

OPINION 6
DO THE STATES HAVE ANY RESPONSIBILITY?

WORLD 8
BLINKEN OFF TO WEST ASIA TO PUSH PEACE TALKS

SPORT 12
AC MILAN, JUVE QUALIFY FOR CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

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BORED OF COMIC ROLES: ABHISHEK 11 VIVACITY

CAPSULE

SOON SWITCH FROM POST TO PREPAID USING OTP
New Delhi: Mobile phone subscribers may soon be allowed to switch from a postpaid connection to prepaid and vice versa by using an OTP-based authentication and without a need to change SIM card, according to an official DoT note. **pg**

VOLCANIC ERUPTION. CHAOS KILL 15 IN CONGO
Goma: Torrents of lava poured into villages after dark in eastern Congo with little warning, leaving at least 15 people dead amid the chaos and destroying more than 500 homes, officials and survivors have said. The eruption of Mount Nyiragongo on Saturday night sent 5,000 people fleeing from the city of Goma across the nearby border into Rwanda, UN said. **pg**

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 2,69,47,496 (+1,95,685)
DEATHS: 3,07,249 (+3,496)
RECOVERED: 2,40,47,760 (+3,26,671)
ACTIVE: 25,81,741
MAHA: 56,02,019 (+22,122)
K'TAKA: 24,50,215 (+25,311)
KERALA: 23,65,788 (+17,821)
UP: 16,73,785 (+3,894)
DELHI: 14,18,418 (+1,550)

CBSE XII staggered exams in July-Aug

Final call on June 1; States, UTs told to submit concerns, proposals by May 25

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With several States and Union Territories reluctant to hold the Class XII Board exams in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic, sources in the Ministry of Education said the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has proposed the exams in a staggered manner from July 15 to August 26. An official announcement regarding this is likely to be made on June 1.

A top Government official also confirmed that the Ministry will review the suggestions received from the States and other stakeholders and present them to the PMO for taking the final call on the contentious issues, which could impact the career prospects of about 1.25 crore Class XII board examinees.

Bihar, Kerala and Nagaland are the only State Education boards which have already conducted the Class XII board examinations between February end to mid-April,



whereas States like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat are in favour of conducting the examination as usual since Covid-19 cases are under control.

The exams of Class 12 board CBSE and ICSE affiliated schools in these States are pending. The CBSE sources said the exams will be held only in offline mode as per the two variants proposals of now.

"The CBSE has proposed conducting exams between July 15 and August 26 and the result to be declared in September. The final decision will be taken on June 1," said the official.

The CBSE has suggested either holding exams only for a few subjects or holding exams for 1.5 hours instead of three

hours. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank has given a deadline of May 25 to the States to put forward their concerns and suggestions pertaining to the conduct of Class 12 board exams.

While there has been an outrage on social media and other platforms from students, parents and others, including certain Opposition parties, ever since the Centre's keenness to conduct the board exams came to the fore on Sunday, Ministry sources said there is likely to be consensus on holding the exams for 1.30 hours based on multiple choice questions and in a staggered manner where only 10 students per class room will be accommodated.

Continued on Page 2

States in a fix as foreign job makers say no to supply, look for indemnity

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

After floating global tenders for procuring Covid-19 vaccines from the foreign land, the job-starved States now seem to be shooting in the dark as major foreign job makers like Moderna and US-based Pfizer have made it clear that they will deal with only the Central Indian Government and not with them as far as providing vaccine is concerned.

So far non-BJP ruled States — Punjab and Delhi's request has been turned down even as sources shared that the foreign vaccine companies are not likely to enter India unless they are given vaccine indemnity against the costs of compensation for any severe side effects.

Since the States cannot provide any such guarantee, the vaccine makers are likely to do business only with the Centre. In what could be the signal to other State Governments as well, the pharma firms Moderna, Pfizer and J&J have cited their policy norms which, they said, mandate them to deal with the Central Government of a country and not the States. The sources also said the Centre is yet to approve many vaccines being made abroad.

This has come as a setback to several States Government which have been pinning hopes on meeting the job requirement from abroad.

Continued on Page 2



A medic administers a dose of Covishield vaccine at a vaccination centre at a Delhi Govt School in New Delhi on Monday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Vaccine centres in Delhi shut for want of shots

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Monday said vaccination has been suspended in 400 centres for 18-44 years, while Covaxin centres for 45 plus have also been shut.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia both urged the Central Government to initiate the process of procurement of vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson for India.

"These firms do not talk to States directly, thus we have written to Center to talk to them and import and distribute among the States as we have



A notice outside a vaccination centre states the non-availability of vaccines at Daryaganj in New Delhi on Monday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

already lost a lot of time," Kejriwal said.

"Vaccinate, Vaccinate, Vaccinate," Kejriwal wrote on his Twitter handle in reply to a tweet by Jai Kotak, AVP at Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Continued on Page 2

Govt allows walk-in registration for 18-44 years group

New Delhi: In a bid to minimise vaccine shortage and help those "without access to internet or smart phones", on-site registration and appointment has now been enabled for the 18-44 years age group on the CoWin platform for Covid-19 vaccination. This feature is enabled only for Government Covid Vaccination Centres at present, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday. **P4**

Panacea Biotech, RDIF to produce 100 mn doses of Sputnik V annually

New Delhi: Domestic pharma major Panacea Biotech (PB) and Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), have agreed to produce 100 million doses per year of Russia-made Sputnik V Covid vaccine in India. **P4**

PAEDIATRIC TRIALS OF COVAXIN MAY BEGIN IN JUNE

Hyderabad: Bharath Biotech may start clinical trials of its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin on children from June, a senior official of the vaccine-maker has said.

Sushil: From ace wrestler to murder accused, nexus with dreaded gangsters

Two-time Olympic medallist's role into murder of budding wrestler being probed

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI



It is also suspected that Kumar was also sending wrestlers, who had retired due to injury or due to some other reasons, to the gangsters and they were often working as recovery agents in parts of Rohini, West and Outer Delhi.

"Police is investigating the murder of Sagar with all angles. The vehicles and weapons recovered after the incident are also being probed. Police teams will be taking Kumar to the stadium to analyse the sequence of incident. Police will also investigate the role of gangsters, including Neeraj Bawania and Sandeep alias Kala Jhatedi," said a senior police official.

Continued on Page 2

Cops at Twitter office on marking Patra's post as 'manipulative'

Serve summons on its officials to join ongoing probe in 'Cong toolkit' case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of Delhi Police on Monday evening visited the offices of Twitter India in Delhi and Gurugram to serve summons on its officials to join the ongoing probe in the alleged toolkit case.

Earlier, the police had sent a notice to social media platform Twitter in connection with an enquiry into a complaint for flagging BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra's tweet on alleged Congress tweet as manipulated media.

"Twitter had replied that they have no information to share. So, the police teams were sent at South Delhi's Lado Sarai and Gurugram to record the statement of the people there, but the offices were locked," said a source.

Chinmoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO)



A team of Delhi Police Special Cell visits the Twitter India's Lado Sarai office in connection with the probe into the alleged Covid toolkit matter, in New Delhi, on Monday. PTI

of Delhi Police, said the police team went to Twitter offices to serve a notice, as a part of routine process. "This was necessitated as police wanted to ascertain who is the right person to serve a notice as replies by Twitter India MD have been very ambiguous," said Biswal.

The BJP has accused the Congress of creating a "toolkit" that seeks to tarnish the image of the country and Prime Minister Narendra Modi by calling the new strain of coro-

navirus as India strain or Modi strain.

However, the Congress has denied the allegation and claimed that the BJP is propagating a fake "toolkit" to defame it.

"The Delhi Police is enquiring into a complaint in which clarification is sought from the Twitter regarding the classification of a tweet by Sambit Patra as 'manipulative,' said Biswal.

Continued on Page 2

Now, Yellow Fungus crops up in Ghaziabad



IANS ■ GHAZIABAD

As the country battles the Covid pandemic, besides its twisted offspring the Black and White fungi wreaking havoc, now the first case of Yellow Fungus has also cropped up in Ghaziabad. ENT Specialist BP Tyagi has claimed that there is a patient of Yellow Fungus in his hospital, who is undergoing treatment.

The 45-year-old patient, resident of Sanjay Nagar in Harsh Hospital, Ghaziabad, is suffering from Yellow Fungus as well as Black and White Fungus.

Professor Tyagi said, "A patient came to me, who after the initial test appeared to be normal, but after doing another investigation, I came to know that the patient is suffering from Black, White as well as Yellow Fungus."

Continued on Page 2

Panel shortlists 3 names for CBI chief sans hiccup

SK Jaiswal, Rajesh Chandra, VSK Kaumudi among the shortlisted

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The three-members committee comprising Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, and Chief Justice of India on Monday unanimously shortlisted SK Jaiswal, Rajesh Chandra and VSK Kaumudi for the post of the next CBI Director. The Prime Minister will now choose a name from these three names.

Opposition Leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury objected in writing to the name of BSF chief Rakesh Asthana citing controversies surrounding him. Meanwhile, sources said that Uttar Pradesh DGP HC Awasthi's name was also considered.

The 90-minute meeting held at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence unanimously decided on the bouquet of three names, said sources.

Among the shortlisted names are CISF chief SK Jaiswal who was earlier DGP of Maharashtra, SSB chief Rajesh Chandra from Bihar cadre, and Special Secretary in Home Ministry in charge of Internal Security, VSP Kaumudi from Andhra Pradesh cadre.

NIA chief YC Modi and BSF chief Rakesh Asthana and many other names like those of the Kerala DGP were dropped due to the fact they had less than six months of service left. The Supreme Court in a recent judgment on selection of DGP's said that the persons should have minimum six months service left. It is learned that Chief Justice of India NV Ramana and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury suggested that Modi can select the new CBI chief from these three names — SK Jaiswal, Rajesh Chandra and VSK Kaumudi.

It is learned that meeting started with the Prime Minister seeking Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury's opinion.

Modi attends meet on impact of panchayat poll loss, Covid on UP Assembly elections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have understood to have attended a key strategy session of the BJP and RSS leaders on Uttar Pradesh here, assessing impact of Covid-19 and the BJP's setback in the recent panchayat polls on the State Assembly elections due early next year.

Modi was joined by BJP chief JP Nadda and UP BJP general secretary (organisational) Sunil Bansal in a meeting with RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale.

BJP launched itself into a damage control mode in UP following a series of events that raised question marks over the State

Government's handling of the Covid-19 situation.

On May 9, Union Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath criticised his Covid-19 containment strategy and demanded urgent corrective measures. He alleged hoarding of empty oxygen cylinders and concentrators.

Hundreds of bodies were found floating in the Ganga recently, prompting suspicion that the abandoned corpses could be those of Covid-19 patients.

Besides, the BJP's Sitapur MLA also expressed resentment over Covid-19 management in the State, saying he feared a sedition charge for speaking up.

Continued on Page 2



On cloud nine, couple walks down the aisle

PNS ■ CHENNAI/NEW DELHI



A couple marries on-board a SpiceJet chartered flight from Madurai, on Sunday. PTI

A couple from Madurai, Tamil Nadu, found a unique way to tie the knot in an unusual way to avoid the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. The couple, identified as Rakesh and Dheekshana, hired a SpiceJet Boeing 737 for two hours and tied the knot exactly when their chartered aircraft hovered over the Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple in the "graceful" presence of 133 relatives and close friends in the flight on Sunday.

After images and videos of the mid-air wedding started circulating on social media on Monday showing people standing extremely close to each other as the couple tied the knot, the Directorate of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued a show-cause notice to SpiceJet and ordered an enquiry into the matter.

The DGCA de-rostered the crew and directed SpiceJet to lodge a complaint with relevant authorities against those people who did not follow the Covid-19 norms inside the flight. "The DGCA" will take strict action" after it completes its probe," said officials.

However, S Senthil Velavan, director, Madurai Airport, has been quoted by a news agency as saying that the Airport Authority of India staff were not aware of the proposed marriage that was to take place in the flight. The airline authorities told the media the passengers were briefed about the dos and don'ts during the flight.

In the images and visuals of the mid-air wedding, the couple can be seen surrounded by guests, all of whom violated Covid-19 protocols. One person can be seen wearing his mask on his chin. The couple, in fact, had tied the knot in a

private wedding ceremony last week. But soon after the Covid relaxation was announced, both of them finalised upon the plan of the "aircraft wedding" in order to make their special

day memorable. According to officials, the "marriage flight" took off from Madurai International Airport at 7 am on May 23. **Continued on Page 2**

Hundreds gather for 'divine' horse's funeral in Karnataka

Bengaluru: Hundreds of locals gathered at a village in Gokak tehsil in Belagavi district of Karnataka on Sunday to organise the funeral of a "divine" horse, flouting coronavirus guidelines. The horse, belonging to a local mutt, was believed to have miracle powers, the locals of the village said.

According to natives, every time there was a crisis in the village, the horse was allowed to move around freely. Amid the ongoing coron-

avirus crisis in the village, the horse was too allowed to move around freely.

However, while lurching, the animal passed away. Hearing the demise of the horse, around 400-500 villagers gathered for its funeral. Belgaum police booked 15 villagers for galvanising people for the funeral.

Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the authorities were investigating the matter. **Agencies**

T to earmark 1,500 beds to handle Black Fungus cases

Hyderabad: Amid rising cases of Black Fungus in the state, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Monday instructed officials to enhance specific beds to treat the infection.

The chief minister also said there should be a study done in places like Delhi and Maharashtra where the Covid-19 spread was controlled and if need be, a medical team should visit the national capital and the neighbouring state to examine and study the situation.

"A total of 1,500 beds, at least 1,100 beds in Hyderabad and another 400 in districts, need to be set up. In addition to increasing the number of beds, the CM said the number of

drugs required to reduce Black Fungus cases should be estimated and medicines ordered immediately," an official release quoted Rao as saying.

Besides increasing bed strength, the CM wanted all the medicines used to treat Black Fungus, also known as mucormycosis, be made available and orders placed for the required numbers.

He wanted to increase the stock of Posaconazole medicine and wanted recruitment of doctors on war footing to contain the spread of Black Fungus.

According to officials, two state-run hospitals have a total of 400 Black Fungus specific beds.



Preparation underway at Maha Bodhi Temple ahead of Buddha Jayanti in, Bodhi Gaya on Monday

HC directs Drug Controller of Delhi to look into procurement of FabiFlu by Gautam Gambhir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday directed the Drug Controller of Delhi to look into the procurement and distribution of FabiFlu by BJP MP Gautam Gambhir, and to take necessary action as per law. The Bench comprising Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh also took note of the procurement of oxygen cylinders by Aam Aadmi Party MLAs Priti Tomar and Praveen Kumar, and directed that enquiry or investigation be undertaken by the drug authority.

"He (Gautam Gambhir) has been a national player...we're sure he had good intentions...but the way he has gone about it, he has actually done a disservice, unintentionally may be. This is not done. Law must take its course...it is only to deal

with such situations. Intentions may be lacking but in that process if they cross the line, law has to take its course. Even with best intention, they are malpractices...We have narrowed down to three - Gautam Gambhir, Priti Tomar and Praveen Kumar," the Court observed.

The Court noted that in Gambhir's case, 285 strips of FabiFlu out of 2,628 strips were left after distribution and the same were given to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). The payment for procurement was given through the Gautam Gambhir Foundation. The Bench sought a status report from the Drug Controller, Delhi detailing how such large quantity of FabiFlu was procured on the basis of a single prescription and then distributed to several patients/attendants.

Lockdown extended in Bihar till June 1 Ministers told not to travel during lockdown

Patna: The Nitish Kumar Government in Bihar on Monday extended Covid-induced lockdown by seven days till June 1, and asked its Ministers to refrain from hitting the streets while the state was under lockdown as their tours could have an "adverse affect on compliance of the restrictions by common citizens."

Lockdown has been in force in Bihar for nearly a month and was to be effective till Tuesday.

Regarding direction to the ministers, a communication issued by the cabinet secretariat department made it clear that restrictions on travel extended to "all districts" including those which happened to

be under a ministers "prabhaar" (charge) or home to his or her Assembly constituency.

The communication was issued as an addendum to a notification issued on Sunday where members of the cabinet had been reproached for undertaking tours of their constituencies or districts under their charge.

The Ministers were told that if they continued with their tours during the lockdown, which has entailed severe curbs on peoples movement and vehicular traffic, "it might have an adverse effect on efforts to ensure strict compliance of restrictions" by the common citizens. The state has been com-

plete lockdown since May 05 and the same has been further extended from May 26 till June 01 next.

The drastic measure was taken in the wake of a raging second wave that struck the state in the beginning of April and has since left more than four lakh people infected and claimed over 2,000 lives.

Although there has been a significant drop in the positivity rate and a commensurate increase in the rate of recovery, the government seems to be acting with abundant caution given the high density of population in Bihar and a predominantly rural demography.

Malaria cases, deaths significantly reduced in Tripura: Official

Agartala: Tripura has succeeded in significantly reducing the number of malaria cases and fatalities due to active surveillance, diagnosis, treatment, and awareness programmes, State Programme Officer for Malaria, Dr. Bansari Das, said on Monday.

At present, around 150 medical teams are working tirelessly covering all the malaria-prone zones, amid the challenges thrown by the second wave of Covid-19, to combat the disease caused by a plasmodium parasite transmitted by the bite of infected mosquitoes, the official said.

"Over the past three years, the malaria death toll has come down significantly due to extensive mass awareness drives, proper screening, real-time diagnosis, and complete treatment arranged by the government," Dr.

Das said. A special initiative has been taken for mass screening in 110 endemic sub-centres to break the transmission cycle and reduce the human reservoir, the State Programme Officer for Malaria said.

Medical teams are conducting random sample testing even in remotest parts of the state while raising awareness through various programmes, Dr. Das said.

An information, education and communication (IEC) van, prepared with multi-colour flexes and a sound system, has been moving across the State for generating awareness.

If people test positive for the infection, the patients are hospitalised or their treatment is followed up by ASHA/other health workers to ensure complete treatment.



CM Arvind Kejriwal visits Mayapuri oxygen depot to inspect consignment of 6,000 cylinders received from China



City streets wear a deserted look during Covid-induced lockdown in Hyderabad on Monday

446 Covid patients infected with Black Fungus in K'taka: Minister

Bengaluru: Around 446 Covid patients have been infected with black fungus (mucormycosis) in Karnataka, admitted State Health Minister K. Sudhakar on Monday.

Of the 446 patients infected, 433 are under treatment in state-run hospitals, and 11 are in home isolation," said the minister in a statement here.

The fungal infection is caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes.

As black fungus is a post-Covid complication, those who are diabetic and use steroids are vulnerable to contract it.

Alarmed by the growing number of Covid patients con-

tracting the disease across the state, Sudhakar said an expert panel had been set up to study the infection, which has been declared as an epidemic by the Union Health Ministry.

Though fungal infections are common, with 200-300 people getting infected across the country in a year, Sudhakar said Covid patients were getting it after recovery during the pandemic's second wave.

"The Centre has allotted 1,150 vials of Amphotericin B drug to the state for injecting the infected patients. Anticipating more such cases, I have urged Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers

D.V. Sadananda Gowda to rush an additional 20,000 vials of the medicine to the state for treating more patients," said Sudhakar, a medical doctor by profession.

As per the experts' panel report, unsterilised medical equipment, prolonged use of face mask, tube and beds are the primary source of the infection.

"The panel has advised us to stop building renovation work in hospitals where Covid patients are under treatment, not to allow outsiders into intensive care units (ICUs) and ensure hygiene in clinical facilities," the Minister noted.

Cops at Twitter office on marking Patra's...

From Page 1

"It appears that Twitter has some information which is not known to us on the basis of which they have classified it as such. This information is relevant to the enquiry.

The Special Cell which is conducting the enquiry wants to find out the truth. Twitter which has claimed to know the underlying truth should clarify," Biswal added.

However, police refused to divulge the contents of the complaint or the identity of the complainant.

Last week, Twitter labelled as manipulated media a tweet by Patra on the alleged "toolkit". Twitter said it may label Tweets that include media (videos, audio, and images) that have been deceptively altered or fabricated.

The BJP leaders, including Patra, have posted numerous tweets to attack the Congress over the purported "toolkit".

On May 19, the Congress lodged a police complaint seeking registration of cases against BJP chief JP Nadda, Union Minister Smriti Irani, BJP general secretary BL Santosh and Patra over the alleged forgery of documents.

Sushil: From...

From Page 1

"Kumar and Ajay were questioned by the police team on Monday for more than four hours and Kumar was also asked about his associates and friends who helped him in hiding," said the senior police official.

When asked about a video of the incident which Kumar asked his associate to record, police refused to reveal further details and said the accused will be interrogated.

A source told The Pioneer that the brawl took place due to a dispute over a flat, located in Model Town area, in which both Kumar and Kala Jhatedi were partners, however, the further interrogation of Kumar will clear the reason behind the deadly attack on deceased wrestler Dhankar and his friends, Sonu and Amit Kumar, who were injured.

Sonu, who has 19 criminal

cases registered against him, is nephew of Kala Jhatedi. It is also suspected that Kumar, along with Kala Jhatedi and Lawrence Bishnoi, were running several highway toll taxes in Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh (UP).

"Several wrestlers were also managing these toll taxes on behalf of the alleged gangster and Sushil and recovering money," said 27-year-old Sumit, a wrestler.

Meanwhile, another wrestler on condition of anonymity said the dispute over the flat had started around three months ago and it was vacated around two months ago.

"After selling this flat the amount was to be divided between Kumar and Jhatedi but after taking support from Neeraj Bawania, Kumar vacated this flat and since then there were tensions between Kumar and Sagar and Sonu Mahal," he said.

On cloud...

From Page 1

The couple claimed that the entire contingent had cleared the RT-PCR test before boarding. An airline spokesperson said, "A SpiceJet Boeing 737 was chartered by a travel agent in Madurai on May 23, 2021 for a group of passengers for a joy ride post their wedding."

"The client was clearly briefed on Covid guidelines to be followed and denied permission for any activity to be performed on board. The approval for this flight was taken as a joy ride for the wedding group," he said.

"The group was repeatedly briefed on the safety norms to be followed by the operating cabin crew and advised to follow the protocols laid down by the DGCA, including restrictions on photography and videography." "Despite repeated requests and reminders, the passengers did not follow the guidelines and the airline is taking appropriate action as per rules," he said.

Vaccine...

From Page 1

According to Directorate General of Health Services, the Delhi Government, at least 400 centres were made for 18-44 years whereas 650 centres for 45 plus. "Due to scarcity of vaccines, we are closing all centres for 18 plus age group and Covaxin centres for 45 plus," a senior Government official said.

"Only centres, which have Covishield available, are open for 45 plus age group," he added.

As per the vaccination database, over 50 lakh doses of vaccines have been administered in Delhi so far, and 11,51,356 people have been fully vaccinated after receiving both shots.

While many have left without vaccination and fatality rate in the national Capital is still high, Sisodia, nodal Minister for Covid management, said the Central Government should rise above petty politics and procure vaccines to save people

from Covid.

Sisodia also alleged due to gross vaccine mismanagement of Central Government, States are suffering with vaccine dearth. "The international private firms have shut their doors for a direct deal with State Government. Scarcity of vaccines is ubiquitous all over the nation. When the Delhi Government raised the demand for vaccines, the Central Government only provided 4 lakh doses and asked us to float a global tender. We reached out to Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson, Moderna and Pfizer told us that they are exclusively speaking with Central Government only and will not distribute vaccines to any State Governments," he added.

Meanwhile, Sisodia has written to the Union Health Minister Dr Harshvardhan seeking a change in the current Covid vaccine procurement plan.

Now, Yellow Fungus crops up in Ghaziabad

From Page 1

"This fungus is found in reptiles. I saw this disease for the first time. Amphotericin B injection is used to treat this disease. It takes a long time to heal. This patient's condition cannot be said to be very good, he is still undergoing treatment."

According to Tyagi, as far as the symptoms of this disease are concerned, there remains sluggishness or lethargy in the body while there is less appetite, due to which the weight starts decreasing. Body wounds also heal very slowly.

Cleanliness is very important to avoid this disease, as infection starts off due to poor hygiene. The more you keep cleanliness around you, the more you can stay safe from this disease.

According to the patient's son Abhishek, "His father was undergoing treatment for corona and he was recovering well. In the last two-three days, his eyes started swelling and suddenly they closed altogether. There was nose bleed and urine leak."

CBSE XII ...

From Page 1

"The exams will be of 90 minutes duration instead of three hours and will be conducted in the same schools where students are enrolled. The questions will be objective and have a very short answer type. Students will have to appear in one language and three elective subjects," said the official.

The CBSE in its proposal had also suggested that in plan B, students can be given an option of appearing for exams in a later stage too. This will mean that if a student misses an exam due to Covid related issue, they can appear for the boards about 15 days later.

Ministry officials said in the Sunday meeting chaired by Union Minister Rajnath Singh and attended Pokhriyal and State Education Secretaries

there was a consensus for holding the exams by majority of States except for the concerns raised by Maharashtra, Delhi and Jharkhand. Different State Governments are taking different decisions about their own board exams.

While most State Governments have already cancelled Class 10 Board exams, Uttar Pradesh has not yet taken a decision on either Class 10 or 12 exams. Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad Secretary Divya Kant Shukla said there is no decision to pass students without taking the exam. A decision is likely later this week. Being the largest State, UP has 5.6 million students writing the Class 10 and 12 examinations every year.

While Class 10 board exams are cancelled in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab the

respective Governments have decided that the State Board exams will be held along with the CBSE Class 12 examinations schedules.

Telangana State Education board is also likely to conduct the Class 12 board examination between July and September, but Gujarat and West Bengal have said the examination will be conducted, once the pandemic is contained.

Maharashtra, which was the first to experience the dangers of second wave pandemic, cancelled the Class 10 while final decision for Class 12 is expected in a week's time.

Other northeast States like Assam and Tripura have said the Board exams for Class 10 and 12 will be held 15 days after normalcy is restored in the region, post Covid-19.

They have also mentioned the necessity to hold the examination.

Modi attends...

From Page 1

"What standing do MLAs have? If we speak too much, treason and sedition charges will be slapped on us as well," Rakesh Rathore told reporters when asked about ICU facilities in Sitapur.

Reverses in Panchayat polls with the rival Samajwadi Party catching-up with the ruling party in the recently held Panchayat polls, seen as semi-finals to assembly polls, have made BJP party managers quite anxious, sources said.

Central BJP leadership has expressed "unhappiness" over panchayat results, they said.

The party may not field the sitting MLAs on almost half of the seats and set eyes on fresh candidates to stabilise itself in the state.

To guess the ground situation, UP Chief Minister is cur-

rently touring the districts in the Assembly constituencies, where the BJP-backed candidates have not fared well including in Varanasi and Ayodhya. "Re-assessment" of the UP strategy is currently underway, according to sources.

Re-booting Covid-19 strategy, BJP president JP Nadda, in recent week, asked all BJP-ruled States, including UP, to come-up with a plan to look after families members, particularly children, who have lost their bread-winners.

BJP Nadda last week wrote to CMs of BJP-ruled States and asked them to launch initiatives to assist those who have suffered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He has also asked CMs to not to celebrate second anniversary of the Modi-government and rather help Covid-19 patients.

States in lurch as foreign job makers...

From Page 1

The Centre, a few weeks ago, had asked the States to approach the foreign vaccine manufacturers directly to meet their need for their population.

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka are among a few other States that have floated global tenders to procure Covid vaccines. These States are reporting a huge surge in cases in the second wave of Covid-19, necessitating vaccine inoculation to almost all age groups at the earliest.

On Monday, Pfizer while refusing the Delhi Government's request to provide vaccines, said it will supply its vaccine only to Central Governments and "supranational organisations".

"Pfizer will supply Covid-19 vaccine only to Central Governments and supranational organisations for deployment in national immunization programmes."

Allocation of doses and implementation plan within a country is a decision for local Governments based on relevant health authority guidance," the company said in a statement here.

It followed Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia's statement earlier in the day that Moderna and Pfizer refused to

supply vaccines directly to the Delhi Government. Punjab too has been met with similar fate as Moderna, refused direct supply of the Covid-19 vaccine, citing its policy to deny the State Government's request.

The Pfizer told the Delhi Government that discussions are on with the Government of India and we are hopeful to bring the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for use in the country, the company further said.

The Central Government, meanwhile, said it is coordinating with all vaccine manufacturers, including Pfizer and Moderna, for vaccine procurement. Supply of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to India depends on the surplus stock available with these companies, said Dr VK Paul, Niti Aayog member (Health) at a Press conference here.

Facing criticism over the pace of vaccination, the Centre had last month announced its decision to allow states and private hospitals to procure vaccines directly from the vaccine manufacturers. Many States since then floated global tenders for vaccines to inoculate their population.

The Punjab Government had approached various vaccine manufacturers, including Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, to ensure early inoculation in the State. Maharashtra which has floated Rs 5 crore tender too seems to be having the same preference as far as job makers are concerned while Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation floated a tender to procure 3.5 crore vaccines on May 15. The last date for submission is June 5.

The UP State Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd had floated a global tender for 4 crore doses on May 7. It tweaked the norms recently after a few interested vaccine makers expressed their inability to meet some of the storage and supply requirements.

Similarly, the Kerala Medical Services Corporation Limited floated tenders for three crore doses on May 22 while Karnataka State Government has split its tender for two crore vaccines into four, seeking supply of 50 lakh doses each at a total cost of Rs 843 crore.

Pune Municipal Corporation and Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation and Goa which had plans to float the tenders might think otherwise after foreign pharma refusal to deal with the States individually.

City girds up to battle new wave

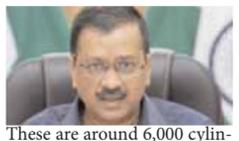
IMPORTS 6K O2 CYLINDERS FROM CHINA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday visited the oxygen depot in Mayapuri which has been prepared to store the consignment of the oxygen cylinders received from China.

Around 6,000 oxygen cylinders have been airlifted from China, out of which 4400 have been received and 1600 will be received in the next two to three days.

Kejriwal said these cylinders can be given to the individuals in need and if another wave emerges and the cases rise again then with these 6,000 cylinders, the Delhi Government can prepare 3000 oxygen beds as two cylinders are needed on each oxygen bed. So, this way there is no laxity in the preparations being made by the Government," he said.



These are around 6,000 cylinders; we have imported these from China and 4400 have been received. 1600 cylinders will be received within 2-3 days. We are preparing depots of 2000 cylinders each in three places with these 6000 cylinders," he said.

"These cylinders can be given to the individuals in need and if another wave emerges and the cases rise again then with these 6000 cylinders, we can prepare 3000 oxygen beds as two cylinders are needed on each oxygen bed. So, this way there is no laxity in the preparations being made by the Government," he said.

Centre responsible for job shortage: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday said Pfizer and Moderna have refused to sell coronavirus vaccines directly to the State, saying they will only talk to the Centre.

Accusing the Centre for scarcity of vaccines, he said the Central Government is fully responsible for this dearth of vaccines that the nation is currently facing.

"As a nation, we have not been able to acquire any of the vaccines which have been successful all over the world. The United States gave a green signal to Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson in December 2020 itself but we have not been able to attain even a single of these vaccines. Even Russia gave clearance for Sputnik in August 2020 and quickly started its mass vaccination drive," he said.

He added that at least 68 nations have acquired Sputnik but the Central Government has woken up only after the situation got abysmal in India. "The UK cleared Pfizer and in fact, 85 nations have given



Pfizer the Green light but our Union Government has not cleared it yet. At present, Moderna has been distributed it to 46 nations apart from India while vaccine manufacture by Johnson & Johnson has been distributed to 41 nations," he added.

"All the 400 vaccination sites for the 18-44 age group have been closed in Delhi after the vaccine stock was over, while the centres administering Covaxin to the 45+ age group, healthcare workers and frontline workers too have been shut due to unavailability of jabs," he added.

The deputy chief minister urged the Centre to approve Pfizer and Moderna on war footing. "I urge the Centre not to make this vaccination programme a joke. Approve Pfizer and Moderna on war footing, rather than asking states to approach these companies. It should not happen that by the time we get vaccines, the time comes that even the antibodies of those who have been vaccinated are finished and they will again require vaccination," he said.

Youth dupes man of ₹36K for Remdesivir injection, arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 20-year-old college student for allegedly duping a man of ₹ 36,000 on the pretext of providing him Remdesivir injection required for treatment of coronavirus patients.

The accused identified as Sagar Chaurasia is a resident of Baba Farid Puri, West Patel Nagar and a student of BCom final year.

Police said Chaurasia worked for a person named Akram Khan who is still at large and efforts are being taken to nab him.

According to Santosh Kumar Meena, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Dwarka district, on May 15, a complaint was received at Dabri police station in which the complainant stated that he was in of Remdesivir injection for a relative and got in touch with one Ajay through social media.

"He was promised delivery of the said drug at Rs. 38,000 and was asked to transfer Rs. 18,000 in his bank account.

"Later, the victim made another payment of Rs. 18,000 as per demand and later switched off his mobile phone," said the DCP.

Multi-pronged strategy to deal with unprecedented situation in city: Top babu

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In order to deal with an unprecedented situation of Covid outbreak, the Delhi Government has worked on a multi-pronged strategy by creating a robust health infrastructure in the national Capital, said senior IAS officer Udit Prakash Rai who is one of the key officials who steered Delhi out of its oxygen crisis.

Rai said ensuring a 500 MT of captive capacity of Oxygen, procurement of 15 new Oxygen tankers, 6000 new cylinders and creating a dashboard for real-time oxygen data monitoring of all hospitals in Delhi are part of this strateg.

"We are fully prepared and based on the learning of this phase. Delhi has 19,000 oxygenated hospital beds, while Mumbai has only 11,000, thereby implying that we are far better equipped to assist our patients. The rise in Covid cases in Mumbai were gradual while in Delhi it spiked dramatically, causing so much stress on the demand,"

informed Rai in an exclusive interview with Bureaucrats India, a platform that works on stories of good governance by bureaucracy.

While talking about his excruciating experience of managing the oxygen shortage, which he rightly termed as "an unprecedented and once-in-a-lifetime crisis, he said, "Unlike Mumbai, which has its own captive oxygen, we did not have any and had to depend on other states for getting it.

Talking about co-ordination at different levels in dealing with the crisis, he said: "We have been able to deliver the best because we worked in a very coordinated manner. It went on round the clock. There was neither any gap nor complacency. There was a great sense of dedication among all stakeholders."

In response to the multitude of challenges triggered by Covid-19 including a sudden surge in the demand of oxygen, he said that transportation of oxygen at such a large scale and in no time was the real litmus test, which was cleared so effectively by the team.

Man, driver arrested for selling Black Fungus shots at 36 times MRP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 46-year-old man and his driver for allegedly selling Amphotericin-B, a medicine used for treatment of black fungus infection at an exorbitant rate of Rs 11,300 per injection in the national Capital.

The accused identified as Rajnish Shrivastava, whose firm AmbuSmith Inc. deals in trading of medical equipment and ambulance modification brought these injections from Lucknow and sold them here at a higher price. Police said his driver, Murtaza Khan (36), a resident of Harsh Vihar also helped him in this business.

Police claimed they were selling the drug at a price which was about 36 times the MRP and said further investigation is underway to ascertain the source of drug.

"The accused duo was arrested on Sunday, after two students reported at Saket police station about Shrivastava and informed that as members of a Whatsapp group 'Covid Helper', they help in arranging medicines for patients suffering from Covid-19 and black fungus," said Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district.

"In a complaint, the students stated that while they were trying to arrange Amphotericin-B injection for a needy patient when they came in contact with Shrivastava, who was selling the said injection at Rs 11,300 per injection which is about 36 times the MRP.

They also informed police that

Shrivastava had agreed to deliver 20 injections for Rs 2,26,000 to them in a short while near Max Hospital, Saket," said the DCP.

"Based on the complaint, a case was registered in the matter. Police team along with the complainant waited near Max Hospital for some time and at about 2 pm, two persons in a MGF Hector car, called the complainants at Hauz Rani traffic signal, near Max Hospital for delivery of the injections. They noticed our team and tried to run away but our team apprehended both persons sitting in the car and on search, 20 injections were recovered from it," said the DCP.

"During preliminary interrogation, it emerged that accused Shrivastava has brought these injections from Lucknow and was trying to sell them at a very high price taking advantage of the needy persons during the pandemic," said the DCP.

"Shrivastava did his masters in tourism from Lucknow University and in 2012-13 started a firm named AmbuSmith Inc which engages in trading of medical equipment such as stretchers, ICU beds for hospitals and does modification of ambulance at Shahbad, Mohammadpur village, near IGI Airport," said the DCP.

"The police have also recovered three mobile phones including the one used by Shrivastava to interact with the complainant along with the car which was used by the alleged persons for black marketing injections and medicines required for patients of Covid-19 and black fungus," the DCP added.

Govt: Widest possible consultative process to decide XIIth board exams

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The final decision on the fate of Class 12 board exams will be based on the widest possible consultative process, and it will also be the best possible option keeping in mind the current situation and students' future prospects, Government sources said on Monday.

They said the high-level meeting, which was held on Sunday and was attended by several Union Ministers and representatives from states, regarding the board exams came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for such a consultation to take into account suggestions and ideas from states.

Modi had chaired a meeting on May 21 where the Union Education Ministry briefed him about the extensive consultations done with teachers and parents, and also informed him about the options at hand about the exams, they said.

Noting that the government has to take a decision keeping in mind the present security of the children due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as their future prospects, he told them to hold a high level meeting with all states and senior Union ministers to take into account suggestions and ideas.



Demand, supply gap of Black Fungus medicine too wide to bridge, need drastic steps, says HC

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court

on Monday said the gap between demand and supply of Amphotericin B, used for treating black fungus affecting primarily those who have recovered from Covid-19, is "too wide to bridge" and drastic steps are required to be taken.

A Bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh, which heard for six hours the matter relating to various issues arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic, said the gap between the demand and supply is more than one-third and it cannot work at this pace.

"It appears the present production and supply and their projections may fall well short of the requirement of the medicine to treat black fungus patients not only in Delhi but across India," the bench said.

The court also said this situation is very different from oxygen crisis and "if there is very limited supply, everyone will have to take a cut. How do we pass any order that you give it."

The Centre indicated to the court about the expected supply of the medicine stock in May and June, early delivery of its import and ramping up of production.

Regarding augmentation of the medicine, central government standing counsel Kirtiman Singh and Amit Mahajan said expected supply in May was 1.36 lakh vials, in June it would be 2.55 lakh vials.

Besides, the import order of the drug is 7.05 lakh vials and the gov-

ernment is trying to find out other avenues, he said, adding that it has also set up a portal for real time data where the states have to update the number of black fungus patients, admissions to and discharges from the hospital and the deaths.

The court directed the Centre to file a further status report with all the relevant details and listed the matter for hearing on May 27.

The bench was informed by the Delhi government's counsel that while on May 21, there were around 200 cases of Mucormycosis (black fungus) in the national capital, the number has increased to 475 as on Monday.

After perusing the figures given by the Central government, the bench said, "The gap is too wide to bridge. Something drastic needs to be done. It cannot work at this pace. The gap is more than one-third. There is a huge shortfall even with these steps."

The bench asked the Centre to find out if there can be more licenses, apart from existing five firms, to manufacture the medicine.

On being asked about the situation worldwide and whether the medicine was in shortfall across the globe, the Centre's counsel said black fungus cases are majorly in South Asia and very few in other countries, so the drug is not in much demand there.

He said the Centre was trying to do whatever it can and there are several constraints like capacity and

quality management of the drug.

The counsel said black fungus is not a contagious disease and it is not going to grow at the pace at which COVID-19 grew and added that those who have developed Mucormycosis, "best of luck to them and God be with them."

He said the Centre will place in the status report about the efforts and progress made by them for alternative medications.

The court was informed by various advocates that besides black fungus, now white and yellow fungus have also been reported and the latter is more lethal and few cases have been reported in Ghaziabad.

To this, the high court asked if all these are related to oxygen and steroid administered on COVID-19 patients.

Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma said that according to Dr Randeep Guleria, AIMS Director, it is caused due to steroid overdose and also seen in diabetic patients.

The Centre's counsel submitted that they have issued a notification to identify black fungus under the Epidemic Disease Act which will ensure that all suspected and confirmed cases of Mucormycosis shall be reported through the Health Department and have also issued SoP for reporting the disease.

He said it is a drug not a jackfruit and the government can't force people to produce sub standard drugs.



A notice outside a vaccination centre states the non-availability of vaccines against the Covid-19, at Daryaganj South Delhi Municipal Corporation dispensary in New Delhi on Monday

City records 1,550 Covid cases, 207 deaths, positivity 2.52

New Delhi: Delhi recorded 1,550 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 207 fatalities on Monday, even as Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said his Government has begun preparing for what is being termed the "third wave". This is the lowest number of daily cases recorded since March 27 (1,558 cases) and the count has gone below the 2,000-mark for the second consecutive day.

The positivity rate in the national Capital stands at 2.52 per cent.

According to the latest health bulletin, the 207 new fatalities pushed the death toll

to 23,409. On Sunday, 1,649 cases and 189 deaths were recorded, while the positivity rate had dipped to 2.42 per cent. Delhi had recorded 3,846 cases and 235 deaths on Wednesday, and 3,231 cases and 233 deaths on Thursday, while the tally on Friday was 3,009 with 252 deaths. On Saturday, it fell further to 2,260 cases.

The positivity rate was 5.5 per cent on Thursday and 4.76 per cent on Friday, slipping gradually to less than 4 per cent on Saturday. In an online briefing, Kejriwal earlier said, "Now the cases are reducing significantly. For the country, this is

the second wave but for Delhi, this is the fourth wave, and this time, in the last week of April around 28,000 cases were recorded but now they have come down to 1500."

The infection rate had also reached 36 per cent in the last week of April, coming down to around 2.5 per cent now, he said.

"It seems that this wave is subsiding but there has been no laxity in the efforts by the Delhi government. We have already started preparing for the next, what is being called the third wave," the chief minister said.

Amid escalating cases of

black fungus in the national capital, Delhi Health Minister Jain on Saturday had asked people to be watchful and not resort to self-medication, particularly steroids, and said about 15 hospitals in the city are treating patients of mucormycosis.

Mucormycosis or black fungus is more common among people whose immunity has got lowered due to Covid, diabetes, kidney disease, liver or cardiac disorders, age-related issues, or those on medication for auto-immune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis.

BJP leader Vijay Goel writes to Delhi L-G, suggests Covid compensation policy

New Delhi: Senior BJP leader and former Union Minister Vijay Goel on Monday wrote to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal, suggesting that a Covid compensation policy be prepared to provide relief to families of those who died due to the disease.

Through his letter to the Lieutenant Governor (L-G), Goel also sought to know whether there is any policy of the Delhi Government to give such a compensation.

"If there is no such policy, it should be made at least for those who died due to Covid. Detailed guidelines should be framed and compensation should be provided automatically to all those who are covered under these guidelines," he said.

The Delhi Government had recently announced a compensation of Rs 50,000 to families of Delhi residents who died due to Covid.

It also pays Rs 1 crore to families of its employees who died due to the virus while discharging their duties as frontline workers.

In his letter, Goel said, "On what grounds Delhi government decided for two different amounts of compensation.

Crackdown on liquor bootleggers amid lockdown

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM :

The lockdown seems to have given an opportunity to smugglers, suppliers, bootleggers to go for liquor bootlegging in Gurugram.

The Gurugram police crackdown on such elements has led to seizure of 2,074 bottles of Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL) about 2,837 bottles of country-made liquor and 96 bottles of beer in the district during the lockdown in 2021 while in 2020 the district police had recovered 51,652 bottles of IMFL about 49,710 bottles of country-made liquor and 15,393 bottles of beer during lockdown.

Subhash Boken, spokesperson of the Gurugram police said, that they registered 380 criminal cases and arrested 389 persons involved in liquor smuggling in 2021 while in 2020 around 1,886 cases were registered and 1,941 criminals were nabbed.

"Strict instructions have issued to all concern station house offices (SHOs) in the district to identify liquor smugglers and suppliers their area-wise police station. The officers have been asked to

take all possible legal action against all such persons, including under the relevant provisions of the Disaster Management and Epidemics Act, etc, Boken added.

Boken said the deputy commissioner of police (DCPs) have been asked to put the SHOs of all Police Stations, especially the bordering Police Stations on alert mode, and directed them to ensure that no smuggling of liquor into Gurugram takes place. Also, all concern officials have further been asked to monitor inter-state smuggling of liquor on a daily basis.

"All concerned police officers have also been directed to remain in touch with the Excise Department officers and also the contractors for feedback, and to ensure sustained and focused efforts against drug smugglers/suppliers/distillers etc," said a senior police official requesting anonymity.

It may be noted that the Haryana government has extended lockdown period till May 31. However, the liquor shops across the district were opened with prior permission of the government on Monday after 21 days with covid norms.

Govt, pvt houses get SDMC notice over mosquito breeding

CAMPAIGN AGAINST DENGUE, MALARIA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Over 1,800 notices have been issued to several houses, Government and private organizations after mosquito breeding was detected on their premises during an ongoing campaign against dengue and malaria by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC).

Mosquito breeding has been detected in more than 5,260 residences out of the 6.12 lakh premises checked. The civic body has issued 5,891 legal notices and prosecution has been initiated after mosquito breeding was found on their premises, said a senior SDMC official.

"In order to control vector-borne diseases ahead of monsoon season, SDMC has intensified its efforts. Public health department of the SDMC always makes efforts to control vector-borne diseases like Dengue, Malaria and Chikungunya," he said.

The department may recommend taking penal action under section 269 of the IPC against households and commercial units after repeated reports of mosquito breeding, he said.

Undergrad courses to start late second year in a row

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

As uncertainty looms large over the conduct of Class 12 examinations by CBSE, ICSE and State Education Boards, the new academic sessions for the undergraduate courses at the universities, engineering and medical colleges and prestigious entrance examinations like NDA are set to be delayed for the second year in a row. In fact, the situation this year is more precarious than 2020, when almost 70 percent of board exams across the country were conducted and cosmetic markings were done to ensure the new session started in November.

In 2021, though, there is no sight of entrance tests based on qualification of Class 12 board exams which may not happen before August even if the vaccination process of students is started as suggested by most of the States in the meeting with the Centre on Sunday.

Sources in the Ministry of Education said that the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) has already proposed an academic calendar for the 2021-22 session. As per the calendar, classes for first-year engineering students of technical courses will begin by September 15, 2021.

Besides the Central

LIST OF BOARD & ENTRANCE EXAMS POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19 IN 2021

Name of the Exam	Actual Dates	Revised Exam Dates
CBSE 12th Board Exams 2021	May 04 to June 14, 2021	To be Notified in June
CBSE 10th Board Exams 2021	Cancelled	Cancelled
CISCE ICSE Class 10th Exams 2021	from May 04, 2021	Cancelled
CISCE ISC Class 12th Exams 2021	from May 04, 2021	To be Notified
International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams 2021	Cancelled	Cancelled
JEE Main April 2021	April 27 to 30, 2021	To be Notified
JEE Main May 2021	May 24 to 28, 2021	To be Notified
VITEEE 2021 (Preponed)	June 18 to 26, 2021	May 29 to 31, 2021
SRMJEEE 2021 (Preponed)	June 11 to 16, 2021	Phase 1 - May 23 & 24, 2021 Phase 2 - July 25 & 26, 2021
NEET PG 2021	April 18, 2021	To be Notified
TISS MAT 2021	May 08, 2021	To be Notified

Government-managed CBSE level entrances, several state-level entrance exams have been postponed which will impact the universities' admission process once again creating confusion amongst students, parents and other stakeholders.

Entrance exams like JEE 2021, NEET 2021, AIEEE 2021, KCET 2021, WBJEE 2021, AP

EAMCET 2021, TS EAMCET 2021 is not likely to be held before August. Results will be declared only sometime during the end of September. Counselling will then start during the month of October-November 2021.

The Class 10th CBSE, ICSE and States Board exams have already been cancelled and all



of them have devised varied grading systems. "Though education is impacted, Class 10th direct results will not be hampered much as the students are still in school and there can be a course correction sitting across with stakeholders. But Class 12th board examinations are very important as this is the first step or rather a ladder for a student to enter or make a career choice. All depends on the government but as an educationist I will prefer the conduct of examinations whichever mode the SOP demands," said Dr Anju Mehrotra, Principal of Kalka Public School, Alaknanda, south Delhi and a Director in the

Kalka Group of Education which runs schools, engineering and medical colleges in Delhi NCR and also in couple of countries abroad.

Given the current situation where board exams and entrance tests have been postponed, according to AICTE officials, the engineering colleges are not very hopeful of keeping up with the proposed calendar and that has to be revised by end of next month when there is clarity.

Last year, the entrance exams were conducted in September and the classes and new sessions at technical institutes like IITs, NITs, AIIMS, Universities began in

November-December after all admission processes were completed.

"Results of Class XII determine the way forward in the child's future. It is a milestone for their career progression. Although safety of the children is of paramount importance, our present education system is such that the end of school exams become a validation for the students' entire school years. Schools do have internal marks and records but not many students give importance to internal school exams in XIIth. I feel this year should be a lesson for us to prepare for the future," said Divya Bhatia, Principal of Amity School, Saket, Delhi.

There is no clarity on the entrance exams this year due to the worsening Covid-19 situation. Consequently, if the admission process doesn't kick off, it is impossible to begin classes for first-semester students by September 15.

"Most engineering college across the country also accept JEE Main scores to admit students. The JEE Main April and May sessions have also been postponed. The situation is not much different for centrally-funded technical institutes such as the IITs and NITs," said Sanjeev Kumar, who runs a chain of engineering entrance coaching centres in north-eastern cities.

All the IITs, NITs and IIITs had submitted guidelines to the Education Ministry in early February this year when the situation was improving.

Owing to the rise in Covid-19 cases, NTA (National Testing Agency) postponed both the April and May session entrance exam of JEE Main (Joint Entrance Examination) April session was scheduled to be held on April 27, 28 and 30 while the May session was scheduled to be held on April 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28.

Several state-level entrance exams have also been deferred, which will impact the admission process in universities like Delhi, JNU, Jamia, Hyderabad

etc and institutes and ultimately beginning of new sessions and classes will be delayed.

Other competitive exams that have been postponed are NEET-PG and UG and UGC Exams 2021 and NDA April 2021 will now happen on September 5. The exams scheduled for August 1 will again be moved ahead.

The Consortium of Medical, Engineering and Dental Colleges of Karnataka (COMEDK) entrance exam is though scheduled to be held on June 20, 2021 but in all way this will so be change with a reduced syllabus for the entrance.

Also, the Consortium of National Law Universities (NLU) is scheduled to conduct Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) exam 2021 on June 13 but in all means this too will be rescheduled.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Postgraduate exam was scheduled for April 18, but owing to the rise in Covid-19 cases, the exam has been postponed for 4 months, that is, August 30.

The UGC National Eligibility Test that was scheduled to be held from May 2 to 17, has been postponed owing to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

Revised dates regarding the exams will be announced 15 days before the exam.

Chances of 3rd wave hitting kid severely dim: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday said there is no indication as of now about kids getting severely affected in the third wave of Covid-19 which is predicted to hit India later this year. The assertion comes at a time when experts have warned that children would be affected by the third wave of coronavirus and that the Governments should make preparations from now on to minimise casualties.

Addressing a routine press briefing on Covid-19, Dr Randeep Guleria, AIIMS Director, said that there is no indication, as of now, that children will be severely affected in the third wave of the pandemic.

Amid apprehension of a third wave later this year or early next year, states have already started preparing, focussing mostly on protecting the children.

"Data from the first and the second wave shows that children are usually protected from Covid and even if they get it, they have mild infection," Dr Guleria said.

He, however, said children have suffered collateral damage during the pandemic due to gender gap in education, stress and mental issues, smartphone dependence/addiction, and interrupted educational opportunities.

Schooling of the children in rural areas has also been

affected. "If we see the data of the first and second waves, it is very similar and it shows that children are usually protected and even if they get it, they only have mild infection. And the virus hasn't changed so there is no indication that children will be more affected in the third wave," he said.

And there is this hypothesis that the virus enters through ACE receptors in the body and these receptors are relatively less in children as compared to adults.

This is a hypothesis on why the infection has been less amongst children, he said.

"Those who floated this theory said that children have so far not been affected, so perhaps they will be most affected in the third wave. But there is so far no evidence that there will be severe infection in children or there will be more cases in them in the upcoming wave," Dr Guleria said.

The comments come in the backdrop of some experts highlighting the need for preparation warning that children could be affected by the third wave more than adults.

The Indian Academy of Paediatrics recently said that though children appear as susceptible as adults it is "highly unlikely that the third wave will predominantly or exclusively affect children" while the country's apex child rights body National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

Panacea Biotec, RDIF join hands to produce 100 million doses of Sputnik V in a year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic pharma major Panacea Biotec (PB) and Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), have agreed to produce 100 million doses per year of Russia-made Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine in India.

In a joint statement, they said the first batch of the Covid-19 vaccine produced at Panacea Biotec's facilities at Baddi in Himachal Pradesh will be shipped to Russia's Gamaleya Center for "quality control", the joint statement said.

Full-scale production of the vaccine is expected to start this summer, the statement said, without disclosing the exact month in which the large-scale production would start.

"Launch of production in India in partnership with Panacea Biotec marks an important step in helping the

(NCPCR) has said that with a third Covid-19 wave projected

country fight the pandemic," RDIF chief executive officer Kirill Dmitriev said.

The production of Sputnik V supports efforts of India's authorities to leave behind the acute phase of coronavirus as soon as possible, while the vaccine will also be exported at a later stage to help prevent the spread of the virus in other countries around the world, he added.

On the development, Panacea Biotec MD Rajesh Jain said, "This marks a significant step as we initiate production of Sputnik V. Together with RDIF, we hope to help bring a sense of normalcy back to people across the country and around the world."

Sputnik V was registered in India under the emergency use authorisation procedure on April 12, 2021, and vaccination against coronavirus with the Russian vaccine started on May 14.

to hit the country, the Centre and states should ramp up

Domestic drug major Dr Reddy's Laboratories on May 14 had said that as part of a limited pilot, the soft launch of the Sputnik V vaccine has commenced and the first dose of the vaccine was administered in Hyderabad.

"Efficacy of Sputnik V is 97.6 per cent based on the analysis of data on coronavirus infection rate among those in Russia vaccinated with both components of Sputnik V from December 5, 2020 to March 31, 2021," the statement said.

Till date, Sputnik V has been registered in 66 countries, it added.

The vaccine is based on a platform of human adenoviral vectors and "uses two different vectors for the two shots in a course of vaccination providing immunity with a longer duration than vaccines using the same delivery mechanism for both shots," the statement said.

their preparations to protect children and neonates.

Shahi litchi from Bihar reaches UK amid Covid

NEW DELHI ■ NEW DELHI

In a major boost to the export of Geographical Identification (GI) certified products during Covid times, the season's first consignment of Shahi litchi from Bihar was exported to the United Kingdom by air route on Monday. The fruit is being sourced from farmers in Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

Shahi litchi was the fourth agricultural product to get GI certification from Bihar in 2018, after Jardalu mango, Katarni rice and Magahi paan. GI registration for Shahi litchi is held with the Muzaffarpur-based Litchi Growers Association of Bihar.

India had exported 135.25 metric tons of Litchi in 2019-20. A geographical indication (GI) tag is used for an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicraft and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

Once the litchi tree starts flowering, another set of traders gets involved and "buy" it from the first set. Similarly, when the fruiting takes place yet another set of traders jump



into the business. There are 45,000-50,000 litchi growers, labourers and traders involved in the production, packaging and marketing of the fruit have doubled.

Litchi cultivation offers a livelihood to many as it provides both on-farm and off-farm employment. Small and marginal farmers get additional income from growing litchi on their homesteads. On an average, a litchi orchard provides employment to six daily wagers.

India is the second largest producer of litchi and Bihar accounts for about 70 per cent production of this high value exotic fruit after China.

According to statistics of the Bihar government, litchi is grown on 29,000 hectares and the annual yield of this highly perishable fruit is about three lakh metric tonnes. The most

popular varieties of Indian litchi grown in Bihar are shahi and 'China'. Litchi is grown predominantly in North Bihar districts like Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Sitamarhi, east and west Champaran, Samastipur, Begusarai and Bhagalpur (Nauagahia). A delicate aroma and flavour make shahi litchi the best variety of Indian litchi.

Shahi litchi is the early variety that is harvested between May 15 and 31 and China litchi is considered to be the late variety. Apart from the demand of fresh litchi in the metros, this fruit is also in great demand in Europe and the Middle East. But there are only three export houses of litchi in Bihar.

The total export of litchi from Bihar does not exceed 30 metric tonnes, which is not even one per cent of its total produce.

Onsite registration now for 18-44 years on CoWin platform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to minimise vaccine shortage and help those "without access to internet or smart phones", on-site registration and appointment has now been enabled for the 18-44 years age group on the CoWin platform for Covid-19 vaccination.

However, this feature is being enabled only for Government Covid Vaccination Centers (CVCs) at present, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday. This feature will not be available for private CVCs and they will have to publish their vaccination schedules exclusively with slots for online appointments.

And this feature will be used only upon decision of respective states and UT governments. States and UT must decide on opening of on-site registrations/facilitated cohorts' registration and appointments for 18-44 years age group based on the local context just as an additional measure to minimize vaccine wastage and for facilitating vaccination of eligible beneficiaries in the age group of 18-44 years, the ministry said in its statement.

The coverage of vaccination was expanded to people in the age group of 18 to 44 years on May 1 with the implementation of the Liberalised Pricing



and Accelerated National Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy.

The facility of on-site appointment mode initially to people in the age group of 18 to 44 years helped avoid overcrowding at vaccination centres, the statement.

Based on various representations given by states and inputs received by ministry for the vaccination of 18-44 years age group, the Union government has now decided to provide facility of on-site registration/facilitated cohort registration on CoWin digital platform for 18-44 years age group considering that in case of sessions exclusively organised with online slots, towards the end of the day, some doses may still be left unutilised in

case the online appointee beneficiaries do not turn up on day of vaccination.

In such cases, on-site registration of a few beneficiaries may be necessary to minimise the vaccine wastage, the statement said.

Even though CoWIN provides for features such as registration of up to 4 beneficiaries with a mobile number, facilitated registration and appointments through applications, such as Arogya Setu and Umang and through the Common Service Centres etc., people requiring facilitated cohort's facility and those without access to internet or smart phones or mobile phones may still have limited access for vaccination.

CRPF to recruit over 11K women cops over next 7 yrs

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In a big boost to recruitment of women in its ranks and enhancement of their operational profile, the CRPF plans to recruit over 11,000 women constables, including clerical staff, over the next seven years. The recruitment will be against an anticipated outgo of over 32,000 constables during the period. The current strength of women in the world's largest paramilitary force is about 8,000.

"During the next seven years from 2021 to 2027, there will be approximately 32,057 anticipated vacancies against normal 'wastage' in the rank of Constable. We plan to recruit 10,579 Constables (Mahila) at the rate of 33 percent of the anticipated vacancies and 560 Mahila Constables (Tradesmen category or office related jobs) as per actual requirement," a senior official said.

Wastage in organisational parlance refers to personnel retiring from service after completion of service or preferring voluntary retirement.

The move comes after the Union Home Secretary chaired a meeting and sought a re-evaluation of the representation of women on the basis of operational requirements in different geographical terrains and con-



ditions. Following the meeting, the CRPF constituted an internal Committee to formulate a Mahila-specific policy regarding their operational deployment including in LWE area, transfer issues and enhancement of representation of women in the ranks. Some of the Mahila companies have already been inducted for anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh, officials said.

Based on the recommendations of the Committee, the Organisation Branch has formulated a proposal and sent it to the Operations Directorate to examine the issue of enhancement of women in the Force in the next seven years besides soliciting suggestions/views from operational and administrative standpoints.

Presently, there are six Mahila battalions with a total sanctioned strength of 7,946 women personnel in various ranks.

According to the latest proposal, these six Mahila Battalions are proposed to be

The proposal also seeks induction of Mahilas in specialised wing of VIP Security Battalions, Signal Battalions, Parliament Duty Groups, etc

converted as General Duty or operational battalions by distributing such personnel to the strength of the operational companies.

The proposal also seeks induction of Mahilas in specialised wing of VIP Security Battalions, Signal Battalions, Parliament Duty Groups (PDG) and Special Duty Group (SDG) in consultation with the heads of such units.

"While the move is expected to be a morale booster for the women, there are operational, administrative and other concerns that need to be addressed for their massive recruitment. Their induction in the operational companies and subsequent deployment in the operational theatres like Jammu and Kashmir and across the Naxal theatre could also turn out to be risky or counter-productive from operational standpoints," another official said.

IMD, astrologers differ over 'Nau Tapa'—9 hottest days of summer

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and the astrologers are differing over 'Nau Tapa' — the nine hottest days of the summer that is to begin from Tuesday.

IMD officials said there is a possibility that this year's 'Nau Tapa' is expected to be not so intense this year due to cyclonic storms and western disturbances. The temperature is not likely to cross 44 degrees during 'Nau Tapa', they maintained.

However, a section of astrologers said that the people should be ready for scorching heat over the next nine days.

IMD officials said conditions are not conducive for a heat wave in the next two weeks and heat waves are unlikely over any part of the country except Rajasthan, where it may occur at isolated places.

"The maximum temperature is likely to be below normal or near normal over most parts of the country outside Gujarat, Rajasthan, Odisha and northeastern States, where there are likely to be near normal or slightly above normal," the IMD said in its forecast. Last year, Rajasthan had recorded 48 degree temperature during Nau Tapa.

On the other hand,

astrologers opined that the temperature will rise during the nine-day period.

Astrologer Sheesh Narain Vajpayee, who predicts on weather conditions, said that the maximum temperature during Nau Tapa, especially on May 28, is likely to be above 44 degrees in several parts of the country.

In Rohini Nakshatra, the distance between Sun and Earth get reduced significantly resulting in days getting hotter and hotter than the rest of summer months comparatively.

This time the Sun enters Rohini Nakshatra on 25th of May 2021, at 8.46 am and will remain there till June 2.

It has been said that whenever the Moon during these transits causes rain it will give the signal for the upcoming days that the monsoon will bring low rainfall, which is called the Rohini Nakshatra.

If there is no rain or cold air during these nine days, then it is believed that the rain will be good this time. That is, the heat is as good as in Nau Tapa.

These nine days are actually called pregnancy clouds of the monsoon and mother earth bears it for the goodwill of mankind.

Didi accuses Centre of bias over Yaas relief

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday questioned the Centre's discriminatory approach while dealing with the States accusing New Delhi of providing lesser funds to her State — than Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Shortly after emerging from a virtual meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah the Chief Minister said that the Centre is giving Bengal an advance of ₹400 crore only to combat cyclone Yaas, while Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are getting ₹600 crore each. "They assured us all help to combat the cyclone but they have agreed to provide an advance of only ₹400 crore, while smaller states like Odisha and Andhra Pradesh which have less population density are getting ₹600 crore... if this not a discrimination then what is," Banerjee said pointing out how

last year also the Centre gave a pitance towards the situation that arose after super cyclone Amphan heat Bengal displacing several lakhs of people.

Earlier the Home Minister held a meeting with Chief Ministers of three states and the Lieutenant Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. "My State which is more densely populated is facing repeated discrimination," the Chief Minister reportedly told Shah in the meeting. The Home Minister has reportedly asked all the States to "make adequate power backup arrangements in all Covid-19 hospitals, labs, vaccine cold chains and other medical facilities."

With Yaas likely to intensify into a fierce super cyclone "perhaps stronger than Amphan" the Bengal Government has taken massive evacuation exercises in the far flung river islands of Sunderbans. "Unlike other States Bengal has a maze of rivers — all branch-



Storm like weather conditions near Howrah Bridge due to formation of Cyclone Yaas in the Bay of Bengal, in Howrah on Monday

es of the Ganga and Padma — criss-crossing each other at the mouth of Bay of Bengal making it all the more difficult to evacuate the people living in these areas to safety," said a senior Bengal bureaucrat adding post cyclonic situation is even worse because, "you do not have to deal with snakes only but also you have to assist the people

survive for months on end because if there is an embankment breach then thousands of acres of land gets brackish unworthy of cultivations for months and even for years." The pandemic situation has only made situation worse he said.

The Chief Minister who is likely to spend Tuesday and Wednesday at the

room" set up besides State secretariat Nabanna said 51 disaster management teams have been kept ready for tackling situations across the districts including Kolkata. Besides 1,000 teams to tackle power emergency have been kept aside she said.

"We have taken lesson from Amphan and are keeping nothing to chances... we are evacuating each and every person from the low-lying areas near the sea" and delta, Banerjee said adding "this cyclone could be stronger than Amphan."

The weather office has predicted a wind speed of around 155-165 km per hour, with gusting to 185 km per hour. The cyclone is likely to make a landfall on Wednesday evening between Ganga Sagar Islands and Paradwip in Odisha.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Railways has cancelled around 25 trains — scheduled to run between May 24 and May 29 — as a precautionary measure.

Shah reviews preparation for Cyclone Yaas with CMs of Odisha, WB, Andhra Pradesh, L-G of Andaman & Nicobar

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday held a review meeting with the Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh and the Lt Governor of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands to assess the preparedness to deal with the situation arising out of Cyclone 'Yaas', which is forming in the Bay of Bengal. The meeting discussed about the power backup arrangements in all Covid-19 hospitals, labs, vaccine cold chains and other medical facilities. Cyclone Yaas is expected to reach Indian coasts on May 26-27.

The Home Minister advised them to ensure adequate stocks of all essential medicines and supplies in hospitals, keeping in view likely disruption of movement of vehicles. For health facilities, including temporary hospitals, likely to be affected by the cyclone, the Union Home Minister advised them to make adequate

arrangements for securing them from losses and for evacuation of patients in advance, if necessary. The Union Home Minister said advance action taken in this regard on the Western coast ensured that there was no adverse impact on any medical facility, said Home Ministry in a statement.

"The safety of all shipping and fishing vessels, and all ports and oil installations in the area was also reviewed during the meeting. In this regard, the Union Home Minister also reviewed the preparedness of the concerned States and UT to ensure that all fishermen are brought back to shore and the timely evacuation of people from low lying and vulnerable areas. He advised them to disseminate messages in local languages over mobile phones, television, social media and through village panchayats, with a view to educate and motivate people," said MHA. **PTI**

P-305 mishap: Navy locates wreckage of tugboat Varaprada

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Continuing its search and rescue operations for the eighth consecutive day in the vicinity of the Mumbai High where the accommodation barge Papaa-305 that sank, the Indian Navy located the wreckage of the Tug-boat Varaprada during an underwater search by its ship INS Makar.

"Tug Varaprada has been located during an underwater search by INS Makar, which commenced early this morning. Diving is in progress to locate trapped Brave Nature's Victim (BNV) if any," Navy's chief spokesperson Commander Mehul Karnik said. Having completed the search of the sunken wreck of Papaa-305 by its specialised teams and found no more bodies on the accommodation barge, the divers on board INS Makar had set about the task of locating the wreckage of Tug

Varaprada in the small hours of Monday.

The Navy personnel have so far recovered the bodies of 70 persons who were among the people working the accommodation barge Papaa-305 that sank on May 17.

"Eight bodies have reportedly been recovered along the coast at Raigad district in Maharashtra and eight more bodies along Gujarat coast near Valsad," Commander Karnik had said. On Sunday night,

"Thus all 274 crew reported missing have been accounted for. Final confirmation will however be pending till the identification of all bodies recovered is completed," the Navy spokesperson had added.

"Search and Rescue Operations by ships and helicopters/aircraft will continue in the area to locate the remaining crew of the sunken vessels," the Navy spokesperson had added.

The Indian Navy deployed INS Makar and INS Tarasa to the BHF, around 175 kms off Mumbai coast to make an underwater search for the wrecks of the two vessels which sank and trace more bodies using expert divers and special equipment.

INS Makar is a lead ship of the Makar-class of Catamarans used for hydrographic surveys by IN, producing navigational charts and is capable of collecting marine environmental information by conducting limited oceanographic surveys.

INS Tarasa is a patrol vessel of the Car Nicobar-class in the series of four Water Jet Fast Attack Craft.

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.

SC seeks Centre's reply on ₹4 lakh ex-gratia to kin of Covid deceased

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday sought response from the Centre on a plea seeking compensation of ₹4 lakh to the families of those who have died from coronavirus.

A vacation bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M R Shah also asked the Centre to place before it the ICMR guidelines on issuance of death certificates for Covid-19 victims, saying there should be uniform policy for issuing such documents.

The apex court was hearing two separate pleas seeking directions to the Centre and states to provide compensation of ₹4 lakh to the families of coronavirus victims as provided under the Disaster Management Act of 2005, and a uniform policy for issuance of death certificates.

The bench said unless there was a uniform policy for issuance of any official document or death certificate stating that the cause of death was Covid, the kin of the victims would not be able to claim benefits of any compensation scheme, if given.

The bench posted the matter on June 11 and asked the Centre to file its reply by then. **PTI**

Narada case: CBI moves SC against HC house-arrest order of 4 leaders

New Delhi: The CBI has moved the Supreme Court challenging a Calcutta High Court order allowing house arrest of four leaders, including three from the TMC, in the Narada bribery case.

The high court had on May 21 ordered shifting of two West Bengal ministers, an MLA and a former Kolkata mayor to house arrest from jail.

A division bench, presided by Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal, differed on the issue of recalling the stay on bail to the four accused. It decided to refer the matter to a larger bench of five judges and the hearing is scheduled at 11 am.

The CBI has challenged the order of house arrest and reference of the matter to a larger bench, a law officer said.

West Bengal Transport Minister Firhad Hakim, Panchayat Minister Subrata Mukherjee, TMC MLA Madan Mitra and former Kolkata mayor Sovan Chatterjee were arrested by the CBI last Monday morning in connection with the Narada sting tape case that is being investigated by the agency on a 2017 order of the high court. **PTI**

Migrant workers' registration process needs to be expedited: SC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday said the process of registration of migrant workers is very slow and it must be expedited so that benefit of schemes can be extended to them amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

While stressing on the need to register migrant workers, the apex court said the benefit of schemes can be extended to them after they are identified and registered by authorities.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M R Shah said the government must ensure that benefits of schemes reach beneficiaries, including migrant workers, and the process must be monitored and supervised.

The top court said it is not satisfied with the efforts of the Centre as well as the states on the issue of registration of workers in unorganised sectors.

The bench was hearing an application filed by three activists who have sought directions to the Centre and states to ensure food security, cash transfers, transport facilities and other welfare measures for migrant workers who are facing distress due to the curbs clamped in several parts of the country amid the pandemic. **PTI**



A view of deserted beach due to restrictions amid rise in coronavirus cases, in Kanyakumari on Monday

Covid cases abate in Kerala but deaths on rise: CM

KOCHI: Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Monday that though there has been an increase in the number of deaths in the State on account of Covid-19, the number of patients have come down considerably.

He told reporters that there were only 17, 821 new cases detected in the State on Monday while the number of deaths on a single day reached 196. "We tested 87,000 samples and the average Test Positivity Rate for the last three days is 22.6 per cent," he said.

The number of patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19 as on Monday evening was 2.59 lakh, said Vijayan. He expressed anguish and concern over the indifferent attitude of the Centre towards the require-

ment of the State.

The Chief Minister said that the lock down enforced in the State has helped to bring down the number of Covid-19 cases. "Before the enforcement of the lock down, only nine per cent of the patients were coming to the hospital while post-lock down the hospitalisation has risen to 14 percent," said Vijayan.

The only district in the State to have triple lock down continues to be Malappuram. The Chief Minister blamed the strong joint family culture prevailing in the district for the situation. "It is the joint family system prevailing in the district that is the root cause of the hike in the number of Covid-19 cases," said Vijayan. **PNS**

Positivity rate drops below 7% in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The positivity rate dropped below 7 per cent across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir while 45 patients succumbed to the coronavirus, 29 in Jammu division and 16 in Kashmir on Monday.

Around 4,000 patients recovered fully and discharged from different hospitals while 2,237 new cases were detected.

The total caseload of active positive cases stood at little over 45,000. Meanwhile, the UT administration has also decided to accelerate the vaccination of people under the 18-45 age category in a focused and targeted manner.

Currently, Jammu & Kashmir is among the leading regions in the country in vaccination of above 45 years age group by vaccinating 62% of its eligible population compared to the national average of 32%. Within J&K 4 districts have so far achieved 90% coverage in this age group. It is further expected that the remaining population in the 45+ age category will be covered within a few days.

Based on the likely flow of vaccine in the coming months, it has been decided that the vaccination programme for 18-45 age group with an estimated population of 60 lakh will be ramped up in a systematic and phased manner to prioritize coverage of high-risk and vulnerable groups.

For the 18-45 age group, the higher risk and vulnerable groups have been identified which include - shopkeepers /dhabawallas, hotel waiters & staff/thelawallas; services sector people engaged in door-to-door work (barbers, repairmen etc); drivers/ conductors; lawyers; journalists; faculty /staff/workers of the universities/colleges; Government employees on COVID duty/or in active field offices- viz employees of PHE, PDD etc.; construction workers registered with Construction Workers Board; tourism sector workers; people with disabilities (PwD); widows/single mothers; orphans; and persons with co-morbid conditions.

K'taka CM: 2nd lockdown relief package under consideration

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday said a second financial package for the Covid-induced lockdown was under consideration.

This package is aimed at providing relief to certain sections left out of the first one, he said.

The Chief Minister said the COVID situation has improved with oxygenated and ICU beds being available to patients in need and on time.

Further noting that the steady decline in daily COVID cases, especially in cities like Bengaluru, was a bit of an ease, he, however, said the situation in rural areas is not satisfying, and people there need to be more cautious.

"Within the financial limitations, I have done my duty. It is known to everyone what Siddaramaiah (leader of opposition) did while in power, I have done it (announced the package) within the limitations," Yediyurappa said in response to a question about the criticism of the Leader of the Opposition against the package.

Speaking to reporters here, the Chief Minister said, "Still several sections have not got the package, I'm thinking about them, in 10-12 days I will try to announce another package for some of them."

As the State is battling the second wave of the pandemic, he had last week announced an over ₹1,250-crore financial package as relief for those whose livelihood has been affected by the lockdown. **PTI**



A sun halo seen in the skies of Bengaluru on Monday

Children to be connected to AYUSH Kavach App in UP

Lucknow: The Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh is preparing to connect children to the 'AYUSH Kavach App', an initiative of the AYUSH Department under the government of India. This will help people access prescriptions to strengthen their immune system through Ayurveda and to educate people about the effective home-remedies, especially for children who are

likely to be impacted by a possible third wave of the pandemic. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has already ordered to set up at least 100 paediatric beds in every district. Ensuring top class treatment, the department of medical education has prepared 432 paediatric ICU (PICU) beds in medical colleges and medical institutes across the state. **IANS**

Kerala graduate employs 15, says small is beautiful

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

In a State known among entrepreneurs as Industrial Graveyard of South of India, a young B.Com graduate has created history by setting up a unit employing fifteen persons. "Small is beautiful and effective," says Anu Krishnan who owns AK Industries in Kerala's Chengannur town.

Kerala is under total lockdown because of Covid-19 and the mood is sombre. An eerie of silence is what greets the visitor to the industrial hub of Aluva as most units are shut down either due to agitation by workers or mismanagement.

But Chengannur, which never had an industrial unit worth mentioning, comes to life with the rhythmic noise of

crushing machines whenever the lockdown is lifted. Amarvati (band name of lamp oil manufacturer in AK Industries) is in full flow manufacturing ecologically and safe bran oil, camphor and incense sticks that add up to the divine atmosphere in Kerala's temples and homes.

Krishnan was a jobseeker for more than six years. "I have appeared in all examinations held by the Kerala Public Service Commission and other agencies to get a safe and secured job. Though I cleared the examinations, the interviews and the quota system did me in. I was planning to write a guide meant for candidates appearing for the PSC examination when my spiritual guru P Unnikrishnan, an office bearer of Sanskar Bharati asked me

to seriously think of becoming a job provider to others. He was convinced of my knowledge in accountancy and computer literacy and that could be the reason for his trust in me," Krishnan told The Pioneer.

Krishnan's father works as a priest in their small family temple and has been complaining about the poor quality of lamp oil and camphor sold in shops. "Unnikrishnan told me that this was a grievance which greets him in all temples across Kerala. That's how the idea of eco-friendly pooja products crept into my mind," said Krishnan. The search for quality lamp oil shocked Krishnan. The chemicals added to lamp oil to bring down the cost of production knew no bounds. "We succeeded in manufactur-

ing quality lamp oil from rice bran collected from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The production is based on traditional system sans any chemicals," explained Krishnan.

He underwent a crash two weeks programme offered by the district industries centre that helped him to prepare project report. "Impressed by the report the Canara Bank came forward to offer a loan and we launched the first phase of the unit with my brother Aju and a family friend. Later on the Union Bank offered us Rs 20 lakh as MUDRA loan and since then the demand for the products are being met without any hiccups," said Krishnan.

The morning and evening pujas especially the offer of lights (deeparadhana) has

become more divine and pleasant thanks to the local brands manufactured in Krishnan's industrial house. It employs 15 persons in normal times and hire more hands as and when demand goes up. Krishnan is also an employee of the unit, crushing, purifying and packing the products. A new addition to the company is a mini-truck to rush the products to various places in the State.

Anu Krishnan has only one dream to fulfil now. "I would like to present the Prime Minister with our products because the MUDRA loan was the secret of our success," he said. More than 300 entrepreneurs from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka had sought his guidance to set up such units.



A nomad walks with his flock of sheep along the deserted Dal Lake during strict lockdown imposed in Jammu & Kashmir to contain the surge in Covid-19 cases, in Srinagar on Monday



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Pandemonium

It is the Centre's duty to make available the anti-COVID jabs to all the States

COVID-19 is a national disaster. There is a national task force in place handling the pandemic centrally. However, when it comes to the procurement of vaccines, the one and only element to fight the virus with, it is being done in a decentralised manner, with the Centre and the States both in a race to get hold of as many doses as they can from the market, even from abroad. Why is procurement not a national task being taken up by the Centre? The question has been doing the rounds since the third phase of the Government's vaccine policy was announced earlier this month. Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia made a pertinent point to bring out the pointlessness of such an exercise when he asked rhetorically what if the States asked the districts to procure their own vaccines, just like the Centre is asking the States to? The Chief Minister of Punjab, Captain Amarinder Singh, has already said that US pharma giant Moderna has refused to supply the vaccine directly to the State, saying it deals with requests only from the Government of India and not from the States or private companies. The Supreme Court a fortnight ago asked the Centre why cannot it buy 100 per cent of the requirement and why cannot the Centre follow the national immunisation programme policy with respect to the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines?



The control of infectious diseases falls in the Concurrent List and is, therefore, said to be a shared responsibility between the Centre and the States; that is how the former's argument goes. However, former Health Secretary K Sujatha Rao pointed out that all these years, the Union Government was supplying vaccines and drugs to the States under the National Programme and that it was for the first time that the Centre was leaving the States alone to buy vaccines on their own and at a price to be determined by the manufacturers. The Centre is the nodal agency to facilitate nearly all aspects of vaccination. It is the Centre, not the States, that can persuade the United States for the raw materials; can help the suppliers expand production capacity; approve more vaccines and balance the domestic supply with obligations of the Indian manufacturers under Covax. Procuring vaccines is a logical extension of the Centre's job. The current policy has created a divide of sorts: The Centre lowered the threshold age for vaccination to 18 years but will not vaccinate the nearly 90 crore people in the 18-45 age group. It is left to the States while the Centre takes care of the older, high-risk categories. Where will that leave Punjab? Where will that leave the other States if the rest of the pharma companies react like Moderna? The vaccination, obviously, cannot stop. The Centre will then be forced to retract its policy; something it can do voluntarily and without compulsion today.

PICTALK



A group of Barabanki residents jumps into the Sarayu to avoid vaccination against COVID-19

Do the States have any responsibility?

Several COVID patients have tragically died, either due to the depletion in oxygen supply at hospitals or for other reasons, across 14 States



A SURYA PRAKASH

The death of patients due to depletion of oxygen in some hospitals in Delhi and in many other States in the past weeks along with the shortage of beds and drugs for COVID-19 patients has shaken the nation's conscience. Apart from Delhi, dreadful stories of criminal negligence and utter incompetence, leading to the death of COVID patients due to oxygen shortage, are surfacing from many States. In Karnataka, 24 COVID patients lost their lives on May 2 and 3 when the district hospital in Chamarajanagara ran out of oxygen. A three-member committee appointed by the High Court indicted the district administration and the hospital authorities for their failure to supervise the crisis and said the oxygen shortage was the result of callousness at various levels.

Reports from Goa were equally grim as over 80 patients in the Goa Medical College and Hospital reportedly lost their lives because the hospital ran out of oxygen. While the hospital authorities claim not all of these cases can be linked to depletion of oxygen, one hears that this institution had a very primitive system of oxygen supply and insufficient storage capacity. The Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court also had to step in and press for speedy action to resolve the logistics issues.

In Haryana, such deaths were reported in hospitals in Gurugram, Rewari and Hisar while the cities in Maharashtra that were hit by oxygen shortage included Kandri, Malegaon and Nasik. And, as if all this was not enough, there have been disastrous fires in hospitals in several States.

An analysis of the death of COVID patients due to oxygen shortage shows that such incidents have occurred in Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Goa, a total of 14 States — half the number of the States in the country. And the elected Governments are run by a wide range of political



parties, including the BJP, the Congress, AAP, Shiv Sena, YSR Congress, the Telangana Rashtra Samithi and the DMK. The Maharashtra Government is run by a coalition of eight parties, including the Shiv Sena, the Congress, the NCP and the SP. The DMK-led coalition in Tamil Nadu has the Congress, the CPI, the CPM and the MDMK, among others.

While everyone is indulging in the blame game, it must be noted that the Prime Minister has chosen not to blame anybody. However, some fundamentals must be understood. Under the Constitution, the State Governments are primarily responsible for hospitals and their disasters. The sharing of powers between the Centre and the States is delineated in the Seventh Schedule, which lists the items that fall within the domain of each entity.

Item six in the State List in this Schedule states: "Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries." In other words, public health and the management of hospitals and dispensaries is wholly the responsibility of the States and they cannot get away by pointing fingers at somebody else. The States also have the duty to prevent spread of

infectious diseases (Item 29 in the Concurrent List). Therefore, no State can claim that it was helpless or powerless to deal with these issues.

Over the last month, the Prime Minister has been made the fall guy — a convenient ruse to deflect blame from all other entities. But once we overcome this crisis, we must take stock of what the following entities did or did not do in the first quarter of this year: The Chief Ministers; State Health Ministers; Chief Secretaries; Health Secretaries; the Indian Council of Medical Research and the administrators of all major Government and private hospitals, apart from the Union Government, the Union Health Ministry in particular, the Union Health Secretary and all senior officials in that Ministry. Did any of the administrators of private hospitals who are studio-hopping over the last three weeks and blaming all and sundry for the oxygen depletion, take any measures to augment the supply and storage of oxygen in their hospitals over the past year? But, as stated earlier, this is not the time for this exercise.

It is true that the Centre should have woken up to the disaster much earlier.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat summed it up when he said after the first wave of COVID-19: "The Government, administration and public dropped their guard." However, this is not the time for finger-pointing. "We have to stay positive ... to keep ourselves COVID-negative," he says. Emphasising the need for positivity at this juncture, Bhagwat referred to a particular phase in World War II when England appeared to be losing the war. Yet, there was a note on Prime Minister Winston Churchill's desk that read: "There is no pessimism in this office. We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat. They don't exist." Bhagwat said India too needs to have such courage and resolve to defeat COVID-19. He is absolutely right. While it is true that not a single family is unaffected by either the COVID illness or consequential bereavement, we have to exhibit superhuman courage, resolve and positivity in the face of personal tragedy to defeat this rampaging scourge.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. The views expressed are personal.)



WHILE EVERYONE IS INDULGING IN THE BLAME GAME, IT MUST BE NOTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS CHOSEN NOT TO BLAME ANYBODY. HOWEVER, SOME FUNDAMENTALS MUST BE UNDERSTOOD. UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, THE STATE GOVERNMENTS ARE PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR HOSPITALS AND THE DISASTERS THEREIN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PUT AN END TO FARMERS' AGITATION

Sir — Many rounds of talks between the farmer unions and the Government have remained inconclusive due to the adamant attitude of both sides. The growers are rigid on their demands: To repeal the three farm laws and a written guarantee from the Centre on the Minimum Support Price (MSP). The Government, on the other hand, is willing to negotiate with the farmers on any issue apart from the repeal of the laws.

Meanwhile, the farmers need to be wary of the self-styled intellectual activists who have wormed their way into the dispute. They seem motivated more by their animus against the Union Government than by the welfare of the farmers. The cultivators, if good sense prevails, should quit the agitation route while the going is good for them.

Instead of intensifying their protest, it would be wiser to use the six-month landmark to move beyond the politics of agitation and put an end to it. May 26 marks the completion of six months of the protest. With the Centre reiterating that its offer is on the table, the unions must accept the 18-month suspension of laws and end their agitation.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

WAKE-UP CALL FOR OUR POLITICOS

Sir — The second wave of the Coronavirus has exposed the inefficiency and inertia of our Central and State leaders. It seems they never took the killer infection as seriously as they take elections, big or small, in different parts of the country. Our country neither upgraded the infrastructure nor stepped up the pace of the vaccination campaign.

While most developed countries booked vaccine orders in far excess of their population, India lagged way behind in its strategic planning. Often, even the courts had to interfere and pulled up the Governments on the handling of the crisis. The cost of inoculating the whole country is 0.36 per cent of the GDP which, experts say, can be achieved easily. If India exhausts its vaccine fund allocated in the Budget of 2021, a lion's share of the population can be vaccinated.

If the Indian leaders still do not wake up, then the world's largest manufacturer of

Time to fix responsibility



Several lives were lost due to overconfidence and negligence, both in equal measure, after the oilfield accommodation barge, "Papaa-305", with 261 men sank into the Arabian sea 35 nautical miles off the Mumbai coast. The Coast Guard had warned the shipping boats and fishermen against venturing into the sea.

Did the captain ignore the advisories? Was the decision to keep going his own? When a cyclone warning is given, the captain is expected to steer his vessel to the safety of the harbour. The warning was sounded on May 11, so the ONGC had enough time to evacuate its personnel.

vaccines may end up being the last in inoculating its citizens. While the other countries announce freebies to those getting the jab, our politicians seem interested only in garnering votes to cling to power.

V Nagendra Kumar | Hyderabad

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE NEXT PROBLEM

Sir — Anxiety, depression, tension, frustration and post-traumatic stress have been among the most common problems for Indians, as reported by the Social Justice Ministry's mental health helpline. Not surprisingly, many States are experiencing more calls to these helplines during the second wave.

According to the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) data, 26,047 calls were received by the KIRAN helpline till April 30 since

September 16, 2020. While the overall number saw a declining trend from March (3,617) to April (3,371), there was an increase in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Haryana, where the calls more than doubled from 73 in March to 170 in April.

Most of the callers over the past month raised concerns regarding the second wave after being diagnosed with COVID-19. The officials said the increase in the number of calls could be partially due to the helpline being promoted as a COVID-related mental health resource during the second wave in the region. The majority of the callers had been men in the age group of 15 to 40 years.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

But the barge was stuck in the sea. The main danger for ships and barges during cyclones is the wind speed. The tidal waves were as high as 10 metres, the survivors said. Due to the high wind speed, the barge went adrift and swayed to hit a rig, resulting in water leakage. Many life rafters were reportedly punctured, making them unsuitable for emergencies. Many men jumped into the water with floating rings, hoping to be spotted by rescuers. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has said it repeatedly warned the ONGC about the cyclone. The company claims the cyclone "changed its path" and caught the barge unawares. Surely, it's an unverified claim that needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. Luckily, two other barges that went adrift were safely brought to the shore.

But for the admirable job done by the Navy and the Coast Guard, the number of casualties would have been much higher. A detailed investigation into the tragedy should be conducted and responsibility fixed. Heads must roll; otherwise there will be little accountability.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

SOUND BITE

Vaccination is the key to controlling the pandemic but the Centre doesn't seem to care.



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



The US' maximum pressure campaign against Iran has proved ineffective; Iran in the face of the American sanctions has triumphed.

Iranian President — Hassan Rouhani



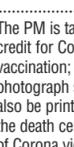
My friends, acquaintances, followers, our volunteers, friends from the TV and film industry, Government officials and donors — I'm amazed and overwhelmed to see how everyone is standing with us in this initiative.

Dancer and actor — Raghav Juyal



I spoke with Kohli during IPL when DC played RCB. He told me that I bowled well and should continue doing this.

Delhi Capitals bowler — Avesh Khan



The PM is taking credit for Corona vaccination; his photograph should also be printed on the death certificates of Corona victims.

Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) president — Jitan Ram Manjhi

Oli-garchy

Thanks to Oli's mismanagement, Nepal is looking at fresh elections in November

On the day Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli failed to prove his majority in the House of Representatives, he had published an appeal in *The Guardian*, requesting the UK Government and the international community for assistance in Nepal's fight against COVID-19. The article received significant backlash within his country. The people were unconvinced since Oli has left no stone unturned to turn Nepal into a political mess; beginning with his quest to remain in power, to misusing the office of the President. Despite losing majority in the House, Oli was invited to form a minority Government. Within days, the same Parliament has been dissolved again, and new elections have been scheduled for November. Noteworthy, Nepal is experiencing the worst of COVID-19 amid rising cases, fatalities and looming doubts over the supply of vaccines from international manufacturers. The shadow of corruption in procuring vaccines and medical equipment is dark enough to be seen. So, a plea from Oli is nothing but a mockery of good governance and a forced blindfold on the international community to overlook. Oli has become an authoritarian leader who disrespects the will of the people, political mood and remains unbothered by what the country is facing.



If anyone can be held responsible for paralysing Nepal in every sphere, it's the present-day "Oli-garchy". The apex court has nullified Oli's earlier attempt to dissolve Parliament, and ill-intended overnight ordinances on political parties were withdrawn by the President amidst opposition. He was once again challenged to prove his majority, but he failed. Currently, unashamed, Oli continues to be the caretaker Prime Minister. Voices are emanating from the Army veterans, civil society and the democratic forces to hold Oli responsible for the current crisis. These are the same voices that fought an autocratic monarchy for more than a decade to establish an envisaged democratic order in the Himalayan country. However, in less than 15 years, leaders like Oli have done no good but fueled the ethnic divide, economic slowdown, soured relations with India and institutionalised corruption. When Nepal became the world's sixth Communist-ruled country in 2008, questions were asked whether Communism and democracy could coexist. With parties like the CPN-UML led by Oli and the Maoists in Nepal, self is prioritised before ideology, nation and people. Therefore, Nepal needs a second wave of democracy to re-establish institutions in the truer sense with education, medical and economy at the priority.

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

REIN IN METHANE EMISSIONS, NOW

The rising levels of methane gas have the potential to add to patients' misery



KOTA SRIRAJ

At a time when COVID-19-induced patient load is overwhelming, it is critical to ensure that factors such as climate change do not add to the disease burden. In these trying times climate change made worse by rising methane levels has the potential to add to the health miseries unless urgent mitigatory measures are applied. The global methane emissions too are anything but under control as per a report by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).



The UNEP report has underlined the urgent need to reduce the human-caused global methane emissions especially from the agricultural sector with its livestock emissions from enteric and manure fermentation contributing up to 32 per cent of global methane emissions. Even though the carbon dioxide levels dropped during the coronavirus pandemic, however, the same did not happen with methane as the concentration in the atmosphere reached record levels last year, according to the data from the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This is worrisome as methane being an extremely powerful greenhouse gas is responsible for about 30 per cent of global warming.

The UNEP report calls for cutting down methane emissions by 45 per cent to avoid worst consequences. If achieved it would prevent a rise in global warming by up to 0.3 degrees Celsius by 2045. Besides, it will help prevent 2,60,000 premature deaths, 7,75,000 asthma-related hospital visits annually, and 25 million tonnes of crop losses. In India, the agri sector contributes to nearly 47 per cent of the anthropogenic methane emissions.

The European Commission for instance had adopted the European Union Methane Strategy in October 2020 which has outlined measures to cut methane emissions in Europe and internationally. India has the potential to reduce methane emissions in the agriculture, waste and energy sectors.

India must begin by addressing the losses and waste in the food sector. A UN report pegged domestic food waste in India at 68.7 million tonnes annually. This waste releases immense quantities of methane. Implementing behavioural change methods can help reduce waste and diverting the waste towards energy generation can help reduce methane emissions. Improvement in livestock management, encouraging adoption of health diets focused on vegetarian can reduce methane emissions by 65-80 million tonnes per year and help script a low methane emissions future for India. In the agriculture sector the adoption of zero tillage practice, coupled with efficient use of fertilisers and better management of water in rice crops can go a long way in gaining control over the carbon footprint of the agriculture sector.

These measures are excellent ways to get a handle on the runaway methane levels in India. However, the government must not fritter away the precious progress made through these measures. One such activity is the continuing usage of coal in India. The government must urgently look towards dialling down coal usage and lend scalability to alternative sources of energy. This must be combined with reducing the mining activities and closing the abandoned coal mines effectively so that they do not keep leaking methane.

Rising methane emissions can have disastrous consequences for human's and environment alike. India must rein in the emissions before they assume unmanageable levels.

(The author is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Supply chain strategies to manage vaccination

Yes, there are problems but there are also solutions that can be leveraged to add order to the campaign, mitigate bottlenecks and increase supply & distribution



ANITA KUMAR

On January 16, 2021, the Covid-19 vaccination programme was launched with much fanfare by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was touted as the only ray of hope after a year of human suffering. An ambitious project to vaccinate 1.3 billion population in a two-dose regimen, an event of this magnitude had never been attempted in India before. Although India has been one of the largest exporters for vaccines in the last decade, several questions were raised: Does India have the capacity to manufacture 2.6 billion doses? Does India have adequate infrastructure to manage distribution, transportation and storage of vaccines that may require sub-zero temperature? Does India have the trained manpower and facilities at the last mile level (primary health care centres) to administer the doses successfully to its population spread far and wide in the interiors of the country.

The questions were uncomfortable and rightly so as barely four months into the programme, the entire vaccination drive has been put in peril due to scarcity of vaccines, lack of resources at the primary healthcare level and people's reluctance to get themselves vaccinated.

This article adopts a supply chain management approach to propose solutions that can be leveraged to add order to the vaccine programme, mitigate bottlenecks and increase the supply and distribution of vaccines. Supply chain management is the facilitation of flow of goods from the raw material suppliers to the manufacturers, dealers, distributors, retailers and finally to the customer; it is also the management of bilateral and seamless flow of information end-to-end. The principles of supply chain management advocate creating strong networks and integrated relationships between the different echelons of the chain.

PROCUREMENT OF RAW MATERIALS

Two major constraints to sourcing of raw materials for Covid 19 vaccine were identified as: 1) raw materials and technologies needed for the fight against COVID-19 are under intellectual property protection and therefore inaccessible to many countries 2) US has invoked Defence Protection Act that prevents the export of critical materials to encourage domestic production. The US has assured that it will expedite export of raw materials, but when is the question. Meanwhile, an international agreement that compels majority of countries to remove or not create trade barriers that disrupt the global flow of raw materials for making vaccines, should be in place. Many petitions have been filed to waive off the patents of Covid-19 vaccines so that production can be expanded rapidly. In this context, it makes sense to invest in the R&D and clinical trials of indigenous vaccine developed in India. Alternate supplier base from other countries such as Russia should be developed to procure and supplement raw materials for large-scale commercial production while strictly adhering to the biosafety standards.

MANAGING MANUFACTURING CAPACITY

The manufacturing process of Covid-19 vaccine is complex and requires specialized production capacity. Moreover, adjuvant materials such as consumables, single-use reactors bags, filters, culture media, and vaccine ingredients are needed in large volumes to complete production. India's manufac-



SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT IS THE FACILITATION OF THE FLOW OF GOODS FROM THE RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS TO THE MANUFACTURERS, DEALERS, DISTRIBUTORS, RETAILERS AND FINALLY TO THE CUSTOMER; IT IS ALSO THE MANAGEMENT OF BILATERAL AND SEAMLESS FLOW OF INFORMATION END-TO-END

The author is Director, CII School of Logistics, Amity University. The views expressed are personal.



turing capacity and capability for vaccines was not questioned earlier as the country houses the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world and exports 60 per cent of its production to other countries as part of the UNICEF immunization programme. However, with Covid 19 vaccines, the production capacity has been severely over-estimated for two reasons: 1) India manufactures vaccines largely intended for children, therefore it was presumptuous to assume that this high capacity would easily be transferred to making adult vaccines. Moreover, India's decision to export vaccines to the rest of the world was premature as the combined production of Covishield (60 million per month) and Covaxin (five million per month) is insufficient to service domestic demand, leave alone create export surplus. India now needs to invest in expanding the manufacturing capacity along with conducting clinical trials to ensure continuous and seamless production. Rather than relying on one manufacturer, the Union and state governments should consider public-private partnerships, advanced purchase agreements, incentives and benefits with concessional loans to propel vaccine production.

VACCINE MID-MILE LOGISTICS

Although India has escalated its cold chain infrastructure to facilitate smooth transportation of vaccines

across the country, it needs to invest further in logistics infrastructure as the vaccines need to be stored and transported at temperatures 2-8 degrees from the point of manufacture to the point of administration. Temperature integrity needs to be maintained at all times as 25 per cent vaccines degrade by the time they reach their destination due to temperature errors. Thus, need of the hour is to create public-private and public-public partnerships to outfit transportation modes, storage hubs, packing stations, dangerous goods handling areas and health centers with freezers.

India's primary healthcare centers which are last mile storage and administration points are ill-equipped to handle these vaccines. Ancillary items like syringes and glass vials need to be made in adequate quantities along with proper training of healthcare workers who can immediately respond to any emergencies. Verifiable transcript of the vaccine's lifecycle and journey needs to be documented as counterfeiting is rampant in the pharmaceutical supply chain.

The Indian government has done well to launch the Co-Win app and a dedicated 24x7 hotline and this has brought visibility and transparency to the front-end operations, but same visibility needs to be extended to the back-end of the supply chain.

For this, a supply chain information directory needs to be established that can help suppliers and purchasers traverse the volatile and uncertain environment. The information directory would serve as a central repository of demand and supply data, including information on the needs of different states and regions, confirmed purchase orders, supplies and manufacturing capacity for input materials and finished products, delivery times, and so on. Moreover, Chain of Custody also needs to be established to ensure tracking of vaccines in the supply chain and prevent counterfeiting of data and systems.

The challenges to vaccinate the Indian population against Covid-19 at the earliest are humungous. The supply scenario in India has been unpredictable for Covid vaccine due to multiple reasons: lack of raw materials, limited manufacturing capacity, inadequate transportation and logistics infrastructure and insufficient trained manpower. On the demand side, although the population numbers are fixed, demand remains uncertain at the micro level due to complications suffered by some patients, misinformation regarding the efficacy of the vaccine and new information related to the highly mutant strain of the virus makes matters worse, creating scepticism over the effectiveness of the overall vaccination programme.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WISHING YOU ALL A HAPPY WORLD WRESTLING DAY. THIS DAY IS ALL ABOUT HELPING EACH OTHER TO FIGHT COVID-19 AND MOTIVATE EACH OTHER.
— WRESTLER
BAJRANG PUNIA



THE APPLICANT (SUSHIL) IS BEING FALSELY IMPLICATED. THE PURPORTED VICTIMS WERE TRYING TO DEFAME AND FIX (SUSHIL) FOR A LONG TIME.
— WRESTLER AND OLYMPIC MEDALLIST
SUSHIL KUMAR

A wake-up call for Delhi's health infrastructure

The city Government must heed warnings and ensure that no life is lost due to systemic failures or misplaced priorities

The second wave of Covid-19 caught Delhi completely unawares and exposed the fault lines in the capital's healthcare infrastructure. It is well known that Covid-19 treatment requires oxygen. Yet, Delhi did not have any plan of action when it came to managing it. We were completely dependent on oxygen supply from other states. The Union government continued to increase Delhi's quota of oxygen. The Delhi government, on the other hand, was accusing the Centre of not doing enough. For days, oxygen mismanagement caused heavy losses. There were casualties, due to oxygen shortage, reported in Jaipur Golden Hospital and Batra Hospital, who complained of an unresponsive administration on the ground. During the Court proceedings, the Delhi govern-



VIJENDER GUPTA

The author is Member of Legislative Assembly, Delhi, representing the Bharatiya Janata Party from Rohini. The views expressed are personal.

ment was reprimanded for being unable to get its act right. The Delhi High Court told the government to put its house in order or let Centre take over. Even after Centre's upward revision of Delhi's quota of oxygen, the Delhi government did not have enough tankers to lift the oxygen and supply it to hospitals. Later, it was revealed that Delhi does not have storage facilities to store oxygen that was supplied by the Centre and was forced to return the excess oxygen.

It is predicted that the third wave might be more alarming than the current wave and impact our children more. Therefore, it is imperative that we begin preparing for the third wave from day one. Till now, preparations initiated by the Delhi government seem inadequate and unsatisfactory. Delhi needs



to move in the direction of becoming self-reliant in oxygen production. In order to accomplish this, I have written to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to make following policy interventions:
□ Fast track installation of PSA oxygen generation plants from the PM Cares Fund in Delhi
□ Provide subsidy and simpli-

fy process to encourage industry to set up oxygen plants in Delhi
□ Relax norms for private nursing homes who are 100% dependent on oxygen cylinders to set up storage units (oxygen tanks) within premises
□ Mandate installation of oxygen plants in all government hospitals and incentivise pri-

mate hospitals to install oxygen plants within premises
Besides oxygen, it is critical to ramp up Delhi's healthcare infrastructure. Delhi's 'unique healthcare model' turned out to be an empty boast when the tragedy struck. The much-publicized Mohalla clinics could not be used to treat even one patient infected with Covid-19. In fact, many of these were seen submerged in piles of garbage or lay abandoned like a haunted house.

The people of Delhi deserve to be treated and not left to die. Therefore, the Delhi government needs to move beyond making cosmetic changes and doing photo-ops. The need of the hour is to operationalise hospitals that are non-functional. Build more isolation centres as well as identify already existing infrastructure such as

mohalla clinics, community centres, schools and so on that could be turned into isolation centres and equipped with oxygen cylinders and concentrators.

Apart from physical infrastructure, our medical staff also needs to be expanded to reduce the burden on existing workforce. The current wave has taken a serious toll on the physical and mental health of medical professionals and supporting staff. We must support them by filling up vacancies of medical professionals and supporting staff in Category B, C and D and train them on Covid management at a large scale.

For children, special preparations need to be made to ensure that they receive timely care. Special pediatric wards equipped with oxygen supply should be

made mandatory in every hospital. Tie-up with Central agencies on specialized treatment for children to keep the administration updated on any advancements in this regard.

To minimize the impact of future waves, vaccination needs to be undertaken on a mission mode. It is important to keep politics aside and start the process of placing orders with vaccine manufacturers. Though the Centre is already delivering vaccines free of cost to Delhi for people above 45 years of age, it is in the purview of states to procure more vaccines as per the needs from vaccine makers in India and abroad, subject to approvals.

This is the time to act and ensure that no life is lost due to systemic failures and misplaced priorities of the Delhi government.

Blinken off to West Asia to push peace talks

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading to the Middle East to press the Israelis, Palestinians and regional players to build on last week's Gaza cease-fire by laying the groundwork for an eventual resumption in long-stalled peace talks.



President Joe Biden announced Blinken would depart on Monday for a short visit to Israel, the West Bank, Jordan and Egypt for what will be the Biden administration's highest-level in-person meetings on the crisis that erupted earlier this month.

In a statement, Biden said Blinken will also work with regional partners to ensure "the coordinated international effort to ensure immediate assistance reaches Gaza."

The administration has been roundly criticised for its perceived hands-off initial response to the deadly violence, including from Democratic allies in Congress who were demanding it take a tougher line on Israel and its response to rocket attacks from Palestinian militant groups in Gaza.

The administration has defended its response by saying it engaged in intense, but quiet, high-level diplomacy to support a cease-fire, which was ultimately arranged last week after Egyptian mediation.

Blinken said on Sunday that the behind-the-scenes effort led by Biden paid off, securing a truce after 11 days. "President Biden leading this effort made the judgment that we could be most effective in doing that. And ultimately, after this intensive effort across the government, we got to where everyone wanted to be, which was to end the violence," he said in an interview with CNN.



Blinken said on Sunday that the behind-the-scenes effort led by Biden paid off, securing a truce after 11 days

"But now, as the president said, I think it's incumbent upon all of us to try to make the turn to start to build something more positive and what that means at heart is that Palestinians and Israelis alike have to know in their day-in and day-out lives equal measures of opportunity, of security, of dignity," Blinken said. He said the time is not

right for an immediate resumption in negotiations between the two sides but that steps could be taken — mainly humanitarian initiatives — to repair damage from Israeli air strikes in Gaza, which caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure and deaths.

"I don't think we're in a place where getting to some kind of a negotiation for what ultimately, I think, has to be the result, which is a two-state solution, is the first order of business," he said. "We have to start building back in concrete ways and offering some genuine hope, prospects, opportunity in the lives of people."

Israeli soldier, civilian stabbed and wounded in Jerusalem

AP ■ JERUSALEM

An Israeli soldier and a civilian were stabbed near a light rail station in east Jerusalem on Monday before the assailant was shot and killed by police, who described it as a terrorist attack.

The attack came in the tense aftermath of an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers that was triggered by protests and clashes in Jerusalem.

The Magen David Adom emergency service said it treated two men in their early 20s with stab wounds to their upper bodies. The military identified one of those wounded as a soldier. Both were being treated at nearby hospitals. Police did not provide any details about the attacker but referred to him as a "terrorist," a term usually reserved for Palestinian assailants.

Nepal's Opposition files writ petition against Prez's 'unconstitutional' House dissolution

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's Opposition alliance on Monday filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against the "unconstitutional" dissolution of the House of Representatives by the President.

Leaders of the alliance moved the apex court two days after President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House on the recommendations of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, who headed a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House.

In the writ, petitioners have demanded that Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba should be, lawfully, appointed the Prime Minister of Nepal in accordance with Article 76 (5), *The Himalayan Times* reported.

Their other demands include the scrapping of the announcement of elections in November, to stop election-related programmes amid the pandemic, and to issue an order to summon House meeting to facilitate presentation of the budget within the time provisioned by the Constitution, it



Sher Bahadur Deuba

said. The petitioners noted that the dissolution was "unconstitutional" as there was legal room for the appointment of a new government as per Article 76 (5) of the Constitution of Nepal.

Former lawmakers from the Opposition parties had assembled in Singha Durbar on Sunday and on Monday to submit their signatures endorsing Deuba's claim to the prime ministership.

At least 26 leaders from Prime Minister Oli's rival faction have reportedly submitted their signatures.

Deuba had staked his claim to the government on Friday claiming that he has the support of 149 lawmakers.

President Bhandari dis-

Leaders of the alliance moved the apex court two days after President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House on the recommendations of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, who headed a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House

solved the 275-member House of Representatives on Saturday for the second time in five months and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19 on the advice of Prime Minister Oli, heading a minority government.

She rejected the bids of both embattled Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition alliance's claims to form a government. Oli and Opposition leader Deuba had staked separate claims to the premiership.

The announcement came after Prime Minister Oli in his last deal-sealing move on Friday midnight recommended the Office of the President to dissolve the House and announce dates for early elections.

Iran agrees to extend deal on cameras at its nuclear sites

AP ■ VIENNA

Iran and the UN's nuclear watchdog agreed on Monday to a one-month extension to a deal on surveillance cameras at Tehran's atomic sites, buying more time for ongoing negotiations seeking to save the country's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

The last-minute discussions further underscored the narrowing window for the US and others to reach terms with Iran as it presses a tough stance with the international community over its atomic programme. The Islamic Republic is already enriching and stockpiling uranium at levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal.

Speaking at a news conference Monday in Vienna, IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi told journalists that he came after a discussion with Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear programme.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's

representative to the IAEA, acknowledged the deal at the same time on Twitter.

Under a confidential agreement called an "Additional Protocol" with Iran, the IAEA collects and analyzes images from a series of surveillance cameras installed at Iranian nuclear sites. Those cameras helped it monitor Tehran's program to see if it is complying with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran's hard-line parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part of UN Inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories did not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by February.

The IAEA then struck a three-month deal with Iran in February to have it hold the surveillance images, with Tehran threatening to delete them afterward if no deal had been reached.

Iran since has broken all the deal's limits after then-President Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew America from the accord.

Myanmar's Suu Kyi makes first in-person court appearance

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, appeared in court in person Monday for the first time since the military arrested her when it seized power on February 1.

One of her lawyers, Min Min Soe, told The Associated Press by phone that Suu Kyi was able to meet with her defence team for about 30 minutes before the hearing began at a special court set up inside the city council building in Naypyitaw, the capital.

The lawyers also met with Win Myint, who was president of the government Suu Kyi led



as state councillor and faces some of the same charges.

Suu Kyi's only previous court appearances have been by video link and she had not been allowed to meet in person with any of her lawyers.

Min Min Soe said Suu Kyi wanted to tell Myanmar's people that her National League for

Democracy party will stand by them. She said that "since the NLD was founded for the people, the NLD will exist as long as the people exist," Min Min Soe said after the hearing. She appeared to be referring to the ruling junta's threat to dissolve the party.

Khin Maung Zaw, head of Suu Kyi's legal team, said "she seems fit and alert and smart, as always."

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is always confident in herself, and she is confident in her cause and confident in the people," he said, using an honorific for a respected older woman.

BBC to review editorial practice in wake of Diana interview scandal

PTI ■ LONDON

The BBC Board on Monday announced a review of its editorial policies after an independent inquiry into its 1995 interview with Diana, the Princess of Wales, concluded last week that the media house had fallen short of "high standards of integrity and transparency".

The inquiry by Lord John Dyson concluded that journalist Martin Bashir, who left the BBC recently, used "deceitful behaviour" to land the world exclusive over 25 years ago and that an internal BBC investigation a year later had covered it up.

In an official statement, the BBC Board admitted failures and said: "audiences had a right to expect better." "As a board we believe that the BBC is a different organisation today, with different and stronger governance, as well as improved processes," the statement read.

"Nevertheless, Lord Dyson's report speaks to historic failings of oversight and these should be reflected upon. We must not just assume that mistakes of the past cannot be repeated today — we must make sure that this is the case," it said.

Merkel, Macron back efforts to improve WHO as meeting opens

AP ■ GENEVA

French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday were among leaders rallying around efforts to strengthen the World Health Organization and the world's ability to prepare for and defend against pandemics.

It came as the U.N. Health agency opened its annual assembly, with a draft resolution in the works that acknowledges missteps in the response to COVID-19.

The sweeping proposal would seek to boost pandemic response, stabilise WHO's funding and ensure greater access to health care — including to vaccines, tests and treatments linked to the coronavirus.

The European Union and Vanuatu were behind the resolution, which was to be considered during the eight-day assembly.

It would create a working group on strengthening WHO's readiness and response to health emergencies.

"We have to have institutions that are up to the task, that meet our ambitions," Macron said by video during the mostly virtual meeting.

ITALY PROBES CABLE CAR CRASH

Stresa (Italy): Italy's transport minister vowed Monday to establish the cause of a cable car disaster that killed 14 people, after the lead cable apparently snapped and the cabin careened back down the mountain until it came off the line and crashed to the ground.

BELARUS OPPOSITION FIGURE DETAINED

Vilnius (Lithuania): A prominent opponent of Belarus' authoritarian president was arrested Sunday after the airliner in which he was traveling was diverted to the country after a bomb threat, in what the opposition and Western officials denounced as a hijacking operation by the Government.

GEORGE FLOYD'S FAMILY HOLDS RALLY

Minneapolis (US): Members of George Floyd's family, and others who lost loved ones to police encounters, joined activists and citizens in Minneapolis on Sunday for a march that was one of several events planned nationwide to mark the one-year anniversary of Floyd's death.

BORIS TO WED FIANCEE CARRIE IN JULY 2022

London: Boris Johnson is among the many whose wedding plans were delayed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown and it seems the UK Prime Minister and fiancée Carrie Symonds have finally settled on a date for their big day.

SEARCH FOR MISSING WOMAN



Nilawati Nayak

General public is here by informed that this woman namely Nilawati Nayak W/o Sanatan Nayak R/o B-123, Jahangir Puri, Delhi Age : 65 years, Height : 5'2", Face : Round, Complexion : Shallow, Build : Medium, Identification: Mentally disturb, wearing yellow colour maxi, has been missing since 14.05.2021. In this regard DD No. 82-A dated 14.05.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing woman may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in SHO : P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
Fax: 24368639, Tel. No. : 011-27636000, 27631600

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-Tender Notice

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:

Sl. No.	Name of work with its location	Replacement/Provision of missing/damaged traction bonds and caution boards over Delhi Division.
1	Approx. cost of work	Rs. 57,78,561.75/-
2	Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 0/-
3	E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	03.06.2021 (00.00 Hrs.) to 17.06.2021 (15.00 Hrs.)
4	E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	17.06.2021 (15.00 Hrs.)
5	Fund Allocation	29366203
6	Website particulars where complete details of tender document can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in
E-Tender No. : 02A-TRD-NDLS-2021-22 Dated 24.05.2021		111121
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE

It is informed that **Sh. Vinod Kumar Meena S/o Sh. Rewati Lal Meena** Signal Khalasi/TKD Station under SSE/SIGNAL/TKD residential address - Village & Post - SIGHNIYA, Tehsil - TODABHIM District - KARAUJI, Rajasthan, Pin code - 322230 is continue unauthorized absent from his duty since 11.07.2015.

In this connection disciplinary proceeding has been initiated and a SF-5 (Major Penalty charge sheet) no. - ADSTE/HNZM dated 27.04.2018 was issued against you under rule no -3 of Railway service conduct rule 1966 and was sent on your residential address.

Enquiry officer was appointed and he also issued letter to you on dated: 15.11.2019, 02.03.2021, 02.04.2021 and 27.04.2021 through registered post to attend the enquiry on dated 30.11.2019, 14.03.2021, 09.04.2021 & 10.05.2021. But you are not attended any enquiry and neither you sent any information/representation to the enquiry officer till date.

Hence **Sh. Vinod Kumar Meena S/o Sh. Rewati Lal Meena signal khalasi TUGLAKABAD Station** is here by informed through daily leading news papers to attend the office of Assistant signal and telecom engineer, Northern Railway Hazrat Nizamuddin and produced your representation within 15 days, otherwise single sided disciplinary action will be taken against you as per Railway service conduct rule.

ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL SIGNAL & TELECOM ENGINEER N.R. HNZM No. - E-6/SIG/STAFF/TKD DATED: 21.05.2021 1103/2021 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

China defends contentious CPEC

Says it is economic initiative and has not affected its stand on Kashmir issue

Beijing: China on Monday again defended its controversial \$60 billion CPEC project with Pakistan, disregarding India's protests as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, saying it is an economic initiative and has not affected its principled stand on the Kashmir issue.

Leaders of China and Pakistan have praised the progress of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in recent days as the two close allies celebrated the establishment of 70 years of their diplo-

matic relations. India has protested to China over the CPEC, the flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as it traverses through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The massive infrastructure project connects China's Xinjiang province with Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

China has been defending the CPEC, saying it is an economic project not aimed at any third country. Answering questions on the CPEC at a media briefing on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said that the CPEC as one of the pioneering projects under the BRI has made important and major progress in infrastructure, energy, ports and industrial parks.

Japan opens mass vaccine centers 2 months before Olympics

Tokyo: Japan mobilised military doctors and nurses to give shots to elderly people in Tokyo and Osaka on Monday as the government desperately tries to accelerate its vaccination roll-out and curb coronavirus infections just two months before hosting the Olympics.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is determined to hold the Olympics in Tokyo after a one-year delay and has made an ambitious pledge to finish vaccinating the country's 36 million elderly people by the end of July, despite skepticism it's possible.

Researchers at China's Wuhan bio lab sought hospital care before Covid-19 outbreak: Report

PTI ■ BEIJING/WASHINGTON

Three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology sought hospital care in November 2019, weeks before Beijing disclosed the Covid-19 pandemic, a US media report said, citing a previously undisclosed American intelligence document that could add weight to growing calls for a full scale probe of whether the coronavirus may have escaped from China's top bio lab.

The details of the reporting go beyond a State Department

Volcanic eruption, ensuing chaos kill at least 15 in Congo

AP ■ GOMA (CONGO)

Torrents of lava poured into villages after dark in eastern Congo with little warning, leaving at least 15 people dead amid the chaos and destroying more than 500 homes, officials and survivors have said.

The eruption of Mount Niyragongo on Saturday night sent about 5,000 people fleeing from the city of Goma across the nearby border into Rwanda, while another 25,000 others sought refuge to the northwest in Sake, the UN children's agency said Sunday.

More than 170 children were still feared missing Sunday, and UNICEF officials said they were organising tran-



sit centres to help unaccompanied children in the wake of the disaster.

Goma ultimately was largely spared the mass destruction caused by the volcano's last eruption in 2002. Hundreds died then and more than 100,000 people were left homeless.

Brazil confirms presence of variant first identified in India

AP ■ BRASILIA (BRAZIL)

Brazil's health minister said the government is concerned about the coronavirus variant first identified in India after the first cases of it were confirmed in the South American country.

Marcelo Queiroga denied, however, that there was community transmission of the variant, which was first identified in Brazil in the northeastern state of Maranhao, where 100 people are being monitored. A case was also confirmed Saturday in Ceara state.

Soon, users can switch between prepaid and postpaid via OTP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mobile phone subscribers may soon be allowed to switch from a postpaid connection to prepaid and vice versa by using an OTP-based authentication and without a need to change SIM card, according to an official DoT note.

Industry body Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) has proposed the mechanism to the Department of Telecom (DoT) and the department has asked telecom operators to carry out proof of concept (PoC) on the same.

The final decision on allowing the change in the account will depend on the outcome of PoC, according to the DoT note.

"The PoC for conversion from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa may be carried out by the telecom service providers as per the procedure...The decision regarding implementation of the procedure shall be taken after the assessment of the outcome of the PoC," DoT ADG Suresh Kumar said in the note issued on May 21.

The COAI, whose members include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, had requested the DoT on April 9



for permission to allow mobile customers to migrate from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa without undertaking fresh KYC procedure and by using OTP (one-time password) based authentication.

"OTP based authentication has become an acceptable norm in all sectors in the recent past and most of the citizen centric services are being offered with OTP authentication. Contactless services in the present era are to be promoted for subscriber convenience and also for ease of doing business," the note said.

Under the proposed process, mobile subscribers willing to change their existing mobile connection from prepaid to postpaid or vice versa will have to send a request to their service provider through

SMS, IVRS, website or authorised app.

Upon receiving the request, the subscriber will get a message acknowledging the request for conversion of the mobile account along with a unique transaction ID and an OTP which will be valid for 10 minutes.

The successful verification of the OTP will be treated as consent of the subscriber and the telecom operator will inform him about the date and time from when the conversion will be considered effective.

"The disruption of services, if any, during the said conversion shall not exceed 30 minutes," the DoT note said.

At present, over 90 per cent of mobile subscribers are using prepaid service.

Market milestone: M-cap of BSE-listed companies at record \$3 trillion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BSE on Monday added another feather to its cap with the market capitalisation of all listed companies on the exchange reaching USD 3 trillion for the first time ever.

At close of trade, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies stood at Rs 2,18,94,202.30 crore (USD 3 trillion). During the day, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies went past the Rs 219 lakh crore level.

"Market capitalization of equities of listed companies on @bseindia reached USD 3 trillion intra day for the first time ever. A great milestone on a long journey. Congratulations to all 6.9 crore+ registered investors, 1400+ brokers, 69,000+ MF distributors and 4700+ companies," BSE's MD and CEO Ashishkumar Chauhan tweeted.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 111.42 points or 0.22 per cent to close at 50,651.90. During the day, it gained 317.11 points to 50,857.59.

Investor wealth rose by Rs 3,30,458.99 crore in two consecutive days of market rally.

The BSE-listed companies' market valuation had crossed

the Rs 100 lakh crore milestone on November 28, 2014.

"Due to a steady decline in fresh COVID cases and hopes of the lockdown being lifted sooner has influenced the domestic market to extend its gains," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

SBI was the biggest gainer among the 30-share pack in Monday's session, spurring nearly 3 per cent, followed by L&T, Axis Bank, PowerGrid and ITC.

On the other hand, Titan and IndusInd Bank were among the prominent losers. "Domestic equities remained upbeat despite mixed global cues as persistent decline in daily caseload and improvement in recovery rate in second wave of COVID-19 continued to lift investors' sentiments," said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices gained up to 0.86 per cent.

Sector-wise, BSE power, oil and gas, utilities, realty, capital goods and industrials indices rose as much as 1.89 per cent, while telecom, metal, FMCG and consumer durables were among those to close lower.

RBI issues guidelines for amalgamation of district central co-op banks with State co-op banks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Monday said it will consider amalgamation of District Central Co-operative Banks (DCCBs) with State Cooperative Banks (StCBs) subject to various conditions, including that a proposal should be made by the State Government concerned.

The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020 has been notified for the StCBs and DCCBs with effect from April 1, 2021. Amalgamation of such banks need to be sanctioned by the Reserve Bank of India.

RBI has come out with the guidelines after a few state governments approached it for amalgamation of DCCBs with StCBs as a two-tier Short-term Co-operative Credit Structure (STCCS).

As per the guidelines, RBI will consider proposals for amalgamation "when the state government of the state makes a proposal to amalgamate one or more DCCB/s in the state with the StCB after conducting a detailed study of the legal framework".

Besides, there should be an additional capital infusion strategy, assurance regarding financial support if required, projected business model with clear profitability and proposed governance



model for the amalgamated bank.

The scheme of amalgamation has to be approved by the requisite majority of shareholders. Also, NABARD has to examine and recommend the proposal of the state government.

"The proposal for amalgamation of DCCBs with the StCB will be examined by Reserve Bank in consultation with NABARD and the sanction/ approval will be a two-stage process," the guidelines said.

In the first stage, an 'in-principle' approval will be accorded subject to fulfilment

of certain conditions, following which the processes for amalgamation may be initiated by all concerned.

After completion of the first stage, NABARD and RBI may be approached for final approval along with compliance report, as per the guidelines.

The guidelines also said that if as a result of share swap ratio based on net worth, shareholders of some DCCBs cannot be allotted any shares, then the state government should infuse sufficient capital in such lenders to ensure that the shareholders are allotted at least one share each.

Corp Affairs Minister launches first phase of MCA21 V3.0 portal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With a revamped website, electronic consultation module and other features, the third version of the Corporate Affairs Ministry's MCA21 portal was launched on Monday.

MCA21 -- which allows electronic filings of various documents under the companies law -- is being redesigned. The first phase of the MCA21 V3.0 (third version) has now been launched, and the second and final phase would be launched from October this year.

The portal is the key platform for companies to submit the required documents and filings. Besides, it provides public access to corporate information.

Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Singh Thakur launched the first phase of MCA21 V3.0, comprising of a revamped website, new email services for ministry officials as well as two new electronic modules for books and consultation, according to a release.

The e-consultation module will facilitate virtual public consultations of proposed

amendments and new legislations to be introduced by the ministry.

It will also "leverage artificial intelligence for compiling, grouping and categorising comments/ inputs received from stakeholders and create analytical reports for quick policy decision making," the release said.

The new email service for officers will provide them with advanced features and capabilities for organised and managed communication with internal as well as external stakeholders, it added.

Corporate Affairs Secretary Rajesh Verma said MCA21 V3.0 will reduce the requirements of attachments, make the forms web-based and also strengthen the pre-fill mechanism.

The entire MCA21 V3.0 project -- proposed to be launched in the current fiscal -- will be driven by data analytics and machine learning.

In her Budget speech in February this year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that in fiscal 2021-22, "we will be launching data analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning-driven MCA21 Version 3.0.

NDDB ties up with Sustain Plus to promote biogas-based manure mgmt model

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) on Monday said it has partnered with Sustain Plus Energy Foundation to promote biogas-based manure management model.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) to this effect was recently signed to form the strategic partnership, it said.

"The collaboration will help NDDB to test and replicate the experience of biogas manure management model in other parts of the country through the network of dairy cooperatives and producer companies," NDDB Executive Director Meenesh Shah said in a statement.

The biogas-based manure management model helps satisfy clean cooking energy needs of smallholder farmers and promote usage of nutrient rich bio-slurry in agriculture, he said.

Shah further said farmers can earn an additional income through the sale of surplus bio-slurry. The aggregated surplus slurry is utilised to produce organic fertiliser. With farmers resorting to clean cooking practices and arresting methane emission, the model mitigates adverse impact on the environment, he added.

FDI jumps 19% to \$ 59.64 billion in 2020-21: Govt data



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign direct investments (FDI) into the country grew 19 per cent to USD 59.64 billion during 2020-21 on account of measures taken by the Government on the fronts of policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business, the commerce and industry ministry said on Monday.

Total FDI, including equity, re-invested earnings and capital, rose 10 per cent to the "highest ever" of USD 81.72 billion during 2020-21 as against USD 74.39 billion in 2019-20.

"FDI equity inflow grew by 19 per cent in 2020-21 (USD 59.64 billion), compared to 2019-20 (USD 49.98 billion)," the ministry said in a statement.

In terms of top investor countries, Singapore is at the top with 29 per cent share. It was followed by the US (23 per

cent) and Mauritius (9 per cent) during the last fiscal.

"Measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country," it said.

It added that the inflows are an endorsement of India's status as a preferred investment destination among global investors. The computer software and hardware sector attracted the highest inflows with around 44 per cent share of the total FDI equity inflows. It was followed by construction (infrastructure) activities (13 per cent) and services sector (8 per cent), respectively.

"Gujarat is the top recipient state during 2020-21 with 37 per cent share of the total FDI equity inflows, followed by Maharashtra (27 per cent) and Karnataka (13 per cent)," it added.

SAT grants interim stay on Sebi's order against Yes Bank in AT-1 bond case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has granted an interim stay on markets regulator Sebi order that had slapped a penalty of ₹ 25 crore on Yes Bank in a case of mis-selling AT-1 bonds.

Apart from penalising Yes Bank, Sebi in its order in April, imposed a fine of ₹ 1 crore on Vivek Kanwar, who was the head of the private wealth management team, and ₹ 50 lakh each on Ashish Nasa and Jasjit Singh Banga.

The two individuals were part of the private wealth management team at the time of the violation.

Sebi alleged misrepresentation by the bank and certain officials for not informing investors of the risk involved while selling the AT -1 (Additional Tier-1) bonds in the secondary market.

While granting interim relief to Yes Bank, SAT said it has "stayed the effect and operation of the impugned order".

This is subject to an undertaking by Yes Bank that in the event of failure of the appeal, the lender would pay the penalty amount within two weeks from the date of the order, SAT said in an order passed on May 21.

Also, the tribunal said has directed Sebi to file a reply within 4 weeks, thereafter the bank needs to file a rejoinder. The matter has been listed for admission and final disposal on July 30.

The order comes following appeals filed by Yes Bank, Kanwar and others.

The tribunal noted that the central government imposed a moratorium on Yes Bank and appointed an administrator, superseding the board of directors.

"The bank is under a rehabilitation scheme and lots of money are being pumped in order to revive the bank," it pointed out.

In addition, the tribunal said that "the Relationship Manager has not been booked. Prima facie, the question as to whether the buyers were informed of the risk factor with regard to the AT-1 Bonds can be best explained by the Relationship Managers which were part of the investigation but were not the noticees in these proceedings".

On the other hand, the members of the private wealth management team have been made noticees and they have been penalised by Sebi, it noted.

"We also prima facie find that the risk factor was already existing on the website and it was in the knowledge of everyone. Considering the aforesaid, prima facie a case is made out for grant of an interim order," it added.

Yes Bank, whose board of directors were reconstituted and fresh capital was infused in 2020, had issued AT-1 bonds in the nature of debentures in December 2013, December 2016 and October 2017.

Rupee slips 13 paise to close at 72.96 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee fell by 13 paise to close at 72.96 against the US currency on Monday, as investors appeared unsure amid lack of cues on the domestic and global front.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened weak at 72.88 against the greenback and traded in the range of 72.98-72.86 during the session.

The rupee finally ended at 72.96 against the American currency, registering a fall of 13 paise over its previous close.

"Rupee consolidated in a narrow range and traded with low volatility following lack of cues on the domestic as well as global front. Market participants are cautious ahead of the advance GDP number that will be released from the US. Better-than-expected growth number could support the dollar at lower levels," Gaurang Somaiyaa, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, surged 1.90 per cent to USD 67.70 per barrel. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.15 per cent to 89.87.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 111.42 points or 0.22 per cent higher at 50,651.90, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced by 22.40 points or 0.15 per cent to 15,197.70.

Sensex jumps 111 points; Nifty ends near 15,200

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex advanced 111 points on Monday, tracking gains in HDFC twins, SBI and L&T amid mixed cues from global markets.

The 30-share BSE index climbed 111.42 points or 0.22 per cent to finish at 50,651.90. The broader NSE Nifty rose 22.40 points or 0.15 per cent to 15,197.70.

SBI was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, advancing over 2 per cent, followed by L&T, ITC, Dr Reddy's, Axis Bank and PowerGrid.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Titan and Bajaj Finserv were among the losers.

Domestic equities remained positive despite mixed global cues as persistent decline in daily caseload and improvement in recovery rate in second wave of COVID-19 continued to lift investors' sentiments, said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Tokyo ended on a positive note, while Hong Kong and Seoul were in the red. Equities in Europe were largely trading with gains in mid-session deals.

BHEL creates capacity to fill 3,000 oxygen cylinders per day at Haridwar facility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeing the acute shortage of medical oxygen in the country during mid-April, the plant created cylinder filling capacity for over 3,000 cylinders per day in a record time of just one week along with putting in the entire logistics & manpower, working day and night for handling over 3,000 cylinders a day. This plant has so far filled almost 55,000 cylinders (over 3,00,000 CuM) of medical oxygen for meeting requirements of hospitals and district authorities, PSUs, armed forces in Uttarakhand, UP as well as Delhi NCR, thus saving thousands of lives in this crisis.

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has rapidly developed into an unprecedented crisis for the nation, and in the midst of this grave national crisis, BHEL has been working on war footing to do its bit for the country and fellow citizens. BHEL's plants, located at Bhopal and Haridwar, have responded to the situation with all possible resources at their command for supplying medical oxygen in and around their vicinity.

BHEL Haridwar was hav-

ing a capacity to produce 24,000 CuM oxygen per day for captive use through internal pipelines.

In one instance, swift action by this unit in supplying oxygen to the Covid Hospital in Tehri, Garhwal -- in response to SOS calls when the main plant supplying these hospitals developed a fault, resulted in saving lives of 80 patients whose oxygen supply would otherwise have got cut off. Similarly, 158 cylinders were despatched urgently to AIIMS, Rishikesh, against SOS call received from them, helped save many lives.

BHEL's Bhopal plant has so far supplied over 1,53,000 cubic meters of oxygen (over 23,000 cylinders) to various Hospitals including Kasturba Hospital, AIIMS, Military Hospital, Railway Hospital and Police Hospital, in addition to various private Hospitals of Bhopal and Madhya Pradesh.

Further efforts are underway for creating oxygen production capacity in other units of the company too.

BHEL stands firm in its resolve to contribute wholeheartedly in meeting the national requirements.

MFIs credit costs may be in 3-6% range in FY22, says report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With their collection efficiency getting impacted amid disruptions caused by the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, microfinance institutions (MFIs) may see their credit cost in the 3-6 per cent range in the current fiscal, a report said.

India Ratings and Research in its report said that collections of micro lenders and small finance banks (SFBs) are likely to have declined 3-5 per cent in April 2021 and additional 5-7 per cent May 2021 (first fortnight of the month), both on a month-on-month basis.

"MFIs could again see credit costs in the range of 3-6 per cent in FY22, if the early trends of the collection performance were to persist," the agency said.

It said May 2021 could see a higher drop in collections (5-7 per cent) than even April 2021 (cumulative 10-15 per cent drop in collections compared to March 21), as states implement stricter measures to manage the second COVID wave.

The variation among

MFIs could be wider, depending on their level of concentration in regions where lifting of restrictions could be slow, it said.

The report further said the incidence of most of the relevant provision will also fall in FY22, given that the bulk of the second wave portfolio deterioration would happen at the beginning of FY22.

"As a consequence, the impact of the credit costs on account of the second wave would be higher in the annual financials for FY22 than FY21 and possibly even the demonetisation crisis," it said.

During demonetisation, MFIs credit costs were spread over three years as the event occurred at end of the third quarter of FY17 and the regulator provided forbearance for NPA (non-performing assets) recognition, the report said.

The agency expects mid and small MFIs to continue to face challenges in fund raising and / or borrowing costs.

It has reiterated a stable outlook for large MFIs and a negative outlook for the rest for FY22.

Icra pegs Q4 GDP growth 2%; FY21 at 8.45%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic rating agency Icra on Monday forecast a 2 per cent uptick in growth during the March FY21 quarter, and 3 per cent from the gross value-added perspective.

This would mean that the NSO projection of a double-dip contraction is avoided.

The agency has placed the full-year contraction at 8.45 per cent. Its chief economist Aditi Nayar expects the annualised GDP growth at 2 per cent in the March quarter, up from 0.40 per cent in the December quarter.

The agency has projected the GVA growth at 3 per cent in Q4 of FY21, up from 1 per cent in Q3, suggesting that the double-dip recession implied by the National Statistics Office (NSO) for Q4 is averted.

Public Notice

This is to inform all concerned that my clients Sh. Ajit Singh Rohilla, aged about 62 years, S/o Late Sh. Deep Chand Rohilla, & Smt. Sunita Rohilla, aged about 60 years, W/o Sh. Ajit Singh Rohilla, both R/o B-1004, Ashta Apartments, Plot No.19B, Sec 6, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075, have disowned their son namely, Varun Rohilla aged about 35 years, owing to his activities unbecoming of a son, from all the movable/immovable properties of my client. If anybody deals with him in any manner, it shall be entirely at their own risk, cost & consequences. They will not be held responsible in any manner for his deed, act & conduct.

Manohar Lal, Advocate

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Corrigendum-1

In reference to tender for "Hiring of one multi-utility Road Vehicle i.e. Innova/Scorpio/ Mahindra Bolero, Marazzo (Five Door-Seven Seater) for the period of two years round the clock under Chief Power Controller, DRM's Office, New Delhi." **Date of Opening:** 11.06.2021 **May be read as:** 15.06.2021 **No.116-S/11/Vehicle/Contract/(2020)/2/ML-IV Dated: 24.05.2021** 1109/2021

Serving Customers With A Smile

SEARCH FOR MISSING FEMALE

General public is hereby informed that this female Name: Santosh, W/o Sanjay Kumar, R/o H. No. 17/259, Shiv Mandir, Wazirabad, Delhi, Age: 42 years, Height: 5'4", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Round, Built: Strong, Identification Mark: Birth mark Lahushan on Face, Wearing: Pink Colour Suit and Slippers in feet has been missing since 08.10.2020 from the area of PS Wazirabad, Delhi.

In this regard a DD No. 50A dated 08.10.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Wazirabad, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this female but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this female kindly inform to the following.

SHO
E-Mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in
Website: http://cbi.nic.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

P.S. Wazirabad, Delhi
Ph: 011-23810076, 8750870131
DP/645/N/2020(Missing)

HEALTH

CocktailDrug

Roche India on Monday announced the rollout of its first batch of the antibody cocktail (Casirivimab and Imdevimab) against Coronavirus in India. The cocktail drug will be marketed by Cipla pan-India. The second batch of the cocktail jabs will be made available by mid-June. Together, they can potentially benefit 200,000 patients as each of the 100,000 packs that will be available in India offers treatment for two patients, the company said in a statement



IMPORTANCE OF HYDRATION

Dehydration is common in summers. DR PRAVEEN JHA tells you how it is linked to low BP and shares tips that can help



With the scorching heat, the incidences of dehydration become rampant. The fluid intake although increases in summer but it doesn't fulfill the amount our body needs. In hot and humid days, our body sweats leading to a lot of water loss and sometimes when we don't take adequate fluids, we suffer from dehydration. This condition can be serious if it remains untreated and can fluctuate the blood pressure levels of the body.

If the blood pressure level is 90/60 mm Hg, then you have a low blood pressure level. Dehydration can be one of the major causes of low blood pressure because of the decrease in blood volume. When you're dehydrated, your blood volume decreases and that leads to a dip in the blood pressure. When the blood pressure drops too low, then a person won't receive oxygen and nutrients.

If the blood pressure level reading is of 140 mm Hg or higher or a diastolic (bottom number) reading of 90 mm Hg or higher, then you're having hypertension. There is a limited research on how dehydration can be linked to hypertension. Investigation are on to find the connection between the two. Preliminary facts suggest that dehydration has the potential of increasing blood pressure due to the action of a hormone called vasopressin. It gets secreted in the body when there's a high amount of sodium level in the blood, or when your blood volume is low. Both of these things can happen when you lose too much fluid.

Symptoms of dehydration one shouldn't ignore: Thirst, dry mouth, urinating less often, urine that's dark in colour, fatigue, lightheadedness or dizziness and confusion.

Causes: If you think not drinking enough water can lead you to dehydration then you're highly mistaken. There are other possible causes of dehydration and they include:

■ **Illness.** A high fever can lead to dehydration. Additionally, vomiting and diarrhea can lead to a significant loss of fluids and electrolytes.

■ **Increased sweating.** Water is lost when you sweat. An increase in sweating can occur in hot weather, during exercise, and if you're sick with a fever.

■ **Frequent urination.** You can also lose fluids through urination. Medications like diuretics, underlying conditions such as Diabetes and alcohol consumption can all cause more frequent urination.

Here are five strategies for staying well-hydrated:

■ **In order to make yourself conscious about your fluid intake,** start writing down how much water you're drinking. Continue doing this for a week.

■ **Make a habit of drinking a glass of water in the morning the moment you get up from your bed.** Take a sipper with you and ensure that you're sipping from it at least twice an hour.

■ **If you are having a hot beverage like tea or coffee, then make sure that you're drinking a glass of water prior to having it.**

The writer is Consultant Gastroenterologist, Regency Superspecialty Hospital, Lucknow

INBRIEF

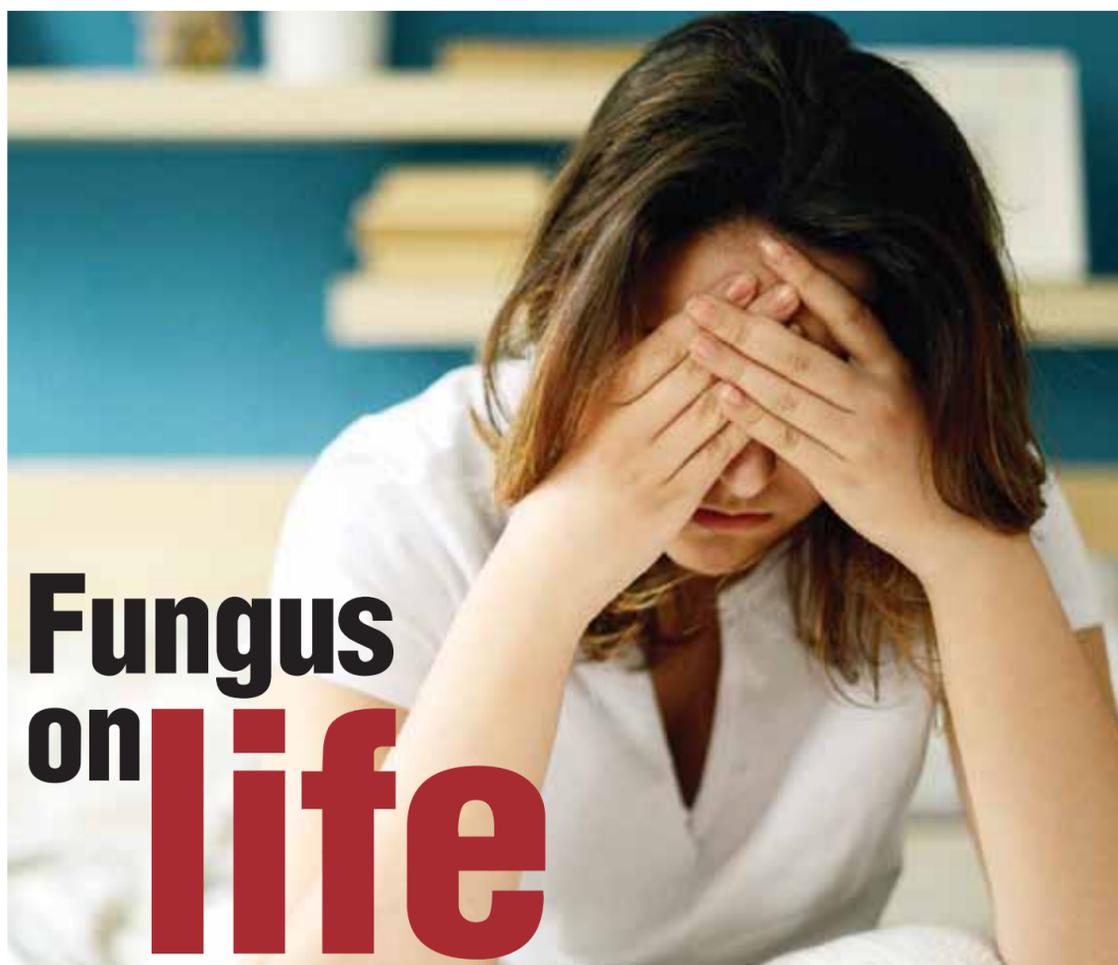
Beauty is more than skin deep and it is a known fact that to be endowed with baby skin is every woman's dream. As it is the perfect balance of softness, plumpness and bounce, there is a plethora of scientific research going on to get that right balance.

Avon's new skincare discovery, Protinol™, is clinically proven to restore both types of collagen found in healthy skin, helping to mimic the perfect collagen equilibrium found in baby skin — a never seen before result.

The breakthrough ingredient is already gaining attention from industry leading scientists. Dr Bayat from the University of Manchester independently tested the ingredient to help fully understand its power. Dr Bayat says: "This is the first time I have ever seen a significant increase in collagen 3 from a topical skincare product."

Protinol™ is available in Avon's New Anew Skin Reset Plumping Shots. Used over seven days, these seven potent single-use shots have the maximum concentration of the patented Protinol™ technology, restoring seven years of collagen loss in just seven days, for plumper, firmer, looking skin, revealing your best skin in years.

What's remarkable is the combination of Protinol + Phytol, as it increases the Hyaluronic Acid production by over 100 per cent and boosts collagen production — a solid boost to hydration and life force.



Fungus on life

Recently, several States declared Black Fungus an epidemic. While, we continue to fight with rising fungal infections, cases of White and Yellow Fungus have started adding to the alarm bells. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with doctors to bring you a report

Even though the COVID curve has started to flatten, COVID deaths are an all time high. What is further wrecking havoc is the Black Fungus, which has been declared as an epidemic by several States including Jammu and Kashmir. This is not all. Alarm bells have rung yet again as four people in Patna was found to have White Fungus. What is it you ask? Doctor responds to your query.

"White fungus is caused by candida group of organisms and Aspergillus. It is found in those patients with low immunity, Diabetes mellitus, using steroids, case of cancer. It involves areas in the body like Mouth, private parts, heart, kidney and lungs. It is also very deadly but it is easily manageable with anti-fungal drugs like Fluconazole. It is present in the air and whenever there is a decrease in immunity, patient may get affected with this infection," Dr HK Mahajan, Anaesthesiologist, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, Vasant Kunj, tells you. With not much study in place, it is difficult to find out the actual cause of the infection.

What is more alarming is the fact that the infection is apparently more dangerous than the Black Fungus, as per doctors.

"White fungus infections are more dangerous than black fungus due to its acute effect on lungs and

other body parts such as other respiratory organs, brain, digestive tract, kidneys, nailbed or even private parts. White fungus is getting much more mortal because of the way it increases and can cause a big damage to the vital organs. Black and White Fungus infections were reported long before the COVID outbreak, but were rare. Now, there is a sudden increase in cases since the onset of the second COVID wave," he says.

The signs and symptoms, he says, resemble to that of COVID. "The signs and symptoms of black fungus include pain in cheekbones and face, eye swelling, congestion, nasal blockage, facial or cheekbone pain, nasal discharge with foul smell and black in colour, and impaired vision. However, the signs and symptoms of white fungus include those which are quite similar to Coronavirus like cough, cold and low oxygen levels along with white marks in the oral cavity," Mahajan explains.

He adds that COVID-related symptoms were seen in all the four white fungus patients of Patna hospital and all of them were not found positive in COVID test. "This clearly means that their lungs got infected as the white fungus damages the lungs and chest and may lead to cough, chest pain and breathlessness.

The signs and symptoms of white fungus include those which are quite similar to Coronavirus like cough, cold and low oxygen levels along with white marks in the oral cavity
— Dr HK Mahajan

This may have irritant symptoms and cause acute pain, headache and swelling. This can be traced through X-rays and CT scans. Such patients are given anti-fungal medication and the same was given to all the four patients in Patna and they have recovered," Mahajan says.

In order to prevent these fungal infections, judicious use of steroids for treating COVID-19 is recommended. "White infection, like I said before, comprises a risk of low oxygen levels and if detected late, may

lead to death. Hence, early diagnosis is the key to proper treatment," he tells you.

Dr Shashank Vashist, ENT and Cochlear Implant Surgeon, Columbia Asia, Palam Vihar, Gurugram, tells you that the most effective treatment is a newer antifungal drug, voriconazole. Amphotericin B is another option.

He adds that this is the most severe form of aspergillosis. It occurs when the infection spreads rapidly from the lungs to the brain, heart, kidneys or skin. "Invasive aspergillosis occurs only in people whose immune systems are weakened as a result of cancer chemotherapy, bone marrow transplantation or a disease of the immune system. Untreated, this form of aspergillosis may be fatal," Vashist opines.

This is not all. A case of yellow fungus was apparently reported in Ghaziabad yesterday. Many doctors say there is nothing called Yellow Fungus in science and that such names are creating confusion among the general public.

With that being said, the symptoms of Yellow Fungus are said to be lethargy, lack of appetite and loss of weight. While in certain severe cases, it may result in pus, wounds taking a long time to heal, malnutrition, organs not functioning or sunken eyes.

DadiKaKehna

Long working hours has become a synonym to work from home during COVID. This may result in back pain. ROSHANI DEVI shares tips that can help relieve it



The usual morning rush to office has gone for a toss. All thanks to the pandemic giving rise to the work from home scenario. But this has resulted in extended working hours, leading to less activity which further results in back pain. Here are a few things one can do to treat and prevent it.

Take a break at regular intervals. Sitting for long hours can take a toll on your spine health. Don't forget to stand up and walk a few steps and/or stretch for a few minutes. This will help in relaxing the muscles.

Avoid being in a com-

fortable position while working on laptops. Instead sit with your spine straight. In case of pain, one can use a heating pad. Do it daily.

Get enough sleep. Lack of adequate sleep can worsen the pain. Hence, it is advisable to have a quality sleep for 7-8 hours. Your pillow and mattress also has a role to play. So, make sure you have the right one. Orthopaedics mattresses can be your go to option in such cases. But before buying one, make sure to consult your doctor if you have severe back issues.



DOCYARD

DR ARCHANA DHAWAN BAJAJ

Gyneacologist
Obstetrician and IVF expert



NURTURE IVF

Beware of reinfection



The second wave of COVID-19 continues to spread far and wide across the country, however, despite surging cases, India continues to have a high recovery rate. While most people suffering from Coronavirus can go on to lead a healthy life post recovery, yet, from what we have seen so far, the SARS-COV-2 virus can leave lingering repercussions for people, even after testing negative.

Newer findings suggest that people with even mild COVID-19 may be at the risk of developing certain pronounced, long-term complications which may be different from the damage caused by the COVID infection. Post-COVID Syndrome means that even after testing negative for the virus, people continue to experience debilitating symptoms that persist for days or months at stretch.

COVID-19 recovery might take weeks or months even after testing negative with the virus. Also, it is important to note that the COVID infection may silently affect the patient's lungs, heart, kidney, nerves or any other organ — the symptoms of which may not be noticeable immediately but may have long-term disabling effects. Therefore, a comprehensive programme that would enable complete clinical assessment of the patient by a team of specialists is the need of the hour to assess the patient's health in its entirety and ensure that the patient gets timely diagnosis & treatment and recovers completely.

COVID Re-infection: While reinfection is relatively rare, but statistics have placed this possibility to be around 4-5 per cent in various populations. A classic definition of COVID re-infection delineates two positive RT-PCR tests at an interim difference of 90-102 days with an intervening negative in between. As per the CDC and ICMR description of COVID re-infection, it means one positive and negative conversion and a re-positive in between 90 to 100 days. People facing the reinfection are mainly those with comorbidities, healthcare workers and frontline workers.

Hence, this is something to be watched out in people of this subgroup. While CDC and ICMR now recognise it as a known-entity, however, they emphasise it should be backed with more studies.

COVID affects the body in more ways than one, it causes fibrosis to the lungs which in turn reduces the oxygen carrying capacity of the lungs. The oxygen availability to most of the organs gets affected associated with thrombosis or thromboembolic phenomena.

The recent wave is a protein losing enteropathy which contributes to weakness and all of this leads to delayed recovery, hyperoxia or lack of oxygen to any organ that can have detrimental effects on the musculature of the organs as a result of which organs work less or lower than before.

The damage brought about by hypoxia takes significant time to recover, thereby delaying the recovery period in Covid patients. Furthermore, the thrombosis relates to the covid pathology and protein losing enteropathy or protein losing diarrhoea which can lead to further delay in recovery.

Moreover, certain category of patients may need re-admission — patients who require mechanical ventilation, ICU or form into any high-risk category of lung fibrosis, because they have difficulty in breathing due to lung pathology or have delayed hyperoxia owing to fibrosis in lungs. Also, people with prolonged illnesses, Diabetes or obesity are much likely to need re-hospitalisation even after getting a negative COVID report with symptoms like breathlessness and/or decrease in oxygen.

COVIDCARE

AMLA: Amla, also known as Indian gooseberry, has several medicinal uses. The fruit is rich in Vitamin C and often purported to have potential antioxidant and heart-health benefits.

This makes it an excellent food to add in your diet in order to boost immunity during COVID times.

Not only this, due to its high Vitamin C content, Indian gooseberry may have some promising

anti-aging benefits. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that can help prevent cellular damage, which may help slow your body's natural aging process.

One of the most common uses of amla is to promote heart health. It may protect against oxidative damage that's associated with heart injury. It may also help prevent the formation of blood clots, which may cause a heart attack or stroke if they block an artery.





A hidden OTT gem

Though *Sandeep aur Pinky Faraar* released in March, it is gradually climbing up the popularity charts now

Over the last couple of weeks, people have been calling Arjun Kapoor and Parineeti Chopra starrer *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar* a 'true hidden gem of a film'. While the film had a lukewarm release on OTT platform Amazon Prime, *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar* (SAPF) is now being thoroughly appreciated by the audience and its IMDB ratings doubled overnight with fans heaping praises on Dibakar Banerjee's gritty crime thriller.



Arjun's performance has played a huge role in the success of the film, essentially surprising everyone with his formidable performance as a *Haryanvi* cop named Pinky Dahiya. He thanked Dibakar for his vision in making him a part of the film and utilising him to wreak havoc in the life of ambitious Delhi girl Sandeep, effectively played by Parineeti. "This will always be a special film in my career. It pushed me to experiment and get out of my comfort zone

and I'm glad that it is paying dividends for me. As we all know, Dibakar is a visionary director and he created a world that was raw, unhinged and highlighted the underbelly of Delhi. I will always be grateful that he deemed me apt to be a part of this world and made me the vehicle of chaos in the film," expressed Arjun.

He further added, "There comes a stage in an actor's life where one has to walk the path less travelled to make a different kind of mark and, for me, SAPF will always be that film. I'm grateful for the love that the film and my character are getting. I was like an apprentice under Dibakar for three months before we started shooting and it shows in the film. He has extracted the best out of me and I will be indebted to him for his belief."

simply natural organic compounds. Simulated gemstones (also known as stimulants) are what people usually consider hoaxes or fake stones. These pirated gemstones are made of materials that resemble the appearance of natural gemstones but have different chemical and physical properties. The most crucial difference is that these knock-off gemstones are cheap and usually made of glass or some type of plastic. The duplicates have resulted in the dwindling trust of people in real gemstones. In contrast, real gemstones are generally expensive because of their rare and scarce availability.

Remember, do not buy some low-price stones expecting results. The stories associated with Big B or any other celebrity can be considered as proof that real gemstones are worth the price. Many online entities provide authentic and reliable gemstones. One should always verify the Gem Laboratory certificates along with other benefits like transparent pricing, *pooja* energisation, worldwide shipping with a huge variety of gemstones before buying any.

TO CHOOSE OR NOT TO CHOOSE

It is pertinent to note here that even genuine gemstones cannot work effectively unless you put your trust in them. Even in the purely scientific medical field, trusting the healer is highly crucial for the healing process. Similarly, with gemstones, without putting faith in the ability of stones one can not expect miracles to happen.

It is said that the rare and naturally extracted gemstones represent the powerhouse celestial bodies of Indian astrology, including Ruby (Sun), Pearl (Moon), Emerald (Mercury) and Diamond (Venus). It is said that real gemstones hold the power to transform the placement of planets; however, a stone is just a stone, no matter how rare or expensive it is, unless you put your complete faith in it. (The author is the CEO at GemPundit and a certified gemologist. The views expressed are personal.)



in," he says and adds, "The right seating and posture is a must that all professionals must adapt to for long term health and well-being. A dedicated workspace along with the right furniture will enable you to keep yourself oriented to your work."

For Sharika, too, posture, comfort, vision and movement all play a critical role in facilitating a sound work environment. That is why she says, "It is absolutely essential to invest in a sturdy, comfortable chair for optimal comfort and correct posture. A combination of natural materials along with a functional design can be a tasteful and stylish statement, and can turn even the most dreary workday into a relaxing one."

"Using compact shelving systems that can multitask as a work desk is a great way to make your furniture multitask just as hard as you. You can complete your minimalist work desk with a slender, but comfortable chair," adds Natasha.

ARTWORK FOR CREATIVITY

Adding artwork to your surroundings is a great way to personalise your space. Natasha recommends the use of motivational posters or any personal items that encourage you and induce creativity. She believes that it is a great way to create a productive and inspiring space.

There shouldn't be any need to conform to the notion of what a traditional home office setup should 'look' like. Sharika feels that a simple, sleek desk with sufficient storage to store office paraphernalia, cables, et al, can keep the space tidy and clutter-free. However, a little creativity never hurts anybody. "Add to that desk accessories like a modern table lamp, a small tray or indoor plants, it allows you to have a space that you can call your own," says she and adds that just like natural lightning works wonders, indoor plants enhance the overall appearance of a space while increasing creativity, reducing stress and eliminating air pollutants, making for a healthier and happier you.



A WFH NOOK

AYUSHI SHARMA speaks to the experts to create a home-office where you are comfortable, focussed and organised

instance, she says, "An unused corner can be transformed into a space-efficient home office. It can be spruced up with a floating desk, shelves and some bold artwork. Another is that you can use a pile of books to separate the work area from the rest of the living room. This not only creates a defined space for working but is also a good stress releasing DIY activity."

Ajay Arya, founder of A Square Designs, agrees with Natasha and says that by turning around the furniture placements at home, you can give your home a new look and also make room for working from home. "It can be a corner of your family room or lounge or even in your bedroom, just add a small writing desk, accessorise it with small objects that would liven up space, your mood and you are all set," shares he.

LIGHT UP THE SPACE

Even though artificial lights are essential, natural light adds an instant boost to the space with positivity and, subsequently, productivity. Researchers found that people who worked in places with ample natural light were 15 per cent more creative. Natasha shares, "Setting up the desk near a window not only lets in warm light, but also creates a well-ventilated area making it a comfortable workspace. In addition to natural lighting, it is important to pick a light that illuminates without overpowering the space. When it comes to desk lamps, it is most advisable to use soft lights as they create a peaceful and mellow atmosphere, which helps release stress, enabling an effective and efficient work environment."

Sharika Sharma, Business Lead, Mangrove Collective, too emphasises

on setting up the work desk and chair in a distraction-free zone, preferably with access to a window to let in natural light and breeze as it enhances creativity, which can further help you soar through your work, and not just for those in traditionally creative fields. She says, "This well-appointed setup can serve not only as a studio but also become a study for quiet reading and introspection."

THE NEED FOR WORKNITURE

The best thing about working from home is most probably the level of comfort and flexibility you have. You can be sitting on the couch, on the kitchen table or your bed. But this kind of comfort can come at the cost of lost productivity. Thus, Kshitij Mirania, Partner, Mirania Luxury Living (Steelcase East), suggests that having a particular space all to yourself will keep you away from the distractions around you at home. "When the surroundings give you work vibes, your attention is bound to swoop in along with your efficiency. To achieve that, all you have to do is choose a corner in your house with good natural light if possible — set it up with a desk and an ergonomic chair, put all your systems in place, keep your required materials like a laptop, stationery, a bottle of water and a lamp right by the side and the focus will flow

The second wave of the pandemic has caused severe disruptions, inevitably leading to a nationwide lockdown again. Millions have resumed working remotely and with so many of us remaining cooped up at home in these unprecedented times, creating a dedicated workspace is certainly the need of the hour. Adaptable spaces are a great solution to make ourselves equipped for the new normal. So as we spend more and more time at home, well-lit spaces, organised work desks and well-planned work nooks are of utmost importance as these can go a long way in helping us stay focussed while simultaneously bolstering our physical and mental well-being. We talk to some interior designers who suggest minimal changes in the house to make it appropriate for work from home.

SHAKE IT UP

By using innovative ways to demarcate your work from home set up, you can adapt any area/room into a workspace. Natasha Aggarwal, founder of NACL (Natasha Aggarwal Creative Living), feels that moving things around is a great way to create a fresh new look for your home. Not only will this allow you to use your space better but it also helps create cosy nooks and corners for a home office. For

7 years of Heropanti

KRITI SANON and TIGER SHROFF have come a long way in a short span of time since their debut together. TEAM VIVA explores their current projects

This weekend marked seven years since the release of the box-office hit, *Heropanti*, in which Kriti Sanon and Tiger Shroff marked their arrival in Bollywood. Following their debut together, both have made their presence felt in the Hindi film industry, with each following a different path.

Reminiscing about his journey so far, Tiger couldn't help but get nostalgic while recalling *Heropanti*. "Looking back in time, I feel nothing but gratitude for all the crazy experiences and the love the audience has showered on me. *Heropanti* will always be a really special film to me, and I just want to thank the director Sabbir Khan and producer Sajid Nadiadwala for believing in me. I would also like to thank Kriti for being one of the best co-stars I could possibly debut with," he shared.

Currently both actors have multiple projects in their kitty. Kriti has several big-budget films in the making. "As an actor, I crave to get diverse roles to be able to explore worlds I haven't been to before. I'm fortunate to have gotten opportunities in such different genres," she expressed, excited about her future projects. From the role of Sita in the mythology drama *Adipurush* with Prabhas to a surrogate mother in *Mimi*, none of her upcoming characters seem alike at all. She will be seen in a horror flick for the first time in *Bhediya* with Varun Dhawan. Other projects include *Bachchan Pandey* with Akshay Kumar and the quirky comedy *Hum Do Hamaare Do* pairing her alongside Rajkummar Rao. "It's challenging but very satisfying and I hope I'm able to do justice to all characters. I am probably in the most exciting phase of my career so



far," Kriti added.

On the other hand, Tiger has multiple franchises in the works with *Heropanti 2* set for release later this year. He will also be seen in the fourth instalment of *Baaghi* sometime next year.

The pair will be seen together for the first time since *Heropanti* in the action flick *Ganapath*, directed by Vikas Bahl.

Have you ever felt like things aren't going your way? Have you had an opportunity slip out of your hands after coming so close? There are times when individuals end up blaming their luck for the unfortunate events happening around them. This is where gemstones, little bundles of happiness made of rare, exquisite and durable minerals, come into the picture. Since ancient times people have put their faith in gemstones to clear any type of negative energy as they believe that these surround the wearer with positivity and healing.

While some might dismiss the belief in gemstones as mythical, others swear by their powers. From film star Amitabh Bachchan, who is often seen wearing a blue sapphire, and AR Rahman, who is an Oscar, BAFTA, and a Golden Globe awardee to the current Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, exotic stones are favoured by several successful personalities.

All these famous personalities hail from very average backgrounds, and all of them at one point in their professional careers have felt stuck; however, the resurgence of Bachchan Sr's acting career after wearing Neelam (blue sapphire) is seen by many as evidence of the way the gemstones can bring in a positive influence in an individual's life.

This is not just limited to Indian personalities. Many foreign celebrities such as the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton and even Hollywood actress Blake Lively have taken up wearing gemstones as their engagement rings for luck and prosperity. However, the question is, can gemstones really heal, relax the mind or simply change your misfortune into a fortune?

THE PRAGMATIC NEUROLOGICAL EFFECTS OF GEMSTONES

Some neuroscientists and psychologists agree that gemstones can help with the healing process. Often wearers believe that gemstones hold the power to fill and

Can stones help?

Since ancient times people have put their faith in gemstones to clear any type of negative energy as they believe that these surround the wearer with positivity and healing, says NITIN YADAV



surround them with positive, hopeful and energetic vibes while removing all the negative or toxic energy. This leads to a productive and invigorating lifestyle. Although the effects of gemstones are yet to be proven purely in a scientific manner, several studies and experts claim that they have an indirect psychological benefit.

Also, because gemstones are naturally extracted, they harness energy from

powerful natural sources such as the sun, the moon, and the ocean to calm, relax and motivate the wearer. It is also believed that gemstones are soothing and can help with stress or anxiety-inducing situations.

Gem experts believe that the mere act of doing something with the intention to take control of your destiny can often reduce the burden and boost hope and brighten your mood while improving the ability to cope with dire conditions. Along the same vein, gemstones can have a relaxing effect on the mind, automatically increasing the wearer's productivity.

REAL AND FAKE GEMSTONES

It is imperative to understand that only real gemstones work. Most gems are minerals; however, some materials referred to as gemstones are just regular rocks or

TRENDBLAZER



WORK IN PROGRESS: YAMI GAUTAM

Making the most of this lockdown period, YAMI GAUTAM is in Chandigarh, spending quality time with her family and loved ones.

She revealed she is not sitting idle and is scouring through scripts, taking care to pick ones which are content driven and experimental.

Looks like the star is all geared up to surprise the audience and the critics with her forthcoming projects.

fairtalk

ABHISHEK BANERJEE



"There is a nice word that people use 'quirky'. I was only getting quirky roles. I was concerned as to why am I getting only that. Thankfully *Paatal Lok* changed that. What OTT did was it gave me the audience's eyes. It gave me stature. Before that, I was doing only comic roles and I was bored of the kind of roles that I was offered all the time."

dailytalk

SHAHANA GOSWAMI



"I think when a show or a film is well written, there's a natural balance about the portrayal of each character in it. When I am saying balance, it means we do not need to highlight a character only because he is a male or a female character but it is more about giving substantial space for each of them."

PRIYANKA, NICK SET MERCURY SOARING

Celebrity couple PRIYANKA CHOPRA and NICK JONAS took the style quotient high with their red carpet look at the Billboard Music Awards.

Priyanka took to Instagram to post pictures from the red carpet. She wore a thigh-high slit gown with a plunging neckline and a custom Dolce Gabbana ensemble. She teamed the golden ensemble with a thick belt and Bulgari jewels. Nick donned a designer number from Fendi.



Milan, Juve qualify for CL

Rossoneri, Bianconeri without Ronaldo win on final day to seal top 4 spot as Napoli miss out after 1-1 draw against Hellas Verona

AFP ■ MILAN

Juventus qualified for the Champions League on the final day of the season on Sunday with a 4-1 win at Bologna and were joined by AC Milan who beat Atalanta 2-0.

Napoli had to settle for a Europa League spot, finishing fifth, one point behind Juventus, after a 1-1 draw at home against Hellas Verona.

A pair of Franck Kessie penalties at the end of either half ensured AC Milan finished the season second — 12 points behind city rivals Inter Milan — and return to the Champions League for the first time since the 2013-2014 season.

"We deserved the Champions League as well as second place," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose side had missed the chance to seal their berth last weekend against Cagliari. "We went through the whole championship at the top, unfortunately we had thrown away the match point last Sunday."

"I'm really excited, happy, I have to thank the club because they made us work in a spectacular way."

Atalanta had already ensured a third consecutive season of Champions League football but missed out on a first second-place Serie A finish days after losing out in the Coppa Italia final to Juventus.

Cristiano Ronaldo was left on the bench by Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo who opted for an attacking lineup of Paulo Dybala and Alvaro Morata flanked by Federico Chiesa and Dejan Kulusevski.

"It was a shared choice, Ronaldo was tired after the fatigue on Wednesday," said Pirlo.

"He made himself available to the team but I chose to have another player named Morata play, who is not the latest arrival. I have a quality team, with many choices available."

A Morata brace along with goals from Chiesa and Adrien Rabiot prevented Juventus missing out on the

shortpasses

SEVILLA BREAK CLUB RECORD

MADRID: Sevilla set a club record for points in the La Liga by beating Alavés 1-0. Papu Gómez scored a stoppage-time winner for Sevilla, which finished with 77 points that is one more than the previous record set by the team in 2014-15 under Unai Emery.

ITALIAN SUPER CUP IN SAUDI

ROME: The Italian Super Cup will return to Saudi Arabia next season when champions Inter Milan face cup winners Juventus, the Italian League announced on Monday.

SHAPOVALOV PULLS OUT

PARIS: Canada's world No 15 Denis Shapovalov has made the "difficult decision" to withdraw from the upcoming French Open due to a shoulder injury.

AMOL, JAFFER APPLY FOR COACH

MUMBAI: Domestic doyens Wasim Jaffer and Amol Muzumdar along with former India leg-spinner Sairaj Bahutule have applied for Mumbai head coach's post.

AFGHANS LOOKING TO HOST PAK

KARACHI: The Afghanistan Cricket Board is keen to host Pakistan for a white ball series in the UAE in August-September. A source in the Pakistan board said that the two boards had opened talks on the planned series which would include three ODIs and three T20 matches in Abu Dhabi or Dubai.

NORTJE IN LINE FOR CSA AWARD

JOHANNESBURG: Pacer Anrich Nortje and batsman Aiden Markram were among the names nominated for Cricket South Africa's player of the year award, with the pacer featuring in the ODI as well as the Test list.

MANDZUKIC EXITS AC MILAN

MILAN: Croatian striker Mario Mandzukic confirmed Monday he was leaving AC Milan at the end of his six-month contract. The 35-year-old joined the club last January as cover for Ibrahimovic but made just 11 appearances and scored no goals.

HUSSAMUDDIN STARTS WITH WIN

DUBAI: India were off to a confident start at the Asian Boxing Championships with CWG Bronze-winner Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg) beating Kazakhstan's Makhmud Sabyrkhan in his opening bout to enter the quarterfinals on Monday.

AFRIDI RULED OUT OF PSL

ISLAMABAD: Star all-rounder Shahid Afridi has been ruled out of the PSL due to a back injury, the PCB said on Monday. Afridi represented Multan Sultans in four of its five league games at Karachi, scoring just three runs and picking up two wickets.

MILKHA HOSPITALISED, STABLE

CHANDIGARH: Legendary sprinter Milkha Singh, who has tested positive for Covid-19, was on Monday hospitalised, with his son and ace golfer Jeev Milkha Singh saying that the move was a precautionary measure. Hospital sources said that Milkha's condition is "stable". **Agencies**



AC Milan players celebrate after 2-0 win against Atalanta in the Serie A match on Sunday

elite European competition for the first time since 2012.

In Naples, Amir Rrahmani scored for Napoli after an hour against his former club, which would have been enough to secure a berth

at the top table but Davide Faraoni pulled one back for the visitors nine minutes.

Gennaro Gattuso's side were denied a return to elite European action after also missing out last sea-

AFP ■ LILLE

Lille won the Ligue 1 title on Sunday thanks to a 2-1 victory at Angers which ensured they were crowned French champions for the first time since 2011 on the final day of the season.

An early Jonathan David strike and Burak Yilmaz's penalty in first-half stoppage time ensured that Christophe Galtier's Lille finished one point ahead of second-placed Paris Saint-Germain, who won 2-0 at Brest.

Angelo Fulgini pulled one back in added time at the end of the match, but the hosts couldn't stop Lille becoming champions for the fourth time in their history.

The match was played behind closed doors due to Covid-19 restrictions but fans poured into the streets of Lille to celebrate at the final whistle.

Supporters lit flares and chanted songs in the northern city's central Place Charles de Gaulle in jubilation at a historic triumph against far wealthier opposition.

"This is exceptional. It's been a long day and a lot of pressure. To beat Paris Saint-Germain to the league title

The title triumph came after

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No Ramos, Real Madrid players in Spain Euro squad

AFP ■ MADRID

Spain coach Luis Enrique on Monday left veteran defender Sergio Ramos out of his Euro 2020 squad but called up centre-back Aymeric Laporte, who recently switched his football nationality.

Ramos, the 35-year-old Real Madrid captain has struggled with injuries this season and has played just five times since the start of the year.

"It was a very difficult decision but he has not been able to play this season and has hardly trained since January," Luis Enrique told the press conference as he announced a 24-man squad.

"I called him yesterday (Sunday), it was hard, difficult. I feel bad, because he is very professional and he helps the national team a lot. And he can still help it in the future. But I have to look for the best for the squad," the coach said.

This season Ramos has missed games after catching Covid-19 and also because of injuries to his right thigh, his left calf and, most recently, his left hamstring.

He was in Madrid's squad for Saturday's final game of the season against Villarreal but did not start.

The absence of Ramos means there is not a single Madrid player in the Spain squad. "It pains me not to have been able to help my team more and not to play for Spain but, in this case, the best thing to do is rest, fully recover and come back next year like we've always done. It hurts not to represent your country, but I have to be honest and sincere," he wrote on Twitter.

"I hope we have a great Euros. I'll be another fan cheering on from home."

Spain have also qualified for the Olympics where they are scheduled to kick off the tournament against Egypt on July 22, ten days after the Euros end.

Ramos could be selected as one of three overage players. Luis Enrique refused to comment on the possibility because he does not select Olympic squad.

Laporte, a 26-year-old Man City defender, was born in southwest France and was called up three times for *Les Bleus* but never made it onto the pitch.

Luis Enrique said Laporte's selection "has nothing to do" with the absence of Ramos.

While France coach Didier Deschamps has a wealth of central defenders to choose from, Luis Enrique has had fewer options since Gerard Pique retired in 2018.

Ramos has been an automatic starter when fit with a number of players, including Villarreal's Pau Torres, Real Sociedad's Inigo Martinez and Eric Garcia of Manchester City, playing alongside him.

After an impressive start at City, Laporte suffered a knee injury in 2019 and has not been a regular under Pep Guardiola this season.

In the absence of Ramos, two 32-year-old Barcelona players, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, become the veteran leadership in a rejuvenated squad.

Luis Enrique has been able to test many young talents in recent months, and has called up a large number of them for the Euro, including Garcia, Pau Torres, Ferran Torres, Mikel Oyarzabal, Pedri and Dani Olmo.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: David De Gea, Unai Simon, Robert Sanchez.

Defenders: Jose Gaya, Eric Garcia, Aymeric Laporte, Jordi Alba, Diego Llorente, Marcos Llorente, Pau Torres, Cesar Azpilicueta.

Midfielders: Fabian Ruiz, Pedri, Sergio Busquets, Rodri Hernandez, Koke, Thiago Alcantara.

Forwards: Dani Olmo, Mikel Oyarzabal, Ferran Torres, Gerard Moreno, Alvaro Morata, Adama Traore, Pablo Sarabia.



Lille end PSG's dominance

