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Beware of 33-ft long arm of corona-laden aerosols

Principal Scientific Adviser's office for double masks, cross ventilation indoors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Beware of coronavirus-laden aerosols and droplets. They can move about as far as 10 metres — in case of aerosols — and 2 metres — in case of droplets — to infect you with coronavirus, said a new advisory issued from the Principal Scientific Adviser's office on Thursday. However, it said the infection can be prevented by wearing masks, double masks or N95 masks, keeping indoor spaces properly ventilated and adhering to other appropriate behaviours such as keeping physical distance and frequent handwashing.

These can reduce the risk of infection even from the more infectious newer strains of SARS-CoV2 virus, it maintained.

Principal Scientific Adviser Vijaya Raghavan had just recently warned that a third Covid wave is "inevitable" in near future.

Larger size droplets fall to the ground and on surfaces, and smaller aerosol particles are carried in the air to greater



Health workers collect swab sample from a shepherd for Covid-19 test at Khag area in district Budgam on Thursday. PTI

distances, said the advisory with illustrations.

"Saliva and nasal discharge in the form of droplets and aerosols, by an infected person while exhaling, talking, speaking, singing, laughing, coughing or sneezing is the primary mode of virus transmissions. An infected person who shows no symptoms can also transmit the virus. People without symptoms can spread the virus. People should continue wearing masks, double masks or N95 masks," said the Principal Scientific Adviser's office.

"Well-ventilated spaces play a crucial role in diluting the Covid-19 viral load of infected air and help in

decreasing the risk of transmission from one infected person to the other," said the advisory titled "Stop the Transmission, Crush the Pandemic — Masks Distance, Sanitation and Ventilation to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus."

Just as smells can be diluted from the air through opening windows and doors and using exhaust systems, ventilating spaces with improved directional air flow decreases the accumulated viral load in the air, reducing the risk of transmission, the advisory explained.

"Ventilation is a community defense that protects all of

us at home or at work. Introducing outdoor air in offices, homes and larger public spaces is advised. Measures to improve ventilation in these spaces must be taken up on urgent priority in urban and rural areas alike, recommendations for huts, homes, offices and large centralised buildings are given. Simple strategic placement of fans, open windows and doors, even slightly open windows can introduce outdoor air and improve the air quality inside," it stated.

Introduction of cross ventilation and exhaust fans will be beneficial in curtailing the spread of the disease, it said.

Deadlier white fungus rears its head

4 infected in Patna

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

White fungus, an infection more dangerous than coronavirus and the black fungus, is now rearing its ugly head with at least four such cases being reported clinically for the first time from Bihar on Thursday.

"Four patients of white fungus (candidiasis) have been detected in Bihar's Capital Patna," said Dr SN Singh, Head of Patna Medical College and Hospital's Microbiology Department.

He said initially patients were showing symptoms of Covid-19, but after thorough



A doctor checks a Covid survivor who is infected with black fungus at the Mucormycosis ward of a Government hospital in Hyderabad on Thursday. AP

investigation it was found that they were suffering from white fungus, which has been treated.

Though Dr Arunaloke Chakrabarti, head of the department of microbiology, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, said there was no need to worry and there was no word as such "white fungus", a few medical experts have called for keeping a watch on the fungus which is said to be deadlier than black fungus or mucormycosis as it affects other organs of the body too apart from just the lungs.

Moreover, it infects children and women and according to doctors, it is the main reason for Leucorrhoea. Hence, women with diabetes who have increased susceptibility to oral and Vulvovaginal Candida (VVC) Species Infections and reporting Covid-19 are more affected. Cancer patients also need to be careful of the fungus.

Given that India is the diabetes capital of the world, there are likely to be more cases reported in near future. In fact, according to a study published recently, while Candida is normally found in the oral cavity, it has also been found flourishing in diabetic patients due to elevated glucose levels, which can result in oral candidiasis and dental plaques.

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3 dedicated black fungus care centres in Delhi soon

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will set up a dedicated centre to treat black fungus cases each in three hospitals in the national Capital.

"It will also ensure adequate management of medicines used in its treatment and take all measures to spread awareness among people about disease prevention measures," said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

These centres will be opened in INJP Hospital, GTB Hospital and Rajiv Gandhi Hospital. "The Delhi Government will prepare a detailed plan and issue standard operating procedure on how to raise awareness among Covid-recovered people for the prevention of the disease," the Government said.

HC asks Centre to inform about steps taken to get 'black fungus' medicine

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to take steps to get the medicine — Amphotericin B — used for treating black fungus which is primarily affecting Covid-19 recovered people, from wherever in the world.

The court said the Centre should inform it about steps taken to import medicine, the shortfall of which was coming in the way of treatment of mucormycosis (black fungus) which has been on rise in the national Capital and elsewhere in the country.

"You have to get the medicine from wherever in the world. You have to take steps right now. Wherever it is available in the world get it," said a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh which was assured by the Centre that it has already started taking steps to import the medicine.

The court noted the domestic production of the medicine lower than required and the Centre said the production capacity has been doubled now.

9 States float global tender for vax, 6 month target a long shot

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Availability and supply of vaccines domestically, at least nine States have floated global expressions of interest (EOI) to procure 28.7 crore vaccine doses in all from manufacturers across the world to inoculate the age group of 18-44 years in India. These States have put a timeline of three months to six months for suppliers to supply the vaccine.

But it remains to be seen as to when the vaccines are actually delivered given the foreign companies' prior commitments as many affluent nations have placed their orders much in advance.

As per the data collected by The Pioneer, worst-hit Maharashtra has invited expression of interest for the procurement of 5 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses. Through the EOI, it will know the stock, price and supply schedule from global vaccine producers approved by the World Health Organization and United States Food and Drug

Administration. The Maharashtra Government went for the global EOI after lack of response to the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation's separate tender for the supply of 1 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses. The BMC was forced to extend the bid submission deadline by a week.

The Uddhav Thackeray Government is exploring options of procurement of vaccine doses from Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Zydus, Cadila among others. The EOI rolled out, however, has added a clause that bars countries sharing land borders with India. This means that BMC will not consider any company or vaccine that comes from China.

While Tamil Nadu issued an EOI for procurement of five crore doses, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka have done so for 4 crore doses each. Odisha (3.8 crore), Kerala (3 crore), Andhra Pradesh (2.4 crore) and Rajasthan (one crore each) are the other States to have floated global tenders.

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STATES	GLOBAL TENDER FOR COVID VACCINE
MAHARASHTRA	6 crore (including 1 cr ordered by BMC) Pune, Navi Mumbai, Thane and Nagpur Municipal Corporations also plans to issue global tenders
TAMIL NADU	3.5 crore
UTTAR PRADESH	4 crore
KARNATAKA	4 crore
ODISHA	3.8 crore
KERALA	3 crore
ANDHRA PRADESH	2.4 crore
TELANGANA	1 crore
RAJASTHAN	1 crore
TOTAL	28.7 crore

MEA: India engaged with US entities for vaccines

New Delhi: India is engaged with American entities for procurement of Covid-19 vaccines from the US and their possible manufacturing in the country subsequently, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday.

PM insulted CMs, didn't allow us to speak: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A furious Mamata Banerjee on Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing him of "insulting" the Chief Ministers and treating them as "puppets".

She complained that though the Chief Ministers were invited in a meeting featuring the Prime Minister and District Magistrates, they were not allowed to speak.

Curiously Mamata used "we" and "us" words instead of usual "me" and "I" while describing what she called a collective "insult of the Chief Ministers."

"Why were we invited in the meeting if he was not prepared to listen to our problems... are the Chief Ministers puppets in his hand... are we bonded labourers..." she said, adding, "I have not seen such arrogance and ballooning ego before."

Taking up the cudgel for her counterparts in other States — that many critics called a result of her increased confidence post the startling victory in Bengal elections — Mamata said, "We feel insulted and humiliated. This is an attempt to bulldoze the federal structure of the country.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses a Press conference at State Secretariat, Nabanna, in Kolkata on Thursday. PTI

Why is the PM feeling so insecure — that he does not even want to listen to us?"

Attacking the Prime Minister for handling the pandemic scenario in cavalier manner which had led to the spike in the number of cases, Mamata said, "This was a casual and super flop meeting. Only CMs of BJP-ruled States were allowed to speak and others were made to watch like

puppets... it seems that the meeting was called only for some media publicity to show that yes they are working."

"Like me all the Chief Ministers were ready with their documents and data and were willing to discuss their problems but they were not allowed to speak... if this was to be done then where was the need calling this meeting," she said.

BJP raps Didi for disrupting Modi's meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday condemned the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "seeking to interrupt" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with District Magistrates on the Covid-19 situation on Thursday "by not allowing DM of 24 Pargana from presenting his views".

He said Mamata did not allow her DM to speak on the Covid-19 situation saying "what does he know, I know..."

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Work out strategy to save rural India from Covid, PM tells DMs

Stop wastage of jabs, urges Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked District Magistrates to work out a strategy to keep away Covid-19 from rural areas and prevent vaccine wastage even as he cautioned that the "challenge remains" as long as the coronavirus infection is present "even on a minor scale".

The Prime Minister asked the officials to work out their strategy in a rural and urban specific way and ensure that rural India is Covid-free.

Addressing the District Magistrates of 10 States, including Opposition-ruled West Bengal, Jharkhand, Kerala and Odisha, through videoconferencing, Modi said over the past few days active cases have started to reduce in the country but urged them to spread the message about keeping villages corona-free and the need to keep following Covid-appropriate behaviour.

The officials briefed the Prime Minister about the



improving Covid situation in their respective districts and shared their experience of using technology for real-time monitoring and capacity building. They also informed him about the various steps taken by them to enhance public participation and awareness in their districts.

The Prime Minister told field officers that coronavirus had made the work more demanding and challenging. New challenges, new strategies and solutions are needed in the second wave of the pandemic, the PM said and lauded the outstanding work of the State and district officials in fighting the menace.

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CAPSULE

J&K COP DAVINDER SINGH DISMISSED

Jammu: Disgraced police officer Davinder Singh, who was arrested and chargesheeted by the NIA in a terror case, was on Thursday dismissed by the J&K administration.

DU POSTPONES FINAL YEAR EXAMS TO JUNE 7

New Delhi: The Delhi University has postponed the exams for final semester/year students to June 7, an official order said.

INDIA-CHINA TIES AT CROSSROADS: MIN

New Delhi: The relationship between India and China is at a crossroads and its direction depends on whether the neighbouring country adheres to various agreements on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday referring to the eastern Ladakh standoff.

FakeBuster to catch cyber impostors

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee, has prepared a digital tool named "FakeBuster" to identify and crack down on virtual imposters either creating a nuisance during online conferences, webinars, examinations, meetings, chats and socialising among others or even committing frauds entailing financial implications. The makers of "FakeBuster" claim it to be one of the first tools across the world to detect imposters using the "DeepFake" detection technology during live video conferencing.

In simple terms, this stand-alone solution enables a user (organiser) to detect if another person's video is manipulated or spoofed during a video conferencing. Imposters have been using real-time mimicked visuals



(videos) known as "DeepFake" during meetings, webinars, online examinations and job interviews with a lot of adverse social, mental and financial implications. Further, through this mode, manipulated media contents are being used in spreading fake news, pornography and other such online content with major repercussions.

The platform is likely to benefit organisations — both the Government and private — as also individuals functioning from within the confines of closed rooms to run offices or

events for more than a year now due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Sophisticated artificial intelligence techniques have spurred a dramatic increase in manipulation of media contents. Such techniques keep evolving and becoming more realistic. That makes detection difficult and it could have far-reaching security implications. Hence, a platform was conceived," said Prof Abhinav Dhall from IIT Roorkee, one of the four-member team that developed the "FakeBuster" in association with Monash University of Australia.

The virtual imposters were successful in their evil designs even in a meeting of the United Nations last year, and similarly, according to media reports, a virtual meeting of South African lawmakers was disrupted by hackers who flooded the video call with pornographic images. The virtual

imposters also hurled racial and sexual insults in the meeting which were held by video conference calls due to lockdown restrictions last year.

A live meeting on Kashmir organised six months ago in which experts from several countries were participating was hacked with songs on Lord Ram and Hanuman playing in the background. The meeting had a group of Pakistani diplomats, along with some human rights "activists" and as the event progressed, pro-Indian accounts intervened the event and tried to stop Pakistani diplomats from lying on the Kashmir issue.

The tool was planned after cases of manipulations were reported in recent times from India and abroad which found their way into video-calling platforms through spoofing tools based on transfer of facial expressions.

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Will stand by late corona warrior's family: Kejriwal



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met the family members of corona warrior Sheoji Mishra who died due to Covid-19 and handed over a cheque of ₹1 crore as compensation to the family on Thursday.

Mishra was a teacher and had contracted coronavirus during his Covid duty in the RSBV, Kalyanvas on June 4 last year and three days later, he succumbed to the infection.

Kejriwal said that no amount of money can com-

pensate for the loss of a life but this financial assistance would ease some of the family's fiscal woes.

He said that the Delhi Government would also provide the late Corona Warrior's elder son a job and would stand beside his family for any help they might need in the future.

"Late Sheoji Mishra was a very hardworking and dedicated teacher in our Delhi Government school.

He passed away after getting infected while being on Covid duty last year. I can understand the pain and grief

of his family.

The Government will provide his elder son a job and we will also stand beside them for any assistance that we can provide," he said.

Mishra, a resident of Delhi had joined the service in 1999. He is survived by his wife Saroj Mishra and two sons.

The Delhi Government school, in which he worked as an English teacher, was facilitating screening of migrant labourers and also organising their movement and providing food and temporary stay at the night shelters to them.

Get drug for black fungus from wherever it is available: HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court (HC) on Wednesday asked the Centre to take steps to source the medicine Amphotericin B, used for treating mucormycosis (black fungus) which is primarily affecting people who have recovered from Covid-19, from wherever it is available in the world.

The HC said the Centre should inform it about the steps taken to import the medicine, the shortfall of which was coming in the way of the treatment of mucormycosis, which has been on the rise in the national Capital and elsewhere in the country.

"You have to get the medicine from wherever it is available in the world get it," said a Bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh which was assured by the Centre that it had already started taking steps to import the medicine.

When the HC noted that the domestic production of the medicine was far less than what was required in India, the Centre informed the court that



the manufacturing capacity of some of the drug's producers had been doubled. It, however, said, "Looking at the shortfall in the supply, we are afraid that mere doubling of production will not suffice. It is not clear by when the augmented production will come in actual production."

The Bench said, "The Centre may place on record the steps taken to import the medicine to augment supplies within the country." The Bench said there were two things at a premium here, that is, time and human lives.

"You need to import this to bridge the gap between your plan to enhance the capacity and completing manufacture before we lose more precious

lives. So act fast on this," it said and asked the Central Government to file a status report on the present production capacity of the medicine, details of the producers licenced to make it, and by when it would be manufactured with the increased capacity.

The court, which was told that Delhi had over 200 cases of black fungus, also asked the Centre to inform it about the present case load and expected load in two weeks. The Centre has to file its report within three days. The issue of shortage of the medicine for treating black fungus was raised by advocate Rakesh Malhotra who said these cases are rising.

Relief as positivity rate dips to 5.50%

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi continued to witness a dip in daily coronavirus cases even as the Capital registered 3,231 fresh infections in the past 24 hours. The number of Covid-19 deaths in the same period was 233, while 7,831 more patients have recovered.

The positivity rate recorded on Thursday dipped further to 5.50 per cent from 5.78 per cent.

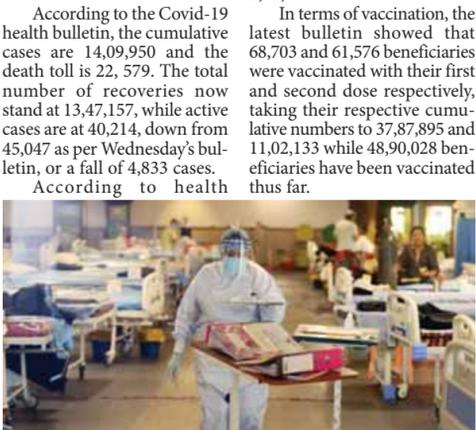
According to the Covid-19 health bulletin, the cumulative cases are 14,09,950 and the death toll is 22,579. The total number of recoveries now stand at 13,47,157, while active cases are at 40,214, down from 45,047 as per Wednesday's bulletin, or a fall of 4,833 cases.

According to health

department officials, 58,744 samples were put to test, down from 66,573 in the 24-hour period before that. Of the 58,744 samples tested, RT-PCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests were conducted on 43,914 while 14,830 underwent rapid antigen testing.

The total samples tested in the Capital thus far stand at 18,532,803 while tests conducted per million are at 9,75,410.

In terms of vaccination, the latest bulletin showed that 68,703 and 61,576 beneficiaries were vaccinated with their first and second dose respectively, taking their respective cumulative numbers to 37,87,895 and 11,02,133 while 48,90,028 beneficiaries have been vaccinated thus far.



ITBP's Covid centre gets 150 ventilator beds

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)-run Covid Care Centre in South Delhi's Chattarpur, has been equipped with 150 ventilator beds for coronavirus patients requiring critical care.

The ventilators were provided to the Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre (SPCCC) by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) from the PM-CARES fund early this month.

"Around 150 GPS-based ventilator beds have been made functional. This will be in addition to the 500 oxygen beds which are already functional at the centre.

The ventilators are being used to provide critical care to the patients infected with coronavirus. About 10 patients have been admitted today," said Vivek Kumar Pandey, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of the ITBP.

Inspector General (IG) of the force Anand Swaroop, who is responsible for the functioning of the SPCCC, visited the ventilator ward and reviewed the arrangements with doctors and senior officers



mannng the facility.

The centre began operations on April 26 after the Delhi Government requested the Union Government to operationalise the facility at the Radha Soami Beas campus in Chattarpur area in view of the rapid increase in Covid-19 cases.

According to data updated till Wednesday, a total of 1,223 patients have been admitted at the SPCCC till now, out of which 935 have been discharged.

"At present, 200 beds are occupied at the centre and hundreds of patients who were critical have been given anti-viral treatment here and their oxygen levels have improved after proper medical care was provided to them," said the PRO.

PM appreciates Gurugram's innovative vaccination drive

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a video conference (VC) with more than 60 District Magistrates of different States in which he reviewed the measures being taken to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the meet, the Prime Minister also appreciated the 'Drive through Covid vaccination' programme recently organised at different malls in Gurugram by the district administration and called it an "innovative idea."

During the interaction with the Prime Minister, Yash Garg, the District Magistrate of Gurugram, informed him that Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar was monitoring the management of Covid-19 in Gurugram district.

He said that vaccination was a major part of the Covid-19 control measures in Gurugram, and so far more than six lakh doses have been given, which means that about 30 per cent of the population has been covered. Apart from this, the focus is on testing individuals and so far more than 14



lakh tests have been done in the district, one of the highest numbers of tests done in the country.

Garg said that the people in urban and rural areas are being motivated to prevent Covid-19 infections in their respective areas and a team of civil defence personnel is spreading awareness regarding control and containment measures. As a result, the positivity rate of the district has reached 10-12 per cent from the 33 per cent earlier. He said that around 32 RWAs opened Covid Care Centres in their societies. Similarly, four major Covid Care Centres have been made

in collaboration with companies and institutions.

Garg informed Modi that under the 'Haryana Rural Health Checkup Scheme' people are being checked at home in every village. There are two teams functioning in every village, which includes Anganwadi workers, teachers, the sarpanch or other influential people of the village, gram secretary and so on.

"Infected individuals are being given an AYUSH kit from the Government in which there are 15 items including Ayurvedic kadhha and medicines, allopathic medicines, equipment etc.

Manoj Tiwari, Adesh Gupta give food, medicines at vaccination centres

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president, Adesh Gupta, and former State president, Member of Parliament (MP) Manoj Tiwari distributed food, medicines and dry ration among needy people at vaccination centres.

Gupta said that in the past year during the pandemic the Prime Minister Narendra Modi Government distributed free

ration to the needy and poor for the whole year but due to shortcomings of the Kejriwal Government's distribution policy, many of these people could not benefit from it.

"In fact it was a deliberate move on the city Government's part which led people to migrate out of Delhi to their hometowns. Even this time seeing the pandemic, the Modi Government has announced two months' free ration where-

as Kejriwal is again politicking into this and thereby depriving needy and poor of their rightful due," he said.

"These people who are suffering because of repeated lockdown here can't be left at the mercy of Kejriwal.

"This is why our party has taken several welfare steps with the motto of 'Seva hi Sangathan' under which dry ration and fruits are being given to them," he said.

J'khand approaches SC for alternative vaccination app

VIJAY DEO JHA ■ RANCHI



THANKSGIVING
Thankyou holy spirit for
The blessings Celine
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The Jharkhand Government has filed an interlocutory application before the Supreme Court seeking intervention of the court to direct the Central Government to allow Amritvahini App as an alternative for registration of vaccination so that maximum number of people are vaccinated and protected from Covid 19.

Notably, the Supreme Court is hearing several cases related to Covid 19.

The Government submitted that for common people the registration process for vaccination has become quite lengthy hence the Central Government should allow Amritvahini App as an alternative online platform for people to register for vaccination. Besides, in the petition, the government has raised other issues also.

Amritvahini App has been developed by Jharkhand government.

9 States float global ...

From Page 1
States such as Uttarakhnad, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar have indicated that they would be floating tenders soon. The volumes likely to be sought by them are not clear as yet.

The EO floated by the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation said the Government sought a delivery schedule of 180 days progressively from the date of purchase order for 3.5 crore (35 million) doses (21,07,31,130) to States and UTs. Of this, the total consumption (including wastage) is 19,09,60,575 doses and nearly two crore Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and union territories while around 26 lakh are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days.

"The EO's outcome remains to be seen as most of the affluent countries have already booked the vaccines much in advance. It depends on how many companies show their interest in the EO's invited by the States," an official said.

As per the Health Ministry's data, over 8.31 crore people have registered in the age group of 18-44 since April 28. Of them, only 10-12 per cent got the first dose of vaccination so far. Many States have stopped the inoculation to 18-44 age group category due to shortage of vaccine.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Thursday claimed the Government has provided more than 21 crore vaccine doses (21,07,31,130) to States and UTs. Of this, the total consumption (including wastage) is 19,09,60,575 doses and nearly two crore Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and union territories while around 26 lakh are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days.

Work out strategy ...

From Page 1
He said the experiences and feedback from their work in the field, helped in making practical and effective policies and that the vaccination strategy is also being pushed forward by incorporating suggestions from States and various stakeholders at all levels.

The Prime Minister stressed on the "need to use local experiences and the need to work together as a country" and emphasised that the meth-

ods and strategies in dealing with the pandemic should be "dynamic as the virus is expert in mutation and changing the format". He said virus mutation is concerning the youth and children outlined the need to boost the vaccination drive. On vaccine wastage, the Prime Minister said "wastage of a single vaccine means not being able to provide the necessary security to an individual". Therefore, he urged the officials to ensure vaccine wastage is prevented. The Prime Minister has been directly interacting with DMs of States to take their feedback and suggestions to counter the pandemic.

Deadlier white fungus rears ...

From Page 1
Symptoms of VVC include white, cottage cheese-like discharge, edema, redness, pain, and burning sensation, said the study published in the journal Cereus. "Out-of-control blood glucose levels result in various metabolic changes, like a rise in glycogen levels. This can cause a remarkable increase in the colonizing and pathogenic abilities of Candida species, as raised glycogen levels cause a fall in the pH of the vagina, making the environment more susceptible to the establishment of a VVC community," authors Dr Lubna Mohammed, Internal Medicine at the California Institute of Behavioral Neurosciences & Psychology, and her colleagues had noted after conducting a review of articles published between 2000 and 2021. They also examined the pathogenesis of Candida species and why they affect patients with DM.

They also noted that patients may have asymptomatic infection due to the immune system keeping the infection contained. Globally, millions of people are affected with diabetes, but India tops the list, making its population more susceptible to secondary infection such as white fungus due to weakened immunity and blood glucose levels that are uncontrolled. The authors have cautioned practicing providers to watch for symptoms of VVC in women with diabetes.

CSB Bank
Gautam Nagar Branch located at 42 Upper Ground Floor, Gautam Nagar, South Delhi, New Delhi - 110049

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE

CSB Bank Limited, Gautam Nagar Branch had granted gold loan against pledge of gold ornaments to the below mentioned borrowers. 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 treaty/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 (Rs.)	Balance Outstanding (as on 18.05.2021) (Rs.)
1	Ashish Saini	11.9	0322-04066742-000007	23818	25012
2	Dheeraj	133.85	0322-04050073-000003	349188	367125
3	Yashwant Kumar	8.2	0322-04113304-000002	9393	9701
4	Karamjeet	69.82	0322-04070504-000003	202188	209304
5	Deepankar Mahla	37.69	0322-04087744-000002	85188	93765
6	Virender	45.8	0322-03798796-000005	166188	182769
7	Sumit Kumar	7.45	0322-04099820-000002	22187	22461
8	Vipul Kumar	51.2	0322-04169063-000001	179188	196822
9	Pankaj	15.3	0322-04169063-000001	51688	56775
10	Tara	56.3	0322-07253491-000001	198869	215515
11	Hari Sharma	43.2	0322-04122556-000002	135825	137501
12	Ashish Saini	33.7	0322-04066742-000008	105188	115446
13	Virender	33	0322-03798796-000006	127188	139592
14	Virender	31.4	0322-03798796-000007	108188	118691

The auction will be conducted at the premises of CSB Bank Limited, Gautam Nagar branch premises situated at 42 Upper Ground Floor, Gautam Nagar, South Delhi, New Delhi - 110049 on 28.05.2021. 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: Gautam Nagar
Date: 20.05.2021
Branch Manager

Mother, son found murdered at home in northeast Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 56 year-old woman Umlsh and her 29-year-old son Ashok were found dead at their house in northeast Delhi's Karawal Nagar on Thursday morning.

Police said that primary investigation suggests that it was a murder and police teams are scanning CCTV camera in the area to identify the accused and to know the crime sequence.

According to a senior police official, a police control room call was received at 8 AM regarding the duo following which a police team was dispatched for the spot.

BJP raps Didi for disrupting..

From Page 1
"The behaviour of Mamata is shameful, condemnable and least expected from a State Chief Minister," said Prasad after Mamata hits out at Modi.

"If the PM interacts with the DM, what is the problem if

good work is shared?", he asked and accused the Bengal Chief Minister of trying to derail the meeting.

"Is tarah ka vyavhar ashobhneey hain aur durbhagyapurn hain..." (this kind of behaviour is undignified and unfortunate), he said. Prasad said the Prime Minister is clear that irrespective of the political colour "good work anywhere should be shared and appreciated."

FakeBuster..

From Page 1
These fake facial expressions are often convincing to human eye and can have serious implications. The IIT claimed that the tool has achieved over 90 per cent accuracy ever since being used as pilot project in recent times.

This software platform is independent of video conferencing solutions and has been tested with Zoom and Skype applications. The device has already been tested and would hit the market soon. The Deepfake detection tool, "FakeBuster", works in both online and offline modes. Since the device can presently be attached with laptops and desktops only "we are aiming to make the network smaller and lighter to enable it to run on mobile phones or devices as well".

informed Associate Professor Subramanian. He said the team is working on using the device to detect fake audios also. Deeming a couple of platform unsafe, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had advised Govt officials not to use a particular video meet app for holding meetings. According to the Govt, the app can be easily hacked and confidential data and material stolen. In its advisory for private individuals, the MHA issued detailed guidelines to prevent unauthorised entry in the conference room, to prevent an unauthorised participant to carry out malicious activity on the terminals of others and avoiding DOS attack by restricting users through passwords and access grant. A DOS (denial-of-service) attack is done by hackers to make a machine or network resource unavailable to its intended user (s).

Chhattisgarh NYAY to Last Mile Continues

Farmers Get Agriculture Input Subsidy

Commemorating Martyrdom Day of
Former Prime Minister

Shri Rajiv Gandhi
on 21st May 2021



RAJIV GANDHI KISAN NYAY YOJANA

Direct Bank Transfer
of First Instalment of Input Subsidy

₹1500cr

to more than 22 lakh farmers

- ❖ For Kharif year 2020-21 input subsidy of ₹9000 per acre to paddy farmers, same rate to be applicable in coming years
- ❖ Farmers selling paddy at MSP this year will receive input subsidy of ₹10000 per acre for Kharif season 2020-21 if switching crops or planting trees
- ❖ For Kharif year 2021-22, besides paddy, farmers cultivating maize, soybean, kodo, kutki and arhar will receive input subsidy of ₹9000 per acre
- ❖ Kodo-Kutki support price raised and fixed at ₹3000 per quintal

Payment of ₹5628 cr made last year

Shri Bhupesh Baghel
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh



GODHAN NYAY YOJANA

Cow Dung Monetizing Scheme

Making Cattle Rearing Economically Profitable

Payment of

₹7.17cr

(for 15th march - 15th may 2021)

to cattle owners towards
cow dung procurement

Payment of ₹88.15 cr made so far

Smt. Sonia Gandhi Ji & Shri Rahul Gandhi Ji

(Hon'ble Members of Parliament)

To Grace the Occasion through Video Conferencing



Wear
Mask



Regularly wash
your hands with soap



Maintain
Physical distancing



Get
Vaccinated



Admit +ve kin of dead staff, CRPF hosps told

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid alarming rise of coronavirus cases in the CRPF ranks and their family members, the CRPF headquarters has directed all designated Covid hospitals under its command to admit family members and next of kin of the deceased personnel.

Till now, the family members of CRPF were dependent on already overstretched civil hospitals across the country for management of Covid-19 cases despite the paramilitary having a large number of hospitals with an authorised pool of about 740 doctors, including specialists and over 3,000 paramedical and nursing staff.

Facing shortage of essential medicines like Remdesivir and equipment like ventilators as also oxygen, the CRPF reiterated to the various formations across the country to liaise with the State police forces to acquire seized items on "zimanama" basis.

The CRPF has also been relying on hospitals under the civil administration in various states for vaccination of serving personnel and their dependents as also the next of kin of martyred men and veterans.

Insiders in the paramilitary said, the ad hoc manner of handling Covid-19 cases has even



demoralised the veterans who have to run from one hospital to another for vaccination as well as treatment of the viral disease despite serving the nation for decades.

On the contrary, other forces, like the ITBP, have been using their composite hospitals for both vaccination as well as treatment of their personnel and even opened the service for other paramilitary forces like the CRPF, sources said. The BSF on Wednesday said it has ramped up facilities at its Covid Care Centres at Chhawla and Tigri Camp in the national capital by adding 10 oxygen beds each at the two camps.

The CRPF had on May 7 written to all the formations to depute commandants to liaise with the State police for taking possession of life saving drugs and equipment seized by the police for use of its personnel. On Tuesday, the CRPF again shot off a letter stating, "Few offices have written letters to the State police, but merely

writing down a letter would not suffice. An officer with good communication skills or a Medical officer be detailed to liaise in person. Please instruct all offices/units to make sincere efforts for proper utilisation of seized life saving Covid equipment."

Through an order earlier this month, the CRPF had directed the medical directorate to allow admission of family members of the paramilitary personnel at dedicated Covid centres as they are facing shortage of beds in civil hospitals.

The CRPF topped the list of the paramilitary forces with the most number of infections with 22,216 personnel contracting the disease as on Monday and also recorded the most number of recoveries that stood at 19,235. The CRPF has suffered the most deaths with 114 casualties in its ranks due to Covid-19. It also has the highest number of active cases at 2,867.

Plea in SC seeks direction to Centre, State Govts for treating non-Covid patients



IANS ■ NEW DELHI

A PIL has been moved in the Supreme Court seeking direction to Centre and State Governments to ensure adequate medical treatment and facilities are provided to all non-Covid-19 patients in all Government and private hospitals, even during the lockdown period.

The plea, moved by advocate G.S. Mani, said the right to public health was a fundamental right and insisted that all governments should ensure that fundamental right to life, liberty, health and equality of non-Covid-19 patients are enforced and protected effectively.

The petitioner said that after the second wave, most of the state governments have put restrictions and protocols, which resulted into denial of regular treatment and check-up of patients with heart, kidney, liver and lung ailments. "Non-Covid-19 patients are facing a

lot of difficulties. Major surgeries are postponed in all the hospitals as doctors are fully busy with Covid-19 patients... for heart patients or pregnant women, it is very difficult to get admission," said the plea.

The petitioner emphasised that in some private hospitals, online consultation is available, whereas in government hospitals, there is no such facility available. "There should be more government hospitals, exclusively for non-Covid-19 patients. The doctors say that they get many calls for other emergencies. People are confused a lot. Emergencies are filled with Covid-19 patients, others can't go in there," the plea said.

The plea contended that right to life and public health is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution, and there was no pre-planned mechanism in the states in connection with public health and medical treatment.

Country's first ₹250 Covid-19 self-test kit to hit market soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's first self-test kit, CoviSelf Covid-19 Antigen LF device, which allows you to test yourself for coronavirus right at your home, will soon hit the market. To cost ₹250, the kit will be available over the counter and need no prescription. Approved by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the kit uses the Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) method for testing.

Manufactured by Pune-based Mylab Discovery Solutions, the kit is likely to reduce the pressure on the overburdened labs and delay in tests and reports.

Mylab Discovery Solutions' Managing Director Hasmukh Rawal said that a positive test will take five to seven minutes and a negative result will take a maximum 15 minutes. "We currently have a capacity of 70 lakh test kits per week and will enhance it to 1 crore test kits by early-June," he said.

At a press conference, Dr Balram Bhargava, DG, ICMR, said, "The testing by the kit is advised for use only on symptomatic individuals and immediate contacts of laboratory-confirmed positive cases."

Incidentally, the company had last year also given India its first RT-PCR Test kit which is now commonly used for Covid-



Dr Bhargava said users will have to download the home testing mobile application available on Google Play Store and Apple store

preprehensive guide of the testing procedure and will provide a positive or negative test result to the patient," Dr Bhargava said. "All users are advised to click a picture of the test strip after completing the test procedure with the same mobile phone, which has been used for downloading the mobile app and user registration."

The research body has also asked residents to take the test according to the user manual provided by the manufacturer and strictly follow the guidelines on the disposal of the kits. Users can download the manual for Mylab Discovery Solutions test kits, CoviSelf.



SC collegium recommends Justice Sanjay as Chief Justice of Allahabad HC

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium, headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana, has recommended the appointment of Justice Sanjay Yadav as the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court.

A statement published on the website of the apex court on Thursday said: "The Supreme Court Collegium on 20th May, 2021 has recommended elevation of Justice Sanjay Yadav, Judge, Allahabad High Court [PHC: Madhya Pradesh] as Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court."

After Chief Justice Govind Mathur demitted the office on April 14, Justice Yadav has been serving as the acting Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court.

Justice Yadav enrolled as advocate on August 25, 1986. He practised on civil, revenue and constitutional sides in the High Court of Madhya Pradesh at Jabalpur. Serving as Deputy Advocate General of Madhya Pradesh, he was elevated as a judge of the High Court of Madhya Pradesh on March 2, 2007, and then elevated as permanent judge on January 15, 2010. He was appointed as acting Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court with effect from October 6, 2019, till November 2, 2019 and from September 30, 2020, till January 2, 2021.

Justice Yadav was transferred to the Allahabad High Court on January 8, 2021.

PM congratulates Vijayan on taking oath as Kerala CM

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday congratulated Pinarayi Vijayan on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Kerala.

In a tweet, the Prime Minister said, "Congratulations to Shri @vijayanpinarayi Ji on taking oath as CM and commencing his second term in office."

Vijayan was sworn in on Thursday as Kerala Chief Minister for the second time amid the Covid-19 crisis in the state.

The oath ceremony took place with Covid protocols in place at the Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office to 76-year-old Vijayan. It is the second stint of the Marxist veteran in the top office.

Along with Vijayan, 20 others also took oath.

Declare black fungus epidemic, Centre directs State Govts



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Alarmed over the rapid surge in the cases of black fungus, the Central Government on Thursday directed all States and Union Territories to declare mucormycosis an epidemic that will help its better management.

Now, all confirmed or suspected cases of the fungal disease have to be reported to the Union Health Ministry.

The Ministry's recommendation come days after a few States like Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat notified the disease.

"In the recent times a new challenge in the form of a fungal infection namely mucormycosis has emerged and is reported from many states amongst Covid-19 patients, especially those on steroid therapy and deranged sugar

control.

"This fungal infection is leading to prolonged morbidity and mortality amongst Covid 19 patients," Joint Secretary in the Ministry, Lav Agarwal, said in the letter to the States.

The treatment of this fungal infection requires multidisciplinary approach consisting of eye surgeons, ENT specialists, general surgeon, neurosurgeon and dental maxillo facial surgeon, among others, and institution of Amphotericin-B injection as an antifungal medicine.

"You are requested to make mucormycosis a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, wherein all government and private health facilities, medical colleges will follow guidelines for screening, diagnosis, management of mucormycosis, issued by the Ministry of Health and Family

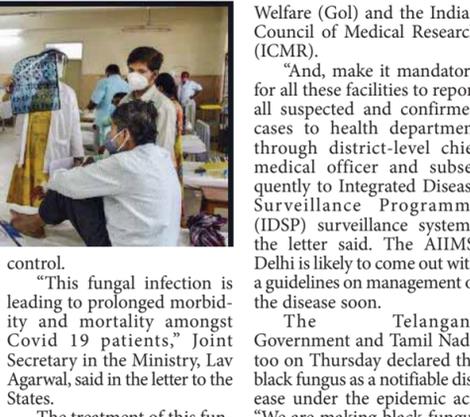
Welfare (GoI) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

"And, make it mandatory for all these facilities to report all suspected and confirmed cases to health department through district-level chief medical officer and subsequently to Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) surveillance system," the letter said. The AIIMS, Delhi is likely to come out with a guidelines on management of the disease soon.

The Telangana Government and Tamil Nadu too on Thursday declared the black fungus as a notifiable disease under the epidemic act. "We are making black fungus a notifiable disease under the Public Health Act. So now, we'll know what all cases are there. Now, we'll also get the data from private hospitals," Tamil Nadu Health Secretary J Radhakrishna said on Thursday.

According to the doctors, black fungus is a complication caused by a fungal infection and people infect it by coming in contact with the fungal spores in the environment. Covid-19 patients having diabetes or compromised immunity are vulnerable to the disease. At least 50 per cent cases result into fatality.

Tauktae triggers incessant rain in Kerala, K'taka, Goa, Maha, Guj



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cyclone Tauktae coupled with a western disturbance has led to incessant rain in Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and Delhi.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly has received 146 mm highest rainfall; Uttarakhand's Nainital 132 mm of rainfall, followed by Delhi which received 119.3 mm; Jhajjar 117 mm; Gurgaon 115 mm and Dholpur in Rajasthan 103 mm in the last

24 hours.

The IMD data says that Jaipur has received 80 mm rainfall, Meerut 85.9 mm, Varanasi 82.8 mm, Meewat in Haryana 84 mm, Mussoorie 103 mm and Mukteswar 85 mm.

According to the IMD, Delhi received the highest-ever rainfall of 119.3 mm in May for the first time since 1951. The perpetual rainfall was due to the impact of cyclonic storm Tauktae and a western disturbance ending 8.30am on Thursday. This was double the previous record rainfall received by Delhi on

May 24, 1976, which was 60 mm. A record 119.3 mm rain fell in Delhi between 8.30am on Wednesday and 8.30am on Thursday, which is a new record for May," Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of IMD's regional forecasting Centre, said.

In Uttarakhand, the IMD has warned of more rain in few districts including Uttarkashi, Rudrapur, Chamoli, Tehri, Pauri, Bageshwar, Nainital, Almora and Champawat. The upper Himalayan regions of the state, including Badrinath in Chamoli district and Kedarnath in Rudrapur, also received snowfall.

Rainfall recorded below 15 mm is considered light, while that recorded between 15 mm and 64.5 mm is moderate. If recorded between 64.5 mm and 115.5 mm, it is heavy and between 115.6 mm and 204.4 mm is considered very heavy. Rainfall above 204.4 mm is considered extremely heavy rainfall.

Meanwhile, southwest monsoon is very likely to advance over south Andaman Sea and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal around May 21, one day in advance in association with the strengthening and deepening of southwesterly winds over the region.

Meanwhile, the IMD has warned that it can't rule out the possibility of a new cyclone heading towards the Eastern seaboard of India, Cyclone Yaas, intensifying like Cyclone Amphan.

"A low pressure area over north Andaman Sea and adjoining eastcentral Bay of Bengal is very likely to intensify into a Cyclonic storm by May 25. It'll move northwards and reach near Odisha-West Bengal coasts around May 26 morning", the IMD said.

Last year in May, India saw the formation of two cyclones, Amphan on the Eastern coast and Nisarga on the Western coast. A UN report released last month calculated that Amphan caused more than \$14 billion worth of economic damage in India alone.

Bharat Biotech ramps up job production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid reports of severe shortage of Covid-19 jabs in the country, Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech on Thursday announced that it has ramped up additional manufacturing capacities for the Covaxin vaccine. Covishield and Covaxin are being provided under the Government's nationwide vaccination programme.

Chiron Behring, a subsidiary of Bharat Biotech in Ankleshwar, Gujarat, plans to produce 200 million doses of Covaxin per annum in the GMP (good manufacturing practicing) facilities that are already operational for the production of vaccines based on Inactivated Vero Cell Platform Technology, under stringent levels of GMP and biosafety, the company said in a statement here. Product availability at Ankleshwar will commence from fourth quarter 2021, it added.

The addition in manufacturing capabilities takes the volume of covaxin doses to up to 1 billion doses per annum, the company said. The company ramped up capacities at its own established campuses specialised for manufacturing inactivated viral vaccines under the highest biosafety levels.

Hypertension, tobacco top most cause of premature mortality

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Hypertension and tobacco are the top most causes of premature mortality and people consuming tobacco in any form are at high risk of many diseases, as nicotine is solely responsible for constricted arteries, heart failure, inflammation, many types of cancers, blindness, and gangrene, while it also complicates existing hypertension.

The above was mentioned by noted interventional Cardiologist Dr (Prof) (Col) Shekhar Kashyap while speaking at a webinar on 'Hypertension, Covid-19 and Tobacco - A Deadly Triad'.

Kashyap is the former Head of Department (Cardiology), Army's Research & Referral Hospital in New Delhi.

"Although the tobacco lobby promotes that nicotine does not cause hypertension, it affects all the organ systems. Tobacco consumption in any form be it cigarettes, chewable, and nicotine gum, causes increase in blood pressure and elevates the heart rates. Nicotine cessation can help immediately. Within 20 minutes of cessation, blood pressure returns to normal and 15 years of cessation eliminates all hazards of smoking," added

Hypertension is the most widely prevalent vascular disease among the low and middle income group countries. It is also one of the biggest causes of premature deaths in the world

Kashyap. Hypertension is the most widely prevalent vascular disease among the low and middle income group countries.

It is also one of the biggest causes of premature deaths in the world.

Today, one in every four men and one in every five women today are suffering from hypertension.

"Those who consume tobacco have poorly controlled hypertension. It is a myth that smokeless tobacco or non-combustible tobacco has no ill-effects. There are ample studies to prove that these cause many diseases," Kashyap said, adding that tobacco blunts the effects of medicines taken to stabilise blood pressure.

Kashyap said persons with cardiometabolic factors face a higher risk of severe Covid-19 condition along with complications and mortality.

Chewing tobacco can increase the risk of Covid-19 as the person does not wear a mask, the hand to mouth contact increases, salivating and spitting puts others at risk, and sitting together to drink and smoke leaves no room for social distancing, thereby increasing the risk of spreading the infection.

"To counter the threat of Covid-19, it is imperative to combat the misinformation campaigns. The studies that purportedly claim consumption of alcohol or smoking can prevent Covid-19, may be manipulated and, therefore, as a vigilant society, there needs to be a high index of suspicion around such studies, he added.

Kashyap advised that people should rely on information and guidelines from credible sources such as the WHO, US CDC, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and ICMR.

He said that there is a lot of ground that needs to be covered, which can begin with sensitising kids at the kindergarten level about the harmful effects of tobacco on our health.

Further, surrogate advertisements promoting the use of tobacco in any form should not be allowed in the vicinity of schools or other educational institutions.

SJM urges EU envoy to shed ambiguity on patent rights

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) on Thursday requested European Union (EU) ambassador here to drop 'ambiguity' in its support to changing Patent rights and thereby facilitate cost effective production and adequate availability of Covid-19 vaccines and medicines in India.

Noting that the European Union (EU) is not clear in its support to changing Patent rights in the World Trade Organization (WTO)'s meeting, next month, the SJM, an RSS outfit, asked it to "unconditionally support the TRIPS Waiver Proposal".

In a letter to the Ambassador Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan Ugo Astuto SJM Co-convenor Ashwini Mahajan said the Global health crisis due to Coronavirus pandemic has prompted several countries to support the Indian and South African application for a patent waiver.

Covid-19

128 more lives lost in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

While Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and 20 of his Cabinet colleagues were being administered the oath of office and secrecy by the Governor, the Covid-19 situation in Kerala continued to be grave and critical. The State saw 128 lives being claimed by the pandemic during the last 24 hours that ended on Thursday 6 pm.

A total of 30,441 new cases were diagnosed by the department of health on Thursday. The Test Positivity Rate for the day was 23.18 per cent.

Malappuram topped the table of districts with highest number of new cases. The district saw 4,746 persons diagnosed with Covid-19 while

3,969 new cases were logged in Thiruvananthapuram. Ernakulam, which is also under triple lockdown orders recorded 3,336 new patients.

Out of the 30, 441 new cases tested positive today, 28, 176 had contracted the pandemic through contact. The number of health workers tested positive on Thursday were 101, underscoring the demand by the Kerala Government Medical Officers Association about the need to deploy more doctors, nurses and para-medical staff in all hospitals. Every day in Kerala sees a minimum of 100 health workers newly getting afflicted with Covid-19.

There were 3.17 lakh persons under treatment for Covid-19 across the State.



People over 18 years of age wait in queues to receive Covid-19 vaccine doses at a centre in Bikaner on Thursday

PTI

47,371 patients discharged in Maharashtra in 24 hours

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 infections dropped to 29,911 in Maharashtra on Thursday, even as the State logged 984 deaths - including 246 deaths arising out of consolidation of old unaccounted figures, even as 47,371 patients were discharged from various hospitals across the State after full recovery.

A day after the pandemic claimed 594 lives and left 34,031 people infected in various parts of Maharashtra, the infections dropped to 29,911, while the state recorded 984 deaths - 429 that occurred in the last 48 hours, 309 recorded in the last week and 246 old unaccounted cases.

With 984 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 84,371 to 85,355.

Similarly, with 29,911 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 54,67,537 to 54,97,448.

As 47,371 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 breached the 50 lakh mark to touch 50,26,308. The recovery rate in the state went up from 91.06 per cent to 91.34 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 4,01,695 to 3,83,253. The fatality rate in the state went up from 1.54 per cent to 1.55 per cent.

With 37 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 14,373 to 14,410, while the infected cases went up by a relatively low 1433 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,91,352 to 6,92,785.

The situation in Pune improved vastly as the "active cases" dropped from 67,295 to 64,084.

Mumbai with 28,987 active cases stood second in the state, followed by Thane (27,604), Solapur (19,783), Nagpur (19,615), Ahmednagar (18,976), Satara (18,942), Nashik (18,151), Amravati (10,685), Beed (10,463), Chandrapur (8,111), Jalgaon (7,839), Aurangabad (6,929), Osmanabad (6,692), Latur (5,588), Buldhana (5,088) and Jalna (4,745).

Of the 3,21,54,275 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 54,97,448 have tested positive (17.15 per cent) for COVID-19 until Thursday.

Currently, 29,35,409 people are in home quarantine while 21,648 people are in institutional quarantine.

J&K sees 4,169 fresh cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

While the UT administration across Jammu & Kashmir is gearing up to strengthen Covid care facilities at Panchayat level the active case load is not showing signs of major improvement.

On Thursday, 67 more patients succumbed to the virus while 4,169 cases tested positive taking the tally of active positive cases to 50,554. Out of these 67 deaths, 41 were reported from Jammu division and 26 from Kashmir. The positivity rate reported across J&K stood at 8.7 per cent. Government Medical College hospital in Jammu reported highest number of 17 deaths while seven patients succumbed to the virus in GMC, Rajouri, two each in Doda, Katra and Udhampur.

According to the media bulletin, out of 4169 new positive cases of novel Corona virus (Covid-19) 1518 were reported from Jammu division and 2651 from Kashmir division. Significantly, 4042 more Covid-19 patients were recovered and discharged from various hospitals including 1533 from Jammu Division and 2509 from Kashmir Division.

Now black fungus case spotted in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Covid-19 situation in Tamil Nadu took a turn for the worse on Thursday with the administration announcing the detection of black fungus in the State.

Black fungus (Mucormycosis) has been reported as a notifiable disease by Health Secretary J Radhakrishnan who disclosed that the private hospitals in the State have been asked to furnish details of the disease which they have diagnosed.

The Directorate of Health and Preventive Medicine in its release said 35, 579 persons have been diagnosed with Covid-19 on Thursday while the pandemic claimed 397 lives during the last 24 hours.

The deaths on account of the pandemic till Thursday evening reached 19,131. As on Thursday evening there were 2.63 lakh patients across the State. Chennai continued to be the problematic district with 6,073 new cases while Coimbatore finished second with 3335 new cases.

The hike in the number of Covid-19 cases and fatalities is a matter of concern as the State is under total lockdown mode.

Priyanka writes to UP CM, seeks schemes for people hit by Covid

Lucknow: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra shot off a missive to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, advising him to launch schemes to provide financial assistance to the people reeling under several financial problems due to the second wave of Covid in the state.

In her letter sent on Thursday, Priyanka pointed out that the second Covid wave had severely affected the masses and the people had to suffer unbearable pain and trauma. The outcry of the helpless people in April-May made it clear that the government had no plans to counter the more fatal form of the pandemic.

"Many unnecessary rules and red tape brought down a mountain of trouble for the people. The epidemic took away thousands of people from us and on the other hand it created huge difficulties in the form of livelihood, loss in business and other work related to daily earners. Today, crores of people are apprehensive about their futures. Their means of earning have hit rock bottom and a galloping inflation has only added to their misery. This has particularly put the middle class in trouble. Instead of leaving people in these difficult situations, it is necessary that your government initiates some concrete welfare measures so that people can get some relief from their troubles," Priyanka said.

Employees who died during panchayat polls will be given compensation in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With disputes over the number of deaths of primary teachers due to Covid during panchayat polls, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday announced that all the Government employees who succumbed to the deadly infection during polls would be given compensation and rules would be amended for that.

"The State Government has decided to provide compensation and jobs to the dependents of the deceased during Panchayat election duty or who got infected with the virus while on duty, leading to their demise later," the CM said in a statement issued on Thursday.

On Thursday, Yogi Adityanath chaired a high level review meeting and gave instructions to chief secretary and ACS, Panchayati Raj, to coordinate with the State Election Commission and request it to amend the said guidelines, in a manner as deemed fit.

On Wednesday, the UP government had claimed that only three teachers had died of Covid during panchayat polls against the claim of 1,621 deaths by the primary teachers' association, which was supported by the opposition leaders.

The government made a U-turn on Thursday and blamed the old guidelines of the State Election Commission for the confusion.

Assam reports 74 new deaths, 6,573 fresh cases

Guwahati: Assam reported 74 deaths due to Covid-19 on Thursday, while the number of coronavirus cases rose by a record 6,573 persons testing positive, pushing the total number of infections to 3,53,574, the National Health Mission (NHM) said.

With 10 persons in Kamrup Metropolitan, nine in Barpeta, eight in Kamrup, seven each in Dibrugarh and Goalpara, Nagaon (5), Tinsukia (4), Darrang and Sivasagar (3 each), Bongaigaon, Cachar, Golaghat, Lakhimpur and Sonitpur (2 each), and one each in Baksa, Biswanath, Chirang, Hojai, Kokrajhar, Morigaon, Nalbari and Udalguri districts, the total number of deaths rose to 2,507 persons.

NHM said 1,347 more Covid-19 patients have died till now, but the government's Death Audit Board has not included them in the tally of fatalities caused by the Covid-19 virus as they had other ailments too. With detection of 6,573 patients against testing of 1,02,684 samples on Thursday, Assam has reported a positivity rate of 6.40 per cent for the day, the NHM daily bulletin said.

The State had reported 6,143 coronavirus positive cases on Wednesday against testing of 1,02,040 samples. Currently, the state has a total of 51,818 active cases they are being treated at different hospitals and Covid Care Centres (CCCs) across the state along with some being at home isolation. Out of the new cases, the highest 1,084 patients were detected from the state capital, followed by 490 in Dibrugarh, 477 in Nagaon and 432 in Kamrup. With 3,53,574 total COVID-19 positive cases in Assam, the overall positivity rate stands at 3.58 per cent against total testing of 98,79,158 samples so far.

The Kamrup Metropolitan district, which primarily comprises the Guwahati city, has so far reported a total of 94,228 cases of Covid-19. During the day, the state reported fewer recoveries than the number of new infections at 3,071 discharges, NHM said in its daily bulletin.

Vijayan sworn in as Kerala CM for second term

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Pinarayi Vijayan was sworn in as the 13th Chief Minister of Kerala in a ceremonial and unique function held at Thiruvananthapuram's Central Stadium on Thursday. The oath of office and secrecy was administered by Arif Mohammed Khan, Governor of Kerala to the Chief Minister designate and 21 members of his Cabinet as per strict Covid-19 guidelines and protocol.

The swearing in ceremony was attended among others by the family members of the designated ministers, senior bureaucrats and leaders of the constituent parties in the Left Democratic Front. Sitaram Yechury, the CPI(M) general secretary had flown into Thiruvananthapuram to attend the oath taking ceremony.

Vijayan was the first minister to be sworn in and Veena George the last person to be administered the oath of office. Nobody from the principal opposition party Congress and the BJP were present during the ceremony.

For the first time in the history of Kerala, the swearing in ceremony of Vijayan was preceded by a musical show portraying the growth of the CPI(M) in the State starting from the 1957 E M S Namboodirippadu-led United Front Government to the impressive victory gained by the party in the 2021 election that returned the ruling front to power, the first such win in the last four decades.

Vijayan came to the venue of the ceremony accompanied by wife Kamala, grandson (son of Veena through her first marriage), Veena and new son-in-law Mohammed Riyaz. Riyaz was also sworn in as a minister in the cabinet, making the Kerala cabinet a unique one which has the father-in-laws as chief minister and son-in-law holding important portfolios (PWD and Tourism).

Earlier in the day Vijayan and the minister designates offered floral tributes at Punnappa-Vayalar Memorial in Alappuzha, the resting place of many party workers who were killed in police firing in the riots staged by the united Communist Party of India in October 1946. The

Communists claim the riots of 1946 a part of the Indian freedom struggle.

In a significant development, Yechury, while speaking to reporters at Thiruvananthapuram, set to rest all controversies associated with the non-exclusion of K K Shylaja, the health minister in the outgoing government in the new council of ministers. The CPI(M) general secretary said that the decision to bring in new faces in the government in Kerala was taken in the long term interest of the party and for the State.

When he was asked about the reason behind the exclusion of Shylaja, he said the question of who will contest the election and who of the elected MLAs become ministers are matters within the domain of the respective State committees in every State. He pointed out that 26 CPI(M) MLAs of the previous House were denied tickets for the 2021 assembly election. "These MLAs included many senior ministers. I think that decision was in the long term interest of not only the CPI(M) but for Kerala itself," he said.

Tainted J&K police officer Davinder Singh dismissed from service

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Jammu & Kashmir Lt-Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday dismissed tainted police officer, Davinder Singh, who was earlier suspended and subsequently charge sheeted by the NIA in a terror case, from service with immediate effect.

Singh was arrested last year on January 11 after he was found travelling in a car along with two terrorists - Naveed Babu and Altaf on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. At the time of the arrest he was posted at Srinagar International Airport.

Initially two AK-47 rifles were seized from the car intercepted by police at Mir Bazaar in South Kashmir district of Kulgam. Later, police had also recovered two pistols and another AK 47 rifle from the residence of Singh.

During the probe, Singh also came on the radar of the investigating agencies for having links with officials of the Pakistan High Commission through secure social media platforms.

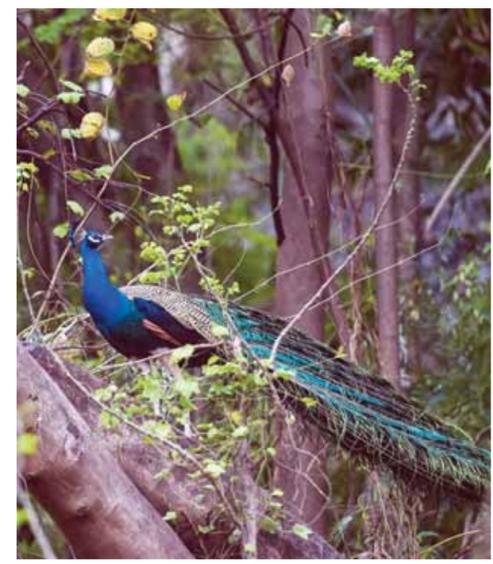
According to the order issued by the Commissioner Secretary to the Government, General Administration Department, "the Lieutenant Governor is satisfied under sub-clause (c) of the proviso to clause (2) of Article 311 of the Constitution of India that in the interest of the security of the State, it is not expedient to hold an enquiry in the case of Davinder Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Under Suspension) S/o Deedar Singh R/o Overground Tral, Pulwama. Accordingly, the Lieutenant Governor hereby dismisses him from service, with immediate effect.

Soon after his arrest Singh was stripped off his gallantry award by the Jammu & Kashmir administration.



People stand in a long queue to collect ration from a Government shop, amid the 2nd wave of Covid-19, in Mathura on Thursday

PTI



A peacock roams around Raj Bhavan in Mumbai on Thursday

PTI

Mumbai Cyclone: Navy recovers 23 more bodies from sea

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Twenty three more bodies of personnel on board the accommodation barge Papaa-305 - which sank amid Cyclone Tauktae off the Mumbai coast on Monday - were recovered by the Indian Navy on Thursday, taking the total number of mortal remains retrieved from under the Arabian Sea to 49.

There were conflicting statements as to the number of persons still missing from the five off-shore vessels - comprising three barges off the Mumbai coast, a drill ship of ONGC and an anchor-handling boat - which went either adrift or sank during the passage of Cyclone Tauktae towards Gujarat on Monday.

"From the accommodation barge Papaa-305, we have rescued 188 people. We have so far recovered 49 bodies. Twenty six

persons are still missing," Defence spokesperson Mehul Karnik said.

However the ONGC pegged the number of missing persons at 37. "There were 714 people on board five stranded vessels. Of them, 628 people were rescued by the Indian Navy, Coast Guard and ONGC vessels. Forty nine bodies have been recovered. As many as 37 persons are still missing. Of the missing, 26 are from barge Papaa-305 and 11 from Varaprada - Anchor handling boat GAL constructor," an ONGC spokesperson said.

Indian Naval ships and aircraft are currently engaged in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations to locate the missing crew members of Accommodation Barge P-305, which sank on Monday, 35 nautical miles off Mumbai coast. Ships INS Kochi, Kolkata, Beas, Betwa, Teg, P8I maritime

surveillance aircraft, Chetak, ALH and Seaking helicopters are involved in the SAR operations, while INS Talwar has also been diverted to provide assistance in relief and rescue operations.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has lauded the efforts of the Armed Forces and the Indian Coast Guard for the ongoing search and rescue operations in areas affected due to Cyclone Tauktae.

Singh - who has been in constant touch with Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of the Army Staff General M M Naravane, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria and Director General of the Indian Coast Guard Shri K Natarajan - commended the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard for saving the lives of people stranded at sea.

The Defence Minister also

hailed the Indian Army for deploying its columns in affected areas and the Indian Air Force for transporting personnel of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

Meanwhile, in a detailed statement issued on Thursday, the ONGC said: "When cyclone Tauktae struck on Monday (May 17), there were 342 installations in the Western Offshore region of the Arabian Sea with 7,675 people. Out of these installations, 243 were fixed and 99 floating."

The officials said that based on the weather warning, the ONGC activated its emergency response system and issued instructions to all installations to take action as per the standard operating procedure.

"At that time, there were in all 99 vessels. Of them, 94 remained safe. There were in all 6961 persons on board the vessels. Of the vessels, five remained

stranded," an ONGC spokesperson said.

While all 202 personnel were rescued from the Support station -3 construction vessel, all 101 personnel were rescued from ONGC's Sagar Bhushan Drill ship.

All 137 personnel were rescued from the GAL construction barge. "From barge Papaa-305, 26 are missing, while 11 are missing from Varaprada - Anchor handling boat GAL constructor," a statement issued by the ONGC said.

The AFCONS-led consortium, which is working closely with ONGC, Petroleum Ministry, Indian Navy, Coast Guard, and DG (Shipping) to coordinate the rescue efforts, attributed the loss of lives of personnel from barge Papaa-305 to "the sudden deterioration of weather (on May 17)" which left no time at all for any further

action to be taken by the Master of the vessel.

"On 14th May itself, all our vessels were advised to secure their respective work locations and move to safe location at the earliest. Accordingly, all vessels and barges, including P305, commenced moving out of their work locations on 14th / 15th May," the AFCONS statement said.

"While the other barges moved to Mumbai Port / Mumbai Outer Anchorage / Anchorage close to Revandanda, the Master of P305 chose to move 200 meter away from the HT platform where the Barge P305 was working, and to remain at that location, deciding this as a safe location since the max predicted wind speed was only 40 Knots and his location was 120 NM away from the eye of the tropical storm," the statement said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Vaccine hesitancy

The Serum Institute of India's statement presents a confusing mix of developments

Adar Poonawala has let the proverbial cat out of the bag. In the latest statement, the Serum Institute of India (SII) made certain points which need careful reading. One, that "in January 2021, we had a large stockpile of vaccine doses.... At that stage, most people, including health experts, believed that India was turning the tide on the pandemic". Was the intention to point out that India did not place enough vaccine orders in January itself to cover at least 70 per cent of the population? Two, "around the same time, many other countries in the world were facing an acute crisis and were in desperate need of help. Our Government extended support wherever possible during this period". Is this to reveal that the SII did not export either commercially or through Covax without intimating the Government of India? Three, "the cooperation between countries... forms the basis for us getting access to technology and aid for health-care.... it is this reciprocity, where India has helped other countries with the supply of HCQ and vaccine exports, that has in turn led to support from other countries". Is this to defend the Government from criticism for exporting/donating vaccines when the second surge raged in India? Four, "as part of our global alliances, we also had commitments to Covax, so that they could distribute the vaccines globally...". The Covax commitments came before



the Indian Government placed its order? Five, "a vaccination drive for such a large population (India) cannot be completed within 2-3 months.... it would take 2-3 years for the entire world population to get fully vaccinated".

It puts paid to the dreams of vaccinating 70 per cent of the Indian population by December. Six, "we also hope to start delivering to Covax and other countries by the end of this year". It means the committed Covax and commercial deliveries stand deferred as the SII is seized with honouring the Indian order made in May. The collaboration between the SII, Gavi and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation firmed up an initial order of 10 crore doses in last August and subsequently revised the figure by another 10 crore doses. Seven, Adar Poonawala earlier said the vaccine shortage would continue till July, by which time the SII would augment production figures to 10 crore a month. As on May 19, 18,70,09,792 doses were given to people. That includes first and second doses of Covishield and Covaxin. Around 11.7 per cent (14,17,55,662) of the Indian population received the first dose, while 3.34 per cent (4,04,84,941) received both doses. That leaves a population of over 100 crore without any doses so far. For herd immunity to be achieved, at least 70 per cent of the non-vaccinated population, or over 70 crore people, need to receive both doses. If the entire ramped up doses of 10 crore of the SII are given to India, it will take seven months to give at least one dose to this segment. A second dose would mean double that amount of dosage.

PICTALK



Animals forage for food, during the COVID-19 lockdown in Delhi

PTI

Much ado

The Delhi Government, rightly concerned though it is about children, has stoked an unnecessary controversy

The Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government in Delhi and the Union Government once again find themselves at each other's throats, their daggers drawn. The issue pertaining to the latest round of faceoff was rather innocuous. The Delhi Government basically pointed to a new COVID strain "originating from Singapore" and shared its apprehension that it could lead to a third wave of the pandemic in India. It appealed to the Union Government to cancel air services with the city-State which, as a Union Minister pointed out, had already been suspended in the absence of any "air bubble" passage with that country. This aspect of the so-called "Singapore strain" was strongly refuted by the South-East Asian country's Government, with its Foreign Minister even saying that the allegation was "unfounded" and that the elected representatives should be serious and responsible with their statements. They even called in the Indian High Commissioner to convey strong objection to the tweet on the "Singapore variant". Not choosing to close the episode here, Singapore has since ordered social media platforms Facebook and Twitter to carry a correction notice to users in the country over the "false statement" about the new variant originating in the city-State.

Soon after the news came out, the Indian Government quickly sided with the Singaporean authorities, saying that the Delhi Chief Minister "doesn't speak for India". Meanwhile, Singapore has shut down its schools as children there are getting more affected than the elders, but its Government stressed that the variant did not originate in Singapore. On the other hand, the country claims, it originated in India. Experts, however, are playing it safe as of now and saying that the infection is on "untraceable origin". The highly contagious B.1.617 variant was first detected in India and has now spread to many countries across the world. Of course, the Delhi Government has every right to protect the interests of its citizens, especially since health is a State subject. It has also every right to voice its concerns, or even take up the cudgels against the federal dispensation on issues that it may feel wronged about. However, it doesn't behove the Kejriwal Government, both in terms of constitutional propriety and the morality of the issue involved, to speak on subjects that fall outside the realm of its purview, especially influencing our country's foreign policy.

Future depends on compassion

Human ingenuity and the sense of cooperation among all countries are needed to beat the current distressing situation

These are not the best of times. Everyone has his own version, own experience, and most of it is common: No one has ever experienced such devastating anxiety, apprehensions and uncertainty about the days ahead. There is a disturbing sense as one receives a call. Every conversation centres around the near and dear ones being under the grip of COVID, and it is no more an exception to receive the devastating news of people suddenly passing away. I received a call from a young lady, known to me ever since she was a kid, some five decades ago. She devotedly looks after her 97-year-old father, who is in comparatively good health for his age. She tells me that she is extremely disturbed after receiving a call from her close relatives, who stay in a distant city.

When she received the call, and began to ask about the welfare of the family members on that side, the caller brushed it aside and came directly to the point: "All of us are in isolation having tested Corona positive. We are upset and disturbed. We don't know what will happen tomorrow. Whatever happens, we shall not inform you as it would serve no purpose. Likewise, we would request you not to inform us even if any fatality occurs on your side." This daughter, already under tremendous tension, was just dumb-struck! She always thought she could fall back upon them. As an elderly academic and family friend, I did my bit. In this instance, the old man is fine by God's grace and we hope to celebrate his centenary in a couple of years; hopefully, without any COVID restrictions. But will this daughter ever forget how she was left to fend for herself?

The unprecedented pandemic's onslaught has triggered numerous tragedies across the nation, with people being unable to attend even the last rites of their loved ones. An estimate suggests that 230 million Indian families became poorer during the first wave. Humanity, however, survives on hope. Things will change, and humanity would certainly come out of the excruciating stranglehold of the pandemic.



Human ingenuity would triumph once more, as it has in the past. At present, everyone seems to be impacted either directly, or indirectly. The loss of livelihood could only be called 'rampant'. In April-May of 2021, the health infrastructure stands shattered, patients are dying in front of hospital gates, in verandas, on stretchers and, shockingly, due to the non-availability of hospital beds. It is a tragic situation that would leave permanent scars on millions of families for ever.

It has challenged human sensitivity, emotionality and compassion. So much is to be rebuilt, resurrected and re-emergised on every front of human existence. Its magnitude has already begun to emerge. The learned and the knowledgeable are already envisioning the shape of things in the post-COVID India and its global context. In the post-Corona era, no nation can progress in isolation. Corona knows no boundaries, no nationalities, and it could be countered only by a strategy that is global in nature, international in implementation and humane in approach.



AT PRESENT, EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE IMPACTED EITHER DIRECTLY, OR INDIRECTLY. THINGS WILL CHANGE, AND HUMANITY WOULD CERTAINLY COME OUT OF THE EXCRUCIATING STRANGLEHOLD OF THE PANDEMIC. HUMAN INGENUITY WOULD TRIUMPH ONCE MORE, AS IT HAS SO OFTEN IN THE PAST

It would not be an over-stretched logic to assert that if the UN and organisations like the Unesco and the UNSC had really achieved their objectives in the initial decades of their existence, humanity would have been much better equipped, united and ready to counter problems like Corona. Sadly enough, the global urge to create a world of peace, nonviolence and righteous conduct that led to creation of International platforms for dialogue and discussion has so far failed to achieve even basic objectives.

While the Governments preferred to participate in creating more and more lethal weapons, the health sector research was mostly taken over by pharmaceutical companies that were interested only in remaining ahead of their competitors, get the patents before others, and capture the market. In India, the health infrastructure shall obviously require serious revamping. Rampant corruption in regulatory bodies impeded the expansion of the medical education for decades. Fortunately, now there are plans to have a medical college in every district, which would now materialise

with greater speed, efficiency and resource inputs. There ought to be a far greater say of experts in policy formulation at the highest levels. It is generally believed that if it were so, India would not have faced a nationwide shortage of medical oxygen, a deficiency that definitely led to several most tragic and avoidable deaths.

India, which was being hailed for offering vaccines to several countries, found itself in a distress situation by the second wave that necessitated helping hands from around the globe. Such inadequacies must not occur in future.

The guiding principles for the post-COVID India could be extracted from the basics Swami Vivekananda had taught us: "The faith in our own selves must be reawakened and then only all the problems that face our country will be gradually solved." The mantra of success would be: "We should give positive ideas; negative thoughts only weaken men." Let us trust human compassion and ingenuity.

(The author works in education and social cohesion. The views expressed are personal.)



JS RAJPUT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TEACHERS ARE FRONTLINE WORKERS

Sir — As the country continues to grapple with the pandemic, the teachers' fraternity has been hit hard. Several teachers of the AMU, Delhi University and others, have fallen prey to the deadly virus. The faculty of various Government schools, too, has been affected by this scourge.

In fact, the Government school teachers, who have been rendering their services not just in routine work but also in crucial non-academic fields, are bearing the brunt of the pandemic the most. Thousands of teachers have succumbed to the virus while on duty, in the panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh and other States.

But the UP Government is in the denial mode and has recently decided to compensate only three teachers, although the teachers' organisations have listed 1,600 COVID-related deaths among the teachers and other school staff posted on election duty. This clearly demonstrates the Government's callousness, lack of foresight and inability to assess the magnitude of the crisis.

Global institutions like the Unesco have called for teachers to be treated as a priority group in the fight against the virus. The Government must designate them as frontline workers and ensure that they are vaccinated on priority.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

AREN'T WE ALSO RESPONSIBLE?

Sir — In the history of our nation, there hasn't been a period like this with so many people dying and falling ill due to a pandemic which, in its second coming, has taken the form of a terrible killer marching ahead.

Now who's to be blamed for this? Well, we are known for pointing the finger at one another and, therefore, many people have started criticising the Prime Minister and the Union Government for the sorry state of affairs. Many citizens lambasted the Election Commission for conducting polls during such a time. Many criticised the Chief Ministers of various States. The leaders and the public systems, including our health system, might have erred somewhere in tackling the pandemic but, above all this,

Road ahead for the new Govt



No matter what the CPI(M) says, the exclusion of KK Shailaja Teacher from the new Council of Ministers, headed by Pinarayi Vijayan, has hung heavy on the occasion of the swearing-in of the Chief Minister and his Cabinet colleagues. It has taken some shine off the ceremony. The claim that it was the party's collective decision and not Pinarayi's is very far-fetched. We are all aware that Pinarayi wields enormous power within the party and no one dares to voice objections to what he wishes. The LDF could have done without changing the horses midstream, as they say. One hopes that the new Health Minister, Veena George, proves equal to the challenge

of leading the fight against COVID-19 as her predecessor did. The new faces in the Cabinet are all up-and-coming leaders; they represent the State's rich cultural ethos; they are promising; they are sure to do their best for the people to fulfil their aspirations and realise their potential. Captain Vijayan should nurture the young Ministers without centralising power in the CMO.

What is politically more substantive and significant is that a Left Front committed to secularism assumes power for one more term, and consecutively at that. We are confident that it will do all that it can to improve the quality of life for the State's people.

We have to look at the new Government in the wider national context. It will be a bulwark against the Right-wing Hindutva forces. It will seek a relationship with the Centre based on cooperative federalism. Most importantly, it will preserve the State's famed social amity. It is expected that the Pinarayi Vijayan Government's policies will be people-centric and focus on welfare and development.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

are we, the citizens of this great nation, also not deserving of reproach for the terrible plight in the country?

The Governments at the Centre and in the States have their limits. They can caution, warn, instruct, guide and implement rules and norms regarding proper COVID behaviour. Why don't we realise that, during the lull in COVID cases a few months ago, we completely forgot all norms — we ignored the masks, the sanitisers and social distancing. We organised celebrations, we enjoyed festivities, crowded weddings took place. As they say, as we sow, so do we reap.

M Pradyu | Kannur

WORKING WOMEN'S WOES

Sir — First and foremost is a woman's sense of self-worth, which goes a long way in building confidence among women. Unlike the caged parrots of yore, the modern

women are free to go out and achieve things in various fields with their confidence and conviction.

Women rule the roost in offices, companies and, at the same time, make our dreams come true in our households as well. They are confident beings and they work and achieve targets. But in this pandemic situation, the position is changing and the will to work for women is slowly diminishing. To tackle the realities of workplace bias, business leaders need to embrace innovative approaches — changing mechanics rather than the mindsets to design the bias out and bring the equity in. Accelerating gender equality matters now more than ever.

MR Jayanthi | Navi Mumbai

SOUND BITE

We must all understand and agree, the shared challenges shall only be overcome through shared efforts.

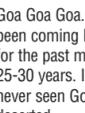


Union Health Minister — Harsh Vardhan



I am determined to continue this operation until its objective is achieved: To restore quiet and security to you, citizens of Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister — Benjamin Netanyahu



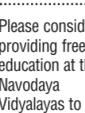
Goa Goa Goa... I've been coming here for the past maybe 25-30 years. I've never seen Goa so deserted.

Actor — Ronit Roy



We have faced the New Zealand bowlers before and have a fair idea of how they operate, the angles they use and we will be prepared

India Test batsman — Cheteshwar Pujara



Please consider providing free education at the Navodaya Vidyalayas to children who have lost either both parents or an earning parent on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congress leader — Sonia Gandhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

MASK UP FOR A HEALTHY INDIA

To save lives and livelihoods, it is must to give up our aversion to masks



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

One of my close friends called up a few days back to discuss renovation of his office. This renovation is tailored more towards making the small office COVID-prepared, from creating separate working spaces for individuals to having provision for different AC vents for as many as possible, and preferably a bunch of private washrooms. This set up is to be used for not more than 10 people using a fairly large open space called office. He thinks the virus and its mutations won't go away for the next couple of years. There is greater anxiety in his communication, the deep-seated fear of having experienced death of loved ones in a fortnight which was frothing up. Overall, there is a loss of that 'bounce back sentiment,' which was almost infectious during the first wave and its aftermath in India. India's central bank has termed "demand shock" being one of the critical factors to guide Indian economy.



Citizens of most metros, and those belonging to the affluent class (even though they form a minuscule percentage out of the total) have been devastated by a what seemed like a bomb that exploded in their neighborhood. This will have long term impacts.

The central government this time around carefully stayed away from a nationwide lockdown learning from its experience last year (India had in 2020 imposed one of the strictest and lengthiest nationwide lockdown). It instead widely publicized need for local/micro containment and strict adherence to COVID appropriate behavior. This translated to State governments (with their political polarities) deciding on the levels of lockdown and effective management of second wave. The result (and we are yet to get over the second wave) is many a times mis-managed, out of synch and mostly a judiciary supervised handling of the pandemic. The time may not be right to criticize any particular individual or political interest for the entire mismanagement, however, emerging facts point out that a state government which worked like a team with the central government, and had a sound bunch of experts including corporate captains and healthcare personal in the backroom advisory panel, did control the pandemic quicker and safer. The second aspect that met with huge failure was in following COVID-appropriate protocols where we, as a nation, failed. Experts, scientists, epidemiologists, doctors had all, for a year, been talking about the appropriate mask usage being the first vaccine against the yet to be understood virus. Their reason was simple that a mask worn properly exposes the wearer to a very tiny fraction of the virus in contaminated environment, which the human body has a capacity to develop an immunity to (this is yet to be ascertained scientifically) and hence, a critical safety deterrent against infection and possible death. However, despite repeated warnings, since February, 2021, almost 50 per cent of the population had forgotten that a virus was still spewing across the globe. Festivals, political gatherings, in home get togethers, outbound travels, shopping in neighborhoods or malls, there was visible alerts of impending fatalities due to the "no mask" carelessness. This aversion to masks dealt a heavy blow and even now the nearly 98 per cent vulnerable population (as stated by health ministry) needs to be masked up before they get a vaccine.

The overall sentiment and questions on lives and livelihoods will continue to rage, and it may be some time before India recovers from the second wave. We hope the democratic governments and policy makers at central state or local administration level don't succumb to the lures of populist measures and think long term for the nation.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

The Coronavirus pandemonium

There's an urgent need to look at the pandemic in retrospect and, drawing lessons, to plan steps for the future. We must not let our discipline flag



SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY

A new viral disease named Coronavirus or COVID-19 which became a worldwide pandemic was hitherto unknown, but emerged so far believed to be accidentally in late 2019 from the laboratory of China's Wuhan University's School of Virology. China came to know of it immediately in November, 2019 but India was notified by WHO in late January, 2020. India's Lock down was announced late night of March 25, 2020 and came into effect midnight the same day. Parliament was in its Budget Session from January 28, 2020 till March 13, 2020. Five MPs contracted the virus but recovered in due course. However, one Minister became a fatal victim of the virus.

In the research conducted for long, the US military research establishment and India's Tata Institute for Fundamental Research through its branch in virology located in Bengaluru participated in the Wuhan research to experiment on Bats in Nagaland during 2017-18. The present Principal Scientific Adviser to the Prime Minister was a prime mover in the project. As we discovered in the deposition by Ministry officials made to the Standing Committee, the Nagaland Bat Research Project was implemented without formal clearance of the Modi Government. Because of my insistence, the Government agreed to constitute an Inquiry into the irregular Bat research project, especially since Chinese money was paid for research conducted. Such disregard of procedures, necessary for clearance of foreign funded research should never again be allowed with impunity by the Government.

Because the Pandemic emerged in India suddenly, followed by a drastic nation-wide lockdown with just four hour notice through a television broadcast by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi threw the nation into complete pandemonium. There were no vaccines for the entire new virus and deaths were taking in unprecedented pace. People were stunned with the seriousness of the illness that followed. Indians particularly were vulnerable because the majority lacked social protection and easy access to quality health care and had meager productive assets.

Nevertheless the team led by the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan did a commendable day and night work, brought the incidence down steadily so much so the world began to felicitate India. But this led to celebration, and complacency despite scientists in India warning a second round could come soon which will be a new more terrible variant. This did come like a tsunami completely disrupting the medical infrastructure and the disruption feeding on the lack of contingency planning for another more virulent variant. Nations which were praising India earlier now suddenly began sneering at our pathetic situation and referred to the new virus as the "Indian variant". These countries have been shy to call the original Covid 19 a "Chinese Virus".

The recent outbreak of second wave of COVID -19 and the oxygen shortages in India have clearly pinpointed the lacunae in the Government administration. The Government however began devoting attention for producing anti Covid-19 vaccine. Despite India being the largest and cheapest producer of vaccines in the



WHERE DO WE STAND TODAY IN INDIA IN TERMS OF ENDING THE PANDEMIC AND RETURNING TO WHAT WE KNOW AS REGULAR FREEDOM OF LIFE AND LIBERTY? THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE DARK TUNNEL IS VISIBLE BUT WE CAN TRIP AGAIN EN ROUTE TO THE EXIT. WITH THE LATEST VARIANT OF COVID-19 PEAKING AROUND MAY 15 THIS YEAR, WE SHOULD BE RID OF THE PANDEMIC

The author is Member of the Rajya Sabha and Parliamentary Standing Committee for Health and Family Welfare. The views expressed are personal.



world, Modi government began focusing on a foreign imported vaccine produced by a joint venture of Oxford University and Swedish Astra Zeneca. This vaccine did not have clearance in US, EU or even now in Sweden itself, not to mention Denmark and other nations. When it was announced that the Pune based Serum Institute of India SII would get the exclusive contract to produce Covishield, I raised a public protest and also requested for an urgent meeting of the Parliament's Standing Committee to know why the Bharat Biotech Ltd headed by a husband Dr. Krishna Ella & wife team, both Ph. Ds from the University of Wisconsin USA and settled in India, which could produce a wholly swadeshi vaccine, and much cheaper, was denied the contract.

It was good that at first I got the Union Health Ministry's full support and then the Prime Minister called an urgent meeting at late night the same day announced the Bharat Biotech would also get the contract to produce Covaxin. Dr. Krishna Ella was one of those rare persons who tweeted thanking me for my efforts. Later the Prime Minister also showed his faith by taking the Covaxin two shots at AIIMS. Today, because of Bharat Biotech we may be able to become self-sufficient by 2021 end. Unlike other foreign vaccines, Covaxin has the best performance as far as the collateral side effects are concerned.

Reputed scholarly magazines such as Lancet have praised the Covaxin performance as optimal. According to the lead Editorial of Economic Times dated May 17, 2021, titled: "To Beat Variants, Go Big on Covaxin" and subtitled "It's found to neutralise all emerging variants," it is stated that "With a study in the peer-reviewed journal, Clinical Infectious Diseases, revealing that indigenously developed Covaxin is effective against all known variants of COVID-19, the Government should make increasing its production a chief priority." This is the second best tribute after the international reputed Lancet praised Covaxin.

Where do we stand today in India in terms of ending the pandemic and returning what we know as regular freedom of life and liberty? The light at the end of the dark tunnel is visible but we can trip again en route to the exit from the dark tunnel? Within the latest variant of COVID-19 peaking around May 15 this year, if our discipline does not flag as it did during mid-March to May first week, as it did as exemplified by pandemonium of election rallies, Kumbh Mela, and sheer indiscipline on the streets, we should be rid of the latest variant induced COVID-19 pandemic.

There is no doubt that the medical infrastructure in India is weak because of the lack of required Budgetary allocation for Health,

years after years at less than 1.5 per cent of the total budget. Even the Finance Minister displaying her total lack of application of mind, in her written speech which she read out in Parliament in February this year, that Health Ministry would get an increase of 137 per cent more than last year's revised estimate, when in fact as pointed out by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, it was barely above last year's after adjusting for inflation. Such ignorant Ministers are the bane of the BJP government's governance capability. This needs to be rectified. That is why I had suggested that the Prime Minister delegate by setting up a Crisis Management Task Force to be headed by an acclaimed efficient Minister such as Nitin Gadkari.

We must also rethink the future of our environment and tackle climate change and environmental degradation with ambition and urgency. Only then can we protect the health, livelihoods, food security and nutrition of all people, and ensure that our 'new normal' is a better one than before ever. The scenario is such that it is now a test for those in power and authority who have proclaiming "Vikas" and Aatmanirbhar Bharat to display accountability, responsibility and obligation. The governing process suffered huge turbulence; the governed running helter-skelter; and governance stands truncated.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE NITISH GOVERNMENT IS NEITHER HELPING PATIENTS, NOR ALLOWING US TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF BIHAR. THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO NEGATIVE POLITICS.

— RJD LEADER
TEJASHWI YADAV



SHUNNING POLITICS, YOU SHOULD ARRANGE FOR DOCTORS (AT YOUR OFFICIAL RESIDENCE). ASK YOUR PMCH TOPPER FAMILY MEMBERS TO RUN THE FACILITY.

— HAM LEADER
JITAN RAM MANJHI

Economy already in crisis, real estate plays spoiler

The Govt is on Charvak's philosophy of borrowing without a thought as to how or when repayments would be made

India is profligate. Its economic policies are away from realism dependent on only one aspect of development - build, build and build more - the real estate that has virtually bust with little activity anywhere else at a time when the fiscal 2020-21 touched ₹14.1 lakh crore deficit, 76 per cent of revised estimates of ₹18.5 lakh crore, 31 per cent more than last year's corresponding level of ₹10.4 lakh crore. It is a grim situation. The government is on Charvak philosophy of borrowings without a thought how, who or when repayments would be made. It will impact many future budgets - generations - and the expectation of a recovery merely through GDP projections is fraught with risks because most projections are unreal. The government through its extravaganzas like the central vista, roads, rail corridors, temples and statues



SHIVAJI SARKAR

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

wants to create an illusion of boosting economy through doses of impractical expenditures. History abounds with many misadventures, including the Alai Minar in Delhi, which could never be completed.

The real estate across the country is in deep crisis. The companies have invested billions in acquiring land but projects could not even take off through slowdown in 2019-20 and consequent lockdowns, job and wage losses and stoppages of work. It is hit by falling property prices except in Ayodhya, where land prices are shooting up as 40 more acres of land is being acquired to make an auspicious figure of 108 acre. The prices have been jacked up by speculative projects around a supposed new tourist city.

The unprecedented scale of the impact of COVID-19 on Indian real estate can be gauged from the fact that the sector has



incurred a loss of over ₹1 lakh crore since the pandemic broke out, according to a KPMG report. The credit shortage brought down the residential sales from four lakh units in 2019-20 to 2.8 lakh units in 2020-21 across the top seven cities of India.

The work from home has given a boost to Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft (GAFAM) tech companies turning into money minting machines. Amazon alone is said to generate \$

80,000 revenues every minute. But it has ruined the real estate as work from home has hit demand for workspaces of about 38 million square feet. These companies are siphoning off funds from India leading to another revenue crisis.

Amid such scenario the latest GDP figures are a misnomer: Industrial output rose 22 per cent in March, on the back of a 19 per cent decline a year ago. In reality, factory output shrunk almost 10 per cent in 2020-21 because of the lockdown, the biggest shock to manufacturing activity since 1982-83, according to Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The March spike needs to be seen in the context of an 18.7 per cent contraction in March, 2020. In the following months IIP numbers underwent large contractions.

Retail inflation figures as per consumer price index (CPI) slowed to 4.3 per cent as food

inflation comprising 39 per cent weight has come down. Food inflation "slumps" as vegetable prices came down to two per cent from 4.9 per cent in March, 2020. Vegetable prices fall by 14.2 per cent in April, cereals and products contracted by three per cent, biggest ever since January, 2012. Crash in vegetables possibly reflect fall in purchasing power and supply disruption due to lockdown curbs. The cereal and veggie price crash will have adverse impact on farm incomes and possibly further consideration for more cash doles.

It is a reflection of the agriculture policy that is not serving the growers. How the three new farm bills would impact farm health should be a matter of concern. But retail inflation is to see additional headwinds in May and June as fuel prices, after a thaw during the state elections, are being spiked every day.

Another concern is the rising prices of edible oils of all sorts. Latest to be added after mustard, groundnut and soya oil is the palm oil used by bakery and other processing units.

The rising fuel prices are also reducing consumption leading to distress for petrol pump owners as their overall income slumps. But it is to increase commodity prices, fare and freight continuously. A lopsided argument that for revenue generation tax rises on fuel are must.

The governments forget that they are the largest owners of vehicles in the country and each rise drains large sums from its coffers though it adversely affects the economy. Is that a wise decision? Let the political leaders have a rethink. Another "achievement" is the record \$589 billion forex reserves. It is rising week by week as imports, including petroleum slump. Crude oil import is at a

20-year-low as it falls 12 per cent. Export figures do not show an encouraging trend.

The pandemic has led to a suspension of several businesses of Tatas and other IT companies. Wipro, TCS and Infosys have deferred pay hikes. Reliance and OYO have cut wages.

The nation's response to correction is not being seen. The Congress-ruled Chattisgarh is the only state to stop construction of new governor's house, assembly, chief minister's house, residences of ministers and senior officers, new circuit house. It saves over ₹500 crore.

The centre also needs to consider such wasteful expenses on various unnecessary constructions and pride in heritage buildings like Parliament House. These may be symbolic but sends sharp messages of caring for the causes of the people, particularly the covid19 hit and severely-hit economy.

Israel unleashes strikes across Gaza again

Gaza City: Israel unleashed another wave of airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Thursday, killing at least one Palestinian and wounding several, and Hamas fired more rockets, even as expectations rose that a cease-fire could be coming.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against calls from the US to wind down the Gaza offensive, appearing determined to inflict maximum damage on Hamas in a war that could help save his political career. Still, officials close to the negotiations say they expect a truce to be announced in the next 24 hours.

In another possible sign of progress, Netanyahu scheduled a meeting later Thursday with his Security Cabinet, where the issue of a cease-fire

was likely to be debated. Explosions shook Gaza City and orange flares lit up the pre-dawn sky, with bombing raids also reported in the central town of Deir al-Balah and the southern town of Khan Younis. As the sun rose, residents surveyed the rubble from at least five family homes destroyed in Khan Younis. There were also heavy airstrikes on a commercial thoroughfare in Gaza City.

The Israeli military said it struck at least three homes of Hamas commanders in Khan Younis and another in Rafah, targeting "military infrastructure," as well as a weapons storage unit at a home in Gaza City.

With hundreds already killed in the worst fighting since Israel and Hamas' 2014 war, U.S. President Joe Biden told Israel on Wednesday that



People inspect the rubble of destroyed residential building which was hit by Israeli airstrikes, in Beit Lahiya, Gaza Strip on Thursday

he expected "a significant de-escalation today on the path to a cease-fire" — but Netanyahu pushed back, saying he was "determined to continue this operation until its aim is met."

It marked the first public rift between the two close allies since the fighting began and poses a difficult test of the U.S.-Israel relationship early in Biden's presidency.

Estimated 4,000-6,000 refugees from Myanmar sought safety in India: UN

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

An estimated 4,000 to 6,000 refugees from Myanmar have sought safety in India, a spokesperson for the UN chief has said, as the world body voiced concern over the rising levels of displacement of people since the military coup in the country in February.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said that in Myanmar, as of last week, approximately 60,700 women, children and men have been internally displaced.

More than 1,700 refugees have crossed into Thailand in March and April, most of whom subsequently returned to Myanmar, and an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 have sought safety in India, Spokesman for the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Stephane Dujarric told reporters at the daily press briefing on Wednesday.

Myanmar shares an over 1,600 km long unfenced and porous land border with India as well as a maritime boundary

in the Bay of Bengal. Four North-Eastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram share the international boundary with Myanmar.

The UN team in Myanmar has called on all countries across the region to offer refuge and protection to all people seeking safety, while humanitarian workers should be granted access to help them. UN colleagues again call on the military to refrain from violence and the use of disproportionate force, including the use of live ammunition.

Dujarric said that UN officials in Myanmar are still gravely concerned over rising levels of displacement since the military takeover of the Government on February 1.

Since then, there has been widespread violence against civilians across the country. Clashes between the Myanmar Armed Forces and ethnic armed organisations in border areas has intensified, he said.

official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the delicate talks.

Khalid Okasha, director of the Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies, which has close ties to the Government, also said a cease-fire was likely in that timeframe, as did Osama Hamdan, a senior Hamas official.

Visiting the region, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Israel has "the right to defend itself against such unacceptable attacks." But he also expressed concern about the rising number of civilian victims and voiced support for truce efforts.

Even as the diplomatic efforts appeared to gather strength, an Israeli airstrike smashed into the Khawaldi family's two-story house in Khan Younis, destroying it. AP

Biden's pattern with Israel: public support, private scolds

Washington: It's a story Joe Biden has loved recounting over the decades: A chain-smoking Golda Meir welcoming the 30-year-old senator to Israel on his first visit in 1973 and giving him a grandmotherly hug before schooling him on the Six-Day War and the dangers still faced by Israel.

A classified Israeli Government memo, though, paints a less anodyne version of Biden's meeting with the Israeli prime minister that day, reporting that the young senator privately "displayed an enthusiasm" that "signaled his lack of diplomatic experience" as he laid out his concerns over land seized in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel years earlier. The document was published last year by Israel's Channel 13.

For Biden it was the start of a familiar dynamic. Over his nearly 50 years in national politics, he has often reserved his toughest messages for Israeli leaders for private talks while publicly burnishing his image as an unwavering supporter of Israel. Agencies

Biden, Netanyahu face rough early test of relationship

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden's efforts to persuade Benjamin Netanyahu to halt military strikes against Hamas in Gaza are plunging the two leaders into a difficult early test of the US-Israeli relationship. The two have had other moments of tension over the years, and their current differences over the war in Gaza create a challenge that Biden was trying mightily to avoid.

Biden told Netanyahu in a telephone call Wednesday that he expected "significant de-escalation" of the fighting by day's end, according to the White House. But the prime minister came right back with a public declaration that he was "determined to continue" the Gaza operation "until its objective is achieved."

Netanyahu did allow that he "greatly appreciates the support of the American president," but said nonetheless that Israel would push ahead.

This is not where Biden had hoped to expend his time and energy.

Gaza's health system buckling under repeated wars, blockade

Gaza City: The Gaza Strip's already feeble health system is being brought to its knees by the fourth war in just over a decade.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed with waves of dead and wounded from Israel's bombardment.

Many vital medicines are rapidly running out in the tiny, blockaded coastal territory, as is fuel to keep electricity going.

Two of Gaza's most prominent doctors, including the No. 2 in Gaza's coronavirus task force, were killed when their homes were destroyed during barrages since fighting between Hamas and Israel erupted 10 days ago.

Just as Gaza was climbing out of a second wave of coronavirus infections, its only virus testing lab was damaged by an airstrike and has been shut down. AP

UN rights body to hold special session over Mideast violence

Geneva: The UN's top human rights body said on Thursday it will hold a special session next week to address "the grave human rights situation" in Palestinian areas of Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

The Human Rights Council will convene the May 27 meeting following a request presented by Pakistan, as coordinator of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation.

The session at the 47-member-state body in Geneva paves the way for a daylong debate over the recent deadly violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the Mideast conflict that has raged for decades.

More than 60 States — including member states and observers — have so far expressed support for the special session, council spokesman Rolando Gomez said. AP

Chinese authorities order video denials by Uyghurs of abuses

Urumqi (China): China has highlighted an unlikely series of videos this year in which Uyghur men and women deny US charges that Beijing is committing human rights violations against their ethnic group.

In fact, a text obtained by the AP shows that the videos are part of a government campaign that raises questions about the willingness of those filmed.

Chinese state media have published dozens of the videos praising the Communist Party and showing Uyghurs angrily denouncing former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for declaring a genocide in the far west Xinjiang region.

The videos, which officials have insisted are spontaneous outpourings of emotion, have also featured prominently in a series of government news conferences held for foreign media.

But the text obtained by AP is the first concrete confirmation that the videos are anything but grassroots.

Sent in January to government offices in the northern city of Karamay, the text told each office to find one Uyghur fluent in Mandarin to film a one-minute video in response to Pompeo's "anti-China remarks."

"Express a clear position on Pompeo's remarks, for example: I firmly oppose Pompeo's anti-Chinese remarks, and I am very angry about them," the text said.

"Express your feelings of loving the party, the country and Xinjiang (I am Chinese, I love my motherland, I am happy at work and in life, and so on)." AP

Iran President gives his most upbeat view yet of nuke talks

Tehran: Iran's president on Thursday offered his most optimistic assessment yet of ongoing talks to resuscitate his country's nuclear deal with world powers, claiming there had been "major" agreement among diplomats even as other nations involved suggested challenges remain.

The comments by President Hassan Rouhani come as Iran prepares for a June 18 election to determine who will replace the relatively moderate cleric. Saving his signature atomic accord before the vote could boost reformist and moderate candidates backing Rouhani's agenda in an election in which many believe hard-liners already hold an edge.

Speaking at a ceremony inaugurating several petrochemical projects, Rouhani asserted that solutions to "major issues like sanctions" had been agreed to by diplomats, while other issues remained under discussion.

"We have taken a major and big step and the main agreement has been done," Rouhani said. That comment came just as Mikhail Ulyanov, a Russian diplomat involved in the talks, tweeted that it "is obvious now that the Vienna talks on (deal) will not be completed by May 21 as the participants hoped." He described the situation as "regrettable but not dramatic."

"May 21 wasn't a deadline but a target date. It helped us not to forget about time pressure," Ulyanov wrote. "The talks will continue until successful outcome." AP

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GLOBE TROTTER

CHINA DELAYS NEW SPACE MISSION

Beijing: China postponed a supply mission to its new space station on Thursday for unspecified technical reasons, while photos sent back from Mars by its newly arrived rover earned plaudits from NASA despite only sporadic contacts between the Chinese and American space programmes. The Tianzhou-2 cargo spacecraft was expected to have been launched early Thursday morning. China Manned Space announced the delay on its website but didn't say when the rescheduled launch may occur.

US NAVAL ACTIVITY: CHINA ISSUES 2ND PROTEST

Beijing: China on Thursday issued its second protest in as many days over US naval activity in the region, accusing a US ship of intruding into its territorial waters surrounding the Paracel island group in the South China Sea. A statement from the Southern Theater Command said the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur committed the "illegal" action on Thursday, prompting Chinese forces to mobilize and demand it leave the area.

OLI FACES FLAK FOR CODE OF CONDUCT VIOLATION

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has faced flak for violating the election code of conduct by appealing for votes for a candidate, contesting the National Assembly by-election, during the silence period. The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday indirectly mentioned in a press statement that Oli violated the election code of conduct by asking to vote for Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, a candidate for the National Assembly by-election in Bagmati being held on Thursday.

PAK: 13 KILLED, OVER 30 HURT AS BUS OVERTURNS

Islamabad: At least 13 people were killed and over 30 others injured when an overloaded speeding passenger bus overturned in Pakistan's Sindh province on Thursday, police said. According to Sukkur Deputy Commissioner Rana Adeel, the bus, which was en route to Karachi from Multan, overturned in Kalar Goth area of Rohri city after the driver lost control over the vehicle.

SRI LANKA SUSPENDS INBOUND INT'L FLIGHTS

Colombo: The Sri Lankan Government has suspended all inbound international passenger flights for 10 days from Friday as part of its efforts to curb the spread of the pandemic in the island nation, which reported the highest spike in infections and deaths on Wednesday.

BBC accused of cover up in Princess Diana 1995 interview scoop

London: The BBC on Thursday issued an apology as an inquiry concluded that the media corporation had covered up the tactics used by journalist Martin Bashir to secure his famous 1995 interview scoop with Princess Diana, in which the late Princess of Wales opened up about her troubled marriage to Prince Charles. Lord John Dyson, the retired judge who led the inquiry, said the BBC "fell short of the high standards of integrity and transparency which are its hallmark" and noted that Bashir, who recently left the BBC, "deceived and induced" Princess Diana's brother Earl Spencer to obtain the interview aired on the BBC's Panorama programme. PTI

France's Sarkozy goes on trial over 2012 campaign financing

Paris: Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy goes on trial on Thursday on charges that his unsuccessful 2012 reelection bid was illegally financed, a scandal that has thrown his conservative party into turmoil. Sarkozy, 66, is facing allegations that he spent almost twice the maximum legal amount of 22.5 million euros (\$27.5 million) on the presidential race he lost to Socialist Francois Hollande. He has denied wrongdoing. AP

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum
No. CIID/SLR/Tender/2020 (Part-V)
Ref: Tender published date: 11.05.2021 and Tender opening date:- 24.05.2021.
It is to inform all concerned, that due to the lockdown imposed by Delhi Government, the NIT for leasing of SLR parcel space in special trains, published in various English & Hindi newspapers, which was earlier scheduled to be opened on 24.05.2021 through IREPS portal i.e. www.ireps.gov.in is now postponed and the same shall be opened on 02.06.2021 at 15:00 hrs. Moreover, items no. 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 of NIT are withdrawn due to Non-availability because of administrative reasons.

Item no.	Train no.	From	To	Comptt	Tender No.
2.	04739	DEE	BKN	FI	SLR-FI-04739-April 21
3.	04739	DEE	BKN	RI	SLR-RI-04739-April 21
4.	04021	DEE	JP	FI	SLR-FI-04021-April 21
5.	04021	DEE	JP	FI	SLR-FI-04021-April 21
6.	04021	DEE	JP	RI	SLR-RI-04021-April 21

Other information of NITs shall remain unchanged. 1082/2021
Serving Customers with a Smile

CSB Bank
CSB Bank, Greater Kailash-2 Branch M-17, Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi-110048
GOLD AUCTION NOTICE
CSB Bank Limited, Greater Kailash-2 branch has granted gold loan against pledge of gold ornaments to the below mentioned borrowers. Notice has been issued to him/their demanding repayment of the amount with interest and charges thereon. Since they have failed to pay 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 as on 19-05-2021
1	S K Arora	89.6	0296-00521043-000015	330000/-	346379/-
2	Jasmine Okram	283.3	0296-04039360-000010	924000/-	928214.23/-
3	Chandan Pandey	32.62	0296-04238549-000001	107318/-	113642/-
4	Ritu Dixit	94.4	0296-07281448-000001	320000/-	346749/-
5	Rajkumar	181.1	0296-07269251-000002	578000/-	630473/-
6	Rajkumar	24.4	0296-07269251-000001	80000/-	88609/-
7	Rakesh Kumar	9.5	0296-04039145-000003	31772/-	33972/-
8	Bahram Mehta	247.8	0296-04047398-000005	724000/-	803360/-
9	Vishnu Gupta	61.2	0296-04062439-000005	187000/-	207722/-
10	Vandana Puri	284.8	0296-04135560-000002	850000/-	842129/-
11	Asha	139.5	0296-02643254-000023	498000/-	523209/-
12	Gajay	278.9	0296-00521734-000023	980000/-	1088942/-
13	Gyan Chand	252.7	0296-04021409-000011	800000/-	762314/-
14	Devender	30.5	0296-07260692-000001	97500/-	103385/-
15	Situ	3.8	0296-04156140-000001	10059/-	11410/-

The auction will be conducted at the premises of CSB Bank Limited, Greater Kailash-II branch premises situated at M-17, Main Market, Dohli House, Greater Kailash-II, Delhi-110048 on 28th May 2021. 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: Greater Kailash-II
Date: 19-05-2021
Branch Manager

THE BATALA CO-OP SUGAR MILLS LTD
G.T. Road, Batala, District Gurdaspur-143505
Website: www.smbatala.com E-mail: batalacsam@rediffmail.com
Global e-Tender Notice
Ref.No. BCSM/SUGAREXPORT/2021-22/02 Date: 21.05.2021
The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (Department of Food and Public Distribution) Govt. of India has vide its notification F.No. 1(6)/2020-SP-1 dated 29th December, 2020 has decided to allow export of all grades of sugar namely raw, plantation white as well as refined sugar under MAEQ (Maximum Admissible Export Quota).

Batala Cooperative Sugar Mills on behalf of all nine Cooperative Sugar Mills of Punjab invites e-Tender for export of approx. 28784 MT sugar issued by Govt. of India vide notification no. F.No.2-(2021)-Trade dated 30th April, 2021, lying in Nine Cooperative Sugar Mills of Punjab under MAEQ from experienced overseas buyers/Export Houses/Merchandisers and Govt./Cooperative Institutions (in which State Govt./Central Govt. has/have invested share capital) having valid Import Export code and experience of sugar export to purchase the aforesaid quantity of sugar from all cooperative Sugar Mills of Punjab and arrange its export as per above mentioned notifications under MAEQ under stipulated norms on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS". DFIA (Duty free import authorization) holder may also participate in this tender as their sugar purchase will be treated as deemed export as per Govt. of India notification vide F.No. 1(6)/2020-SP-1 dated 31st March, 2021 issued regarding clarification of ISMA; M/s Indian Biscuits Manufacturer's Association (IBMA), Food Ingredients Importer/Exporter Welfare Association (FIEWA), and Star Oxachem Pvt. Ltd.

Above said exporter may also participate in this tender to facilitate the exchange of domestic quota of any sugar mill who wish to exchange their domestic quota with export quota of any/all the Cooperative Sugar Mills in Punjab as per clause No. 4 (e-1) of guidelines issued by DFPD of Govt. of India vide notification F.No. 1(6)/2020-S.P-1 dated 19th January, 2021.

The documents can be downloaded from the e-Procurement website portal http://eproc.punjab.gov.in or from the Batala Sugar Mill's website www.smbatala.com. Online tender will have to be submitted in two bid system i.e. Technical Bid and Financial Bid on or before 10.06.2021 at 11:00 AM on the e-tender portal http://eproc.punjab.gov.in along with EMD and other documents. Other details (e-Bid document) for submission of e-bids along with eligible criteria, date & time of submission of e-Bids, opening of Technical Bids/Financial Bids, amount of EMD, experience and other terms & conditions will be available on e-Procurement website portal as mentioned above from the date 21.05.2021 onwards. The Bidders will have to deposit e-tender document fee (Non Refundable) of Rs. 1000/- + 18% GST= Rs. 1180/- and earnest money of Rs. 50,00/- per Quintal (Rupees Fifty Per Quintal) of Sugar to be exported, through RTGS/NEFT/Net-Banking in the account as shown on e-Procurement website portal http://eproc.punjab.gov.in. Tender without e-tender document fee and EMD will not be accepted. The Govt./Cooperative Institutions are exempted from deposit of EMD. The stipulated norms for export and other terms and conditions are annexed along with the e-Tender form.

The undersigned reserves the right to cancel one or all the tenders without assigning any reason.
Sd/- GENERAL MANAGER

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PROCUREMENT, JAMMU POWER DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LIMITED, RAIL HEAD, NARWAL, JAMMU J&K PIN -180012
PHONE NO. 0191-2473402 TELEFAX- 0191-2472350, e-mail: epcjammu@gmail.com
e- NIT No. SE/PR/JT/243 NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER Dated: 18.05.2021
e- NIT No. SE/PR/J/01/2021-22 Dated: 18.05.2021

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of UT of Jammu & Kashmir, Superintending Engineer, Procurement, JPDC, Jammu invites online e-bids from original Govt. registered manufacturers for supply of material as under for the requirement of JPDC:

NIT No. :- Description of Material & Quantity (In Nos.)
SE/PR/J/01/2021-22 dated :- 18.05.2021 :- PURCHASE OF 630 KVA (Cu-Wound) EEL-2 DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS ALONG WITH EXTERNALLY FITTED MCCB WITH CABLE BOX AND 4X4 MTRS SUITABLE CABLE : 10 Nos.

Detailed NIT maybe downloaded from the website http://jktenders.gov.in upto 8th of June 2021-22 till 1400 Hrs. The tender shall be accepted through online mode only. In case, the tender process does not get completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in the newspapers. The details regarding corrigendum may be seen on the above mentioned website.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Procurement, JPDC, Jammu
No. DIP/J-737-P/21 Dated : 20-05-2021

Z-28016/6/2021-PMSSY, IV
Government of India
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
(PMSSY Division)

3rd Floor, Indian Red Cross Society Building, New Delhi- 110001
ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POST OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EACH IN AIIMS AT (i) BHOPAL (MADHYA PRADESH), (ii) BHUBANESWAR (ODISHA), (iii) PATNA (BIHAR), (iv) RISHIKESH (UTTARAKHAND), (v) GUWAHATI (ASSAM), (vi) AWANTIPORA (JAMMU & KASHMIR) and (vii) DARBHANGA (BIHAR)

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (PMSSY Division) invites applications from eligible candidates for filling up the post of Executive Director on deputiation/short term contract/contract basis in the Level 15; Rs. 182200-224100/- in the Pay Matrix (as per 7th CPC) each in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at (i) Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) (ii) Bhubaneswar (Odisha) (iii) Patna (Bihar) (iv) Rishikesh (Uttarakhand) (v) Guwahati (Assam) (vi) Awantipora (Jammu & Kashmir) and (vii) Darbhanga (Bihar). For further details, please visit Ministry's Website and Division's Website at www.mohfw.gov.in and http://pmssy-mohfw.nic.in

Detailed advertisement will be published in the Employment News. The closing date of receipt of application will be the 45th day from the date of publication of advertisement in Employment News.

(S.M. Routray)
Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India
Tel : 011-23355005
davp 17101/11/0002/2122

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking) CIN : UA40109UP2001SGC025867/2358
Victoria Cross Vijayta Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwal Road, Dehradun - 248001 Tel.: 0135-2763672-76 Fax: 0135-2760289
Website : www.uktenders.gov.in

E-TENDER NOTICE (NIT)
Uttarakhand Power Corporation Ltd., Dehradun invites e-tender for following as detailed below:-

Sl. No.	Name of Item	Tender Specification No.	Tender Qty.	Estimated Cost (in ₹)	Average Yearly Turn Over of Preceding Three Financial Years (i.e. 2017-2018, 2018-2019 & 2019-2020 (in ₹)	Cost of tender document including GST (in ₹)	Date & time of Prebid conference in online & offline mode	Last Date & time of online request for Tender and Submission of tender in online & Offline mode	Date of opening of bid Part-I in online and offline mode
1.	11 Meter Long Steel Tubular Pole SP-55 (Bottom Portion Hot Dip Galvanized)	CCP-I/4/ 2021-2022	4,000 Nos.	6.36.48,000.00	9.55 Crore	23,600.00	27.5.2021 at 12:30 hrs.	3.6.2021 upto 17:00 hrs.	4.6.2021 at 15:30 hrs

For further details, please visit our website www.uktenders.gov.in
No. 206/EE(CM)/UPJA-A/2/ Dt. 19/05/2021
"SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION" Use Led Bulb to Save Electricity. (Toll Free No. 1912)
"Pay Electricity bill online 24x7 from www.upcl.org". (For information on Electricity theft; Informer may report to Toll free No. 1800 180 4185 / Fax No. 0135-2760911)

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER CORPORATE (C & P-I)
SHO
Police Station, Karawal Nagar, Delhi
Ph: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639
DP/742/NE/2021

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely Naina, D/o: Ravi Kumar, R/o: H.No. 09, Gali No. 01, Devi Nagar, Karawal Nagar, Delhi has been kidnapped since 12.11.2020 from the area of PS Karawal Nagar, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 538/20, dated 12.11.2020 U/S 363 IPC has been lodged at Police Station Karawal Nagar, Delhi. The description of kidnapped girl is as under:

Name: Naina, **Age:** About 15 Years, **Height:** 5', **Face:** Oval, **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Fair, **Wearing:** White Lining Top, **Blue Colour Jeans and Black Chappal in Feet..**

If anyone has any information about this kidnapped girl please inform P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi.

Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, **Email:** cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638/24368641, **Fax:** 011-24368639
SHO
Police Station, Karawal Nagar, Delhi
Ph: 011-22932332, 8750870728
DP/742/NE/2021

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General Public is hereby informed that an one lady was found dead at Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, Sector-6, Rohini, Delhi dated 21.04.2021 at 7.00 am. In this

Retail inflation for farm workers eases in April



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers in April eased marginally to 2.66 per cent and 2.94 per cent, respectively, mainly due to lower prices of certain food items.

"Point-to-point rate of inflation based on the CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers) and CPI-RL (Consumer Price Index for Rural Labourers) decreased to 2.66 per cent and 2.94 per cent in April 2021, from 2.78 per cent and 2.96 per cent, respectively, in March, 2021," the labour ministry said

in a statement.

Food inflation based on CPI-AL and CPI-RL stood at 1.24 per cent and 1.54 per cent in April 2021, respectively, it added.

The change in the index varied from state to state.

In the case of agricultural labourers, it recorded an increase in the range of 1-17 points in 16 states and a decrease of 1-4 points in four states. Tamil Nadu, with 1,249 points, topped the index; whereas Himachal Pradesh, with 813 points, stood at the bottom.

In the case of rural labourers, it recorded a rise in the

range of 1-18 points in 17 states and a decrease of 1-4 points in three states. Tamil Nadu, with 1,233 points, topped the index table; whereas Bihar, with 851 points, stood at the bottom.

Among the states, the highest increase in CPI-AL and CPI-RL was experienced by West Bengal with 17 points and 18 points, respectively. It was mainly due to a rise in the prices of rice, mustard oil, firewood, kerosene oil, vegetables and fruits.

On the contrary, the highest decrease in the CPI-AL was experienced by Andhra Pradesh. In the CPI-RL, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura (-4 points each) saw the most decrease. It was mainly due to fall in the prices of rice, onion, tamarind, saree cotton mill, vegetables and fruits, it said.

The All-India CPI-AL and CPI-RL for April 2021 rose 6 points each to stand at 1,041 and 1,049 points, respectively. The two indices were at 1,035 (CPI-AL) and 1,043 (CPI-RL) in March 2021.

ICAR issues advisory to overcome impact of 2nd Covid wave on farm sector



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of sowing of kharif (summer) crops, the government's premier agricultural research body ICAR has come out with an advisory to help farmers overcome the impact of the second wave of the pandemic on farm production and their income.

"During 2021-22, second wave of COVID-19 pandemic is again posing a serious problem to the nation, halting economic activities in one way or the other. The resultant actions may impact agricultural production and consequently national food and nutrition security," said the 400 page advisory prepared by the Indian Council of Agricultural

Research (ICAR). It is with suitable technological options can show sustainable pathways under such circumstances, it said.

Stating that the 2021 kharif season is approaching in midst of second wave of Covid pandemic, the ICAR advisory said, "Therefore, disruption in normal operations/ logistics usually undertaken during the pre-kharif period is likely."

To cope with shortages in labour and timely availability of inputs at affordable prices, farmers need to enhance the use of on-farm inputs especially organic manures, adopt best practices for increasing resource use efficiency and reduce cost of cultivation, it said.

Sensex, Nifty retreat for second day; banks, RIL slip

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks stayed on the backfoot for the second session running on Thursday, mirroring the nervousness in global markets after minutes of the US Fed's previous meeting revealed discussions around tapering its asset purchase programme.

After touching the 50,000-mark in opening trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex was dragged lower by selling in banking and energy counters. It finally finished at 49,564.86, down 337.78 points or 0.68 per cent.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty gave up the 15,000-level to close 124.10 points or 0.83 per cent lower at 14,906.05. ONGC was the top loser among the Sensex constituents, tumbling 2.70 per cent, followed by Sun Pharma, PowerGrid, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Bank and Nestle India.

On the other hand, M&M, IndusInd Bank, Titan, I&T, Bajaj Finserv and Infosys were

among the gainers, climbing up to 2.47 per cent. "Domestic market witnessed selling due to lack of further domestic cues and weak global market. Wall Street has extended its losses as US treasury yield and dollar index jumped post the release of a watchful Fed minutes, which was below the expectations."

"Fed minutes signalled a plausible slowdown in bond buying at some point, a shift in policy in the future, which will have an implication on emerging markets," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities, said the visible decline in daily COVID-19 cases in India has offered comfort to investors.

"However, minutes of FOMC meeting indicates diversions among members' view about higher inflation and accommodative stance and ECB's warning toward potential bubble in financial assets do not bode well for global equities, including India."

New IT filing portal from June 7

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department will launch a new income tax filing portal on June 7. Therefore, the existing portal will remain suspended for 6 days from June 1 to June 6," said a circular by the Income tax Department.

As per the circular, officers including AOs, CIT(A) etc access the information for taxpayers from the portal.

Likewise, taxpayers also use extensive use of the portal for filing their ITR, checking refund and raising grievance among others. Due to unavailability of the system for six days, officers have also been advised to not fix anything for compliance during these 6 days. The Department has directed that any hearing or compliance is to be fixed only from June 10 such that taxpayers are given ample time to respond via the new system.

As per the official circular, the officers in the field including AOS, CIT (A), PCIT interact with taxpayers through E-proceedings over the E-filing portal directly or through the NeAC/NFAC for issuance of notices IANS

Tourism sector seeks GST rationalisation

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

FAITH, the policy federation of all the national associations representing the complete tourism, travel and hospitality industry in India, has made suggestions to the Finance Ministry and Tourism Ministry for GST rationalisation of Indian tourism value chain, to be taken up in the upcoming GST council meeting next week.

FAITH has suggested to initiate the process of undertaking a review and rationalisation of GST applicable across different aspects of the Indian tourism, travel and hospitality industry. It said that this rationalisation will enable some rationale support once the tourism industry attempts to begin its long crawl back from the pandemic.

Some of the measures suggested are hotels to be allowed to charge IGST which will enable seamless availability of credit across India to all travel agents and tour operators and will thereby lead to building up a sustainable domestic holidays, meetings and con-



ventions business within the country.

Tour operators to be enabled a special presumptive GST rate of 1.8% with full GST setoffs. The current rate of 5 per cent without setoffs structurally implies that tour operators have an inbuilt margin of around 27.8 per cent which is an inherently flawed assumption in the internet economy.

Consumers spared of hike; petrol, diesel prices unchanged on Thursday

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Consumers have been spared of another increase in auto fuel prices with oil marketing companies (OMCs) deciding to keep petrol and diesel rates unchanged on Thursday.

This is second consecutive day of fuel price pause and follows slight softening in global oil market over demand concerns prime markets in Asia seeing rising cases of coronavirus.

With fuel prices spared of another increase, the price of petrol continues to remain at Wednesday's level of Rs 92.85

a litre and diesel Rs 83.51 per litre in Delhi.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel price remained static on Thursday but its actual retail prices varied depending on the level of local levies in respective states.

Before Thursday, OMC were revising fuel prices on every alternate day for last one week rather than undertaking changes on a daily basis as has been practise. Accordingly, the Wednesday's price hold came after there was an increase in prices on Tuesday. These was no price increase on Monday as well.

Bitcoin crash: Think long-term: Indian crypto leaders

New Delhi: A day after the key cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum saw a bloodbath, industry players on Thursday requested people not to lose hope and take a long-term view of their investments.

The price of bitcoin tumbled below \$40,000 for the first time in months and other cryptocurrencies were also pressured on Wednesday, after the People's Bank of China apparently warned against using digital coins as payment.

It was the second jolt to the fast-growing crypto market after Tesla last week applied brakes on Bitcoin as a payment mode to buy its electric vehicles, citing environmental harm. IANS

Govt aims to bring additional 6.37 lakh hectare under oilseeds in this kharif season

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Agriculture on Thursday said it has chalked out a multi-pronged strategy to bring in additional 6.37 lakh hectare area under oilseeds in the forthcoming kharif (summer) season beginning July this year. The Government has decided to freely distribute high-yielding varieties of oilseeds, especially soybean and groundnut, to farmers in kharif season 2021-22.

Last year, oilseeds were sown in 208.2 lakh hectare during the kharif season and 80 lakh hectare in the rabi (winter) season. In a statement, the Ministry said it has adopted a

"multi-pronged strategy" to achieve self-sufficiency in oilseeds production. Soybean seeds, costing ₹76.03 crore, will be distributed for intercropping in 41 districts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, UP and Bihar. The area to be covered will be 10.06 lakh hectare.

"The soybean seeds to be distributed will be having a yield of not less than 20 quintals per hectare," the ministry said. "Government of India has approved an ambitious plan for free distribution of high-yielding varieties of seeds to the farmers for the 2021 kharif season in the form of mini-kits," it said.

hectare.

About 8.16 lakh seed mini-kits will be distributed in 90 districts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, UP and Bihar. The area to be covered will be 10.06 lakh hectare.

"The soybean seeds to be distributed will be having a yield of not less than 20 quintals per hectare," the ministry said. "Government of India has approved an ambitious plan for free distribution of high-yielding varieties of seeds to the farmers for the 2021 kharif season in the form of mini-kits," it said.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Rahul Satya Narayan Shukla S/o Shri Satya Narayan R/o 638 DA Block First Floor SFS MIG Flats Shalimar Bagh, Haiderpur Village Road, North West Delhi-110088 state both the names Rahul Satya Narayan Shukla and Rahul Shukla are of same person and I will be known as Rahul Shukla s/o Satya Narayana for all purposes.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE						
SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	UHBVN	PROCUREMENT OF GSS WIRE 7/8 SWG (4 MM) FOR UHBVN & DBVN	CLOSING DATE 08.06.2021	EMD 2 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	cemm@uhbvn.org.in
2	UHBVN	LT PVC ARMoured CABLE OF SIZE 20x10 SQ.MM AS PER NIGAM'S TECH. SPECIFICATION NO. CSC-193/DH/PRD/2020-21 AND AS PER RELEVANT IS ALONGWITH ITS AMENDMENTS.	CLOSING DATE 08.06.2021	EMD 2 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	902360202 cemm@uhbvn.org.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in RO NO. 2997

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

E-TENDER NOTICE

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

S. No	Job No.	Name of work	Amount
1	18 / Manager System / AMC - Computer / 2021-21	A.M.C for Computer, T.F.T and UPS of HP make, Noida.	Rs. 53,25,399/-

Which can be uploaded by date 27/05/2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened / downloaded on date 28/05/2021 at 11.00 AM.

Manager System

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

CSB Bank
Formerly The Catholic Syrian Bank Ltd.

New Delhi Branch located at G-36, Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110 001

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE

CSB Bank Limited, New Delhi branch had granted gold loan against pledge of gold ornaments to the below mentioned borrower. Notice has been issued to him/himself 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 (Rs.)	Balance as on 31.03.2021 (Rs.)
1	Mradu Aggarwal	563.93	0205-00565406-00031	1949000	2085975
2	Anuj Aggarwal	472	0205-07248269-0000011	1547000	1638577
3	Kuldeep Singh	11.08	0205-04105245-00002	37700	40042
4	Kanchan	22.75	0205-07235858-0000033	75000	72562.38
5	Mohd Mansoor	158.15	0205-03062176-00007	470000	493524
6	Chaijan Singh	86.02	0205-04088009-00005	265000	249274
7	Chaijan Singh	61.96	0205-04088009-00006	196000	188223
8	Mohd Mansoor	35.13	0205-03062176-00009	108600	116374
9	Pooja Rampal	24.77	0205-04203313-0000011	61000	63193
10	Rupa Sharma	56.63	0205-04214195-0000011	169918	179241
11	Ashish Chauhan	255.94	0205-04222510-0000011	905000	950752
12	Sunil Kumar Pal	12.68	0205-04229876-0000011	41118	43005
13	Maya	55.09	0205-4104489-00004	180150	187052
14	Anuj Aggarwal	127	0205-07248269-000002	395000	395012
15	Kanchan	3.8	0205-07235858-0000004	12559	12571
16	Sunitha John	219.61	0205-04140640-00004	760000	771693
17	Sunitha John	73.41	0205-04140640-00006	262900	267054
18	Sunitha John	52.23	0205-04140640-00005	196000	199098

The auction will be conducted at the premises of CSB Bank Limited, New Delhi branch premises situated at G-36, Outer Circle, Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110 001 on 29.05.2021 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: New Delhi
Date: 20-05-2021
Branch Manager

Government of Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR
Telefax :- 0194-2496089, Email Id: xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

Gist of e-tender
NIT No: MHCHD/TS /2021-22/25/e-tendering Dated:-18.05.2021

On the behalf of Lt. Governor of J&K Union Territory, e-tenders are invited from original equipment manufacturers or their authorized dealers/ representatives or reputed and experienced firms for the below mentioned works:

Name of Work:- SITC of Medical Gas pipeline system from 625 LPM Oxygen Plant to various wards OT's ICU's of Govt. BJ Hospital, Srinagar.

Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs) :- 24.99
Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 1000
Time of completion (in days) :- 10
AA Accorded Vide No :- 49 MCS of 2020, Dated: 28-08-2020
TS. NO :- MHCHD/TS 22 of 05/2021

1. Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 18.05.2021 (18.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 18.05.2021 (18.00 hrs).

2. Uploading:- The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site 19.05.2021 (10.00 hrs) to 27.05.2021 (14:00hrs) in two (02) covers.

3. Opening of Bids :- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 27.05.2021 at 16.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar
No. DIPP-1836/21 Dated:- 20.05.2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railways have decided to cancel the following Special Trains due to low occupancy and other operational reasons as per the following details:-

Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
02287 Sealdah-Bikaner Jn. Duronto Special	23.05.2021 to till further advice
02288 Bikaner Jn.-Sealdah Duronto Special	25.05.2021 to till further advice
05203 Barauni Jn.-Lucknow Express Special	22.05.2021 to till further advice
05204 Lucknow-Barauni Jn. Express Special	23.05.2021 to till further advice
05269 Muzaffarpur-Ahmedabad Express Special	27.05.2021 to till further advice
05270 Ahmedabad-Muzaffarpur Express Special	29.05.2021 to till further advice

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
Download RailMadad app.
RailMadad Helpline No.: 139
Please join us on

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Your Convenience - Our Concern
Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Notice Inviting Tender
Office of District Magistrate / District Disaster Management Authority Haridwar
Email: ddmoharidwar@gmail.com

Office of District Magistrate/District Disaster Management Authority, Haridwar invites following short term tender from eligible bidders for the following work :-

01-IVRS & Analytics System to Monitor and check Spread of Covid-19 in Haridwar District.

Tender documents can be purchased from office of ADM/DDMA Haridwar" between 21/05/2021 to 27/05/2021 (12:00 pm). Information in this regard with all details detailed eligibility criteria and other terms & conditions of the tender document can be downloaded from www.haridwar.nic.in. It is also to be informed that any amendment in future against the tender shall be uploaded on www.haridwar.nic.in.

Document Purchase Start Date	21.05.2021 at 10:00 AM
Proposal Due Date	27.05.2021 at 12:00 PM
Opening of Technical Bids	27.05.2021 at 01:00 PM
Tender Document Price	Rs 2000 (GST Extra)
No. 10728/IVRS/2021-22	ADM (F/R), Haridwar

CSB Bank
Formerly The Catholic Syrian Bank Ltd.

CSB Bank, Rohini Branch F-26/2, Ground Floor, Sector-7, Rohini-110085

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE

CSB Bank Limited, Rohini Branch has granted gold loan against pledge of gold ornaments to the below mentioned borrower. Notice has been issued to them demanding repayment of the amount with interest and charges thereon. Since they have failed to repay the balance outstanding in the respective account, 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 as on 20.05.2021
1	Vivek Baid	250.75	0483-04248544-000002	950000/-	956475.50/-

The auction will be conducted at the premises of CSB Bank Limited, Rohini Branch premises situated at F-26/2, Ground Floor, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi-110085 on 29th May 2021. 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: Rohini
Date: 20-05-2021
Branch Manager

Haryana Medical Services Corporation Limited
(A Government of Haryana Undertaking)
Bays No. 59-62, Sector-2, Panchkula, Phone: 0172-2590608

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS (NIT)

HMSCL invites e-tenders for two years Rate contract for Oxygen Concentrator on the website www.etenders.hry.nic.in. please see corrigendum if any regarding these tenders on the website www.etenders.hry.nic.in only.

Managing Director, HMSCL, Panchkula
RO NO. 2994

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)

1. Name of work with its location:	strengthening of top lateral bracing angles X-angles, gussets etc. and replacement of corroded rivets of Br. No. 974 UP at Kms 1241/18 to 1242/2 on SPN-MB section and replacement of badly corroded rivets & members i.e. Lateral bracing angles, Cross frames & Gusset plates of Br. No. 1258 DN on MB-SRE section under the jurisdiction of AXEN/BLB/MB of MB Division.
2. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 51,12,606.37
3. Completion period of the work	06 (Six) Months
4. Date & time for submission of tender & opening of tender	Up-to 15:00 hrs on 14.06.2021. Opening of tender after 15:00 hrs on same day.
5. Website particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded.	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in

Tender Notice No: 32-W-BR-974-1258-MB-21 Dated: 19.05.2021 1075/2021
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Food supplies to ITIs akin to mid-day meal to schools, so GST exempt

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The supply of food items under government schemes to Industrial training institutes (ITIs) will be treated at par with supply of mid-day meals to schools and not attract GST.

In a ruling, the Authority for Advance Ruling (AAR) has brought ITIs at par with education institutions equivalent to higher secondary education and thereby exempted supply of food items under a government programme to these vocational training institutes from applicability of GST.

The Kerala AAR ruling came on an application made by a service provider, HV Azeez. The service provider has sought clarification from AAR whether his supply of GST exempt food items such as eggs, milk, banana to ITIs as per government scheme will be taxable.

Since Azeez had taken GST registration, the question sought for clarification was whether TDS on such supply could be refunded and whether the entity was required to have GST registration at all.

The AAR ruled that since ITIs were giving certificate equivalent to 12th or 10th (if students take the tests for two additional papers under National Institute of Open School), they were at par with other higher secondary education institutes. This itself, gives supply of food to ITIs immunity from taxes (GST).

Also, as the supply of food items includes all GST exempt products, the applicant is not required to take GST registration.



A LIFELONG ASSET

Children are not trained to think rationally. Precisely why the earlier they are introduced to it and encouraged to practise it, the better, says
ROHAN PARIKH



Using reason and logic to deduce a belief, conclusion or decision, may seem like a natural ability. But the truth is, children are not trained to think rationally. Precisely why the earlier they are introduced to it and encouraged to practise it, the better. It builds clarity of thought, problem-solving abilities and decision-making power: Crucial skills that go on to improve well-being in all spheres of life as they grow.

Benefits are evident as early as in performance at school.
 Numerous studies prove that cognitive skills are more efficient

when the mind is trained to think rationally. The cognitive process is an accumulation of thinking, knowing, remembering, judging and problem solving. If rational thinking in the form of reasoning and logic is added to the mix, the result can be based on a rock-solid foundation.

In subjects like Science, Economics, Mathematics and Philosophy, it gives wings to a student's curious mind, boosting it to go beyond what they study in books and learn in the classroom.

It helps overcome behavioural problems in class.
 Classrooms are dynamic spaces.

While some students take on learning easily, for a few others it is a struggle, often caused more by psychosocial reasons than a real learning disability. It then falls upon the teacher to control the disruptive behaviour. The learning environment of the class has to be protected like a fragile ecosystem. Not just for distracted school kids, but also for the ones who are eager to learn.

Inculcating rational thinking at this stage prepares children for the future. In such cases of disruptive behaviour, instead of the traditional method of reprimanding, the teacher may lay out choices for the student. Each choice is attached to a conse-

quence. The student is introduced to cause and effect, the logical deduction method. Responsibility for their actions lies with them. Once a child has walked this path in the thought process, they are armed for life with rational thinking to make the right choices for themselves and those around them.

The benefits of rational thinking spill over to life itself.

Did you know that the most prolific minds in human history like Thomas Edison, Charles Darwin and Isaac Newton, were endowed with rational thinking that honed their intelligence?

Rational thinking makes children cognizant of the consequences of each action. This logical deduction makes one take the right path in life. The child grows up with a strong moral compass. Performance in school shoots up as the child is able to relate learning with knowledge, a lifelong asset. It prepares the student to look beyond the traditional problem solving methods to hunt for the right approach.

It builds enduring bonds between students and teachers.

Rational thinking opens minds. Even as teachers look forward to connecting with each student individually, they understand how the child's mind works. These interactions go beyond academic progress and text book learning. The student has an adult looking out for them in the school environment, senses support, trust, security, and a two-way channel for communication. This teacher-student bond develops mutual respect, and fosters emotional well-being.

Strong teacher student bonds based on rational thinking sets the ground for healthy relationships. Students imbibe this experience as the foundation for long-term connections.

"People don't think like scientists; they think like lawyers," concludes Peter Ditto, a psychologist who studies decision-making at the University of California, Irvine. In numerous ways, rational thinking is the steady way to build scientific thinking for prudent decision-making, complementing the natural gifts of a child.

(The writer is the Managing Director of The Green Acres Academy, an educational institution.)



Huma adorns a new look in *Maharani*

SonyLIV is all set to stream the smuch-anticipated series, *Maharani*, but just before the show goes live; the makers have dropped yet another fascinating and intriguing look done by actor Huma Qureshi. After taking the internet by storm with the teaser, Huma's Chief Minister look is designed brilliantly.

For the look, the actor has donned dark shade sarees clubbed with shawls symbolising the right attitude required for her role. With dark kohlr eyes and a red *bindi*, Huma proves that she is here to stay and her look is perfectly adorned by her character.

Talking about it, Huma said, "I'm excited and looking forward to the show streaming soon. We've got a great response to the teaser and I'm sure the viewers will be well entertained through the show. Playing Rani Bharati is multifaceted, she has var-

ious shades associated to her character and that has been a great honour to portray. To get into the skin of the character, we tried on various looks that helped establish the phases in her life."

Illiterate yet wise enough to separate the wheat from the chaff, docile yet combative when danger looms large on her family, Rani Bharati is a woman with striking contrasts. Her life turns upside down following a decision her husband takes. From milking cows, making *gobar upalas* to standing by her family despite all odds, what lies ahead of her is a mystery that's waiting to unfold.

Will Rani be able to sail through this? Directed by Karan Sharma and created by Sushant Kapoor, the show features Sohumi Shah, Amit Sial and Vineet Kumar among others. *Maharani* is a fictionalised series that is set to release on May 28 on SonyLIV.



Is it safe to mask kiss in a partially-vaccinated world?

Mask to mask kiss — a new trend popularised by celebrities. Recently Kamala Harris, Vice President of the US and second gentleman Doug Emhoff kissed before heading their separate ways on flights with their masks on. Actor Varun Sood kissing his girlfriend Divya Agarwal at the Mumbai airport with a mask on before leaving for Cape Town, South Africa raised many eyebrows.

The question that rises: Is it safe? Let's see what experts have to say about it in a world that is partially-vaccinated.

Delhi-based Dr Anubha Singh, Gynecologist and Medical Director from Shantah Fertility Centre says, "Remember, a mask protects the other person in how it limits the spread of your respiratory droplets. For masks to truly reduce the risks of getting COVID-19, both people would have to wear a mask: a mutual masking. But it might not be a strategy that works for everyone."

Dr Singh further added, "You see masks are like condoms until you know how to wear them correctly and yes they are not 100 per cent safe. Hence be very very careful while kissing."

The consequences of dropping the mask and kissing publicly can go beyond one person getting COVID-19.

Dr Shobha Gupta, Medical Director and IVF Specialist from Mother's Lap IVF Centre explained, "It's very dangerous as the outer surface of the mask has the maximum virus of other people. Close contact with a mask on could be risky. Hence, I would advise avoiding face-to-face contact or closeness."

What kind of problem arises if two masked people kiss each other? She answers, "It is still a questionable thing, your protective layer over your nose might not be good enough because the virus is readily transmitted by aerosols. One should be very careful and avoid kissing even with a mask on in public."

—IANS

The conventional Hindi film heroine is often one-dimensional, impossibly perfect and confined to song and dance routines. However, a few films in the recent past have challenged these notions on the big screen as well as on OTT platforms by portraying women in all their depth and complexity. Here are a few of such memorable characters.



Upasana in *Axone*: Upasana (played by Sayani Gupta) in this Yoodlee production is part of the North-Eastern migrant community in Delhi. Her body language and habitual diffidence show how guarded and vulnerable she feels in a milieu that treats her and her friends as outsiders. Yet, as the film progresses, we see Upasana dealing with her love life, her conflicted feelings about a friend who was in a relationship with her boyfriend and her own insecurities with increasing confidence. Her determination to cook a special dish to celebrate a wedding finally wins the day and her innocence and strength endear her to us more than any other character. Gupta

Not the conventional type

It took Bollywood some time to realise that real women are not stereotypical but unique in their own right. Here are five characters that redefined the quintessential Hindi film heroine in recent times

portrays Upasana without artifice and gives us a heroine we have never seen before as a protagonist in a mainstream film. Credit also goes to director Nicholas Kharkongor, who offers us a complex story about race and prejudice we are not fully familiar with.

Aji: Female anger is often portrayed without nuance in cinema. In the dark and brooding Devashish Makhija directorial, *Aji*, anger is a slow-burning force that takes over the life of a grandmother (played by Sushama Deshpande). She is not a one note heroine who



decides to take revenge one fine day after a tragedy and then spectacularly pulls off a cathartic kill. She observes, stalks the man who has destroyed her family with unblinking focus and prepares herself psychologically and physically (watch

how she learns to chop meat with the help of a butcher friend) to take on a man whose privilege protects him from the consequences of his actions. In commercial cinema, a grandmother is usually a benevolent character incidental to the theme, but here, Aji is the protagonist and the plot because it is through her that a story that usually ends with an unreported rape, reaches a conclusion that nobody expected. Aji represents a section of society that has been denied the right to justice even in cinema because in any other film, she could just have been a poor, old woman wailing over her granddaughter's crumpled body. Here the tailor who has possibly lived a lifetime, being overlooked at the margins of society, refuses to accept injustice and will do what she can to balance the scales of power.

Sandhya in *Pagglait*: How many young widows get to headline a Hindi film's narrative? In Umesh Bist's quirky directorial *Pagglait*, you get to meet one such protagonist who cannot even fully mourn her dead husband because her marriage was loveless and perhaps arranged only for convenience. She spends a large part of the film, clad in an unflattering cardigan, surrounded by a posse of



overbearing, loud relatives, wondering about what happened to all her aspirations. Sandhya (played by Sanya Malhotra) is a flesh and blood person who feels suffocated by widowhood. When she discovers a secret from her husband's past, she is forced to reevaluate her short-lived marriage and also how she wants to live, the person she wants to be and the dreams she wants to chase now that she has the freedom to do so. Produced by Balaji Motion Pictures and Sikhya Entertainment, the film gave us a character who was so relatable that all of us felt we had met her somewhere.

Bharati in *Geeli Puchhi*: When was the last time you saw a heroine who was Dalit, queer and a blue collar worker? Possibly never till you met her in *Geeli Puchhi* in the recently released Netflix film compi-

tion, *Ajeeb Daastaan*. Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, the film introduces us to factory worker Bharati Mondol (played by Konkana Sen Sharma) who has dealt with caste and gender prejudices all her life, is mocked at work and denied a desk job she is qualified for. She watches in anger as the job is given away to a higher-caste woman Priya Sharma (played by Aditi



Rao Hydari) but then is slowly won over by the naive affection of her new colleague. The two are drawn to each other till Bharati's Dalit identity establishes her exclusion from Priya's life conclusively. But this is not where the story ends. Bharati finds a way to not just get the job that she wants but to establish once and for all that she will no longer be denied her share of humanity.



Vidya in *Kahaani*: This 2012 Sujoy Ghosh directorial (also co-producer of the film) had a heroine who did not play second fiddle to anyone, drove the plot single-handedly, was the survivor of a tragedy and an avenger with a baby bump. Ghosh struggled a lot to get the film made because producers did not want to invest in a film where a pregnant woman was the lead star but Vidya Balan's self-assured histrionics and poise guided the film to box-office success and bushels of critical acclaim. *Kahaani* proved that even modestly budgeted films with female stars can earn the big bucks. It also established Balan as an actor who can be everyman and yet be extraordinary. Much of the film's success came from the unwavering courage of the heroine who meticulously crafts a plan to smoke a mass murderer out of his hiding place and then without a moment's hesitation slays him while Durga Puja celebrations reach a crescendo around her. And she does it without melodrama and with an icy precision that leaves the audience in awe.

TRENDBLAZER



KANGANA PRAISES SAMANTHA AKKINENI

Actor **KANGANA RANAUT** shared an Instagram note praising South star **Samantha Akkineni** in the trailer of the forthcoming web-series *The Family Man 2*. The trailer dropped the day before. "This girl has my heart @samantharathprabhuoffi," wrote Kangana, sharing a snapshot of the trailer featuring Samantha. The second season of the web series will premiere on June 4. Samantha marks her digital debut as antagonist of the show.

fairtalk

RONIT ROY



"I've been visiting Goa for the past 25-30 years or so. I've never seen it so deserted. After the cyclone, trees and poles have fell, there is no electricity or water supply since the last five days. It's untrue that nature has harmed mankind. Mankind and nature have borne the brunt alike. It's just one of those things. We shall keep loving. We shall learn a lesson or two and move on."

dailytalk

ASHISH VIDYARTHI



"OTT is a very new thing for me. I think it is a brilliant mix between cinema and television. My work experience with the cast and crew of *Sunflower* was very fulfilling. I enjoyed working with each and every actor in the show. Also as an actor, I got a lot of freedom from my director, which helped me learn a lot in many different ways."

CHER ANNOUNCES BIOPIC ON BIRTHDAY

Singer **CHER**, who turned 75 yesterday, tweeted to announce that her official biopic is in the works. The yet-untitled film is set at Universal Pictures, with *Mamma Mia!* producers Judy Craymer and Gary Gostzman on board and Eric Roth penning the script. Cher will serve as a producer on the film, too. Cher is a Tony Award away from achieving EGOT status, having won an Emmy in 2003, a Grammy in 2000 and an Oscar (as Best Actress) in 1988.



A BOWL OF WARMTH

With the pandemic hitting the capital hard, volunteer groups and individuals have been burning both ends of the candle to ensure that no one who is affected by COVID-19 goes hungry. By **CHRISTY VARGHESE**

On a normal day Utsav Malhotra, proprietor of Utsav's Aroma Express located in Navin Shahdara, would wake up well in time to open the shutters of his bakeshop and cafe by 10 am. As a small business owner, Utsav would take care to tend to orders and requests well in time so that the workload did not pile up. His venture was fairly successful and was shaping up to be a popular joint among the youth who resided in the surrounding areas. That was until he had to make peace with 'the new normal'.

Fast forward to the second wave of Covid. Utsav makes some calls and takes stock of messages on WhatsApp to confirm that he needs to prepare 50 lunch *thalis* and that there are no pending orders for his cafe. He is one among numerous volunteer groups and individuals rising to address the need of the moment by providing hot meals to people affected by the pandemic. While some have the advantage of having an abundance of resources at their disposal, and are making good use of this privilege, there are others like Utsav who work on a smaller scale but leave no stone unturned in helping those in need.

"As of now, the 50 food packets will be delivered to the members of around 20 families residing in or around Navin Shahdara. I am very grateful to my family members who help me prepare enough food, depending on the need, without any hesitation. They constantly remind me with their actions that I should appreciate what I have and have successfully instilled the practice of helping others in me," he shared over a rushed telephonic conversation. Utsav has been delivering hot, home-cooked meals ever since the second wave of COVID-19 cases have hit the capital hard. While his team of delivery attendants help hand over orders from Utsav's Aroma Kitchen, they have refused to help him with his philanthropic initiative and he expressed that their fears aren't unwarranted and that he won't force them to do anything they are not comfortable with.

He has made it a point to refuse any sort of payment from the people he delivers food to. "I do not seek donations or payments from those whom I am helping. While



I have to admit that I could use all the help I receive but I haven't asked anyone for any sort of assistance. I am grateful for everyone who has aided me in my endeavour but regardless, I have decided that come what may I will continue this tiffin service till the time I can. There are children out there with both parents testing positive for COVID. There are entire households that have been rendered weak due to the pandemic and I will go out of my way to ensure that they receive a hot meal at least twice a day. I think that is the least I can do," Utsav signed off before abruptly disconnecting the phone call so that he could get back to delivering the food before it turned cold.

Working on similar lines, but on a somewhat larger scale, the Rotary Club of Ghaziabad has been delivering food to COVID-19 patients across Ghaziabad since May 3. "We have been delivering over 150 meals, give or take 20 packets depending on whether there are any new cases or if some of our recipients have recovered, twice a day for lunch and dinner. While we do not seek payment for the food packages, we have been accepting donations. In the meanwhile, we have been making use of the funds accumulated by our organisation," said Virender



Aggarwal, a member of the club. With an extensive team at their disposal, they have been catering to customised meal requests.

At the other end of the spectrum, we also have associations of residential areas pitching in to

lend a helping hand.

With the onset of the second wave of COVID-19 cases, my friendly neighbour, who refuses to be named, advised their domestic help to be careful and not visit them until the situation regains a sense

of normalcy, while handing her two months' salary in advance. However, a few days later, when she tested positive for the novel Coronavirus, she was overcome by helplessness and did not know what to do. She highlighted her plight in one simple statement, "All I could think about was, if I am not well, what will my son eat?"

That was when her neighbourhood's residents welfare organisation came to her rescue by providing healthy, nutritious food to their household till she recovered. She shared that the first time she received the warm package she struggled to hold her tears back. "My gratitude knows no bounds. We received hot meals from our neighbours for a couple of days even after I tested negative. Moreover, those who helped me out refused to accept payments for the same. I cannot even express how overwhelming this simple act of kindness was," she said.

Special shoutout to every person out there who has been checking up on others to make sure that they are not hungry in these uncertain times. The simple pleasure of receiving a plate full of hot food when one is starving cannot be conveyed in mere words. Be the reason someone else starts believing in humanity.



One step at a time

Experts believe eating healthy is the best and only way to completely recover from the prolonged effects of COVID-19. **AYUSHI SHARMA** talks to a few nutritionists...

You must have heard that if you manage to beat the common symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, dry cough, sore throat or loss of taste and smell, you pretty much have emerged victorious against the deadly virus. However, experts believe that the road to recovery is a prolonged affair, supported by the fact that even after testing negative most people experience fatigue. The novel Coronavirus takes a toll on the immune system, which leaves the person much weaker than before. And that's the reason why good nutrition is important for your health when you are recovering from Coronavirus.



A nutritionist on board for GAIL India, Dr Rohini Patil, emphasises on taking one step at a time. She feels that dealing with post-COVID fatigue is not an easy task, the struggle is very much real. "Don't make the mistake of jumping back to your 'normal life routine' right after you have tested negative. Subsequently, you need to give yourself enough time to get back to the old everyday practice by taking one step at a time. Do not forget, you have recently battled an illness that has critically attacked your immune system. Even if your reports come negative, the body is still fighting the underlying effects. And that is why one needs to rest well. Sleeping for at least eight to nine hours is mandatory," says Dr Patil, who also happens to be the founder and CEO of Nutracry Lifestyle.

According to experts, exerting yourself physically or even mentally can be harmful. She suggests that hydration is another important key to make sure you're keeping well. "Drink a lot of water along with some chia or basil seeds. They would provide the much-needed hydration to the body," adds Dr Patil.

Since it's vital to maintain your energy levels, another leading health coach, nutritionist and the founder of MY22BMI, Preeti Tyagi, underlines the importance of including a sufficient amount of healthy carbohydrates in your diet. She says, "The best option is to consume more complex carbohydrates such as whole grains, millets and other simi-

lar items. Consume legumes and pulses regularly. Aside from these, incorporate fermented foods into your diet, such as yogurt, kombucha, *kanji*, fermented pickles and beans. This will help maintain a stable gut microbiota and improve immunity. Just maintain a sufficient amount of carbs in your diet and don't skip them. You should start your day with a handful of nuts and seeds such as walnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds among others. This will give the body an immediate boost and will aid in recovery as the day progresses. These nuts, especially walnuts, are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids."

Well, this reminds one of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s guidelines, which emphasises on consuming foods with omega-3, zinc, selenium, protein and vitamin B as they play a role in our body's healing process, which would help us in maintaining a healthy immune system. And, walnuts are a great source of all these nutrients.

While no single item can prevent or treat illness, let's look at what health and fitness educator Yash Vardhan Swami hints at. He says, "More than the exact food sources, we should look for nutrients we need for better recovery and immunity. Opt for food rich in vitamin C, vitamin D3, zinc, protein and anti-inflammatory in nature."

A prediction by the great inventor and businessman Thomas Alva Edison seems very relevant in today's times. "The doctor of the future will no longer treat the human frame with drugs, but rather will cure and prevent disease with nutrition."

R E C I P E S



DARK CHOCOLATE & BEETROOT BROWNIE, PUDDING WITH CASSIS CREAM

WHAT YOU NEED

- Cocoa solid dark chocolate: 100 gm
- Egg: 2
- Muscovado sugar: 125 gm
- Vanilla extract: 1 tsp
- Melted butter: 125 gm
- Cocoa powder: 40 gm
- Self-rising flour: 40 gm
- Grated and cooked beetroot: 150 gm
- Double cream: 200 ml
- Cassis liquor: 2 tbsp
- Icing sugar (optional)

METHOD

For brownie:

- Pre-heat the oven to 180 degree C.
- Lightly grease the ramekins using melted butter and a silicone brush.
- In a medium-sized bowl, break the chocolate into small pieces.

- Place the bowl over a saucepan of hot water to melt. Do not let the water boil or the bowl touch the water.
- In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, sugar and vanilla until thick and foamy.
- Use a medium-sized silicone spatula or spatula spoon to stir in the melted chocolate followed by the melted butter. Sift in the cocoa powder and flour. Gently stir.
- Fold in the grated, cooked beetroot.
- Divide the mixture between the four ramekins and bake for 20 minutes.
- The puddings are done when well risen and the surface is cracked. The centre will still be soft.

For cassis cream:

- Whisk the cream until thickened and stir in the cassis liquor.
- Serve the puddings warm with the cassis cream and a dusting of icing sugar (optional).

Courtesy: Le Creuset.



YES WE CRAN

WHAT YOU NEED

- Black & White scotch whisky: 45 ml
- Lime juice: 10 ml
- Cranberry Juice: 60 ml

METHOD

- Build all the ingredients into a highball glass with ice and stir well.
- Garnish with a lime wedge on each serve.

Courtesy: Diageo.

ORGANIC BROWN RICE KHICHDI

WHAT YOU NEED

- Organic cumin: 1 tsp
- Turmeric: 1/4 tsp
- Organic mustard: 1 tsp
- Tomato (finely chopped): 1
- Pinch of organic asafoetida
- Salt: 3/4 tsp
- Bay leaf: 1
- Brown rice (soaked 2 hours): 1/2 cup
- Onion (finely chopped): 1/2
- Water: 3.5 cup
- Organic ginger & garlic paste: 1 tsp
- Moong dal (soaked 20 minutes): 1/2 cup
- Green chilli (slit): 1
- Coriander (finely chopped): 2 tbsp

METHOD

- In a pressure cooker, sauté mustard and cumin seeds till they start spluttering.
- Put the flame off and add one



- bay leaf and pinch of *hing*.
- Add onion, sprinkle a bit of water, turn on the flame and sauté till it turns translucent.
- Now add one ginger garlic paste and one green chilli, sauté well.
- Then add one tomato and sauté till it turns soft and mushy.
- Add 1/4 tsp turmeric, 3/4 tsp salt and sauté.
- Add rice and *moong dal*.
- Sauté on low flame for a minute or till *moong dal* turns aromatic.
- Pour 1/2 cup of water and stir well. Or you add according to the consistency you require.
- Pressure cook for five whistles.
- Once the pressure settles, mix gently, adding two tablespoon of coriander leaves.

Courtesy: Orco Spices and Condiments.



BERRY CHEESECAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Egg yolks: 5
- Cream cheese: 200 gm
- Fresh cream: 150 gm
- Icing sugar: 100 gm
- Corn flour: 25 gm
- Cracker crumbs: 300 gm
- Butter (melted): 50 gm

METHOD

- Crush graham crackers into crumbs. In a medium bowl, combine crumbs together with melted butter and stir until moistened.
- In a large bowl (using a hand mixer), add cream cheese and stir until smooth. Don't over-beat or you'll incorporate too much air.
- Add sugar and stir again until creamy.
- Add sour cream, vanilla extract and salt. Then stir until well-combined.
- If using a stand mixer, make sure you pause periodically to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl with a spatula so that all ingredients are evenly incorporated.
- With mixer on low speed, gradually add

lightly beaten eggs, one at a time, stirring just until each egg is incorporated.

- Once all eggs have been added, use a spatula to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl again and make sure all ingredients are well combined.
- Pour cheesecake batter into prepared

spring form pan. To insure against leaks, place pan on a cookie sheet that's been lined with foil.

- Transfer to the center rack of your oven and bake on 325F (160C) for about 75 minutes.

Courtesy: Pastry chef L Anandh at DoubleTree by Hilton Goa, Panaji.

shortpasses

SHAKIB RETURNS TO ODI SQUAD
DHAKA: All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has been included in Bangladesh's 15-member ODI squad for the first two of their three-match series against Sri Lanka in Dhaka on May 23 & 25. He had missed Bangladesh's previous series against NZ due to a thigh injury.

RUDISHA WILL MISS TOKYO 2020
GENEVA: Two-time Olympic 800-meter champion David Rudisha will not defend his title at the Tokyo Games. Rudisha's agent, Michel Boeting, told AP on Thursday that Tokyo was "out of the question" for Rudisha because of a persistent hamstring problem.

2 ROWERS INCLUDED IN TOPS
NEW DELHI: Olympic-bound rowers Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh and wrestlers Seema Bisla and Sumit Malik were on Thursday included in the core group of the TOPS of the Sports Ministry. The ministry also announced that Vinesh Phogat will continue training overseas till the Tokyo Games as her proposal was cleared by the Mission Olympic Cell.

DIAS WINS FWA AWARD
LONDON: Manchester City defender Ruben Dias has been voted the Football Writers' Association's footballer of the year, it was announced on Thursday. The Portugal international was a comfortable winner ahead of Tottenham forward Harry Kane and City teammate Kevin De Bruyne.

SREEJESH IN ATHLETES' COMMITTEE
NEW DELHI: Star India hockey team goalkeeper P R Sreejesh was on Thursday appointed as a member of the FIH Athletes' Committee during the virtual meeting of the world body's Executive Board. He was one of the four new members appointed by the EB.

SHAMMI RETURNS AS SLC PREZ
COLOMBO: Shammi Silva was elected uncontested for a second term as president of Sri Lanka Cricket in the polls held on Thursday. He will be at the helm till 2023.

PSL MATCHES IN ABU DHABI
KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board is set to stage the remaining matches of the sixth edition of the Pakistan Super League in Abu Dhabi after receiving all outstanding approvals & exemptions from the UAE Govt.

WI TEST PLAYERS RECEIVE VAX
ST LUCIA: 13 members of the West Indies red-ball squad, including players and support staff, have received Covid-19 vaccinations, CWI said. While 11 players and support staff received their first dose of the vaccine, two squad members got their second jab in St Lucia, where they are preparing for the upcoming South Africa Tests.

Playing India in neutral venue is exciting: Kane

AFP ■ LONDON

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson has said that the prospect of squaring off against India at a neutral venue is pretty exciting. The Black Caps have arrived in England to play a two-match Test series against the hosts before they face Virat Kohli's Team India in the final of the World Test Championship which is slated to start on June 18 in Southampton.

While addressing a virtual press conference on Thursday, the New Zealand skipper stated that his team is excited about facing India in the World Test Championship final. "I know the boys are really excited for the challenge and then the Test Championship final. The focus will be on one game at a time. I suppose having a different opposition, playing in a neutral country is an exciting prospect," Williamson said during the virtual presser.

"It's great, and like I mentioned, it's nice always to get to the side after a break. There is a lot of excitement in the camp, and we know the

challenge, like coming over here and playing against England in their own backyard," he added.

The New Zealand players are currently serving the mandatory quarantine upon their arrival in England. Williamson said that team is keen to step out and start training.

"Most of the team is here now. We are all pretty much on the same side (of the hotel), so we're able to catch up a little bit with one another on our different balconies. For a number of guys, it's their first time in the bubble, while others have done it a few times, so that can be quite helpful," said the New Zealand captain.

"The first step is getting out of the bubble, and after that, we're looking forward to starting our preparation, in terms of adjustment to conditions and catching up with the guys. It's always exciting when there has been a period of time away from the team, and I look forward to that," he added.

The first England vs New Zealand Test gets underway on June 2 at Lord's while the second Test is scheduled to be played in Birmingham on June 10.



New Zealand players kit up to take part in team's indoor nets practice session on Thursday. The Kane Williamson led side which arrived England in two batches will face hosts in 2 Tests before facing India in WTC final @BLACKCAPS

4K fans allowed for WTC final



PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

The World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand in Southampton will be held in the presence of 4000 spectators, Hampshire County Club head Rod Bransgrove has said.

The Covid-19 situation has improved in the UK and around 1500 people were allowed to watch the county game between Leicestershire and Hampshire at the Ageas Bowl, which hosts the

WTC final from June 18.

Bransgrove told *Cricbuzz* that the ECB and the ICC are permitting a crowd of "4000 people" in the eagerly-awaited clash. "I understand 50 per cent of the permitted crowds will be taken by the ICC for its sponsors and other stake holders and we will be selling the rest 2000 tickets. We have already received more than double applications from the fans," Bransgrove said.

"It is a high interest game and there is a good demand for it." PTI

Archer to undergo elbow surgery today

London: England pacer Jofra Archer will undergo a surgery on his right elbow on Friday, which could effectively rule him out of the first part of the five-match Test series against visiting India beginning on August 4.

Archer is already out of the upcoming two-match Test series against New Zealand and this will be his second surgery after being operated upon on his right hand.

"Jofra has been reviewed by a medical consultant in respect of his right elbow soreness. He will now proceed to surgery tomorrow," the ECB said in a tweet. The 26-year-old, who recently made a comeback in the County Championship for Sussex, consulted a specialist after feeling discomfort in his elbow and was advised to go for a surgery.

"Further updates will be released in due course," the ECB stated without specifying how long it will take for Archer to make a comeback. PTI

Jamieson wary of wanting a lot from Dukes

Southampton: New Zealand pace bowler Kyle Jamieson says he and the entire bowling unit won't get carried away with the extra swing that the Dukes cricket ball offers during their tour of England.

The Kiwis, used to playing with the Kookaburra at home, will be playing in England with the Dukes ball which offers more swing.

"You don't want to start trying to move the ball two sets of stumps and then get caught on the bounce," he said while speaking to the media.



The right-arm pace bowler, who made his Test debut in February, 2020, against India, has picked 36 wickets in his first six Test matches.

conditions in his home country will come in handy.

"We've found favourable conditions in New Zealand at times, albeit not with the Dukes ball, and we're mindful of the fact that if you start searching too much, you can get hurt a little bit," he added.

"I think that's something that we've hopefully taken care of, but I guess we'll address that when the time comes, and the next 10 days or so, leading into that first Test, is vital for us." IANS

Dravid likely to coach India on SL tour

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Cricket Academy chief and former India captain Rahul Dravid is set to be the head coach of the Indian white-ball squad that will tour Sri Lanka in July.

Dravid, who stopped travelling with the India A and U-19 teams after taking over as NCA head in Bengaluru, will be the head coach of the second-string side in the absence of Ravi Shastri, who will be busy with the Test side in England at the same time.

"He will travel with the



team to Sri Lanka in all likelihood," a BCCI source said.

Other NCA staff members are likely to be split into two parties of which one will tour Sri Lanka with Dravid and the other will travel to England

with the women's cricket team next month.

Paras Mhambrey, who has also coached the men's A sides and Under-19 teams, is likely to be the bowling coach, the report added.

India are expected to play three ODIs and as many T20s in Sri Lanka in July though the schedule has not been announced yet.

The squad will have plenty of fringe players and some established white-ball specialists. Hardik Pandya, Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer are in the running for captaincy.

Sixer of French Cups for PSG

AFP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain have a domestic double in their sights after they won the French Cup by beating Monaco 2-0 in Wednesday's final at the Stade de France.

Goals from Mauro Icardi and Kylian Mbappe won a largely uninspiring final for PSG who now go into the weekend's final round of Ligue 1 fixtures with a record-equalling 10th league title still a possibility.

The French champions have now won the French Cup six times in the last seven seasons having reached the final every year since 2015.

It was also the second trophy of coach Mauricio Pochettino's managerial career after he won the Champions Trophy for PSG in January,

although this will for many count as his first major honour.

"We work every day to experience this kind of feeling, reward and recognition," said Mbappe.

"It's the work of a whole group, staff, all the people who work every day for us, the club and of course the supporters who couldn't be there. We think a lot about the fans and this title is for them as well."

Monaco meanwhile continue their wait to win the French Cup for the first time since 1991, in their first final since 2010 when they were also beaten by PSG.

Niko Kovac's side have however had a positive season and can finish it on a happier note at the weekend by qualifying for the Champions League for the first time since 2018.

India W to play 1st D/N Test in Aus

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian women's cricket team will compete in its maiden Day-Night Test from September 30 to October 3 when it tours Australia this year.

The match will be played in Perth, which hasn't hosted a Day-Night game as yet, Cricket Australia said after BCCI secretary Jay Shah made the initial announcement.

"Taking forward our commitment towards women's cricket, I am extremely pleased to announce that Team India @BCCIwomen will play in their first-ever pink ball day-night Test later this year in Australia," Shah tweeted.

The Indian women's team, which will play its first Test in seven years from June 16 in England, will compete in another one during the tour of Australia.

The team will also play three ODIs (from September 19 to 24) and as many T20I matches (from October 7 to 11) Down Under.

India last played a Test against Australia in 2006.

The pink ball Test between India and Australia will be



only the second such match to be held in the history of women's cricket. The only Day-Night women's game played so far was between Australia and England at Sydney in November 2017 which ended

Pink ball Test going to be well-contested: Perry

Melbourne: Australia all-rounder Ellyse Perry reckons the presence of skilful batters in the Indian women's team will make the pink ball Test a well-contested affair despite the conditions at Perth being more suited to the hosts.

"It's an absolutely wonderful venue for a women's Test. The pitch provides that little bit of extra pace and bounce, and the ball carries through really well,

there's a little bit of sideways movement," Perry was quoted as saying by *cricnet.com.au*.

"That's certainly in (our) favour ... our conditions and the Australian style of cricket but having said that, looking at the Indian team, some of the skills of their players, particularly their batters, it's going to be a really well-contested Test match and a great opportunity for both sides." PTI

in a draw.

Preparing for both the England and Australia Test will be a challenge since the women don't play with red ball even on the domestic circuit.

"It will be a challenge for sure but the good thing is that women are getting to play Tests," a former India player said.

"The pink ball game in Australia will be a tougher challenge as the girls have never played with that ball but I am sure they will get to prepare well for it. A few practice games will also be needed," she added.

Difficult to play T20 WC in India: Hussey

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australia batsman Mike Hussey, who tested positive for Covid-19 in IPL's bio-bubble, has advocated moving this year's T20 World Cup from India to the UAE as he feels teams will be "nervous" to travel there because of the raging pandemic.

Batting coach Hussey was among three members of the Chennai Super Kings contingent who contracted the virus during the IPL, which had to be suspended after cases were detected in four teams.

"I think it's going to be very difficult in my view to play that tournament in India," Hussey told *Fox Cricket* upon his return to Sydney, where he is undergoing a 14-day quarantine.

Hussey had also spent two weeks isolating in India after testing positive for the virus in Delhi from where he was transported to Chennai in an air ambulance.

"We're talking about eight teams in the IPL. I think there are probably similar number,



maybe more teams coming in from overseas (for the T20 World Cup), there'd be more venues. As I said earlier, if they're playing in different cities, that is when the risk goes up.

"I think they'll have to look some pretty big contingency plans, perhaps looking at the UAE or somewhere like that that could host the World T20. I think there will be a lot of cricket boards around the world that'd be pretty nervous about going back to India for a cricket tournament," said Hussey.

UAE has already emerged as the back up venue and the ICC is likely to take a call on the tournament on June 1.

Juve win Coppa Italia title

AFP ■ REGGIO EMILIA

Andrea Pirlo insisted he wanted to continue as Juventus coach after lifting his second trophy this season in the Coppa Italia final.

The dethroned league champions beat Atalanta 2-1 to win the Italian Cup for the 14th time after winning the Super Cup in January.

Federico Chiesa scored the winner with quarter of an hour to go after Dejan Kulusevski struck after half an hour, in a game played in front of fans for the first time in over a year.

"It was a great match, between two beautiful teams who fought to the end, a final worthy of this name, also a big celebration for the public, and everything that has happened this season," said Pirlo, who turned 42 on Wednesday.

"I would really like to sit on the Juventus bench again next year," he continued. "I think I did my job well day by day, trying to win finals. I would like to con-



tinue, I love this club."

Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini, 63, was denied a first trophy of his coaching career, and his club's second trophy after the 1963 Coppa Italia.

"It's a disappointment," said Gasperini. "We are happy to be at this level, to be able to play this type of game and to qualify for the Champions League for the third consecutive season."

Gianluigi Buffon was in the Juventus goal for the final time in his career and the veteran

keeper was solid on the night winning his sixth Coppa Italia 22 years after his first with Parma, where he played alongside Chiesa's father Enrico.

It was Juventus's first Coppa Italia since 2018, having finished runners-up last year to Napoli. Atalanta also lost the 2019 final to Lazio.

Ronaldo failed to score on the night but has now won every trophy in three of Europe's five major leagues — England, Spain and now Italy.

Liverpool move into top 4

AFP ■ BURNLEY

Liverpool set up a dramatic final-day battle to qualify for the Champions League with a vital 3-0 win at Burnley, while Tottenham's bid to reach the Europa League suffered a blow in a 2-1 defeat against Aston Villa on Wednesday.

Jurgen Klopp's side moved into fourth place in the Premier League thanks to goals from Roberto Firmino, Nathaniel Phillips and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

Liverpool are above fifth-placed Leicester on goal difference, with the Reds on +24 and the Foxes on +20.

If Liverpool win their final game at home to Crystal Palace on Sunday, they should finish in the top four and salvage a difficult campaign that saw them tamerly surrender the title to Manchester City.

Leicester host Tottenham on Sunday, while third-placed



Nathaniel Phillips, left, celebrates after scoring Liverpool's second goal

Chelsea, one point above Liverpool, travel to Aston Villa.

Firmino put Liverpool on course for their fourth consecutive victory with a clinical finish from Andy Robertson's 43rd minute cross.

Phillips got the second goal in the 52nd minute with a header from Sadio Mane's cross for his first goal for the club.

Oxlade-Chamberlain lashed in Liverpool's third in the 88th minute.

"We had to win the 'semi-final' and we did. Nothing is decided yet but we improved our position and we have the final," Klopp said.

"That's what we needed. It's what we deserve because this was a top performance."

Fifth and sixth place finishes secure a spot in next season's Europa League, while seventh place brings entry into a play-off for the new Europa Conference League.

Tottenham will have to wait until their last game of the season to discover their European destiny.

A second defeat in their last three games left them in seventh place, level on points with eighth-placed Everton and three points behind sixth-placed West Ham.

They will have to beat Leicester and hope West Ham lose to Southampton to pip their London rivals on goal difference.

Kane says transfer is 'down to me'

London: Tottenham striker Harry Kane has given the biggest indication yet that he is ready to leave the Premier League club and says he will control his own future.

Kane is reported to have told Spurs he wants to be sold at the end of the season after becoming frustrated at the lack of progress at the club.

The England captain, who is 28 in July, says he needs a conversation with chairman about his future.

"I think it's definitely a conversation to be had with the club," Kane told Gary Neville's YouTube channel *The Overlap*. "I want to be playing in the biggest games, the biggest moments."

"I'm sure that (Daniel Levy, Spurs chairman) will want to set out the plan of where he sees it but ultimately it's going to be down to me and how I feel and what's going to be the best for me and my career this moment in time." AFP