

**OPINION 6**  
INDIA IS VERY MUCH A MATURE DEMOCRACY

**WORLD 8**  
ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES KILL 6, LEVEL LARGE FAMILY HOME IN GAZA

**SPORT 12**  
BENZEMA, MÜLLER RETURN FOR EURO 2020

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FASCINATED WITH AI PACINO: ABHISHEK 10 VIVACITY

## CAPSULE

**IT MIN DIRECTS WHATSAPP TO WITHDRAW NEW POLICY**  
New Delhi: The Government has ordered WhatsApp to withdraw its controversial new privacy policy, saying the changes undermine the sacrosanct values of privacy, data security and rights and interests of citizens. P9

**RECORD 20L CORONA TESTS DONE IN 24 HRS**  
New Delhi: More than 20 lakh Covid-19 tests were conducted across the country in a span of 24 hours, which is a global record and the highest ever done in a single day in India, the Union Health Ministry said.

**IMPRESSED WITH BIHAR APP, PM SEEKS DETAILS**  
Patna: An innovative Home Isolation Tracking (HIT) App developed by the Bihar Government to keep an eye on the condition of Covid patients recuperating at their residence has drawn special praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**FORMER NSG CHIEF DIES OF COVID-19**  
New Delhi: Former NSG director general JK Dutt, who headed the commando force during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, died on Wednesday due to complications arising out of Covid-19, officials said.

**ED FILES CASE AGAINST NAVNEET KALRA**  
New Delhi: The ED has filed a money laundering case against businessman Navneet Kalra and his associates in a recent case of alleged hoarding and black marketing of oxygen concentrators, officials said.

## IMD rejects ONGC disaster excuse on cyclone path

26 bodies found; Navy searching for missing 49

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a tragedy that unfolded in the aftermath of Cyclone Tauktae ravaging the Maharashtra coast two days ago, the Indian Navy on Wednesday recovered 26 bodies from the accommodation barge Pappa-305. The Navy continued a massive search for 49 missing oil workers in and around the ONGC's Mumbai High oilfields in the choppy Arabian Sea, through its warships, reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters.

While ONGC has said the tragedy occurred because the cyclone changed its path, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has rejected the claims.

IMD sources said they warned ONGC frequently about the approaching cyclone. Earlier, the ONGC rejected reports that it didn't "remove" barges after repeated warnings from the Indian Coast Guard.

Meanwhile, in a hitherto most extensive off-shore search and rescue operations that saw the Navy and Indian Coast



INS Kochi arrives at Mumbai Naval Dockyard with the rescued crew members of barge P305 in Mumbai on Wednesday PTI

Guard (ICG) rescue more than 600 crew and oil workers during the past three days, the bodies of the 22 workers were brought to the Mumbai harbour by INS Kochi, a stealth guided missile destroyer.

In all, 261 persons were on board Pappa-305. Of these, the Navy has rescued 186 so far. "As of now, 186 crew members of Accommodation barge P-305, and two from Tug 'Varaprada' have been rescued

by Indian Navy ships and aircraft. A total of 26 mortal remains of the crew of Barge P305 have been recovered so far. Now a total of 49 persons are missing," Defence spokesperson Commander Mehul Karnik said, while confirming the death of 26 persons on board the accommodation barge Pappa-305.

As the Indian Navy's Search and Rescue (SAR) operations off Mumbai and Gujarat

entered its third day, three warships INS Kolkata, INS Betwa and INS Beas were in the vicinity of Mumbai High looking for the survivors.

As part of the intensified search operation, a P-81 is a long-range, multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft carried out reconnaissance trips over the designated area even as SeaKing helicopters launched search operations.

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## Take shots 3 months after Covid recovery

Lactating women must take job: Guidelines

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Amid widespread confusion, the Centre on Wednesday sought to bring in clarity over the timing of vaccination for those infected with Covid-19. Those who have been infected with Covid-19 can take their vaccines three months after fully clinically recovering from the disease. Those who have been infected after the first dose should also wait for three months for the second dose.

While those who have been



treated with plasma therapy should also get vaccinated after a gap of three months, people with any other serious general illness requiring hospitalisation or ICU care should also wait for 4-8 weeks before getting the Covid-19 vaccine, the Ministry outlined.

The Union Health Ministry issued a statement in this regard after accepting recommendations from the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC). NEGVAC is providing guidance to the Government on prioritisation of population groups, procurement and inventory management, vaccine selection and vaccine delivery and tracking mechanism.

The Ministry added there will be no requirement for Rapid Antigen Test screening of vaccine recipients prior to

vaccination against Covid-19. At the same time, the Ministry said Covid-19 vaccination is recommended for all lactating women and an individual can donate blood after 14 days of either receiving anti-coronavirus shot or testing RT-PCR negative, if suffering from the disease.

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<b>Covid-19 IN INDIA</b>	
<b>TOTAL CASES:</b> 2,57,69,174 (+2,73,828)	
<b>DEATHS:</b> 2,87,101 (+3,821)	
<b>RECOVERED:</b> 2,23,44,007 (+3,64,112)	
<b>ACTIVE:</b> 31,27,640	
<b>MAHA:</b> 54,67,537 (+34,031)	
<b>K'TAKA:</b> 23,06,655 (+34,281)	
<b>KERALA:</b> 22,33,469 (+32,762)	
<b>UP:</b> 16,44,849 (+7,186)	
<b>DELHI:</b> 14,06,719 (+3,846)	

## Bootleggers pose as media men end up in police custody

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested four men from Delhi's South Extension area on the charges of selling liquor at high rates amid the lockdown. The bootleggers posed as media professionals.

The accused have been identified as Amit Malik (36), Ram Ashish (25), Pawan Kaushik (41) and Mohit Baisoya (21). An FIR was registered against the accused at Kotla Mubarakpur police station after 42 beer bottles and 18 bottles of whiskey were recovered from their possession.

The police said Baisoya, a Delhi Civil Defence employee, escorted his accomplices. He helped them escape whenever they were stopped by the police while supplying liquor.

According to a senior police official, on Tuesday night, when a police team was patrolling South Extension-1, head constable Satender received inputs about the four-some bootlegging liquor.

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## Kejriwal doesn't speak for India: MEA Delhi CM's remarks on Singapore strain spark political brickbats

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's comments about a new coronavirus variant in Singapore kicked off a diplomatic row on Wednesday with the city Government strongly registering its protest over the "unfounded assertions" after summoning Indian High Commissioner P Kumaran.

This led the Centre to term Kejriwal as "irresponsible" and "who doesn't speak for India", prompting a counter from the latter's deputy.

Singapore's Foreign Ministry said it was disappointed that a prominent political figure had "failed to ascertain the facts before making such claims".

In an effort to assuage the feelings of Singapore, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, in a series of tweets, said Singapore and India have been solid partners in combating the pandemic and appreciated the country's role as a logistics hub and oxygen supplier.

"Their gesture of deploying military aircraft to help us

speaks of our exceptional relationship. However, irresponsible comments from those who should know better can damage long-standing partnerships. So, let me clarify — Delhi CM does not speak for India," he said.

Continued on Page 2

## Govt doing cheap politics: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the BJP and its Government of doing "cheap politics" over Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's comments about a "new" Singapore Covid strain, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the Central Government is interested in playing "murky" politics.

"The unabated ridicule by the BJP indicates the Centre is more worried about Singapore instead of worrying about how this new strain may adversely affect our children," he said.

Continued on Page 2

## Singapore strain buzz based on local Covid transmission

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The buzz and the controversy in India over a purported new coronavirus strain in Singapore owe its origin to the city-state registering 38 new cases on Sunday. The facts that all are locally-transmitted cases and Singapore's highest single-day has spiked since September 2020, and moreover they include four children, have aggravated the concerns.

Singapore has denied the existence of any new strain there saying the strain prevalent in many of the Covid-19 cases in recent weeks is the B.1.617.2 variant, which was first detected in India. A new strain has also not been scientifically established.

However, the 38 new cases are being said to be locally-transmitted cases with the four children linked to a cluster at a tuition centre.

Also, Singapore has been reporting zero or single-digit infections for months; its number of cases are significantly lower than other countries in Southeast Asia and most importantly, its case fatality ratio is the lowest in the world.

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## CBI drags Didi to court for intimidating investigators

Ministers stay put in jail, HC to hear Narada case today

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Two senior Trinamool Congress Ministers, an ex-Minister and an MLA will have to stay in judicial custody for at least a day more with the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday adjourning till Thursday the hearing in the Narada sting case.

Ministers Subroto Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, MLA Madan Mitra and former Minister Sovan Chatterjee were on Monday morning arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation proving the Narada sting operation case that took place in 2014 and was published in 2016.

Incidentally all the four leaders have been part of Mamata Banerjee Cabinet, besides being the former Mayors of the heritage Kolkata Municipal Corporation.



Police personnel at the Calcutta High Court during a hearing on the Narada scam case, in Kolkata on Wednesday PTI

The Division Bench of acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Arijit Banerjee is hearing the bail petition of the four accused. Hours after they were granted bail by a designated CBI court — eight hours after their arrest — the High Court had stayed their release late on Monday evening and fixed a hearing on Wednesday.

Apart from objecting to the grant of bail, the CBI on Wednesday set up a new argument seeking the transfer of the case on the plea that the accused were influential persons and could manipulate trial proceedings.

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## Tauktae soaks northwest India; more rain in store for Capital

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Most parts of north-west India, including Delhi, Uttarakhand, Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, north Rajasthan, and some parts of Himachal Pradesh, received moderate to heavy rain on Wednesday as Cyclone Tauktae's remnants linger over north India and it will continue till Thursday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also issued an orange alert for Delhi, predicting "heavy" to "very heavy" rainfall in parts of the Capital with winds gusting up to 60 kilometres per hour. In an impact-based advisory, it predicted waterlogging in low-lying areas, traffic disruption and uprooting of small plants.

Meanwhile, in less than a week, another cyclone "Yaas", is likely to form over Bay of



Vehicles ply on a road amid rainfall in Delhi on Wednesday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Bengal around May 25 and is expected to hit the east coast by May 26-27. It was on May 17 that "Extremely Severe Cyclone" Tauktae hit southern Gujarat and its remnants continue to head towards the

plains of north India. According to the IMD, northwest India has been witnessing moderate to heavy rainfall since Wednesday morning.

Continued on Page 2

## Raj first State to tag black fungus as epidemic

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As coronavirus-hit India now braces itself for the new black fungus or mucormycosis nightmare, Rajasthan on Wednesday became the first State to declare the rare but potentially fatal fungal infection as an epidemic even as Haryana and Gujarat a few days ago categorised it under the notifiable disease to ensure its better management amid the deadly second wave of Covid.

An epidemic denotes a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time while a notifiable disease is any disease that is required by law to be reported to Government authorities.

As of Wednesday, Rajasthan had nearly 100 cases of black fungus, while Haryana and Gujarat had 115 cases and 900 cases respectively.

In fact, many other States too across the country like

Maharashtra (1,500-2,000 cases) Karnataka (97), Uttarakhand (38), Uttar Pradesh (50), Telangana (50), Delhi (130) Odisha (10), Madhya Pradesh (281) and Bihar (30) are reporting a spike in the black fungus cases among recovering and recovered Covid-19 patients.

Most of the States have already started reporting mortalities in the fungus-infected patients. The fungus mostly attacks the virus-recovered immune-compromised or diabetic patients. Unsupervised and unregulated drug usage besides lack of surveillance of blood sugar levels is being attributed to the rare disease' mortality rate at 50 per cent.

Health experts are expecting to see more mucormycosis cases in the next few weeks amid a devastating second wave of the coronavirus in India, known as the diabetes capital of the world.

For instance, health experts



A doctor attends a black fungus infected patient at mucormycosis ward of Government ENT hospital in Hyderabad on Wednesday PTI

have warned that Bihar may see between 1,000 and 1,500 patients with black fungus by the end of May this year on the basis of the rate of infection of Covid witnessed in rural areas. The situation is likely to be no different in other medical facilities-starved villages in the

country which are witnessing a surge in Covid-19 cases.

As the cases spike, the treatment drugs like Amphotericin B are drying up from the market across the States, including the national Capital and NCR, resulting in rampant black marketeering of

the drug. An anti-fungal intravenous injection which costs 3,500 rupees (\$48) a dose and has to be administered every day for up to eight weeks is the only drug effective against the disease. Social media feeds and WhatsApp groups are already flooded with SOS messages from across the country from the desperate needy.

States are gearing up to deal with the new threat. Telangana has dedicated its two hospitals to exclusively treat the cases of black fungus. "A separate 250-bed mucormycosis ward has been established in Rajkot," said Dr RS Trivedi, medical superintendent of Surat Medical College in Gujarat. Also, many States have started floating tenders for Amphotericin B, Posaconazole, and Isavuconazole with some of them regulating their allocation besides setting up expert panels to tackle the disease.

Continued on Page 2

# Bihar's Covid tracking App wins PM's praise

**Patna:** An innovative Home Isolation Tracking (HIT) App developed by the Bihar Government to keep an eye on the condition of Covid patients recuperating at their residence has drawn special praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Modi came to know about the HIT App while talking to Patna district magistrate Chandrasekar Singh during an interaction with officials of several districts of nine states on Tuesday. Impressed with the concept, the prime minister ordered to send its details to the union health ministry for its utilisation across the country, Singh said.

"The health department has sent one-page detail of the HIT Covid App to the union Health Ministry," Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Pratyaya Amrit told PTI on

Wednesday.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had launched the "HIT Covid App" on Monday to reach out to coronavirus patients undergoing treatment for the deadly disease in home isolation. As part of the project, health workers at the grassroot level visit patients in home isolation to record their temperature and oxygen level on a daily basis and the data is fed to the App. Based on the information, necessary action is taken by the health department for the ailing persons.

The HIT App has been developed by the Bihar State Electronics Development Corporation (BELTRON) under the guidance of the health department.

Amrit said the App was initially launched in five districts on a trial basis and seeing its success, it has been

expanded across the state.

A nodal officer has been appointed in every district, where a special team has been constituted for better upkeep of home quarantined sufferers.

As part of the exercise, 80,000 ASHA or Auxiliary Nurse Midwife workers and 15,000 rural health workers trained by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) have been engaged for a door-to-door survey of Covid patients in home isolation, the additional chief secretary added.

NIOS is an autonomous body which functions under the guidance of the union ministry of education. It provides a number of vocational, life enrichment and community oriented courses besides general and academic courses at secondary and senior secondary level.



Police distribute food among bus drivers and conductors from Kerala, stranded due to Covid-19 lockdown, in Nagaon district of Assam on Wednesday

# Maha records 51,457 recoveries in 24 hours

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra recorded 51,457 Covid-19 recoveries on Wednesday, even as the pandemic claimed 594 lives and left 34,031 people infected in various parts of the State.

As 51,457 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the State after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went from 49,27,480 to 49,78,937. The recovery rate in the State went up from 90.69 per cent to 91.06 per cent.

A day after Maharashtra logged a staggering 679 deaths and 28,438, the daily deaths dropped by 85, while the infections went down by 5593.

With 516 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 83777 to 84,293. Similarly, with 34,031 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 54,33,506 to 54,67,537.

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 4,19,727 to 4,01,695.

The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.54 per cent.

With 57 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 14316 to 14,373, while the infected cases went up by a relatively low 1329 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,90,023 to 6,91,352.

The situation in Pune improved vastly as the "active cases" dropped from 72089 to 67,295.

Mumbai with 29,445 active cases stood second in the state, followed by Thane (28,383), Nagpur (23,272), Solapur (20,449), Ahmednagar (20,351), Satara (19,139), Nashik (18,432), Beed (10,767), Chandrapur (9,517), Jalgaon (9,402), Aurangabad (7,337), Latur (5,982), Osmanabad (5,977), Buldhana (5,258) and Jalna (5,227).

Of the 3,18,74,364 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 54,67,537 have tested positive (17.15 per cent) for Covid-19 until Wednesday.

Currently, 30,59,537 people are in home quarantine while 23,828 people are in institutional quarantine.

# ICMR advises against indiscriminate Covid home testing using RAT kit

**New Delhi:** The ICMR on Wednesday advised against indiscriminate Covid-19 home testing using Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs), saying it should be used only on symptomatic individuals and on the immediate contacts of laboratory confirmed positive cases. All individuals who test positive through the RAT kit may be considered as true positives and no repeat testing is required, the Indian Council of Medical Research said in an advisory.

"Home testing by RAT is advised only in symptomatic individuals and immediate contacts of laboratory confirmed positive cases. Indiscriminate testing is not advised," the country's apex health research body said.

"All symptomatic individuals who test negative by RAT should get themselves immediately tested by RT-PCR. This is especially important as the RATs are likely to miss few positive cases presenting with a low viral load.

# Khadi wins tribunal's nod against misuse of brand name by any firms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Khadi and Village Industries Commission's (KVIC) efforts to prevent "unauthorized" and "fraudulent" use of brand name "Khadi" has now found legal backing from the courts. Observing that "Khadi" was not a generic name to be used by private individuals or firms, the National Internet Exchange of India Domain Dispute Policy (INDRP) Arbitration Tribunal in Delhi has permanently restrained any individual from using the brand name Khadi. The order came on a complaint filed by KVIC challenging a domain name www.khadi.in being run by a Delhi-based person namely Mr Jitendra Jain.

"It is an undisputed fact that KVIC, the complainant, is the legitimate owner of the trademark "Khadi"/"Khadi India" and has acquired ownership in terms of the provisions of Section 17 of Trade Marks Act 1999... The Tribunal also does not concur

with the submission of the respondent that "Khadi" is a generic word and that respondent is entitled to use it. In the opinion of the Tribunal, the impugned domain name (www.khadi.in) is a trademark backed domain name and it not only violates the provisions of the Trade Marks Act 1999 but also violates Clause 4 of the INDRP policy issued by the NIXI," the Tribunal said.

"It is directed that the domain name www.khadi.in be transferred in favor of the complainant (KVIC)... the respondent and any person acting on its behalf are permanently restrained from using the domain name or any other deceptively similar trademark which may amount to infringement of the complainant's registered trademark and also from doing any other thing which is likely to create confusion and deception with the goods/services of KVIC, the complainant," the order dated 3rd may 2021 passed by Shri Pankaj Garg, sole Arbitrator read.

# Take shots 3 months after ...

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These decisions were taken by the Ministry based on the fresh recommendations by NEGVC and have also been communicated to the States and Union Territories, an official from the Ministry said adding that these suggestions are based on the evolving situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and emerging global scientific evidence and experience.

Also, Covid-19 vaccination should be deferred by three months after recovery in individuals having lab test proven SARS-CoV-2 illness while vaccination in Covid-19 patients who have been given anti-SARS-2 monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma should be deferred by three months from the date of discharge from the hospital. The Government has just dropped Plasma therapy from the Covid treatment protocol. According to the ministry, it is advisable to receive both the doses irrespective of past history of Covid infection as this will help in developing a strong immune response against the disease.

Regarding vaccination of pregnant women, the matter is under discussion and further deliberation by the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI), it said.

"States have been advised to ensure effective dissemination of the information to service providers as well as the general public, through use of all channels of information and communication in the local languages," the official added. States have also been advised to undertake training of the vaccination staff at all levels.

# Raj first State...

From Page 1

Earlier this week, the shortage was also flagged by hospitals in Gurugram, leading to the Haryana Government forming a panel to procure the injections hospitals have been using to treat recovering Covid patients who have developed mucormycosis (black fungus).

The disease is causing blindness in some cases. If left uncared for, mucormycosis may also turn fatal, stated an advisory released by the ICMR and Union Health Ministry even as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is developing guidelines to treat black fungus or mucormycosis which is aggravated by excessive usage of

steroids given by doctors for Covid-19 treatment.

The disease is caused by a set of micro-organisms known as mucormycetes, which are present naturally in the environment, seen mostly in soil and in decaying organic matter like leaves, compost and piles. People catch mucormycosis by coming in contact with the fungal spores in the environment. It can also develop on the skin after the fungus enters the skin through a cut, scrape, burn, or another type of skin trauma.

Doctors said most of their patients arrive late, when they are already losing vision, and doctors have to surgically remove the eye to stop the infection from reaching the brain.

# Centre doing... Bootleggers pose as media men end up...

From Page 1

The senior AAP leader also slammed the centre for "inadequate" and "substandard" Covid-19 crisis management.

"Doctors and scientists are warning the nation against the new strain that has emerged in Singapore. Even the Supreme Court has mentioned that the next wave will adversely impact children but our Central Government is least concerned about the chances of a third wave or how our children will have to bear the brunt of it," he said.

"The Central Government needs to prioritise our children first and foremost instead of playing politics and fixing its image abroad. The Delhi Government has always been committed and will continue to commit itself for the safety of our children. We want to protect and save our children from this deadly crisis. Our nation is worried for our children instead of how Singapore views us," he said.

"Further inputs were developed and it came to light that the four men would come in their vehicles to supply liquor to customers near an underpass close to AIIMS Gate No. 2. Subsequently, a raid was conducted and the four men were apprehended near AIIMS underpass Ring Road when they arrived at the spot in a car with their liquor supply," he said.

"A fake media ID card carried by Malik was recovered. He has previously been involved in four cases including that of assault and eve-teasing. A car and three scooters were also recovered," said police adding that further investigation is underway.

# CBI drags Didi to court for intimidating investigators

From Page 1

Underscoring its "influential status" claim the CBI further pleaded how hundreds of people gheraoed the Nizam Palace on Monday, pelted stones and held the area to ransom denying the investigating agencies any chance to physically produce the accused in the court.

CBI counsels said how the Agency could not produce them in the court "as a result of the terror created by and at the behest of the arrested accused persons" by the presence Chief Minister and the other leaders.

Refuting the CBI's argument State Government's counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi said that while Banerjee had gone to Nizam Palace to express her anguish the commotion outside the Nizam Palace was not linked to the legality of whether bail could be granted to the accused.

The TMC counsels also raised the issue of natural justice --- audi alteram partem --- and questioned the propriety of staying the bail petition of the four accused without hear-

ing the other side. "After they were granted bail by the lower court the High Court on Monday had given a stay ex parte which we have questioned," said a TMC lawyer.

The CBI which is also investigating the cow racketing, coal smuggling and a multitude of chit fund cases involving the names of some powerful politicians of the State on Wednesday raised the "influential persons" angle seeking transfer of the Narada case to the High Court. The Agency could also try to get the case transferred out of Bengal, TMC leadership feared asking its supporters to remain calm. There was no agitation on Wednesday.

The bail application would come up for hearing on Wednesday, TMC advocates said questioning the need for the accused to be kept behind the bar at a time when the chargesheet had been filed "meaning thereby that the investigation process is over and they will not be needed for further investigation."

# Singapore strain buzz based on local Covid...

From Page 1

"Some of these (virus) mutations are much more virulent, and they seem to attack the younger children," Singapore's Education Minister Chan Chun Sing has said. "None of the children who have contracted the virus are seriously ill and a few have mild symptoms, he added. The B.1.617 strain appeared to affect children more, said Health Minister Ong Ye Kung.

According to experts, the first wave of the pandemic mostly affected those above 60 years of age. The second wave affected the younger generation. Now that most adults are either infected or vaccinated, it is expected that children may be at risk in the third wave.

The highly contagious B.1.617 variant was first detected in India and has now been found in 44 nations. Singapore, which has banned flights from India since April 24, has a total of 61,651 confirmed cases, 61,134 recoveries and 31 deaths till May 19, 2021.

The Singapore Government has ordered that anyone entering Singapore from places other than Australia, Brunei, mainland China, New Zealand, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau will have to spend 21 days in quarantine in a Government facility and not at home. If anybody found violating the quarantine period, s/he will have to pay a fine of Singapore \$10,000 or up to six months in jail, or both.

# Kejriwal doesn't speak for India: MEA

From Page 1

Singapore's reaction came a day after Kejriwal said a variant of Covid-19 found in that country was particularly harmful to children and could cause a third wave of infections in India.

"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 had said.

Giving details of the Indian envoy's meeting with officials of the Singapore foreign ministry there, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said Kumaran conveyed to the Singapore Government that the Delhi Chief Minister had no competence to comment on Covid variants.

"Singapore Government called in our High Commissioner today to convey strong objection to Delhi CM's tweet on "Singapore variant". The High Commissioner clarified that Delhi CM had no competence to pronounce on Covid variants or civil aviation policy," Bagchi tweeted.

The Singapore Foreign Ministry said there is no "Singapore variant" and that the strain prevalent in many of the Covid-19 cases in recent weeks is the B.1.617.2 variant, which was first

detected in India.

It also said in a statement, the Ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) "regrets the unfounded assertions made on Facebook and Twitter by Kejriwal that a variant of Covid-19 found in Singapore was particularly harmful to children and could cause a third wave of infections in India. MFA is disappointed that a prominent political figure had failed to ascertain the facts before making such claims".

Meanwhile, Singapore's envoy to New Delhi Simon Wong cautioned that his country has a law for Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) to mitigate misinformation. "We reserve right to invoke POFMA on assertions made by CM (Delhi). However, we're satisfied with the Indian government's clarification," he said.

The envoy also assured that Kejriwal's comments will not impact India and Singapore's fight against corona and said the ongoing airlifting of oxygen containers and medical equipment in the last two days in an indicator.

Putting behind the so-called controversy, Wong said, "We were happy to see Jaishankar had put 3 points that Singapore and India are solid partners in the fight against Covid, that Delhi CM does not speak for India, and that the comments made were irresponsible."

# IMD rejects...

From Page 1

Earlier in the day, the Defence spokesperson said: "All the 137 on board barge GAL Constructor were rescued yesterday and dropped in INS Shikra, the Naval helibase at Colaba in Mumbai and ICG air station in Daman.

"Besides, all the 196 on board Support Station 3 and 101 in Sagar Bhushan are safe and accounted for. Both have been secured. Those on board are being brought to the shores," Commander Karnik said.

According to the Defence spokesperson, the Indian Naval ships and aircraft are currently undertaking SAR of the missing crew members of Accommodation Barge P-305, which sank on Monday 35 miles off Mumbai.

INS Kochi, Kolkata, Beas, Betwa, Teg, P8I maritime surveillance aircraft, Chetak, ALH & Seaking helicopters are involved in the SAR operations.

INS Kochi which entered harbour on Wednesday to disembark 125 survivors and mortal remains of four crew members, was immediately sailed

out in the evening again to continue the Search effort. INS Kolkata is scheduled to enter Mumbai harbour on 19th night to disembark the survivors rescued from barge P-305 and Tug "Varapradha" as well as the mortal remains of 18 crew members recovered during the operation.

On completion of its operations off Gujarat coast, INS Talwar has also been diverted to conjoin the other three naval ships searching for the missing crew of barge P-305, off Mumbai.

INS Talwar was the 'On Scene Coordinator' off Gujarat coast and assisted Support Station 3 (SS3) and Drill Ship Sagar Bhushan, which are now being safely towed back to Mumbai by ONGC support vessels. Food and water to the 300 odd crew members of these vessels was also provided by the naval helicopters from Mumbai, earlier in the day.

Meanwhile, survivors on board Papaa-305 brought horror stories to the shore. So much so that many on board Papaa-305, when the accommodation barge drifted dangerously as the Cyclone Tauktae cyclone passed the Mumbai coast, apprehended that they

were all set to meet a watery grave.

Papaa-305, which had 261 persons on board when it sent out a distress call after experiencing water ingress and flooding, sank on Monday night. Many of the crew members with life jackets jumped into the choppy Arabian Sea.

Significantly enough, the vessel had a full complement of safety equipment including life jackets and life rafts for all persons on board.

"It was a horrific situation on the barge. With life jackets on, I jumped into the sea and swam in the waters for seven to eight hours. I had the determination to stay alive. I was ultimately rescued by the Navy," workman Manoj Gite, who hails from Kolhapur, said.

"It is because of the Navy that we all are alive and safe today, otherwise we don't know what would have happened to us," another survivor said.

As the barge sank in the sea amid darkness of night, the crew was scattered here and there. We had to deal with huge waves and gale winds. It was something we had not experienced in all our lives. We still can fathom how we survived," yet another survivor recalled.

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**THANKSGIVING**

Thankyou holy spirit for your blessings.

PD(8993)C

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is made General to public that my client Smt Santosh W/o Sh. Rajender Singh R/o RZ-A-137, Nand Ram Park, Uttam Nagar, Delhi, has debarred her daughter Archana, R/o 3/54B, J-Ext, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi, from all her movable and immovable property and as such has withdrawn all her social, financial and family relation from her and such she has no right in any of the properties/assets of my client.

Sd/- PRATYUSH CHIRANTAN ADVOCATE

**कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल**

यात्रिक विभाग ( मुख्यालय ) गोविंदपुरा ( बी.एच.ई.एल. )

निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा-पत्र

क्र.58/या.वि./2021

भोपाल, दिनांक 17.05.2021

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

क्र.	ऑनलाईन निविदा क्र.	कार्य का नाम	अनुमानित राशि	घरोहर राशि	प्रपत्र	कार्य हेतु निर्धारित एम.ओ.आर.	कार्य की अवधि
2	2021_UAD_142472_1	ASPHALTING ROADS AT VIVEKANAND PARISAR, BARRAI WARD NO 85 ZONE NO 19	1,76,20,315/-	1,76,203/-	12,500/-	MPUADD ISSR 2012	06 Month

1. निविदा प्रपत्र को निर्धारित राशि एवं धरोहर राशि एवं अन्य आवश्यक दस्तावेज ऑनलाईन प्रस्तुत करने होंगे एवं अन्य सम्बन्धित विस्तृत जानकारी [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) पर देखी जा सकती है।

3. किसी भी निविदा को स्वीकार अथवा अस्वीकार करने का अधिकार विभाग के पास सुरक्षित होगा।

अधीक्षण यंत्री ( सिविल )  
नगर निगम भोपाल

नि.क्र. 107/021/022

# Task force to save kids from third wave: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said his Government will form a special task force comprising paediatricians and senior IAS officers to protect children from the third wave of the Coronavirus pandemic.

In a review meeting held by Arvind Kejriwal on the current situation in Delhi and to deliberate on the measures to be taken to prevent the third wave of the outbreak, he directed the officials to work in advance and make arrangements for sufficient oxygen tankers and ensure the proper functioning of oxygen plants for an optimum supply of the crucial life-giving gas to hospitals. A series of measures were also outlined in the review meeting convened by Kejriwal on Wednesday, including the formation of a special task force to protect children, increasing the number of oxygen beds and better management of essential medicines.

Kejriwal tweeted, "If the third wave of Corona emerges, we have to be prepared in advance to fight it. Took some important decisions today in a



meeting with the officials. 1.

To create a special task force to protect children from the third wave 2. Adequate beds, oxygen, and better management of essential medicines."

The third wave may require Delhi to be prepared with 40,000 oxygen beds and the Delhi Government is making preparations to install 10,000 ICU beds. A committee comprising officials will be formed to overlook the availability of medicines, oxygen and beds.

Addressing the officials, Kejriwal said, "We need to

keep enough oxygen tankers at hand so that we do not fall short of supply. We also need to ensure optimum oxygen storage and proper functioning of oxygen plants."

A special task force comprising paediatricians, experts, and senior IAS officers will also be constituted as a part of the Delhi Government's efforts to protect children from Covid's third wave.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who is also the nodal Minister for Covid-19, and Health Minister Satyendar Jain were also present at the meeting.

# Delhi's Covid positivity rate falls to 5.78%

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that the low positivity rate and downward trend of Covid-19 cases being reported in the national Capital in the last few days, is a good sign and the Government aims to bring the positivity rate further down to two per cent and then to zero.

The national Capital reported 3,846 new Covid-19 cases, its lowest daily spike since April 5, and 235 deaths on Wednesday, as the city's positivity rate dipped to 5.78 per cent, according to the latest health bulletin.

At 5.78 per cent, the positivity rate is at its lowest since April 6, when it stood at 4.9 per cent. The number of new infections is also the lowest since April 5, when 3,548 people were diagnosed with the disease, according to the data issued by the city Government.

The Health Minister said that a downward trend in the news cases is seen. "We have dropped down from 28,000 cases to about 4500. However, we must strive towards having a positivity rate below five per cent and preferably around two per cent. We cannot afford complacency and must follow covid appropriate behavior by all means. In the previous waves, the caseload stood at a positivity rate of two per cent



which increased to a drastic 36 per cent in this wave," he said.

He also informed that even though plasma therapy has been dropped from treatment protocol, it may still be used for treatment at the advice of doctors. Jain stressed upon the fact that with a production capacity of 1 crore vaccines in a day, new manufactures must be roped in for production by the centre to protect the people of India at all costs.

Jain declared that the Delhi government had increased the testing capacity in the South-West district, which is home to a large number of villages as around 10-12,000 being done in a single day and a glaring downward trend in cases has been observed.

He underscored that Black fungus cannot be treated at home, and can only be treated in hospitals under the super-

vision of doctors. "The medicines need to be available in the hospitals as black fungus cannot be treated at homes. It is meant to be treated in hospitals under the supervision of doctors. All measures are being taken to maintain the supply of medicines in the hospitals. The supply was less and we have demanded 1 lakh units of the medicine for the treatment of black fungus," he added.

Highlighting the position of vaccine stocks in Delhi, he said that Covaxin's stock is already over for the 18-44 age brackets and Covishield's stock is remaining for about 2 days only. He added that the centre has not informed anything yet about the segment for those between 18-44 years.

Throwing light upon an impending third wave, Jain stressed that the Delhi government is taking all the mea-

asures to curb and restrict the third wave from coming or wreaking havoc in a way that the current wave did.

Talking about plasma therapy that has been dropped from the treatment protocol, Jain said, "Plasma therapy has been dropped from the specific methodology of covid treatment, however, on the suggestion of doctors, it can still be initiated. "It depends on a case-to-case basis, and will be done only after the recommendation of the doctor. Nevertheless, we must know that there is no sure-shot specific medicine meant only for treatment against COVID-19."

He also laid emphasis upon how a Union Minister agreed to the decentralisation of manufacturing of vaccines to other companies, akin to the suggestions made by Delhi government.

# SDMC collects ₹8L on Covid violations



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has collected nearly ₹8.66 lakh from violators of Covid related guidelines.

The senior SDMC official said that the civic body slapped 2,544 challans from 19th April to 18th May this year for not following Covid related norms. "Action was taken against those citizens who violated Covid-appropriate behaviour like wearing masks, maintaining adequate physical distance, etc," he added.

In Najafgarh Zone, as many as 1,173 challans were slapped and ₹5,80,000 collected as fine. In South Zone 536 people were fined and ₹82,000 was collected.

Similarly, in West Zone 575 challans were slapped and ₹1.51 lakh was collected as fine.

# 4 from Bihar held for duping people in need of oxygen cylinders



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the arrest of four men from Bihar, the Crime Branch of Delhi Police on Wednesday claimed to have busted a gang of cheats who used to dupe people on pretext of providing oxygen cylinders across the nation. The accused have cheated more than 300 people in the name of Covid help. Police said that they have seized three bank accounts where over ₹1.30 crore transaction was done.

The accused have been identified as Deepak (21), Pankaj (26), Sarvan (35) and Mithlesh (36). Police said that they are the members of Chhote Choudhary gang from Nalanda district in Bihar.

According to Shibhesh Singh, the Additional Commissioner of Police, Crime, over 500 cheating cases were registered and investigations are being done by district cyber units, CyPAD and Crime Branch.

"On one such case, the

complainant, who was in need of an oxygen cylinder, contacted one Sachin whose number he got from social media. Sachin offered him two cylinders for ₹23,950. The complainant transferred money through e-wallet, but did not receive the cylinders," said the additional CP.

"During investigation, it was found that the money was transferred to a bank account in Mumbai.

Later, the accused were zeroed in Nalanda area. A raid was conducted and Mithlesh was apprehended. On his instance, three other accused were arrested," said the additional CP.

"During interrogation, it was revealed that they are the members of Chhote Choudhary gang operating from Nalanda area in Bihar. Chaudhary, a resident of Nalanda, operated the gang for two to three years. He has engaged 200 to 300 people in the area for duping people," said the additional CP.

# Two of Kalra's phones seized, sent to forensic lab

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police Crime Branch has seized two mobile phones from businessman Navneet Kalra, who was arrested for allegedly hoarding and black marketing oxygen concentrators (OCs) in the national Capital.

"The police team probing the case has seized two cell phones from Kalra which have been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for further examination," said an official.

Meanwhile, the Crime Branch on Tuesday took Kalra to the three restaurants Khan Chacha, Townhall, and Nege & Ju, owned by him in Khan Market in connection with the case as over 500 OCs were recovered from there.

Police have also seized some documents related to accounts and ongoing investigation.

Kalra was nabbed from Gurugram on Sunday night and was formally arrested on Monday after being on the run for over a week.

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday declined to direct an expeditious decision on a bail plea filed by Kalra, a day after a city court remanded him to three days' police custody.

The police have said that the OCs seized from Kalra's restaurants were imported from China and were being sold at an exorbitant price of ₹50,000 to 70,000 a piece as against their original cost that ranged anywhere between ₹16,000-₹22,000.

# Trader held for selling oxygen concentrator meant for charity

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a 47-year-old businessman for allegedly selling oxygen concentrators (OCs), originally meant for distribution among the needy for ₹1 lakh each in the national Capital.

The accused has been identified as Harminder Singh, a resident of Tilak Nagar. Police said that he was arrested near Hotel Radisson, Paschim Vihar situated in Outer Delhi on Tuesday.

Police also recovered six OCs, that had been made in

China and six stabilisers from the possession of the accused.

According to Parvinder Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, based on specific inputs received by police, a trap was laid near the hotel to nab Harminder Singh on Tuesday afternoon.

"As Harminder arrived at the spot, Head Constable Om Prakash approached his vehicle posing as a customer and struck a deal for supply of an oxygen concentrator for ₹1,00,000 and paid a token amount to him," said the DCP.

# Gurugram sees first black fungus death

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A 29-year-old man had reportedly died due to the dreaded black fungus infection (Mucormycosis) on May 16 at a private hospital in Gurugram, a few days after he recovered from Coronavirus.

The youth, identified as Vikas Sharma, a resident of Pataudi area in Gurugram had developed Covid symptoms on April 25 and was admitted to a Rewari-based private hospital. After three days of treatment he was discharged from the hospital and was in home isolation till he was cured of Covid-19. However, on May 14 Vikas' health started deteriorating and he lost his voice and vision and black spots were visible on his face.

The deceased's family members said that they rushed him to a private hospital where several tests were conducted and all reports came out normal. Later on May 15, Vikas developed breathing problems and ultimately he was admitted to Max Hospital where he died. "Just for 24 hours of treat-



BLACK FUNGUS

ment the hospital handed over a bill of ₹7.21 lakh and claimed that they had performed nose and throat surgery on the patient. Later when we protested for several hours against such a huge amount the hospital authorities refused to hand over the body," Vinod, a family member alleged.

The aggrieved family plans to file a complaint before the district administration.

"We have no information regarding the matter. Also, if someone died in a hospital due to black fungus symptoms, that particular hospital will have to inform the State Government. The local health department has no such role on this matter," Virender Yadav,

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Gurugram said.

However, Max Hospital, in a statement, mentioned the cause of death as cardiac arrest and said Vikas was also diagnosed with black fungus.

A Max Health Care (MHC) spokesperson said that the victim was already in a critical condition when he was brought to the hospital.

"The 29-year-old patient arrived at the emergency in a critical condition on the morning of May 15. He was bleeding from the nose, complained of nausea, headache, was disoriented and had a severely damaged right eye with loss of vision. He had been ill with Covid since April 23 and was

undergoing treatment from outside. The patient was on multiple medicines including steroids which were prescribed by his treating doctor since May 5. He was thoroughly investigated which confirmed that he was infected with extensive mucormycosis, which had extended extensively, including into the brain," the spokesperson said.

"The patient underwent two surgeries the same evening and was shifted to a post-operative ICU at night and was under heavy sedation. However, despite a multidisciplinary team effort, he succumbed to cardiac arrest," he added.

"The ₹7.2 lakh bill that the family received was a system-generated interim bill, which included additional planned surgeries. The final bill was prepared after the death of the patient, which was of ₹3.95 lakh and was presented to the patient's attendants for a final settlement. We strongly deny any allegations by the family/relatives that there was any excessive billing," the spokesperson concluded.

## PICTALK



Vehicles ply through the rain-filled roads of the national Capital. Ranjan Dimri

Department of Women and Child Development  
Govt. of NCT of Delhi  
1st Floor, ISBT Building, Kashmere Gate, Delhi-06

## PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN DURING COVID-19

A Child who has lost one or both of his/ her parents or whose parents/ guardian are infected with COVID-19 and such child in need of care & protection requires following services:

Protection | Food | Shelter | Health Care | Trauma Counselling | Support

### TO HELP SUCH CHILDREN CALL:

(in need of care and protection)

- Police 100 or 112
- Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights - 9311551393
- An NGO having knowledge of such children should immediately inform to the above Department

Childline  
**1098**

A person can be **jailed** if he/she is involved in:

- Child trafficking
- Child labour
- Child sexual abuse
- Illegal adoption
- Child marriage
- Cruelty to a child
- Any other crime against a child

On 4th May 2021, Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of NCT of Delhi has set up District Task Force in each district to protect children and ensure their:

Rescue

Counselling and Mental Support

Protection and Wellbeing

To know more visit -  
<http://it.delhigovt.nic.in/writereaddata/Odr2021842663.pdf>

# Restore MPLADS for Covid aid: Opp to PM

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Parliamentarians other than that of the ruling BJP have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi for immediate restoration of the MPLADS fund to utilise the money on medical facilities amid the second phase of Covid-19 outbreak.

RJD MP Manoj Jha on Wednesday urged the PM to immediately restore the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme funds to assist the Parliamentarians in addressing critical human needs within the constituencies.

Among others who have raised this demand recently are Congress leader Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh and BSP leader Amroha Lok Sabha MP Kunwar Danish Ali.

In his letter, Digvijaya Singh pointed out that people are demanding the installation of oxygen concentrators, ventilators, CT scan machines etc as well as availability of Remdesivir injections, and, therefore, the use of MPLAD funds must be restored.

Some other members from Congress, DMK, NCP, YSRCP, TRS, TDP, BJD, BSP, SP, RJD have raised similar demands.

Jha in his letter to Modi said the country's rural geographies have been reeling under the grave economic and social shocks caused by the pandemic and hence there is an urgent need to ramp up basic health infrastructure.

"While the district administrations across the country are working on a war footing with the available resources, the

additional funds from MPLADS can be utilised to augment the required basic healthcare facilities such as supporting the paediatric ICU wards at Government hospitals, oxygen logistics, essential medicines, protective kits for ASHAs, Anganwadis, ANM and other mechanisms therein," Jha mentioned in his letter to the PM.

Congress leader of the party in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury in his communication has said the Parliamentarians were united on the issue and suggested that there could be a resolution for restoration of the funds.

Under the MPLAD scheme, MPs can recommend development programmes involving expenditure of Rs five crore every year in their constituencies.

During the Budget session as well MPs urged the PM the need MPLADS post the first phase of pandemic and they had suggested the use of Central Vista funds could be diverted which in turn could be used for Covid fight.

Earlier in Monsoon session when the Lok Sabha unanimously backed the Government's move to slash salaries of MPs by 30 per cent to meet the exigencies arising out of the pandemic, Opposition had asked the Government to restore the MPLADS the funding for which has been suspended for two years.

The Opposition also suggested that the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista project should be cancelled to put in that money for the country's fight against Covid pandemic.

Congress MP Dean Kuriackose has suggested that the total collection from salary deduction would be around Rs 50 crore, which is nominal compared to the economic package announced by the government in view of the outbreak. DMK's Kalanidhi Veeraswami pointed out there were other ways to mobilise funds.

"There is a proposal that the amount of about Rs 20,000 crore to be spent on the Central Vista project could instead be used to combat Covid-19," he said.

"Even if it (the money saved out of MPs' salary cut) means a drop in the ocean, we are happy to do so because we want to stand with the nation. But this amount is just 12.5 per cent of the money estimated for the Central Vista Project. Who wants this project now? You can take that money and invest in Covid hospitals and ventilators," said NCP's Supriya Sule.

TMC leader Sougata Ray, who moved an amendment to increase the salary cut to 35 per cent, said the government should take away the entire salary of MPs, but retain MPLADS. "You are ready to spend ₹20,000 crore for Central Vista and you are taking away petty amounts from the MP," he said.

BJD's Pinaki Mishra said taking away MPLAD funds would "disempower" members of Parliament. While TDP's Jayadev Galla suggested that the Government explore other expenditure cuts, Independent MP Navneet Ravi Rana said suspension of MPLADS funding was "grave injustice" to the electorate.

# CBI books IFFCO MD, raids 12 locations

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The CBI has registered a case against Managing Director and Chief Executive Officers of Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO) and a former MD of Indian Potash Ltd (IPL) besides others in a graft case for allegedly importing large quantities of fertilisers and raw materials at inflated rates to claim higher subsidies from the Government.

After registering the case of corruption and criminal conspiracy following a reference from the Chemicals and Fertilisers ministry, the CBI on Wednesday conducted searches at the official and residential premises at 12 locations including the national capital, Gurugram and Mumbai among others.

Besides naming incumbent MD and CEO, IFFCO, US Awasthi and then MD, IPL, Pravinder Singh Gahlaut, the agency has also named Awasthi's sons Amol and Anupam in their capacity as promoters of a private firm Catalyst Business Associates Pvt Ltd. Vivek Gahlaut, son of former IPL MD Pravinder Singh Gahlaut, has also been booked in the case.

In addition to these, Pankaj Jain, Jyoti Group of Companies and Rare Earth Group, Dubai, his brother Sanjay Jain, President of Jyoti Trading Corporation and beneficial owner of other entities of Jyoti Group and Senior Vice President of the Dubai-based private corporation Amrinder Dhari Singh, have also been made accused in the case.

Chartered Accountant and promoter of Midas Metal International LLC, Rajiv Saxena and Sushil Kumar

Pachisia, employee of accused Pankaj Jain besides unknown directors of IFFCO and unknown others find mention as accused in the FIR.

It was alleged in the FIR that IFFCO and IPL have been importing huge quantities of fertilizers running into several thousands of metric tons and raw materials for fertilisers from various foreign suppliers.

The fertilisers were supposed to be supplied to the farmers at subsidized rates.

The accused allegedly cheated the Government by claiming higher subsidy as IFFCO and IPL imported fertilizers and raw materials through Kisan International Trading FZE in Dubai (a subsidiary of IFFCO) and other middlemen at "highly inflated rates covering the commission meant for the accused including the then MDs of IFFCO and IPL," the CBI said.

"The commission amount was allegedly paid / transferred by the Overseas Suppliers to the accused officials through sham transactions involving the top executives of the public sector fertilizer firms," it said.

The CBI recovered ₹8.80 lakh in cash from the premises of U S Awasthi even as the searches continued till the filing of the report.

From the residence of Parvinder Singh Gahlaut, the agency recovered fixed deposit receipts (FDR) of over ₹5.5 crore in his name as well as in the name of his family members.

It also recovered 14 bank account details and documents of around 19 immovable properties at Mumbai, Himachal Pradesh, Gurgaon, Delhi and Sonapat.

# ₹1,000 cr relief for Gujarat ravaged by Cyclone Tauktae

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday visited Gujarat to assess the damage caused by Cyclone Tauktae and announced ₹1,000 crore for immediate relief activities in the State.

The Prime Minister undertook an aerial survey of the cyclone hit areas in Una (Gir-Somnath), Jafraabad (Amreli), Mahua (Bhavnagar) in Gujarat & Diu, according to Prime Minister's office.

Thereafter, he chaired a meeting at Ahmedabad to review the relief and rehabilitation measures being undertaken in Gujarat & Diu.

He announced a financial aid of ₹1,000 crore to the State.

He also announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 to the seriously injured in the cyclone in the States of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and the UTs of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

The Centre will be deploying an Inter-Ministerial Team to visit Gujarat to assess the extent of damage in the State, based on which further assistance will be given.

Prime Minister assured the people of the state that the Union Government would extend all possible assistance for restoration and rebuilding of the infrastructure in the affected areas.

During his visit he also took stock of the situation relating to the Covid pandemic. Modi was received by Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani on his arrival in Bhavnagar. Thereafter, he took a helicopter to visit the affected areas in the State.

# BJP provides more proof on Cong toolkit

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra on Wednesday came up with some more details and "proof" on the alleged Congress tool-kit saying it was authored by Saumya Varma working in AICC research wing under Rajeev Gowda.

The "toolkit" outlining the grand old party's alleged attempt at defaming Prime Minister Modi and the Government was released by the BJP leader.

Patra said that domain experts during their research concluded that the tool kit was authored by Saumya Varma and asked will Sonia Gandhi and Rahul would respond on the issue?.

He alleged that the toolkit brought focus on the ongoing Central Vista Project. Patra alleged that the tool kit had mentioned Central Vista as a 'vanity project'.

Sambit Patra further questioned the author of the toolkit, Varma."It is clearly written here in social media profiles of Saumya Varma that she is connected with Congress MP Rajeev Gowda. She is connected to the research wing of the AICC which is headed by Professor Gowda," Patra said.

Attacking the Congress, Patra showcased a picture in which Varma is seen with high-profile people, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Professor Gowda."As you can see, Saumya Varma is seen in this picture with Rahul Gandhi and Professor Gowda who heads the research wing of the AICC. During that time, Rahul Gandhi was the



Congress chief and this is the picture of their research team. You can see the pictures of these toolkit managers. I want to show this to the whole country," said Sambit Patra.

Presenting another picture of the 'research team', Patra added that Saumya Varma can be seen in the picture as well. He sought to reveal another picture of the alleged 'author of the toolkit' with Professor Gowda.

"This is the toolkit gang that defames and insults the country. They spread lies about the Central Vista Project and ventilators," Patra added."Their motive is to tarnish Prime Minister Modi's image. This gang is responsible for the toolkit," said BJP spokesperson.

Sambit Patra also presented another social media post, linking Saumya Varma with the grand old party.

The social media post relates to the Congress' manifesto during the Delhi assembly elections. Patra further hit out at the Congress and blamed it for naming the Covid-19 as an 'Indian Variant'.

Patra signed off his statement by questioning if the alleged author Saumya Varma is working in AICC research wing under Rajeev Gowda. In addition, Patra also asked if Varma is a member of the Congress party.

# Chinese troops won't be able to surprise Indian forces this time: Army Chief



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

As Chinese troops have started their military exercises in the Tibetan plateau opposite Ladakh recently, India is keeping a close watch, Army Chief General MM Naravane said here on Wednesday. He also said the Chinese will not be able to surprise the Indian forces this time on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) like they did last year.

Making this assertion, the Army Chief also said the army had deployed sufficient number of troops on the LAC and they were operationally ready to meet any challenge.

His remarks came amidst reports about the People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducting its summer time exercises in its depth areas on its side opposite Eastern Ladakh. It is the same sector where the Chinese troops last year diverted troops from their exercise schedule and intruded into India at several points triggering nearly ten-month-old stand-off.

Asked about the ongoing Chinese drill, Naravane said it is an annual feature where in troops from both the sides conduct exercises in their respective areas. The depth areas where the Chinese are holding exercises are at least 100 to 150 km away from the LAC.

He also said situation at present at the LAC in eastern Ladakh was peaceful and both the sides were abiding by the agreement on disengagement. The Chief's remarks came in the backdrop of the Corps Commanders of the two armies holding 11 rounds of talks to defuse tension at the LAC.

On preparations to fight corona, Naravane said more than 90 per cent of the army were administered two shots. Moreover, those who contracted corona after two shots were mild and recovered at home.

The Army Chief also said all the troops deployed on the LAC and the Line of Control (LOC) have to undergo series of tests before joining duty after

# Army finds ways to overcome O2 crisis

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Continuing its efforts to cease the availability of oxygen, the Army has found a solution for efficient conversion of liquid oxygen to low pressure oxygen gas that can be given to Covid-19 patients at their hospital beds.

Giving details here on Wednesday, the Army said over seven days, its team of engineers in consultation and material support from the Council for Science and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) put together a working solution using vaporisers, pressure relief valves and liquid oxygen cylinders.

"Since oxygen was transported in liquid form in cryogenic tanks, quick conversion of liquid oxygen to oxygen gas and ensuring availability at the patients' bed was a critical challenge faced by all hospitals managing Covid patients," the statement said.

The engineers' team used a self-pressuring liquid oxygen cylinder of small capacity (250 litres) and processed it through specially designed vaporiser and directly usable outlet pressure (4 Bar) with leak-proof pipeline and pressure valves.

A prototype for 40 beds for a period of two to three days was made functional at base hospital in Delhi.

The team has also tested a mobile version to cater for typical shifting requirements in hospitals, the statement noted adding it is economically viable and is safe to operate since it obviates high gas pressure in the pipeline or cylinders and does not require any power supply to operate.

The system is capable of replication in a quick time frame.

returning from leave adding the troops on the border were 100 per cent fit.

# ITBP puts cutouts of baboons to keep monkeys at bay from Covid centre

**RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI**

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has adopted a novel tactic of putting cutouts of baboons in and around the campus of the 500-bed Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre here to keep the menacing monkeys at bay.

Monkeys often keep visiting the Covid Centre in groups and attack the personnel, especially those in PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) kits and could be risky to the patients.

The SPCCC is located at the sprawling campus of the Radha Soami Satsang Beas at Chhattarpur here where 250 oxygenated beds are occupied by the Covid patients.

The Centre is manned by over 200 personnel of the ITBP including 50 doctors, 50 nurses and others comprising nursing assistants and security personnel.

During the last week, at least two-three incidents have happened at the Centre and the monkeys have injured a similar number of personnel.

"To counter the monkey menace at the SPCCC, the ITBP has placed about 10 cutouts of baboons at vantage points at the Centre to scare the monkeys. The cutouts of the baboons have been made in varying sizes and postures in order to imitate the real creatures," ITBP spokesperson Vivek Pandey said.

In the past few days, groups



of monkeys were seen roaming at the Centre. Some of the monkeys turn aggressive and try to attack the personnel deployed to look after the Covid care centre, specifically people who are geared in PPE kits, Pandey said.

The cutouts of baboons seem to be very effective as the monkeys are somehow keeping away from entering the premises. "These cutouts are randomly rotated daily to new places across the centre so that the monkey groups do not guess these to be static and feel them to be real," he said.

The cutouts were procured locally and the procurement cost the paramilitary just about ₹4,000 for 10 pieces.

The marauding monkeys destruct some of the arrangements after venturing into the

protected area, disturbing peace and also rushing to get hold of the eatables meant for the patients. However, substantial damage to the facility or injury to the personnel has been avoided due to the alert sentries at the facility. None of the patients have been hurt till now but few ITBP personnel sustained minor injuries due to the monkey attacks, he said.

Amid the lurking threat from the monkeys who have the liberty to enter the campus from any side of the huge campus, the locations of the deployment of the cutouts is constantly changed to hoodwink the monkeys to believe that they are real ones and induce fear, officials said, adding live baboons cannot be deployed in keeping with the environmental laws.

# Govt brings community-based plan to rehabilitate PwDs

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

With an aim to develop trained manpower for rehabilitation and development of the person with disabilities, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot launched a six-month Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) Programme on rehabilitation for the sector here on Wednesday.

Gehlot said the course has been developed in collaboration with Melbourne University to ensure empowerment and inclusiveness of the people with disabilities in the society. "Due to the pandemic situation, the requirement of first hand counsellor/guide for Divyangjan has become more relevant and there is a need to roll out this programme as

early as possible," he said.

The programme was launched in the presence of Union Minister of State, SJS&E, Krishan Pal Gurjar, Australian High Commissioner to India, Barry O'Farrell; High Commissioner of India to Australia, Manpreet Vohra, Secretary DEPwD, Anjali Bhawra and Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University Professor Duncan Maskell.

Gurjar said, "This programme will be first of its kind which will create trained manpower in identifying risk cases, appraising the parents/guardians about the nearest early intervention centres, and guiding them for availing Government benefits for the sector."

PwDs, their parents and the community for Government Schemes and Programmes and expressed hopes that the CBID programme will go a long way in generating trained human resources to carry out the important task.

The Rehabilitation Council of India and University of Melbourne have been working on this program since the last two years. The Department will involve all the States/UTs in future expansion of this program, the Secretary said.

The course will be initially launched on pilot basis for two batches in seven national institutes of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and some voluntary organisations having experience in the field. Initially the programme will be available in English, Hindi and seven

# Submit MRP of pulse oximeter by May 22, NPPA tells manufacturers

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

To keep tabs on the prices of pulse oximeter and oxygen concentrators which are being sold in the black market in the Covid-19 times, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has directed all manufacturers/importers of these two medical devices to submit maximum retail price (MRP) by May 22.

According to various reports, amid the second wave of the pandemic sweeping across the country, an oxygen concentrator that normally costs about ₹50,000 to ₹60,000 is now being sold for a whopping ₹1.5 lakh in the black market while oximeters, that indicate the level of oxygen in an individual's body, are being sold at a price range between Rs 1,800 to Rs 3,000 which is about three to four times the MRP of the device.

Oxygen Concentrator is a device that sucks oxygen from the atmosphere and delivers it to a person suffering from respiratory illness. It is a life-saving instrument meant for home use by those Covid-19 patients whose oxygen saturation dips below 80 mm Hg. Expressing displeasure at the government's failure to curb the prices, the Delhi High Court had in fact just a few days ago had asked the Centre and the Delhi gov-

ernment why a notification under the Essential Commodities Act has not yet been issued to classify concentrators as "essential commodities." The NPPA action is likely to stop the black marketing. "This notice is in reference to the Gazette Notification dated March 31, 2020 issued by NPPA for regulation of medical devices under DPCO-2013 read with Essential Commodities (EC) Act, 1955 with effect from April 1, 2020. Accordingly, MRP of medical devices cannot be increased more than ten per cent (10%) in a year," said an NPPA official.

"In view of the above, all manufacturers or importers of aforesaid medical devices have been advised to ensure compliance of the provisions of Para 20 of the DPCO, 2013 failing which action may be initiated for violation of provisions of DPCO, 2013 read with EC Act, 1955," he said about the NPPA order.

"Medical devices industry associations of Pulse Oximeter and Oxygen Concentrator namely MTAI, AiMeD, CII, FICCI, USIBC, AMCHAM, Advamed are hereby directed to disseminate this office memorandum among its member companies and shall ensure compliance of the same," NPPA said in the notice.



regional languages, namely, Gujarati, Marathi, Odia, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil and Garo. The classes are expected to commence by August while

mode of training for this course would be both offline/online taking into account the prevailing Covid scenario, said an official from the Ministry

# 'Govt should help Indian firms in developing future jobs'

**DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI**

As the Indian Government's Application for the relaxation in patent rights that may facilitate production of Covid-19 vaccines and medicines domestically comes before World Trade Organisation (WTO) on June 8-9, it is suggested that Government should look beyond this 'stop-gap' arrangement and support indigenous companies and their research for developing 'future vaccines'.

WTO is to take-up Indian request 'informally' by the month-end before finally deciding the issue on June 8-9.

Talking to the Pioneer on the issue, former Economic advisor to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Jagdish Shettigar said "Indian commitment that vaccines and medicines for treating Covid19 will be used domestically and not to be exported would bring even European countries round relaxing patents rights."

Shettigar said Government should respect the "brand equity" and support the research and development efforts of Indian companies like Bharat Biotech, producing Covaxin.

"Current vaccines are stop-gap arrangements and not one-time solution for the disease. We would be needing future vaccines for the society and towards this end India should be encouraging local research technology and talent," he said.

Shettigar said companies like Bharat Biotech which first produced Indian vaccine be incentivised by recognition and compensation "if they are to transfer technological know-how to other pharma companies for vaccine production."

The former Economic advisor in the Vajpayee's office was of view that the currently available Covid19 vaccine were fast-tracked ones with an unclear nature of virus - lab or nature produced- and therefore, the country would be needing long-term research to develop a permanent one-time cure for Corona or other future viruses.

He pointed out that Bharat Biotech is on an advanced stage of producing vaccine for kids (like pulse polio).

As to whether request before the WTO, Shettigar said "India giving a commitment that the vaccine would be consumed domestically and not exported would help it get support of European countries which are opposing relaxation in Patent rights."

Covid-19

# Kerala logs 112 deaths, 32,762 new cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Thursday's swearing in ceremony of Pinarayi Vijayan as Chief Minister of Kerala has been shadowed by the unabated hike in the daily number of Covid-19 patients in the State as well as the fatalities. The pandemic claimed 112 lives on Wednesday (the highest toll to be registered on a single day since Covid-19 was first reported in the State in January 2020).

The State logged 32,762 new cases on Wednesday which include 104 health workers. The number of patients undergoing treatment for the pandemic came down to 3.31 lakh. The death toll in the State till Wednesday shows 6,724.

Ernakulam topped the list

of districts with highest number of new cases as 4,282 persons were diagnosed with the pandemic on Wednesday while Malappuram came close behind with 4,212. Thiruvananthapuram, where the swearing in ceremony is being scheduled, logged 3,600 new patients on Wednesday. The Test Positivity rate across the State showed 23.31 while there are districts and towns having twice this figure as TPR.

An official in Government Hospital Perumbavoor said that admission of new patients have been put on hold because of the non-availability of beds, staff and technicians. Wedding Halls and Town Halls are being converted into First Line Covid Treatment Centres but the infrastructure in these halls are anything but satisfactory.

# 365 fall prey to virus in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The situation in Tamil Nadu turned grave by Wednesday as the State logged 365 deaths during the last 24 hours while the number of new people tested for Covid-19 touched 34,875.

According to the directorate of public health and preventive medicine, there are 2.53 lakh Covid-19 patients across the State as on Wednesday evening. There has been no let up in the number of tests carried out in the State. On Wednesday, 1.62 lakh persons were subjected to RT-PCR tests.

Tamil Nadu which has succeeded in bringing down the number of new persons testing positive to below the 700 mark is experiencing a new surge in the pandemic of late. The State though under total lock down for the last one week is yet to make any impact on the high speed transmission of the pandemic.

Chennai recorded 6,297 new cases on Wednesday followed by Coimbatore (3,250) and Chengalpattu (2,275).

The physicians and medical experts who usually speak to the media about the intensity of the pandemic remained incommunicado on Wednesday while Dr C V Krishnaswamy, the leading researcher has been down with fever for the last few days making it difficult to ascertain the cause behind the latest surge.

# 3,969 more afflicted in J&K, 62 die

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

For the first time in the last three weeks the positivity rate dropped down to little over eight per cent even as 62 more patients succumbed to the virus in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir while 3,969 more patients tested positive and 4,338 patients returned home after recovering fully from different hospitals on Wednesday.

In Udhampur a centurion Dholi Devi, claiming to be a 120 year old resident of village Ghar Katiyas of Sub Division Drudu, Tehsil Latti was given the first dose at the vaccination camp held by the district administration in the remote area.

Family members claimed the age of the women on the basis of a ration card.

According to a media bulletin, "Out of 62 deaths, 39 patients died due to Covid19 in Jammu division and 23 in Kashmir".

Significantly, Jammu district recorded less than 500 fresh cases of coronavirus while Srinagar district recorded less than 700 cases on Wednesday.

According to the media bulletin, the total active load stood at 50494. Jammu division with over 20,000 active positive cases is struggling to



A centenarian woman of Udhampur district leads by example by getting vaccinated

bring down the high mortality rate.

On Wednesday a total number of 17 patients died in GMC, Jammu, 4 in GMC Kathua. Four other districts of Rajouri, Kathua, Udhampur, and Samba continue to record a higher number of cases. In Kashmir division, Budgam district is reporting the highest number of

cases after Srinagar.

Meanwhile, in order to effectively tackle Covid-19 pandemic in rural areas, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Wednesday directed the Deputy Commissioners and Health department to ensure a minimum 5-bedded Covid Care Centre including one Oxygen sup-

ported bed in every Panchayat of Jammu & Kashmir for the patient requiring immediate medical attention.

Expenditure of up to ₹1 lakh per Panchayat has been approved by the Lt Governor from District Capex Budget to make these Centres immediately functional.

The decision has been taken to create basic minimum infrastructure to provide isolation facilities at Panchayat level as many households may not have an option for isolation of Covid positive patients in their own residence.

The Lt Governor has directed the Health Department to strengthen other public health facilities including Sub-centres, Health and Wellness Centres, and Primary Health Centres for testing and referral of cases with co-morbidity or low oxygen saturation to the higher centres.

The Lt Governor also directed that mobile testing vans must be utilized to cover villages for testing with the help of PRIs and volunteers. Symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals to be provided Covid kits, and Block Medical Officers must ensure round-the-clock monitoring of positive cases and referral to the higher healthcare centre.



People in the 18-44 year age group wait to receive Covid-19 shots at the Moti Lal Nehru Medical College vaccination centre, in Prayagraj on Wednesday

# UP to tweak rules for financial aid to Covid orphans

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With reports pouring in about children being orphaned due to Covid-19 across the State, the Uttar Pradesh Government is set to amend rules to allow for financial help to more than two children of a family against the prevailing rule to aid only two children of a family.

Additional Chief Secretary, Information, Navneet Sehgal said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath clarified that these children are the responsibility of the State Government and promised that the State would ensure all facilities to these ill-fated children.

Director, Department of Women and Child Development, Manoj Rai said that the government rules would be tweaked so that all affected children could be provided financial assistance even if they are more than two from a family.

# Recoveries continue to outnumber fresh infections in Karnataka

**Bengaluru:** The number of recoveries continued to outnumber fresh Covid-19 cases in Karnataka, as the State on Wednesday reported 49,953 discharges, 34,281 new cases and 468 fatalities, the Health Department said.

While the total number of infections stood at 23,06,655, the toll was 23,306.

The state on Tuesday had reported a record 58,395 recoveries and 30,309 fresh cases. Bengaluru Urban registered 11,772 fresh cases today. The city saw 29,238 discharges.

As of May 19 evening, cumulatively 23,06,655 Covid-19 positive cases have been

confirmed in the state, which includes 23,306 deaths and 17,24,438 discharges, the Health department said in its bulletin.

Total number of active cases in the State stood at 5,58,890.

While the positivity rate for the day stood at 26.46 per cent, case fatality rate (CFR) was at 1.36 per cent.

Health Minister K Sudhakar said the positivity rate in the state was decreasing and described it as a good sign, as he ruled out any co-relation between decline in the number of testing and positivity rate coming down.

# Ex-Bengal CM Buddhadeb, wife test +ve

**Kolkata:** The condition of former Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya who has tested positive for the corona virus was stable but his oxygen saturation level was fluctuating, doctors attending on him said adding his wife Mira Bhattacharya who had been shifted to a South Kolkata hospital after testing positive too was stable.

The 77-year-old former Chief Minister who has COPD and other ailments was advised hospitalization but he refused to move to hospital, sources said adding the doctors were monitoring his condition at his house.

Bhattacharya and his wife live in a two-room flat at Palm Avenue in Kolkata. A third person a medical attendant of Bhattacharya too has tested positive and is in home isolation, sources said adding a medical board had been formed to monitor the condition of Bhattacharya's wife.

# Pinarayi Vijayan looks invincible

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala electorate has bestowed the status of a political superstar to Pinarayi Vijayan, the CPI(M) leader who is being sworn-in as Chief Minister later in the day at Thiruvananthapuram. He has everything at his disposal and is not at all at the mercy of smaller elements that constitute the Left Democratic Front led by the CPI(M).

The previous United Democratic Front Governments led by Ommen Chandi, A K Antony, late K Karunakaran and the LDF Governments in the past headed by V S Achuthanandan and E K Nayanar were handicapped by fringe outfits which had enough numbers to sink the Ministries to the turbulent waters of Kerala politics. This means that the Government headed by Vijayan has brutal majority with the CPI(M) itself boasting of 62 members while its poor cousin and trusted ally CPI has 17 MLAs. The two Communist parties alone has 79 MLAs in a House with total strength of 140.

"The chances of other constituent outfits in the Front pos-

ing any problems to Vijayan look remote because then the formers would be at the mercy of the Congress, about which the less we speak the better," said Hari Kartha, former chief editor, Janmabhumi and a respected political commentator in the State.

He says that all may not be that smooth for Vijayan despite the brutal majority at his disposal in the Assembly. "The 1967 United Front Government headed by E M S Namboodirippadu swept 113 of the 133 seats at stake. The seven-party front that included Muslim League looked invincible from day one itself. But the government could not survive beyond 30 months," reminiscences Kartha. The CPI(M) and the CPI were suspicious of each other. "The House witnessed scenes like ministers alleging each other of corruption and EMS was left with the only option-to resign. The CPI summoned C Achutha Menon, a parliament member and formed an alternate Government with the latter as Chief Minister. They got the outside support from the Indian National Congress," he said.

# Vijayan-led LDF Govt to be sworn in today

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Stage is set for the swearing in of the Pinarayi Vijayan-headed LDF council of ministers on Thursday at 3.30 pm at Thiruvananthapuram. The oath of office and secrecy would be administered by Governor Arif Mohammed Khan at the Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram.

According to Vijayan himself, only 500 guests including persons holding constitutional positions, family members of the ministers, MPs and MLAs have been invited to the function in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to this the capital city is under triple lockdown because of the unprecedented increase in COVID-19 cases.

The Kerala High Court asked the State administration to diligently follow the guidelines, do as and don'ts associated with COVID-19 protocol while holding the swearing in ceremony. The Indian Medical Association has asked the Government to do away with the ceremony and hold the function on-line. The High Court has sent notice to the Government seeking response to the plea for restricting the swearing in to on line.

Earlier, the LDF issued a



A huge cut-out of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan stands at Vizhinjam coastal village, ahead of his swearing-in for the second term, in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday

release with details of the portfolios allocated to the ministers who would be sworn in on Thursday. While Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has retained the departments of home, vigilance, general administration, IT, environment, K N Balagopalan has been allocated the department of finance. M V Govindan, the number two in the cabinet will hold the charges of local administration and excise. Veena George is the minister for health while R Bindu, wife

of acting party secretary Vijayaraghavan has been allocated the higher education department. V Sivankutty, son-in-law of party ideologue late P Govinda Pillai, will be the new education minister while K Radhakrishnan, the popular leader from Thrissur in the minister for the sensitive department of Devaswam (Temple Administration) and social welfare.

Mohammed Riyaz, the new son-in-law of the chief minister has been entrusted

with the important departments of public works and tourism. The PWD was handled by G Sudhakaran in the previous Pinarayi Vijayan led Government.

V N Vasava, the Kottayam strongman of the CPI(M) has been allocated the cooperative department where he will be the presiding over the hundreds of cooperative banks in the State.

Janata Dal (S) leader Krishnan Kutty is the new minister for power while NCP leader A K Saseendran has been allocated the department of forest.

Antony Raju is the new minister for transport while Kerala Congress (Mani) representative Roshni Augustine will look after water resources. Saji Cheriyan who joined the CPI(M) from Congress recently has been given the coveted fisheries and culture department. V Abdul Rehman is the minister for minority welfare while Indian National League's Ahmed Devarakoil is the minister for ports. J Chinjurani (CPI) is the minister for dairy development while her colleagues in the party K Rajan, P Prasad and G R Anil have been allocated the departments of Revenue, Agriculture and Civil Supplies respectively.

# Elderline becomes operational in UP

FIANS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh has become one of the first states in the country to successfully operationalise 'Elderline', a helpline to assist and comfort the senior citizens amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic across the State.

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India had come up with an initiative to reach out to the senior citizens in times of crisis to help them in terms of health concerns, emotional support and legal aid.

The toll-free helpline facility had been made operational in Uttar Pradesh to extend complete support to the elderly citizens across all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

The helpline — 14567, is being cited as a critical step to reach the elderly in need during the prevailing pandemic in the state, as it receives as many as 80 to 90 calls on a daily basis from various districts of Uttar Pradesh ranging from Noida to Ballia.

Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath has been particularly concerned about the safety, security, and all-round welfare of the needy, vulnerable and deprived sections of society.

In its efforts to realize the above objective even during such challenging times, the 'Elderline' project is providing complete support to senior citizens through the call centres which remain functional from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

All queries pertaining to information on old age homes, physiotherapy units, health related, mental health related and legal issues are being addressed promptly, thereby ensuring quick redressal of grievances as directed by the state government.

The facility has already been made operational in five major states of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu (TN) and Karnataka and efforts are being made to make them functional in all states by the end of May 2021.

The 'Elderline' is a facility operationalized with the assistance of Tata Trusts and NSE foundation.

# Rescued Kerala fishermen handed over to authorities

**Mangaluru:** The three stranded fishermen from Kerala, who were rescued by Indian Coast Guard vessel Vikram off Kannur coast on May 14, were handed over to Kerala Government authorities at the New Mangalore port here on Wednesday.

The rescued fishermen have been identified as Arun (36), Francis (58) and Suriender (64), Coast Guard (Karnataka) commander DIG S B Venkatesh said in a release here.

The fishing boat IFB Bhadriya was stranded 10 nautical miles off Kannur coast and it faced an engine failure in face of impending inclement weather due to cyclone Tauktae.

The rescue operation was undertaken during midnight on May 14 braving rough seas.

The ship was later diverted to proceed off Lakshadweep coast for search and rescue of other fishing boats registered in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The ICG ship from Karnataka carried out extensive search by offshore patrol vessel and aerial search by Coast Guard Dornier aircraft, but no traces of fishing boats with crew were sighted.

The vessel entered New Mangalore Port on Wednesday after nine days of sailing in the rough seas.



The Gariahat market area looks almost deserted during the Covid-induced lockdown in Kolkata on Wednesday

# HC asks JJ Hospital to form expert panel to examine Stan Swamy

**Mumbai:** The Bombay High Court directed the Talaja prison authorities on Wednesday to take Jesuit priest Stan Swamy, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, to the JJ Hospital here for a medical examination.

Swamy, 84, must be examined at the State-run medical facility at 10.30 am on Thursday, it said.

A vacation Bench of Justices S J Kathawalla and S P Tavares directed the hospital's dean to form a committee of expert doctors, including a neuro-physician, an ENT specialist, an orthopaedic, a general physician, and other doctor required, to examine Swamy.

The Bench also directed

the State Government to submit a report of the medical examination before the HC by May 21.

The court asked authorities of the Talaja prison in neighbouring Navi Mumbai, where Swamy is lodged, to arrange for him to be produced before the HC via video-conferencing at 4 pm on May 21, if the prison has such facilities.

**HC permits Hany Babu to be shifted to Breach Candy Hospital**

**Mumbai:** The Bombay High Court on Wednesday permitted Delhi University's associate professor Hany Babu, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, to be shifted to the private Breach Candy Hospital here for medical treatment.

Hany Babu moved the HC on Wednesday morning seeking medical aid for an eye infection which he developed after

contracting COVID-19. The HC said Babu should be shifted to the Breach Candy Hospital on Thursday under police protection, and charges for his treatment there and medicines prescribed will be borne by him and his family. Hany Babu tested positive for coronavirus earlier this month and is currently undergoing treatment at the state-run G T Hospital in Mumbai.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Live-in a sin?

A High Court has recently ruled that such a relationship is 'morally and socially unacceptable'

An open economy and access to technology and the internet not only broaden people's minds but also change how they look at relationships; like ties between a man and a woman that are deemed to be outside of familial, social and cultural contexts, that bring with it no obligations and no responsibility to the people in that relationship. The live-in relationship is one such where a couple lives separately outside of matrimony, often without sanction from their family or society at large. It happens with the condition that there are no conditions upon either the man or the woman. It begins when they are living together. It ends when they walk out. It is neither sin nor a crime though it is called 'living-in sin' in a country where the social institution of marriage is considered the bulwark of legal, ethical and moral relationship between a man and a woman. The emergence of individualisation in a liberalised world has catapulted live-ins to a preferred level of urban existence. Those who are highly individualistic prefer a no-holds-barred relationship, like live-in. Those who are sceptical about a marriage working prefer to live as common law partners. The political and biological freedoms sprouting out of the feminist movement and economic empowerment of women have encouraged them to see live-ins as a platform with equal footing as their male partners. Even bisexual relationships end up in a live-in silo,



the partners protecting each other from the orthodoxy of society.

It is in this context that a recent decision by a single-judge Bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court describing the live-in relationship as morally and socially unacceptable comes as a surprise. The Bench of Justice HS Madaan was hearing a petition filed by a 19-year-old woman from Uttar Pradesh and a 22-year-old man from Punjab, currently in an "inter-caste" live-in relationship and seeking protection of their lives and liberty from the woman's family. The judge dismissed the petition saying: "As a matter of fact, the petitioners in the garb of filing the present petition are seeking seal of approval on their live-in relationship, which is morally and socially not acceptable and no protection order in the petition can be passed." For the record, a live-in relationship is not illegal in India. The Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment in the S Khushboo vs Kanniammal case of 2010, stated that a live-in comes within the ambit of the right to life under Article 21, that live-ins are permissible and it is not illegal for two consenting adults living together. In a 2013 judgment in the Indra Sarma vs VKV Sarma case, the apex court said the decision to marry or not marry to have a heterosexual relationship is personal, adding that a live-in is neither a crime nor a sin even though it may not be socially acceptable in India. Justice Madaan was obviously aware of these rulings, for he never said the live-in was legally unacceptable; he stressed on social unacceptability to dismiss the petition.

## PICTALK



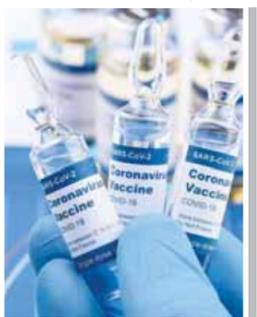
Migrants arrive at the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, near the Morocco-Spain border

PTI

## Take your time

As the nation prepares for anti-COVID vaccine's clinical trials on minors, let's err on the side of caution

The news has come that the Phase 2 and 3 trials of Covaxin on children aged 2-18 years will start sometime in the next fortnight. The Bharat Biotech-manufactured vaccine against the raging COVID-19 pandemic will be the first such vaccine to be tested on minors in the country. Owing largely to speculation in social media, there is already the fear prevailing among the masses that the impending third wave of the virulent infection could potentially target mainly the children. Kicking off a minor controversy on the subject, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was recently



filed in the Delhi High Court, requesting it to stay the vaccine's clinical trial on the minors. However, the court has refused to grant any interim stay on the trial. There has also been the lingering issue of vaccine hesitancy, especially since the initial stages of India's vaccination drive, when people preferred to wait till the last possible moment before going for the anti-COVID shot. Coupled with the doubts on the efficacy of the vaccines, people were also afraid that their elected representatives — largely ahead of the lesser mortals in any queue for any privilege and entitlement in receiving freebies — chose to wait this time around.

Adding to their hesitation and discomfiture was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to the elected representatives to not rush for vaccination. However, the people's fears were allayed when the Prime Minister himself went to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in the Capital to get the jab. The Hyderabad-based firm's vaccine, among the two main manufactured in India, the other being Covishield, is preferred among the populace. But the main concern to be addressed by the Government and the medical fraternity, including scientists, is that the health of our next generation must not be compromised in any way, at any cost. They are our future and let there be no haste at any level, at any stage, to rush ahead with the vaccination drive. Only when the clinical trials are completed to the satisfaction of the experts and the efficacy of the dose confirmed, should the kids be brought into the vaccination centres. In our hurry to fulfil the promise of inoculating all Indian citizens, we must not forget that it is also equally our responsibility to ensure that the health of the minors takes precedence of everything else.

# India is very much a mature democracy

In spite of the noises being made, at home and abroad, the truth is that India under Modi is the most inclusive democracy



BINDU DALMIA

Indians are probably among the most argumentative polity by nature, a trait that is seen in full flourish in any functioning democracy. Any sceptic or critic to the contrary in the 'Age of Modi' needs to just observe the memes, jokes and cartoons of the elected leaders on their WhatsApp forwards, which could not be in free-float in a flawed democracy. Or, just peek into the Twitter universe, and read through the first 50 tweets on your timeline to get a feel of the free-for-all views, both pro and anti-establishment. Or, just glance through the editorials of media houses that are democratically empowered enough to maintain an anti-establishment stance. Or, simply channel-hop at the prime time national debates. Amidst the cacophony of new-hour debates, does one spot any hint of suppression or repression by the establishment? To the contrary, we may just be guilty of a revelry of 'over-democracy'!

The watchdogs of democracy, Freedom House of the US and The Economist's Democracy Index, have displayed a distinctly skewed western bias in unilaterally downgrading the quality of Indian democracy to being "partly free", which is like saying a woman is "partly pregnant".

So, what are the fair metrics to gauge freedom of expression? "Should newspapers be allowed to publish cartoons of Prophet Muhammad?" The answer is 'No'. "Does the struggle against terrorism justify the Government reading your emails?" The answer is 'Maybe', as there can be no binaries in the Governments have to combat terrorism. "Between Facebook and the Government, do we have any privacy left?" The answer is 'None'. Clearly, in the highest traditions of maintaining plurality, the freedom of expression can never be absolute, but comes with responsibility, self-restraint and subjective interpretations.

Let's remember that social media never existed during the time of Indira Gandhi's rule, and was negligible during Sonia Gandhi's proxy rule during the UPA years. Had social media been prevalent, it is anyone's guess if the erstwhile rulers would



have permitted such *laissez-faire* critique as the Modi Government tolerates?

Coming to the Centre-State relations in upholding democratic dharma, within India's diverse and complex federal structure, agriculture, education, health and housing are State subjects, so Modi, or any Prime Minister, has to manage multi-polarity through dialogue, discourse and ultimate consensus. This is because the Centre neither has the constitutional powers to, nor can it succeed, in imposing its writ on strong and well-entrenched, grassroots-level State chieftains of the likes of Uddhav Thackeray, Mamata Banerjee or Naveen Patnaik.

The fact that the BJP, which is the world's largest and richest political party with a membership of 150 million, succeeded only partially in increasing its footprint into West Bengal despite a fiercely contested battle, bears testimony to one of the fairest democracies of the world.

The second exemplification of conferring too much democracy has been allowing the farmer's agitation to persist since mid-November despite their non-negotiable stance which obstructs fourth-gener-



THE INDIAN DEMOCRACY IS AN EDIFICE THAT IS SO DEEPLY ENTRENCHED, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REVERSE ITS TRAJECTORY OR DISMANTLE ITS INSTITUTIONS EVEN BY THE STRONGEST AND TALLEST LEADER OF THIS CENTURY

ation reforms. The fact is that a Government with a strong mandate could and should have clamped down hard on such activism. Instead, the Centre ceded excessive ground on issues like hazardous stubble burning being allowed to persist, continuing to subsidise power bills and supporting the MSP on unsustainable water-guzzling crops.... Any lack of democracy here, considering farmers constitute 60 per cent of India's population?

No ranking of democratic metrics can be considered authentic which does not take into account a coherent counter-reality of the dedicated anti-Modi lobbies as seen within the social media universe, NGOs, and the think-tanks of the Left liberals. There exist thriving vested political and business lobbies within and outside of India that target to dethrone Modi for personal agendas on the pretext of India's descent into 'illiberalism'. They all cite the familiar and cliched tropes about the regime's fascist orientation as seen through "Hindu nationalism" or "minority victimhood" labels that have unfairly stuck with Modi.

Let me blunt this myth firmly with a quote from Modi himself requesting peace and

equilibrium on the historic Supreme Court judgment on Ayodhya in his tweet on November 9th 2019: "This verdict shouldn't be seen as a win or loss for anybody. Be it Ram Bhakti or Rahim Bhakti, it is imperative that we strengthen the spirit of *Rashtra Bhakti*." Clearly, Modi implied no celebration be undertaken on a day that was bigger in symbolism for Hindus than Diwali itself. If anything, even under Modi, while political parties shunned appeasement, but in the homeland of the majority community, we persisted with our session with obverse secularism.

I have deliberately not delved into the distant past to substantiate why I believe India remains a mature and thriving democracy, but have cited just five recent instances since November 2019 to reiterate the Modi regime's conformity and commitment to democratic tenets. To sum up, the Indian democracy is an edifice that is so deeply entrenched, it is impossible to reverse its trajectory or dismantle its institutions even by the strongest and tallest leader of this century.

(The writer is an author, columnist and Chairperson, NCFIL, at the NITI Aayog. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### LET THE KIDS FEEL NORMAL

Sir — This has reference to your editorial 'Missing childhood' (May 29). A fear is being created that the third wave of COVID-19 is likely to hit the nation around winter this year, and that it is likely to affect children the most. It is quite unfortunate.

Already, two years of school education have gone waste for the kids. The schools should not be treated as clusters. Non-productive study through online classes has had little impact on the students towards gaining knowledge. It even spoils their health, especially eyesight.

The younger ones, especially, are not mature enough either to take online classes or study by themselves. All the students being made to pass onto the next grade without writing any examination is also a cause of concern. Attending school, meeting teachers and the faculty, doing practicals on their own, their playtime; all this really has its own advantages. Corona is not only claiming lives but also ruining the future of our children. Our education departments must evolve a scientific strategy to bridge the knowledge and study deficit when the situation eases.

Sravana Ramchandran | Chennai

### BAD NEWS FOR THE NATION'S ECONOMY

Sir — The rising unemployment and the shrinking incomes, including among the salaried class members, has led to a lack of demand in the market, which is not a good sign for the economy. It is especially worrisome for a developing country like India.

The labour participation rate had recovered soon after the lockdown was eased last year but it has run out of momentum even before it could recover fully. The unemployment rate rose to eight per cent in April from 6.5 per cent in March, according to the CMIE data. The partial lockdowns in metro cities also affected the economic status of the country, which looked bleak ever since the pandemic struck the subcontinent.

The economy had recovered a bit after the lockdown was eased in 2020 but while the supply side indicators saw a robust turnaround, there was a lack of demand. The

## NGOs need to do more



During the pandemic, the Centre and the State Governments are working efficiently at their respective levels. Along with them, many charitable institutions and NGOs across the country are making sincere efforts to provide succour to fellow citizens and trying to save the lives of as many people as possible.

But where are the scouts of the NCC and the NSS? Those, who incur the expenditure of billions of rupees and who earn extra marks in Government job exams, where are they? Today, when the country needs their services, they are missing in action.

Of course, there are a few exceptions. But how nice it would be if these registered NGOs, claiming to do social work from the cities and

income and consumer sentiment have also taken a hit. The income, across segments and economic strata, is lower than what it was a year earlier. Almost 90 per cent of the families have seen their income shrink. This is critical because it is only domestic consumption that will help the economy and provide a boost to our economy.

CK Ramani Subbu | Trichy

### DEVELOP MULTI-PURPOSE COHESION

Sir — This refers to the article by Kalyani Shankar, *The Institutional Discord amid COVID* (May 19), wherein she has rightly gauged the situation by commenting that in all these confrontations, the federal cooperation expected between the Centre and the states has broken down. Besides being adversely affected by the horrific epidemic, the multi-cornered confrontations remain an obstacle.

towns to the *taluka* level, came forward to help the needy to meet this challenge. If even half of these organisations had been prepared to meet the COVID-19 challenge, it would have been so much easier for the country.

The sad truth is that these NGOs tend to add false hands, show false teeth, get photographed and propagate their self-claimed "work" to raise funds. All the non-governmental organisations in India boast the high-sounding ideas of moral value, service and philanthropy. But, behind the scenes, in the fundraising race, they adopt a selfish culture. Their main focus turns to raising as much moneys as possible and the issues relating to public benefit tend to be ignored or neglected. Since Independence, the non-governmental organisations have played an important role in helping the needy and the poor, providing them with assistance and uplifting the socio-economic status of millions of people. However, they should not restrict their role merely to providing relief and assistance during disasters but also to reconstructing the damaged infrastructure.

Priyanka Saurabh | Hisar

Indicating the negligence of the executive, the judiciary is constantly showing it the mirror of constitutional duties to be fulfilled. The political leaders are engaged in political rivalry at the Centre and the State levels. The economic exploitation of the sick and their attendants in private hospitals continues unabated.

The administrative arrangements are proving to be inadequate. The pricing mechanism of vaccines has become a matter of controversy amongst the Centre and the States. In these crucial times, there is an urgent need to abandon biased confrontation and develop multi-purpose cohesion in order to collectively fight against COVID-19.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

But is his (Nitin Gadkari's) boss listening? This is what Manmohan Singh had suggested on April 18.

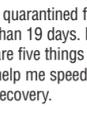


Congress leader — Jai Ram Ramesh



Those who support terrorism will not be safe in Germany... they will not find a place of retreat in our country.

German Interior Minister — Horst Seehofer



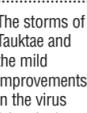
I quarantined for more than 19 days. But there are five things I did to help me speed up my recovery.

Actor — Rubina Dilaik



It's hugely worrying for any cricketer. You don't want a recurring nature of an injury, especially a bowler and especially this lad (Jofra Archer).

Former England captain — Nasser Hussain



The storms of *Tauktae* and the mild improvements in the virus (situation) over the land where it disturbs the most... we pray in the sincerity of our beings.

Actor — Amitabh Bachchan



## FIRST COLUMN

## GOA AS A NIGHTMARE

The State's mismanagement of the second wave of COVID is appalling



ARUN SINHA

Goa, a global tourist destination, has turned into a nightmare with the disastrous mismanagement of the COVID situation by the State Government. A week ago, the COVID positivity rate in the State shot up beyond 55 per cent, the highest in the country. Such a high positivity rate showed that the pandemic was spreading at an uncontrollable pace. In the first wave, to many Goans, COVID was still distant. It happened to people not known to them, far away from their neighbourhoods. In the second wave, everyone has their close relatives, friends or colleagues infected. It was like a surge that was barred in the first wave that turned into a deluge in the second wave and flooded the whole city. The deluge could have been barred too. But the State Government did not take it seriously. It had controlled the first wave effectively, bringing down infection rate to nearly zero. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and



Health Minister Vishwajit Rane were too pleased to go on local and national television to pat their backs for Goa's achievement amid appalling mismanagement in most other states. They thought that just as they had reined in the first wave they would tame the second. They approached the second wave with a war rhetoric full of bravado and no guns. "We overcame the first wave. We shall overcome the second too"—was their message to the Goans through their daily press briefings. But in reality they did little more than the routine things. They did not devise a strategy to stop the deluge. The preventive side was totally absent from their strategy; they entirely relied on the curative side. Such a strategy worked in the first wave because, thanks to a long countrywide lockdown, the number of cases was low. Goa had a good health infrastructure and good doctors, both in the public and the private hospitals, so they provided good care to the patients. The mortality was low, and there were still extra beds. But dealing with the second wave with the same kind of strategy—no strong preventive measures and reliance solely on curative measures—proved horrendous.

The Chief Minister refused to order a lockdown even after the two large States of Maharashtra and Karnataka flanking Goa, ordered a lockdown. He even rejected suggestions for making a COVID negative certificate compulsory for people travelling to Goa from Maharashtra and Karnataka. He did not shut down the hotels and restaurants. He did not close down the casinos. Pramod Sawant was handpicked by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to become the Chief Minister of Goa after Manohar Parrikar, who was a strong personality in regional politics, passed away two years ago. Sawant lacks the charisma and leadership qualities of Parrikar. Midway he started saying that there is absolutely no need of a lockdown as COVID protocol and vaccination would control the pandemic.

However, he did nothing to enforce the COVID protocol. He let public meetings be held, many of which he addressed himself, for the municipal elections. He did not post policemen at public halls or star hotels to enforce the ceiling on crowds. He did not restrict crowds on the beaches and at nightclubs and discos. As for vaccination, he failed to procure vaccines, delaying inoculation of the 18-44 age group. With such gross mismanagement, it was hardly surprising when hospitals ran short of ventilators and oxygen, and people started dying in large numbers. It was only when the deluge threatened to drown his own future that Sawant ordered a lockdown. He realised that though a lockdown was against Narendra Modi's mantra, it alone was going to help him save himself politically. He has to seek a popular mandate in nine months.

(The author is the Editor, Navhind Times, Goa. The views expressed are personal.)

## COVID writing on the wall ahead of UP polls

The severe wave of the killer pandemic has virtually nullified all the good work undertaken by the Yogi Adityanath Government



BISWAJEET BANERJEE

After a month of devastation COVID-19 has caused in Uttar Pradesh leaving behind a trail of deaths and stories of agony emanating from almost each mohalla across the State, the insiders in the BJP and in the RSS realise that whatever be their achievements like providing houses to poor or free electricity, Ram Mandir and scrapping of Article 370 — everything has been washed away. "We have to start from scratch. This year's corona pandemic has washed away the good work being done by the BJP Government," a senior BJP leader told this reporter recently.

The statement coming from a senior BJP leader speaks volumes about the confidence of the party before the assembly election slated for early next year. From early this year the party had started a campaign with Ram Mandir being the fulcrum of the strategy. The elected representatives from Lok Sabha to ward levels were asked to galvanise party workers. The focus was booth management. Meetings - both physical and virtual - were going on across the State. There was a euphoria in the party cadre that Yogi Adityanath will return as Chief Minister. The main opposition Samajwadi Party too looked a bit reticent as its national president Akhilesh Yadav seemed to be at a sea about the party's political strategy.

The pandemic seems to have turned the BJP's appcart over. The desperate cries of help, for hospital beds and oxygen coming from cities and recovery of bloated and highly decomposed bodies from rivers across the state shows the catastrophe this pandemic has created.

An RSS pracharak says no one is now talking about Ram Temple. "This was to be our crowning glory event and we were set to use this (Ram Temple) in the next assembly election campaign. That has finished now. The slate is clean. We do not know where to start." The party believed that the victory on the Ram Mandir issue was the cornerstone of its campaign. Scrapping of article 370 added to the sheen of their campaign. Now, they seem to stand nowhere.

A ruling party corporator recounts how he had failed to help people of his ward when they were in dire need of beds in hospitals or were running around for a cylinder of oxygen. He called officers over a hundred times but they did not pick up his calls. Even senior party leaders showed their helplessness. Now, the corporator questions how he can expect support from these people because he has failed them when they needed his support the most. Families who lost people to COVID are also losing faith in the party, government and the system.

Union Minister Santosh Gangwar himself wrote a letter to Chief Minister Adityanath saying officials are not attending calls of people. When ruling party MLA from Nawabganj Kesar Singh died of corona his son tweeted saying if this government cannot save its MLA, what to talk about others. Party MP from Meerut Rajendra Agarwal wrote a letter to Adityanath to increase the number of beds in hospitals after reports that gangs of touts were allocating beds to patients in COVID hospitals.

What has added to BJP and Yogi Government's agony is the Panchayat elections.



THE PANDEMIC SEEMS TO HAVE TURNED THE BJP'S APPLCART OVER. THE DESPERATE CRIES OF HELP, FOR HOSPITAL BEDS AND OXYGEN COMING FROM CITIES AND RECOVERY OF BLOATED AND HIGHLY DECOMPOSED BODIES FROM RIVERS ACROSS THE STATE SHOW THE CATASTROPHE THIS PANDEMIC HAS CREATED

The writer is Executive Director (News), The Pioneer, Lucknow. The views expressed are personal.



It is now no secret that COVID infection reached villages also because of them. In the Covid 1.0 the villages remained untouched because the outsiders were not allowed entry unless they completed mandatory 14-day quarantine in schools outside villages. This time the situation was different. During the election campaign villagers enjoyed parties, thrown by candidates, as is the norm in Panchayat elections, sacrificing their personal safety. Once the pandemic reached villages it took a calamitous shape.

These elections cast their shadow on urban areas too. As the pandemic was raging in cities in the first week of April, particularly after Holi, the Yogi government delayed implementing lockdown or the corona curfew as it is called now. This allowed the pandemic to sweep markets, city malls, offices and banks, stretching medical facilities. But the government imposed the curfew only after the Panchayat elections were over on April 29.

The saner voices inside the BJP were of the opinion that elections should be postponed. Senior party leaders and lawmakers wrote to Adityanath for postponing the elections. BJP MP Kaushal Kishore said that he had written two such letters, adding his requests were ignored. The campaigning began

when covid cases started picking up in the state.

Insiders vouch that at one time the Chief Minister was willing to postpone Panchayat elections. The message was conveyed to the Central leadership but the latter reportedly suggested that Uttar Pradesh should go ahead with the elections. The central leaders argued that if UP cancels Panchayat elections, pressure would be on the Union government to request the Election Commission to postpone West Bengal polls.

At that time the BJP leadership was confident that the party would sweep West Bengal elections and thus they decided to go ahead with Panchayat elections in UP. But the gamble did not pay off in either state. Out of a total 3,050 member district panchayat across 75 districts of UP, the BJP won 768 seats, Samajwadi Party in alliance with RLD won 828 seats (SP 759 seats and RLD 69 seats), BSP 319, Congress 125 and Independents won 1071 seats. The Independents included BJP and Samajwadi rebel candidates.

Politically speaking, panchayat elections are not the testimony of the outcome in assembly elections. History shows that there is no guarantee that a party which has won Panchayat election will win assembly polls. In 2006,

Mulayam Singh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party won majority of the seats of district Panchayat chairmen but in 2007 assembly polls the party was routed. In 2011, Bahujan Samaj Party led by Mayawati won majority in these elections, but in the following year's assembly polls BSP could win only 67 seats. In 2017, Samajwadi Party was dethroned though it had won a majority of Panchayat seats in 2016.

It has been a tradition in the last two decades that the ruling party, by dint of money or muscle power has won the posts of block pramukh and panchayat chairman. The

situation during the pandemic is different now. The BJP might win district and block pramukh elections, but can people who are battered by COVID-19 spare the ruling party this time? That is the question ringing the state. The Bharatiya Janata Party will fight on two fronts - one to refurbish its image and two face the wrath of farmers who are all set to intensify their agitation against farm laws. In western UP, already, reports are that the farmers' agitation may dent BJP's reputation. The BJP leaders must be aware of this and that is probably why they are saying they will have to start preparing for the assembly elections from scratch.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE ISSUE IS NOT SINGAPORE; THE ISSUE IS TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN. TODAY AGAIN, THE CENTRE IS UNABLE TO FORESEE THE DANGER.

— DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER  
MANISH SISODIA



COVID-19 IS ENDEMIC IN HUMANITY.... POLITICIANS SHOULD STICK TO FACTS! THERE IS NO SINGAPORE VARIANT.  
— SINGAPORE FOREIGN MINISTER  
VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN

## Women's rights: Where the mind is without fear

Almost one in three women has been subjected to either intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both

If a woman with a voice is a strong woman, then women must continue to raise their voice. Women today face breach of bodily integrity, discrimination in voting rights, legal contracts, and work; and unequal access to opportunities of education and health. Devastating evil of sexual violence too persists. Agency, the quintessence of empowerment, cannot be manifested in an environment characterised by violence and infringement of rights. Despite several initiatives, freedom from sexual violence remains elusive.

According to WHO estimates, almost one in three women (15 years or older) have been subjected to either intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life. Violence against women (VAW) is a social mechanism that is used to relegate women



SIMRIT KAUR

SANCHITA JOSHI

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into subservient positions and curtail their already limited opportunities. It is intrinsically problematic as it is a violation of women's basic human rights and dignity. As per UN Women, estimated global cost associated with VAW stands at US\$ 1.5 trillion.

Despite adoption of the UN Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) and inclusion of sub-goals related to the same under Goal 5 (Gender Equality) of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), this man-made pandemic still looms large. At present, it has been aggravated by the natural pandemic with UN Women terming intensification of VAW during COVID-19 as 'Shadow Pandemic'.

Pervasiveness of VAW in its different forms - physical, sexual and psychological is a global phenomenon and persists across the different stages of



their life-cycle, sometimes even preceding birth.

Female foeticide, a widespread reality, has resulted in several 'missing girls'. According to State of the World Population Report (2020), there are about 142 million 'missing females' globally, more than double of the 1970 estimate of 61 million. In India, close to five lakh went 'missing' at birth each year during the period 2013-17. According to NITI Aayog's SDG Report (2019), Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) is at 896 (per

1000 males), below the desired target of 954; with Delhi, Uttarakhand, and Haryana emerging as the three worst performers (SRB below 860).

Relatedly, Economic Survey 2017-18, highlights another aspect of discrimination - son-meta preference, which manifests itself in a skewed sex ratio of last child and estimated the number of 'unwanted girls' in India at 21 million.

Among the older age groups, Human Development Report (2020) suggests that percentage of females (15 years and above) who ever experienced intimate partner violence were about 31 per cent for South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa each, 27.9 per cent for Europe and Central Asia, and 23.8 per cent for Latin America and Caribbean. Meanwhile, within India, according to NITI Aayog's SDG Report (2019), 33.3 per cent of Indian married

women (15-49 years) had ever experienced spousal violence. For the worst performing States, it was above 40 per cent.

Similarly, proportion of sexual crimes against girl children to total crime against children stands at about 60 per cent; the proportion being more than 100 per cent for worst performing states. Also, crime against women per one lakh of female population at all-India level is 57.9 per cent, with the rate being more than 85 per cent for worst performers. The National Crime Records Bureau data highlights that cases of crime against women registered in the country were over four lakhs in 2019.

The present pandemic has also corroborated that women are disproportionately adversely affected at times of crisis. During 2019 COVID lockdown, a surge in reporting of VAW especially domestic violence

was witnessed both in India and globally. This can be primarily attributed to direct interaction with the abuser in small household dwellings; reverse migration, as witnessed in India with the return of the abuser; and restricted mobility. Moreover, there also exists an element of differential vulnerability wherein women belonging to minority groups; indigenous groups; rural communities; children; female migrants; disabled women; and those in regions of conflict or climate change, are at times more exposed to VAW.

Taking into consideration the significant challenges posed by VAW, the Indian government has put in place several mechanisms to ensure the safety of girls and women.

Going ahead, policy makers should focus on a collaborative approach, which includes NGOs and civil society at large

in understanding the genesis of the problem, raising awareness and putting in place educational curriculums especially for children and adolescents that aim towards reducing VAW by bringing about behavioural and attitudinal changes from an early age. There is also need to work together with communities to raise awareness and work towards eradication of any customs or traditions that make the process of reform inert and curtail efficacy of policy measures aimed towards complete elimination of VAW.

In addition, strengthening data collection pertaining to different forms of violence to facilitate policy making is also critical. Last but not the least, gendered consequences of the pandemic need to be taken into consideration to ensure that both response as well as recovery mechanisms are gender sensitive.

# Israeli airstrikes kill 6, level large family home in Gaza

AP ■ GAZA CITY

Israeli airstrikes killed at least six people across the Gaza Strip and destroyed the home of an extended family early Wednesday. Despite growing international pressure for a cease-fire, the military said it widened its strikes on militant targets in the Palestinian territory's south to blunt continuing rocket fire from Hamas.

Residents surveyed the piles of bricks, concrete and other debris that had once been the home of 40 members of al-Astal family in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis.

They said a warning missile struck the building five minutes before the airstrike, allowing everyone to escape.

Ahmed al-Astal, a university professor, described a scene of panic before the airstrike hit, with men, women and children racing out of the building. Some of the women didn't even have time to cover their hair with Muslim headscarves, he said.

"We had just gotten down to the street, breathless, when the devastating bombardment came," he said.

"They left nothing but destruction, the children's cries



Mourners gather over the body of Yousef Abu Hussein, an al-Aqsa radio reporter, during his funeral at the main mosque in Gaza, Wednesday

filling the street. ... This is happening, and there is no one to help us. We ask God to help us."

The Israeli military said it struck a militant tunnel network around the towns of Khan Younis and Rafah, with 52 aircraft hitting 40 under-

ground targets. Gaza's Health Ministry said a woman was killed and eight people were wounded in those strikes.

Hamas-run Al-Aqsa radio said one of its reporters was killed in an airstrike in Gaza City. Among the six killed

Wednesday were also two people who died when warning missiles crashed into their apartment.

The latest strikes came as diplomatic efforts aimed at a cease-fire gathered strength and Gaza's infrastructure,

already weakened by a 14-year blockade, rapidly deteriorated.

Medical supplies, water and fuel for electricity are running low in territory, on which Israel and Egypt imposed the blockade after the Islamic militant group Hamas seized power in 2007.

The Biden administration was privately encouraging Israel to wind down its bombardment of Gaza.

Egyptian negotiators also were working to halt the fighting, and while they have not made progress with Israel, they were optimistic international pressure would force it to the table. Officials discussed the sensitive diplomacy on condition of anonymity.

But it was still unclear if or how soon those efforts would yield results. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel hopes to restore quiet "quickly" but did not exclude the possibility of further escalation.

"You can either conquer them, and that's always an open possibility, or you can deter them," he told foreign ambassadors. "We are engaged right now in forceful deterrence, but I have to say, we don't rule out anything."

## No longer silent, Gulf Arab citizens express anger at Israel

AP ■ DUBAI

The ongoing bloodshed in the Gaza Strip has unleashed a chorus of voices across Gulf Arab states that are fiercely critical of Israel and emphatically supportive of Palestinians.

The vocal opposition to Israel, expressed in street protests, on social media and in newspaper columns, comes just months after pacts were signed to establish ties with the Jewish state — and complicates government efforts to rally Arab citizens around full-throttle acceptance of the deals.

Analysts said the conflict will also set back Israeli efforts to secure more normalisation deals with other Arab states, like Saudi Arabia.

The criticism has not only put Arab governments that signed the diplomatic accords with Israel in a difficult position with their citizens, it also affirms that the Palestinian

cause continues to resonate deeply with people across the Middle East.

"No matter what your national priorities are at the moment or regional priorities are at the moment, when stuff like this happens, the Palestinian issue comes back and hits you," Emirati political analyst Abdulkhaleq Abdulla said.

Still, the open calls for Palestinian rights and condemnation of Israel voiced by countless Gulf Arab citizens have largely mirrored official statements from their governments, all of which have condemned the violence in some form.

Some have gone further, and Abdulla said he'd hoped the United Arab Emirates' most recent statement calling "on all parties" to cease fighting had been bolder and named Israel as the aggressor.

In speaking out, Gulf citizens are challenging the official

narratives around normalization with Israel.

In Bahrain, civil society groups signed a letter urging the government to expel the Israeli ambassador.

In Kuwait, protesters held two rallies and are demanding permission to hold more. In Qatar, the government allowed hundreds to protest over the weekend as Hamas' top leader delivered a speech.

In the UAE, some have openly donned the black-and-white checkered Palestinian keffiyeh on Instagram while others have tweeted under hashtags supportive of Palestinians.

Last year, the UAE became the first Arab country in over two decades to establish ties with Israel, after Egypt and Jordan in 1979 and 1994, respectively.

It was a brazen move that bypassed the Palestinians, who slammed it as treason and a stab in the back.

## US Prez Biden, in Netanyahu call, urges 'significant de-escalation'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden stepped up the pressure on Israel to end 10 days of violent skirmishes with Palestinians, making clear in a call Wednesday with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he expected "significant de-escalation" by day's end.

Biden asked Netanyahu to move "toward the path to a cease-fire," according to a White House description of their conversation.

There is pressure, too, on Biden to do more, with more than 200 people killed in the fighting. Until Wednesday, Biden had avoided pushing the American ally more directly and publicly for a cease-fire or conveyed such a level of urgency for ending Israeli airstrikes targeting Hamas in the thickly populated Gaza Strip.

The Biden administration had relied on what officials described as "quiet, intensive" diplomacy, including quashing a UN Security Council statement that would have addressed a cease-fire.

The administration's handling opened a divide between Biden and Democratic lawmakers, dozens of whom have called for a cease-fire.

## GOP seeks political opening amid tense fighting

Washington: Republicans trying to drive a wedge between Democrats and chip away at President Joe Biden's support are zeroing in on the violence in the Middle East, laying blame on his administration and aiming to make his liberal critics the face of the party heading into the midterm elections.

GOP Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Tom Cotton of Arkansas, both potential White House hopefuls in 2024, have focused in particular on Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and other progressives for criticising Israel amid an escalating volley of missiles and airstrikes in Hamas-controlled Gaza that has killed hundreds of civilians over the last week.

The approach represents a new strategy for Republicans who have struggled to land consistent and effective criticism of Biden and his fellow Democrats during the opening months of his presidency.

In focusing on the fighting in Gaza, the GOP is aiming to demonstrate staunch support for Israel, an issue of deep importance to many in the party's base. At the same time, Republicans are hoping to draw a contrast with Democrats and leave them appearing divided.

## Palestinian leader accuses Israel of war crimes

Ramallah: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas says Israel is carrying out "organised state terrorism and war crimes" in Gaza that are punishable under international law. In a televised address Wednesday, he said the Palestinians "will not hesitate to pursue those who commit such crimes in front of international courts."

Abbas is the head of the internationally backed Palestinian Authority, whose forces were driven from Gaza when the militant Hamas group seized power in 2007. The PA has limited autonomy in parts of the

## Israel accuses Chinese state TV of 'blatant anti-Semitism'

Beijing: Israel's Embassy in China is protesting what it describes as "blatant anti-Semitism" on a programme run by the overseas channel of state broadcaster CCTV discussing the ongoing violence in Gaza and elsewhere.

In a tweet, the embassy said "we have hoped that the times of the Jew's controlling the world conspiracy theories were over, unfortunately anti-Semitism has shown its ugly face again."

"We are appalled to see blatant anti-Semitism expressed in an official Chinese media outlet," the tweet said.

## China cries provocation as US warship sails through Taiwan Strait

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Wednesday accused the US of resorting to provocative moves in the Taiwan Strait and undermining peace and stability in the region after an American naval ship sailed through the waterway to demonstrate Washington's commitment to a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

The US Navy's 7th Fleet said that the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur had conducted a "routine Taiwan Strait transit" on Tuesday in accordance with international law.

The Taiwan Strait is a 180-kilometer wide channel separating China and Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its mainland.

"The ship's transit through Taiwan Strait demonstrates the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the Navy said in a statement.

"The US military will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows," the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted the US Navy statement as saying.

The US military planes and warships periodically fly and sail through the Taiwan Strait and the disputed South China Sea to assert freedom of

navigation in areas claimed by China. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan have counter claims over the South China Sea. As the US destroyer sailed through the Taiwan Strait, the Chinese Navy rushed its ships and closely monitored and followed it. Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here on Wednesday.

"The US vessels recently have come to Taiwan Strait to flex their muscles in provocation and a deliberate move to disrupt and undermine the regional situation and harm peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Zhao said.

"We firmly reject that and determined to safeguard our sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge the US to play a constructive role for regional peace and stability," he said. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theatre Command Spokesman Senior Colonel Zhang Chunhui in a statement called the latest passage through the strait a "provocation."

"The US move sends the wrong signals to Taiwanese independence-leaning forces, deliberately disrupting and sabotaging the regional situation and endangering peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," he said. China is increasingly getting concerned over the US policy towards Taiwan, an estranged island that fiercely asserts its independence.

China, for its part, vows to integrate it with the Chinese mainland and stepped up military manoeuvres in the area. Beijing also firmly opposes the present Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who is a strong advocate of Taiwan's independence.

he said. China is increasingly getting concerned over the US policy towards Taiwan, an estranged island that fiercely asserts its independence.

The previous US President, Donald Trump, reconfigured the US policy expanding America's material and military support to Taiwan, ignoring Beijing's criticism that it is a violation of "One-China" policy. Trump's successor Joe Biden continued that policy much to the chagrin of China.

Analysts said the US Navy transits through the waterway were becoming the norm, as were warnings from the PLA in response, raising the risk of conflict given the tensions and lack of communications between the two sides.

Shi Yinhong, a professor of international relations at the Renmin

University of China in Beijing, said that both the PLA and the US military recognised that the Taiwan Strait could become "a dangerous place" if tensions continued to rise.

## GLOBE TROTTER

**TURKEY BANS PLASTIC WASTE IMPORTS**  
Istanbul: Turkey has banned the importation of ethylene polymer plastic waste as environmental groups sound the alarm on the world's plastic consumption and lack of effective recycling.

**CHINA LAUNCHES OCEAN OBSERVATION SATELLITE**  
Beijing: China on Wednesday successfully sent a new ocean-monitoring satellite into orbit as part of its effort to build an all-weather and round-the-clock dynamic ocean environment monitoring system which would provide early warning on marine disasters. The satellite was launched by a Long March-4B rocket carrying the Haiyang-2D (HY-2D) satellite from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China, the state media reported.

**NEPAL RECORDS 246 COVID-RELATED DEATHS**  
Kathmandu: Nepal recorded 246 new Covid-19 fatalities in the last 24 hours, pushing the death toll to 5,657, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday. The total coronavirus tally stands at 480,418 with 8,064 new cases, it said. Of the total new cases, 2,486 were reported from Kathmandu Valley in the last 24 hours. While 360,403 people have recovered so far, 1,14,529 others are undergoing treatment at various home and institutional isolation centres.

**LEBANESE ACTING FM STEPS DOWN**  
Beirut: Lebanon's acting foreign minister stepped down on Wednesday amid a diplomatic row with Gulf Arab countries after he suggested in a TV interview this week that they had provided backing to extremists, helping the rise of the Islamic State group. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait summoned Lebanese ambassadors in their capitals to protest Charbel Wehbe's remarks during an interview with Alhurra news channel. They accuse Wehbe of violating diplomatic norms and making derogatory statements. Wehbe said that "friendship and brotherhood countries" brought Islamic State militants to Syria.

**E-Tender Notice No. 02/21-22 dt. 19.05.2021** for procurement of stores. E-Tenders are invited by PCMM/Metro Railway, Kolkata for following items have already been uploaded in [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) with full details. Manual Bid will not be accepted. (i) **Tender No. : 03215190, Brief Description :** Oxygen Generator Plant. **Quantity :** 1 No. **Closing date & time :** 24.05.2021 at 14.00 hrs. (ii) **Tender No. : 02215089, Brief Description :** 20KVA UPS with 3 years post warranty CAMC. **Quantity :** 27 Nos. **Closing date & time :** 31.05.2021 at 14.00 hrs. **Metro Railway, Kolkata**

**WESTERN RAILWAY E-TENDER FOR FAMILY MALL DEVELOPMENT & ALLIED WORK**  
Department: Commercial Executive: Sr. DCM E-Tender Notice No.: CA11 Family\_Mall\_MMCT Date: 18/05/2021 **Work and Location:** Development, Maintenance and Operation of Family Mall at Mumbai Central (MMCT) station of Mumbai Division for a period of 5 (five) years. **Approx. Cost of Work: ₹11,33,98,286/ for 5 years (Excluding Taxes, etc.) EMD: ₹22.68,000/- Last Date & Time for Online Tender Submission:** till 15.00 Hrs on 18/06/2021 **Date and Time for e-Tender Opening:** 15.30 Hrs on 18/06/2021 **Notes:** (i) Complete tender details and documents and corrigendum (if any) can be viewed and downloaded on [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in). (2) Cost of tender and EMD shall be accepted only through net banking or E-Payment gateway. **0-0113**  
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## America-Russia showdown looms as top diplomats meet in Iceland

AP ■ REYKJAVIK (ICELAND)

Top diplomats from the United States and Russia are set to square off this week in Iceland for their first face-to-face encounter that comes as ties between the nations have deteriorated sharply in recent months. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russia's longtime Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov plan to talk Wednesday on the sidelines of an Arctic Council meeting in the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik, a city with deep history in US-Russian relations.

Even before the talks — that are ostensibly to prepare for a summit between President Joe Biden and Russian leader Vladimir Putin next month — the two diplomats laid down near diametrically opposed positions for the meeting, previewing what is likely to be a difficult and contentious exchange.

This follows a spate of tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions as US-Russian relations threaten a return to Cold War lows. The nuclear powers are at odds on myriad issues including Ukraine, the Arctic, Russia's treatment of opposition figure Alexey Navalny and accusations of cybermalfeasance, including claims that Russia-based hackers were responsible for a ransomware attack on a key US pipeline.

## Quake rattles Nepal's Lamjung Dozens of houses flattened, injuries reported

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

A 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal's western Lamjung district on Wednesday, injuring at least six persons and damaging dozens of houses, officials said.

The epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 5:42 AM (05:27 IST), was located at Marshyangdi Rural Municipality of the district, 200 km west of Kathmandu.

The 5.8-magnitude quake damaged around two dozen houses and left six people injured. The Kathmandu Post reported.

According to the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre, two tremors of magnitudes 4.0 and 5.3 were also recorded in the district later at 8:16 AM and 8:26 AM.

The report said that around 20 small tremors have been felt until 10 AM since the first

quake hit the district.

Altogether, four earthquakes from mild to moderate hit Lamjung. They were known as the aftershocks of the devastating 2015 earthquake that hit Gorkha district. Lamjung is 75 km west of Gorkha.

According to Inspector Jagdish Regmi of the District Police Office, six people have been injured in the quake.

"Three people were injured after a wall of a house gave way

while the other three were injured while running away," he said.

All the injured were rushed to a nearby hospital in Lamjung where their condition is reported to be normal.

The Himalayan Times reported that a woman was found half-buried as her house caved in. She was asleep when the quake struck. Locals rescued her and rushed her to a hospital.

## Mexico City marks 500 years since conquest battle began

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

Remembering the Spanish siege of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital now known as Mexico City: now the painful birth of modern Mexico, or the start of centuries of virtual enslavement.

The world-changing battle started on May 22, 1521, and lasted for months until the city finally fell to the conquistadores on August 13. It was one of the few times an organized Indigenous army under local command fought European colonizers to a standstill for months, and the final defeat helped set the template for much of the conquest and

colonization that came afterward.

"The fall of Tenochtitlan opened the modern history of the West," said historian Salvador Rueda, director of the city's Chapultepec Museum. One way of remembering the event is symbolized by a plaque that stands in the city's "Plaza of Three Cultures" honoring Indigenous Mexico, Spanish colonialism and the "modern" mixed-race Mexico that resulted from the conquest.

The three cultures are represented by three buildings: a ruined Aztec temple, a Spanish colonial church built atop the ruins and a modern government office building con-

structed in the 1960s. "It was neither a triumph nor a defeat. It was the painful birth of the Mestizo (mixed-race) Mexico today," the plaque reads.

That sentiment, preached by the government since the 1920s — that Mexico is a non-racial, non-racist, unified nation where everyone is mixed-race, bearing the blood of both conquerors and conquered — has aged about as well as the 1960s office building.

It is largely roped off because shards of its marble facing regularly shear off and come crashing to the ground, and Indigenous or dark-skinned Mexicans continue to face discrimination by their lighter-skinned countrymen.

## EU takes big step toward relaxing travel for vaccinated

Brussels: The European Union on Wednesday took a step toward relaxing tourism travel for visitors from outside the bloc, with EU ambassadors agreeing on measures to allow fully vaccinated visitors in.

They also agreed on easing the criteria for nations to be considered a safe country, from which all tourists can travel. Up to now, that list included only seven nations.

The EU imposed strict measures last year to contain Covid-19 outbreaks but the bloc's 27 ambassadors now say many of those restrictions on non-essential travel should be

eased. Specifically, tourists from outside the bloc who have been fully vaccinated should be allowed in. The EU "Council will now recommend that member states ease some of the current restrictions" for those who have been vaccinated, said EU Commission spokesman Christian Wigand.

"The council should also soon expand the list of non-EU countries with a good epidemiological situation from where travel is permitted," said Wigand. The EU's European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is to give advice on the list.

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पत्रांक: 365 दिनांक: 19.05.2021  
**Tender Time Extension Notice**  
Due to unavoidable reason, dates of Bid of NIT No.: 01/EE/(Pathri)/2021-22 (Rehabilitation and Modification works of E.O.T Crane of Pathri Power House) invited by the Office of the Executive Engineer, (M&G) Pathri Power House, Bahadradab, Haryana are hereby extended. Last date for submission of Tender: 02.06.2021 upto 11:00 Hrs. Date of opening of tender: 04.06.2021 at 11:00 Hrs. All other terms and conditions of tender shall remain unchanged. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website [www.ujvn.com](http://www.ujvn.com).  
**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (M&G)**  
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

# Govt asked WhatsApp to withdraw privacy policy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has ordered WhatsApp to withdraw its controversial new privacy policy, saying the changes undermine the sacrosanct values of privacy, data security and rights and interests of Indian citizens.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT shot-off a letter to WhatsApp on May 18 on the issue, sources said and warned that necessary steps in accordance with law will be taken if a satisfactory response was not received within seven days.

The ministry has taken a strong position on the matter, and made it clear that it is not just problematic but also "irresponsible" for the messaging platform to leverage its position to impose "unfair" terms and conditions on Indian users, when many depend on WhatsApp to communicate in everyday life, according to the sources.

In the letter, the ministry has drawn attention of WhatsApp as to how its new privacy policy is a violation of several provisions of the exist-



ing Indian laws and rules. In fulfilment of its sovereign responsibility to protect the rights and interests of Indian citizens, the government will consider various options available to it under laws in India, the sources at the ministry said. A raging debate had ensued after WhatsApp had said it will update its terms of service and privacy policy around how it processes user data and partners with Facebook to offer integrations across the social media giant's products. WhatsApp - which has 53 crore users in India as per government data - had faced severe backlash over user concerns that data was being shared with parent company Facebook. Earlier this week, WhatsApp told the Delhi High Court that while its new privacy policy has come into effect from May 15, it would not start deleting accounts of those users who have not accepted it and would try to encourage them to get on board.

# Sensex snaps 3-day winning run as profit-booking takes hold

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmark Sensex succumbed to selling pressure on Wednesday as investors cashed in gains after a three-session rally, with banking and finance shares leading the selloff.

A bearish trend in global markets and a depreciating rupee added to the selling momentum, traders said.

Giving up the 50,000 mark, the 30-share BSE index ended 290.69 points or 0.58 per cent lower at 49,902.64. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty fell 77.95 points or 0.52 per cent to close at 15,030.15.

Bajaj Finserv was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding 1.68 per cent, followed by HDFC.

M&M, Bharti Airtel, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Bank and HDFC Bank.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Nestle India, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Auto and Axis Bank were among the gainers, spurring up to 1.82 per cent.

"The recent sharp rally has triggered some caution for the near-term. The global market was tentative ahead of the announcement of Fed minutes, this was mirrored in the domestic market, though it is

₹ snaps 3-day winning streak, drops 13 paise to 73.18/\$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Snapping its three-day winning run, the rupee on Wednesday declined by 13 paise to close at 73.18 against the US dollar in line fall in Asian currencies ahead of the release of US Fed minutes.

Dollar demand from importers and weak regional risk appetite and losses in the domestic equities also weighed on the local unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic currency opened at 73.02 against the American currency, but pared the gains to close at 73.18, registering a decline of 13 paise over its previous close.

not expected to hawkish. "Optimism gained from declining COVID cases resisted a sharp correction in domestic market," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

# CBIC rationalises GST refund provisions Allows taxpayers to withdraw application

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has rationalised GST refund provisions, including giving option to taxpayers to withdraw application.

It has amended Goods and Services Tax (GST) rules and has excluded the time period from date of filing of refund application to date of issuance of deficiency memo by the officer from the overall time limit to file refund application.

Dhruva Advisors LLP Niraj Bagri said many GST refund applications were returned on the grounds of deficiency seeking the company to file a fresh application. The filing of a rectified refund application was treated as a new refund application.

"In several instances, though the original refund application was filed within the time limit of 2 years, the department has been considering the date of rectified refund application as the relevant date resulting in rejections on the ground of breach of time



limits. "CBIC has put rest to this controversy, by amending the rule, and providing that the time period from the date of filing of original refund application till the time the deficiency letter is issued, will be excluded for determining the two-year period," Bagri said. Athena Law Associates Partner Pawan Arora said now refund application can be withdrawn at any time prior to issuance of provisional/ final refund order or refund payment/ withhold/ rejection order.

Also, the amendments in refund rules have resolved the biggest dispute regarding time limit of fresh filing of refund application after receipt of deficiency notice.

"Now, the time period up to date of communication of deficiency notice shall not be counted in the two years limitation for fresh refund application."

In my view it should be given retrospective effect to dispose of the pending litigations on this issue before the courts," Arora added.

EY Tax Partner Abhishek Jain welcomed the amendments, saying they were awaited and advocated by the industry players for a long time.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said changes in the rules would help numerous taxpayers, including exporters. Current amendments to GST rules will also empower taxpayers to withdraw the GST refund application to correct any clerical mistakes that may have crept in.

# Sebi proposes merger of debt securities rules into single one

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To ease compliance burden on listed entities, Sebi on Wednesday proposed merger of listing rules pertaining to debt securities and non-convertible redeemable preference shares into a single regulation.

The proposal is aimed at harmonising with the Companies Act, 2013, and maintaining consistency with the Sebi's LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) rules and Debenture Trustees norms, the regulator said in a consultation paper.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has invited public comments, open for 21 days, on the proposal.

# Second wave induced sequential slackening a concern: ICRA

IAANS ■ NEW DELHI

Sequential growth slackening driven by the second wave of Covid-19 in India has emerged as a concern, ratings agency ICRA said.

ICRA also cautioned that bruised sentiment, high health-care and fuel expenses will limit discretionary purchases in the immediate term.

Furthermore, the agency expects a cut-back in spending on contact-intensive services.

"As expected, the shrinked base of the nationwide lockdown in April 2020 has boosted the pace of year-on-year (YoY) expansion of several high-frequency indicators in April 2021, resulting in a widespread improvement compared to the performance in March 2021," ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said.

"However, the optimism generated by this trend is limited,

as eight of the 13 non-financial indicators in April 2021 remained below their pre-Covid levels."

According to Nayar, indicators such as GST e-way bills, electricity generation, vehicle registrations, rail freight traffic, etc displayed a slowing sequential momentum in April 2021, reflecting the rise in Covid-19 cases and imposition of localised restrictions.

"The early data available for May 2021 confirms that this trend is continuing, as the lockdowns have both been extended, and spread to other states, to curb the second wave of Covid-19."

As per ICRA, the YoY performance of 14 of the 15 high frequency indicators (except bank deposits) tracked by it recorded an improvement in April 2021, relative to March 2021.

# Govt to hike DAP subsidy on fertilizer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers will continue to get DAP fertilizer at ₹1200 per bag this year after the Government announced a hike in the subsidy amount from ₹500 to ₹1200. The decision was taken after a high level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday.

The Government spends about ₹80,000 crore on subsidies for chemical fertilisers every year. With the increase in subsidy in DAP, Government of India will spend an additional ₹14,775 crore as subsidy in Kharif season. "Thus, despite the rise in international market prices of DAP, it has been decided to continue selling it at the older price of ₹1200 and the central government has decided to bear all the burden of price hike. The amount of subsidy per

bag has never been increased so much at once.

Last year, the actual price of DAP was ₹1,700 per bag. In which the Central Government was giving a subsidy of ₹500 per bag.

So the companies were selling fertilizer to farmers for ₹1200 per bag," the PMO said in a statement.

Recently, the international prices of phosphoric acid, ammonia etc. used in DAP have gone up by 60% to 70%. So the actual price of a DAP bag is now ₹2400, which could be sold by Fertilizer companies at ₹1900 after considering a subsidy of ₹500. With today's decision, farmers will continue to get a DAP bag for ₹1200.

The opposition parties including Congress and NCP have been attacking the Modi government over a hike in fertiliser prices, saying this will put an additional burden of ₹ 20,000 crore on the farmers.

# Das asks PSBs to quickly implement measures announced by RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday asked state-owned banks to quickly implement measures announced by the central bank recently in the "right earnest", and to continue focussing on steps to enhance the resilience of their balance sheets.

Das during a meeting with the MDs and CEOs of public sector banks acknowledged the important role being played by PSBs in extending various banking facilities including credit facilities to individuals and businesses while tackling the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

"He impressed upon the banks to quickly implement the measures announced by RBI recently in the right earnest. He also urged the banks to continue focussing on steps to

enhance the resilience of their balance sheets," the RBI said in a statement post the meeting held over video conference.

Earlier this month, the governor had announced a slew of measures, including term liquidity facility of Rs 50,000 crore to ease access to emergency health services, to further improve lending to MSME sector, restructuring of loans, and rationalisation of compliance to KYC, in wake of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other matters that came up for discussion during the meeting, included the current state of the financial sector.

# IOC net rises to ₹8,781 cr in Jan-Mar

New Delhi: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's biggest oil firm, on Wednesday reported a better-than-expected net profit of ₹8,781.30 crore in the March quarter, helped by a surge in refining margins as higher crude prices boosted the inventory value. Standalone net profit in January-March was at ₹8,781.30 crore, or ₹9.56 a share, compared with a loss of ₹5,185.32 crore in the same period a year back, IOC Chairman S M Vaidya said. The rise in profitability was due to higher inventory gain and higher petrochemical margin in the fourth quarter of 2020-21 (April to March) fiscal, he said at a conference call with reporters. IANS

# Offer to sell Govt's 1.95% stake in Axis Bank gets good response on first day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The central Government's sale of shares, held through SUUTI, in Axis Bank got subscribed over four times on the first day of offer on Wednesday, according to DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey.

The Government is selling up to 5.80 crore shares or 1.95 per cent stake held through the Specified Undertaking of the Unit Trust of India (SUUTI) in Axis Bank at a floor price of ₹680 apiece. This includes a base issue size of 3.60 crore shares and a greenshoe option to sell more than 2.20 crore shares.

"Offer for Sale of SUUTI shares in Axis Bank got a good

response on day one. Issue subscribed over 4 times of base size at a clearing price above the floor price by non-retail investors. SUUTI has decided to exercise the green shoe option. Retail investors get a chance to bid tomorrow," the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary said in a tweet.

The sale of 1.95 per cent stake is expected to fetch around Rs 4,000 crore to the exchequer.

SUUTI held 3.45 per cent stake in Axis Bank at the end of March 2021.

Shares of Axis Bank closed at ₹716.70, up 0.67 per cent over previous close on BSE.

# I-T dept issues ₹24,792 crore refunds so far this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax department on Wednesday said it has issued over ₹24,792 crore refunds to more than 15 lakh taxpayers so far this fiscal.

Of this personal income tax refunds worth ₹7,458 crore has been issued in over 14.98 lakh cases. Corporate tax refunds of ₹ 17,334 crore have been issued to 43,661 taxpayers.

"CBDT issues refunds of over ₹24,792 crore to more than 15 lakh taxpayers between 1st April 2021 to 17th May 2021," the Income-tax department tweeted. The I-T department did not specify the financial year for the refunds.

# Google unveils new feature for faster connectivity



IAANS ■ SAN FRANCISCO

In a bid to make all devices work better together, tech giant Google has announced a new feature Fast Pair that helps make it easier and faster to connect to Bluetooth devices around.

The company said that, so far, people have used Fast Pair over 36 million times to connect their Android phones with Bluetooth accessories from Sony, Microsoft, JBL, Philips, Google and many other popular brands.

"In the coming months, we're bringing Fast Pair to even more devices such as Beats headphones as well as cars from BMW and Ford. With a single tap, you can pair your Android phone to your favorite accessories whether it's earbuds, speakers, wearables or cars," Erik Kay, VP of Engineering, Android, said during the Google I/O conference on Tuesday.

"We are making it easier to navigate your TV by building remote-control features directly into your Android phone, so you can watch your favourite show even if your actual remote is missing," Kay added. Rolling out later this year, the built-in remote control on Android phones will work instantly for the more than 80 million Android TV OS devices, including Google TV.

**OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION UNIT, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM**  
COLLECTORATE COMPOUND, RUDRAPUR, DISTT. UDHAM SINGH NAGAR

**E-Tender Notice** Date: 19.05.2021

Ref no. 667/Nivida/53

- Name of the work:- CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOMS AT GOVT. DEGREE COLLEGE KASHIPUR (UDHAM SINGH NAGAR).
- Estimated Cost - Rs. 310.79 Lakh
- Period of Completion - 12 Month
- Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:- 20.05.2021 (17.00hrs)
- Last date/Time of receipt of bids in the portal:- 07.06.2021 (17.00hrs)
- Date & Time of Technical bid Opening:- 09.06.2021 (12.00hrs)
- Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid:- General Manager (Kumaon), Nirman Wing, Uttarakhand Pwaj Nigam, Laxmi Niwas, Durgapal Garden, Piliokhi, Halidwari.
- Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place:- 27.05.2021 (13.00 hrs) General Manager (Kumaon), Nirman Wing, Uttarakhand Peyjal, Laxmi Niwas, Durgapal Garden, Cinihya Secondary School Piliokhi, Badli Mukhiani, Halidwari.
- For further details, details of subsequent Amendment / correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in)

**Project Manager**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE** DATED: 19.05.2021

**No. 74-W/2/3/WA/Publication** DATED: 19.05.2021

**SRDEN/IMB** acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tenders closing date 15.06.2021 16:00. Bidders will be able to submit their original revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

**Tender No. Date** 11-DRM-MB-21-22 Date- 18.05.2021

Name of work	Structural condition survey by underwater inspection and videography of Bridge No. 1248 UP & DN and 1258 UP & DN in the section of Sr. DEN-IMB.
Tender Closing Date/Time	15.06.2021 16:00
Advertised Value (Rs.)	1017428.07
Bidding Start Date	01.06.2021
Validity of Offer (Days)	45 Days
Period of Completion	6 Months

**1070/21**

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**GOLD AUCTION NOTICE**

CSB Bank Limited, Karol Bagh Branch had granted gold loan against pledge of gold ornaments to the below mentioned borrower(s). Notice has been issued to him/them demanding repayment of the amount with interest and charges thereon. Since they have failed to repay the balance outstanding in the respective accounts, we are constrained to recover the amount by sale of gold ornaments in public auction and if the auction does not fetch required amount, bank will proceed with the sale by private treaties/contract. Bank reserves its right to change/extend the date and venue of auction without assigning any reason.

Sl No	Name of borrower	Gross Weight of Pledge items (in grams)	Overdue Gold Loan Account No.	Amount	Balance Outstanding (as on 18.05.2021)
1	Anveet Singh Arora	10.17	0458-04202154-000001	38200	41183
2	Anveet Singh Arora	15.58	0458-04202154-000002	55500	59790
3	Sanjay	21.71	0458-07130721-000001	71000	76385
4	Meera	64.31	0458-04218847-000001	207000	218000
5	Meera	4.85	0458-04218847-000002	17300	18100
6	Meera	3.67	0458-04218847-000003	12500	12810

The auction will be conducted at the premises of CSB Bank Limited, Karolbagh branch premises situated at Upper Ground 2106, Desh Bandhu Gupta Road, Karolbagh, New Delhi-110005 on **28.05.2021 at 11:00 AM**. Interested parties may contact the Branch Manager in the above address. Participants should attend the auction along with copy of Pan Card, passport size photo, valid identity proof and address proof on the date of auction.

**Place:** Karol Bagh  
**Date:** 19-05-2021  
**Branch Manager**

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**  
**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, PRISONS DEPARTMENT J&K SRINAGAR**

**E-TENDER NOTICE FOR SUPPLY OF BEDDING AND UTENSIL ITEMS FOR PRISONS DEPARTMENT J&K FOR THE YEAR 2021-22**  
e-NIT No. 01- OF 2021 DATED: 17-05-2021

Sealed Tenders affixed with revenue stamps for an amount of Rs. 5/- on behalf of Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir State are invited from the original Manufacturers/ Authorized distributors /dealers registered for supply of Bedding, and Utensil items FOR PRISONS DEPARTMENT J&K FOR THE YEAR 2021-22 to the Original NIT under two bid cover system (Technical Specification Bid / Financial Bid). The intending tenderer/s shall have to attach earnest money in the shape of CDR/FDR from any Nationalized/Scheduled Bank to be pledged to the Financial Advisor/CAO Prisons Department J&K Jammu for an amount to the extent shown against each below. The detailed documents, Criteria and other terms and conditions can also be seen/downloaded from the governmental website [www.iktenders.gov.in](http://www.iktenders.gov.in) as per schedule of dates given below:-

- Date of Issue/publishing of tender notice :- 18.05.2021, 10.00 am,
- Date of Downloading of bidding documents or Start date :- 18.05.2021, 10.00 am,
- Bid submission Start date :- 20.05.2021, 10.00 am,
- Bid Submission closing/End date :- 17.06.2021, 2.00 pm,
- Date and time of opening online Bids :- 18.06.2021, 3.00 pm (in the office chamber of DGP Prisons J&K),
- Deadline for receiving the hardcopy of Original DD & EMD including all the soft copy of documents in favour of approved firm/Contractor :- 17.06.2021, 3.00 pm,
- EMD AMOUNT :- Rs. 50000.00 (refundable),
- Cost of tender documents (Non-refundable) :- Rs. 5000.00 and for SSI Units Rs. 1000.00 (non-refundable).

Sd/- Financial Advisor/CAO,  
No. DIP/J-1536/21 Dated: 19.05.2021 Prisons Department, J&K, Jammu

**कार्यालय कलेक्टर, जिला- नारायणपुर (छत्तीसगढ़)**  
**(आदिवासी विकास शाखा)**  
**दूरभाष (कार्यालय) 07781-252881, (फैक्स) 252920**  
**Email-collector.assttw.narayanpur@gmail.com**

**मैनुअल पद्धति प्रथम निविदा सूचना**

क्रमांक /1214/आदिवा/निमार्ण/2021-22 नारायणपुर, दिनांक 13.05.2021

एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत श्रेणी "स" से "अ" तक के खसम श्रेणी में नारायणपुर जिले के पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निमार्ण कार्यों हेतु मैनुअल पद्धति में निम्नांकित 28.05.2021 समय 5:30 बजे तक निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निम्न कार्य का लोक निर्माण विभाग, छत्तीसगढ़ शासन रायपुर द्वारा भवन दर अनुसूची जो 01.01.2015 से प्रभावशील है।

क्र	कार्य का नाम	ठेके की लागत (लाख में)	अमान राशि (लाख में)
1	2	3	4
1	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम सेहतवा, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
2	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम ओरमसेट, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
3	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम चनोर, दिखं नारायणपुर का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
4	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम करसेवेडा, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
5	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम हितवावा, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
6	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम परलनार, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
7	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम बरवावाही, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
8	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम हालनार, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
9	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम वाववे, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
10	आदिवासी कच्चा आश्रम मुनकरा, दिखं ओरम का भवन निर्माण कार्य	148.54	1.12
11	श्री.पै.वि.वा. वॉलक अकवास नद्वेनार, दिखं नापुर का भवन निर्माण कार्य	177.10	1.33

नोट:- उक्त निर्माण कार्यों की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञापन, निविदा दस्तावेज, निविदा प्रश्न की दर व अन्य जानकारी दिनांक 28.05.2021 तक कार्यालयीन अवधि में कार्यालय कलेक्टर (आदिवासी विकास शाखा) के कक्ष क्रमांक 94, 95 में प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

हस्ता/-  
सहायक आयुक्त,  
आदिवासी, विकास  
नारायणपुर

**R.O.NO.60614/8**  
**R.O.DATE: 18/05/2021**

# Amazon donates \$5mn of medical equipment to help India fight Covid

IAANS ■ WASHINGTON

In a bid to help India, in its fight against the second and more lethal wave of coronavirus, Amazon has sent critical medical equipment worth over \$5 million to support hospitals and other Covid care facilities across India, the e-commerce giant said on Wednesday.

The critical life-saving equipment includes 82 anaesthesia ventilators, 1,238 BiPAP machines and 60 ventilators. The medical equipment will be distributed to Amazon's on-the-ground community partners such as the American India Foundation, ACT Grants and Swasth, who will distribute to verified hospitals and non-profit organisations across the



country to ensure it reaches communities where it is needed the most. In addition, Amazon is also donating transportation services to the American non-profit organisation India Association of Western Washington and working to support the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation and other US non-profit organisations to help get medical supplies to India. The e-commerce giant is also part of the US Chamber of Commerce's Global Task Force to help India combat Covid-19. Early this month, Amazon India announced that it is working with global sellers on its marketplace to help them bring in about 9,000 oxygen concentrators for customers in the country. In April, the company announced that they are importing and donating 100 ventilator units.



# CELEBS TO THE RESCUE

In these unprecedented times, there are some people out there who are putting their privilege to good use. TEAM VIVA looks at some good Samaritan stories from Bollywood

**A**mid the surge in cases during the second wave of the novel Coronavirus, the country has been shaken to its core. The limitations of our nation's healthcare sector have been thoroughly exposed over the past one year. In these uncertain times, many names from the Bollywood fraternity have stepped up in varying aspects. While there have been many questions raised with respect to the nature of their philanthropy, it has to be said that they are, at least, making a difference. Listed below are a handful of such people:

**SONU SOOD**  
 Any such list deserves Sonu Sood right at the top as he has turned into a real-life hero with his unconditional service to fellow citizens. The actor has been at the forefront ever since the first nationwide lockdown, helping stranded migrant workers and students in reaching home, arranging for medical resources like oxygen cylinders, beds and medicines.

Earlier this month, Sonu was seen in an episode of the third season of the reality dance show *Dance Deewane*, where he received a warm welcome and several contestants paid tribute to him. Uday Singh, a resident of a small town Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh, performed a special act saluting Sonu's contribution towards daily wagers and COVID-19 affected people. While thanking him for his efforts, Uday shared how his entire village survives on daily wages, and with the lockdown in place, they have been left without any earning.

Moved by his story, Sonu immediately told Uday that for the entire period of the lockdown, he will feed the entire village. He further assured the contestant that regular ration would be provided to everyone, however, long the lockdown continues. Stories like this help preserve one's faith in humanity.

**ANUSHKA SHARMA**  
 Anushka Sharma, along with husband and cricketer Virat Kohli, donated ₹2 crores to a week-long fundraiser they kick-started on May 7, 2020. Last week, the power couple took to social media to release a statement saying that their fundraiser on Ketto to generate funds for COVID-19 relief in India had surpassed expectation by raising over ₹11 crore and the funds will go to ACT Grants, a COVID-19 relief organisation. Last year the duo had donated to the PM CARES fund as well as the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (Maharashtra). While they refrained from revealing the details, it was reported that the couple donated ₹3 crores to the PM CARES fund.

**AMITABH BACHCHAN, AJAY DEVGN AND PRODUCER ANAND PANDIT**  
 Their camaraderie and long working association is well-known in and outside industry circles. Now, veteran producer Anand Pandit and Amitabh Bachchan have joined hands to extend urgent COVID-19 care to Mumbaiers with a fully equipped 25-bed facility in Juhu. Pandit, who also helped set

up a similar facility in the neighbourhood of Dadar, stated, "A 25-bed oxygen facility has been set up at the Ritambhara Vishva Vidyapeeth in Juhu. After a trial run, the centre was up and running by 10 am on Tuesday, May 18. Amitabh ji donated the equipment and infrastructure for the facility and all necessary permissions have been granted by the BMC."

Pandit, who helped scores of daily wage workers in the industry during the lockdown last year, also recently synergised with Ajay Devgn to establish a 20-bed ICU facility for COVID-19 patients at Shivaji Park and is working and scouting locations to set up another one in Borivali.

He further expressed, "The industry must come together at this time to help as many people as possible. We are facing an economic, humanitarian and social crisis at a scale that would have been unimaginable even last year. And those who can, must do everything to change the bleak narrative around the pandemic to one that gives hope."

**DIANA PENTY**  
 For many battling COVID-19 in India today, the treatment and hospitalisation is a huge financial burden which many of them are unable to fulfil. With no help on the horizon, many are turning to crowdfunding to help ease the burden. With #EveryLifeMatters, an initiative in association with Ketto India, Diana Penty aims to raise awareness and help provide relief and financial support to those who need help in these testing times.

Through this initiative, Diana will use her social media to highlight individuals in dire need of financial support for

medical treatment and also support the many good Samaritans across the country, who've stepped up in the time of major crisis to help those in need. Many of them don't have the platforms to have their fundraisers amplified enough to make an impact, and this initiative will help them do just that.

Using her fan base and networks, Diana plans to help amplify the work of these individuals/organisations and help as many people as possible in the process.

Known for her humanitarian work, Diana was also at the helm of *The Khaki Project* last year, providing Mumbai's police force with much-needed supplies such as masks, sanitisers etc.

**SALMAN KHAN**  
 Last month, videos surfaced of the actor sampling food before they were packed and sent out to frontline workers.

A member of Shiv Sena's youth wing, the political party co-ordinating relief work with the actor, shared that Salman Khan came to check the quality of food that was sent out. "Salman bhai has immense respect for frontline workers. His mother even sends handmade tiffin for the police personnel that have been stationed outside his house on security duty. He thought since the lockdown is going on and these workers are on duty 24/7, we should start sending food packets and try to make it easier for them," the Shiv Sena worker said.

Last year, Salman rallied his Bollywood friends to help send care packages to migrant workers stranded during the nationwide lockdown.

**SUSHMITA SEN**  
 When Sushmita Sen came across an online appeal for help when the CEO of Shanti Mukand hospital in Delhi broke down while admitting that his hospital barely had any oxygen left, she chose to act right away. The actor procured as many oxygen cylinders as she could and tweeted for assistance in transporting them from Mumbai to Delhi. Later on, she shared the news that a "Twitter friend" had assisted her in getting the cylinders to the hospital the very next morning.

**ANUPAM KHER**  
 Anupam Kher Foundation in collaboration with Dr Ashutosh Tewari (Global Cancer Foundation, USA) and Baba Kalyani, (Bharat Forge, India), recently started an initiative called *Project Heal India*.

Last weekend, *Project Heal India* donated several oxygen concentrators and Bilevel Positive Airway Pressure (BiPAP) machines to Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Maharashtra, for relief work during the health crisis. It has initiated various donations to different medical institutions of the country under its first leg of operations. It aims at providing critical lifesaving equipment and other life-supporting devices to medical institutions and hospitals across India.

**PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS**  
 She has been actively using her social media to share COVID-19 resources since the second wave began. On Friday, she and husband Nick Jonas launched a fundraiser, a partnership between the Priyanka

Chopra Jonas Foundation and Give India.

Earlier this week, Priyanka stated that through the fundraiser, they have obtained over \$3 million. She further revealed that the fund collected so far they were able to procure 500 oxygen concentrators, 422 oxygen cylinders and even manpower for 10 vaccination centres that'll help over 6,000 people to get vaccinated over the next two months.

**AKSHAY KUMAR AND TWINKLE KHANNA**  
 Akshay Kumar recently donated ₹1 crore to former Indian cricketer, now politician, Gautam Gambhir's foundation, which is helping distribute free food, medicines and much-needed oxygen to the needy. Akshay, who has just recovered from COVID-19 after being hospitalised, had donated ₹25 crore for P M C A R E S Fund last year.

His spouse, Twinkle Khanna, has been actively using her Twitter account to share relevant updates in the fight against the pandemic. Earlier this month, she tweeted that the couple successfully secured 100 oxygen generators for those in need, in association with Daivik Foundation.



## The wait is (almost) over

*The Family Man* gears up for its second season premiering next month

Putting an end to all anticipation and bringing cheers to its fans, Amazon Prime Video officially announced June 4, 2021 as the release date for the second season of *The Family Man*, created by the maverick duo, Raj Nidimoru and Krishna D.K.

The announcement was accompanied by a captivating trailer for the second season which showcases the return of the nation's most endearing family man aka Srikant Tiwari, played by actor Manoj Bajpayee. This season Srikant Tiwari will be pitted against a new, powerful and brutal adversary named Raaji, essayed by southern star Samantha Akkineni, who would be making her digital debut. The nine-part season will see Srikant continuing to jostle between the duality of being a middle-class family man and a world class spy while trying to save the nation from an imminent attack. Packed with exciting twists and an unexpected climax, the forthcoming season of the edgy action-drama series will give a riveting glimpse of the two worlds of Srikant.

The creators of the series Raj and D.K said in a joint statement, "As creators, we have been waiting for a pretty long time to share the trailer of the much-awaited new season of *The Family Man*. We promised the season will be out by end of this summer, and we are glad that we just about kept that promise. The wait will finally be over on 4 June as Srikant Tiwari will return with a thrilling storyline, and 'danger really has a



new face' - Samantha Akkineni, who has done a tremendous job, along with the fantastic ensemble cast." "We are confident we have carved out an exciting season for the viewers, despite having to work through the pandemic. Hopefully, the new season will be worth the wait. These are extremely difficult times, and we hope and pray for better times. Please stay safe, mask up, and vaccinate as soon as you can," they concluded in their statement. "Nothing is more rewarding

for us than our characters becoming a household name. The fact that Srikant Tiwari, the quintessential family man, received so much love and appreciation validates our belief that good, authentic stories connect and transcend all barriers. The new season of *The Family Man* is bigger, more complex and dials up the action. We're confident that the viewers will be enthralled to witness the face-off between Srikant and his nemesis," said Aparna Purohit, Head of India Originals, Amazon Prime Video.

## TREND TOOL

# Virtual games take front seat

You certainly remember playing board games with friends and family when you were younger? It used to be so much fun and hours would go by in a jiffy, without you even realising. How times have changed...

Now that most of us are cooped up indoors, virtual games such as Ludo, Monopoly or UNO are a welcome distraction and have taken up the role played by traditional board games of bringing people together. In order to break the monotony while sustaining sanity in these times, here are a few games that you could play on your smartphones along with friends and family even if they are not around.

**MONOPOLY**  
 Monopoly is a classic game that needs no introduction and has now been updated for smartphones. It is one of the most popular games for family and friends today. One could even call it an educational game since it provides knowledge about investments to the players. By rolling dice and moving pointers, everyone gets to earn some Monopoly money and have fun. It is currently available for Android devices.

**LUDO EMPEROR**  
 Play Ludo like never before with Ludo Emperor. It's the world's fastest ludo game with unique and engaging gameplay. You can play with friends or play online to clash against your opponents, defend your fort, attack enemies with dragons, goblins and cannons.



Reach the victory square to become an emperor. This game is available for free in Google Play Store and App Store.

**DRAW SOMETHING**  
 Draw Something brings to life Pictionary (if you are old enough to know what that is, congratulations!). This is a simple game which allows family members to challenge each other on drawing items based on descriptions, and unsuspecting participants have to guess

the word. You can also play this game with people around the world. This game is available for android and can be downloaded for free.

**UNO**  
 This is another interactive and entertaining game based on a traditional card game. Players can earn points by making strategic moves on your smartphones. The game has been designed to get everyone involved and is available for Android users.

**AMONG US**  
 It is one of the most popular games across the globe, currently. You can play this game over local servers or online with four-10 players at a time. Here you need to prep your spaceship for departure but have to be aware as one will be an impostor hell-bent on killing everyone. Crewmates can win the game by completing their tasks or voting out the impostor off the ship. You can download the game for free on Google Play Store.

## TREND BLAZER



### 'EVERYONE DESERVES RESPECT'

Actor **VIVAAN SHAH** says playing a scrap dealer in the film *Kabaad: The Coin* helped him know the hardships that scrap dealers as a community face in life, even as they keep the city clean. "We do not give any respect to garbage and scrap collectors. Imagine, if they stopped collecting garbage and waste, our neighbourhoods will be like a garbage yard. But do we even say 'thank you' when they collect the trash from our homes? No, right?," said he.

### fairtalk



'I've been fascinated with Al Pacino all my life. Something like Tony Montana in *Scarface* would be my dream role. If I ever get to play something like that, I'm sure I'm going to kill it. The energy, the gruesomeness of such a character is always very exciting. It is very liberating and helps you vent your inner anger.'

### dailytalk



'I was told by a big producer that it's suicide to play a gay man in a non-comic film in India. As a production I was told I am hammering my foot to back this concept when I have the option of picking any other genre.'

### QUEEN MOTHER OF WAKANDA SPEAKS

Actor **ANGELA BASSETT** feels *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* will do justice in honouring the memory of late actor Chadwick Boseman. "It's going to be interesting to surpass the cultural phenomenon that it was. It's going to be phenomenal, it's going to pay tribute and it will carry on that legacy," said Bassett, who plays Ramonda, Queen Mother of Wakanda and mother of Boseman's character T'Challa.



# Health services should be strengthened: Gehlot

Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, said that the arrangements for COVID-19 treatment at the CHC and PHC level in the state should be strengthened at war level. In the model CHC, the facilities like recruitment, setting up of oxygen generation plant, setting up of infant intensive care unit etc. should be completed in a time bound manner. This will enable us to counter the second wave of the pandemic as well as the third wave. In addition, the pressure on district and divisional hospitals will be reduced.

Gehlot was conducting a high-level review on Tuesday night through a video conference on other related topics including lockdown and availability of resources. He said that in the districts of Jaipur, where the rate of infection is high, the system of Micro Containment Zone should be strengthened further. Door-to-door survey and distribution of drug kits should be expedited. He shared that many large private hospitals have oxygen supply; they should be encouraged to supply liquid medical oxygen through pipeline and to set up their own oxygen generation plant.

Gehlot said that it is worrying to see many cases of black fungus in COVID patients. For this, special treatment facility should be made available in hospitals. Minister of State for Medicine and Health, Dr Subhash Garg, informed that the recruitment of Lab Technician and Radiographer needs to be finalised soon. This will provide adequate paramedical staff in CHC and PHC. He



CM House

suggested to make the installation process of oxygen generation plant more decentralised.

Chief Secretary, Niranjana Arya, said that he is in constant touch with the Union Home Secretary and the Chief Secretary of Gujarat regarding the intensity of the taakta cyclone. He said that with the entry in Rajasthan, its intensity is expected to decrease. Strong winds and heavy rains are forecast at some places in the southern and northern parts of the state. In view of this, all other necessary arrangements have been ensured, including adequate buffer stock and alternate supply of electricity in districts and hospitals by lifting oxygen in advance. Additional

Chief Secretary, Sudhansh Pant, said that in the last four-five days, the rate of the virus in Jaipur has come down from 30 per cent to around 22 per cent. There has also been some decrease in the number of deaths.

Principal Government Secretary Medical and Health, Akhil Arora, informed that the rates of treatment of black fungus disease in private hospitals will be determined soon. He informed that a tender has been issued for the purchase of medicines required for the treatment of this disease. Personnel will be appointed in private hospitals to help the beneficiaries of the Chief Minister Chiranjeevi Health Insurance Scheme, which will help in

providing benefits of the scheme to the relatives of the patient.

Industry Secretary, Ashutosh AT, told that there is no information about any disruptions in the production of oxygen and its lift in Jamnagar and Hazira plants due to the storm. He informed that in case of regular adequate supply of oxygen, four thousand oxygen beds can be increased in 17 hospitals.

Medical Secretary, Siddharth Mahajan, shared that there has been some decrease in the number of active cases in the state since last few days and it has come down to approximately 1,59,000. The recovery rate has increased to around 81 per cent. The availability of oxygen beds has improved in the hospitals associated with the district and medical colleges due to the pressure of Kansa. RUHS also has an increased number of discharge patients compared to the new admissions.

Aruna Rajoria, CEO of Rajasthan Health Assurance Agency, said that the Chief Minister Chiranjeevi Health Insurance Scheme calls for quick resolution of patients' problems, the centre has been established. Since May 1, 12,700 patients have availed the scheme. Most of the ₹94 crore claims submitted so far in the scheme have been paid.

Additional Chief Secretary, Subodh Agrawal, Director General of Police, ML Lathar, Principal Secretary Home, Abhay Kumar, Vice Chancellor of IUHS, Dr Rajababu Panwar and Principal of SMS Hospital, Dr Sudhir Bhandari also expressed their views in the conference.

# Culture Ministry organises a discussion on International Museum Day

Ministry of Culture, Government of India, organised a panel discussion on the occasion of International Museum Day on May 18, 2021. The Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (IC), Prahlad Singh Patel, highlighted importance of museums and cultural spaces in bringing our cultural wealth to the masses.

The objective of International Museum Day is to raise awareness about the fact that museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among people.

The theme for this year's International Museum Day was *The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine*.

Prahlad Patel delivered the keynote address at the virtual programme. Highlighting the importance of culture, he said, "Culture is a true reflection of development and level of civilisation of a country. India is a storehouse of archaeological treasures and its cultural richness is famous all across the world. However, we may have lacked the excellence in showcasing our boundless culture in the manner it is done abroad. Museums play a pivotal role in showcasing our culture in dif-



ferent ways that interests people. We must create more such spaces for exhibiting our cultural wealth to bring it to the masses, which is also a dream of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

"We have to present the correct history and facts, and museums can contribute towards it in a big way," he added. Prahlad Patel expressed his gratitude to those who have contributed in the development of museums.

Two panel discussions were organised at programme with the following themes: Reimagining museum and culture study programmes to create new pathways to the future; and the many shades of online interaction and engagement, and what it means for the museums. Experts from various fields such as culture, museology, anthropology and heritage among others participated in the discussion.



# Jack of all trades

Indian classical dancer, actor, film producer and environmentalist — Arushi Nishank — believes that talent is not what gets appreciated through material kinds, but a power that enlightens the inner soul and radiates its vibrancy to the world around.

She recently announced her Bollywood debut, in association with T-Series, with the music video *Wafa Na Raas Aayee*. The song, within few hours of the release, crossed 100 million views.

Arushi said that the shoot and the whole process was initially a bit challenging for her as it was her first project. The daughter of the Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, said, "I hardly knew the technical language but my co-stars and director were so cooperative and helpful that I could execute everything with complete ease. Moreover, the shoot was in Kashmir in the month of January. You must imagine the weather conditions there. It was really difficult to shoot in the 'not so friendly' weather. However, I must say that the journey has been delightful."

Arushi has been felicitated with multiple award and recognitions by Government of India and Uttarakhand. She is also an active promoter of social reforms programmes led by the government. Apart from being a dedicated Kathak dancer of global repute, she has left her footprint in the fields of entrepreneurship, poetry, literature as well as film production.

She has contributed towards environment by actively joining the drive of Sparsh Ganga Campaign in 2008. Arushi has also chaired the International Women Empowerment Summit, which was supported by the United Nations. As a chairperson, she is actively working towards the cause of lower girl ratio, women participation in different sectors, their safety and improving economic independence for woman through education.

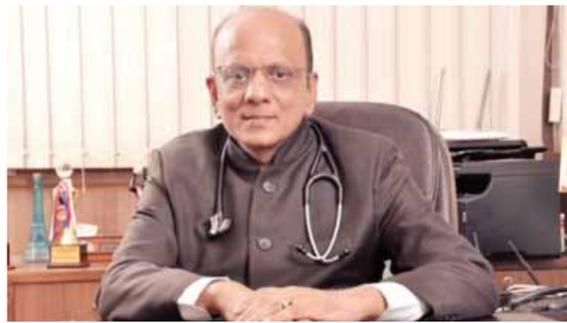
She has composed and performed in more than 15 countries in the timespan of 16 years. Arushi established her own production house — Himshri Films. In 2018, she produced a regional film *Major Nirala* under her banner. She certainly seems to be the jack of all trades.

# 'DR K K AGGARWAL WAS A MAN LIKE NO OTHER'

When I first met Dr K.K. Aggarwal ten years ago, my first reaction was: Why hadn't I met him sooner. He was that sort of person. At the time, he was the spirit behind the *MTNL Health Mela*, an annual free medical check-up, health awareness and lifestyle jamboree that thousands of people attended. Every year, he would add additional elements to the event, making it more widespread, inclusive and holistic.

I had approached him to seek some guidance in organising a large medical camp in Rajasthan. He was much enthused by the proposal and hand-held the organisers in every aspect of the event, from patient and crowd management, roping in hospitals, medical experts, pharmaceutical companies and philanthropists to ensure that the event was a resounding success. This was when he introduced me to Dr Naresh Trehan, who went on to perform several heart surgeries on children from poor families in the state. I kept in touch with Dr Aggarwal thereafter. Every time we spoke or met, he emphasised the need to educate people about healthy practices. His busy schedule, often at the expense of his own health and leisure, would be crammed with initiatives. His palette was rich, his initiatives spanned advancement of public awareness of medicine to making quality medical services available to the needy. Whenever I offered to pay him consultation fees for seeing an indigent patient I had referred him, he would shrug it off. After he became the President of the Indian Medical Association, the place was soon crackling with energy and initiative. I was in the building next door and would often walk across to his office during lunch for instant warmth and inspiration, which he could deliver in amazingly large quantities in seconds. Although always at the centre of a cloud of admirers, he made room for those at the periphery, ordering and reordering his time frantically to accommodate those who most needed it.

At the time, I was thinking of



innovative ways to improve taxpayer compliance. One day, he suggested that he and other leading cardiologists appear in an advertisement to inform taxpayers that paying their taxes on time was good for their hearts. How he convinced other luminaries of the field to lend their name to the ad, I would never know. Around the same time, I fainted at home. My hysterical wife rushed me to Moolchand Hospital where Dr Aggarwal quickly took over my management, rushing me through diagnostic and interventional procedures within minutes. I was conscious enough to overhear his exchange with an ER physician in which, failing to make headway with my wife, he said he would sign the consent form as my father. That was the moment when I realised I would do just fine. Whenever I visited him afterwards, follow-up would last just a few minutes. He would quickly zoom out to larger purpose of human life. This was inexplicably uplifting and therapeutic. Soon, he became physician and healer to my whole family. His ability to connect with everyone ensured that my wife and my daughters had established independent channels of communication with him in no time. After examining my father-in-law's heart, who was then in his seventies, Dr Aggarwal told him he would go on to live a hundred years. That assurance has been central to my father-in-law's willpower to keep going. Once, when I thought I had

diagnosed a rare disorder in the knee of a close relative, he encouraged me to publish it.

Watching him at work was a lesson in nurturing talent around him, pushing them into challenging assignments and tougher roles. The story of Dr Aggarwal's round-the-clock commitment ever since COVID-SAR-2 pandemic befall India is well-known by now. His journey during the past one and half years saw him emerge as the leading public intellectual of the pandemic. Single-handedly, supported by volunteers who subscribed to his vision of health for all, he delivered scientifically validated information to millions in small easily digestible bites day after day, took questions from every part of India, and kept his followers abreast of fresh developments. Incidentally, 'single-handedness' was nothing new to him. His efforts have trained millions in CPR techniques. It is hard to put a number on the lives saved by his efforts. He was an educator to his last breath. In his last public video, he declared, even as he breathed oxygen through a nasal cannula, the 'show must go on'. In the battle against ignorance and misinformation, he led from the front. Every Teacher's Day on September 5, also his birthday, we will have an opportunity to remember him and to keep walking the path he illuminated. I miss you, sir. I speak on behalf of millions. (The writer, Dr Amandeep Singh, is a physician and a civil servant.)

# Central govt launches programme for rehabilitation of divyangjan

Dr Thaaawarchand Gehlot, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, virtually launched a six month Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) Programme in the presence of Krishan Pal Gurjar, Union Minister of State, Social Justice and Empowerment, Barry O'Farrell, Australian High Commissioner at New Delhi, Manpreet Vohra, High Commissioner of India to Australia at Canberra and Anjali Bhawra, Secretary (DEPwD) Government of India.

The programme aims to create a pool of grass-root rehabilitation workers at community level, who can work alongside ASHA and Anganwadi workers to handle cross disability issues and facilitate inclusion of persons with disabilities in the society. The programme has been designed to provide competency-based knowledge and skills



among these workers to enhance their ability for successfully discharging their duties. These workers will be called *Divyang Mitra*.

The Rehabilitation Council of India intends to roll out the course initially on a pilot basis for two batches in seven National Institutes of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and seven to nine voluntary organisations having experience in Community-Based Rehabilitation programme. Initially the programme will be available in

English, Hindi and seven other regional languages, namely, Gujarati, Marathi, Odiya, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil and Garo. The classes for the first batch of about 600 students are expected to commence by August, this year. Mode of training for this course would be both offline/online taking into account, the prevailing COVID-19 scenario.

This CBID course has been co-designed by Rehabilitation Council of India and University of Melbourne as a joint initiative under the Memorandum of

Understanding signed between the Government of Australia and the Government of India on November 22, 2018 for cooperation in disability sector. The content and curriculum of the course has been developed by an expert committee comprising experts drawn from both India and Australia. The National Board of Examination in Rehabilitation under the Rehabilitation Council of India will conduct examinations and award certificates to pass-out candidates.

# ESIC extends date for contribution

The country is dealing with a very challenging situation due to the second wave of the pandemic. In line with the relief measures being extended by the government to business entities and workers, Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has relaxed the provision as entered in Regulation 31 of ESI (General) Regulations, 1950 and allowed filing of ESI contribution for the month of April 2021 up to June 15, 2021 instead of May 15, 2021.

The employers covered under ESI Scheme can now file and pay ESI contribution for the month of April up to June 15. This will provide an extended window to 12.36 lakh employers to pay the contribution under ESI scheme.

# GAIL launches video on International Day of Families

As the country grapples with the deadly Coronavirus pandemic, GAIL (India) Limited released a video on its digital platforms coinciding with International Day of Families to urge everyone to come together as one family and help each other in such dystopian times.

The video focussed on how people can come together like a family

and help each other in daily lives by performing small actions such as bringing groceries, ensuring well-being and mental health, helping frontline workers in the field and the service providers to take vaccination. The video motivates netizens to keep following the new normal habits, which include sanitisation, wearing masks and maintaining

social distancing in public. With the right precautions, the fight against COVID-19 can be won.

As a responsible corporate, GAIL has been striving for value creation in society. GAIL emphasised on being stronger together as the pandemic has pressed the pause button. Technology has become the only way to stay in touch with your loved ones.

# Keonjhar District Administration installs oxygen plant

District Administration, Keonjhar, decided to purchase a dedicated 'Oxygen Generator Machine' based on PSA technology (Pressure Swing Adsorption) through DMF Funds. It is for overcoming the short supply of medical grade oxygen at the district during around October 2020.

The machine was delivered in January 2021 at the district. Its installation process started in the last week of April 2021. Quality check, installation as well as connection with the 45 ICU



beds were completed by May 10, 2021.

The machine can provide on an average five jumbo cylinders worth oxygen per hour i.e. approximately around 8.5 lakh litres of oxygen per day.

Dedicated COVID Hospital, Ranki, Keonjhar, had capacity of 14 ICU beds during the first wave of the pandemic, with 12 high-end ventilators. The number of ICU beds have been increased to 45 along with 26 ventilators in total.

# POWERGRID organises vax camps

COVID-19 has changed and challenged the way people had been living and working. The only hope for humankind is the use of vaccination, which reduces the complications of the virus.

The Government of India has stepped up the vaccination process in the country. To be a part of this mission, Power Grid Corporation of India has organised vaccination camps in many locations for its employees at its establishments across the country like Kota, Bhiwadi, Misa, Namsai, Rourkela, Ara, Biharsharif, Saharsa and Muzaffarpur. For all the camps, the cost on account of vaccination was borne by the corporation.

Among the many camps organised at various locations, one was recently organised in Sector 46, Gurugram, in its multi-pur-



pose hall (MP Hall) in association with Max Hospital, where more than 1,600 individuals were vaccinated. These include employees, contractual employees and superannuated employees and their family members. Another vaccination drive was organised in association with Fortis and Artemis, where more than 700 individuals were vaccinated. At Katwaria Sarai office Delhi, in association with Apollo Hospital, more than 290 people took the vaccine. It includes more than 80 employees and their families from Ministry of Power and other Power PSUs.

A total of more than 2,600 people have been vaccinated by the corporation in these three camps organised in the NCR territory. POWERGRID stands united with the Government of India's vision to complete the largest vaccination drive in the world.

# Benzema, Müller return for Euro 2020

Real Madrid striker back in French squad after nearly 6-year exile; German coach Löw recalls Thomas & Hummels

AFP ■ PARIS

Karim Benzema was named in France's provisional Euro 2020 squad by Didier Deschamps on Tuesday, giving the Real Madrid striker a shock international recall after years in the wilderness over his alleged role in a blackmail plot.

The 33-year-old has not played for France since October 2015, but is now set to line up alongside World Cup winners Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann at the delayed European Championship.

"So proud of this return to the France team and of the trust placed in me," Benzema said on Twitter.

"Thank you to my family, my friends, my club... and to all those who have always supported me and give me strength every day."

Benzema, who has scored 27 goals for France in 81 appearances, was named as this season's best French player playing abroad by the country's players' association earlier on Tuesday.

He has netted 29 times for Real Madrid this term, passing 20 league goals in all three seasons since Cristiano Ronaldo left the Santiago Bernabeu for Juventus in 2018.

"How was it done? We made contact, we fixed an appointment and we saw each other," said Deschamps.

"I never said anything bad about him on a human level. From the start, there was a relationship of trust. We are not going to go back over what happened."



France kick off their Euro 2020 campaign against three-time winners Germany in Munich on June 15, face Hungary in Budapest four days later and finish their Group F schedule against holders Portugal on June 23.

Les Bleus have impressed at major tournaments without Benzema, reaching the Euro 2016 final on home soil before losing to Portugal and lifting their second World Cup three years ago in Russia, defeating Croatia 4-2 in the final.



"Back again @dfb\_team! I am ready for the Euro 2020," Thomas Müller posted on Twitter after he receives Germany call up for next month's European Championship @esmuellet\_

## SEXTAPE SCANDAL

The former Lyon forward had not been selected since the sextape scandal involving his former international teammate Mathieu Valbuena broke in 2015.

The case revolves round a plot to extort money from Valbuena by threatening to make a sex video public.

Benzema will be vying for a place in the starting XI with Chelsea striker Olivier Giroud.

For a while, Benzema targeted Giroud on social media saying that while he was a Formula One car, the 34-year-old Giroud was a "go-kart".

Deschamps also named in-form Monaco forward Wissam Ben Yedder in the squad, but has left out World Cup-winning centre-back Samuel Umtiti.

## FRANCE SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Hugo Lloris, Mike Maignan, Steve Mandanda.

**Defenders:** Lucas Digne, Leo

Dubois, Lucas Hernandez, Presnel Kimpembe, Jules Kounde, Clement Lenglet, Benjamin Pavard, Raphael Varane, Kurt Zouma.

**Midfielders:** N'Golo Kante, Thomas Lemar, Paul Pogba, Adrien Rabiot, Moussa Sissoko, Corentin Tolisso

**Forwards:** Wissam Ben Yedder, Karim Benzema, Kingsley Coman, Ousmane Dembele, Olivier Giroud, Antoine Griezmann, Kylian Mbappe, Marcus Thuram.

## HUMMELS ALSO BACK

BERLIN: Germany head coach Joachim Löw on Wednesday named Thomas Müller and Mats Hummels in the 26-man provisional German squad for the Euro 2020 finals, ending the pair's two-year exile.

"Back again," Müller, 31, posted on Twitter underneath a picture giving the thumbs up.

Hummels, 32, also reacted, on Instagram: "I am glad to be back — I'm really up for the

new chapter".

However, there was no recall for Bayern Munich defender Jérôme Boateng, who was also axed by Löw in March 2019 alongside Müller and Hummels.

Löw said he did not regret binning Müller and Hummels two years ago to give younger players a chance in the wake of the disastrous 2018 World Cup campaign when Germany crashed out in the group stages.

However, Germany's coach admitted recent poor results — including a thrashing by Spain and shock home loss to North Macedonia — meant "we had to rethink everything".

Germany have been drawn in a tough group and start their Euro 2020 campaign against world champions France on June 15 in Munich, where they also face holders Portugal four days later.

Bayern Munich forward Müller and Dortmund defender Hummels have been recalled because "in terms of leadership, they can also give the team a lot," Löw added.

"We lacked stability and experience in some games. Müller and Hummels have played very well this season, they can lead."

Three names will be trimmed from the final 23-man squad for the European Championship from June 11 until July 11.

Eight Bayern Munich players have been named, including captain Manuel Neuer as well as 18-year-old Jamal Musiala, who opted for Germany over England this year.

Two high-profile names

## WC winner Khedira to retire at end of season

BERLIN: Sami Khedira will retire when the Bundesliga season finishes this weekend, the former Germany midfielder announced on Wednesday.

"It's a pretty tough step, but the only right one. 15 years of professional football have left their mark," Hertha Berlin's Khedira told reporters.

Khedira, a World Cup winner in 2014, made the last of his 77 appearances for his Germany in the infamous 2-0 defeat to South Korea four years later in Russia.

The 34-year-old started his career at Stuttgart, where he won the 2007 Bundesliga title.

He joined Real Madrid

after the 2010 World Cup finals, recovering from a serious knee injury at the start of 2013/14 to win that season's Champions League final.

Khedira won a World Cup winners medal in Brazil despite having to withdraw from Germany's starting line-up before the final after picking up an injury during the warm-up.

He switched to Juventus in 2015, but after winning five Serie A titles, he did not make a single appearance for Juve this season before signing for Hertha in February until the end of the campaign.

He has been restricted by injury to eight Bundesliga games.

missing are injured Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen and Borussia Dortmund midfielder Marco Reus, who made himself unavailable on Tuesday after an injury-hit season.

A surprise choice is Monaco forward Kevin Volland as back up for Chelsea striker Timo Werner.

"We saw what he did in France, he scored 16 goals and also looks very good physically," explained Löw.

Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos has been included despite testing positive for Covid-19.

Loew is "full of hope" that Kroos, 31, will be fit for the

finals, but may have to join the German's training camp after the start date on May 28.

## GERMANY SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Manuel Neuer, Kevin Trapp, Bernd Leno.

**Defenders:** Antonio Ruediger, Mats Hummels, Matthias Ginter, Niklas Süle, Emre Can, Lukas Klostermann, Robin Gosens, Robin Koch, Christian Günter, Marcel Halstenberg.

**Midfield/Forwards:** Joshua Kimmich, Ilkay Gundogan, Serge Gnabry, Kai Havertz, Toni Kroos, Leon Goretzka, Timo Werner, Thomas Müller, Leroy Sane, Jonas Hofmann, Jamal Musiala, Florian Neuhaus, Kevin Volland.

## Chelsea boost top-4 chances

AFP ■ LONDON

Chelsea are on course to qualify for the Champions League after a crucial 2-1 win against top-four rivals Leicester, while Brighton staged a superb fightback to beat champions Manchester City as fans returned to the Premier League on Tuesday.

Supporters have been allowed back into Premier League matches this week for the first time since December following the UK's easing of coronavirus restrictions.

Around 8,000 fans were at Stamford Bridge as Chelsea moved into the third place at Leicester's expense, while 7,900 saw Brighton's dramatic 3-2 victory against City.

There were 10,000 United fans at Old Trafford for their 1-1 draw with relegated Fulham and 8,000 at Southampton for their 2-0 defeat against Leeds.

Chelsea avenged Saturday's 1-0 FA Cup final defeat against Leicester to steal a march on the Foxes in the race for the top four.

Thomas Tuchel's side broke



the deadlock in the 47th minute when Antonio Rudiger bundled home after a corner was unwittingly flicked on by Leicester's Luke Thomas. Jorginho doubled Chelsea's lead with a 66th-minute penalty after VAR ruled Wesley Fofana fouled Timo Werner.

Kelechi Iheanacho set up a tense finale when the Leicester striker slotted home in the 76th minute. But Chelsea held on and emotions ran high in

stoppage-time after a brawl erupted featuring virtually every player and members of both teams' coaching staffs.

Chelsea will be guaranteed to finish third if they win at Aston Villa in their last game of the season on Sunday.

Having won the FA Cup for the first time, fourth-placed Leicester is three points ahead of fifth-placed Liverpool, but the Reds would go above them on goal difference if they win at

Burnley. Leicester's final match is at home to Tottenham, while Liverpool host Crystal Palace.

## CITY STUNNED

With the title wrapped up, Manchester City are fine-tuning their preparations ahead of the Champions League final against Chelsea in Porto on May 29.

But Pep Guardiola's side were beaten for the second time in their last three games after a second-half collapse at the Amex Stadium.

Ilkay Gundogan headed City into the lead from Riyad Mahrez's second-minute cross. Joao Cancelo was sent off in the 10th minute after the City defender hauled down Danny Welbeck.

Phil Foden increased City's lead in the 48th minute with a fine solo effort, only for Leandro Trossard to get one back moments later.

Adam Webster equalised with a thumping header in the 72nd minute before Dan Burn grabbed the winner from close range four minutes later.

## Asia Cup called off Oz to host Afghanistan in Test ahead of Ashes

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The 2021 Asia Cup, which was shifted from Pakistan to Sri Lanka, was on Wednesday called off due to rising Covid-19 cases in the island nation.

The Asia Cup, which was last held in 2018, was scheduled to be held in June but Sri Lanka Cricket CEO Ashley de Silva announced that it will be difficult for them to conduct the tournament.

"Due to the prevailing situation, it will not be possible to play the tournament in June this year," De Silva told reporters.

The tournament was supposed to be hosted by Pakistan but since India were unlikely to travel there due to political tension between the two nations, it was shifted to Sri Lanka.

With all the teams planning for their FTPs for the next two years, the continental showpiece might only find a slot after the 2023 ICC 50-over World Cup.

AFP ■ SYDNEY

Australia's cricketers will play their first ever Test match against Afghanistan in Hobart later this year ahead of hosting the Ashes against England, officials announced on Thursday.

A tour by Indian women's cricket team was also confirmed with the bilateral series kicking off the International schedule for Meg Lanning and Co. However, the details of that tour are yet to be confirmed.

The women's team will also host England for the multi-format Ashes.

"We are also incredibly excited to welcome Afghanistan to our shores for a historic first Test match against Australia," said Cricket Australia's interim CEO Nick Hockley.

The five-day match will be played at Hobart's Blundstone Arena from November 27, with Australia then facing England at Brisbane's Gabba ground in the first Test of the five match Ashes series beginning December 8.

"The story of the



Afghanistan cricket team is one of the most uplifting in International sport, and their record of three wins from their first six Tests prove they truly belong at this level," added Hockley.

Afghanistan were granted Test status in 2018 with Australia originally planning to face them for the first time in the longest form of the game last year, but that match had to be scrapped as the coronavirus pandemic ravaged the global cricket calendar.

Earlier, CA said they were

hopeful England's band of vociferous travelling fans would be allowed to travel for the Ashes series, which concludes at Perth in January, but that depended on Government Covid restrictions over arrivals and quarantine.

They announced an Ashes series that includes a day-night second Test in Adelaide and the traditional Boxing Day match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as the third Test.

Sydney, however, will be the venue for the fourth Test, rather than the series finale as has been customary.

## shortpasses

### BCCI CALL SGM ON MAY 29

NEW DELHI: The BCCI has called a Special General Meeting on May 29 to discuss the upcoming cricket season in India, including the ICC T20 World Cup scheduled in October-November.

### LEVERKUSEN HIRE SEOANE

BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen on Wednesday named Swiss Gerardo Seoane as their new head coach for next season. The 42-year-old has signed a three-year deal and replaces caretaker coach Hannes Wolf.

### KOLESNIKOV LOWERS 50M BACK WR

BUDAPEST: For the second consecutive day, Russian swimmer Kliment Kolesnikov improved his own world record in the 50-meter backstroke. The 20-year-old Kolesnikov clocked 23.80 seconds to win the Gold medal at the European Championships on Tuesday. That was 0.13 faster than his previous record set in the semifinals a day earlier.

### NORRIS COMMITS TO MCLAREN

LONDON: Lando Norris has been rewarded for sparking a revival in McLaren's fortunes with a new long-term contract the team announced on Wednesday.

### MCA SEEK COACH APPLICATION

MUMBAI: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has sought applications for the post of its senior team's head coach, including, among others, an eligibility criteria of a minimum 50 first-class matches.

### TORINO AVOID RELEGATION

ROME: Torino drew 0-0 at Lazio to assure their presence in 2021-22 Serie A.

## Mary desperate to assess herself at Asian c'ship ahead of Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It's a tournament that she has dominated for years but the Asian Boxing Championship this time is more than just a medal-winning opportunity for MCMary Kom, who is "desperate for competition" before the Olympics after training in India was thrown haywire by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mary Kom (51kg) has collected one Silver and a staggering five Gold medals from her seven appearances at the continental showpiece.

The six-time world champion can't wait to land in Dubai for the upcoming edition, which starts on May 24 because all she wants right now is a "good slugfest".

"I have been so eager to compete, there has hardly been any training because of the pandemic and I need this desperately to assess myself before the Olympics," the 38-year-old Manipuri said from Pune, where she has been training for the past few days.

She had to move to Pune, along with a couple of other Olympic-bound women boxers, after the national camp in Delhi

was forced to shut down because of a Covid-19 outbreak in the bubble created at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium last month.

"It has not been easy. I was at home after coming back from the tournament in Spain (in March). My children were not well, we had to manage that and it comes with its own set of anxieties. Then, the camp in Delhi was called off because of Covid," she said.

"Something or the other kept affecting the training schedule. So the Asian Championship is important because I get to compete and there is nothing better than a good competition to help preparations," she added.

The few days of training that she has got in the highly-rated Army Sports Institute at Pune have been beneficial, according to the legendary pugilist, who also got her first shot of the Covid-19 vaccine there.

"I feel confident about my body. But as I always say, I will give my best, whether it would be enough to get a medal is something that only time will tell," said Mary Kom, reiterating her long-held pre-tournament position on medal expectations.

## Indian team leaves for Doha for WC qualifiers



New Delhi: Talismanic captain Sunil Chhetri made a return after recovering from Covid-19 infection as a 28-member Indian football squad leaves for Doha on Wednesday for the three upcoming matches of the joint 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Qualifiers.

The team will have a preparatory camp inside a bio-bubble in Doha before its first match on June 3 against hosts Qatar.

After missing the two International friendly matches against Oman and the UAE on March 25 and 29, Chhetri is set to feature in the forthcoming games.

As per the health parameters required to travel to Qatar, all the players and staff will carry with them negative results from the RT-PCR Covid-19 tests conducted in the last 48 hours.

Prior to their departure, all of them were serving quarantine in the national capital since May 15.



India cricketers Ravichandran Ashwin, Washington Sundar, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammed Siraj and women's team captain Mithali Raj have reached Mumbai en route to the United Kingdom, the BCCI tweeted on Wednesday

## Prasidh, Amit Mishra recover from Covid

New Delhi: Pacer Prasidh Krishna, who was named as a stand-by for India's tour of England, and veteran spinner Amit Mishra have recovered from Covid-19.

Both bowlers had contracted the dreaded virus during the currently-suspended IPL earlier this month.

While Mishra tested positive on May 4, the day the league was indefinitely suspended, Krishna joined the list of infected players on May 8.

"Prasidh Krishna has recovered

from COVID-19," a BCCI source said.

Delhi Capitals leg-spinner Mishra took to Twitter to give an update on his recovery and express his gratitude towards the front-line health workers.

"The real heroes. Our Frontline workers. All I can say post my recovery is, You have my support and heartfelt appreciation for all you do," he tweeted. "We are deeply grateful to you for all the sacrifices that you and your family are making," he added.

## Shafali promoted, Ekta & Veda dropped from central contracts

New Delhi: Teen batting sensation Shafali Verma was on Wednesday promoted to Grade B in the BCCI's annual contracts list as the cricket board reduced the number of contracted players from 22 to 19.

The Grade A which offers an annual retainer fees of ₹50 lakh once again comprised of three all-format players — T20 skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, her deputy Smriti Mandhana and leg break bowler Poonam Yadav.

The Grade B has an annual retainer fee of ₹30 lakh and veterans such as Jhulan Goswami, Mithali Raj and Deepti Sharma are among 10 players in this bracket.

"Shafali is seen as the biggest superstars that we will have in years to come and hence it wasn't a surprise that she got elevated to Grade B from C. Punam Raut was rewarded for her good show in the South Africa series and she has also been promoted to Grade B," a senior BCCI official said.

Young Richa Ghosh has been included in the Grade C which makes players richer by ₹10 lakh. It has six cricketers this year, five less than the last time.

The contracts are for a period from October 2020 to September 2021.

The two notable names dropped from the 19-strong list are batter Veda Krishnamurthy and left-arm spinner Ekta Bist. The others, who were dropped include Dayalan Hemlatha and spinner Anuja Patil, who featured in the last year's list.