called a grey area of the Constitution in the manner and the timing in which he gave sanction to the Central Bureau of Investigation to arrest the four persons. What is this grey area?

The story begins with whether the Governor is the sanctioning authority in the case. The Supreme Court in the M Karunanidhi vs Union of India in 1979 held that the office of a minister and a chief minister is a public office for three reasons: One, that a minister is appointed or dismissed by the Governor and is, therefore,



VVP SHARMA

The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.

subordinate to him whatever be the nature and status of his constitutional functions. Two, that a chief minister or a minister gets salary for the public work done or the public duty performed by him. Three, that the said salary is paid to the chief minister or the minister from the government funds. Therefore, the Governor can argue in favour of his right to sanction action against the ministers.

However, this runs contrary to the position of the CBI vis-à-vis half-a-dozen Members of Parliament — it requested the Lok Sabha speaker, Om Birla, for sanction. This is a strange situation where for an MP, the Lok Sabha Speaker's permission is sought while for a member of the state assembly, the Governor's sanction is taken, not the assembly speaker's. Interestingly, in the RS Nayak vs AR Antulay case



judgment in February, 1984, the Supreme Court said: "We have expressed our conclusion that where offences as set out in Sec. 6 are alleged to have been committed by a public servant, sanction of only that authority would be necessary who would be entitled to remove him from that office which is alleged to have been misused or abused for corrupt motives." Who is that authority in this case, the Governor or the Speaker? The

latter certainly cannot be that authority.

The second part of the story relates to the timing of the Governor's sanction. The CBI approached the Governor only in January 2021 for sanction in the case that pertains to 2016. It is altogether another issue as to why the agency did not seek sanction against Suvendu Adhikari and Mukul Roy who had since left the Trinamool and joined the BJP and despite the fact that Roy is considered the main accused in the case.

The Governor did not act on the CBI request all through January, February and March; the state assembly elections began only on March 27 and it is also a 'grey' area whether the Raj Bhavan okaying or turning down the sanctions would have been construed as a violation of the Election Commission's model of conduct in terms of influencing the voters. Governor

Dhankhar gave his sanction on May 10. That was five days after Mamata Banerjee was sworn in as Chief Minister. That was four days after the newly elected legislators took oath of office in the Assembly. That was also just a day before the rest of her ministry, including Firdah Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee, was sworn-in on May 11.

This period between May 5 and May 10 is a grey area. Mamata was sworn-in alone. Only she represented the government. There were no ministers then and until the same Governor swore them in on May 11. So, what was the constitutional status of Firdah Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee on May 10? They were only MLAs. The courts have held that MLAs are not public servants under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) as they are not paid by the 'executive government' for their duties and also because

the legislature is not considered to be within the 'ambit' of the government as per Section 21(12) of the IPC. Which clearly means, no separate sanction from the Governor was anyway required for them. They became ministers only on the morning of May 11. However, their current ministerial status has no bearing on the Narada sting case.

What is pertinent is whether the two were ministers at the time they are alleged by the CBI to have committed an offence. Firdah Hakim was a minister, handling urban development and municipal affairs, during the 2014-2016 period when the sting was in operation. But Hakim in the meantime stood for fresh elections, became an MLA and was sworn-in on May 11, a day after the sanction was given. Subrata Mukherjee was the panchayats and rural development minister. However, there is another

legal issue that says the accused in such case must continue to be a public servant till the date cognizance is taken by the court. Is not the break in ministership key to deciding the validity of the sanction?

In the RS Nayak vs A. R. Antulay verdict of 1984, the apex court pointed out: "If the accused has ceased to hold that office by the date the court is called upon to take cognizance of the offences alleged to have been committed by such public servant, no sanction under Sec. 6 would be necessary despite the fact that he may be holding any other office on the relevant date which may make him a public servant as understood in Sec 21, if there is no allegation that office has been abused or misused for corrupt motives." Is the bearing this pronouncement of the court has on the Governor's sanction self-explanatory?

GLOBE TROTTERING
RUSSIA, CHINA TO KICK-OFF BIGGEST NUCLEAR PROJECT
Beijing: Russia and China will hold the ground-breaking ceremony of their biggest nuclear energy project on Wednesday under which Moscow would jointly build four high power nuclear power plants in two Chinese cities. Chinese President Xi Jinping will join his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin via video link in Beijing to witness the ground-breaking ceremony of the bilateral nuclear energy cooperation project on Wednesday. Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told the media here on Tuesday.

Two killed in strike launched from Gaza

AP ■ GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP)

A strike launched from Gaza on Tuesday killed two Thai workers inside a packaging plant in southern Israel, police said, as Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers continued to trade attacks throughout the day.

The Magen David Adom rescue service said it transported another seven wounded people to the hospital after the projectile attack Tuesday afternoon in southern Israel. It came as Palestinians across Israel and the occupied territories went on strike in a rare collective action against Israel's policies.

With the war in Gaza showing no sign of abating and truce efforts apparently stalled, the general strike and expected protests could again widen the conflict after a spasm of communal violence in Israel and protests across the occupied West Bank last week.

Israel's airstrikes toppled a six-story building that housed bookstores and educational centers used by the Islamic University and other colleges, leaving behind a massive mound of rebar and concrete slabs. Desks, office chairs, books and computer wires could be seen in the debris. Residents sifted through the rubble, searching for their belongings.

Israel warned the building's residents ahead of time, sending them fleeing into the predawn darkness, and there were no reports of casualties. Israel said it was targeting militants, their tunnels and rocket launchers across the territory. "The whole street started running, then destruction, an



Israeli police officers detain a Palestinian youth during a protest against Israel's air strikes on the Gaza Strip and the violent confrontations between Israeli security forces and Palestinians, in Jerusalem's Old City on Tuesday. AP

earthquake," said Jamal Herzallah, a resident of the area. "This whole area was shaking."

Heavy fighting broke out May 10 when Gaza's militant Hamas rulers fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests against Israel's heavy-handed policing of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a flash-point site sacred to Jews and Muslims, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers.

At least 213 Palestinians have been killed in heavy airstrikes since, including 61 children and 36 women, with more than 1,440 people wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not break the numbers down into fighters and civilians.

As the fighting drags on, medical supplies, fuel and water are running low in Gaza. Twelve people in Israel,

including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier, have been killed in the ongoing rocket attacks launched from civilian areas in Gaza toward civilian areas in Israel.

The fighting is the most intense since a 2014 war between Israel and Hamas, but efforts to halt it have so far stalled. Egyptian mediators are trying to negotiate a cease-fire, but the US has stopped short of demanding an immediate stop to the hostilities and Israel has so far vowed to press on.

UN agency says situation in Gaza is dire

AP ■ GENEVA

The UN humanitarian agency is describing an increasingly dire situation inside the Gaza Strip as the war between Israel and the territory's Hamas rulers rages with no end in sight. Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, says nearly 47,000 Palestinians have fled their homes during more than a week of heavy Israeli airstrikes. Hamas and other militants have fired more than 3,400 rockets into Israel.

Laerke says electricity across Gaza is only available for six to eight hours a day. Citing Palestinian authorities, he said 132 buildings comprising 621 housing and commercial units have been destroyed in Gaza. He says another 316 housing units have been severely damaged and rendered uninhabitable.

Biden, in phone call with Bibi, supports Israel's right to self defence

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden, in a telephonic call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, supported Israel's "right to defend itself" against indiscriminate rocket attacks and encouraged him to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians, the White House has said.

Biden welcomed efforts to address inter-communal violence and to bring calm to Jerusalem, the White House said in a readout of the call.

During the phone call on Monday, Biden reiterated his firm support for Israel's "right to defend itself" against indiscriminate rocket attacks, it said. He encouraged Israel to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians, it said. The two leaders discussed progress in Israel's military operations against Hamas

and other terrorist groups in Gaza, the White House said. "The President expressed his support for a ceasefire and discussed the US engagement with Egypt and other partners towards that end," said the readout.

Palestinian militant group Hamas has fired more than 3,000 rockets over Israel during the past seven days, pushing more than half of Israel's population into shelter houses and Israel has carried out hundreds of devastating retaliatory attacks in Gaza.

More than 200 people have been killed in the recent escalation in the region, including a caregiver from India. US Secretary of State Tony Blinken, who is travelling right now, also spoke to his Israeli counterpart, Foreign Minister Gaby Ashkenazi and discussed America's efforts to bring an end to the violence.

EU mulls ways to help defuse Israel-Palestinian fighting

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union foreign ministers debated on Tuesday how to use the 27-nation bloc's political clout to help diplomatic efforts to end the fighting between the Israeli armed forces and Palestinian militants.

The EU has been united in its calls for a cease-fire and the need for a political solution to end the latest conflict - now in its second week - but the nations are divided over how best to help.

No firm decisions involving threats of sanctions or other measures are likely from the ministers' video-conference.

At least 212 Palestinians have been killed in heavy airstrikes so far, including 61 children, and over 1,400 people wounded, Gaza's Health Ministry said. At least 12 people in Israel, including a 5-year-old boy, have been killed in

rocket attacks launched from Gaza toward civilian areas in Israel.

Israel carried out a wave of airstrikes on what it said were militant targets in Gaza, leveling a six-story building in downtown Gaza City, and Palestinian militants fired dozens of rockets into Israel early Tuesday, the latest in the fourth war between the two sides.

The EU is the biggest donor of aid to the Palestinians but holds little influence over the militant group Hamas or the state of Israel, despite having some trade arrangements that are favourable to the Israelis.

Before the meeting, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell tweeted that he had an exchange with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on how the United States and the bloc "can jointly contribute to end violence" and to reduce tensions.

NEPAL CRISIS Ruling CPN-UML forms 10-member task force to resolve party disputes

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's ruling CPN-UML headed by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has formed a 10-member joint task force from the two rival factions to iron out intra-party differences that threatens the stability of the minority government, according to media reports.

Oli, who is the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist-Leninist, on Sunday last held a one-on-one meeting with Madhav Kumar Nepal, who heads the rival faction of the party, and decided to form a taskforce with five members from each group to resolve their differences, the Himalayan Times newspaper reported on Monday.

The task force is supposed to forge a consensus on resurrecting the party as it was on May 16, 2018, according to MyRepublica news portal.

While Nepal's camp will be led by Bhim Bahadur Rawal, Oli faction will be led by deputy parliamentary party leader Subas Chandra Nembang, the report said.

The other members from the Nepal faction in the task-force are Ghanashyam Bhusal, Gokarna Bista, Raghu Panta

and Surendra Pandey. The other members of the Oli faction are Minister of Finance Bishnu Prasad Paudel, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, PM's Chief Adviser Bishnu Rimal and Lumbini Chief Minister Shankar Pokharel.

CPN-UML lawmakers of the Nepal faction had initially threatened to resign from the House of Representatives en masse. However, the lawmakers dropped the idea after Oli withdrew action taken against four dissident leaders, including Nepal, for working against the party following a meeting between the two rival leaders on Thursday, ahead of the trust vote.

On May 10, when Oli sought a vote of confidence, 28 lawmakers from the Nepal faction abstained from voting, resulting in the 69-year-old prime minister losing a trust vote in the House of Representatives.

Oli was reappointed as Prime Minister on Thursday last as the Opposition alliance of Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) on Thursday failed to muster majority support to form the next govern-

ment. However, as per rules, Oli is required to win the vote of confidence within 30 days from the date of the appointment. At present 136 votes are needed to form a majority government in the 275-member House.

The CPN-UML, headed by Oli, is the largest party with 121 seats in the House. Nepali Congress and Maoist Centre have 61 and 49 seats in the lower house.

After its alliance Nepal Communist Party (Maoist Centre) led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' withdrew its support to the Oli government, it reduced to a minority one.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 last year after President Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, amidst a tussle for power within the ruling NCP.

Oli's move to dissolve the House sparked protests from a large section of the NCP led by his rival 'Prachanda'.

In February, the apex court reinstated the dissolved House, in a setback to Oli who was preparing for snap polls.

Over 50 migrants drowned off Tunisia, 33 saved

AP ■ TUNISIA (TUNISIA)

Tunisian authorities say more than 50 migrants have drowned off the coast of the North African country, while 33 others were rescued by workers from an oil platform.

Defence Ministry spokesman Mohamed Zekri said Tuesday that a boat carrying the migrants sank Monday off Sfax, on Tunisia's southeast coast. He said navy units were sent to search the water for missing passengers.

Flavio Di Giacomo, a spokesperson for the Mediterranean coordination office of the International Organization for Migration, said on Twitter that the 33 survivors were all from Bangladesh. The boat departed from Zwara, Libya, on Sunday, he said.

The nationalities of the people who died were not immediately clear.

An International Organisation for Migration spokesman in Tunisia, Riadh Kadhi, said the survivors reported that the boat carried about 90 passengers when it left Libya.

Libya is a frequent departure point for Europe-bound migrants making the dangerous Mediterranean Sea crossing.

China offers to host Afghan peace talks, backs leading role for Ghani-led Govt

PTI ■ BEIJING

China, which has stepped up its diplomacy between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the wake of the US troops withdrawal from the war-torn country, has offered to host peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Significantly, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who in the last two-days held telephone talks with his Pakistani and Afghan counterparts, said that China will back the Afghan government headed by Ashraf Ghani in playing a leading role.

The offer to facilitate peace talks was made during Wang's phone talks with his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Haneef Atmar on Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told

a media briefing here on Tuesday.

Asked to elaborate, Zhao said, "China is ready to facilitate intra-Afghan talks and will provide necessary conditions for negotiation in China."

The US had announced its plans to withdraw its troops completely from Afghanistan by September.

The US troop pull-out has raised concerns in Beijing that it may lead to the regrouping of Xinjiang province's Uygur Muslim militants in Afghanistan, which shares borders with China.

During their telephonic conversation, Wang told Atmar that "China will continue to support the Afghan government in playing a leading role in the country's peace and reconciliation process", state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Mob attacks police station in Pakistan in search of man accused of blasphemy

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A mob, wielding batons and iron rods, has attacked a police station here in the Pakistani capital in an attempt to lynch a man detained on a charge of blasphemy, according to a media report.

Dozens of villagers attacked the Golra Police Station in Islamabad, asking the officials for the custody of the suspect held for investigation into a complaint lodged against him on a blasphemy charge, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Within minutes of law enforcers bringing the suspect to the police station, scores of people gathered at the station gate. The mob forced their way in after overpowering the guards.

The crowd started damaging the offices of the 'moharrar'

(police cleric), investigating officers and the Station House Officer. Such incidents in the past have led to the lynching of blasphemy accused persons.

During the attack, the policemen tried to protect themselves as well as the suspect by locking themselves up in the lock-up and other rooms. They contacted a nearby police contingent for help.

Police reinforcement, including personnel of the counter-terrorism department, anti-terrorist squad and anti-riot unit, reached the spot and rescued their colleagues.

The confrontation between the villagers and the police went on for well over an hour.

It was not confirmed how many policemen were injured in the attack. While there was a complete blackout in the police station and its vicinity.

Russia's northernmost base projects its power across Arctic

AP ■ NAGURSKOYE

During the Cold War, Russia's Nagurskoye airbase was little more than a runway, a weather station and a communications outpost in the Franz Josef Land archipelago.

It was a remote and desolate home mostly for polar bears, where temperatures plunge in winter to minus-42 Celsius (43 degrees below zero Fahrenheit) and the snow only disappears from August to mid-September.



most military base is bristling with missiles and radar and its extended runway can handle all types of aircraft, including nuclear-capable strategic bombers, projecting Moscow's power and influence across the Arctic amid intensifying international competition for

the region's vast resources. The shamrock-shaped facility — three large pods extending from a central atrium — is called the "Arctic Trefoil" and is painted in the white-red-and-blue of the national flag, brightening the otherwise stark vantage point on the 5,600-kilometer (3,470-mile) Northern Sea Route along Russia's Arctic coast. Other buildings on the Island, which is called Alexandra Land, are used for radar and communications, a weather station, oil storage, hangars and construction facilities.

Bangladesh arrests woman journalist under colonial-era official secrecy law

Dhaka: A senior Bangladeshi woman journalist, known for her investigative reporting, was arrested on charges of violating a colonial-era official secrecy law, the police said on Tuesday, triggering protests by the rights groups and her colleagues.

Rozina Islam, a senior reporter of Bangla Daily Prothom Alo, the largest daily newspaper based on circulation, was on Monday detained for over five hours by the Health Ministry officials for allegedly clicking a picture of a document with her cell phone without permission. PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3 rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Hello G Communication, Satyaprabash Yadav, Kiran Yadav, Shop No-13, Basement 13/21 Puri Plaza, Karol Bagh, Delhi, A/c No-629105500692	Flat No 703, 7th Floor, Wing "A" Infinity Towers, Plot No. 18, Land Bearing Cts 35 A And 35A/1 To 12, of Village Pahadi Gorgeon East Taluka Borivali, In The Registration District, And Sub District of Mumbai City Jitendra Road, Malad, Mumbai, Maharashtra-400097	19-Apr-2021, Rs. 70,51,334.72/-	01-05-2020

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : May 19, 2021
Place: Delhi NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

WESTERN RAILWAY
STORES DEPARTMENT
e-AUCTION SALE DURING JUNE, 2021 FOR P-WAY & OTHER VARIOUS SCRAP

SPECIAL ATTENTION - ALL STEEL PURCHASERS & RE-ROLLERS
Public e-Auction for disposal of P. Way scrap, rail scrap & other various scrap material will be held in June, 2021 as per program given below -

1st Round	2nd Round	Depot	Depot Officer in Charge	Contact No.
02/06/2021	28/06/2021	BRC	Sr. Divisional Materials Manager, BRC	02652641592 9724091750
04/06/2021	29/06/2021	BVP	Sr. Divisional Materials Manager, BVP	02782444360 0272409750
10/06/2021	-	MX	Deputy Chief Materials Manager, MX	022-24929571 09004495750
17/06/2021	-	DHD	Deputy Chief Materials Manager, DHD	02673241295 09724090455
19/06/2021	-	SBI	Deputy Chief Materials Manager, SBI	07927500080 09724093774
24/06/2021	-	PRTN	Deputy Chief Materials Manager, DHD	02673241295 09724090455
25/06/2021	-	RJT	Sr. Divisional Materials Manager, RJT	02812476943 09724094770
26/06/2021	-	RTM	Sr. Divisional Materials Manager, RTM	07412230080 09752492750
28/06/2021	-	MMCT	Sr. Divisional Materials Manager, MMCT	022-23094142 09004499006
30/06/2021	-	ADI	Sr. Divisional Materials Manager, ADI	07922205888 09724093750

For detailed information, please contact the concerned Depot Officers.
1. Railway reserves the right to withdraw any lot from e-Auction.
2. e-Auction will start as per scheduled time.
3. e-Auction catalogues will be available on site www.ireps.gov.in e-auction portal.
4. In case of any assistance required regarding e-Auction, digital signatures, registration procedure and participation, please contact above mentioned Depot Officer.
5. All payment transactions shall be done through online payment gateway. (No. SIII/Auction Programme-1/June, 2021 Dated 15/05/2021)

D-0107 For Principal Chief Materials Manager
Like us on: [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly) follows us on: twitter.com/WesternRly

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
(Through e-tendering)

Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-AMC-050-2021-22 Dated: 18.05.2021

Name of work with its location	Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of HBL make IPS for 14 locations in Delhi Division for Three (03) years.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 53,23,224/- only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055
Date & Time for upload the tender/closing of tender	Tender uploading/closing date & time - 16.06.2021 up to 15:00 hrs.
Website particulars & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in and Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.

1062/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PSPCCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number: U410PB2010SGC33813
Website: www.pspcl.in, Contact No. +91 9646107151

Tender Enquiry No. 543/GHTP/EMC/SGMC-W4/Vol-31 Dated: 18/05/2021
Superintending Engineer, Elect. Mtc. Circle, O&M, GHTP Lehra Mohabbat invites E-Tender for the work of Routine, Preventive, Breakdown & Shutdown Maintenance of 6.6KV & 415V AC Switchgears, 220V & 24V DC power supply systems, ESP Control Panels and other local control panels and associated equipments, battery banks, battery chargers, local push button stations and power receptacles, HT & LT Power and control cables installed at various locations under Switchgear Mtc. Cell of 2X210MW Stage-I and 2X250MW Stage-II, Guru Hargobind Thermal Plant, Lehra Mohabbat, District Bathinda, Punjab as per details given in the tender specifications for a period of one year. For detailed NIT & tender specifications, please refer to <https://leproc.punjab.gov.in> from 25/05/2021, 11:00 AM onwards.
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any, will be published online at <https://leproc.punjab.gov.in>

RO No. 76155/12/256/2021/4626 GHTP-24/21

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that a lady namely Anjali alongwith Trolley Vanity Bag & Black Carry Bag, W/o Gopal, R/o RZ-C/37, Harizan Basti, Gali No. 12/13, East Sagarpur, New Delhi-45, Age: 32 years, Height: 5'4", Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Long, Built: Normal, Wearing: Pink Colour Suit & Salwar and Black Colour Sandal in her feet has been missing from her home since 28.04.2021 at 5.00 am. In this regard a vide DD No. 73A dated 28.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Sagarpur, New Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing lady but no clue has come to light so far. if any one having any information about this lady please inform undersigned.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639

SHO
P.S. Sagarpur, New Delhi
DP/646/SW/2021 Ph.: 011-28522655, 7065036228

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice
invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

NIT No.	116-S/1/Vehicle/Contract(2020)/2/ML-IV
Name of work and its location	Tender for "Hiring of one multi-utility Road Vehicle i.e. Innova/Scorpio/Mahindra Bolero, Marazzo (Five Door-Seven Seater) for the period of two years round the clock under Chief Power Controller, DRM's Office, New Delhi."
Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 21,58,920/- (Twenty one lakh Fifty Eight thousand Nine Hundred Twenty only) + GST as applicable.
Earnest money	Rs. 43,200/-
Completion period of work	Two years i.e. 24 months from the date of execution of work.
Cost of tender document	Rs. 3540/- (including GST@18%) (Non-refundable)
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 11.00 hrs. on 11.06.2021 Opening of Tender at 11.00 hrs on 11.06.2021
Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen.	Above tender is available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in

116-S/1/Vehicle/Contract(2020)/2/ML-IV Dated: 18.05.2021 1055/2021
Serving Customers With A Smile

Sensex, Nifty spurt to two months highs

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty on Tuesday settled above the levels not seen in over two months as economic recovery hopes amid continuous decline in fresh COVID-19 cases further perked up investor sentiment. Recapturing the 50,000-level milestone, the BSE Sensex soared 612.60 points or 1.24 per cent to settle at 50,193.33. This was the highest closing for the index since March 16. Likewise, the NSE Nifty went past the psychological 15,000-mark. At the closing bell, the NSE gauge quoted higher by 184.95 points or 1.24 points at 15,108.10 – the best closing since March 10. On the Sensex chart, M&M was the top gainer, rallying nearly 6 per cent, followed by Bajaj Auto, Titan, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank and L&T. On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, ITC, Dr Reddy's, SBI and HUL suffered losses. Sectorally, BSE auto, industrials, consumer durables, capital goods, power and utilities

indices rallied up to 3.19 per cent. Telecom and FMCG indices fell up to 1.66 per cent. In the broader market, midcap and smallcap indices outperformed the benchmark by rallying as much as 1.87 per cent. Largecap index rose 1.22 per cent. Domestic equities extended gains as early sign of decline in COVID-19 daily caseload and improving prospects of faster economic recovery emboldened investors," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities. Additionally, strong cues from Asian markets also supported the rally in domestic market, he added. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended on a positive note. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading with gains in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.82 per cent higher at USD 70.03 per barrel. The Indian rupee ended 17 paise higher at 73.05 against the US dollar on Tuesday.

Investors richer by over ₹ 5.78L crore in 2 sessions of massive market rally

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Investors' wealth zoomed by ₹5,78,634.72 crore in two days of intense market rally, with participants adding ₹2,74,908.83 crore to their fortune on Tuesday. Over the past two sessions, the BSE gauge Sensex has gained about 1,461 points or 2.99 per cent. The benchmark rallied 612.60 points or 1.24 per cent to settle above the 50,000-mark on Tuesday. Following the two-day massive rallies, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped by Rs 5,78,634.72 crore to a record Rs 2,16,39,367.91 crore on Tuesday. "The rise can be attributed to a decline in India's COVID cases and stability in the global markets," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd. Last time on April 1, the BSE benchmark had closed above 50,000-level. On Tuesday, M&M was the top gainer in the 30-share pack, rallying nearly 6 per cent, followed by Bajaj Auto, Titan, Bajaj Finance and HDFC Bank.

Rupee rises by 17 paise to over 7-week high; gains for 3rd straight day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Mumbai: The rupee rose by 17 paise to close at a seven-week high of 73.05 against the US dollar on Tuesday, extending its gaining streak to the third straight session on positive domestic equities and weakening of the American currency in the overseas markets. At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.18 and hit an intra-day high of 72.95 and a low of 73.18 during the session. "Rupee gained for the third day in row to the highest in almost seven weeks as dollar drifted lower while equities roared after daily virus cases started declining," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. However, sharp gains were prevented on surge in crude oil prices, continued FII outflows, traders said. The local unit settled at 73.05, the highest closing level since March 26. On Monday, the rupee had closed at 73.22 against the US dollar. The domestic unit has appreciated 37 paise in the trading sessions on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.40 per cent to 89.80.

PTI

2nd tranche of commercial coal mines auction gets tremendous response: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Centre on Tuesday said the second tranche of commercial coal mines' auction has received tremendous response which is reflected in around 50 mine specific tender documents being purchased by bidders till date. Moreover, many other prospective bidders are in the process of registration and purchase of tender documents from the auction portal, the coal ministry said in a statement. "The response to this auction tranche, till now, has been tremendous," it said. The bid submission date has been extended to enable interested parties travel to mine locations for inspection once the lockdown curbs are removed in states, it added. In March, India launched the second tranche of auction for commercial coal mining, offering 67 mines for sale. Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi launched the auction process in a programme held

SAT says it can hear appeals in absence of technical member

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Securities Appellate Tribunal has said its Bench consisting of the presiding officer and a judicial member have the powers to hear matters even in the absence of a technical member. The order comes after an issue was raised by markets regulator Sebi questioning the composition of the tribunal's bench hearing the appeals filed before it. The regulator is of the view that the tribunal should not hear appeals till such time a technical member is appointed by the central government. The tribunal was functioning with a presiding officer, a judicial member and a technical member. However, the technical member demitted office on March 31, 2021. Since then, the bench of the tribunal consists of the presiding officer and the judicial member.

Pawar writes to Gowda, seeks rollback of hike in fertiliser prices

PTI ■ MUMBAI
NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday wrote to Union Chemical and Fertilisers Minister D V Sadananda Gowda, demanding a roll-back of increase in fertiliser prices. Farmers are reeling under "one of the worst ever" crises as the coronavirus pandemic has impacted people's livelihoods, he said in the letter. "But I have learnt that instead of extending a helping hand to this distressed community, the Central Government has taken a decision to increase the prices of fertilisers exponentially," said the former agriculture minister. The "lockdown conditions" have crushed the marketing system he said.

COAI urges Govt to remove fake messages on social media linking Covid-19 to 5G

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Telecom industry body COAI has approached the Information Technology Ministry for removal of fake and misleading messages from social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter linking spread of COVID-19 to 5G technology. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), whose members include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, said the claims linking 5G with coronavirus are baseless as 5G networks have not yet been installed in the country and even 5G trials are yet to be started by the telecom operators. In a letter dated May 15 to MeitY Additional Secretary Rajendra Kumar, COAI Director General S P Kochhar said: "To safeguard the nation-

al interest, we request your good office to kindly instruct all the social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc, to remove all such posts and misleading campaigns from their platforms on an urgent basis." People have been sharing audio and video messages on social media platforms in which 5G towers are being blamed for rise in casualties across the country even though none of the companies have installed 5G technology anywhere in India. Video messages show that people convinced with the claim want to bring down mobile towers. "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," Kochhar said.

Vijay Mallya loses bankruptcy petition amendment High Court battle in UK

PTI ■ LONDON
A consortium of Indian banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI) on Tuesday moved a step closer in their attempt to recover debt from loans paid out to Vijay Mallya's now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines after the High Court in London upheld an application to amend their bankruptcy petition, in favour of waiving their security over the businessman's assets in India. Chief Insolvency and Companies Court (ICC) Judge Michael Briggs handed down his judgment in favour of the banks to declare there is no public policy that prevents a waiver of security rights, as argued by Mallya's lawyers. At a virtual hearing, July 26 was set as the date for final arguments for and against granting a bankruptcy order against Mallya after the banks accused him of trying to "kick matters into the long grass" and called on the "bankruptcy petition to be brought to its inevitable end."

Infosys, Majesco collaborate to accelerate digital experience for insurers

New Delhi: IT services firm Infosys and Majesco, a cloud insurance software solutions provider, on Tuesday, announced a strategic collaboration to work together to help joint customers accelerate their digital transformation journey. This will help unlock new opportunities, address the demand for personalised customer experiences, operational effectiveness, and digital adoption across the insurance business value chain, a regulatory filing said. Infosys' insurance domain and digital capabilities combined with Majesco's cloud-based suite of solutions including the Majesco L&A and Group Core Suite, Majesco P&C Core Suite, and Majesco Digital1st Insurance on Majesco CloudInsurer, will accelerate business growth and innovation for the insurance industry, it added. The combined synergy will help Life & Annuity (L&A), Group, and Property & Casualty (P&C) customers transform their business and will benefit insurers in achieving agility and innovation at speed and scale, the filing said. "In an increasingly changing insurance marketplace of new customer expectations, new risks, new competitors and new innovative products, insurers must make bold moves to transform their business and meet the needs of a new digital era of insurance," Majesco Chief Operating Officer Ed Ossie said. Insurers must optimise business and create the future business to substantially increase their potential for success, and the collaboration will help joint customers accelerate their transformation and their path to the future of insurance, he added.

PTI

SRMIST donates ₹1.10 crore to Tamil Nadu CM's Public Relief Fund

Chennai: The SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) has donated ₹1.10 crore to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund (TNCMPRF) in an effort to effectively support efforts of the Government of Tamil Nadu to contain the spread of the second wave of COVID 19 pandemic. SRMIST's Pro Chancellor (Academics) Dr. P. Sathyanarayanan, Chairman of Ramapuram campus Dr. R. Shivakumar and Co-Chairman Mr. S. Niranjanmet the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Thiru M. K. Stalin and handed over the contribution of Rs

1.10 crores on behalf of SRMIST to fight against the COVID 19 pandemic. Founder Chancellor of the SRM Group of Institutions, Dr. T. R. Paarivendhar, who is also a Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Perambalur Constituency mentioned that the amount donated to TNCMPRF was the generous contribution of all employees working in Kattankulathur, Vadapalani, Ramapuram, Trichycampuses and all other institutions under Valliammai Society to curb the spread of corona virus.

PTI

31 Oxygen Concentrators reach CLW

Chittaranjan: A consignment of 31 Oxygen Concentrators of 5 litre capacity from ACT Grants reached CLW on Monday, to meet the oxygen requirements of COVID patients admitted in KG Hospital. These oxygen concentrators concentrate the oxygen from air by purifying by selectively removing nitrogen to supply an oxygen-enriched gas and makes it available for patients who have low oxygen levels in their blood.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to general that my clients having shares in M/s Unitrion Computers Private Limited having Regd. office at F-11/C Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi-110020. Shri Ishwar Kewalramani S/o Late Shri Gopaladas Kewalramani presently residing at N 14/8 First Floor, DLF Phase-II Gurugram having 37.46% shares alongwith other shareholders Shri. Suman Singh Yadav son of Shri Balbir Singh Yadav R/o K-3, South City-1, Gurgaon-122001 having 41.62%, Shri Ramesh Chandra son of Late Shri Ishwar Chandra Singh R/o Sahyog Apt., Flat No. 9, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad UP-201012 having 20.83% and Shri Ishwar Singh Rawat son of Late Shri Kedar Singh Rawat R/o 147/15, Sector-1, Pushp Vihar New Delhi-110017 having 0.04% have sold their shares. Ishwar Kewalramani alongwith other Director Ishwar Singh Rawat who were Directors in the said company have resigned from directorship and company affairs have been handed over to new management from 28th March, 2021. If anyone deals with the said company on behalf of my clients will be solely responsible at his own end and our clients shall not be responsible in any condition. **Lakshay Kewalramani Advocate** Enrollment No.: D/3670/2020 N-14/8, DLF Phase-II, Gurugram

Office of the Superintending Engineer, Construction Circle, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Kathgodam, Haldwani.
(E-mail: sepeyjal_ntl@yahoo.co.in, Phone: 05946-298296)

E-Tendering/Tender Notice

Letter No. 1354 / 613 / 116 Date: 18.05.2021

Name of Work :- Pipe Line & All Other Work	Name of Scheme	Estimated cost	Period of completion of work:
1	Dhoomkhera GOV W/S Scheme	Rs. 80.96 Lakh	06 months
2	Pipaliya GOV W/S Scheme	Rs. 86.82 Lakh	06 months
3	Kumrah GOV W/S Scheme	Rs. 80.38 Lakh	06 months

Key Dates-

4	Date of Online Publication	19.05.2021 at 17:00 hrs.
5	Document Download : Start Date	20.05.2021 at 10:00 hrs.
6	Document download : End Date	03.06.2021 at 17:00 hrs
7	Pre Bid Meeting	25.05.2021 at 14:00 hrs.
8	Bid Submission : Start Date	20.05.2021 at 10:00 hrs.
9	Bid Submission : End Date	03.06.2021 at 17:00 hrs.
10	Offline Submission of Document (Cost of bidding document, Bid Security, Original Affidavits & all the Supporting Documents in support of qualification)	04.06.2021 upto 17:00 hrs.
11	Date of Technical Bid Opening	05.06.2021 at 11:00 hrs
12	Date of Financial Bid Opening	To be announced Later
13	Details of tender, corrigendum or cancellation etc. may be obtained at web site: www.uktenders.gov.in	

Superintending Engineer

CCI approves sale of Yes Bank's mutual funds subsidiaries to GPL Finance, Investments

New Delhi: Fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Tuesday approved the acquisition of Yes Asset Management (India) Ltd and Yes Trustee Limited by GPL Finance and Investments Ltd. The proposed combination envisages the acquisition of 100 per cent equity shares of the two entities by GPL, as per a release. "By way of these acquisitions, GPL will acquire Yes Mutual Fund and become its sole sponsor," the release added. GPL Finance is a non-deposit-taking and non-systemically important non-banking financial company. In August 2020, the private lender had executed a definitive agreement for the sale of 100 per cent of the equity shareholding of Yes Asset Management (India) Ltd and Yes Trustee Ltd, both wholly-owned subsidiaries of Yes Bank to GPL Finance and Investments, it had said in a regulatory filing. "White Oak Investment Management Private Limited owns 99 per cent of the purchaser. The ultimate beneficial holder of the purchaser is Prashant Khemka who owns 99.99 per cent of White Oak Investment Management Private Limited," Yes Bank had said.

PTI

Indian IT & Biz Services market grows 5.41% to \$13.4 bn in 2020: IDC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses in the country, as per IDC Worldwide Semi-annual Services Tracker. Of the IT and Business Services market, the IT Services segment contributed 77.06 per cent and grew by 5.97 per cent in 2020. This is against a growth rate of 8.91 per cent in 2019. As per IDC, the IT and Business Services market will begin picking up momentum gradually from 2021 onwards due to increased spending in areas like cloud, application modernisation, AI, automation etc. "The IT and Business Services market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 7.18 per cent between 2020-2025 and touch nearly USD 19 billion by the end of 2025 on the back of increased spending in areas like cloud and artificial intelligence. The Indian IT and Business Services market had grown by 8.43 per cent in 2019, but the growth rate fell in

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male **Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: 40 Years, Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5' 2", Face: Round, Build: Normal, Hair: Black & White, Wearing: Red colour T-shirt and grey colour pajama, who was found at near Kodya Pull, Shiv Mandir Railway Colony Mor Sarai, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.** In this regard a case **DD No. 17A, U/s 174 Cr.PC Dated 16.05.2021 has been registered at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi.** Any person having any information or clue about the above deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

Sd/- SHO
P.S: Kotwali, Delhi
Tel.: 011-23977100

DP/1194/N/2021(UIDB)

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE

SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / BMD (APPRO X) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD /AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	UHBVN	EMPANELMENT OF ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS FOR 11KV WORK ON TURNKEY BASIS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF TENDER OPERATIONS IN CIRCLSO FUHBVN	17.05.2021 10.06.2021	50000/-	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019145 sepd@uhbvn.org.in

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

RO NO. 2963

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B Nagar, (U.P.)
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms / contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes / amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A)	1.	88/CGM/SM(WC-5)/2020-21	Name of Work:- M/o Building (Repair of Staff Quarter Type-I and Type-II in the Premises of Police Station Compound Sector-24), NOIDA Cost - Rs. 35.59 Lacs
	2.	02/GM/SM(WC-7)/e-tender/2021-22	Name of Work:- M/o Road (Repairing of Road in B-Block, Phase-II), Noida Cost - Rs. 95.71 Lacs
	3.	03/GM/SM(WC-7)/e-tender/2021-22	Name of Work:- M/o Road (Repairing of Road in Sector-83), Noida Cost - Rs. 42.84 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date **03.06.2021** upto **5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification Shall be opened / downloaded on date **04.06.2021 at 11.00 AM**.

General Manager
NOIDA

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice (Through e-tendering)

Name of work with its location	Trenching, laying & termination of cable in connection with ROB at (1). Construction of RUB on DLJ-UMB section (Location 69.30 Km) on Nestle Road to Kiwana Israna Road in District Panipat. (2). Construction of 2 lane ROB in lieu of L-Xing no. 110-A at Km. 123/2-3 on DLJ-BTI section at Jind of Delhi Division. (3) Provision of RUB/LHS in lieu of LC 49 near Diwana at km. 82/5-7 on DLJ-UMB. (4) Provision of LHS in lieu of manned L-xing gate no. 50, 51, 56, 60, 65, 72 & 76 in DLJ-UMB section of Delhi Division. (5) Provision of LHS in lieu of manned L-xing gate no. 77, 82, 84, 86, 87, 91 & 93 in DLJ-UMB section of Delhi Division.
Approx. cost of the work (₹)	₹88.97, 320/- only
Address of the Office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM Office, New Delhi-110055
Date & Time for upload the tender/Closing of tender	Tender uploading/closing date & time 16.06.2021 upto 15.00 hrs
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.irps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055

Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-Tender-1357 Dated : 18.05.2021
1061/2021
Serving Customers With A Smile



ROAD TO SUCCESS

Choosing the right college can be a tedious process. There are times when your application gets rejected by your favourite college. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with GURDARSHAN S KOCHAR, who shares tips to simplify your decision making

Most students would remember the advice they got from their parents the time they got promoted to Class X. *Beta abhi padh lo, aage maze karna* (Study hard this time, you can have fun after this class). That wasn't the end, the same was repeated when you got promoted to Class XII too. However, it seems like the advice was put on loop and actually the time for fun never came for some students. But, students should take this advice forward even to the college. The right choice of subject, stream or college will define the career growth to write their life history.

With that being said, choosing the right college can be a tedious task. And if not done wisely, it can leave you in an unpleasant situation.

"My advice to students is they should shortlist the best-suited colleges according to their fields of interest. As traditional educational practices are becoming obsolete, it is important to look at institutes that provide a futuristic course design and contribute to shaping up the career trajectory. Next, students should gather some data points about who is teaching their discipline of study at the prospective college and also acquire an understanding of the peer group that would be eventually contributing to their

growth," Gurdarshan S Kochar, Project Director — Strategy and Marketing, Masters' Union, tells you.

Often students and parents get carried away by the facilities provided by the college and its infrastructure. However, this should be the last criteria while hunting for the right college.

"More than the facilities being provided by the college, students should focus on the unique offerings which increase their opportunities to learn hands-on skills. Go to a college which organises bootcamps, one-on-one mentorship programmes, encourages students to become a member of various student-led clubs and helps them gain a holistic perspective during the course," Kochar adds.

However, not all goes smooth in the process. There are times when a student is left disheartened and demotivated upon not landing an admission in his dream college. The way out here is to not dwell on rejections.

"While seeking admissions, every student wants to go to the best college. Finding out you weren't accepted to a preferred college can be hard, but I would encourage students to try not to dwell on the rejection. The truth is that everyone faces some form of rejection at some point in their lives, but failure to get admission to a dream college

doesn't depreciate one's worth or competence as a student. It only implies that the application didn't meet the college criteria and there's the scope of improvement in your efforts. It's easier said than done, but the healthy way to move forward is to accept the rejection," he says.

If students let disappointment hinder the decision that they still

have to make, that will be an even worse outcome. It is important to buckle up, focus on the broader career objective and acknowledge that rejection from one college doesn't mark the end of their journey. At this point looking out for alternatives is just a tad diversion from their Plan A, but always remember that when one door closes, it directs you towards a thousand other opportunities. Sometimes, rejection can also turn out to be a blessing in disguise or a drive for students to apply to another college that is perhaps more fitting to their long-term career goals.

While looking for a college, there are students who plan to take a gap year to prepare. There is often a clash of opinion between the student and the parents. However, it is not as bad it may sound. "When it comes to taking a gap year, it is a matter of personal choice. The youth is now more open to the idea of taking a year off for a growing number of reasons — some long for a breather between two phases of education in the anticipation that it can help them to clear the head, it sometimes provides an opportunity to figure out exactly what they want next or it can be utilised to explore career options, working on an intriguing project or acquiring a new skill like

learning a new language. The most important aspect here is to take a break for the right reasons," Kochar says.

Taking a break just so you can re-apply to another college without a clear vision about what you're going to do with your time can be a bit challenging at times. One should also be prepared with suitable alternatives in case the outcome after taking a gap year doesn't turn out in their favour.

"If we take inspiration from developed countries, career counselling at the school level acts as the backbone of their education system and empowers students to make the right career choices early on in their lives, not limited to just selecting the right college. This definitely helps them avoid any wastage of time and understand their field of interest. But, career counselling in India is still not the most preferred choice for students and parents alike, especially at the school level. The sheer lack of awareness and comprehension of the value and benefits of career counselling is one of the many reasons why it is still not an integral part of the Indian education system," he says and adds that it is high time we act upon the significance of career guidance and equip our youth to make an informed decision about their career progressions.

MORE THAN THE FACILITIES BEING PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE, STUDENTS SHOULD FOCUS ON THE UNIQUE OFFERINGS WHICH INCREASE THEIR OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN HANDS-ON SKILLS

QUOTE OF THE DAY

No one has yet realised the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure.

— Emma Goldman

MoU signed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR, and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune, have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaborations in scientific research & development (R&D) and faculty/student exchanges between the two institutions.

The agreement enables the two institutions to pursue significant academic cooperation in R&D projects in the areas of Natural Sciences, leveraging their respective expertise and capabilities. The scope of the agreement includes sharing of relevant information and laboratory resources between the two institutions as well as exchange of students, scholars and postdoctoral fellows for projects.

Dr Rupamanjari Ghosh, Vice-Chancellor of Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR, said: "Our partnership with IISER-Pune is reflective of our steadfast belief that in a true partnership, 1+1 becomes more than 2. Scientific research is the bedrock of inventions, innovations and transformational solutions for the myriad problems that vex our world. The ongoing pandemic has reinstated its importance everywhere, and as a research-focused institution, we are committed to contributing to tackling the most pressing issues of global importance. Our partnership with IISER-Pune is a step in this direction, as we share our expertise and experience to grow from strength to strength."

SoM launched by MU

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the significant success of the Mahindra University's Ecole Centrale School of Engineering, Mahindra University announces the launch of its School of Management from the 2021-2022 academic session in which academic partner is Cornell University's SC Johnson College of Business (an ivy league institution located near New York, USA). Three UG programmes, BA in Economics & Finance, BBA in Digital Technologies and BBA in Computational Business Analytics (an interdisciplinary program with the Ecole Centrale School of Engineering), will be on offer from this academic year through this collaboration.

The Mahindra University School of Management (MU — SoM) will benefit significantly from Cornell University's expertise in curriculum development, faculty exchange programs including some specialty courses delivery by the Cornell faculty to Mahindra University students, as well as student immersion at Cornell.

"MU envisions that the School of Management will be developed as a Centre for higher learning in management. We hope that in the coming years, we are able to attract not just the most acclaimed talent pool from India and abroad and undertake the best research in emerging areas of contemporary interest but also contribute meaningfully to nation building," says Dr Yajulu Medury, Vice Chancellor, Mahindra University.

Tips to crack MNS

To get admission in the four-year BSc Nursing Course offered by the Armed Forces Medical Colleges & Command Hospitals, aspirants need to qualify the entrance exam with excellent performance. SHISHIR DIXIT tells you how

When we talk about the most demanding career options among young women aspirants who wish to join the defence forces, the Military Nursing Service — MNS Exam always tops the list. To get admission in the four-year BSc Nursing Course with a total of 220 vacancies offered by the Armed Forces Medical Colleges & Command Hospitals, the young aspirants need to qualify the MNS entrance exam with excellent performance in both the written and the interview round.

Finally, after completion of all the stages, the candidates are awarded admission in the Armed Forces Medical Colleges & Command Hospitals based on the merit-cum-choice. The admission for BSc Nursing training is awarded for six colleges across India which are as follows: AFMC Pune, CH(EC) Kolkata, INHS Asvini, AH (R&R) New Delhi, CH (CC), Lucknow and CH (AF) Bangalore.

Since the Armed Forces Medical Colleges & Command Hospitals have been recognised as a premier medical institute of India and a centre of excellence for education & research, there has always been a high competition to secure their seats. Thus, the MNS entrance exam provides assured career prospects to eligible women aspirants in the defence services.

The mindset to crack the MNS exam in the first attempt starts with a firm belief in oneself and the acknowledgement of the true potential. The excellent performance in both the stages, written and interview is required from the candidate's end.

Tips for clearing the interview



There are no such tricks and tips to clear the MNS Interview. All it requires the most is hard work with a dedicated approach to crack the MNS exam in the first attempt. The MNS exam is of moderate level but the competition is tough, therefore, those candidates who wish to secure their admission in the Armed Forces Medical Colleges have to take their preparation a little bit higher than others.

The MNS Interview is panel interview having about five senior officers selecting the best Military Nurses. The interview plays an important role as after qualifying the written exam of MNS, approximately for one seat of BSc Nursing there are three-four candidates who are being interviewed by the panel. So, in the interview the competition is strong.

- Possessing the basic moral ethics and aptitude
- Formal Way of self introduction by the candidates
- Be prepared for cross questions in self introduction
- Adequate knowledge of the defence forces
- Effective communication

and interpersonal skills

- Maintaining proper eye contact & body language
- Proper sense of understanding the questions
- Interpretation skills to change the thoughts into right answers

Preparation tips for MNS written and interview

The MNS written exam is of moderate level and consists of questions from subjects like General English, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and General Intelligence. General English is a basic component of the whole syllabus and contains topics like reading comprehension, familiarity with keywords and vocabulary, knowledge of synonym-antonym, etc. General Intelligence and General Science have similar spaces in the MNS syllabus to score adequate marks. Basic knowledge of the Class XII syllabus and familiarity with some advanced topics included in the MNS syllabus are enough for achieving excellence in General Science. Similarly, General Intelligence tests the general and mental awareness of the candidates. It

majorly concentrates on reasoning and problem-solving approaches.

- Adequate knowledge of the MNS Syllabus 2021
- Knowing the MNS Exam pattern & selection process
- Maintaining proper timetable for consistent learning
- Analyzing the capabilities for better performance
- Regular practice and solving the mock tests
- Revision of the important concepts on daily basis
- Maintaining proper health & mental alertness

The judgement of the attitude, intelligence and the inner skills of the candidates is a basic criterion to assess during the interview process. The MNS Interview is quite tough as it is conducted to acknowledge the suitability of the candidates on the basis of intelligence observation and personality traits. Therefore, a student must focus on developing the various aspects related to the interview process to have an excellent performance during the interview.

The writer is Founder & Director, Centurion Defence Academy

Top accounting softwares

Accounting displays the financial health of a business. For any small or medium business, ascertaining financials and maintaining books of accounts to keep a tab on the financial position of the business can turn out to be a tedious process. Financial accounting involves a lot of complex scenarios, big operational budgets and enormous ledger records.

If it's a small business or a huge one, it faces shortcomings in handling extensive books of accounts and play with adequate tools but with fully configurable e-invoicing, GSTR and other features are enabling the businesses from small towns to connect with the mainstream development of the country. Practicing healthy financial book-keeping and engaging the perfect accounting software provides a straightforward powerful accounting solution.

Below is the list of top five most popular accounting softwares which are also regarded as the best accounting softwares for small business in India across varied sectors.

Tally: With more than 75 per cent market share and two billion business users, Tally is undoubtedly the best accounting software in India for small enterprises. Tally tops our list of accounting software as an end-to-end solution to GST statutory regulations as current reformer changes get in the financial accounting system of India. Tally is equipped with error detection capabilities that minimize any chances of rejection in GST returns. As accountants have been using this software for so many

decades, they have established a comfort factor for working on tally and have a huge preference for working on tally. Its mass reach and user acceptability are what driving its growth.

Busy Accounting Software: Busy was launched in the year 1997 and is mainly popular for its inventory management features. Most of the distributors and stockholders have now shifted from Tally to Busy as the detailed inventory reports generated by Busy help a business in keeping a track of the stock which has made Busy one of the top online accounting software in India. Busy was curated by a group of IT professionals with a motive that focused on the development of business accounting.

Vyapar is a free platform that allows maintaining invoice, getting inventory records, managing books of accounts, and tracking daily business activities

Zoho Books: The latest entry in the field of accounting softwares is the Zoho Books Accounting Software. It is a cloud accounting software, which is undoubtedly going to be the future of accounting. Zoho Books can be easily accessed from any

device with the use of the Internet. Zoho Books is GST compliant, automates business workflow, and manages financial accounting and helps in managing departments collectively from one single source. According to finance experts, Zoho Books is one of the most preferred accounting solutions for growing business.

Marg: Launched in the year 1992, Marg has built a name for itself in the market as a software which provides customised solutions depending on the need of each industry. Marg is a GST enabled inventory and accounting software in India that makes GST billing and filing easy. Marg is a trade specialised solution that is highly affordable in price and customisable in features. With more than 2500 software configuration and 500 tutorial videos, the software is easy to implement and lets you build functionality to business support.

Vyapar: Vyapar tops the list of accounting software for small Indian businesses. The accounting software is a free platform that allows maintaining invoice, getting inventory records, managing books of accounts, and tracking daily business activities while focusing on business growth rate. Since most of the small sector business needs a digital upgrade, Vyapar acts as an effective solution. Vyapar is GST compliant and allows error-free tax returns while eliminating errors occurred with manual calculations. Vyapar takes charge to control individual units of the business, creates customisable invoices, and automates payment reminders.

SRMIST steps in to provide support

The SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Deemed to be University has donated ₹1.10 crores to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund (TNCMPRF) in an effort to effectively support efforts of the Government of Tamil Nadu to contain the spread of the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

SRMIST's Pro Chancellor (Academics) Dr P Sathyananayanan, Chairman of Ramapuram campus Dr R Shivakumar and Co-Chairman S Niranjan met the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu



Thiru MK Stalin and handed over the contribution on behalf of SRMIST. Founder Chancellor of the

SRM Group of Institutions, Dr TR Paarivendhar, who is also a Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Perambalur Constituency mentioned that the amount donated to TNCMPRF was the generous contribution of all employees working in Kattankulathur, Vadapalani, Ramapuram, Trichy campuses and all other institutions under Valliammai Society to curb the spread of Coronavirus.

It is appreciable that the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has taken timely and earnest action to curb the spread of Coronavirus across the state.



PREPPING FOR FINAL STAGE

The Civil Services written exam results have been declared. It is time for the selected candidates to prepare for the final stage, the interview. PRANAY AGGARWAL tells you that honesty is the best policy when it comes to acing it

Clearing Civil Services exam boosts one's confidence. However, it is important not to become over-confident and become complacent. After all, less than half of the 2,000-odd candidates called for the interview get selected in the final merit list.

With the results of the written exam having been declared a few days back, the shortlisted candidates are upping the ante preparing for the interview.

Here are some suggestions to prepare for the interview:

READ WIDELY

The interview stage is not a test of one's knowledge. It is a test of one's personality. Hence the apt name of personality test. To develop a suitable personality to be a Civil Servant, one needs to develop reasoned opinions and be aware of differing points of view. For that, it is advisable to read voraciously.

DEVELOP CLARITY OF THOUGHT & EXPRESSION

It is important to develop clarity of thought on different issues, especially those that are in news. The Board will test you for clarity of vision. Do not contradict your own opinions in the course of the

interview. Try to express yourself without hesitation and with proper articulation in discussions with your friends and mentors.

KNOW YOURSELF

The interview board members have read your Detailed Application Form (DAF). It is one of the inputs that will help them form an impression of you. It is, thus, important to prepare all the things that you have mentioned in your form or are incidental to it, sufficiently.

Questions on one's academic background, graduation subject and professional journey may be asked. You may be asked the reasons for selection of a particular subject as optional or your service and cadre preferences.

RESEARCH YOUR HOBBIES

You are expected to have more than the average person's knowledge of your stated areas of interest, extracurricular activities and hobbies. Research them well. Also explore any current developments related to your hobbies. For example, if your hobby is sports, you are expected to be aware of the government's efforts for promotion of sports in India through the Khelo India programme.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE APPROPRIATE BODY LANGUAGE DURING THE INTERVIEW. BE REASONABLY RELAXED, HAVE CORRECT POSTURE AND MANNERISMS. AVOID MOVEMENTS LIKE SHAKING A LEG OR BITING NAILS DUE TO NERVOUSNESS

DEVELOP TACT

Civil servants require a fair amount of tact to handle public pressures, politician bosses and illegitimate expectations of their own community members. The interview board may pose to you a hypothetical situation and seek your response.

For instance, one may be asked as to how you would possibly tackle farmers on a blockade in a district if you were in-charge. You should have the ability to think calmly but reasonably quickly and suggest practical steps to handle the situation.

PRACTICE INTERVIEWS

It is of utmost importance to practice giving interviews before the D-day. The practice interviews should be given in a simulated environment, preferably with senior civil servants on the Board.

BODY LANGUAGE

It is important to have appropriate body language during the interview. One should be reasonably relaxed, have correct posture and mannerisms. Avoid any unappealing bodily movements like shaking a leg or biting nails due to nervousness. These may distract

the Board members from what you have to say and will show you in poor light.

It is important to project a pleasant personality to the interview board. Even if the interview is seemingly not going well, do not lose calm. The members may be evaluating you different than your own assessment. Thus, even a tough interview may fetch you a great score, when you least expect it.

HONESTY, THE BEST POLICY

Some of the qualities that the board members are looking for are intellectual honesty and moral integrity. Give honest answers. Do not try to bluff. If you do and the members sense it, and it's very likely that they will, it may negatively affect your score. In contrast, if you come across as an honest, even if flawed person; it may be all that you need to score well in the interview. Even if you do not know the answer to a couple of questions in a row, convey it honestly to the board members.

Don't lose focus and prepare well for this last stage.

The author is Convenor of Indian Civil Services Association & mentors UPSC aspirants at IAS Gurukul

'Follow rules to clear SAT, GRE'

There are key pointers that a student preparing for exams like SAT, GMAT and GRE needs to keep in mind 3 weeks leading up to it, says ADARSH KHANDELWAL

According to Common Application, as of March 1, 2021 students applied to nine per cent more colleges. This means increased competition for the Ivy League colleges and other top institutes. Despite many colleges going test-optional, a high standardised test score remains a differentiating factor for both undergraduate and postgraduate applications. Test preparation for study abroad encompasses tests like GMAT or GRE for PG and the ACT, SAT and AP for UG.

Students from South Korea and Singapore first work through a dependable online diagnostic test followed by self-study and two-three weeks of self-driven problem solving. Only after this initial familiarisation with the tests do they look for test preparation programmes.

Students in India rarely explore test structure and options on their own before looking out for tutoring. Once tutoring has started, the student tends to play no active role in the process. This is, however, a mistake. The student learns to depend on the tutor without developing the ability to analyse and monitor performance. This often spells trouble on test day.

Here a few things that a student preparing for any of these tests for study abroad need to ensure in the three weeks leading up to the test. These pointers assume that the student has already developed significant clarity about improvement areas, test-taking challenges, areas of strength, etc.

Mock tests

There is no better way of preparing for a standardised test than to take mock tests. What is crucial is planning practice around the mock tests. The rule of thumb is 80 per cent of your preparation in these crucial three weeks should revolve around the mock tests-taking mocks, reviewing errors, identifying improvement areas and practicing on these improvement areas.

Timed practice

The remaining 20 per cent of your preparation should be practice on all topics to ensure your strengths are not compromised while working on weaknesses. Ensure that everything you



Adarsh Khandelwal
Co-founder, Collegify

solve is timed at this stage.

Granular analysis

Computer adaptive test like the GMAT require careful attention to pacing and structured problem-solving. However, when it comes to a computer-based test like the GRE or a test like the ACT, time management is just as crucial. Test-takers often make the mistake of not going into painstaking detail on question types and time taken on an average and for a specific test on a question variant.

To sum up, competition for the top colleges in the US and other study abroad destinations is increasing fast. Making your profile stand out is easier when you have excellent standardised test scores since these demonstrate your competency in critical thinking and written communication skills to the college.

Your test preparation needs to follow the path indicated in this article. Remember that 80 per cent of your success will come from your own hard work. The remaining 20 per cent would comprise test preparation guidance and material.

The seventh round of India's Trade Policy Review (TPR) at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva, was held earlier in January this year. Even an official US National Trade Estimate Report 2020 covering close to 70 countries have recently observed "India's average MFN applied tariff rate of 17.1 per cent remains the highest of any major world economy."

Studies in the past have argued that use of tariffs can have a positive impact on economic growth. Paul Bairoch had argued that there was a positive association between tariffs and growth before 1914, which he named as the tariff-growth paradox. Similarly, other eminent economists such as Rodriguez and Rodrik,

have proven that tariff-growth relationship depends on economic conditions both globally and domestically.

The market failure argument points to the positive impact of tariffs in case of high unemployment in the economy. Unemployment rate in India has been on a rise since 2014. It stood at 6.1 per cent in 2017-18 which was the highest since 1972-73. It reached an all-time high rate of 23.52 per cent in April, 2020 and has declined to 6.90 per cent in February this year, which is still higher than what we saw in 2017-18. Such, high unemployment rate, does make a strong case for higher tariffs.

But besides unemployment, India's trade gap has also widened from \$10.2

MINDIT

billion in 2020 to \$12.9 billion in February, 2021. While imports have increased by 7 per cent, exports have decreased by 0.3 per cent according to Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Higher tariffs are expected to boost industrial growth by making imports relatively expensive. However, the latest available data on imports do not show decline in all commodity groups. For instance, share of products like electrical transformers, static converters (for example, rectifiers) and inductors in total imports to

India has increased by 0.054 pp according to reports. If we consider macro-data, for example in electronics, where the government has raised duties over the past six years, to encourage domestic production, their import value has increased from around 2 trillion in 2014 to over 3.7 trillion Indian rupees in 2020.

On the export front, Government is aiming towards export promotion in the manufacturing sector through the Make in India scheme as well as by increasing tariffs. The Government has, for example,

imposed 5 per cent duty on TV parts from October last year. However, imposition of tariffs on intermediate goods may reduce their value addition in domestic industries which can in-turn negatively affect the growth in that sector. Also, lower imports due to high tariffs on parts can lead to lower exports, making the net impact on trade gap ambiguous.

Trade deficit will also depend upon Terms of Trade (ToT). Tariff imposition should lead to improvement. Evidence here too however, suggests to the contrary. The country's ToT increased from 93.82 in 2014 to 108.67 in 2016 but declined to 98.17 in 2018. If price of imports remains relatively higher despite the improvement in ToT, then

import should decrease and exports should increase. In return, it should have improved the trade deficit, but we find that this is not the case presently.

A widening trade deficit can in-fact worsen the unemployment problem. Therefore, impact of higher tariffs on unemployment will also depend upon how they affect the trade deficit, which in the light of above arguments, not only stands ambiguous, but looks clearly flawed. India, therefore would be best advised to initiate a competitive tariff regime in order to veer back to the path of high growth and tackle the its burgeoning unemployment crisis.

The writer is Aitika Gupta, Assistant Professor of Economics, Indian School of Business & Finance



The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow invites applications for its Dean's International Excellence Award.

Number of scholarships: 70

Value: £4,000
Duration: One year
Eligibility: To apply for the award — Postgraduate Taught: Humanities & Social Sciences, candidates must: Be available to commence their academic studies in the UK by the start of the academic year in September/October 2021.

Have an offer of study for a full time, postgraduate, Humanities and Social Sciences programme at the University of Strathclyde.
Have paid the tuition fee deposit before July 31, 2021.

For more information visit: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/study-withus/scholarships/humanities-socialsciences/deansinternational-excellenceaward-post-graduate-taught/> or contact hass-pg-enquiries@strath.ac.uk
Application deadline: The last date to apply is July 31, 2021

Applications are invited for Graduate Research scholarships for high-achieving students at the University of Melbourne. These are open for

Australian/domestic and international students to pursue the graduate research degree programme at the university.

Number of awards: 600 financial aid positions will be awarded in all subject areas

Value: Provide 100 per cent fee remission and up to \$1,10,000. Full fee offset for up to two years for students undertaking a masters by research or up to four years for students undertaking a doctoral degree.

Course: These opportunities are open for the graduate research degree programme
Eligibility: Have applied for and meet the entry requirements for a graduate research degree at the University of Melbourne, or be at present enrolled in a graduate research degree at the university.

Supporting documents: To apply, candidates must be ready to submit the academic transcript and certificates.

Admission requirements: If you are a new student and have applied for a graduate research by the application closing date for that course, you will be automatically considered for the scholarships.

How to apply: To participate in this application, applicants must submit an online application form through the link: https://unimelb.admissions_scholarships.formstack.com/forms/graduate_research_scholarships_application
Application deadline: The last date is October 31, 2021.

BUSINESS STRATEGY (CONSULTANT) AT STRATEGYCO.GLOBAL

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹35,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/e57a4d
Deadline: May 27, 2021

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (SALES) AT BRAND SAMOSA

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹20,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/6a3f64
Application deadline: May 27, 2021

WEB DEVELOPMENT AT UKINDIAFED TECH

Location - Work From Home
Stipend: ₹8,000-₹12,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/991827
Deadline: May 27, 2021

UI/UX DESIGN AT SNAZZY ALIGN

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹30,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/20875e
Deadline: May 27, 2021

HR AT RK TRADING COMPANY

Location: Chandigarh, Delhi
Stipend: ₹5,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/c2a42b
Deadline: May 26, 2021

FRESHER JOBS TECHNICAL RECRUITER AT WONO INC

Location: Remote
Stipend: ₹5.1-₹6.1 lakh per annum
Link: internshala.com/i/99799a
Deadline: June 12, 2021
Skill(s): MS-Office, Recruitment, MS-Word, MS-Excel, English Proficiency (Spoken)

BUSINESS MARKETING MANAGER AT MENTORBOX

Location: Delhi, Pune, Mumbai
Stipend: ₹4.2-₹8.5 lakh per annum
Link: internshala.com/i/946e6f
Deadline: June 6, 2021
Skill(s): Social Media Marketing, English Proficiency (Spoken & Written)

IN BRIEF

WASTE COLLECTION WITH GEO MAPPING

A team of student researchers from Lovely Professional University have developed a vehicle controller for automatic waste collection in a controlled environment like universities, Government organisations and public places.

The vehicle controller is equipped with a geo-mapping feature capable of mapping the location of the bins and also monitoring the garbage levels of the bins to prevent waste overflow.

The entire system will cost around ₹30,000 when ready for production

SKILL QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

The teacher growth-focused ed-tech platform, Surasaa, has announced the introduction of two new UK-accredited

qualifications. These support the recently launched competency-based education policy 2020. The platform is planning to launch

35 more programmes in multiple delivery formats. The objective is to empower every teacher.

MIT-WPU FORAYS INTO E-EDUCATION SPACE

MIT World Peace University (MIT-WPU) launched its new online vertical — World Peace University RISE (WPU RISE) last week. The new venture aims to bring industry-relevant education in the areas of Science, Technology and Management to students.

"WPU RISE was launched

with the intent to expand MIT-WPU's reach and make quality education accessible to the youth of India and around the world. Our core belief is that education is the first step to trigger any form of change — small or monumental," said Rahul V Karad, Executive President, MIT-WPU, Pune.

GROWING HUMAN BRAIN TISSUES WITH BIOREACTOR

The The Indian Institute of Technology Madras and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) scientists have grown human brain tissues called organoids with help of a 3D printed Bioreactor that they developed.

The objective was to observe the brain tissues while they grow and develop, a technology that can potentially accelerate medical and therapeutic discoveries for diseases

such as cancer and neurological disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

The scientists came up with a novel solution, which let the cell grow uninterrupted. In this invention, a 3D printed micro-incubator and imaging chamber was made into a single palm-sized platform, which was successfully demonstrated for long-term human brain cells culture and real-time

imaging.

The findings of this research were recently published in the reputed, peer-reviewed international journal *Biomicrofluidics*. The Research Team included Ikram Khan (first author) and Professor Anil Prabhakar from IIT Madras and Chloe Delepine, Hayley Tsang, Vincent Pham, and Professor. Mriganka Sur from MIT.

This technology has been patented in India.

BOT TO HELP WITH VACCINE SLOTS AND PLASMA DONORS

Making it easier for citizens to get notification on availability of vaccination slot and plasma donors, Insurtech WIMWasure has launched a messaging bot on WhatsApp. Citizens can simply drop a text on the number along with their pin code and age and be notified as soon as slot is available which the user can book the slot on COWIN website. The facility is also available for registration and instant notification on availability of plasma donors in respective pin code area. The AI-enabled chatbot is making the process fast

and efficient by taking away the need to watch website or mobile application.

Ravinder Kumar, founder-CEO, WIMWasure said: "This user-friendly service will simplify searching for availability for vaccines, as well as locate plasma donors at the click of a finger. We appeal to people, who have recovered from COVID-19 to come forward, and register through a simple WhatsApp message and help save lives."

Visit <http://covid.wimwasure.com/> or send a message to +91 78386 34968

WORKSHOPS ON ART, DESIGN & VISUAL COMMUNICATION

The Uno Lona Academy, will be organising a series of workshops and talks under the title *BlendEd* in art and design education. These workshops and talks will be focusing on a diverse community of learners interested in the creative fields.

The workshops starts from May 21-July 25, 2021. Each weekend (Friday & Sunday) will have two workshops and one talk (Saturday). The tickets for the workshops range from ₹500-₹1200E. nrollment for the talks is free of cost.

Harsimran Juneja, Co-founder-director, The Uno Lona Academy said: "The attempt of the workshops and talks is to introduce some of these practices collectively, in a bite-sized format, to aid young learners to begin their journey or even delve deeper into the creative fields."

Fantastic challenge to play India: Kane on WTC final

PTI ■ LONDON

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson is excited to face India in the World Test Championships (WTC) final next month as he considers showdowns against Virat Kohli's men to be a "fantastic challenge".

India and New Zealand square-off in the final of the inaugural World Test Championships in Southampton from June 18.

"When we play against India, it has always been a fantastic challenge and so it is really exciting to be playing against them," Williamson said in a video posted by the ICC on its Twitter handle.

"It's really, really exciting to be involved in the final, obviously to win it would be that much better," said the 30-year-old considered one of the best current batsmen in the world.

Talking about championship and how it progressed, Williamson said, "We saw the contests in the WTC has brought real excitement."

"... The games were really tight such as in the India-Australia series and our series against Pakistan as well where you had to really fight hard to get the results, which is really great."

New Zealand pacer Neil Wagner admitted India possesses fast bowlers who can exploit the English conditions but said the wickets can change anytime and become flat also.

"India has a lot of quality fast bowlers who have done well in different conditions, they can swing (the ball) under overcast conditions but when the sun comes out it



(wicket) is flat and nothing happens.

"(English) Conditions can change throughout and so I am not getting carried away too much, trying to control the controllables."

India batsman Hanuma Vihari, who is in England for a county stint with Warwickshire, said it would be a great feeling to play for his country in the WTC final.

"I am excited but I would want to be in that moment and not to get too much carried away by the importance of the situation," he said.

"But as a sportsman, to play for India in the final of inaugural World Test Championships is always a great feeling," said the 27-year-old batsman who is currently playing county cricket in England.

The majority of the Kiwi players have reached the UK as they play a two-match series against England starting June 2 before the WTC final.

The Indians are expected to reach here in the first week of June after a hard quarantine in Mumbai.

Lincoln earlier this month. However, he played those fears on Monday, saying, "Obviously you don't want to have those little niggles and this (calf) niggle came about

later, [England is] still a great place to play cricket — probably one of the best tours to go on. Obviously being in a bubble is going to be a bit strange. Thirteen years ago, fond memories of that tour and still to date one of the best innings I've played in Manchester in the second Test," he said.

TAYLOR CONFIDENT

New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor said he is confident about overcoming a calf strain and becoming fit ahead of the two-Test series against hosts England and the WTC final against India.

New Zealand begin their campaign at Lord's when they take on England in the first Test from June 2.

The 37-year-old Taylor is in the spotlight as the dependable batsman recently suffered a calf strain during the Black Caps' training at their high-performance centre at

trying to get the hamstring right," said Taylor.

"It's part and parcel of being an International cricketer," Taylor told *cricinfo.com* as he along with Tim Southee, BJ Watling and Neil Wagner depart for the UK on Monday.

"More is made of it when you get older. If you get a calf or a hamstring injury at 32, nothing's made of it, but when you're 37, there's a few more headlines, but it is what it is, and I'm comfortable with where I'm at," added Taylor.

Taylor is relishing the opportunity to dominate in England, where, on his maiden International assignment in 2008, he smashed an unbeaten 154 against the hosts in the Test at Manchester.

"(A) hundred-odd Tests later, [England is] still a great place to play cricket — probably one of the best tours to go on. Obviously being in a bubble is going to be a bit strange. Thirteen years ago, fond memories of that tour and still to date one of the best innings I've played in Manchester in the second Test," he said.

SEIFERT TO FLY HOME

New Zealand wicket-keeper batsman Tim Seifert, who contracted Covid-19 during the currently-suspended IPL in India, has tested negative for the infection now and is on his way back home, his national coach Gary Stead has revealed.

Seifert represented Kolkata Knight Riders and tested positive for the virus on May 8.

"I heard from Tim just a little while ago. I think the really encouraging thing is he's tested negative and my understanding is he's on a flight out of India pretty quickly as well," Stead was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"I don't know how long it's going to take him to get back to New Zealand or where he's heading via, but it's great news for Tim, that for a start his health is on the improve anyway, to the point where he's not testing positive anymore," added the head coach.

As per the report, an NZ Cricket spokesperson also confirmed that Seifert had left India to begin his journey home.

England rest IPL stars for NZ Tests

London: England on Tuesday rested IPL stars including Jos Buttler and Jonny Bairstow for the upcoming two-Test series against New Zealand while Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes were not considered for selection due to injuries.

England named a 15-man squad for the series starting June 2.

"Multi-format players Moeen Ali, Jonathan Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran and Chris Woakes are rested after completing a quarantine period following the cancellation of the Indian Premier League earlier this month.

"They will spend some time resting before joining up with their respective counties in due course," said the ECB in a statement referring to the four players who had to undergo a 10-day quarantine upon their return from India.

Gloucestershire wicketkeeper-batsman James Bracey and Sussex seamer Ollie Robinson have been called up to the Test squad for the first time.

Both have been in impressive form during the early stages of the County Championship.

Bracey has scored 478 Championship runs so far in this campaign at an average of 53, while Robinson has taken 29 wickets at an average of 14.

There was a recall for Somerset all-rounder Craig Overton, who last featured for England in a Test match in September 2019 against Australia at Emirates Old Trafford, and he will be looking to add to his four caps.

England head coach Chris Silverwood said: "The summer of Test cricket will be fascinating. Playing the top two teams in the world, in New Zealand and India, is perfect preparation for us as we continue to improve and progress towards an Ashes series in Australia at the back end of the year.

"With several players not available through injury or being rested for the New Zealand series, it is an opportunity for us to reward those who have been on the fringes of England squads over the past 12 months."

Squad: Joe Root (captain) James Anderson, James Bracey, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Zak Crawley, Ben Foakes, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Craig Overton, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Dom Sibley, Olly Stone, Mark Wood. PTI



Saha recovers from Covid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha has recovered from Covid-19 and will be available for India's tour of England next month.

Saha has reached his home in Kolkata after completing over a fortnight-long quarantine at a Delhi hotel. He was picked for the England-bound squad subject to fitness.

The 36-year-old was among the players who contracted the dreaded virus in



the currently-suspended IPL while playing for SunRisers Hyderabad.

"Wriddhiman is back home yesterday after two and half weeks of hotel quarantine in Delhi," a source close to the player said.

Saha will have to return another negative RT-PCR test before joining the pre-departure bio-bubble in Mumbai, where the squad will undergo hard quarantine before boarding the flight to England.

Nitish ready for Int'l cricket



PTI ■ MUMBAI

After creating a space for himself in both the domestic circuit and the IPL, Delhi and Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Nitish Rana feels ready for International arena, hoping to get his "reward" when the Indian team is picked for July's tour of Sri Lanka.

India, sans stars such as Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, will be touring Sri Lanka for a white-ball series in July.

"It is there at the back of my mind that my name should come (in the squad) and I am prepared for that because I feel my name would come," Nitish

told PTI in an interview when asked whether he is hoping for a call-up.

"If you pick and see my record for the last three years in white-ball — be it domestic or the IPL, I have performed well and I feel that I will get the reward for it today or tomorrow.

"And I feel I am ready for International cricket and I am waiting for that... like they say one call away... I am waiting for that call..." added the 27-year-old left-handed batsman, who also bowls off-break.

Rana has scored 2,266 runs from 38 First-Class games, averaging over 40.

India is set to travel to Sri

Lanka for a T20 and ODI series and the team would comprise all white-ball specialists as the Test team would be playing in England at the same time.

Rana, who scored 201 runs from seven matches in the currently-suspended IPL also reflected on the season.

"To be very honest, from the last 3-4 years, it has been a pattern for me that I start the season well, in mid-season, I have 2-3 flop innings and then at the end of the season I play 1-2 innings well.

"So always, the total (runs) scored are in between 330-400," he said.

According to Rana, his hunger to score runs used to vanish after three-four matches and the coaches advised him to watch that aspect.

"I added many skills mentally in my game and normal life. I felt that in the last 2-3 years, I used to become very happy that I am performing well and it should continue, but the hunger to score runs used to finish. "...My coaches said a hungry Nitish Rana should stay alive, it will make you consistent," he elaborated.

"It is not guaranteed that you will score runs in every match but the ratio improves."

Oz bowlers deny knowing 2018 ball-tampering plot

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian bowlers, including top pacer Pat Cummins, on Tuesday asserted that they were unaware of the 2018 ball-tampering plot after being caught in a storm triggered by incident protagonist Cameron Bancroft's recent comments hinting at their involvement.

Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon, who were all part of the team during the ill-fated series against South Africa, issued a joint statement to claim innocence and call for an end to "rumour-mongering and innuendo".

"We pride ourselves on our honesty. So it's been disappoint-



ing to see that our integrity has been questioned by some journalists and past players in recent days in regard to the Cape Town Test of 2018," the statement read.

"...We feel compelled to put the key facts on the record again: We did not know a foreign substance was taken onto

the field to alter the condition of the ball until we saw the images on the big screen at Newlands."

Bancroft, in a recent interview, had claimed that team's bowlers could have been aware of the illegal plot. He has since backtracked from his statement after Cricket Australia offered a reinvestigation.

The quartet added that both umpires officiating on the field — Nigel Llong and Richard Illingworth — had inspected the ball and did not see any damage.

"The umpires during that Test match, Nigel Llong and Richard Illingworth, both very respected and experienced umpires, inspected the ball after the images surfaced on the

TV coverage and did not change it because there was no sign of damage," they said. The four bowlers said they learned valuable lessons and it is time to move on from the issue.

"None of this excuses what happened on the field that day at Newlands. It was wrong and it should never have happened.

"We've all learned valuable lessons and we'd like to think the public can see a change for the better in terms of the way we play, the way we behave and respect the game.

"We respectfully request an end to the rumour-mongering and innuendo. It has gone on too long and it is time to move on."

India W to play Test in Aus

New Delhi: Indian women's cricket team is set to play a Test in Australia after playing one in England next month.

India, who play their first Test in seven years from June 16 in England, will play another one during the tour of Australia. They will also play ODI and T20I matches Down Under.

India last played a Test against Australia in 2006.

"England and Australia are the two teams that still play Tests and going

forward you will see a Test slotted in when they visit India or when India tour the two countries," a BCCI official said on Tuesday.

"The idea was floated on the sidelines of the men's pink ball Test and later discussed in the Apex Council meeting (last month)."

The tour of Australia is not yet announced but Australian pacer Megan Schutt said earlier this month the series is planned for mid-September.

De Villiers decides 'retirement is final'



PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Cricket South Africa on Tuesday announced that AB de Villiers won't be coming out of International retirement ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup in India, saying that he has decided "once and for all" to not change his mind.

Putting to rest speculations around his comeback, CSA said that "discussions with AB de Villiers have concluded with the batsman deciding once and for all, that his retirement will remain final."

The statement was reportedly made after CSA announced the team for upcoming tour of the West Indies, though it focussed largely on the squads for the two Test matches and five T20Is in the Caribbean islands rather than de Villiers' retirement.

In May 2018, de Villiers had announced his retirement from international cricket. He played 114 Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20Is before announcing the surprise decision.

However, last month the 37-year-old versatile cricketer said it would be "fantastic" to make an International comeback ahead of the T20 World Cup.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India in October-November.

West Indies will be South Africa's first bilateral tour to the Caribbean since 2010, followed by a tri-series in 2016 that also featured Australia.

This tour, which had to be rescheduled from 2020, will include two Tests and five T20 Internationals from June 10 to July 3 in St Lucia and Grenada respectively.

Andujar spoils Federer's comeback party

AFP ■ GENEVA

Roger Federer lost the first match of his comeback proper on Tuesday as the Swiss tennis great tumbled out of the Geneva Open on his first outing in two months.

Federer lost 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 in the second round to Spanish clay court specialist Pablo Andujar to wreck the 39-year-old's hopes of stringing a run of matches together ahead of the French Open, Wimbledon and the Tokyo Olympics.

Federer returned to the courts in March, having been out for more than a year following two knee surgeries, winning his first match in Doha before losing his second.

He was hoping to find some form on the Geneva clay but tumbled at the first hurdle.

Federer seemed at ease in his movement but took a bit of time to get into his groove, getting only 40 percent of his first serves in during the first set, which he lost by overhitting a second serve.



Roger Federer returns a ball to Pablo Andujar during their second round match. AP

won his first service game to love then broke for a 2-1 lead.

He began to show flashes of the old magic, throwing in occasional backhand drop shots.

He overhit his first set point but made no mistake with the second.

Federer broke to go 2-1 up in the second set, drawing Andujar to the net and beating him with a backhand passing shot. Andujar broke back to make it 4-4 and held serve to

leave Federer serving to stay in the match.

Andujar had two match points but Federer pulled it back to deuce before misfiring to hand his opponent victory.

Federer shook his head as he walked to the net, while Andujar, 35, looked like he could not believe what he had pulled off, in what was remarkably their first match despite the Spaniard having turned professional in 2003.

Serena out

AFP ■ PARMA

Former world number one Serena Williams crashed out of the WTA tournament in Parma on Tuesday when she was beaten in straight sets 7-6, 6-2 in her second round match by Katerina Siniakova.

In Monday's first round in Parma she had comfortably seen off teenager Lisa Pigato but the 25-year-old Siniakova, ranked 68 in singles but a former world number one in doubles, was a tougher proposition.

Williams fired down five aces but also threw in seven double faults as she struggled to get her service game working.

Siniakova took the first set tiebreak to four and then broke Williams three times in the second set as she wrapped up the match in one hour 37 minutes.

Hetmyer, Russell return to Windies T20 squad

PTI ■ ST JOHN'S

Star players Andre Russell, Chris Gayle, and Shimron Hetmyer were on Tuesday named in West Indies' provisional 18-man squad for the back-to-back five-match T20 International home series against South Africa, Australia and Pakistan.

Russell and Hetmyer last played in 2020 while Gayle was part of the series against Sri Lanka in March.

The expanded squad maintains the blend of experienced players with exciting young talent as the West Indies continue preparations in the build-up to the defence of their ICC T20 World Cup title, to be held in India in October-November.

Sheldon Cottrell, Hetmyer, Russell, Oshane Thomas and Hayden Walsh Jr return alongside the majority of the squad who featured in the 2-1 T20I series victory against Sri Lanka. Kieron Pollard will lead the side.

The provisional squad will quarantine and train in St Lucia ahead of the

first T20I series against South Africa starting on June 26 at the Grenada National Cricket Stadium. The official squad will subsequently be selected and announced ahead of each Series.

CWI's lead selector, Roger Harper, explained the thinking behind naming this squad.

"The provisional T20I squad was put together with all T20I home series matches against South Africa, Australia and Pakistan in mind. This gives us the opportunity to continue to build towards the upcoming World Cup and to determine our best squad and our ideal eleven."

Squad: Kieron Pollard (Captain), Nicholas Pooran, Fabian Allen, Dwayne Bravo, Sheldon Cottrell, Andre Edwards, Andre Fletcher, Chris Gayle, Shimron Hetmyer, Jason Holder, Akeal Hosein, Evin Lewis, Obec McCoy, Andre Russell, Lendl Simmons, Kevin Sinclair, Oshane Thomas, Hayden Walsh Jr.

