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DESPITE KHASHOGGI SLAYING

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WANT TO DO
LIGHTER ROLES:
AMIT SIAL
13 VIVACITY

Clamour for Covid jabs in urban India

Various States
complain about
vaccine shortage

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is the biggest producers of vaccines, but its own nationwide vaccination drive launched on January 16 seems to be faltering amid mismatch between the vaccine availability and the number of seekers in urban India with various States complaining about vaccine shortage.

So far, over 19 crore people have registered on CoWin — the Government's portal — including around 6.42 crore who registered from May 1 to 7, as per the data available from the Union Health Ministry.

There huge demand for vaccination is from urban areas mainly.

However, so far, just 2.6 per cent of the total eligible population has been fully vaccinated (two doses). On the other hand a country like the USA which was hit hard by the Covid-19 for better part of the last year has vaccinated at least 40 per cent of its population with both jabs.

The Ministry has claimed that more than 1 crore Covid vaccine doses (1,04,30,063) are still available with the States/UTs and more than 9 lakh (9,24,910) vaccine doses will be provided in the next three days, but it is not enough even to cover 50 per

cent of those (2.42 crore) who registered in the last week from May 1 to May 7.

Realising that vaccines availability is going to take time, the Union Health Ministry last week asked the States to prioritise administering the second dose and use supplies from the Centre in a 70:30 ratio of second and first doses.

Clearly, because of the shortage of the vaccines and the Government opening up the vaccination drive for those above 18 from May 1 (an estimated 59 crore people that become eligible to receive the shot, as per the affidavit filed by the Union Health Ministry in the SC, many from both the categories who have registered



People wait in long queues to receive Covid-19 vaccine doses outside ESI Hospital in Noida on Monday

PTI

on the Co-Win will have to wait for little more before they could get the jab.

The total population eligible for vaccination when it was limited to healthcare and front-

line workers and those above 45 was about 34 crore. Now, the total population that will be

inoculated stands more than 90 crore including 59 crore adult population including 18 plus to 44 years.

It is not only those in the age group of 45 and above who are complaining of not getting the vaccines so are those in the age bracket of 18 plus to 44 which was an estimated 59 crore population As of May 7, just 11.81 lakh have received the shot.

What's more, overall vaccination numbers too are declining. On May 9, around 6.89 people were vaccinated, on May 8 the number was 20.15 lakh while on May 7 and May 6, the number of people who were inoculated was 22.89 lakh and 23.59 lakh respectively.

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Superstition, fear derail vax drive in rural India

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

From Ballia in Uttar Pradesh to Nuh in Haryana, from Sampat Chak in Bihar to even Manjhwali in Faridabad, close to Delhi, the Covid-19 vaccination drive in India's rural areas has taken a hit as the fear of an adverse reaction, superstition, and a lack of information and awareness have made villagers either hesitant or completely unwilling to take the jab.

In fact, there have even been reports that vaccination centres have been destroyed and health workers beaten up in various part of the country.

Villagers of Manjhwali in

Faridabad damaged the vaccination centres at Gurukul school and beat up health workers a few days ago. The health workers were going to this village to disseminate information for Covid vaccinations. In another case in Nuh, Haryana, villagers threatened to beat health workers if they insisted for vaccination.

Besides the shortage of vaccines, the vaccination process slowed down in this district as the majority of people think the jab could cause infertility. Health workers are facing an uphill task to convince them for inoculation.

In Bihar, most of the vac-

cination centres are far away from the villages. For instance, vaccination centres for Bahua, Kandap, Sohgi villages are set up in Sampat Chak, which is five kilometres away from these villages. Most of the villagers are hesitant to walk and get a jab.

"Even if counselled, villagers are unable to travel 17-20 km to the nearest centre just for vaccination. And if they eventually do reach, the internet is too slow and it takes hours to register and verify online," said in-charge of vaccination centre, Sampat Chak.

"In Ballia's Basdih Road

vaccination centre in UP, there are over 20,000 population in five villages but only 800-1000 turned up for vaccination so far," said a health worker on the condition of anonymity.

The Pilana vaccination centre in Baghpat in Western UP witnessed a similar scenario. "There are about 200 houses with 1500-2000 people. Of this, about 500 people are aged above 50, but the coverage in the past month would just be a third of the target group," said an anganwadi worker who goes door-to-door explaining to villagers about the vaccine and the need for it.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA
TOTAL CASES: 2,29,67,832 (+3,05,284)
DEATHS: 2,49,641 (+3,493)
RECOVERED: 1,89,96,654 (+3,31,192)
ACTIVE: 37,11,738
MAHA: 51,38,973 (+37,236)
K'TAKA: 19,73,683 (+39,305)
KERALA: 19,30,116 (+27,487)
UP: 15,24,767 (+21,277)
DELHI: 13,36,218 (+12,651)

Nepal PM Oli loses vote of confidence

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister P Sharma Oli lost a trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday, in a fresh setback to the embattled premier seeking to tighten his grip on power after the CPN (Maoist Centre) led by Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' withdrew support to his Government.

Prime Minister Oli secured 93 votes in the Lower House of Parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Oli, 69, required at least 136 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives to win the confidence motion as four members are currently under suspension.

A total of 124 members voted against the confidence motion while 15 members stayed neutral, Speaker Agni Sapkota announced. The session was attended by 232 lawmakers.

With this, Prime Minister Oli is automatically relieved from his post as per Article 100 (3).

CAPSULE

LOOKOUT NOTICE AGAINST WRESTLER SUSHIL KUMAR

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has issued a lookout notice against two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl that led to the death of a wrestler here, officials said. A senior police officer said notice was issued late Sunday evening.

DATA: CRPF LOST 108 PERSONNEL TO COVID

New Delhi: The CRPF has lost 108 personnel to Covid-19, the highest among the Central forces that function under the command of the Union Home Ministry, according to data.

WHO LABELS STRAIN IN INDIA AS CONCERN

Geneva: A Covid-19 variant spreading in India, which is facing an explosive outbreak, appears to be more contagious and has been classified as being "of concern", WHO said.

45 'Covid' bodies found floating in Ganga in Buxar

PTI/IANS ■ PATNA

Several bodies, decomposed, bloated and suspected to be of people who succumbed to Covid-19, were on Monday found floating in Ganga River in a Bihar district.

Officials in Chausa block of Buxar, which borders Uttar Pradesh, rushed to the spot of the unseemly sight upon hearing the news.

"We were alerted by the local chowkidar that many bodies have been spotted floating from upstream. We have so far recovered 15 of these. None of the deceased happens to be a resident of the district," Chausa BDO Ashok Kumar told PTI over phone. Ashok Kumar said the administration has spotted 45 dead bodies at Mahadev Ghat.

He said, "Many Uttar Pradesh districts are situated right across the river and the bodies may have been dumped in the Ganges for reasons not known to us. We cannot confirm whether the deceased were indeed Covid-19 positive. The bodies have started decomposing. But we are taking all precautions while ensur-

'We cannot confirm whether the deceased were indeed Covid-19 positive. The bodies have started decomposing'.

ing that these are disposed of in a decent manner".

Some news channels claimed the number of bodies to be as high as 100, but the BDO dismissed as "highly exaggerated".

Many local residents claimed the district administration is "in denial over many such unfortunate incidents involving residents of Buxar".

Buxar SDO KK Upadhyay said, "During preliminary investigation, it has appeared that the bodies are in decomposed state and over 5 to 6 days old. We are interacting with our counterparts in Varanasi and Prayagraj to investigate the incident".

"There is also a shortage of wood and other material required for cremation.

Availability of these has taken a hit because of the lockdown. So many bereaved family members are impelled to immerse the bodies of their departed relatives in the river," one of the residents said.

Anjoria Devi, wife of the Dom Raja of Mahadev Ghat in Chausa, alleged that relatives of the deceased are also coming to the Ghat and throwing the dead bodies into the Ganga without cremation. "Around 10 dead bodies are being thrown in every day. When they were asked not to do so, they assault us. They also argue who would bear the expenses of cremation," she told reporters.

Often family members of a Covid victim are not handed over the body by the administration which claims it would perform the last rites observing the protocol in place for the deadly virus, another local stated. "What indeed happens is that the officials develop cold feet later and fearing that they might catch the infection themselves, they dump the bodies in the river and flee. Little do they realise that they are also polluting the river," he added.

File plea for early hearing on Central Vista: HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A request was made to the Delhi High Court on Monday to give an early hearing to a PIL seeking a stay on the construction of the Central Vista here amid the raging Covid pandemic.

The request was mentioned before a bench of Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh by senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, and the court said an early hearing application be filed first.

Luthra told the bench that he was mentioning the matter as the Supreme Court on May 7 asked the petitioners to seek urgent hearing before the High Court on May 10.

Petitioners — Anya Malhotra, who works as a translator, and Sohail Hashmi, a historian and documentary filmmaker — had moved the apex court against the HC's May 4 order adjourning their plea to May 17.

The HC had adjourned the matter saying it first wants to study the SC's January 5 judgement giving a go ahead to the Central Vista project.

Cong defers party chief poll over Covid crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday once again deferred the election for the post of a new party chief due to the prevailing pandemic situation. The decision was taken at the Congress Working Committee (CWC) chaired by interim chief Sonia Gandhi.

The election will be only after the Covid situation in the country improves. June 23 was the scheduled date for holding the election.

This is the third time in a row the election for the Congress president has been postponed amid speculation that Rahul Gandhi will again take up the reins of the party.

Addressing a Press conference after the CWC meet, AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal said the committee members felt that this was not the right time to conduct elections. "All energy should be channelised to provide relief and support work. It was unanimously decided to defer elections further temporarily," Venugopal said.

The post of Congress president has remained vacant since party leader Rahul Gandhi resigned after the 2019

Lok Sabha polls.

When the discussion was initiated by Sonia Gandhi to hold the polls, senior leaders like Ashok Gehlot, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma said there is no need for elections at this time due to Covid-19.

By the time Sonia had informed the meeting that the party's Central Election Authority chief Madhusudan Mistry had already worked out a schedule.

The issue of leadership is crucial as the group of 23 Congress dissenters (G-23) had been pushing for a revamp of the party organisation. Some prominent G-23 members such as Ghulam Nabi Azad and Anand Sharma are also members of the CWC.

The grand old party has been waiting for a president for almost two years now. Rahul Gandhi, who had assumed the post in 2017, had resigned as the party president after Congress lost the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Since then, the party has been operating under the aegis of Sonia Gandhi as interim president. The CWC has postponed the election for the Congress president thrice now.

J&K Lt Governor's Twitter handle suspended briefly

Jammu: The official Twitter handle of Jammu & Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha was suspended briefly due to an "automated systems error" and was restored later.

A Twitter spokesperson, when approached, said, "The account was flagged by our automated systems in error. This action has been reversed, and access to the account has been reinstated."

The '@OfficeOfLGJandK' handle with over 50,000 followers had an account suspension notice displayed with a line below reading "Twitter suspends accounts which violate the Twitter Rules" in the evening.

Raj Bhawan officials said the matter was taken up with the authorities concerned for resolving the "technical error".

The handle was subsequently restored but the number of followers had been reset.

PDP spokesman Mohit Bhan was among the first to flag the issue of suspension of twitter account of the Lieutenant Governor, saying "meanwhile @TwitterIndia suspends the account of Office Of LG J&K citing rules violation. What did they do by the way. Did I miss something?"

Postmen give new lease of life to serious patients

PNS ■ NEW DLHI

Dakiya dava laya. The vanishing tribe of postmen who formed the inseparable part of our old world, linking loved ones with each other, have again proved to be a new lifeline in the time of crisis.

Take the case of Muradabad in Uttar Pradesh. "Dakiya babu" in Muradabad is working overtime, even on Sundays, to deliver and reconnect the needy and serious patients with their doctors and hospitals as far as Mumbai, Kolkata, and Delhi.

The online treatment of over 30 patients, including some suffering from cancer, has not stopped. The hospitals which used to despatch medicines by private couriers have



switched to post office services following the current lockdown where most of the air and train services have been stopped.

According to senior post office official Veer Singh, the moment patient informs that medicines have been dispatched through postal couri-

er, "We immediately check online and deliver medicine parcels to patients the moment they land here, even on Sundays or night."

Officials and postmen are contacted and offices are unlocked on holidays and packets are reached at patients' doorsteps.

A cancer patient in Majhola, who was prescribed medicines by a Mumbai hospital, kept receiving his special drugs as postmen ensured his life is not disrupted by coronavirus clamp down as it did to many in over last on year.

The Government has issued a notification to exempt the postal service from the purview of the Covid lockdown.

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Varsha delivers a humane touch to the end!

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

She is up in the morning and prepares breakfast, lunch and dinner for her family like any other professional woman. Then, she heads straight to the cremation grounds and graveyards.

Varsha Verma, wife of a PWD assistant engineer, feels blessed to be a chosen one for cremating and giving a decent burial to those who succumbed to COVID-19 in the city and whose relatives are not willing to attend the last rites. She has cremated or buried over 170 COVID-19 victims till now and receives several calls from people, even from those abroad, who want a decent farewell for their loved ones.



Varsha, who was felicitated by Lucknow Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia for her contribution to society recently, said she has been working with destitute bodies' for the past three years and has witnessed macabre scenes.

"The only time I could not sleep was when I laid to rest a 15-year-old destitute girl," said the gritty lady who has been running four hearses, with three standing outside Covid facilities of DRDO hospital, KGMU and Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital and one moving around the city to pick up bodies from homes.

Varsha says that she has been doing social work since the time she was 14-year-old and it has slowly grown. "I started working on giving proper cremation to destitute bodies' three years back and since then it has been a natural progression to COVID-19 deaths," she says. It is not that this strong lady did not face

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21,331 test positive, 29,709 recover

Meerut ahead of Lucknow in case count

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh recorded 21,331 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours while 29,709 patients recovered in the same period. The death toll stood at 278. There are 2,25,271 active cases in the state at present while 15,742 people have succumbed to the infection.

There were 30 deaths recorded in Kanpur, followed by 26 in Lucknow, 16 in Jhansi, 15 in Azamgarh, 12 each in Hardoi & Gonda, 10 in Gautam Buddha Nagar, nine in Varanasi and eight in Saharanpur.

For the first time since the outbreak of the second wave Lucknow was placed on second spot in terms of the number of cases while Meerut topped the list with 2,269 fresh cases. Next was Lucknow (1274), followed



A patient being shifted to RMLIMS Covid facility in Lucknow on Monday

Pioneer

by Gorakhpur (1031), Gautam Buddha Nagar (1026), Saharanpur (961), Varanasi (864) and Kanpur (430).

In Lucknow, 2,915 patients recovered, taking the recovery figures to 2,04,570 even as the active cases came down to 2,194. Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Amit Mohan Prasad said on Monday that

2,14,977 people were tested for Covid in the state. "For the 10th consecutive day, UP recorded more recoveries than the fresh cases in 24 hours. With the state managing to flatten the curve and limiting the transmission of the deadly virus, the Covid situation in Uttar Pradesh has been consistently improving as the number of active cases has

been drastically reduced by 85,000 in the last 10 days," Prasad said.

He said that with the aggressive approach against Covid, the number of about 3.10 lakh active cases on April 30 has come down to about 2.25 lakh now. "Besides, the surveillance committees are going door-to-door screening, provid-

ing free medical kits to people for effective and timely recovery of Covid patients in home isolation," he said.

Meanwhile, Lucknow Covid incharge Roshan Jacob held a meeting with nodal officers for bed allocation at the Integrated Control and Command Centre and reviewed the uploads on the DSO portal.

Jacob said that sector magistrates should take action against hospitals where beds are vacant but patients are being denied admission.

Complaints were made against Rajdhani, Sanjivini, GCRG and Lucknow hospitals for not updating the portal. It came to the fore that Rajdhani and Sanjivini hospitals had vacant beds but they were denying admission to patients. Jacob said a show-case notice should be issued to these hospitals.

Meanwhile, Lucknow DM visited Aliganj CHC to take stock of the work done by rapid response teams. He also inspected the testing area.

Over 100 shooters volunteer to help in mitigating O2 shortage

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Over 100 national shooters have volunteered to help in mitigating oxygen shortage in Uttar Pradesh. Among the renowned shooters are Asutosh Dwivedi, (UP), Pradeep Kumar Singh (Haryana), Tabish Ahmed (UP), Rahul Soni (Delhi), Monu Kumar (Delhi), Harpreet Singh (Delhi) and Shailendra (UP).

The initiative came about after CMD, Rodic Consultants, and national-level shooter Raj Kumar urged the shooters' community to support the fight against Covid. The consultancy developed a first-of-its-kind digital portal for oxygen monitoring in the state, to ensure timely supply of oxygen in the state.

The unique platform will regularly monitor and track the real-time location of vehicles so that oxygen reached hospitals without delay, especially during emergencies. The company is leveraging the 'hub and spoke' model to streamline the oxygen supply.

"These are unprecedented times as we are witnessing a sharp surge in coronavirus cases across the country.

Collaboration will be the key to winning the battle against the pandemic. At Rodic, we are contributing by setting up a command centre for oxygen movement across the country like we did along with the UP government. In this, we required volunteers to support us for efficient management of the entire process. I appealed to all my fellow shooters across India to come forward and the response from the shooter's community has been very positive. I thank all the shooters who have volunteered to augment our efforts to tackle the deadly disease. I urge more people to proactively join us in the mission of defeating the second corona wave across the country. Such initiatives will go a long way in alleviating the miseries of patients," said Kumar.

In another path-breaking initiative to streamline the supply of oxygen in Uttar Pradesh, the firm has strategised and implemented a 'hub and spokes' model, wherein the state has been divided into five regions and the route has been optimised by leveraging air, rail, and road. Lucknow, Kanpur, Modinagar, Ghaziabad, and Varanasi are

the five major hubs while Gorakhpur and Bareilly are functioning as co-hubs.

Each hub comprises five-six cities and the spokes are 57 medical colleges across UP which have witnessed increasing demand for oxygen. This model is flexible to allow modifications in case of fluctuations in oxygen demand. The creation of an additional hub requires approximately 9-10 hours of turnaround time. About 12 aircraft have been deployed with the help of the UP government to optimise the supply chain and ensure the spike in demand.

"Mitigating inefficiency in the supply chain and ensuring its optimisation is the prerequisite to ensure timely oxygen supply to hospitals. We are leveraging the 'hub and spokes' model that has tremendously reduced turnaround time to ensure hassle-free and timely supply of oxygen across the state of UP," Raj Kumar added.

The company has been mulling to deploy this unique oxygen monitoring system to other states including Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi to tackle the pandemic.

Only locals in 18+ group to be vaccinated in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has issued an order maintaining that only residents from the state in the age group of 18-44 years will be vaccinated in government-run centres and officials have been directed to ensure that people from other states are not administered vaccines in designated centres across the state.

In an order (SPMU/NHM/RR/2021-22/60 414-2) issued on Friday, Director Health Mission, Aparna Upadhaya said that from May 1, vaccination has started for 18+ and only those who have registered online will be entertained.

"It is brought to our notice that in few districts, online registration of 18-44 years is being done by people from other states. Thus, residents of Uttar Pradesh are deprived of this vaccination facility. As the UP government is purchasing vaccines from its own kitty to vaccinate people between 18-44 years, it should be ensured that people who are being vaccinated are from Uttar Pradesh," the order said.

The said order was sent to all district magistrates and chief medical officers of the state. The order puts the vaccination of

people, who are from other states but working in UP, in a limbo.

"When vaccination is a national campaign, how can the state government discriminate between UP people and non-UP people," asked human rights activist Lenin Raghuvanshi.

Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh, however, feigned ignorance about the order. "For vaccination, the only mandatory clause is registration. Bona fide residence proof is not required," he said. When asked about specific government orders to DMs and CMOs, the Minister said that he had no knowledge about the order.

The UP government has initiated vaccination for the 18-44 age group in 18 districts. Earlier, on May 1 it was for seven districts Lucknow, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Meerut, and Bareilly and on May 6 the government added 11 more districts namely Aligarh, Agra, Ghaziabad, Jhansi, Moradabad, Saharanpur, Firozabad, Mathura, Ayodhya, Shahjahanpur and Gautam Budh Nagar to the list.

To meet the demand of vaccines, the state government floated a global tender for purchase of 4 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

Surveillance teams set up by govt reach out to villagers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To prevent the transmission of coronavirus in rural pockets of Uttar Pradesh, surveillance committees set up by the Yogi government have reached out to a population of crores and isolated a sizable number of residents showing symptoms of any disease. A government spokesman said in Lucknow on Monday that more than 4 lakh members of 60,569 surveillance committees were conducting door-to-door surveillance so as to enable early detection, isolation and treatment and thwarting the further spread of viral infection.

"The major outcome of heightened surveillance is that teams have been able to isolate residents under observation and get them tested through RRTs thus providing proper medical treatment to Covid patients in home isolation at their doorstep," the official said.

Amid the influx of migrant workers and labourers into the state as a result of lockdown in Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the chief minister issued strict directives to contain the virus spread at the beginning by conducting rapid antigen tests on all coming to railway stations and bus stations from distant places. He also instructed to equip the quarantine centres for those testing positive with all facilities such as proper food and medical aid.

"In pursuance of the CM's orders, free medical treatment, medicine kits and proper food is being provided in the isolation/quarantine centres set up in panchayat bhawans, school buildings etc, as a result of which villages have shown swift recovery of Covid patients. Also, people found to be indisposed or those testing Covid positive are being treated as per established medical protocols," he said.

Azam Khan shifted to ICU

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Jailed Samajwadi Party MP from Rampur Azam Khan and his son Abdullah Azam had to be shifted to Medanta Hospital in Lucknow on Sunday evening after the former's condition deteriorated at Sitapur District Jail on Monday. The father-son duo tested Covid positive a few days back.

According to Medanta Hospital authorities, Azam Khan's oxygen requirement was about 10 litres per minute after which he was shifted to the ICU while Abdullah's condition was stated to be stable.

Earlier at Sitapur District Jail, the

oxygen level of Azam Khan had dropped to 90, after which he and his son were escorted by police and Health department officials to the Lucknow hospital.

The Samajwadi Party veteran has been in Sitapur District Jail for more than a year along with his wife Tazeen Fatima and son Abdullah Azam after surrendering before a Rampur court. Khan's wife, however, secured bail a few days back, but he and his son are still in jail. The three were accused in multiple cases for their alleged connection to land grabbing, encroachment and others by the Yogi government. Khan has secured bail in most cases while son has also got bail in some cases lodged against him.

Muslim gram pradhan in Ayodhya village

Lucknow (PNS): In a show of bonhomie between the two communities, a Muslim man was elected gram pradhan in an Ayodhya village with 100 per cent Hindu population. The elected pradhan is the sole Muslim family in the village. Rajanpur people elected Hafiz Azeem Uddin as the village head. He defeated several other candidates in the fray.

Hafiz Azeem Uddin is a resident of Rajanpur village of Mavai block of Rudauli assembly constituency in Ayodhya and his win proved the political pundits wrong, showing that people do vote above caste and religious lines. The village has now become the centre of attraction after setting a perfect example of brotherhood. Speaking to media-persons on Monday, Hafiz Azeem Uddin said, "It is just the love and support of the villagers which gave me strength to file the nomination and win the election. There is communal harmony in the village. We are all like a big family. There are three temples in the villages and I came to know that people of my village prayed to God and even observed fasts for my victory. It was only after I won that people had water, which shows their

affection for me."

"My father has been a pradhan a decade back and it was his blessings too. Two of my brothers are abroad and one is a teacher. The entire village is like a big family and everyone is always ready to help each other. All the festivals are celebrated here with equal fervour. Gujrias are made in our house on Holi. I want to thank all the village people and assure them that development is only what they will see now," an elated Hafiz Azeem Uddin said.

BLOCK PRAMUKH POLL DEFERRED

After drawing all-round flak for holding panchayat elections in four phases in the third week of April, the Uttar Pradesh government decided to postpone the elections of block pramukh and chairman of district panchayat and postpone them for after June 15.

Earlier, these elections were proposed to be held between May 15 and 20. Holding the elections became untenable for the administration as the state government has imposed partial state-wide corona curfew to arrest the spread of the viral infection.

उपरोक्त पावर ट्रान्समिशन कॉरपोरेशन लिमिटेड, विविध आर्म्सगन सूचना

(1) अल्पकालिक ई-निविदा संख्या 14-वि.प.म.(प्र.)ल/2020-21, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय, लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत 220 के०वी० उपकेंद्र कुशी रोड में स्थापित डबरेडबल एयर कंशेक्षणों की मरम्मत, अनुसूचक एवं ओवरहॉलिंग सम्बन्धी कार्य, हेतु ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की गयी है जिसे www.etender.up.nic.in पर दिनांक 10/05/2021 को प्रकाशित किया गया है। कार्य की अनुमानित लागत रु. 1.43 लाख का कार्य की अवधि 01 माह घरोहर धनराशि रु. 1,500.00, ऑन लाइन ई-निविदा करने की अंतिम तिथि दिनांक 21.05.2021 को 16.00 बजे तक है। उपरोक्त बतौर ई-निविदाओं के कार्य की कुल मात्रा ई-निविदा विशिष्टीकरण व अन्य नियम एवं शर्तें www.etender.up.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है। अक्षोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता को बिना कोई कारण बताये किसी भी ई-निविदा अथवा समी ई-निविदाओं को अस्वीकार/विमाजित करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। निर्धारित तिथि के विस्तार तथा शुद्धि पत्र से सम्बन्धित सूचना यदि कोई होगी केवल वेबसाइट पर आती जाएगी। अतः स्वयं को अपडेट रखने के लिए उपरोक्त वेबसाइट को नियमित देखते रहना चाहिए।

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारेषण मण्डल-प्रथम, उपरोक्त पावर ट्रान्समिशन कॉरपोरेशन लि०, कक्ष सं०-111 से 114, भू-सत, पारेषण भवन, विद्युत खण्ड-11, निकट मंत्री आवास गोमती नगर, लखनऊ -226010 पत्रांक- 689 दिनांक - 10.05.2021 "राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बचाय"

E-Tender Notice

Supply of Machinery and Equipments for Common Facility Centre in Diamond Cutting and Polishing Cluster, Surat

Re-Tender ID - CFC/LGD/2021/04

Online e-tenders are invited for supply, installation and Commissioning of Machineryes and Equipments for **Common Facility Centre in Lab Grown Diamond Cluster, Surat.** Detailed tender document can be downloaded from the website nprocure.com

Duration of Downloading	11/05/2021 to 24/05/2021 (Up to 18:00 Hrs)
Tender Duration (On Line)	
Pre Bid Meeting with Bidders	17/05/2021 at 12:00 Hrs (Online)
Submission of Physical documents,	24/05/2021 (Up to 16:00 Hrs)
Tender Fee, EMD etc.	
Closing of Submission of tenders (Online)	24/05/2021 at 18:00 Hrs
Technical Bid opening (on line),	27/05/2021 at 12:00 Hrs (Tentative)

DIRECTOR

THE CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

BLOCK NO 1, 9th FLOOR, UDVOG BHAVAN, SECTOR-11, GANDHINAGAR

Phone No: (079)232-43847/ 232-43706, 09435506403

URL: www.ced.gujarat.gov.in

ZN/166/21-22

SCHOOLSCAN


ROZA IFTAR

City Montessori School, Kanpur Road Campus, organised a virtual roza iftar on Monday. Eminent personalities from Kuwait, Canada, USA, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Albania, Bangladesh, Palestine, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and India came together and prayed for peace in the world. They also gave a message of unity and peace to the world community. Salem Salman Humoud Al Sabah from Kuwait was the chief guest while Imam Tariq Rasheed from Canada presided over the virtual congregation.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No. 129/2021

Important Notice for the Rail Passengers

It is notified for information of General Public that following Summer Special Trains will run as per details as under:-



1. Train No. 09193/09194 Mumbai Central-Gorakhpur -Mumbai Central Summer Superfast Special Train				
Train No. 09193 Ex Mumbai Central on Monday, Thursday Date 10.05.2021 & 13.05.2021				
Train No. 09194 Ex Gorakhpur on Wednesday, Saturday Date 12.05.2021 & 15.05.2021				
Train No. 09193 Mumbai Central - Gorakhpur	Train No. 09194 Gorakhpur -Mumbai Central			

Arrival	Departure	Station	Arrival	Departure
—	23.00	Mumbai Central	23.20	—
23.45	23.47	Borivali	22.32	22.34
01.26	01.28	Vapi	20.50	20.52
02.30	02.35	Surat	19.45	19.50
04.10	04.20	Vadodara	18.00	18.10
08.40	08.50	Ratlam	13.20	13.30
12.00	12.10	Kota	09.40	09.50
13.20	13.25	Sawai Madhopur	08.12	08.17
15.35	15.37	Bharatpur	06.55	06.57
16.15	16.40	Achnnera	05.45	06.10
17.30	17.35	Mathura Jn.	04.50	04.55
19.15	19.20	Kasganj	03.05	03.10
20.50	20.55	Farrukhabad	01.30	01.35
00.15	00.25	Kanpur Central	22.00	22.10
02.05	02.10	Aishbagh	20.27	20.32
04.00	04.02	Barabanki Jn.	18.35	18.37
05.25	05.30	Gonda Jn.	17.05	17.10
07.00	07.02	Basti	15.20	15.22
09.05	—	Gorakhpur	—	14.00

Composition-First AC cum Second AC-01, AC II-01, AC III-06, General Class-02, Sleeper Class-08, Pantry Car-01, Generator cum Luggage-01, SLR/D-01 = 21 Coaches

2. Train No. 01329/01330 Pune-Gorakhpur-Pune Summer Special Train

Train No. 01329 Ex Pune on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday Date 11.05.2021, 13.05.2021, 15.05.2021, 18.05.2021, 20.05.2021 Train No. 01330 Ex Gorakhpur on Thursday, Saturday, Monday Date 13.05.2021, 15.05.2021, 17.05.2021, 20.05.2021, 22.05.2021

Train No. 01329 Pune - Gorakhpur			Train No. 01330 Gorakhpur - Pune	
Arrival	Departure	Station	Arrival	Departure
—	21.30	Pune	05.25	—
22.45	22.47	Daund Chord Line	03.57	04.00
00.12	00.15	Ahmednagar	02.02	02.05
04.15	04.20	Manmad Jn.	22.25	22.30
06.50	06.55	Bhusaval Jn.	19.30	19.35
12.40	12.50	Itarsi Jn.	14.30	14.40
15.15	15.20	Bhopal Jn.	12.15	12.25
17.50	17.55	Bina Jn.	09.50	09.55
20.20	20.30	Jhansi Jn.	07.15	07.25
01.20	01.30	Kanpur Central	02.15	02.25
03.15	03.25	Lucknow	00.30	00.40
05.40	05.45	Gonda Jn.	21.10	21.15
06.50	06.54	Basti	20.00	20.05
09.00	—	Gorakhpur	—	19.00

Composition-Sleeper Class-11, General Class-04, AC II-01, AC III-04, SLR/D-02 = 22 Coaches

3. Train No. 01359/01360 Ch. Shivaji Maharaj (T.) - Gorakhpur - Ch. Shivaji Maharaj (T.)

Train No. 01359 Ex Ch. Shivaji Maharaj (T.) on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday Date 12.05.2021, 14.05.2021, 16.05.2021, 17.05.2021, 19.05.2021 Train No. 01360 Ex Gorakhpur on Wednesday, Friday, Sunday, Tuesday Date 14.05.2021, 16.05.2021, 18.05.2021, 19.05.2021, 21.05.2021

Train No. 01359 Ch. Shivaji Maharaj (T.) - Gorakhpur			Train No. 01360 Gorakhpur - Ch. Shivaji Maharaj (T.)	
Arrival	Departure	Station	Arrival	Departure
—	23.30	Ch. Shivaji Maharaj (T.)	03.45	—
23.42	23.45	Dadar	03.27	03.30
00.32	00.35	Kalyan Jn.	02.57	03.00
02.55	02.58	Nasik Road	23.37	23.40
06.50	06.55	Bhusaval Jn.	19.30	19.35
12.40	12.50	Itarsi Jn.	14.30	14.40
15.15	15.20	Bhopal Jn.	12.15	12.25
17.50	17.55	Bina Jn.	09.50	09.55
20.20	20.30	Jhansi Jn.	07.15	07.25
01.20	01.30	Kanpur Central	02.15	02.25
03.15	03.25	Lucknow	00.30	00.40
05.40	05.45	Gonda Jn.	21.10	21.15
06.50	06.55	Basti	20.00	20.05
09.00	—	Gorakhpur	—	19.00

Composition-Sleeper Class-10, General Class-05, AC II-01, AC III-06, SLR/D-02 = 24 Coaches

Please Note:1. These train will run with full reserved accommodation. 2. It is mandatory for the passengers to follow the guidelines issued for prevention and safety from Covid-19. CPRO/T-48A Chief Pass. Traffic Manager, Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955 "DO NOT TRAVEL WITH INFLAMMABLE ARTICLE IN TRAIN"

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Online monitoring of Covid hospitals not effective in curbing negligence

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Online monitoring of Covid facilities is not effective in controlling negligence in treatment which may be behind many COVID-19 deaths and also the false feedback given to authorities. Doctors at the Covid facilities feel that strict monitoring with ground inspections may help in improving the treatment given to the COVID-19 patients and in reducing deaths.

A senior doctor at a well-known Covid facility said that among issues which he observed in the hospital, he found that a patient was giving false feedback to the higher authorities, saying that the treatment being provided was very good.

“However, this patient’s feedback to us was that he was

not getting proper treatment. The patient changed his tune only because the doctor who was treating him was holding the camera through which he was talking to the higher authorities,” he pointed out.

The senior doctor said the healthcare provided in Covid facilities would not improve until those treating the patients, including doctors, nursing staff and ward boys, were brought under a strict monitoring system. “Take another case where a patient who had high contacts managed to get an X-ray done at the hospital because the digital X-ray machine at his bed was not working. An X-ray technician entering a Covid facility and taking X-ray of a patient is a serious lapse,” he said, adding that there some doctors were not doing Covid

duties and taking up administrative work, creating disharmony which needs to be looked into.

“There are instances of miscommunication and non-communication among doctors while leaving their shifts which can compromise the safety of a patient. There have been times when the doctors on shift have not provided the details of the patients with comorbidities to doctors of coming on the next shift and this can increase the risk to the patients,” the doctor said.

“The administration must take note of this and see that there is involvement of everyone in treatment of patients. Proper monitoring means direct interaction with the patients and strict supervision by the heads of the hospitals in terms of duties dis-

charged. This is the only way to improve treatment,” he added.

Another doctor from another Covid facility said that ground inspections were very less because nobody wanted to enter the Covid ward.

“Online inspections are not a substitute to the ground inspections which ensure that the doctors and the healthcare providers regularly visit the patients and get information about the seriousness of the disease to intervene in time,” he said. Regarding the feedback from patients, he said that most of them do give a fair opinion.

“Patients do give the right feedback but then the communication is through the phone. The ground inspections of Covid facilities have been less in the recent past,” he added.

Rajnath to visit Lucknow today

Lucknow (PNS): Defence Minister and MP from Lucknow, Rajnath Singh will be visiting his parliamentary constituency for two hours on Tuesday to inspect two new Covid hospitals set up with the help of Defence Research and Design Organisation (DRDO) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

BJP media in-charge Pravin Garg said that the defence minister will fly to Lucknow airport around 11:30 am from New Delhi and visit the makeshift Covid hospital at the Haj House in Sarojininaragar area. The 255-bed hospital has been set up by HAL in collaboration with the UP government. Later, Singh will inspect Atal Bihari Vajpayee Covid hospital set up by DRDO at Awadh Shilp Gram. The DRDO hospital has already become operational while the HAL hospital will start functioning from Tuesday. The defence minister will fly back to New Delhi around 1:30 pm.



People waiting at Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences on Monday to take Covid vaccine jabs. According to District Immunisation Officer Dr MK Singh, 3,473 people in 18+ category were among a total of 9,878 who got vaccinated in Lucknow on Monday

Pioneer

Private co owner held for selling O₂ concentrators, cylinders at higher rates

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police arrested proprietor of a private company for selling oxygen concentrators at higher rates to people struggling to save the lives of their loved ones down with Covid.

The police recovered 18 oxygen concentrators, three oxygen cylinders, five silicone face masks, a laptop, an iPhone, Rs 2.4 lakh in cash, a Honda City car and two receipt books. The accused had amassed crores of rupees before the police could get a whiff.

The accused was identified as Subhash Chandra of PGI police station area and his office is situated close to a dental college in the area.

The police said they were tipped off about a firm selling oxygen concentrators at higher rates (Rs 35,000-40,000) among people in need. On Monday, the police were tipped off about his movement in Prerna Kendra where he had to sell an oxygen concentrator and



cylinder to a customer. The police reached there and rounded him up.

He told the police that he is a native of Jaunpur and has been into the business for the last several years. The accused said he would supplying medical equipment to different hospitals across the city. He took advantage of the situation and started giving the oxygen concentrators and cylinders on rent to people in need. He said he used to realise Rs 35,000 from each customers as security money.

Cop accused of raping colleague

Lucknow (PNS): A woman constable alleged that her colleague sexually exploited her on the promise of marriage and later forced her to go for abortion. She also alleged that the Ashiyana SHO and a constable sided with the accused. However, the accused constable, Ashwini Pratap Yadav, was suspended and the probe was handed over to the Cantonment ACP. The woman and the accused are 2019 recruits.

The complainant and the accused were posted at Ashiyana police station. In due course of time, Ashwini came close to her and promised to marry her. The complainant said he sexually exploited her on this pretext. She said when she got pregnant, the accused forced her to go for abortion.

“I complained to SHO Paramhans Gupta who scolded me and sided with the accused. Another constable also defended the accused,” she alleged. She said her complaint was not addressed by senior officers following which she had to appeal to approach the office of the DCP (Woman Crime).

Minor killed by friend, body recovered from vacant plot

Lucknow (PNS): Warned of a complaint to parents about his smoking habit, a minor boy killed his friend (also a minor) and dumped the body in a vacant plot in Gudamba. The victim was identified as Saurabh, who was a resident of a slum area in Gudamba and worked as a vegetable vendor. He had left home to buy vegetables on Friday and was missing ever since. However, he was seen along with the accused in a CCTV footage on Friday.

As Saurabh did not return home, his parents started searching for him and later lodged a case, suspecting the role of his friend with whom he had left for the market.

The police initially took the complaint lightly and summoned the suspect on Saturday. “Since the mother of the suspect works at the house of a policeman, the police let him off,” deceased’s father Nirankar alleged.

He said he petitioned his

case to the commissioner of police after which the Gudamba SHO was given a dressing down. Later, the suspect was interrogated. He owned up his crime and disclosed that he and Saurabh reached a vacant plot on Friday. Saurabh was playing games on the mobile phone of the accused when the latter started smoking. They picked up a fight on some issue and Saurabh warned the accused of complaining to his parents about his smoking habit.

Irked over that, the accused thrashed Saurabh and choked his throat. Saurabh fell unconscious and the accused went to a shop from where he purchased a blade. He later slit Saurabh’s wrists and hid the body under the debris and bricks. The accused took out the money from Saurabh’s pockets and cleared his debt.

It surfaced that Saurabh was killed on Friday but the police did not take the case seriously.

Probe ordered into death of Thailand woman

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A probe has been ordered into the death of a Thailand woman who had tested positive for Covid at was admitted in Ram Manohar Institute of Medical Sciences. The incident led to a political slugfest on social media and a Samajwadi Party leader demanded a threadbare probe into the case.

DCP (East) Sanjeev Suman, who was tasked with conducting the probe, said the woman was a certified therapist and worked at a spa in Gominagar. He said the woman had a valid visa and she visited the country after getting permission from authorities concerned and all her documents were valid.

About Salman, whom she was in touch with and who helped her in getting admitted to the hospital, the DCP said he is the manager of the spa where

DCP (East) Sanjeev Suman said the woman had a valid visa and she visited the country after getting permission from authorities concerned and all her documents were valid

the woman worked and which is owned by Rakesh Sharma.

“The social media is abuzz with defamatory posts about the woman and police will initiate action against all such people if the allegations are found to be baseless. We have asked such people to give us evidence so that the investigation could be expedited but no one has come forward so far,” he said.

The woman moved to the hospital on April 30 and died three days later. The police got the cremation done in the presence of Salman, who is a native of Sultanpur.

Salman had told mediapersons that the Thailand embassy was in constant touch with the doctors and also with the officials concerned and there was to shift her to some hospital outside Lucknow. He further said that her oxygen saturation level was low. Initial investigation revealed that the woman had a tourist visa. Sources said the police checked details of different hotels but could not find her name in the logbooks. “The police are puzzled about why the woman visited the city during Covid times, especially when parlours and spa centres are closed and it is uncertain when will they reopen,” they said.

Can Fin Homes Ltd. (Incorporated in India)				
Branch Address :- 1st Floor, Speed Building, 3 Shahbazpur Road Hazratganj, Lucknow, U.P. 226001., Phone No. 0522-4065123, E-Mail:- lucknow@canfinhomes.com				
DEMAND NOTICE				
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI Act) read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (Rules)				
Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd. under SARFAESI Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3, issued Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the Borrower/guarantors listed hereunder (hereinafter referred to as the "said Borrower"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the Notice, within 60 days from date of receipt of Notice, as per details given below.				
The said Notices have been returned undelivered by the postal authorities/have not been duly acknowledged by the borrowers. Hence the Company by way of abundant caution is effecting this publication of the demand notice (as per the provisions of Rule 3 (1)). The undersigned has, therefore, caused these notices to be pasted on the premises of the last known addresses of the said Borrowers, as per the said Act.				
As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to the Company by the respective parties as detailed below.				
No.	Name of Borrowers/ Guarantors with address	Amount claimed as per Demand Notice	Description of the Secured Asset	Date of NPA
1.	1. Mrs. Jyoti Srivastava W/o Mr. Abhishek Srivastava, 2. Mr. Abhishek Srivastava S/o Mr. Kamleshwar Prasad Srivastava, Both R/o. 631/8, Gyan Vihar Harihar Nagar, Indira Nagar Lucknow U.P.- 226016, Guarantor:- Mr.Virendra Kumar S/O Mr. Gopi Chandra, R/o. 99A, Rajeev Nagar, Ismail Ganj Ward2, Indira Nagar Lucknow, U.P.-226016.	Rs. 15,62,622.*	All that house on Plot No. 49 measuring 69.516 sq. mtr. Situated at Khasra No.1 Ka Minjumala, Village Paikramau, Pargana Mahona, Tahsil Bakshi Ka Talab, Distt Lucknow.	31.10.2020
2.	1. Mrs. Kiran Singh W/o Anil Singh, 2. Mr. Shivam Singh S/o Anil Singh. Both R/o: Plot No 8 Gata No. 109 Ka Min, Rasoolpur Kayastha, Paragana-Mahona, Tehsil-Bakshi Ka Talab, Lucknow 226021. Guarantor:- Mr. Surya Pratap Singh S/o Ram Pratap Singh R/o.: 647B/170, Abhishekpuram, Janakipuram, Lucknow-226021	Rs. 15,78,163.*	All that house on Plot No. 8, measuring 83.643 sq. mtr. situated at Gata No. 109 Ka Min, Rasoolpur Kayastha, Paragana-Mahona, Tehsil-Bakshi Ka Talab, Lucknow U.P	31.10.2020
3.	Mr. Pawan Kumar S/o Ram Swaroop, 2. Mrs. Tulsi Kori D/o Raja Ram, Both R/o. Plot No 13 , 614/P-13 (KH-184) Shyam Vihar Colony Faizullaganj Lucknow U. P.- 226201. Guarantor :- Mr. Parvez Rizvi S/o Javed Rizvi, R/o. 450/301-A Zohra Cottage, Haider Colony Mufitganj Mallah tola2, Lucknow, U.P.-226003.	Rs. 17,63,409.*	All that house on Plot No. 3 measuring 111.245 sq. mtr. situated at Khasra No.119 Ka Min, Village-Saraiya, Pargana-Mahona, Tahsil- Bakshi Ka Talab, Lucknow	28.02.2021
* Payable with further interest at contractual rates as agreed from the date mentioned above till date of payment. You are hereby called upon to pay the above said amount with contracted rate of interest thereon within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the undersigned will be constrained to Initiate action under SARFAESI Act to enforce the aforesaid security. Further, the attention of borrowers/guarantors is invited to provisions of Section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available to them to redeem the secured assets.				
Date 11.05.2021 Place- Lucknow Authorised officer Can fin Homes Ltd.				

More than 100 species of plants on LU campus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow University released its green audit report on Monday. Green audit is a process of systematic identification, quantification, recording, reporting and analysis of the components of environmental diversity of various establishments. LU spokesperson Durgesh Srivastava said the green audit report was compiled by M/s Earth Protection Group Environmental Consultant Pvt Ltd (EPGEC), a leading consultant in the field of environment, under the guidance of its Managing Director Dr Nelesh Agarwal and Executive Director Dr Rajeev Kanaujia and team members of the university under the guidance of Prof Amita Kanaujia on the direction of the Vice Chancellor University Prof Alok Kumar Rai.

He said the LU had been making efforts to keep its environment clean since its inception. “For the past one year, the LU has been at the forefront of environmental initiatives, including the plantation of 26,000 saplings on January 26, starting three new gardens, etc. In the same series of efforts, the present green audit report deals with some of the major objectives such as flora and fauna documentation and with suggestions to further improve it, monitoring of energy consumption, and assessment of quantity of water conservation and lastly organic and solid waste generation and management,” he said.

As per the report, in LU (Old Campus), the total water consumption is 877.46 KL/day. Quantity of sewage waste generated via domestic activities is 790 KL/day. The entire waste water is being treated by Bharwara STP through nagar drain and no treated wastewater is recycled or reused on the campus. The main source of electricity is six power connections from Lucknow Electricity Supply Administration (LESA) maintained by the works department. Total number of electricity units consumed by the university is 50,92,213 units and 12,72,856 units by solar panels. “Solar power system of capacity 1000 KW has been installed at the old campus. The entire solar power system is operated by HFM Solar Power Limited. After installation of the solar power system, the university saved around five lakhs units per month as well as reduced carbon dioxide CO2 emission,” the report states. The 100-year- old campus of LU has a rich biodiversity. “The campus has a rich diversity of flora as well as birds and butterflies. More than a hundred species of trees are present on the campus.

Varsity extends helping hand to people in distress

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow University Alumni Foundation has decided to extend a helping hand to people in need and have launched an effort to connect willing plasma, blood donors to potential recipients across the country by creating an organised common database.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai launched the drive by releasing posters and registration form link seeking plasma, blood donations on the university’s social media platforms.

“The LU Alumni Foundation is sharing the appeal through various social media platforms and through its members to spread the word for getting maximum enrolments for donation from across the country. The VC appreciated the efforts and appealed to all past and present students, faculty members and staff to actively participate and contribute to this humanitarian work. The effort is being coordinated by Prof Nishi Pandey and facilitated by Sharaf Abbas, both office-bearers of the Foundation,” a spokesperson of LU said.

Online mango marketing may pick up this season

Lucknow (PNS): Due to limited visits to fruit markets, online mango marketing during COVID-19 pandemic may help mango lovers to enjoy the excellent Malihabadi mangoes during June at their doorsteps.

CISH director Shailendra Rajan said that CISH started demonstrating online trading involving entrepreneurs through mobile apps during the 2020 pandemic.

“This was for the first time when mango mobile apps were developed for exclusive marketing of the Lucknow mangoes. This initiative was made by the Agri Business Incubation Centre of the institute. The entrepreneurs received a good response from online customers and learned about various steps involved in the supply chain of mangoes from farmer’s field to the customer using mobile app. This included the selection of fruits, its grading, processing, packaging and delivery which requires experience, especially in handling a large number of customers during the season,” he said.

Rajan said that at the end of the mango season, the activity was stopped because no other fruit was tried on this platform.

“The online marketing of mangoes was possible only for about two months in Lucknow. However, mango being a perishable commodity, customers from different cities started ordering Lucknow mangoes but transport and delivery problems in distant cities were not good. The mango consignment reached the city but after that it could not be distributed due to Covid lockdown or other restrictions in the city,” he said.

Rajan said that in the second COVID-19 wave, the movement of people was limited and everybody wanted mangoes to be delivered at their doorsteps. “People started contacting entrepreneurs who made online mango marketing possible in Lucknow last year. One of the entrepreneurs supplied mangoes in the National Capital Region. The mangoes from Malihabad were transported to the Delhi border and from that point, online orders were handled. Handling of individual mango order from Lucknow to NCR involves a lot of transportation charges. The entrepreneur transported mangoes in bulk from Malihabad, repacked and distributed them in NCR,” Rajan said.

DRDO Covid Hospital starts operation in BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amidst the ongoing second wave of COVID-19, the Ministry of Defence has come forward in massive strength to support the fight against the pandemic by setting up and manning the operations in various Covid Hospitals across the country. After Delhi, Ahmedabad and Lucknow, Pandit Rajan Mishra Covid Hospital at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has been made functional on Monday through the efforts of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the Armed Forces and the civil administration.

The 750-bed hospital has been set up by DRDO. The Armed Forces are providing specialists, doctors, nursing and other medical staff, moved from across the country on a war footing to run the hospital in coordination with BHU and the civil administration. The complete medical staff has been trained in Covid protocols, all equipment has been checked for serviceability and quality control and the functionality of the ancillary services of the hospital ensured. All beds in the hospital will be oxygenated as the hospital is well equipped with 40 KL of oxygen stored in three tanks. The state government has facilitated all major functions such as supply of essential amenities to run the hospital including oxygen, dedicated power supply, bio-medical and other waste management and



DRDO Covid Hospital starts operation at BHU in Varanasi on Monday

Pioneer

patient management system. Medicines and food will be provided free of charge to all patients. The 250 bed ICU facility is functional at commencement. The capacity of the hospital will gradually be expanded to 750 beds with the anticipated patient inflow. There will be no direct walk-in admissions to this Covid hospital. All admissions will be managed through referrals by the Integrated Command & Control Centre, Varanasi under the State Administration. The contact number of the ICCC Varanasi is 18001805567 and

the Hospital helplines are 7307015441 and 7307015442. The quick setup of the hospital is a testimony to the commitment of the Ministry of Defence to enhance health infrastructure while working in close coordination with the state governments.

Meanwhile, Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) said that the police have tightened their security arrangements at the Covid hospital and a police outpost has been set up there. He said that the police have checked all the aspects including getting no

objection certificates from fire brigade, PWD and electricity departments. He appealed to all the police personnel deployed there to keep cordial behaviour with the patients and their attendants apart from maintaining full cooperation with the Army personnel and BHU employees. He also held a meeting with police officers to review the security and other arrangements. The meeting was also attended by DyCP Kashi, AdCP Kashi, ACP Bhelupur, Lanka police station In-charge and Chief Proctor of BHU.

Slight decrease in positive cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In a major relief, the district continued recording a slight decrease for the second consecutive day in the positive cases during the last 24 hours. As many as 745 cases of COVID-19 were recorded on Monday evening increasing the total number to 75,639 crossing the 75K-mark. There is decrease in the number of deaths during the last 24 hours as eight deaths were recorded this evening and with this, the death toll increased to 650. As many as 1,468 patients of home isolation recovered while as many as 143 have been recovered from the hospitals. The total number of patients cured in the district increased to 65,267 including 60,621 in home isolation and 4,646 in COVID-19 hospitals.

In the first report of the day, 561 positive patients were found out of 3,744 reports received and this figure increased to 745 out of 8,087 received samples as per report provided by the Health department on this evening. The total active cases decreased to 9,722 from 10,596 which was a

day ago. On Sunday evening, as many as 851 positive cases were recorded and the total number was 74,894, while 9 deaths were reported and the death toll was 642. Earlier, in view of finding hundreds of new positive cases, with 10 new hotspots, the number of active hotspots was 615 with 1 green zones having been converted to red zones by a day ago. Out of total 3,276 hotspots, 2,661 are green zones and 615 are red zones.

The Health department continued the vaccination drive for the beneficiaries aged above from 45 years at 67 vaccination centres of the district from 10 am to 4 pm including Ramkrishan Mission Home of Service in Luxa, Shree Ram Lakshmi Narayan Marwadi Hindu Hospital in Godowlia, Mata Anandmayee Hospital in Shivala, Raja Baldev Das Birla Hospital in Machhodari, Mahila District Women Government Hospital in Kabirchaura, Pt Deen Dayal Government Hospital, near Pandeypur and ESIC, near Pandeypur.

Besides, the vaccination drive was also launched for the

beneficiaries aged above 18 and below 45 years at 17 vaccination centres including LBS Hospital, Ramnagar, Sirsunder Lal Hospital in BHU, Rajkiya Ayurvedic College in Chowkaghat, District Government Hospital in Kabirchaura, Central Hospital in BLW and a few CHC & PHC of urban and rural areas. The long queues of the beneficiaries particularly of aged between 18 and 45 years were seen at Women Government Hospital. The administration has received a fresh consignment of 30,000 doses of vaccines to cover the maximum beneficiaries.

The district administration issued the details of the current status of beds availability in different hospitals. As per detail provided by the administration in the evening on Monday, there are a total of 783 beds including 592 of L-2 and 191 of L-3 in seven government hospitals & trauma centre in BHU and of them, the 168 beds of L-2 and 10 beds of L-3 were vacant. In 51 private hospitals, there are 1,386 beds available including 1,073 of L-2 and 313 of L-3 and of them, 407 beds of

L-2 and 63 of L-3 beds were vacant. In total, there are a total 2,169 beds including 1,665 of L-2 and 504 of L-3 in government and private hospitals and out of them, 557 of L-2 and 73 of L-3 were vacant.

Meanwhile, the social organisation Varanasi Elite Round Table-278 in association with Karouli Diagnostic has started free facility of computed tomography (CT) scan for the poor patients. It has released helpline numbers-9958127585 and 7007669453 for the registration. The poor patients could avail the facility of CT scan free of cost at three centres in the city by getting registration on these both helpline numbers.

The administrative office of the State Bank of India (SBI) distributed as many as 150 lunch packets to the family members of corona patients admitted in emergency of SPGG Hospital and Women Government Hospital. The DGM of bank Vinod Kumar Sinha, AGM Shashank Kumar and CMSs Lilli Srivastava & DR Prasann Kumar were mainly present on the occasion.

Daily wagers facing crisis as corona curfew enters 11th day

VARANASI (PNS): As most of the officers and public representatives are paying their main attention to provide better treatment and medicine kits to the Covid positive patients, a sizeable section of the society especially the rickshaw-pullers, vendors, daily wagers and others are facing a serious crisis for livelihood as the corona curfew entered the 11th day here on Monday. Unlike last year when nationwide lockdown was imposed to prevent the spread of the first wave of coronavirus, this time neither the administration nor the social organisations are seen active in supporting the poor to get ration and other essential items.

Last year, not only the public representatives and officers but also dozens of social and voluntary organisations apart from various police and other departments were seen very active in giving food and ration kits to the poor but this time, when undoubtedly the virus infection speed was several times high, rarely any of the authorities or organisations is thinking about the poor who have lost their jobs



Nadesar area wears a deserted look during corona curfew in Varanasi on Monday

Pioneer

due to continuation of lockdown. Though essential items are being supplied through fair price shops it is fact that only a little section of the poor has ration cards. Most of the rickshaw pullers came here from various parts of Purvanchal (eastern UP), Bihar, West Bengal and other states.

Even during the day,

Rohania MLA Surendra Narayan Singh, along with SDM Siddharh Yadav and ADM (Protocol) Bachhu Singh distributed masks and Covid medicine kits to the needy people at Mohansarai where the gram pradhans of Mohansarai Manoj Kumar Verma and Payagpur Alpana Pandey were also present. Speaking on the occasion, the

officers also appealed to the local people to come forward and get them vaccinated in view to prevent the spread of corona.

The medicine kits were also distributed among the people in Madhopur and Chitaunikot villages where several tehsil and panchayat officers were also present.

Meanwhile, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal continued providing oxygen cylinders to the needy corona patients. Some MLAs are also providing the same from the quota in view to give the patients during this pandemic period. Not only this, on the instructions of UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Neelkanth Tiwari, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers organised free medical camps at seven places in City South assembly constituency in association with Indian Medical Association (IMS), following Covid guidelines. In these camps, about 800 people were examined and 3200 medicine kits were distributed to the people.

Complaints of arbitrary recovery from Covid patients comes to light

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

More than a dozen complaints of arbitrary recovery from Covid patients have come to light in Prayagraj. The arbitrariness of private Covid hospitals are making patients forced to shell out more money. For example- Lavkush, a resident of Allapur, was a pharmacist in the Health department. On April 14, he was admitted to L-2 Private Hospital in Tagore Town after being tested positive from an antigen kit.

He has been admitted there for two days. When the condition worsened, the private hospital referred him to SRN Hospital where he died. During the two days of admission, the private hospital took ₹ 1.25 lakh and the money for medicines and tests was spent separately. This incident with a Covid patient is just a hallmark. The operators of these hospitals are also associated with the ruling party.

During the Corona transition, private hospitals have found an opportunity to arbitrate in the disaster. Some nursing home and hospital operators are depositing ₹ 1.5 lakh from the admitted patients, whether they are

mild or serious, as soon as they reach the hospital, and then in the name of doctor's rounds, tests, different in the name of medicines charging money. If the patient has oxygen, he is on a ventilator or HFNO, then double recovery is being done. Ventilator charge is also being taken ₹ 15,000 per day.

A bill for Rs 60,000 a day is being charged from the patients admitted in the ICU. The nodal officer from Corona, from CMO to DM, is also accepting this fact. It is being said that DM has also reprimanded the operators of some private hospitals in this matter. But the loot from patients is not stopped. More than a dozen patients have also complained of the city's five private Covid hospitals in the case. It is under investigation against private hospitals located in Tagore Town, Civil Lines, Phaphamau. Explanations have also been sought from hospitals. If the answer is not appropriate, it is being said to take action.

Some private Covid hospitals in the city have received more money from Corona patients for treatments that are being investigated. Explanations have been sought from hospitals. Action will be

taken after the investigation report is received. Dr Prabhakar Rai, Chief Medical Officer said.

Private Covid Hospital is charging ₹ 5000 each in the name of conducting Covid tests from the patients admitted. A complaint has also been made to this CMO as well. On the other hand, according to the Health department officials, due to the busy handling of infection in the second wave of corona, this regard was not fully taken care of. Because of this, private Covid hospitals are charging more than four times the rate fixed by the government in the name of conducting tests.

Private Covid hospitals are making arbitrary recoveries from patients in the name of treatment. They did another trick. Hospitals did not admit serious patients. After admitting mild patients of Corona, filled the hospital with records and when serious patients arrived, they told them that their beds were not empty here. In the month of April, private Covid hospitals have driven away more than 2000 patients and earned money by treating mild patients. These hospitals showed that no patient died in

them. If the condition of the patients who remained admitted became even a little serious, they were immediately referred to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. Dr Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer of Corona, also believed this fact. He said that initially hospitals were allowed to enroll. They took advantage of this. Therefore, two helpline numbers were issued for recruiting patients, as well as arrangements were made to get the approval of the Health department before hiring private hospitals. Rates have been fixed for the treatment of private Covid patients under Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Yojana. In an order issued on April 28 by the Chief Executive Officer of PMJMY, four rates have been fixed for Covid patients to private hospitals under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme. If any patient is admitted under Ayushman, then the government will pay the treatment money according to these rates to the hospitals. This order has been sent to all the district magistrates, chief medical officers. Action has been directed against the hospitals for taking more money than the prescribed rate.

236 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

There was news of relief in Corona case on Sunday. It was because a total of 236 new cases of COVID-19 were found in 24 hours, while six patients died. The number of new patients on Sunday was not only half of what it was a day earlier. Rather it came down to the level before 37 days. At the same time, the number of people who got infection-free was about four-and-a-half per cent more than the new infected.

Dr Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer of Corona, said that on April 1, the figure was below 300. On April 1, 222 new infections were detected in 24 hours. On Sunday, the number of new infected was 185 less than a day earlier, i.e. Saturday. On Saturday, 421 new infections were detected. Due to the continuous decrease in the number of new infected corona, Prayagraj has now come to 11th position in the case of infected people.

Along with this, the rate of infection has also decreased. On April 17, the highest number of 2,436 new patients was found in a single day, according to Health department data. The rate of infection was more than 21 per cent of the total testing that day. But,



A child arrives for swab sample for COVID-19 test at a Covid centre in Prayagraj

according to Sunday's report, now the infection rate has come down to five per cent.

This has brought relief to both the Health department and the district administration.

DM fixes ambulance charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The ambulance rate in

Prayagraj has been fixed in the global pandemic coronavirus infection. The district administration has put a check on the arbitrariness of ambulance drivers and operators. The District Magistrate has fixed the ambulance rate to take the corona patients to the hospital. If they take more than that, action will be taken against them under the Pandemic Act. Three nodal officers have also been deployed to monitor them. Also, the number has been issued for the complaint.

Ambulances are arbitrary in order to bring people suffering from the Corona epidemic to the hospital. Their arbitrary and people's pain is being prominently published in various news papers daily. The District Magistrate Bhanuchandra Goswami has taken it seriously. Recently, the district administration had even reduced the rate of carrying the dead body to Phaphamau Ghat on the death of Corona. Now the rate has been fixed for carrying the Corona patients to any hospital in the district. He said that now they will not be able to charge more than the prescribed rate.

Oxygen free--- ₹ 1,000 for 10 kilometres and above, at the rate of ₹ 100 will be applicable for per kilometre. Attached with oxygen--- The fare up to 10 kilometres is ₹ 1500 and if you go beyond

this distance then ₹ 100 more have to be paid for per kilometre.

Ventilator supported--- ₹ 2,500 for 10 kilometres and more than ₹ 200 per kilometre.

For Carrying corona dead body--- From SRN to Phaphamau Ghat, now AC ambulance will cost ₹ 1500 and AC ambulance will be ₹ 2,000. People can also complain on 112 and Covid helpline 07447179060, 09649418686 for charging more than the prescribed rate. On the arbitrary of the ambulances' drivers, SP Traffic Akhilesh Bhadoria 9454401201, City Magistrate Rajneesh Mishra 9454417831 and RTO Enforcement Rajkumar Singh 8299092747 have been made nodal officers.

DM Bhanuchandra Goswami said that people are struggling with the crisis of corona epidemic. In such a time, strict action will be taken against people with ambulances. Today, they cannot charge more than the rate that has been set.

REMDESIVIR INJECTIONS OF V100166 & V100156 BATCH BANNED: The government has banned the use of Remdesivir injections of V100166 and V100156 batches in government hospitals in all districts of the state. In some districts, there were complaints of the condition of the patients worsening after the injection of this batch of Remdesivir.

Taking cognisance of the complaints, DGME and MSCL have instructed that the injec-

tions of this batch in Corona infected admitted in hospitals should not be injected till the test is done. In this regard, urgent messages have been sent to the AD Health, CMO and principals of Medical College of all districts.

After the shortage of Remdesivir injection, which is considered useful in the treatment of severe corona infected patients, the government had supplied them in several stages in all the districts. With the availability of Remdesivir injections in government hospitals, prohibition of black marketing and deviation of attendants also decreased. Now the use of two batches of injections has been banned after adverse effects of injection.

Separate orders have been issued in this regard from the level of Additional Director Medical Education and Additional Chief Secretary.

CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai said that he has not seen the order yet. Batch number of Remdesivir injections will be checked at Railway and Beli hospital. At the same time, according to the Principal of Moti Lal Nehru Medical College, Dr. SP Singh, injecting Remdesivir of a patient or an attendant in the college's SRN Hospital has not worsened the situation. In this regard, instructions are given to use the injection only after checking the batch number of the injection. They said that there may not have been a supply of injections for the banned batch. The injections will be used only

after checking stock and batch numbers on Tuesday.

10 NEW VACCINATION CENTRES: The people of Prayagraj were witnessed to have passion and spirit to defeat the coronavirus. The most enthusiastic are the youth class. They seem to be interested in COVID-19 vaccination. Till now, 18 to 44-year-old beneficiaries were still being vaccinated at 10 centres. Now 10 new centres in rural areas have also started vaccination today i.e. Monday. Vaccines will be applied only to those who have been registered online. Till now, those above 45 years of age were being vaccinated Covishield vaccine. Those 18 to 44 were being given Covaxin. From today, Covishield vaccine is being given to people of both these age groups. Health department has also mobilised to speed up vaccination and the enthusiasm is also among the beneficiaries. The portal is being hit round-the-clock for online registration. The message is coming in the mobile phone when someone registers, there is no date, slot and centre name in anyone's message. The vaccination was being conducted in rural areas including CHC Manda, Meja, Ramnagar and Shankargarh, CHC Saidabad, Handia, Pratappur, Bahria, Mauaima and Soraon. The centres set up in rural areas including Medical College, Dufferin, Beli Hospital-, Railway Hospital, UPHC Daraganj, MDI, CHC Jasra, CHC Chaka, CHC Kotwa, new PHC Jhuni.

State heading towards self-reliance in meeting oxygen requirements: DC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar, while inspecting the progress of installation of the 500 LPM capacity oxygen generation plant at district hospital, said the testing and trials were in progress. He assured that in the next three days the sample would be tested and all the requisite formalities would be completed and the oxygen supply would start.

The divisional commissioner said the new oxygen generation plant would produce sufficient oxygen to refill 110 jumbo oxygen cylinders. He said once this plant became fully functional, it would help in reducing the number of jumbo oxygen cylinders which were now being procured from the open market.

Dr Shekhar said the COVID-19 pandemic had



Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar inspecting the under construction oxygen plant at District Hospital on Monday.

taught a crucial lesson and the government was making every effort to remain prepared, especially in view of the sudden change in require-

ments for handling the pandemic.

He said with the leadership and support of the UP government, the state was

heading towards self-reliance and also self-sufficiency in meeting the oxygen requirements of Covid hospitals. He said the Centre and the state

government had jointly launched a mission to set up more new oxygen generation plants at district level hospitals so as to handle the oxygen requirements effectively.

The divisional commissioner said in Ursula district hospital, there was a need for 150 jumbo oxygen cylinders per day and added that the company which had established the oxygen plant would also ensure its maintenance for the next three years as well.

He was accompanied by the director of Ursula district hospital and the chief medical superintendent.

He said similar efforts were being made by the local administration in Kanshi Ram Hospital and other district hospitals of Kanpur division. He said the progress of installation of the oxygen plants was under strict and constant monitoring.

DM inspects pvt hospitals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar District Magistrate Alok Tiwari inspected various private hospitals on Monday to see if the norms laid down by the district administration were being followed or not.

He said only the hospitals having the facility to treat COVID-19 patients could admit such patients. He directed the hospitals to ensure that their ICUs were under CCTV surveillance and the relatives were informed about the condition of their patients every day.

There have been several

complaints about mismanagement in private hospitals and that the private hospitals were admitting the patients on fixed packages but on account of hidden other costs the patients are being fleeced.

The district magistrate had earlier informed that the charges were fixed for bed, ventilator, oxygen and other facilities and the patients could not be charged beyond that. Ironically, despite several complaints from the relatives of patients of overbilling, nothing has been done against the private hospitals.

Tiwari on Monday went to the new Leelamani Hospital,

where he took feedback from the medical authorities and then inspected the working of the ICUs on CCTV. He directed the hospital authorities to provide mobile phone numbers of the patients' relatives and interacted with them. He asked the relatives of patients to file a complaint if they were overcharged or if the hospital failed to provide quality treatment to the patients.

He told the relatives of the patients that static magistrates were stationed at the hospitals round-the-clock and in case of any complaint of overcharging they should file a complaint to the static magistrate so that

necessary action could be taken against the hospital concerned.

The district magistrate was informed that the hospital at the moment had 42 patients.

Meanwhile, the district magistrate along with the Kanpur Municipal Commissioner Akshay Tripathi supervised the sanitisation and fogging drive and inquired about the chemical being sprayed and its amount. He was informed that constant sanitisation was being carried out, especially in fruit and vegetable markets.

He said all the markets need to be covered under the sanitisation drive.

Gupta takes over charge as regional manager of LIC NCR Kanpur



RP Gupta

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The new regional manager for the LIC, North Central Region, Kanpur, RP Gupta, took over charge on Monday.

Prior to his new posting, Gupta was a faculty member of National Insurance Academy, Pune. He started his career with the LIC in 1988 as a direct recruit officer and later took over various charges in the field of marketing and administration and served efficiently and successfully. Gupta has immense experience in the field of working in life insurance marketing and other related distribution channels.

He has worked as provincial manager (marketing) at various LIC offices at Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha. While working as senior divisional manager at Aurangabad and Satara divisions he was behind the phenomenal growth in the business of LIC. He had done a commendable job as the provincial manager of the CLIA distribution channel in western region. He had also worked as faculty member at LIC Managerial Development Centre, which is a middle and senior level top training organisation. LIC NCR Kanpur extends to UP and Uttarakhand. Gupta thanked all the agents, staff and officials of LIC for their excellent performance and also the policy holders for their unstinting faith in the LIC. He assured the customers of quick settlement of death claims related to COVID-19 pandemic and also appealed to them to keep themselves safe and utilise LICs digital services as well.

BUSTED: The Crime Branch of Kanpur Nagar police busted a gang of interstate ATM hackers with the arrest of two persons on Monday. They were identified as Anshu Kushwaha (28) son of Yashoda Nagar in Naubasta and Prabhat Shukla of Sanjay Gandhi Nagar in Naubasta. During interrogation, both disclosed that the gang was active in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Delhi and Jharkhand. Gang members were expert in opening accounts in almost all the banks and getting ATM cards. As per the modus operandi of the gang, the members would withdraw money from the ATMs and when the machine was dispensing the cash, they would down the shutter and disconnect the server due to which the transaction was shown as 'cancelled' and the money withdrawn was again credited to the respective account.

Boy freed by kidnappers

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A boy was freed by his kidnappers on Sunday night. Interacting with media at Police Lines on Monday, Superintendent of Police (SP) incharge Shubhash Chandra Shakya said frequent raids conducted by the police demoralised the kidnappers and they freed the boy in the orchards near his residence under Dehat Kotwali police station late on Sunday evening. He said investigation was on to nab the kidnappers. For the safe recovery of the boy the SP incharge patted the back of the police team, including ASP (City) Sanjay Kumar and SHO



Dehat Kotwali Vijay Kumar Chaurasia. It may be recalled here that Dileep Kumar alias Mintu, a resident of Hariharpur Berahmi village under Dehat Kotwali police station had on Saturday lodged an FIR about his four-year-old son, Ayush, going missing.

SUMMER VACATION: As per the direction of the High Court DJ Lal Chand Gupta has declared summer vacation from

May 10 to June 4 for civil courts. According to the order, working for urgent matters will continue as it used to be in the past years. In the order it was mentioned that hearing of emergency matters will be carried out through virtual process.

Gkp-CSMT spl to run from May 14

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will for the convenience of passengers run 01359/01360 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) (Mumbai)- Gorakhpur-Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (Mumbai) summer special train from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (Mumbai) on May 12, 14, 16, 17 and 19 and from Gorakhpur on May 14, 16, 18, 19 and 21. It will also run 09193/09194 Mumbai Central-Gorakhpur-Mumbai Central superfast summer special train from Mumbai Central on May 10 and 13 and Gorakhpur on May 12 and 15. All coaches in the trains will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

CSMT-GKP SPL: The 01359 CSMT (Mumbai) - Gorakhpur summer special train will on May 12, 14, 16, 17 and 19 leave CSMT (Mumbai) at 23.30 hrs, Dadar at 23.45 hrs, Kalyan on the second day at 00.35 hrs, Nasik Road at 02.58 hrs, Bhusaval at 06.55 hrs, Itarsi at 12.50 hrs, Bhopal at 15.20 hrs, Bina at 17.55 hrs, Jhansi at 20.30 hrs, on the third day from Kanpur Central at 01.30 hrs, Lucknow at 03.25 hrs, Gonda at 05.45 hrs, Basti at 06.55 hrs and reach

Gorakhpur at 09.00 hrs.

GKP-CSMT SPL: In the return journey 01360 Gorakhpur-CSMT (Mumbai) summer special train will on May 14, 16, 18, 19 and 21 depart from Gorakhpur at 19.00 hrs, from Basti at 20.05 hrs, Gonda at 21.15 hrs, from Lucknow on second day at 00.40 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 02.25 hrs, from Jhansi at 07.25 hrs, from Bina at 09.55 hrs, from Bhopal at 12.25 hrs, from Itarsi at 14.40 hrs, Bhusaval at 19.35 hrs, Nashik Road at 23.40 hrs, third day from Kalyan at 03.00 hrs, Dadar at 03.30 hrs and reach CSMT at 03.45 hrs. A total of 24 coaches, including 10 of sleeper class, five of general second class, six of AC third class, one of AC second class and two of SLRD will be attached in this train.

MMCT-GKP SPL: The 09193 Mumbai Central (MMCT)-Gorakhpur superfast summer special will on May 10 and 13 depart from Mumbai Central at 23.00 hrs, from Borivali at 23.47 hrs, from Vapi on second day at 01.28 hrs, from Surat at 02.35 hrs, from Vadodara at 04.20 hrs, from Ratlam at 08.50 hrs, from Kota at 12.10 hrs, from Sawai Madhopur at 13.25 hrs, from Aachhnera at 15.37 hrs, from Aachhnera at 16.40 hrs, from Mathura Junction at 17.35 hrs, from Kasganj at 19.20 hrs,

from Farrukhabad at 20.55 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 00.25 hrs, from Aishbagh at 02.10 hrs, from Barabanki at 04.02 hrs, from Gonda at 05.30 hrs, Basti at 07.02 hrs and will arrive at Gorakhpur at 09.05 hrs.

GKP-MMCT SPL: In the return journey, the 09194 Gorakhpur-Mumbai Central superfast summer special train will on May 12 and 15 depart from Gorakhpur at 14.00 hrs, from Basti at 15.22 hrs, from Gonda at 17.10 hrs, from Barabanki at 18.37 hrs, from Aishbagh at 20.32 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 22.10 hrs, the second day from Farrukhabad at 01.35 hrs, from Kasganj at 03.10 hrs, from Mathura Junction at 04.55 hrs, from Aachhnera at 06.10 hrs, from Bharatpur at 06.57 hrs, from Sawai Madhopur at 08.17 hrs, from Kota at 09.50 hrs, from Ratlam at 13.30 hrs, from Vadodara at 18.10 hrs, from Surat at 19.50 hrs, from Vapi at 20.52 hrs, from Borivali at 22.34 hrs and reach Mumbai Central at 23.20 hrs. In this special train, 21 LHB coaches, including one of AC first-cum-second, one of AC second class, six of AC third class, eight of sleeper class, two of general second class, one of pantry car, one of generator-luggage van, and one of SLRD will be attached.

Gorakhpur-Pune spl from May 13

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will run the 01329/01330 Pune-Gorakhpur-Pune summer special train from Pune on May 11, 13, 15, 18 and 20 and from Gorakhpur on May 13, 15, 17, 20 and 22. All coaches in them will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

PUNE-GKP SPL: The 01329 Pune-Gorakhpur summer special train will May 11, 13, 15, 18 and 20 depart from Pune at 21.30 hrs, from Daund Chord Line at 22.47 hrs, from Ahmednagar on the second day at 00.15 hrs, from Manmad at 04.20 hrs, from Bhusaval at 06.55 hrs, from Itarsi at 12.50

hrs, from Bhopal at 15.20 hrs, from Bina at 17.55 hrs, from Jhansi at 20.30 hrs, the third day from Kanpur Central at 01.30 hrs, from Lucknow at 03.25 hrs, from Gonda at 05.45 hrs, Basti at 06.55 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 09.00 hrs.

GKP-PUNE SPL: In the return journey 01330 Gorakhpur-Pune summer special train will on May 13, 15, 17, 20 and 22 depart from Gorakhpur at 19.00 hrs, from Basti at 20.05 hrs, from Gonda at 21.15 hrs, from Lucknow on second day at 00.40 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 02.25 hrs, from Jhansi at 07.25 hrs, from Bina at 09.55 hrs, from Bhopal at 12.25 hrs, from Itarsi at 14.40 hrs, from Bhusaval at 19.35 hrs, from Manmad at 22.30 hrs, from Ahmednagar at 02.05 hrs,

from Daund Chord Line at 04.00 hrs and reach Pune at 05.25 hrs. A total of 22 coaches, including 11 of sleeper class, four of general second class, one of AC second class, four of AC third class and two of SLRD will be attached in this train.

STOPPAGE CANCELLED

Due to Covid-19 infection and operational difficulties the railway administration has from May 10 till further orders cancelled the stoppage of all trains at the following seven stations. The stoppage of all trains at Varanasi division's Khaira, Marhaura, Rajapatti, Majhagarh, Jalaipur, Khatkuiyan and Barharaganj stations has been cancelled from May 10 till further orders, CPRO PK Singh said.

Efforts to fight spread of Covid

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Considering the huge surge in Covid-19 cases in the country NTPC Vindhyachal is taking several steps to fight the spread of virus. NTPC Vindhya hospital is being used for treating Covid-19 infected employees. "We have advanced our infrastructure to combat the second wave of Coronavirus by setting up a dedicated Covid health centre, Covid isolation centre and quarantine centres and by adding oxygen equipped beds as well as increasing the number of beds in isolation wards and quarantine centres", Executive Director (Vindhyachal) Munish Jauhari said. He added that "we have also asked our employees to use the e-Paramarsh application for telemed-



icine so that they can avoid going to hospitals and secure themselves from getting exposed to Covid. We have also tied up with Apollo Hospital which has brought immense relief to Covid-infected patients since now they are getting better treatment even when in home isolation. Keeping in mind the surge in cases all the gates of the colony premises have been closed, only one gate is operational so that entry and exit of people can be strictly monitored. Any person coming from outside the district is being tested and after seeing the reports advised for home isolation or for quarantine in a dedicated quarantine centre. Free medicines are being made available to nearby villagers under CSR. Besides, vaccination drive is being carried out.

DM inspects CHC

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAIN

DM Priyanka Niranjan inspected the CHC at Kadaura and issued necessary guidelines to doctors. She instructed them to care of patients and ensure providing of medicines to the needy. She said due to Covid-19 many patients are arriving at government hospitals so it is necessary to care of each one of them. She went to Gaffur Khan Mahavidyalaya, which is already a quarantine centre, met the quarantined persons and inspected the community kitchen there. She instructed the BDO to provide proper meals to the quarantined people. She went to the quarantine centre at Kalpi College and instructed the SDM to care of quarantined people. Meanwhile she said that people can give their sample for Covid-19 testing at their respective PHCs. She instructed EOs of Kalpi and Kadaura Nagar Palika to properly sanitise the containment zones. SDM Kalpi Kaushal Kishore and BDO Atiranjan Singh were also present.

Body recovered

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

The recovery of the body of a 12-year-old child in a field on Sunday morning created a sensation in the area. On being informed about the matter by the villagers the police reached the spot and was engaged in further action. According to a report received here, 12-year-old Ashu, son of Bhim Sahni, a resident of Madhi Ahladpur village under Saiyadraja police station, was missing from his house since Saturday evening. His anxious family members launched a search for him but could not find him anywhere. On getting information about the recovery of a child's body in the field, his family rushed to the spot and saw blood on the nose of the victim and a mark on his throat. Meanwhile Saiyadraja police station incharge Laxman Parvat said the body of a child has been found which had been sent for the post-mortem examination and further action in the matter is being taken.

Salesman ends life after row with his wife

KANPUR (PNS): A medical store salesman hanged himself to death after a row with his wife in Sarsaiya Ghat under Kotwali police station late Sunday night. According to reports, Vinay alias Vineet Kumar Sahu (35) of Sarsaiya Ghat was employed as salesman in a medical store in Birhana Road and lived with his wife Soni and daughter Anmol (5) The elder brother of the deceased who lives in the same locality with his family said that for the past few days, Soni had been pressing Vinay to let out the new portion of her house and on Sunday night also the couple had an argument over this issue. After the row with his wife, Vinay went to sleep in a room of the new portion of his house. On Monday morning, when Soni went to the new portion and knocked on the door to start the submersible pump, she did not

receive any response. On peeping through the window, she found Vinay hanging from the ceiling with a saree.

The ACP and ADCP also visited the spot along with a forensic team to supervise investigation.

No suicide note was found. Station House Officer Ran Bahadur Singh said that prima facie it appeared to be a suicide case and further investigations would be made on receipt of autopsy report.

ONE KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP: A private firm employee was killed and his son and nephew were seriously injured when a speeding van knocked down their motorcycle near Anwarganj railway station on GT road under Raipurwa police station on Monday afternoon.

Police admitted both the injured to LLR Hospital and impounded the van and

detained its owner. The driver of the van managed to escape.

According to reports, Irshad Hussain (45) of Juhi Lal Colony in Kidwai Nagar was going to Chamanganj on a motorcycle on Monday afternoon to meet one of his relatives. He was accompanied by his son Aqleem (16) and nephew Ayan (12).

Near Anwarganj railway station on GT road, when Hussain turned his motorcycle towards Raipurwa, a speeding van coming from Jarib Chowki side knocked down his two-wheeler, injuring all the three.

Hussain succumbed to his injuries on the way to hospital.

Station House Officer Raj Kumar said the local residents caught the van and its owner Adarsh Kumar of Bilharu from the spot while the driver Jitendra managed to escape. Raids were on to nab Jitendra.

GIRL ENDS LIFE:

Depressed by the behaviour of her stepmother towards her, a teenage girl committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling fan a day after Mother's Day in Taudhakpur Nihalpur village under Bidhnu police station on Monday morning. She was identified as Archana (18), daughter of Munna Lal, a grocer of Nihalpur area. Munnal came to know about the incident when he returned home from the shop. Munnal's wife Rekha had died after prolonged illness about 10 years ago. As Archana was very young at that time, he had married Meena, a mother of three sons, to take care of her. For the past few days, Archana was in depression because of the ill behaviour of her stepmother. On Monday morning, when Munnal went to his shop Meena went to the market to buy vegetables, Archana hanged herself.

Centre defends jab policy in SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has justified in the Supreme Court the Covid-19 vaccination policy saying its response and strategy is completely driven by expert medical and scientific opinion which leaves little room for judicial interference and emphasised that citizens of all age groups will get free vaccination throughout India.

In view of the unprecedented and peculiar circumstances under which vaccination drive is devised as an executive policy, the “wisdom of the executive should be trusted,” it said. In a global pandemic, where the response and strategy of the nation is completely driven by expert medical and scientific opinion, “any overzealous, though well-meaning judicial intervention, may lead to unforeseen and unintended consequences”, the government said.

In 218-page affidavit filed late Sunday night in the top court’s suo motu case on Covid-19 management, the Centre said, this policy “conforms to mandate of Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution of India and is made after several rounds of consultation and discussion with experts, state government and vaccine manufacturers requiring no interference by this Court as while dealing with



a pandemic of this magnitude, the executive does have a room for free play in the joints, in larger public interest”.

The Government further said, “It is also submitted that citizens of 18 to 44 years are getting vaccination free of cost as all the State Governments have announced free vaccination for this population group of 18-44 years. Thus, all citizens of all age groups will get free vaccination throughout the country.” States have also been provided the information of the total number of doses of both vaccines available to them and the UTs from “Government of India channel” for the identified priority groups (health care workers, frontline workers and population above 45 years of age) free of cost from May 1 to 15 and this data would be released every fortnight, it said.

“It is most respectfully submitted that in the times of such grave and unprecedented crisis which the nation is fighting the disaster of an unprecedented magnitude, the executive functioning of the government needs discretion to formulate policy in larger interest. It is submitted that in view of the unprecedented and peculiar circumstances under which



vaccination drive is devised as an executive policy, the wisdom of the executive should be trusted,” the affidavit said.

The Government said in a plethora of judgements, the SC laid down the parameters for judicial review of executive policies, which can only be struck down or interfered with on the grounds of manifest arbitrariness, allowing sufficiency play in the joints to the executive, to function in accordance with its Constitutional mandate.

“In the context of a global pandemic, where the response and strategy of the nation is completely driven by expert medical and scientific opinion, there is even little room for judicial interference. Any overzealous, though well-meaning judicial intervention may lead to unforeseen and unintended consequences, in absence of any expert advice or administrative experience, leaving the doctors, scientists, experts and executive very little room to find innovative solutions on the go”, it said.

It said the policy, strategy and steps taken, based on expert scientific advice, have to be appreciated in the context of a medical crisis.

Not possible to give migrants free food grain this time: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday ruled out the possibility of free food grains distribution to migrants saying there is no panic situation and no complete national lockdown, unlike last year. However, the Government has started distributing additional free grains again under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for two months — May and June—to 80 crore ration cardholders.

“Migrant crisis is not as big as it was last year. ... It is not a complete national lockdown. It is a local lockdown, the industry is working. The complete lockdown is not there. That panic is also not there,” Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said in a virtual press meet. The Government said there is no impact on the prices of food grains in the open market due to free grains distribution under PMGKAY. Those migrants, who have gone back to their villages, are availing ration supply either through State or central ration cards, he said.

The Secretary was responding to a query why the government has not announced a free grains scheme for migrants amid a resurgence of the Covid cases.

Last year, the government had distributed 6.40 lakh tonne of foodgrains for free to migrants and stranded migrants.

Himanta takes oath as 15th CM of Assam

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Credited with BJP’s ‘political surge’ in the North-East, Himanta Biswa Sarma, a non-tribal, was sworn in as the 15th Chief Minister of Assam on Monday by State Governor Jagdish Mukhi, replacing former Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

Sarma had joined the BJP from the Congress in 2015 at the residence of senior BJP leader Amit Shah’s and was then appointed Convener of the Election Management Committee for the upcoming Assembly Elections in Assam in 2016 that catapulted Sonowal as the State Chief Minister.

Five years down the line



Sarma, 52, expanded his clout in the North-East as also in the BJP and upstaged his seven years senior Sonowal

An interesting comment of Sonowal reported locally in March, this year, at a book launch function in Assam reflect that Sonowal was, in a way, still confident that ‘democratic election’ would pave way for him for the second time.

‘Users not accepting privacy terms to face limited functionality’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

WhatsApp will not delete any account for not accepting its new privacy update, but users not agreeing to the controversial terms after “several weeks” will not be able to access their chat list, and eventually, will not be able to answer incoming phone or video calls over the app.

Last week, the Facebook-owned company had said users not accepting its privacy policy update by its May 15 deadline will not face deletion or lose functionality of their accounts on the said date.

WhatsApp, on its website, said it is continuing to remind those who haven’t had the chance to review and accept the terms, and after a period of several weeks, “the reminder (that) people receive will eventually become persistent”.

It, however, did not divulge the timelines set for these reminders. Explaining the course of action after ‘persistent’ reminders are sent to users, WhatsApp said: “At that time, you’ll encounter limited functionality on WhatsApp until you accept the updates”. “This will not happen to all users at the same time. You won’t be able to access your chat list, but you can still answer incoming phone and video calls.

If you have notifications enabled, you can tap on them to read or respond to a message



or call back a missed phone or video call,” it said.

The messaging platform said after a few weeks of limited functionality, users, who still won’t accept the terms, “won’t be able to receive incoming calls or notifications and WhatsApp will stop sending messages and calls to your phone”.

WhatsApp said it won’t delete the users’ accounts if they haven’t accepted the update but highlighted that its existing policy related to inactive users will apply.

WhatsApp accounts are generally deleted after 120 days of inactivity, wherein inactivity refers to users not connecting to the messaging platform.

While the company did not respond to specific queries around these reminders, how long they will run and other modalities, a WhatsApp spokesperson said: “We’ll continue to provide reminders to those users within WhatsApp in the weeks to come”.

Asked if one needs to be a non-Brahmin from Upper Assam to become the chief minister candidate from the BJP party, Sonowal said “This is a very very...this is a question that should not be raised. Our party BJP

is a very democratic party and we believe in people’s democracy.”

His fate was decided in Delhi before it was formally announced in BJP legislature party meet a day before at Gauhati.

Sarma, a Brahmin, and Sonowal, a kachari-tribal had began their political careers and honed their political skills as leaders of All Assam Student Union (AASU) and then went separate ways for years before joining hands together in the BJP.

Prime Minister who had hand-picked Sonowal in 2016, Congratulated Himanta and the other Ministers who took oath.

“Congratulations to Himanta Biswa Ji and the other Ministers who took oath today,” tweeted Modi.

“I am confident this team will add momentum to the development journey of Assam and fulfil aspirations of the people,” the Prime Minister added.

Modi also praised Sonowal for his “immense contribution in strengthening the party in the State”

“My valued colleague @sarbanandsonwal Ji was at the helm of a pro-people and pro-development administration over the last five years. His contribution towards Assam’s progress and strengthening the party in the state is immense,” prime Minister said to heal the hurt sentiments of the ex-CM and his loyalists.

Sarma took to Twitter to express his gratitude to the people of the state. “With fragrance of Assam in my heart & love of my wonderful people in my veins, I offer my deepest gratitude to you all. I would not have been what I am had it not been for your pious faith in me. On this Day, I vow to work with & for each one of you with greater passion Assam,” he tweeted.

In another tweet, he thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying, “This is the biggest day in my life, and I so fondly cherish your generous affection. I assure you we shall leave no stone unturned to carry forward your vision of taking Assam, & NE to greater heights.”

Sarma has an LLB From Government Law College and a PhD from Gauhati University. Sarma practised law at Gauhati High Court from 1996 to 2001.

He has married Riniki Bhuyian Sarma in 2001, with whom he has a son and a daughter. In 2017, he was elected as the Badminton Association of India president.

Mild Covid symptoms unlikely to cause major damage to heart: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People who had Covid-19 infections with mild or no symptoms should heave a sigh of relief as a team of scientists has, for the first time, found that virus in such patients is unlikely to cause lasting damage to the structure or function of the heart.

This should reassure the public, said the scientists given that it is a well known fact that severe hospitalised Covid-19 infections are associated with blood clots, inflammation of the heart and heart damage, mild infections may cause similar complications.

According to a study led by UCL (University College London) researchers and funded by the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and Barts Charity until now, there has been little information specifically looking at this group of people and the effects on the heart further down the line after infection.

Published in JACC

Cardiovascular Imaging, the study of 149 healthcare workers recruited from Barts Health and Royal Free London NHS Trusts is the largest and most detailed study to date into mild Covid-19 infection and its longer-term impact on the heart. Researchers identified participants with mild Covid-19 from the Covid sorium, a study in three London hospitals where healthcare workers had undergone weekly samples of blood, saliva and nasal swabs for 16 weeks.

Six months after mild infection, they looked at the heart structure and function by analysing heart MRI scans of 74 healthcare workers with prior mild Covid-19 and compared them to the scans of 75 healthy age, sex and ethnicity matched controls who had not previously been infected.

They found no difference in the size or amount of muscle of the left ventricle - the main chamber of the heart responsible for pumping blood around the body.

Navy warships bring O2 from Kuwait, Qatar and Singapore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the ongoing national effort to augment supply of oxygen, three Indian Navy warships carrying the gas from Kuwait, Qatar and Singapore reached India on Monday. The Army set up three hospitals in Faridabad, Chandigarh and Patiala for treating Covid-19 patients.

Giving details about the naval endeavour, officials said three ships including Kolkata, Trikan and Airavat reached India with Liquid Medical Oxygen.

As part of the ongoing Operation ‘Samudra Setu II’ to support the nation’s fight against Covid-19, INS Kolkata arrived New Mangalore, INS Trikand entered Mumbai and INS Airavat arrived in Visakhapatnam.

These ships are part of nine ships deployed for Covid relief Operation ‘Samudra Setu II’ for shipment of Liquid Medical Oxygen and associated medical equipment from friendly foreign countries in the Persian Gulf and South East Asia.

INS Airavat arrived in Visakhapatnam with eight cryogenic oxygen tanks and 3,898 oxygen cylinders along with other critical medical equipment from Singapore.

INS Trikand was deployed to augment shipment of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) cryogenic containers from Hamad Port, Qatar to Mumbai. The ship arrived at Mumbai with 40 Metric Tons(MT) of liquid



Oxygen. The consignment is part of the French mission “Oxygen Solidarity Bridge” to support India’s fight against Covid-19 pandemic, they said. INS Kolkata arrived at New Mangalore with 400 bottles of Oxygen, two 27 MT containers of Liquid Medical Oxygen and 47 concentrators that were embarked at Qatar and Kuwait.

While these ships entered ports to augment oxygen supply in three different States, two more warships are enroute to India from Kuwait and one ship is at Brunei to embark medical supplies.

As regards the Army’s role, they said the force has set up a 100-bed Covid care hospital at the Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government Medical College, Chhainsa, located 20 kms from Faridabad town.

The Army and the Civil Administration, Faridabad District worked in close coordination on a war footing to ensure that the hospital is functional from Tuesday to provide Level 1 medical care to mild/ symptomatic patients suffering from Covid-19.

In a related development,

Western Command chief Lieutenant General RP Singh on Monday announced the operationalisation of Western Command Covid Hospitals at International Students Hostel of Panjab University, Sector 25 Chandigarh and Rajindra Government Hospital, Patiala besides the facility at Faridabad. The hospital at Patiala will start functioning from Tuesday.

The Army has deployed its Doctors, Nursing Officers and Paramedics for holistic treatment to patients as per the Indian Council for Medical Research(ICMR) guidelines, provided service ambulances and trained personnel for administration and management of the hospital.

The civil administration is facilitating essential amenities, service management, uninterrupted oxygen supply, patient admission and discharge and ambulance services at these hospitals.

The hospitals will also cater for basic laboratory, X-Ray, Pharmacy and catering for patients. The admission to these Hospitals will be opened to all citizens.

Sonia seeks explanation for poll losses from general secretaries

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Monday came down heavily on the party cadre for the party’s debacle in the just-concluded Assembly elections.

Sources within the party said that an annoyed Sonia sought an explanation for the electoral losses from the general secretaries in charge of the States that went to polls, she also raked up the issue of pending party’s President post and organisational elections to be held by month of June.

During the party’s Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, Sonia talked more about the prevailing situation within the party and discussed measures to be taken to “pull up the socks” to strengthen the party base.

In a surprise move, Sonia asked Assam general secretary Jitender Singh, Kerala general secretary Tariq Anwar, West Bengal in-charge Jitin Prasada, Tamil Nadu & Puducherry in-charge Dinesh Gundurao to make a presentation and explain why the party lost in these States.

“I expect them to brief us very frankly on our performance in their respective States. We want them to tell us why we performed well below expectation. These results tell

us clearly that we need to put our house in order,” she said.

“We have to take note of our serious setbacks. To say that we are deeply disappointed is to make an understatement. I intend to set up a small group to look at every aspect that caused such reverses and report back very quickly. We need to candidly understand why in Kerala and Assam we failed to dislodge the incumbent governments, and why in West Bengal we drew a complete blank. These will yield uncomfortable lessons, but if we do not face reality, if we do not look the facts in the face, we will not draw the right lessons,” Sonia said in the virtual meeting of the CWC which is the party’s highest decision-making body.

Sources said that West Bengal in charge Jitin Prasada in his presentation said that alliance with ISF ruined the party prospects in the state and mentioned that the ISF alliance was finalized by the Left parties and not the Congress. In the midst of elections, senior party leader Anand Sharma had raised the issue but was snubbed West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury that the Left had given its share of seats to ISF.

Jitin also blamed the committee for delaying the seat sharing pact and also said by the time campaigning for the last phases began where the

Congress was strong, the election became bipolar between TMC and BJP, and the party could not get any seat in Malda and Murshidabad, which are its strongholds.

Prasada also said that there was no clarity whether to attack Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee or not and requested the CWC to throw light on the issue of alliance and how to move forward.

For Assam, according to sources, the general secretary in-charge Jitendra Singh highlighted that it was wrong to make CAA as a poll issue, though the party was hopeful to wrest power from BJP and early campaign at the grass-roots level by the local leadership would have been result-oriented. The incharge for the Tamil Nadu conveyed that the wave was for DMK and in Puducherry the people was looking for a change due to the allegations of misgovernance by the Naranswamy government, according to the sources. While the Kerala incharge said that though the party worker hard and a regular campaigns by Rahul Gandhi was positive, but the cause of real loss is being assessed and a report in this regard will be shared soon.

Sonia further said the recent Assembly election was a clear indication that the Congress needed to put its

Priyanka slams Govt over Central Vista project



IAANS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday attacked the Narendra Modi-led Union Government over the Central Vista project and questioned the expenditure being made on a new residence for the Prime Minister when the amount could be utilised for providing Covid related medical assistance.

“PM’s new residence & Central vista cost = Rs 20,000 cr = 62 crore vaccine doses = 22 crore Remdesvir vials = 3 crore 10 litre oxygen cylinders = 13 AIIMS with a total of 12,000 beds. WHY?” Priyanka tweeted.

The Government has brought the construction work for the ambitious Central Vista project under the ambit of ‘essential services’ to ensure smooth movement of labourers during the ongoing lockdown in Delhi.

Both Priyanka and her brother Rahul Gandhi have been critical of the Central Vista project, saying that it shouldn’t be continued at a time when the country is reeling under the Covid pandemic with many people complaining of not getting hospital beds, Covid vaccines, oxygen cylinders and life-saving drugs.



house in order,

She said calling the results disappointing would be an understatement and announced the setting up of a small group to analyse the results.

On the occasion Sonia also slammed the Narendra Modi government for ignoring expert advice on Covid-19 and allowing it become a “catastrophe”. She also targeted the government for being “woefully short” on vaccination.

The meeting also saw presentations by chief ministers of Congress-ruled states on the Covid situation and challenges. “The country is paying a horrendous price for the Modi government’s neglect of the pandemic, indeed its wilful patronage of super-spreader events that were allowed for partisan gains. A far deadlier second wave has now overwhelmed us. Some scientists have now cautioned about a third wave overtaking us soon. Some States have already announced a complete lockdown. The public health system across the country has all but collapsed,” she said.

A party colleague, and leader of Congress in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, wrote a letter to the Government to convene a special session of the Parliament to discuss and debate on the pandemic which is taking a heavy toll on the health of the nation every hour, every minute.

No barrier should come in way of equitable access to vaccination: Gates’ NGO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after philanthropist Bill Gates said that he was against sharing intellectual property (IP) rights on Covid-19 vaccines with developing countries, his NGO, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has issued a statement that no barriers should stand in the way of equitable access to vaccines, including intellectual property.

Bill Gates had said in an interview said that he would not be willing to share the Covid 19 vaccine patents or IP rights with developing countries like India. The statement had drawn flak from various quarters

However, now the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has issued a statement that “no barriers should stand in the

way of equitable access to vaccines.”

Gates had cited vaccine safety and security issues and shortage of vaccine factories justifying his statement to move a vaccine to developing countries like India. His statement was slammed worldwide with reports highlighting the profit-making aspect of Gates foundation and also the lack of an open distribution model for vaccine production in the past.

Gates Foundation CEO, Mark Suzman, in a press statement this week noted, “No barriers should stand in the way of equitable access to vaccines, including intellectual property, which is why we are supportive of a narrow waiver during the pandemic. Those negotiations will occur via the WTO process, led by country negotiators.”

MHA extends security cover to BJP candidates who fought Bengal polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing the ongoing political violence in West Bengal, Union Home Ministry has decided to extend the central security cover to all those who contested on BJP ticket in the Assembly polls.

The MHA provided central security cover to all BJP candidates from March onward. Many of them are getting X-category security, mainly from CRPF, CISF and BSF.

According to officials, the recent high-level security appraisal meeting has analysed the threat perception to BJP MLAs and those lost elections. Many BJP candidates have requested MHA to continue their security for a while, citing the ongoing political violence facing from TMC cadres.

Didi retains loyalists in 3rd Cabinet

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday unveiled her third Cabinet retaining almost her entire team of Ministers — from the previous Ministry — while at the same time drafting in a bevy of newfaces like cricketer Manoj Tiwari, tribal actress Birbaha Hansda and Akhil Giri a veteran MLA from East Midnapore that houses Nandigram.

Giri is known for his daggers-drawn chemistry with Nandigram MLA Suwendu Adhikari a former pointsman of the Chief Minister who defected to the BJP a few months ago and defeated Banerjee by a wafer-thin margin.

Forty three Ministers were sworn in at a toned down ceremony in the Throne Room of Raj Bhavan. The ruling Trinamool Congress roared back to power with two-third majority leaving the BJP back by a huge margin.

While the Chief Minister retained the crucial Home, Health, North Bengal and Cultural Affairs departments, she did some reshuffling in the portfolios of her other senior colleagues bringing senior



Minister and TMC general secretary back as the Industry Minister.

The TMC Government had to digest massive criticism for failing to bring in investment in its decade-long rule of Bengal. Another Minister Bratya Basu a dramatist and a prominent intellectual has been redrafted as the Education Minister. Basu had been removed from the ministry several years ago. Both Basu who has been recuperating from corona infection and Finance Minister Amit Mitra -- suffering from COPD) were sworn in virtually from their residences.

Veterans Subrata Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, Aroop Biswas, Sujit Bose, Chandrima Bhattacharya and Shashi Panja are back as minis-

ters too with Mukherjee getting the Panchayat portfolio and Hakim a former Kolkata Mayor given the Housing and Urban Development department.

Incidentally Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar who has been quite critical of the new TMC Government for allegedly ignoring the ongoing post-poll violence in the State on Sunday sanctioned the prosecution of Mukherjee, Hakim, Madan Mitra a TMC MLA and former Minister and Sovan Chatterjee a former member of Mamata Banerjee Cabinet — who left the TMC to join the BJP before leaving the saffron party too. The CBI had sought the Governor's permission to prosecute them in the Narada payoff case.

Sitting Rajya Sabha MP Manas Bhuniya has also been drafted as a Cabinet Minister alongside Soumen Mahapatra, Jyotipriya Mullick and Javed Khan. Former IPS officer Humayun Kabir, Ghulam Rabbani, Siddiquillah Chowdhury and Siuli Saha have also been made ministers.

Soon after the swearing-in ceremony the Chief Minister said that her Government's first priority would be to fight the corona crisis even as she hit out

at the Centre for ignoring the situation, questioning the export of vaccines at a time when India did not have its own quota Banerjee said that the Centre should make alternative arrangements for doses immediately even if it meant allowing other concerns to manufacture the medicines.

Attacking the Centre for sending central team to visit the

alleged violence-hit areas of the State Banerjee said "at a time when the country is fighting a pandemic here are some people busy doing politics sending central teams to states."

She wondered "why this central team is going to BJP families only and why they are not going to other victims if any ... this team has been sent to create violence in the State."

Suwendu Adhikari named Bengal Opposition Leader

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Amid speculation about who would take charge as the Leader of Opposition or for that matter whether the post should be given to a man with RSS background the BJP on Monday nominated Suwendu Adhikari on the post.

"Suwendu Adhikari was chosen unanimously as the Leader of the Opposition and his name was proposed by our senior leader Mukul Roy," State party president Dilip Ghosh said. The selection of Adhikari was done in the pres-

ence of Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Appointment of Adhikari a TMC turncoat who left that party a few months before the election to join the BJP and defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from Nandigram seat took place after much inner rumbling sources said.

After being nominated to the post Adhikari said, "I will act constitutionally," adding his first priority would be to work for the pandemic and save the lives of the victims of post-electoral violence.

CRPF identifies remaining 8,500 for first Covid jab

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF has identified about 8,500 personnel who have not taken the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine and sought to expeditiously vaccinate them. The remaining over 3,15,000 personnel have been given the jabs.

The details have emerged following a review of the vaccinations in the ranks of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) earlier this month during which it was found that a total of 8,441 personnel across the formations have still not been administered the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. Another 16 persons of the CRPF Directorate here have not been given the first dose and 57 personnel have not taken the second dose of the vaccine.

Director General of CRPF, Kuldiep Singh has decided to personally monitor the progress of the pending cases of vaccinations.

Further, the Force has decided to undertake a headcount of all pending cases and trace all

the personnel who are away on leave/temporary duty attachments.

The paramilitary headquarters has directed all the formations and medical directorates to personally contact the personnel over telephone and plans for vaccinating should be made accordingly, officials said. It has also sought a break up of pending cases in the area of operations of various formations and offices.

For those personnel who have not received the vaccine shots on the ground of comorbidity, they should be advised to undergo laboratory test CRP (C-reactive protein quantitative). If the reports of CRP are on the higher side in normal range or it is above normal range, vaccination of that comorbid person should be avoided and the patient should be treated vigorously for the illness so that the CRP test comes in normal range.

When the CRPF test reading comes in normal range after treatment, vaccination can be carried out in consultation with the physician, they said.



Farmers harvest rice crop at a paddy field in Nadia on Monday

PTI

Covid-19 positivity rate drops marginally in J&K

Jammu: Even though the positivity rate across Jammu & Kashmir on Monday dropped down marginally below 10 percent for the first time in the recent days but high mortality rate, especially in Jammu district, remained one of the biggest worries for health administrators pooling in all possible resources to treat patients.

The positivity rate on Monday stood at 9.8 percent. On Sunday the positivity rate recorded was 10.68 percent.

On Monday, 56 more patients succumbed to the deadly virus, 39 from Jammu

region and 17 from Kashmir while 3614 patients tested positive for coronavirus taking the tally of active positive cases to 49,951.

According to the media bulletin, out of 3614 new positive cases of novel Coronavirus (Covid-19), 1496 were reported from Jammu division and 2118 from Kashmir division.

Moreover, 2855 more Covid-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals including 1070 from Jammu Division and 1785 from Kashmir Division.

According to the media bulletin, out of 220546 positive

"The pandemic has come as an unprecedented and unforeseen challenge for all of us and especially the health fraternity. The prime need is to build trust between the public and the health system," the GMC Principal said

health system amidst the rising challenge of Covid-19.

"The pandemic has come as an unprecedented and unforeseen challenge for all of us and especially the health fraternity. The prime need is to build trust between the public and the health system", the GMC Principal said. "With the number of Covid-19 patients increasing, the administration is also ramping up facilities, equipment, infrastructure besides increasing the number of frontline workers.

The GMC Principal expressed empathy for the patients and their families fac-

ing hardship and said that the Jammu Medical College Hospital has increased the number of critical care beds and is treating more than 700 critical Covid patients, while patients with mild and moderate symptoms are being looked after at Covid health Centres and Covid Care Centres. She also expressed concern over the high positivity rate observed while testing, saying that the high positivity rate also underlines the greater need for adopting Covid appropriate behaviour for saving oneself as well as saving the lives of our loved ones. **PNS**

Daily death drops to 549 in Maha on Monday

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

For the first time in more than a month, the "active cases" in Pune — which is the worst Covid-19 affected city in Maharashtra — dropped below one lakh mark on Monday, even as the daily deaths in Maharashtra dropped further to 549 and infections dipped to 37,236.

In a relief to the state health authorities, the "active cases" in Pune — which is the worst Covid-19 affected city in Maharashtra — dropped from 1,00,316 to 97,593.

The development came on a day when Pune recorded 10 new deaths and 4,685 new infections. While the total deaths in Pune went up from 10,049 to 10,059, the total caseload climbed from 9,26,124 to 9,30,809.

Currently, Pune has the highest caseload of 9,30,809,

while Mumbai's total number of infections is 6,77,412, followed among other districts by Thane (5,38,963), Nagpur (4,66,959), Nashik (3,53,279) and Ahmednagar (2,06,629).

It may be recalled that on April 9, the "active cases" in Pune had breached a grim landmark of one lakh, as an alarming 10,083 cases were reported on that day to take caseload in that city to 1,00,051.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 graph showed a downward trend in Maharashtra for the second consecutive day on Monday, as the daily deaths came down further from 549 while the infections dipped to 37,236.

A day after the State recorded 572 fatalities and 48,401 new cases, the deaths came down to 549, while the infections dropped by 11,165 to register a daily caseload of 37,236.

With 549 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 75,849 to 76,398. Similarly, with 37,236 new infections, the total number of cases rose from 51,01,737 to 51,38,973.

As 61,607 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the State after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up from 44,07,818 to 44,69,425. The recovery rate in the state went up from 86.04 per cent to 46.95 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 6,15,783 to 5,90,818 cases. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.49 per cent.

With 74 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 13,781 to 13,855, while the infected cases went up by 1,732 to trigger a jump in the

infections from 6,75,630 to 6,77,412.

While Pune accounted for a maximum 97,593 "active cases" in the State, Nagpur stood second 56,458, followed by Mumbai with 47,054,) Nashik (34,755), Thane (34,185), Ahmednagar (23,661), Solapur (23,028), Satara (22,463), Chandrapur (22,265), Beed (15,586), Jalgaon (13,711), Aurangabad (12,594), Latur (12,085), Parbhani (11,010), Osmanabad (7,568), Jalna (7,015), Bhandara (6,122), Buldhana (5,687), Nanded (5,487) and Nandurbar (3,395).

Of the 2,96, 31,127 samples sent to laboratories, 51,38,973 have tested positive (17.34 per cent) for Covid-19 until Monday.

Currently, 36,70,320 people are in home quarantine while 26,664 people are in institutional quarantine.

Goa CM upset after Covid victim denied cremation

Panaji: Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Monday expressed displeasure after a village panchayat in North Goa refused to cremate the remains of a local resident who had died of Covid-19 infection.

Speaking virtually to elected representatives of village panchayats and municipalities from across Goa, Sawant said the village panchayats and municipalities should cooperate with people during the pandemic crisis.

"I felt bad on Sunday. The Bastora sarpanch and villagers refused to cremate the body of a local resident. Where was he from? Was he not from the same panchayat (jurisdiction)?" Sawant added.

On Sunday, relatives of the deceased victim Ashok Naik had alleged that the Bastora village panchayat had refused permission to cremate him as he had died from Covid-19. The body was later taken to another cremation ground where the final rites were performed.

According to Ranjit Usgaonkar, the panchayat was not involved in the decision to refuse cremation of the deceased Covid-19 patient.

"We do not know who has refused to cremate Ashok Naik. The panchayat does not take such a decision. The decision is taken by the local temple committee. There could be a misunderstanding among the victim's relatives," Usgaonkar said. **FIANS**

Puducherry CM hospitalised after testing +ve

Chennai: Puducherry Chief minister N Rangasamy tested Covid positive and has been admitted to a private hospital in Chennai according to Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Dr Tamilsai Soundararajan's office.

Rangasamy, who was sworn in as Chief minister of Puducherry on May 7 tested positive on Sunday evening after a test at the Indra Gandhi Government Medical College hospital, Puducherry. He left for Chennai to get treatment and was admitted to a private hospital.

All the public programmes of the Chief minister stand cancelled. Rangasamy is the leader of the All India NR Congress(AINRC) and led the NDA to victory in the recent elections. The AINRC won 10 seats while its coalition partner BJP got 6 seats. Independents garnered 6 seats, DMK 6 seats and the Indian National Congress won 2 seats. **FIANS**

Lower testing size leads to lower Covid tally in Andhra

FIANS ■ AMARAVATI

Reduced testing during the preceding 24 hours saw Andhra Pradesh report lesser numbers on Monday. Compared to around 1 lakh samples that are usually tested every day, only 60,124 samples were tested, and 14,986 new cases were detected during the 24 hours, ending 9 am Monday.

For the past few days, the State has been consistently reporting daily covid tallies above 20,000.

There was a relative dip in the number of deaths reported on Monday, as 84 people succumbed to the pandemic. In comparison, the death toll on Sunday was 93.

The fresh fatalities pushed the State's cumulative death toll to 8,791, while the cumulative tally of covid cases in the state climbed to 13,02,589.

On Monday, one district reported covid numbers in excess of 2,000, while six districts reported above 1,000 cases each, and the remaining six districts had three-digit tallies.

East Godavari reported the highest tally of 2,352 cases. Other districts with high numbers include Visakhapatnam (1,618), Guntur (1,575), Chittoor (1,543), Nellore (1,432), Srikakulam (1,298), and YSR Kadapa (1,224).

East Godavari and Guntur districts accounted for maximum deaths of 12 deaths, while YSR Kadapa reported the lowest death toll of 2.

The State has so far conducted 1,74,28,059 tests.

Monday also saw 16,167 people recovering from the virus. The cumulative number of recoveries has gone up to 11,04,431.

The number of active cases in the State now stands at 1,89,367.

Stalin orders opening of 12 Sidha Covid care centres

CHENNAI: Chief Minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin has cracked the whip to flatten the corona curve in Tamil Nadu. To begin with he has ordered the opening of 12 Sidha Covid Care Centres across the State following the findings of a Chennai based scientist that a Sidhaa herbal preparation has the potential to counter Covid-19 virus.

M Subramanian, Medical and Family Welfare Minister dedicated to the people a 240-bed exclusive Sidha Centre in Chennai metropolis on Sunday.

The Chief Minister has asked his council of ministers as well as bureaucrats not to leave any stones unturned in their search for a solution to check the spread of the pandemic in its second coming.

Stalin took notice of the positive signals from Ministry of Ayush which gave green signal to the use of Kabasura Kudineer, a Sidha poly herbal preparation in the treatment of Covid-19.

"The Chief Minister is of the view that opening of Sidha hospitals would bring down the pressure on tertiary hospitals. Not all patients require oxygen support," said Subramanian.

The move to go for Sidha Care Centres comes at a time when a Chennai based scientist along with his colleagues in South Korea and Ethiopia suc-

cessfully established the efficacy of Kabasura Kudineer in neutralising viral infections that cause SARS or Covid.

Prof Savariar Vincent, former dean of Research, Loyola College, Chennai, S Arokyaraj (Sejong University, Seoul), M Saravanan (Mekelle University, Ethiopia) and Manoj Dhanraj through a painstaking research found out that Kabasura Kudineer is effective against fever, cough, sore-throat and shortness of breath (similar to SARS-CoV2-like symptoms).

"We established by a process known as molecular docking that the main compounds from Kabasura Kudineer plants inhibit Covid -19 giving the better energy score compared to synthetic drugs," said Prof Vincent who led and integrated the research operations that took place in laboratories spread across India, South Korea and Ethiopia.

He said that 145 phyto-compounds from Kabasura Kudineer were subjected to research. "This study hypothesizes that a group of compounds from KK may exert its antiviral properties against novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 by either blocking the host cell receptor or inhibiting the key viral protease required for its replication in the host cell," Prof Vincent told The Pioneer. **PNS**

Slight improvement in Kerala post 3-day lockdown

KOCHI: Three days of total lockdown has slightly improved the pandemic situation in Kerala. On Monday, the State diagnosed 27,487 persons with Covid-19 while 65 deaths were reported during the period ending 6 pm. "But the number of people tested on Monday was limited to 99,748 and this could be the reason for the small reduction in Test Positivity Rate to 27.56 per cent," said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in his media briefing.

Vijayan said there were 4,19, 726 Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment in the State as on Monday. He continued blaming the Centre for its reluctance to provide oxygen, vaccine and financial help to Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram had highest number of Covid patients on Monday (3,494).

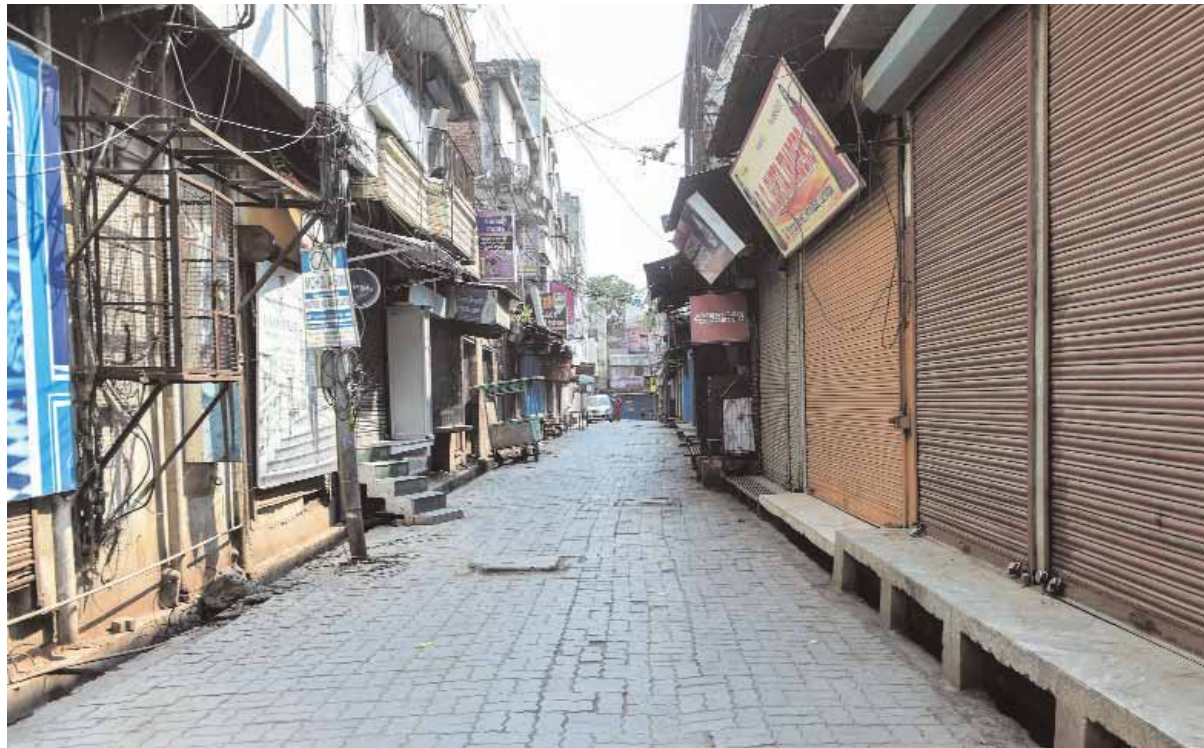
Severe shortage of medical professionals including doctors is causing severe stress to the medical fraternity in Kerala, according to Kerala Government Medical Officers Association, the umbrella organization of all the Government doctors in the State.

The Association has sent an urgent communication to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan listing the grievances faced by Government hospitals, first line covid treatment centers and primary health centers in Kerala. The list of shortcomings highlighted by the KGMOA is shocking and explains the dangerous conditions under which the doctors, nurses and para medical staff in the State work.

"The Government should appoint doctors, nurses and other medical professionals as per the nationally accepted doctors to patients ratio. If this is not done immediately, the public health system in the State would break down," said the memorandum signed by the president and secretary of the Association.

The doctors demand the setting up of domiciliary care centers and step down Covid First Line Treatment Centers in panchayat and block levels. "These centers could be manned by health professionals other than doctors and could be used to accommodate the category-one patients who do not require the physical presence of doctors," said the doctors. Such centers could make use of tele consultation. The KGMOA also called for the setting up of 24X7 call centers making use of the retired Government doctors.

They pointed out that the number of health workers getting infected with Covid-19 is high in the State. **PNS**



Aminabad market wears a deserted look amid Covid-19 induced lockdown in Lucknow on Monday

PTI

Hope floats

Can Mamata's win spur the Opposition into unity? More importantly, will the Congress be the nucleus?

The resounding victory of Mamata Banerjee against the BJP's concerted effort to wrest power in West Bengal has allowed the languid Opposition to dream afresh of an anti-BJP alliance well in time for 2024. Such buoyed spirits were seen in the past, too, but the current one stands out. One, the West Bengal victory following the never-seen-before hype created by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah left a strong message in its wake. Two, the satraps hailed Mamata, but of greater import was a congratulatory tweet by JD(U) parliamentary board chairman Upendra Kushwaha about Mamata breaching the BJP's "chakravyuh" (a circular, military formation). The tweet by the BJP's ruling ally in Bihar caused its own ripples and raised eyebrows. Three, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut took the narrative forward not only by asserting that the shrivelling Congress continued to be the "soul" of any Opposition alliance, but also by presenting Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi as a model of a political alliance against the BJP at the national level. The positive reception to Mamata's victory in the Opposition-ruled States will not automatically lead to a common national front; it merely points to such a possibility. There are many pre-conditions to be met first: The next round of Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, for example. Can the SP and the BSP reach an electoral understanding? Will the Left, AAP and even the Trinamool Congress allow a straight fight



between the Congress and the Akali Dal and/or the BJP in Punjab? Both States will test the Opposition's resolve, while the UP result will be the clincher.

The regional leaders are coming to terms with their shared problems of one-upmanship, a Congress snapping at their heels and a BJP trying to poach their brood. Will the prospect of a united fight against the BJP prompt them to adopt the jointly-at-the-Centre-and-severally-in-States formula of decentralised unity? One way to find out is for them to overcome the COVID-19 challenge by opening two-way communication channels among themselves. The Congress cannot automatically stake claim to be the "soul" just because its leadership may favour a default principle that the index of Opposition unity will work in its favour and it can seek the top post by getting most seats in the Opposition camp. It has shown maturity to be the junior-most partner in Maharashtra. It may believe that the satrap's inability to leave their States for a national role for fear of political backstabbing will leave the Congress as a default alternative. The MVA model has worked because the Shiv Sena, NCP and the Congress were compelled to bury their differences. Noticeably, the Sena did not interfere with the Anil Deshmukh case and left it to the NCP to sort it out. Also, all the partners fared reasonably well in the State elections without having to be a drag on the alliance. The question therefore is: Should the Opposition search for a leader first or an alliance? To date, six Prime Ministers have come from the Congress and an equal number from the formerly Congress but non-BJP fold. Who can break the tie?

PICTALK



A man blows a conch shell as part of an exercise to strengthen his lungs, near Taj Mahal

PTI

In the slow lane

Experts say that vaccinating all against COVID is the only way out but the drive is spluttering

The world applauded us for supplying indigenous COVID vaccines under the "Vaccine Maitri" initiative. Well, that was before the second wave hit home. When it comes to dealing with the pandemic in our own backyard, our vaccination efforts run into a wall of challenges — from manufacturing to pricing to supply chain bottlenecks. Several States had expressed inability to start the vaccination drive for 18-44 years, citing shortage of vaccines. The situation hasn't improved yet; if anything, inequitable vaccine prices have only exacerbated it. No doubt, there exists a wide demand-and-supply gap and India needs to ramp up its vaccine production capacity manifold. While the nation faces a vaccine deficit, how logical is it for the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) to plan to pump 240 million pounds (₹2,400 crore) for making vaccines in the United Kingdom? This huge amount should have ideally been spent on increasing the production capacity in India. In the looming shadow of a more lethal third wave, achieving herd immunity seems to be the only way out. However, going by the current pace — India fares poorly on the index of percentage vaccination — achieving herd immunity is easier said than done.

Since most of the predictions by our scientists with respect to the nature and peak of the second wave have fallen flat, there is no point relying on their predictions on the timing and intensity of the third wave. Adding to these woes are disturbing reports that a "black fungus" is maiming those who have recovered from COVID. The rare infection, called "Mucormycosis", has an overall mortality rate of 50 per cent. Doctors believe it may be triggered by the use of steroids that are given as life-saving drugs to critically ill COVID patients. If that is true, fighting SARS-CoV-2 virus and its variants is not the only challenge that we face. We must also get ready to face the fungal infection that severely damages our skin, lungs and brain. The crisis is certainly deepening as the Government's best efforts to contain the pandemic notwithstanding, the desired results are nowhere in sight. The Centre has claimed in the Supreme Court that its vaccine policy is "just, equitable and non-discriminatory" and there is no need for the courts to interfere. However, this explanation doesn't agree with the situation on the ground. Far from reaching even the halfway point in the fight against COVID, the Government must employ sincere, coordinated and gigantic efforts to deal with the crisis.



Apocalypse and the leadership

The handling of the pandemic, both by the Centre and the States, since the first wave leaves much to be desired



DEEPAK SINHA

Despite the darkness and the chaos that currently engulf us, one can say with certainty that this, too, shall pass. Undoubtedly, the cost has been tragically unconscionable, and nothing could have prepared us for the trauma and heartbreak that confronts us on a daily basis.

The fact is that we had expected to be overwhelmed by the pandemic's impact during the first wave, given the state of our health infrastructure and the Government's apathy. Especially, since the latter's complete focus was on Donald Trump's visit, the opposition to the Citizen's Amendment Act and the Delhi riots. For reasons that we still do not fully understand, that did not happen and we got away lightly, believing for some reason that our generally poor standard of hygiene and prevalence of disease had made us immune to the virus. Clearly a combination of inverse snobbery, arrogance and complacency gripped us, allowing us to forsake common sense and ignore basic science in an effort to quickly regain our pre-pandemic lives.

Suffice it to say, the handling of the first wave by those mandated to do so was apathetic in the initial stages and panic-stricken subsequently, especially after they saw it decimate Europe, the US and South America. We locked ourselves in, at a moment's notice, without any consideration for our less fortunate brethren, the daily wage earners, whose livelihoods disappeared overnight. The inability of the State to anticipate the consequences or mitigate their suffering resulted in the largest migration of population seen since Partition. The migrants attempted to get back to the safety of their villages, treks on foot involving thousands of kilometres for some.

To compound their misery, the Centre as well as most State Governments responded, as the Governments here invariably do, with inherent savagery, totally bereft of empathy or compassion. As a result, thousands died by the wayside. The Government



was seemingly unaware that even in the tragedy that was Partition, the fledgling Government of the time utilised the military to establish the Military Evacuation Organisation to coordinate the movement of all refugees and helped them reach their destinations in relative safety.

In complete contrast, despite the grave nature of the threat confronting the Government, the military remained a mere bystander, utilised for such "critical" tasks as serenading hospital staff and other frontline workers by showering hospitals and police memorials with flowers from helicopters! Even now, there are allegations that the military has been used to establish field hospitals in the constituencies of a few VIP politicians.

Clearly, in hindsight, it was not our systems and processes in place to deal with just such a contingency that were found wanting, as Kerala showed us, but the lackadaisical approach of most Ministers and bureaucrats whose responsibility it was to ensure their implementation. They, in their wisdom, or rather the lack of it, treated the NDMA's detailed guidelines and SOPs with contempt, leaving it to their min-



THE HANDLING OF THE FIRST WAVE BY THOSE MANDATED TO DO SO WAS APATHETIC IN THE INITIAL STAGES AND PANIC-STRICKEN SUBSEQUENTLY, ESPECIALLY AFTER THEY SAW IT DECIMATE EUROPE, THE US AND SOUTH AMERICA

ions to handle the problems.

Inherent arrogance and a belief that we had put the pandemic behind us ensured that the Narendra Modi Government took its eyes off the ball, even going so far as to ignore advice, received in early March from its own advisory group, on the likelihood of a second wave impacting us with even more ferocity. As a result, it didn't bother to make up for the infrastructural and procedural deficiencies observed earlier but, worse, refused to hold accountable for acts of omission and commission those responsible for the lapses and delays that led to unnecessary and avoidable deaths of thousands. In short, it was a Government more focused on garnering power and prestige than ensuring the well-being of its citizens. An uncaring civil society, a divided and defunct Opposition spearheaded by a party in the death throes and a pro-Government media preferred to remain silent on these issues. By doing so, we enabled them to cover up their misdeeds and perpetuate false narratives and bold-faced lies.

While Modi may have excellent reasons for not venturing outside his bio-bubble at the Race Course Road, prefer-

ring to lead from within, he should note that leaders need to be seen, otherwise they are redundant. Interestingly, such an absence in a war zone on the part of a military leader would result in his immediate removal from command, probably on grounds of incompetence, if not sheer cowardice.

Whatever the spin this Government may attempt to push, Modi has been completely shorn off all the gloss and charisma he earlier projected. His unwillingness to take responsibility for the disaster implies that he lacks the moral fibre. The question that arises is if he will do the right thing and fall upon his sword. One way or the other, we will know the answer soon. But let us be totally clear that his reputation is done and dusted, forever connected to his handling of the pandemic and what it has wrought. As the Bard, insightful as ever, wrote: "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

(The writer is a military veteran, who is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PM HAS FAILED TO HANDLE COVID CRISIS

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi faces growing criticism across the political spectrum for holding large election rallies as the country's health system reels under the deadly wave of COVID-19, forcing the citizens to beg for oxygen and hospital beds. Modi, at a campaign rally in West Bengal, said he has never seen such huge crowds at any event. Leaders of key States lashed out at Modi as the Congress and the Left called off campaigning in West Bengal due to the virus surge. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, whose State includes India's financial centre, tried calling Modi to address the shortages of oxygen and the drug Remdesivir but was told the PM was too busy addressing rallies. India now has the world's fastest-growing COVID-19 caseload, leaving it behind only the US in terms of total numbers.

The growing gap between Modi's optimism in fighting the virus and the reality on the ground is particularly evident in Delhi, among the worst hit in India.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

GOVT MUST TAP ONLINE EDUCATION POTENTIAL

Sir — Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, degree colleges and universities have resorted to complete online methods of conducting semester examinations. They also believe that online examinations are the way forward because the pandemic has made it difficult to conduct offline examinations. In addition, the use of advanced technology and digital software has made it easier to conduct examinations virtually, do complete assessment and declare results faster. Till now, degree colleges conducted the last two semester examinations online after the COVID-19 pandemic hit India in March, 2020. Currently, degree colleges, the University of Mumbai (MU) and major universities in Maharashtra are conducting the final-year last semester examinations online.

With the second wave of COVID-19 lashing the country, the Government has closed the schools and colleges to contain the spread of the virus. Classes are suspended and examinations are either cancelled or

Govt must help prison inmates



Very few in the Government — the Centre and the States — would have given a second thought to the plight of the inmates in India's overcrowded prisons, especially in relation to the pandemic. In the times of distress, it is only the Supreme Court that the hapless inmates can turn to for some type of succor. The top court of the land had, in 2020, freed prisoners, nearly 60,000 of them, on interim bail to decongest the prisons. Subsequently, 90 per cent of them returned. The SC has again ordered that those released on parole during the first phase of the pandemic be freed on a repeat parole for 90 days.

postponed indefinitely. The new academic year which began late, but with lots of hopes for the students, was disrupted once again. The online education has once again acquired a new urgency during this period.

C K Subramaniam | Mumbai

THE ASSAM CM MUST ACT URGENTLY

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Fair deal?' (May 10). The elevation of Himanta Biswa Sarma as the Chief Minister of Assam has been an inevitable choice for the BJP's top brass. Ever since he crossed over to the BJP from the Congress in 2014, he has been instrumental in increasing the BJP's footprint not just in Assam but throughout the Northeast. As the convenor of the North East Democratic Alliance, Sarma has been BJP's main troubleshooter and strategist in the region. Even when the party in Assam was hit by anti-CAA

According to the apex court, it is important to save the lives of the prisoners and the personnel guarding and interacting with them. Obviously, because States cannot have one rule for the public and another for the prisoners, it is not as if every person would jump at the idea of going home albeit for a short period.

Fear, anxiety and apprehension rule many prisoners. Those hesitant to spend a brief period with their loved ones need to be tested in the prison premises and taken care of. Also, the law enforcers would do well to avoid unnecessary arrests during the pandemic. In the case of Anesh Kumar versus the State of Bihar, the SC had ruled that arrests should be an exception in cases where the offences are punishable with less than seven years' imprisonment. Quite understandable, because 'humane attitude' should be the cornerstone of criminal jurisprudence. Several verdicts of higher courts have advised the subordinate courts to bear in mind that Article 21 of the Constitution speaks about protection of life, and public liberty, is a fundamental right of a citizen.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

protests and COVID crisis last year, it was Sarma who was at the forefront of navigating the troubled waters for BJP.

With a huge political clout, Sarma has played a big role in changing the political calculus of Assam by engineering an unspoken electoral alliance between Assamese and Bengali Hindu voters of the State. All of this has seen Sarma achieve a bigger stature than Sonowal in Assam. And with most new MLAs in BJP supporting Sarma, it would have been risky for the party central leadership to overlook him for the CM's post.

However, Sarma takes over at a challenging time for Assam. With the rising number of cases, Sarma clearly has his task cut out and must hit the ground running.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

The Government's repeated chest-thumping at receiving foreign aid is pathetic. Had GOI done its job, it wouldn't have come to this.



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

Russia consistently defends international law. At the same time, we will steadfastly defend our national interests and ensure the security of our people.



Russian President — Vladimir Putin

My mother was very gentle. I can be many things in my work and in my life, but I am very warm and gentle with my children.



Actor — Angelina Jolie

I think we've already seen plans for the T20 World Cup to move out of India...and they're going to be ultra-cautious about that sort of a thing.

New Zealand cricketer — James Neesham

We are in a health emergency. We have repeatedly urged the Government to call an all-party meeting to demonstrate resolve.




Congress interim president — Sonia Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA’S PATH TO CARBON NEUTRALITY

A decarbonised economy will also be knowledge-based and knowledge-driven



SANJAY GUPTA

As the Glasgow Conference of the Parties (GoP) meeting draws near, there is considerable discussion and speculation on India's future commitments and plans; not just on further reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions but to offer a date by when the country would achieve carbon neutrality or net-zero emissions. While India is the only G-20 country on track to meet its Paris Climate Agreement goals, it is also being projected as a big emitter. With recent date announcements made by China, the EU and the USA to achieve carbon neutrality, both the domestic and international climate community are now looking to India to declare its deadline.

There are two issues to consider. One, is it in India's medium and long-term interests to become a carbon neutral economy, gradually moving towards decarbonisation of all the sectors? As the past experience of economic history shows, countries and economies that adopted newer technologies and approaches have benefited socially, economically and in geostrategic terms. The difference between a "future" green economy and non-green economy will be the same as an industrialised and non-industrialised economy in the current scenario. Further, the Global Commission on Adaptation avers that investments in adaptation consistently deliver higher returns and create more jobs than traditional investments. Second, should the country declare a date for achieving the net-zero carbon emissions status, what should be that date? Given the current global mood, it will be strategic for India to declare its intent on achieving carbon neutrality but only on its own terms. The path to India's green economy should not emerge out of Paris or Glasgow but rather out of every village, town and city in the country. Its net-zero emissions date should be a time band such as from 2065-2085. The later date should be offered as a more likely target. However, if there is adequate green finance made available, supported by development and availability of appropriate technologies, the earlier date of 2065 or thereabouts could be possible. What can India hope from countries that are less than supportive of a Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and medicines to avert an ongoing global tragedy? How much support will the same set of rich countries provide to India and other developing countries to address a "wicked" problem such as climate change?

India will have to forge its own unique path towards decarbonisation. It has achieved immensely in areas such as energy efficiency and solar power. By 2030, it aims to install 450 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity, far exceeding its Paris targets. But these are low-hanging fruits compared to the long and arduous path ahead. The process to achieve carbon neutrality will be integrated and interconnected across geographies, people and multiple sectors of the economy. Inclusion of the voice and choice of the socioeconomically underprivileged and climate-vulnerable groups will be critical to success of the "green" transition and inclusive growth. Farmers will need to adapt, innovate and improvise to achieve climate resiliency while also attaining higher productivity and profitability. India should proactively seek Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in green technologies for that is what it will take to obtain access, not just international climate negotiations that have largely ignored the needs and aspirations of the developing countries. The list of current and future technologies will be long but each one will need to be judged and imbibed based on its social relevance, economic viability and the ability to solve critical problems. A decarbonised economy will also be a knowledge-based and knowledge-driven economy.

(The writer is an independent consultant and expert in climate issues. The views expressed are personal.)

NEP: A bundle of pious intentions

The Government should avoid overambitious targets that will result in gross underutilisation or even scrapping of the assets already created



UTTAM GUPTA

In yet another attempt to improve the power sector, the Modi Government has come up with a new draft National Electricity Policy (NEP), the major objectives being to promote clean energy such as power based on renewable and gas without debunking coal; revitalise power distribution companies (discoms) and developing an efficient market for electricity distribution.

All the three objectives are laudable. These are crucial to development of an efficient, competitive and sustainable power sector to meet the needs of the economy on a high growth trajectory while at the same time, meeting the environment goals (especially India's commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change). What is being done on ground zero to achieve these goals?

At present, India has a total generation capacity of about 360 GW (one gigawatt equals 1000 megawatts or MW) including 63 per cent based on fossil fuels, of which coal alone accounts for 54 per cent and nearly 22 per cent based on renewable energy, viz., solar, wind, bio-mass, small hydro, etc. and gas-based capacity accounting for another seven per cent. However, only 50 per cent of this installed capacity is currently utilised.

This has to do with indiscriminate setting up of capacity on coal (to some extent on gas) much before Prime Minister Narendra Modi started giving a boost to the renewable energy sector. Many of those plants were set up without ascertaining whether or not power produced by them would find any takers (the promoters could not even sign power purchase agreements or PPAs) while others did not even have fuel supply tie-ups (several gas-based plants fall in this category). Many coal-based plants have been impacted by availability of much cheaper power, at about ₹2.4 per unit from renewable-based plants (against ₹5 to ₹66 per unit from coal) prompting Discoms not to buy power from the former. In turn, renewable-based plants are affected as some State Governments (for instance, Andhra Pradesh) are not honoring PPAs.

Meanwhile, Modi has more than doubled the original goal of renewable-based power capacity from 175 GW by 2022 to 450 GW by 2030.

The current capacity being 80 GW, to reach the scaled up target, the country will need to add 370 GW. Plus an additional 50 GW from coal-based projects already under implementation, the total capacity will go up to 780 GW by 2030. Against this, the projected demand being about 320 GW (on the basis of an average six per cent annual Gross Domestic Product growth), this would imply utilisation of mere 40 per cent.

The Government should avoid over-ambitious targets which will result in gross under utilisation or even scrapping assets already created.

It overarching focus should be on ensuring optimum utilisation of every megawatt of capacity created and viability of all efficiently run power generation plants. This brings us to the second objective, namely revitalising Discoms. In this regard, the Modi Government has taken numerous steps, the latest being the ₹300,000 crore electricity distribution reform program unveiled by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, in the Union Budget for 2021-22.

Christened 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD), the scheme



AT THE ROOT OF PERSISTENT AND INCREASING LOSSES OF DISCOMS ARE THE ORDERS ISSUED BY STATE GOVERNMENTS TO SELL ELECTRICITY TO SOME PREFERRED CONSUMERS VIZ. POOR HOUSEHOLDS AND FARMERS, EITHER AT A FRACTION OF THE COST OF PURCHASE, TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION, OR EVEN FREE. ON THE UNITS SOLD TO THESE GROUPS, THESE COMPANIES INCUR COLOSSAL UNDER-RECOVERY. THIS IS AGGRAVATED BY AT&C LOSSES — MOST OF IT PLAIN THEFT

The writer is New-Delhi based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.



sets targets for losses and efficiency of Discoms. The aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses and shortfall in the average revenue realisation (ARR) from the sale of electricity *vis-a-vis* the average cost of supply (ACS) or the ACS-ARR gap are major causes behind the losses of Discoms and their financial stress. Accordingly, the scheme aims at reducing AT&C losses to 12-15 per cent and ACS-ARR gap to 'nil' by 2025.

When viewed in the backdrop of Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), launched in November 2015, wherein the targets were missed by a huge margin, this scheme does not inspire. Under UDAY, Discoms were required to reduce AT&C losses from 20.7 per cent during 2015-16 to 15 per cent by 2018-19. Further, they were to reduce the ACS-ARR gap from ₹0.59 per unit during 2015-16 to 'zero' by 2018-19.

Simultaneously, the Government gave them a financial restructuring package (FRP) under which their entire debt of about ₹400,000 crore was condoned. This led to a dramatic impact on their losses which declined from ₹52,000 crore during 2015-16 to a low of ₹17,000 crore during 2017-18. However, Discoms did little to set their house in order.

During 2019-20, their AT&C losses were 18.9 per cent against the 15 per cent target for 2018-19. The ACS-ARR gap during 2019-20, stood at ₹0.42 per unit against target of 'zero' for 2018-19.

During 2020-21, discoms reported a staggering loss of ₹58,000

crore.

Correspondingly, their debt galloped to about ₹450,000 crore by the end of 2020-21 and is estimated to reach ₹600,000 crore mark by the end of current fiscal. The collateral damage is a pile-up of their dues to power generators to over ₹150,000 crore (current). This is despite a special loan of ₹90,000 crore promised by Nirmala Sitharaman under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' in May 2020 (the loan amount has since been raised to ₹130,000 crore).

Against this backdrop, the latest talk, of achieving those targets which should have been achieved by 2018-19 by March 2025 under RLRBSD, is laughable.

At the root of persistent and increasing losses of Discoms are the orders issued by State Governments to sell electricity to some preferred consumers viz., poor households and farmers, either at a fraction of the cost of purchase, transmission and distribution, or even free. On the units sold to these groups, these companies incur colossal under-recovery. This is aggravated by AT&C losses - most of it plain theft.

Inflated tariff allowed to generators under purchase agreements adds to the revenue shortfall. Unless, these three fundamental factors are addressed, any other attempt to revitalise Discoms - as intended in the NEP - will be a non-starter.

As for developing an efficient market for electricity distribution - as promised in the policy - it is easier said than done. When an overwhelming share of power generated in the country is procured by

Discoms under PPAs (mostly under long-term contracts), distributed by them at tariff controlled by States/owners of Discoms (regulatory commissions merely approve what is proposed by them) and a mere five per cent of the electricity is traded, it will take ages before one can hope to see 'efficient' and 'competitive' markets.

Meanwhile, under the draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2021, in sync with the intent to develop an efficient market under NEP, Modi Government proposes to de-license the distribution business, bring in competition, and give the consumer power to choose supplier. If only the States give subsidies directly to farmers and households, rein in power theft and improve efficiencies in purchase, wheeling and distribution, will help in revitalising the Discoms.

In view of the entire distribution network viz., transmission lines, feeder lines, transformers etc that caters to households, industries etc in an area being owned and controlled by the Discoms, any talk of letting private license is a misnomer. Instead of indulging in such rhetoric, Modi will do well to get States resolve the basics.

If only the States give subsidies directly to farmers and households (instead of riding piggy back on Discoms), rein in power theft and improve efficiencies in purchase, wheeling and distribution, this will help in revitalising the Discoms and also give relief to industries which are currently paying exorbitant charges for cross-subsidising the preferred customers.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE PM IS TAKING EVERY STEP TO SAVE LIVES. TODAY, MOST OF THE COUNTRIES ARE STANDING WITH US DUE TO HIS EFFORTS. — UNION MINISTER ANURAG THAKUR



THE GOI'S REPEATED CHEST-THUMPING AT RECEIVING FOREIGN AID IS PATHETIC. HAD IT DONE ITS JOB, THINGS WOULDN'T HAVE COME TO SUCH A PASS. — CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



States vote for new economy; will Mamata lead the Oppn?

The West Bengal Chief Minister has virtually challenged the dazzling development model that has put India's public sector on sale

The recent Assembly election results reflect more than politics. Indian voters have larger issues and economy is at the core of their concern. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal have separately endorsed a new economic course for the nation.

The eastern State definitely remains at the centre of attention. A *hawai-chappal* wearing and white sari-clad Mamata Banerjee has virtually challenged the dazzling development model that has put India's public sector on sale and is engaged in a visual extravaganza of over ₹30,000 crore (in reality possibly over ₹50,000 crore) to change Delhi's central vista. Nobody explains why that should be a priority instead of creating a strong healthcare sector and hospitals capable of producing their own oxygen.



SHIVAJI SARKAR

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

Populist largesse of Mamata for women, youth and *Duare sarkar* (Government at the doorstep), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK's) welfare policies in Tamil Nadu or the Left alliance in Kerala, when studied closely, virtually refutes the "aggressive privatised development" model of the Centre. All these States have voted against farm Bills that seek to create large house monopolies, junk scrapping policy of poor man's vehicles, high fuel prices, fares, tolls, taxes and so-called user charges. The vote endorses that the country has more poverty to address than create cosmetic central vista that serves none but a few, big corporate houses. They have together rejected 'Manmohanomics' — that ended up in a political disaster for its proponent, the

Congress, and its follower, the BJP. The people are pitted against the disinvestment of prime banks, LIC, financial institutions, defence establishments and others with a target of ₹1.75 lakh crore in 2021-22. This is lower than ₹2.1 lakh crore it hoped to garner through divestment in 2020-21; an admission of failure of the Government bid. This failed economic concept is rejected now by the voters.

While in Tamil Nadu the change was inevitable, Kerala not very surprisingly voted for the Left front, following people's perception that the Government was delivering. The voters equally perceived that the Congress-led UDF was incapable of opposing the BJP's onslaught for privatisation, now a national concern. So, the LDF has returned with a bigger mandate.

The massive vote surge in



West Bengal for the Trinamool Congress was not possible if the people did not perceive the Centre's economic policies as a grave threat. The Left-Congress, the TMC and even a section of the BJP voted for economic policy changes that, ironically, Mamata Banerjee symbolises. The 47.93 per cent votes for TMC up from 43.3 per cent in 2019 and reduced numbers of votes for BJP to 38.13 per cent from 40.2 per

cent in 2019 says a lot. The loss of all other parties was a gain for the TMC. It has also busted the myth that West Bengal votes along communal lines. The wash out of the Left and Congress for its alliance with the highly communalised ISF is enough testimony. This also proves that West Bengal votes for social and economic issues and rejects any polarisation, barring some exceptions, either for Furfura or Ram. Another noticeable aspect is the vote for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose whose anniversary the BJP celebrated as *Parakaram Diwas* and Mamata as *Deshnayak Diwas*.

Surprisingly, nobody pointed out this incongruity which Mamata aptly encashed with a heightened nationalistic presentation - a message went out strong that the Centre is not only disrespectful to Netaji, but is also blatant

ly promoting some private houses. No wonder that some days later the Rafael bribery charge revived as an issue following a French Government exposure. India is not against private companies. Many have contributed significantly; many enjoy people's trust and have set standards. The nation, however, is against overt domineering by any group. The present elections have exposed that. The country wants privatisation neither at the cost of the public sector nor does it want to get it enslaved to any private player.

In the UP's panchayat elections, the BJP gets only 580 against Samajwadi Party (SP) 782, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) 361, Congress' 61 and 1266 others. So, will this election lead to an overt cry for economic changes? The rightist centrist party is too inclined towards the corporates and

may not bring about the changes. But the opposition though too has its corporate connections and may try to forge an alliance to clinch a political change. Its leadership is not yet obvious. Mamata may emerge as one but her all-India acceptability may not be easy.

Some like Akhilesh Yadav have spoken for her. Either way, a change of guard may be inevitable. The combine would have to come out with a new economic policy - against privatisation and for strengthening the people's economy; one may call it socialist or by any other name. It has to be contrary to a centrist, aggressive privatisation that the present rulers are trying to dispense. India is at the threshold of an economic and political change. It may gel before the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections next year.

India remains vulnerable to further waves of Covid: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Monday warned that India's slow pace of vaccination could mean that the country remains vulnerable to further waves of the pandemic even once the current surge subsides.

Just 9.4 per cent of the population had received at least one vaccine dose as of May 5, according to figures from Our World in Data, the agency said.

"India's slow pace of vaccination means that the country could remain vulnerable to further waves of the pandemic even once the current surge subsides," Fitch added.

The Centre has already provided more than 17.56 crore vaccine doses to states/UTs free of cost.

The cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country exceeded 16.94 crore on May 9.

The global rating agency said there are growing indications that the latest wave of coronavirus infections will add to risks among financial institutions (Fls).

It also anticipates that the RBI may introduce additional measures to support the financial sector if indications of economic stress mount.



"We expect the shock to economic activity from the latest wave

of the pandemic in India to be less severe than in 2020, even though caseloads and fatalities are much higher.

"Nonetheless, indicators show activity dropped in April-May, which is likely to delay the country's recovery, and the number of newly recorded cases remains extremely high," Fitch Ratings said in a report.

It said that currently, authorities are implementing lockdowns more narrowly, and companies and individuals have adjusted behaviour in ways that cushion the effects.

"There is a risk that disruption could persist longer and spread further than our baseline case assumes, particularly if lockdowns are introduced in more regions, or nationwide," it added.

India is facing the world's worst outbreak of COVID-19 cases with more than 3 lakh new daily COVID-19 cases being reported for two weeks now and the new cases reached more than 4 lakh new daily cases over the weekend.

More than 2.46 lakh people in India have died from the coronavirus

infection. Public health system is buckling under the weight of surging

infections and deaths with several parts of the country reporting

shortage of hospital beds, medical oxygen, medicines and vaccines.

Last month, Fitch had said the surge in COVID-19 cases could add to headwinds facing India's banks and non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) if it led to a resurgence in asset-quality pressures.

Govt relaxes procurement norms for health, pharma Ministries, DRDO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the world's worst outbreak of Covid-19 severely straining the health system in the country, the government has made sweeping changes in the way departments procure medical supplies, including allowing procurement of the same item at different rates.

Relaxing tendering norms, the Department of Expenditure has allowed global tenders to be floated for less than ₹200 crore as well.

The Department of Expenditure, under the Ministry of Finance, on April 24 issued special instructions relating to relief operations for Covid-19 pandemic and said that the prevailing health emergency on account of the unprecedented surge in Covid-19 cases across the country requires immediate procurement of certain items in quantities which may not be available with a single supplier and/ or within the time frame in which they are needed.

"The instruction in this Department's OM (Office Memorandum)... Dated May 15, 2020... Specifying that no Global Tender Enquiries shall be invited for tenders up to Rs 200 crore shall stand relaxed

and hence it shall be permissible to invite GTE where necessary," said the instructions, which have been put up on the ministry's website on Monday.

As part of its Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, the government in May last year notified amendments to General Financial Rules (GFR) to ensure that goods and services valued less than Rs 200 crore will be procured from domestic firms, a move which was aimed at benefitting small and medium enterprises.

Rule 149 of GFR provides that procurement of goods and services through the Government's e-marketplace (GeM) will be mandatory for items available on GeM portal.

"In the present situation, vendors under GeM, even if orders are placed, may not always be able to effect deliveries of supplies on time and desired locations, due to the rapidly changing situation on account of the critical pandemic situation which requires extreme flexibility in making available the critical life saving goods to the medical care facilities," as per the instructions, which would be in force till May 31.

Budget heading for vaccination expenditure does not inhibit Centre from using funds: FinMin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry on Monday said provisioning ₹ 35,000 crore-expenditure for vaccines in the Union Budget for FY22 under the title "Transfers to States" does in no way inhibit the central government from using the funds to buy Covid-19 shots.

The amount of ₹35,000 crore provided in the Union Budget for fiscal year starting April 1, 2021 (FY22) under the Demand for Grants No. 40, titled "Transfers to States" has been done for several administrative advantages, including expenditure under such head being exempted from the quarterly control restrictions.

Also, it allows the Union government to procure the vaccines and pass them on to the states as grants in kind.

Refuting reports that no provision for expenditure on Covid-19 vaccination has been done by the central government, the finance ministry said, "vaccines have actually been, and are being, procured by and paid for by the Centre through this head of account (Demand for Grants No.40 Transfers to States)".

Since expenditure on vaccine is one-off expenditure outside the normal Centrally-Sponsored Schemes of the health ministry, separate fund-



ing ensures easy monitoring and management of these funds, the ministry noted.

The amount provided under this head for vaccinations is operated by the Ministry of Health. Vaccines are passed on to the states as grants in kind and the actual administration of vaccines is being done by states, it said.

Further, there is enough administrative flexibility to change the nature of the scheme between grants in kind and other forms of grants, it said in a statement.

"The use of the Demand titled 'Transfers to States' in no way implies that expenditure cannot be incurred by the Centre," the ministry said.

Currently, COVID-19 vaccines are being provided free of

cost by the Centre to those who are 45 years of age and above and to all frontline workers.

The Centre has so far provided more than 17.56 crore vaccine doses to states/ UTs free of cost.

The Centre has placed total orders of 26.60 crore doses for Rs 3,639.67 crore with the Serum Institute of India which is manufacturing Covishield vaccine while an order for 8 crore doses involving an amount of Rs 1,104.78 crore has been placed with Bharat Biotech for Covaxin.

India is facing the world's worst outbreak of COVID-19 cases with more than 3 lakh new daily cases being reported for two weeks now and the new cases reached more than 4 lakh daily over the weekend.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	14928.25	14966.90	14892.50	14942.35	119.20	
COALINDIA	137.10	148.50	137.10	148.10	11.25	
UPL	635.70	680.35	635.55	679.90	50.50	
HINDALCO	407.80	427.50	406.70	426.00	24.90	
IOC	95.30	95.55	95.20	99.20	4.50	
IT	1347.00	1398.85	1347.00	1397.95	55.25	
TATAMOTORS	304.50	315.70	304.00	314.35	11.60	
DREDDY	5380.00	5389.95	5372.00	5334.00	159.30	
TATASTEEL	1210.00	1229.00	1200.00	1218.50	36.15	
SUNPHARMA	688.00	703.50	683.60	698.00	18.55	
DIVISLAB	4052.00	4205.00	4042.10	4137.95	108.85	
POWERGRID	215.40	220.15	214.95	220.20	5.45	
NTPC	106.00	108.00	105.60	107.70	2.65	
BPCL	449.00	455.00	445.00	453.50	10.35	
ONGC	113.85	114.95	112.00	114.00	2.55	
INDUSINDBK	999.00	949.95	911.15	947.15	20.95	
CIPLA	832.50	906.45	877.50	901.80	18.90	
WIPRO	517.60	528.50	513.55	525.00	9.75	
KOTAKBANK	1809.00	1813.25	1790.60	1811.95	31.60	
M&M	721.00	783.80	768.65	785.10	13.10	
HDIFC	255.10	256.30	251.15	252.90	32.25	
HDCLIFE	67.25	68.95	67.05	68.05	8.40	
EICHERMOT	2427.15	2465.00	2412.55	2446.00	28.85	
ICICIBANK	61.00	617.00	611.00	614.05	6.95	
SRN	390.50	367.00	358.80	362.30	4.05	
TECHM	985.00	962.00	973.10	991.00	10.05	
MARUTI	6675.20	6773.15	6660.10	6765.00	61.95	
HINDUNILVR	2423.00	2446.95	2416.00	2431.25	20.05	
TATACONSUM	627.00	636.95	621.00	634.00	5.00	
SBIILE	1009.30	1017.50	999.00	1006.45	6.20	
HDPCBANK	1427.00	1430.00	1412.80	1423.00	8.25	
BHARTIARTL	57.00	57.20	56.10	57.40	2.90	
TITAN	1454.40	1469.75	1445.00	1453.25	6.75	
TCS	314.95	316.20	312.00	314.70	14.10	
NESTLEIND	1663.00	1685.00	1667.00	1682.50	6.65	
JSWSTEEL	76.90	77.30	76.05	77.25	2.30	
ITC	207.15	207.45	205.00	205.80	0.45	
BAIFINANCE	5575.00	5575.00	5456.00	5497.75	3.95	
BAJAJ-AUTO	3900.00	3903.85	3844.50	3869.20	2.45	
AXISBANK	723.50	725.00	714.00	716.50	-2.25	
BAJAJFINSV	11390.00	11549.00	11280.00	11310.80	-8.45	
ASIANPAINT	2399.00	2389.00	2342.55	2348.00	-3.65	
RELIANCE	1939.00	1946.80	1920.95	1927.10	-4.65	
HCLTECH	918.05	921.60	910.20	913.95	-2.45	
GRASIM	1460.00	1475.00	1430.25	1443.00	-6.60	
ADANIPORTS	77.40	77.90	76.45	76.00	-3.75	
HEROMOTOCO	2860.80	2875.00	2830.00	2839.90	-20.90	
INFY	1439.50	1352.90	1335.00	1339.90	-12.65	
ULTRACEMCO	6990.00	6605.00	6300.00	6399.00	-82.90	
BRITANNIA	3478.00	3478.00	3403.50	3417.00	-44.25	
SHREECEM	2799.00	2803.15	2728.40	2739.95	-530.05	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	35987.05	36222.10	35974.00	36190.15	373.20	
NMDC	190.00	202.10	189.00	202.55	17.80	
MOTHERSUMI	222.70	236.80	221.70	236.75	15.85	
TORNTHPHARM	2619.00	2782.85	2610.00	2768.10	152.05	
AIKEM	2995.00	3088.95	2889.90	3042.00	134.55	
VEDL	289.00	296.30	287.05	294.40	11.35	
CADILAHC	609.45	639.00	606.00	625.00	21.80	
ICICIINFY	1449.95	1499.80	1446.75	1498.40	48.45	
AUROPHARMA	1018.85	1061.75	1016.10	1046.00	32.95	
DLF	260.30	261.75	259.15	266.30	8.35	
GAIL	150.25	155.50	150.25	155.00	4.75	
HDIFCAML	2720.00	2804.35	2720.00	2800.00	81.35	
PEL	1684.00	1715.00	1677.10	1714.95	45.30	
INDIGO	1646.00	1685.00	1643.05	1679.95	39.35	
LUPIN	1229.00	1241.50	1205.50	1222.00	25.45	
HINDPETRO	253.00	259.80	251.65	255.90	4.45	
PIDILITIND	1820.05	1855.00	1820.00	1847.90	31.70	
BOSCHLTD	1360.00	1388.00	1354.30	1387.00	237.60	
ABBOTINDIA	15845.00	16445.00	15839.85	16100.00	249.60	
GODREJCP	700.00	711.60	698.10	711.40	9.30	
MRPL	78200.00	78745.00	77500.00	78320.00	873.80	
INDUSTOWER	257.25	258.40	254.35	257.45	2.85	
BIOCIN	383.05	387.45	382.45	385.20	4.05	
BERGEPAINT	718.70	724.20	712.60	722.00	6.55	
SIEMENS	1865.00	1889.10	1855.00	1880.00	16.95	
MUTHOOTFIN	1224.00	1230.00	1200.00	1222.75	11.05	
MCOWWELLN	549.00	555.00	544.00	552.25	4.30	
COPAL	1514.20	1524.10	1505.75	1520.40	9.05	
JUBLFOOD	2752.00	2766.00	2696.00	2755.15	14.60	
ADANIEN	1294.90	1314.00	1286.30	1305.00	6.10	
IGL	515.35	524.55	515.35	517.00	1.90	
APOLLOHOSP	3315.00	3342.60	3321.60	3321.25	10.40	
HAVELLS	1005.00	1012.75	1000.55	1004.75	2.75	
BAJAJHLDNG	3535.00	3552.30	3482.35	3520.00	-4.70	
ANANDGREEN	1110.00	1120.00	1098.05	1100.00	-2.90	
AMBUJACEM	314.20	315.15	310.00	311.00	-1.25	
UBL	1222.80	1238.55	1205.35	1209.60	-6.00	
SBCARD	985.90	989.70	971.15	976.75	-5.20	
MARICO	473.00	474.35	468.00	471.30	-2.55	
ICICIPRULI	561.30	564.80	552.15	558.00	-3.75	
PETRONET	243.00	244.00	240.85	241.15	-1.75	
ACC	1918.50	1921.00	1880.25	1886.20	-18.55	
RANDHANBNK	285.00	304.90	285.00	294.35	-3.00	
ADANITRANS	1199.00	1199.00	1140.75	1163.30	-13.10	
NAUKRI	467.00	471.45	460.15	465.00	-62.30	
YESBANK	13.40	13.45	13.05	13.15	-0.20	
DMART	2925.00	2960.00	2840.00	2850.00	-45.50	
PNB	36.55	36.70	35.50	35.60	-0.65	
DABUR	535.00	535.05	519.30	523.35	-11.25	
LTI	3798.00	3798.00	3633.80	3673.00	-95.60	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
COFORGE	3380.00	3380.00	3145.00	3221.85
TATASTEEL	1209.00	1229.05	1200.00	1216.55
TATAMOTORS	304.50	315.50	304.00	314.80
BHEL	58.50	66.50	58.25	65.70
SHAIL	150.00	151.10	145.00	146.25
SBIN	360.00	367.00	359.00	361.80
DRREDDY	5330.00	5422.00	5272.70	5329.10
NMDC	190.00	202.50	189.00	200.40
CIPLA	890.20	906.00	877.70	900.25
HINDALCO	410.00	428.30	406.75	425.90
ADANIPORTS	774.00	779.50	762.25	765.85
JSWSTEEL	765.00	773.00	756.10	758.70
HINDCOPPER	185.00	189.20	183.20	189.20
CADILAH	610.00	629.80	606.00	624.00
TATAPOWER	104.00	110.70	103.35	110.00
VEDL	289.90	296.25	287.15	293.90
GENMARK	603.35	634.80	602.95	625.65
RELIANCE	1943.75	1946.10	1920.40	1925.70
NATIONALUM	79.55	82.30	77.00	81.50
SUNPHARMA	684.00	703.40	683.85	698.15
HDPCF	2519.45	2564.00	2517.30	2530.95
GMMF	4090.00	4855.00	4088.25	4403.10
BANBHANBKN	287.00	304.80	284.50	296.10
ICFPL	634.80	680.00	633.00	674.40
ADANIENT	1350.00	1393.75	1350.00	1374.00
ADANIPOWER	1299.85	1317.25	1286.90	1304.05
IOC	97.25	99.80	97.00	98.55
BPCL	90.00	99.50	95.00	99.05
INDIA	447.10	454.90	444.80	453.70
	8.29	8.30	8.05	8.20
BAJFINANCE	5550.00	5560.00	5446.10	5496.80
ONGC	113.00	114.95	112.50	113.85
BANKBARODA	70.90	74.35	70.65	73.40
BHARTIARTL	572.90	576.80	569.00	572.70
COALINDIA	138.00	149.50	137.35	147.10
TATACONSUM	629.70	636.70	621.00	631.15
DEEPAKNI	2810.00	3083.50	1770.35	1776.05
ALKEM	1925.00	1828.00	2911.00	3029.65
ICICIBANK	608.60	617.10	608.60	613.10
INDIANSTEL	489.00	501.60	487.00	490.35

Nepal PM Oli loses trust vote in Parliament

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli lost a trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday, in a fresh setback to the embattled premier seeking to tighten his grip on power after the CPN (Maoist Centre) led by Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' withdrew support to his government.

Prime Minister Oli secured 93 votes in the lower house of parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Oli, 69, required at least 136 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives to win the confidence motion as four members are currently under suspension.

A total of 124 members voted against the confidence motion while 15 members stayed neutral, Speaker Agni Sapkota announced. The session was attended by 232 lawmakers.

"As the votes cast in favour of the motion fell short to

achieve a majority of the existing strength of the House of Representatives, I hereby declare that the prime minister's motion to seek a vote of confidence has been rejected," Sapkota announced before adjourning the House.

With this, Prime Minister Oli is automatically relieved from his post as per Article 100 (3).

Some 28 Lawmakers belonging to Oli's rival faction led by Madhav Nepal-Jhala Nath Khanal abstained during the voting.

The main Opposition Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), which control 61 and 49 votes, respectively, voted against Oli's trust motion.

The Janata Samajbadi Party, which has 32 votes, however, was divided. The Mahantha Thakur-led faction stayed neutral while the Upendra Yadav-led group voted against Oli.

After its alliance Nepal



Communist Party Maoist Centre led by Prachanda withdrew its support to the government last week, Oli's government was reduced to a minority one.

After losing the Vote of Confidence, the Prime Minister is automatically removed from his post and now the new coalition government will be formed as per the constitutional process, said senior Nepali Congress leader Prakash Man Singh.

Senior leader of CPN-Maoist Ganesh Shah said that Oli should immediately resign from the post and pave way for the formation of an alternative government.

The CPN-Maoist will join hands with the Nepali Congress and other parties who voted against Oli to form a coalition government at the earliest, he said.

Meanwhile, Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba, CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" and Chairman of Janata Samajwadi Party Upendra Yadav have issued a joint statement urging President Bhandari to start the process of forming an alternative government after Oli's defeat.

"We call upon President Bhandari to initiate the process of appointment of a new prime minister as per article 76 sub-clause 2 of the constitution," the joint statement said. There is a provision in the Article 76 sub-clause 2 of the constitution to form a coalition government with the help of two or more political parties representing in the House.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 last

year after President Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, amidst a tussle for power within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

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

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

Oli repeatedly defended his move to dissolve the House of Representatives, saying some leaders of his party were attempting to form a "parallel government".

Oli, who joined politics as a student activist in his teenage and spent 14 years in jail for opposing the now-abolished monarchy, became Nepal's Prime Minister for a second time in 2018 as a joint candidate of the Left alliance. **PTI**

Israeli police and Palestinians clash at Jerusalem holy site

Jerusalem: Israeli police firing tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets clashed with stone-throwing Palestinians at a flash-point Jerusalem holy site on Monday, the latest in a series of confrontations that threatened to push the contested city toward wider conflict.

More than a dozen tear gas canisters and stun grenades landed in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, as police and protesters faced off inside the walled compound that surrounds it, said an Associated Press photographer at the scene.

Smoke rose in front of the mosque and the iconic golden-domed shrine on the site, and rocks littered the nearby plaza. Inside one area of the compound, shoes and debris lay scattered over ornate carpets.

More than 305 Palestinians were hurt, including 228 who went to hospitals and clinics for treatment, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Seven of the injured were in serious

More than 305 Palestinians were hurt, including 228 who went to hospitals and clinics for treatment, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent

have waged a lengthy legal battle to take over properties.

Monday was expected to be particularly tense since Israelis mark it as Jerusalem Day to celebrate their capture of east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war.

On Monday, two anti-Arab members of Israel's parliament, surrounded by an entourage and police, pushed through a line of protesters in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

Several Arab members of parliament were among those trying to stop Betzalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir, amid shouting and jostling.

At one point during the scum, the protesters pounded on the sides of a dumpster, and one man yelled at Smotrich in Arabic, "Get out of here, you dog!"

Smotrich and Ben Gvir eventually got to the other side of a police barricade and entered a house already inhabited by settlers. **AP**

China slams US 'double standards', plays down concerns over rocket debris falling in Indian Ocean

Beijing: Accusing the US of maintaining "double standards", China on Monday played down global concerns over its out-of-control rocket remnants re-entering the Earth's atmosphere and crashing into the Indian Ocean near the Maldives.

The remnants of China's biggest rocket, Long March 5B, crashed into the Indian Ocean near the Maldives on Sunday with no reports of damage, but Beijing was criticised by US space agency NASA for its failure to "meet responsible standards" regarding its space debris.

Reacting to NASA Administrator Senator Bill Nelson's criticism, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying at a media briefing here said some countries, including America, are hyping up the issue even though the rocket debris was burnt on re-entry into the atmosphere.

China followed the debris "very closely" and there were no reports of any damage to the ground caused by the debris, she said. "Any concerns or misgivings in some media over this issue are unnecessary," Hua said, adding that there has never

been any instance of falling debris causing damage.

"So the likelihood is extremely low. The issue should be left to professionals and it is unnecessary to hype up the issue to cause any panic," she said. Hitting out at the US, Hua said "American media used romantic rhetoric like 'shooting stars lighting up the night sky' about the debris of the US rockets in the past. "But when it comes to the Chinese side, it's a completely different approach. We are willing to work with other countries, including the US, to strengthen cooperation in the use of outer space, but we also oppose double standards on this issue." The spokesperson said China is taking part in the international cooperation to predict the (crash) results and is also cooperating with other countries to deal with the debris in outer space to make sure that outer space activities are sustainable.

Responding to a question on whether China has notified India and Maldives about the crash, Hua said, "Our competent authorities have made notifications on multiple occasions and

we have international cooperation channels to share information on the final result of the space debris."

The bulk of the out-of-control rocket, which had put into orbit the core module of China's planned space station on April 29, was mostly destroyed as it re-entered the atmosphere, according to Chinese official media.

The space vehicle re-entered the atmosphere on Sunday morning and the debris from the 18-tonne rocket, one of the largest items in decades to have an undirected dive into the atmosphere, landed in the Indian Ocean.

The uncontrolled fall of the Chinese rocket sparked concerns among US officials, NASA and international astrophysicists that it could hit inhabited areas. Harvard astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell, who tracked the debris of the rocket part for the past few days, said that it was a reckless gamble by China.

"An ocean reentry was always statistically the likely. It appears China won its gamble...But it was still reckless," he tweeted. **PTI**

China denounces US appeal for Taiwan to join WHO meeting

Beijing: China's Government criticised US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday for urging the World Health Organisation to invite Taiwan, the island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory, to participate in a meeting this month.

Blinken's statement on Friday adds to a similar joint appeal by foreign ministers of the Group of Seven major economies this month in London. That irked the Communist Beijing government, which insists Taiwan has no right to conduct foreign relations or join global bodies.

Blinken's appeal seriously violates the one-China principle and joint US-Chinese declarations, said a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying. China firmly deplores and rejects it.

Taiwan split with the Chinese mainland in 1949 after a civil war. The two sides have extensive trade ties but no official relations.

The US and other major

governments have no official ties with Taiwan, but Washington and some others have expressed growing support for Taiwan during the coronavirus pandemic and in response to Beijing's increasing assertiveness abroad.

Blinken called Taiwan a force for good in the world and said it should be invited as an observer at the meeting of the World Health Assembly, the WHO decision-making body. He said it could make valuable contributions as the world tries to end the pandemic.

Hua accused Washington of making the appeal for political purposes. She said it is detrimental to future global response to public health crises.

Hua said Taiwan is part of China's core interests, a term Beijing uses to describe issues over which it might be willing to go to war.

China has no room for compromise on this, she said. We advise individual countries to immediately stop hyping Taiwan-related issues. **AP**

Man stabs 5 at New Zealand supermarket; 3 critically hurt

Wellington: A man began stabbing people at a New Zealand supermarket on Monday, wounding five people, three of them critically, according to authorities. Police said a suspect had been arrested and taken into custody after the incident at a Countdown supermarket in the city of Dunedin. Two supermarket staff members were among those wounded.

People in the store at the time told local media that it was a chaotic scene as people began screaming and running toward the exits. They said some brave shoppers had tried to stop the man and pin him down.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the motivation for the attack had not been established but police didn't have any evidence to suggest it was domestic terrorism.

"Needless to say that such an attack is hugely concerning, and I do want to acknowledge the really early reports of courageous acts by bystanders who have taken action in order to protect those around them," Ardern said. **AP**

Turkey seeks better Saudi ties despite Khashoggi slaying

ANKARA: Turkey's top envoy is traveling to Saudi Arabia as Turkey seeks to mend ties with the kingdom that hit an all-time low over the 2018 killing in Istanbul of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu will meet with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, to discuss bilateral relations and regional issues during his two-day visit, according to a Turkish Foreign Ministry statement.

The visit is the first by a high-level Turkish official since the killing of Khashoggi by Saudi agents inside the kingdom's consulate increased tensions between the two regional powers.

The killing added to tensions over Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which is viewed by Riyadh as a terrorist group. The two countries have also been at odds over Turkey's support for Qatar in a dispute among Gulf countries as well as over the

conflict in Libya.

Cavusoglu's visit is also part of a wider effort by Turkey to normalize ties with Arab nations as it finds itself isolated internationally at a time when its economy is faltering.

Last week, a high-level Turkish delegation traveled to Cairo to improve relations with Egypt, which have been strained since the Egyptian military's 2013 ouster of President Mohammed Morsi, an Islamist who hailed from the Muslim Brotherhood.

Khashoggi was killed on October 2, 2018, after he entered the consulate to get documents that would allow him to marry his Turkish fiancée, who was waiting outside. Turkish officials allege Khashoggi, who had written critically about Saudi Arabia's crown prince for The Washington Post, was killed by a team of Saudi agents and then dismembered with a bone saw. **AP**

FROM PAGE 1

CLAMOUR FOR COVID JABS IN URBAN INDIA

Dismal figures given that inoculation had reached as high as 40 lakh in early April.

At the current pace of vaccination, experts said it would take nearly three months to vaccinate just those registered till now. At the current rate of vaccination - less than 17 lakh a day - the 170-crore remaining doses needed to fully cover the entire 94-crore adult population would take about 1,000 days - or close to three years. The new phase of vaccination has also slowed down because now the private entities are dealing with multiple issues such as shortage, procurement as well as transportation etc

The current production capacity of Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech is 6 crore and 2 crore per month or roughly 26 lakh doses per day. Both companies are enhancing capacity, but that might have to wait till July, as was also pointed out recently by Aadir Poonawalla, CEO of SII.

The Government is already drawing flak for exporting the vaccine instead of vaccinating its own people. "The Centre has donated 6.6 crore since March. On April 22, when India had the world's highest number of 3.32 lakh cases, the Central Government had also exported two lakh vaccines to Paraguay," Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said recently.

Experts also pointed out that no advance purchase pact was made with vaccine makers and no funds were made to them to increase production have led to shortage of vaccines.

Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser at SBI, in a note on recently pointed out the gaps. "We have given only 160.5 million doses with around 131 million taken the first dose and 31.5 million the two doses. The percentage of people who have taken two doses to total vaccination doses is a low 19.5 per cent. However, the daily vaccination is going down now with an average of 17 lakh compared to an average of 28 lakh in April.

"Given this trend, we believe we can only be able to vaccinate 15 per cent of the population by October

which is required for herd immunity but only if we are able to vaccinate around 55 lakh daily in September and October," he said adding that accelerated vaccination is the only solution to contain the raging pandemic.

SUPERSTITION, FEAR DERAILED VAX DRIVE IN RURAL INDIA

The story is similar in rural areas of Varanasi, Baghpat, Aligarh, Agra, Gorakhpur and Rampur in UP. Reports said a sizeable share of the population is reluctant to take the jab due to fear of the viral infection and side effects of post-vaccination.

"Fear of hospitalisation, loss of daily wages and inability to reach far-away vaccination centres were some factors the villagers cited, officials of union health ministry said adding that the story is similar in southern States.

"Scepticism about the safety and efficacy of Covid-19 shots is high in India, particularly in rural areas and misinformation via social media platforms and word-of-mouth have prevented many to take shots," an official of UP health department has been quoted as having said. .

Interestingly, in tribal areas, Covid vaccine hesitancy is high due to superstitions among Adivasi communities as there is a strong perception that one has to avoid liquor for a few days before and after vaccination. Besides, another superstition is that they will get fever if vaccinated.

POSTMEN GIVE NEW LEASE OF LIFE TO SERIOUS PATIENTS

"Considering the fact that postal services are essential services and are required to continue un-hindered during any partial lockdown or restrictions imposed by the respective State/UT Governments, the postal circles are hereby directed to kindly adhere to the broad guidelines," the Government said in a notification.

The extra zeal and inspired work of postmen here has ensured that the medical treatment is not discontinued even for one day.

And now in Muradabad, it is turning out to be a changed song instead of "Dakiya daak laya.., of poet-

song writer Gulzar," it is now "Dakiya dawa laya".

VARSHA DELIVERS A HUMANE TOUCH TO THE END!

problems but they did not deter her.

"My work is splashed on social media and people have called my parents to discourage me from doing this work. Initially, my husband was also hesitant but they all had to give up because of my stubborn nature. Now my husband gives me a lot of immunity boosters and fruits to see that I remain safe," she said.

"I have seen so much while cremating abandoned bodies that nothing scares me and I have not allowed the word COVID-19 to enter my mind," she said. Among the cruelest things she witnessed during the second wave was of a couple who were lecturers and the husband died COVID-19 at Indiranagar.

"I had just started out with this work when I received a call from Indiranagar. The body had swelled up because of the delay. There were only three people to lift the body — me, my driver and the wife of the deceased. We struggled to wrap the body and carried it across three large rooms and the courtyard, while relatives were standing and making video films but did not come forward to help. That night when I went to sleep I wondered how people could be so cruel with someone they had spent their life," she said.

Talking about the expenditure on performing the last rites, Varsha said she started with her own funds with the thought that it must reach the public and slowly people joined her in the endeavour and funds started coming in.

"The expenditures include the rental for the hearse, salary of the driver and an accompanying staff on a daily basis, petrol and food for the staff," she said.

Varsha says she has kept the child alive in herself and the moment she steps back into home, she starts giving time to her family.

"After a day's hard work I do not mind enjoying a party also," she said. She said that people looked at her in different ways with some having a word of praise and some looking at her work with hate. "But this does not deter me as I am on a mission," she added.

Malaysian PM announces 1-month lockdown

Kuala Lumpur: All of Malaysia will be placed under a near lockdown for about a month to fight the coronavirus, but businesses will be allowed to continue to operate at reduced capacity, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced on Monday.

The lockdown, starting Wednesday until June 7, took the nation by surprise because restrictions on movement are already in place in many parts of the country, including Kuala Lumpur and

the richest State of Selangor.

Muhyiddin said drastic action was needed to battle a new aggressive outbreak before it turns into a national catastrophe. He said the emergence of new virus variants with higher infection rates, constraints on the public health system and public failure to observe health measures were worrying.

New coronavirus cases have exceeded 3,500 a day in recent weeks, pushing Malaysia's total tally up three-fold since January

to over 444,000. Deaths have also surged to 1,700.

Muhyiddin said all inter-district travel, sports and social events will be banned. He said Muslims cannot visit each other or visit family graves as is customary during the Eid festival starting Thursday to mark the end of the Muslim fasting month.

All education institutions will be shut, except kindergartens and daycare centres. Dine-in service will not be allowed in restaurants,

and no more than three people will be allowed in private vehicles. Religious institutions can open with limited numbers.

Unlike the country's first national lockdown last year that halted most economic activities, Muhyiddin said all businesses can operate but at reduced capacity. The lockdown last year dealt a severe blow to Malaysia's economy and the government earlier said it would only impose targeted measures to deal with the pandemic. **AP**

Pak Govt to set new rules to meet FATF demands

Islamabad: Pakistan, keen to exit from the grey list of the FATF, is set to introduce new rules relating to anti-money laundering cases and change the prosecution process to meet its remaining tough conditions, a media report said on Monday.

Pakistan was put on the grey list by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global watchdog for money laundering and terror financing in June 2018 and the country has been struggling to come out of it.

The Dawn newspaper reported that the changes being made also include the transfer of investigations and prosecution of anti-money laundering (AML) cases from police, provincial anti-corruption establishments (ACEs) and other similar agencies to specialised agencies.

This is part of two sets of rules including the AML (Forfeited Properties Management) Rules 2021 and the AML (Referral) Rules 2021 under the National Policy Statement on Follow the Money approved by the federal Cabinet meeting a few days ago, the report said.

These rules and related notifications for certain changes in the existing schedule of Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010 (AMLA) would come into force immediately to be followed by the appointment of administrators and special public prosecutors for implementation.

Based on these measures, the FATF would conclude if Pakistan has complied with three outstanding benchmarks, out of 27, that blocked its exit from the grey list in February this year. Several review meetings of the FATF are scheduled to begin in the second week of June, culminating in the next FATF plenary on June 21-25.

The three outstanding action points (out of a total of 27) include (i) demonstrating that terrorist financing (TF) investigations and prosecutions target persons and entities acting on behalf or at the directive of the designated persons or entities.

Demonstrating that TF prosecutions result in effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions; and (iii) demonstrating effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions against all designated terrorists, particularly those acting for them or on their behalf.

Now, the government has decided to appoint dozens of administrators with the powers to confiscate, receive, manage, rent out, auction, transfer or dispose of or take all other measures to preserve the value of the properties and perishable or non-perishable assets to be confiscated under the AML 2010 rules or court orders. **PTI**

UN says 5 migrants drowned; over 700 intercepted off Libya

Cairo: At least five people, including a woman and a child, drowned when a boat carrying at least 45 Europe-bound migrants capsized off Libya, a UN migration official said on Monday. The wreck was the latest disaster in the Mediterranean Sea involving migrants seeking a better life in Europe.

Safa Msehli, a spokeswoman for the International Organisation for Migration, said the wreck took place on Sunday. She said fishermen rescued 40 migrants and returned them to the shore. Msehli said the boat was among nine others carrying more than 700 migrants intercepted Sunday by the Libyan coast guard off the coast of

the North African country.

The migrants were taken to overcrowded detention centres, where the UN migration agency fears more threats to their lives and violations of their rights, she said.

Libya has in recent years emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East. The oil-rich country plunged into chaos following a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed longtime ruler Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

Earlier this month, at least 11 Europe-bound migrants drowned when a rubber dinghy carrying two dozen people capsized off Libya. **AP**

Sri Lanka records highest single-day spike with over 2,600 new Covid cases

Colombo: Sri Lanka has recorded over 2,600 coronavirus cases, the highest-ever single-day count recorded so far in the island nation since the pandemic began last year, authorities said on Monday.

Gen. Shavendra Silva, the head of the National Operations Centre for the Prevention of Covid-19 (NOCCOP), said some 2,672 cases were confirmed on Sunday, up from 1,896 a day ear-

lier.


Sri Lanka on Sunday set a new record with the number of daily Covid-19 infections exceeding 2,500 for the first time since the epidemic began, the Colombo Gazette reported. The coronavirus cases are surging as health authorities continue to struggle to provide care for the confirmed cases. The government said action to create 10,000 care beds has been fast tracked. **PTI**

DOCYARD

DR ASHU RASTOGI

Asso Professor, Dept of Endocrinology

PGI CHANDIGARH



Vitamin D intake is vital



Many studies have now found high association between Vitamin D levels and COVID-19 severity and mortality. Such studies showed that patients with COVID-19 had significantly lower Vitamin D levels. In addition, fever was significantly higher in patients who had deficient Vitamin D levels compared with patients who had sufficient levels. Additionally, it has been found that older adults with Vitamin D deficiency and COVID-19 had worse morbidity outcomes compared with those who were not deficient.

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that plays a number of critical roles in body. This nutrient is especially important for immune system health. Since, it is a group of fat-soluble compounds responsible for intestinal absorption of calcium, magnesium, and phosphate, and for a variety of additional biological effects; low levels of Vitamin D can increase the likelihood of developing multiple acute and chronic ailments. A weaker immune system means body's weak defence against infection and disease.

A prospective, interventional study found that a high dose of calcifediol reduced the need for intensive care stays in patients infected with COVID-19. Because Vitamin D deficiency has been shown to potentially increase the risk of severe respiratory infections, Vitamin D supplements are suggested for prevention and treatment of COVID-19 complications, especially acute respiratory disease. Nowadays many brands of Vitamin D supplementation are available in market like D3 Must, Caldikind, Calshine, etc.

Because Vitamin D deficiency has been shown to potentially increase the risk of severe respiratory infections, Vitamin D supplements are suggested for prevention and treatment of COVID-19 complications

days high dose of Vitamin D3 (60000 IU) supplementation helps in Coronavirus clearance.

Given the evidence supporting the role of vitamin D in modulating immune function, and the impact of vitamin D supplementation on vitamin D-deficient patients with COVID-19, practical recommendations should be synthesised as follows:

■ Current public health guidelines for optimising vitamin D status should be followed always

■ Patients hospitalised with COVID-19 should have baseline serum 25(OH)D concentrations measured and should be supplemented to a level >30ng/mL (optimal 40-60ng/mL), especially when the baseline level is <10ng/mL

■ In COVID-19 patients with 25(OH)D serum concentrations under 20ng/mL the recommended dose for correction of deficiency is 6000-7000 oral IU/ day for 6-8 weeks. For maintenance, the dose varies from 2000 to 3000 oral IU/day depending on the age and clinical condition of the individual up to reach optimal concentrations.

■ When it is not possible to measure baseline 25(OH)D concentrations in COVID-19 patients, it seems essential supplementing with 2000-3000 oral IU per day up to the suggested optimal serum concentrations (40-60ng/mL).

Though India is a subtropical country with adequate sunlight, Vitamin D deficiency is prevalent. Sunlight rapidly inactivate SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces, suggesting that there may be an environmental benefit associated with Vitamin D as a result of sun exposure. It is necessary for people to understand the importance of Vitamin D so that they can take relevant medications.

COVIDCARE

GARLIC: While many of us might not like the smell of garlic, and hence avoid eating it, this herb is highly nutritious. It is low in calories and rich in Vitamin C, vitamin B6 and manganese. It also contains trace amounts of various other nutrients. Hence, it may help in boosting immunity which is undoubtedly the need of the hour.

Garlic supplements help prevent and reduce the severity of common illnesses like the flu and common cold. Not to mention, high doses of garlic

appear to improve blood pressure for those with known high blood pressure (hypertension). In some instances, supplements may be as effective as regular medications.

It also seem to reduce total and LDL cholesterol, particularly in those who have high cholesterol.



ALL ABOUT BLACK FUNGUS

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with DR RAHUL BHARGAVA to bring you a report on Mucormycosis, a rare fungal infection reported in COVID-19 patients

As if the second wave of COVID-19 wasn't enough to make you shiver with fear, the country is reporting a rash of cases involving a fungal infection. Mucormycosis (sometimes called zygomycosis) is a serious but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes. These molds live throughout the environment. When someone breathes in these spores, infection in the sinus or lung can occur.

Mucormycosis can also develop on the skin after the fungus enters the skin through a cut, scrape or other type of skin trauma. Mucormycosis primarily affects people who have health problems or take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness.

"The symptoms associated with the disease include one-sided facial swelling, headache, nasal or sinus congestion, loss of vision or pain in the eyes, swelling in cheeks and eyes, fever and black crusts in the nose. The US Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates Mucormycosis with an overall all-cause mortality rate of 54 per cent," Dr Rahul Bhargava, Head ENT & Neck Surgeon, Bhargava ENT & Gynae Clinic and Medical Consultant — ENTOD

International, tells you.

Mucormycosis is affecting COVID patients more because of prolonged administration of steroids and subsequent immunocompromised state.

"Diabetic patients are at much higher risk of mucormycosis if affected by COVID-19 because Covid-19 further impairs their immune system and second, they are given corticosteroids for their treatment. This leads to a rise in their blood sugar level thus increasing their risk of mucormycosis. This combination of Diabetes and Covid-19, therefore, becomes a dangerous and deadly challenge to manage. Some cases of mucormycosis have also been observed in patients with an asymptomatic Covid-19 infection who were not even aware of their diagnosis," Bhargava, who has come across three patients in past one week who have contracted this infection after recovering from COVID-19, explains.

A cause of worry is that presently, there are no feasible measures to prevent mucormycosis however, early detection is the best solution for now.

"Some of the things which can be done to prevent it are nasal douching and gargles with Betadine

Diabetic patients are at much higher risk of mucormycosis if affected by COVID-19 because Covid-19 further impairs their immune system and they are also given corticosteroids for their treatment

solution, proper control of Diabetes and using steroids only on prescription by a physician. Turmeric contains curcumin which is also good for fungal-infections," he says.

Bhargava tells you that it is a serious infection and needs to be treated with prescription antifungal medicine, usually posaconazole, amphotericin B or isavuconazole. "These medicines are given

through a vein (amphotericin B, posaconazole, isavuconazole) or by mouth (posaconazole, isavuconazole). Other medicines, including voriconazole, fluconazole and echinocandins, do not work against the fungi that cause mucormycosis. Often, mucormycosis requires surgery to cut away the infected tissue," he adds.

The correlation between COVID-19 and Mucormycosis, Bhargava says, is not surprising at all. "Because the major risk factor for Mucormycosis is uncontrolled Diabetes mellitus which is also a high-risk factor for COVID-19. Secondly, steroids — which are known to suppress immunity — are the only of treatment, like I have mentioned before, which has shown to decrease COVID-19 mortality. So, it is the combination of COVID-19, with decreased immunity and the steroids which probably predispose a patient to Mucormycosis," he says.

Since the association between the deadly virus and mucormycosis is the state of weakened immune responses in patients, it depends from patient to patient when one can develop this infection. It may take days or even weeks after one has recovered from COVID to get infected with the fungus.

HEALTH IS WEALTH

Following a healthy lifestyle is important. More so, when health and overall wellbeing is at the forefront. DIPAK KUMAR SINGH shares tips that can help



One cannot escape death, but can certainly prevent old age. The fundamental principle of a healthy, relaxed, happy and stress free life is that one must follow a self-determined routine — self-discipline in daily routine. Here are a few suggestions based upon my learning:

One, try to make the moment of getting up in the morning, your happiest moment of the day. Smile at the world when you open your eyes or even laugh loudly. This forms the base of your feelings for the whole day.

Two, water regime. Drink at least four litres of water every day. Also, drink at least three glasses of warm water, first thing in the morning. Avoid drinking cold water. It should be at least room temperature.

Three, follow a good food regime. Take three meals and nothing in between, unless you have been medically advised to take five meals or more. Breakfast should be ideally within four hours of waking up and should be the heaviest. Fruits should be consumed in the first half of the day only. Avoid fruits after mid-day. Curd should be taken with the breakfast, unless prohibited by doctor. *Mattha* with lunch. And no curd item in the dinner. Emphasis should be on quality of food rather than quantity. Consume those foods, which gives more energy and nutrients, in less quantity.

Four, work place regime. In case you have long sitting job: Use straight back chair, keep your back straight, aligned with the chair back, get up after every 45 minutes and take a stroll for five minutes and stretch your neck backwards whenever you remember.

Caution: Whenever you stretch your neck backwards, keep your eyes closed.

Five, post dinner regime. Dinner should be taken ideally before 8 pm. There should be about four hours of gap between dinner and sleep. Brush your teeth after having the meal. Walk for at least 20 minutes. Take steam and gargle with salt and *haldi* mixed in hot water. Switch off your mobile at least half an hour before you go to bed, unless your profession demands to keep it on 24 hours.

Six, after you go to bed put two drops of mustard oil in your navel and rub it with your finger tip, 40 times clockwise and 40 times anti-clockwise. Put two drops of mustard oil in each nostril. Once on bed, close your eyes and remember each and every event that has happened since morning. Forgive those who have hurt you in any way on that day. Ask forgiveness from those whom you have hurt in any way. This will relax your mind and you will have a sound sleep with positive thought, and will wake up smiling the next morning. Have at least seven hours of sleep in the night. Try to follow the age old maxim — early to bed and early to rise.

And last but not the least, follow a good work out regime. spend at least one hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening on your personal exercise regime. Remember walking, jogging and breathing exercises have to be a part of your exercise regime.

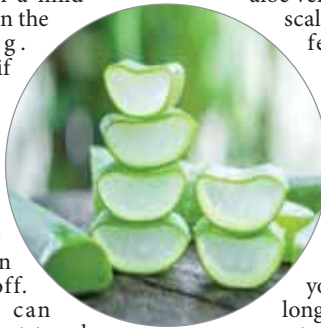
The writer is Principal Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Dept, Government of Bihar

DadiKaKehna

Long and silky hair are a dream of many. But, many of us end up cutting it short because of the hair fall that follows. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy to follow home remedies that can help



We can't emphasise enough on the importance of oiling long hair regularly. One can use coconut, almond, mustard or even olive oil. Massage it into the scalp and leave it overnight. Wash with a mild shampoo in the morning. However, if you have an oily skin, oil your hair and leave it for an hour and then wash off. One can wrap a hot towel around the head for 10 minutes to help in the better absorption of the oil. If one reason why you



don't want to sport long hair is because they fall, use aloe vera. It soothes the scalp and conditions hair. It reduces dandruff and unblock hair follicles that may be blocked by excess oil. You can apply pure aloe vera gel to your scalp and hair a few times a week.

Apply a mask made of egg; it is an excellent source of protein, which helps your hair grow longer. Just crack open two eggs, strain the yolks and use the egg white on your hair. Let it stay for 20 minutes and wash off.

TIPTOP

Public health experts and social activists on May 10, 2021 rooted for a more sustained communication for behaviour change in the realm of hand-washing in India, not only to save people from the COVID-19 pandemic but for a longer-term prevention. Speaking at the Hand Hygiene Summit, organised by the Integrated Health and Wellbeing (IHW) Council, supported by Dettol, on World Hand Hygiene Day, they also emphasised the need of inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration for holistic communication.

"There is a lot of diversity in needs and inequity in India when it comes to handwashing practices. Behaviour change in people has remained unaddressed for a long time. We need a localised, multi-channel, sustained communication to nudge behaviour change, starting with children and schools — people them-

selves can come up with innovative localised solutions for their needs," says Urvashi Prasad, Senior Public Policy Specialist in the Office of Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog.

Highlighting that the better hand-washing practice in the past one year is a fear-driven adoption, Arundati Muralidharan, Manager Policy (WASH in Health & Nutrition, and Schools), WaterAid India, says, "We need to make hand hygiene a social norm because fear-driven adoption of hygiene practises can remain active for a limited time. Hygiene should be a part of a group of protective behaviours, but there are mindset barriers for which raising awareness is important. We have not made enough investment on hygiene in the community setting or public space; inter-ministerial involvement is important to achieve that goal."

SLIMLINE

In response to the massive surge of COVID-19 cases, Gurugram-based Elanpro (Elan Professional Appliances Pvt. Ltd.), India's one of the leading commercial refrigeration company hailed its efforts by providing 2050 Oxygen Concentrators at zero-profit. Available with different capacity, Elanpro has airlifted 2050 oxygen concentrators to distribute it across India in order to support people during these difficult times. Offering at a zero-profit price, the company is contributing for the betterment of society.

With the second wave of COVID-19, it is

even more imperative to ensure that apart from metropolitan cities, every district or rural area should be provided with the necessary equipment. The demand for Oxygen Concentrators and Cylinders have increased. Considering these factors, Elanpro has been reaching out to several NGOs and hospitals to lend a helping hand to the district and rural areas. Deepening its engagement with the Government, Elanpro has also reached out to Gurugram District Commissioner's office to contribute 100 units of Oxygen concentrators in COVID Centre at Gurugram.

INBRIEF

At a time when Delhi's medical infrastructure is reeling under a menacing COVID wave, leading Delhi-based dermatologist Dr Chiranjiv Chhabra has launched a new initiative to provide medical support and guidance to patients by converting her skin and wellness clinics into COVID tele-support centres.

The initiative aims to help provide medical guidance, monitoring and support to patients with mild or moderate illness in a bid to bridge the medical care gap being experienced by a large number of patients.

Led by Dr Chhabra, her team of 12 doctors and health educators have taken charge of the tele-support initiative with an objective to enable early treatment for as many patients as possible, thereby preventing complications and need for critical care.

"Over the past few weeks, we have been witnessing an alarming situation where healthcare is crumbling under the weight of the pandemic and patients are running from pillar to post to be able to find a doctor. We have seen a number of people experience severe complications because of delay in treatment as doctors are heavily occupied treating critically ill patients. This is a gap we want to bridge through our tele-support initiative. Our main objective is to treat mild and moderately ill patients early so that we can save them from reaching a stage where they would need hospitalisation or oxygen support," said Dr Chiranjiv Chhabra, leading dermatologist and founder of Alive Wellness Clinics.

To undertake this initiative, Alive Wellness Clinics has tied up with general physicians and chest specialists to facilitate tele-consultation of patients under the guidance of the team.



The emergence of edtech

Until some years ago, the concept of an online classroom was frowned upon and not considered with any seriousness. However, the pandemic has changed such thinking, says VIKAS KAKWANI



The education industry has undergone a revolutionary change in recent times. Although these were ushered in by a chain of unfortunate events, the results have been astounding, especially for the Edtech industry where start-ups that had received \$553 million worth of investment in 2019. These have shot up to nearly \$2.22 billion now. A report by RedSeer and Omidyar Network India states that India's EdTech industry is expected to touch \$3.5 billion by 2022. Almost all the companies in this sector have fared well and are looking forward to expanding themselves in the coming quarters. But that was not the case before the pandemic.

Until some years ago, the concept of an online classroom was frowned upon and not considered with any seriousness. The only role that technology was thought to play in children's lives was that of a distraction, making them stray away from their actual goals. Though it hasn't been smooth sailing, times are changing. In India, accessibility is a major road-

block, with only 20 per cent of students having access to both laptops and smartphones, whereas 20 per cent have access to just smartphones, 30 per cent have access to only feature phones, while the remaining 30 per cent don't have any devices. Such a scenario does bring forward lots of challenges along with a myriad of opportunities for the Edtech industry. To understand the opportunities and to gauge its growth, one has to return to the time when the pandemic had just hit the country.

The nationwide lockdown in March 2020 had sent our 250 million student population into a state of disarray. Given that the country was still grappling even to understand the situation, the hardships faced by students were barely considered.

While some urban institutes and student populace did turn to the online medium without a fuss, their strength was still numbered. It has to be duly noted that in rural areas where the technological infrastructure is limited, such solutions are out of reach.

Returning to the brick and mor-



tar classroom was unlikely and in face of such a crisis, edtech companies proved to be godsend for students as well as parents.

The technology used by these platforms is well-researched as are the teaching methods. Combining cutting-edge technology with a person-

alised learning methodology, arguably, these are delivering much better results than conventional teaching methods.

Now, if you are wondering how Edtech can reach out to rural masses and the disadvantaged, you only have to look at the innovations

brought on by some of the leading companies. Using the impetus of the government for Digital India along with the increased internet penetration, these firms are ensuring that their resources are available at the lowest possible cost.

The fact that these apps can be downloaded easily with most of the content being free for users implies edtech companies are striking the right balance between profit and the cause of imparting quality education.

With the pandemic showing no signs of abating, analysts have predicted that these companies' positive growth trend will sustain in the forthcoming quarters. However, even after the situation changes, these platforms are here to stay. What is likely to change is rather the conventional attitude to education. The time is not far when almost all conventional classrooms will depend on edtech solutions for a more wholesome learning experience.

(The writer is the founder of an edtech firm - AAS Vidyalaya.)



Kubbra reveals her idea of perfect old age

Sacred Games' actor Kubbra Sait says that in her sixties or seventies, she would like a tiny home with a little garden probably growing cabbages. "Oh yeah, if it faces the beach, then that will be amazing," quips Kubbra.

The performer, who left behind a successful corporate career for acting, recently featured on the *My 3 Secrets To Success* audio series on Audible Suno.

Answering a question on what her 60s or 70s should look like, she adds, "So, some clean air to breathe, a book to read and probably my fingers entwined with someone I love. I think that would be an ideal 60s-70s to me. We're not chasing every day. I don't think I'm chasing today either. I'm thinking of the opportunities that come to me at the moment but there isn't a chase anymore, and I think if you stop chasing things, you automatically reach a point of calmness and that's very different from being numb from the chase."

On the work front, Kubbra shared her excitement about

Foundation, that's about to release this year. "It's I think one sole project that I have put in about a year and a half of mine, and that feels extremely valuable," says she.

"I don't think today your currency is money. Your currency is time. So if I have been able to break out of that mental block and invest time in a project that I believe in, I think it's going to pay off pretty well and I'm quite excited about it. Apart from that, I've got three work projects in process and when they come to realisation, I'll share them with you. But otherwise I can say that, I've got a book coming, I've got a show coming out, I've been on this Audible podcast," adds she.

Finally, speaking about her Zen mode: "I'm being in a state of solitude in a state of Zen. I am being that person. And it's just allowing you to recognise the past, the present and the future as it's going to be. I think it's very important to be in a state of Zen so that you can allow the future to unfold. It's exciting. So, what's keeping me busy, my Zen is keeping me busy."

—IANS

Promising crossover

The *Mission Majnu* team spills the beans on what made actor RASHMIKA MANDANNA the first and the best choice for the role

Actor Rashmika Mandanna will soon be seen in her Bollywood debut opposite actor Sidharth Malhotra. *Mission Majnu* is her first foray into a spy thriller yet the team unanimously felt that she was their first and best choice for the film.

"We were looking for a formidable actor with a fresh face when we chanced upon some of Rashmika's work. I was especially impressed by her nuanced performance in *Dear Comrade*. We felt she had the right mixture of innocence and beauty required for the crucial role, which needed a sensitive interpretation of the character. I think there's a very good chance the Indian audience will discover another film star from the South," said Shantanu Baagchi, the director of *Mission Majnu*. The prominent ad filmmaker is making his directorial debut with the forthcoming film.

Producer Amar Butala also expressed his admiration for Rashmika, "My first interaction with her was over a zoom call during the lockdown when we narrated the script of



Mission Majnu. It was remarkable to see how she picked up every nuance of her character even though we were on a video call. It's been a pleasure working with her because not only she brings a solid experience and confidence of a big film star with her, but also has the sincere energy of a newcomer."

Producer Garima Mehta chimed in, "The first thing you see in Rashmika is her dazzling smile, the sheer energy and charm that she exudes. Since her debut film *Kirik Party*, later *Geetha Govindham* and *Dear Comrade*, she has grown into an exceptional actor. We were sure she would bring alive her role in the film. Rashmika and Sidharth share great on-screen chemistry in *Mission Majnu* and would surely be loved by her fan base."

The actress' impeccable work has not only left the audience in awe but a team of producers and directors as well who wasted no time to bring her on board for the film. Besides *Mission Majnu*, Rashmika has another Bollywood film in the pipeline, *Goodbye* with Amitabh Bachchan. She would also be starring in the Telugu action thriller titled *Pushpa*, along with Allu Arjun later this year.

Technology comes to the rescue to ensure personal hygiene. Let's find out how

Go waterless

Hygienic lives, especially with the ongoing pandemic. Inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices are the cause of death for lakhs of people every year, majority of them being children. Provision of clean water is one of the most effective methods of saving lives.

However, clean water is a novelty in the current world as we are using tons of it every day to drink, bathe and cook. But it is not available around the world on an equitable basis. Hence, we all should make sure that water is conserved.

Benefits associated with waterless formulations include reduction in plastic waste, reduction in costs and aiding the creation of effective products. Along with reduce-reuse-recycle processes, a sustainable life can be achieved with the use of waterless personal care products wherein technological advancements play a key role.

Waterless technology can now be used in every aspect of personal hygiene in these ways:

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene could be easily managed with waterless soaps which require no or less water to rinse off the foam. Such waterless products can come handy on a long trip and in distant places with less water availability.

Bodily hygiene

A daily shower is necessary to



maintain personal hygiene and healthy living. A well-showered body reduces the odour produced by perspiration, and get rid of most germs. In situations with no water availability or inability to take a shower, use a waterless body bath and shampoo to maintain a shower routine.

Oral hygiene

The use of a toothbrush for cleaning after all meals is essential for the prevention of oral cavities and infections. Food and drinks leave residue in the teeth that grow.

Newer technology like waterless toothpastes could be a new addition to your personal care kit where you would require no water to rinse off the

residue. A safe to swallow formulation makes it easy to use and effective for dental hygiene.

Intimate hygiene

Avoiding infections, fungus or itching is essential. Women should wash their genitals more than twice a day to avoid bacterial infections such as by E.coli. This can be done by using waterless intimate hygiene products as personal care. For men, it is advised to keep hygienic with waterless products.

Head hygiene

Hair should be washed two or three times a week. Waterless shampoo is another addition to personal care for maintaining hygiene with no water. It is

an easy to use spray formulation rinsed off with a towel or a tissue.

Another feature of waterless products is that they are free from parabens and preservatives. That concludes to them being extremely safe for all skin types. A transition to waterless products is a road taken by lesser people but once the move has been made it would lead to a lesser carbon footprint.

The products are sold in more concentrated, compact packages, they can significantly decrease the number of materials needed to house them. And, shipping waterless formulas requires less space and therefore, less fuel. It's these seemingly small benefits that actually have the potential to make a real impact.

—IANS



FEEL LIKE OUTSIDER: SHARMAN

Actor **SHARMAN JOSHI** has worked in Bollywood for over two decades now. While he understands how the film industry and the connections work, he says he still feels like an outsider and feels sorry for himself for not being connected to the star parivaars of Bollywood.

"I understand that there is a certain monogamy of certain generations of families that have been in business, and tomorrow my children would."

fairtalk

AMIT SIAL



"I don't want to take up any cop role for sure. I really want to cut down on playing intense roles as it's started to play with my head. I want to do lighter roles, common man roles... even a dark comedy would do. Actors get stereotyped in everything. It's your responsibility how to get out of it. You need to think about yourself, no one else will."

dailytalk

VISHAL MISHRA



"I think artistes who are constantly writing music, putting out videos, and entertaining everyone since the last one year while staying at home are also acting like frontline workers. Artists are frontline workers. Our audience never knows what mental condition we are going through while singing a song but what keeps us going is their love."

I AM WARM WITH MY CHILDREN: JOLIE

Actor **ANGELINA JOLIE** said that she makes sure to always be very warm and gentle when it comes to her kids.

She added that this is something that she has learnt from her late mother Marcheline Bertrand.

She said, "My mother was very gentle. I can be many things in my work and in my life, but I am very warm and gentle with my children. That kindness and warmth is a foundation that's unbelievably important."



▶ short passes

BABAR ICC PLAYER OF MONTH
DUBAI: Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and Australian women's team wicketkeeper Alyssa Healy were on Monday declared the ICC players of the month for their stellar performances during the month of April.

WEST BROM RELEGATED
LONDON: West Brom was relegated after one season back in the Premier League after losing 3-1 at Arsenal, ending Sam Allardyce's record of never having taken a side down from England's top division as a manager.

VIRAT, ISHANT GET FIRST DOSE
MUMBAI: India captain Virat Kohli and senior pacer Ishant Sharma on Monday received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccination. While Kohli, who now lives in Mumbai, posted a photo on Instagram, Ishant and his wife Pratima, a former India hoopster, also uploaded their selfie in front of a vaccination centre.

VARUN, WARRIER BACK HOME
NEW DELHI: KKR leg-spinner Varun Chakravathy and pacer Sandeep Warrier, who were the first to test -ve for Covid-19 in the currently-suspended IPL's bio-bubble, have returned to their respective home cities after completing 10 days of mandatory isolation.

CAVANI EXTENDS MAN UTD STAY
MANCHESTER: Edinson Cavani has agreed to extend his contract by one year and will remain with Man United until June 2022.

GORETZKA COULD MISS EUROS
MUNICH: Bayern Munich midfielder Leon Goretzka will be ruled out for the rest of the season and could miss the start of Euro 2020 after picking up a thigh injury.

SRH OWNERS DONATE ₹30 CR
NEW DELHI: Owners of IPL team Sunrisers Hyderabad, Sun TV, on Monday donated ₹30 crore towards Covid-19 relief work being undertaken by the state and central Governments along with various NGOs.

SHAFALI TO PLAY FOR BIRMINGHAM
NEW DELHI: India's teen batting sensation Shafali Verma is set to play for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred and might also turn up for a Sydney franchise in the Women's Big Bash League.

SINNER SETS UP NADAL CLASH
ROME: Jannik Sinner booked a second-round showdown with nine-time champion Rafael Nadal at the Italian Open after a 6-2, 6-4 win over Frenchman Ugo Humbert on Monday.

BACH'S JAPAN VISIT POSTPONED
TOKYO: IOC chief Thomas Bach has been forced to postpone a visit to Japan, organisers said on Monday, after a coronavirus state of emergency was extended less than three months before the Tokyo Games.

FLICK AGREED GERMAN DEAL
BERLIN: Hansi Flick, who is stepping down as Bayern Munich coach at the end of this season, will take over the German national team after this summer's Euro, a German newspaper reported on Monday.

MEDVEDEV RETAKES 2ND SPOT
PARIS: Daniil Medvedev reclaimed the world number two spot from Rafael Nadal in the latest ATP rankings released on Monday, with no Americans in the top 30 for the first time.

MURRAY TO COMPETE AT QUEEN'S
LONDON: Andy Murray will warm up for this year's championship at Queen's, where he has lifted the trophy five times.

Doubt IPL 2021 will continue in India: Neesham

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand all-rounder Jimmy Neesham doesn't think that there is any chance of the remaining 31 matches of Indian Premier League happening in India this year, after the tournament got postponed due to Covid-19 cases inside the bio-bubble.

He also has serious doubts whether India would be able to host the 16-team T20 World Cup later this year.

Both IPL and T20 World Cup are set to be re-scheduled to the United Arab Emirates.

"If it did start up again, I doubt the IPL would be in India again," said Neesham told *Newshub*.

"I think we've already seen plans for the T20 World Cup to move out of India later in the year and they're going to be ultra-cautious about that sort of thing," said Neesham, who was playing for Mumbai Indians in the now suspended league.

Neesham feels the bio-security lapses could be due to the fact that the teams were travelling across the country.

"Even though we were flying on chartered planes, we have to go through customs, hand your details over to people, walk through terminals, so there were always going to be pinch-points there," he said.

Neesham said that it is difficult to comprehend how the bubble was breached.

"We obviously don't know yet exactly how teams were infiltrated, but... It's such a difficult prospect to



keep everything perfect and when you've got so many guys that are close to each other, there are going to be social interactions after games. "Once one team has it, you start looking back through your last week at who you talked to and who you shook hands with. It certainly

gets your mind racing." However Neesham isn't averse to the idea of going back to India again and playing the IPL if it resumes. "For me, I signed up for the IPL knowing what it might be like. I felt like it was an obligation — I made

the commitment to go and never had any thoughts of pulling out individually before the tournament finished," he said.

"Guys will have different opinions on that, but it's my job, I'm a professional and you have plenty of times you tour countries you're not that keen on going to, but it's about getting on the field and getting the job done.

"I would sign up again, especially once vaccinations start rolling out. I don't think anyone really predicted how quickly it would all come crashing down over there and how quickly we would be on the first plane out."

The IPL was suspended last Tuesday after four players and two coaches from four different teams tested positive for the dreaded disease within a space of 48 hours.

"To be honest, I wasn't expecting it to get called off. I think, when you've got so many teams in different bubbles, the expectation was that there would always be some cases at some point during the tournament," Neesham said.

"We thought teams might have to lock down and miss a couple of games, like we've seen in other organisations, like the NBA. The show must go on.

"The thing that was so shocking was how quickly it came up in so many different teams at the same time and we didn't really have an option in the end."

Neesham said they were "not out of the woods yet" and may develop symptoms in the coming days.

Poms won't force quarantining IPL stars back for NZ series

AFP ■ LONDON

Team director Ashley Giles says England have no plans to "rush" their IPL stars back for next month's Test series against New Zealand and could introduce new faces to cope with a packed schedule.

The suspension of the IPL because of the devastating coronavirus outbreak in India has left England with a potentially larger player pool than they envisaged for the two-Test series against New Zealand.

Among those currently serving quarantine periods are Jos Buttler, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran, all of whom have Test contracts with England.

They could be available for County Championship matches starting on May 20 before joining the England 'bubble' ahead of the first Test against New Zealand at Lord's, which begins on June 2.

But even if the trio are in

contention, England may have to call up fresh reinforcements given Ben Stokes and Dom Sibley are currently injured, while fast bowler Jofra Archer has only recently returned to action with Sussex's 2nd XI.

"All these guys (returning from the IPL) are currently in quarantine and have had a number of spells in quarantine and bubbles," Giles said on Monday.

"We need to look after them, with the amount of cricket they've got coming up. We're not going to rush or force them back into cricket."

"Chris Silverwood (the England coach) will work with each and every one of them, as will our medical teams on what's best for their progress."

After the New Zealand series, England have five Tests at home to India before travelling to Australia later this year in a bid to regain the Ashes. England also have numerous white-ball commitments, including the planned T20 World Cup in India.



Malinga could return to play World T20

Kandy: Sri Lanka fast bowler Lasith Malinga could return to the national team for the T20 World Cup, said the national selection committee chairman Pramodya Wickramasinghe.

"We will talk to Lasith soon. He is in our plans for the forthcoming T20 tours, including the T20 World Cup coming up in October," said Wickramasinghe.

With back-to-back T20 World Cups scheduled in 2021 and 2022, Sri Lanka would need an experienced bowler like Malinga to marshal the attack.

"Lasith is in our plans. We always should not forget that he is one of the greatest bowlers in our country even in

his present form. His records speak for that. There are two back-to-back T20 World Cups that are coming up, this year and next year. We are going to discuss our plans with him when we meet him in the next couple of days," Wickramasinghe added.

Malinga said he is "looking forward" to meeting the selectors.

"I have retired from both Test and ODI cricket but not from T20s. I am keen to know how the selection committee is going to get the services of a senior player like me for the national side. In my career, I have proved on many occasions that I can come back after a long break and perform well for my country," he said.

No point in comparing yourself with anyone: Nagwaswalla

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Left-arm pacer Arzan L. Nagwaswalla, who will fly to the UK with the Indian team as a stand-by player, says shutting down comparisons, staying patient and focussing on routine played a key role in yielding the desired outcome for him.

Only a few Parsi cricketers have made the cut for the national team and Nagwaswalla is hoping to join the list after his stellar performance for Gujarat has placed him at the doorstep of the Indian team.

"The grind in domestic cricket has helped me understand the importance of routine. How to practice, how to bowl during practice and how to focus on the process and keep following the same, without

thinking too much about the result," Nagwaswalla told *bcci.tv*.

"If you follow the process correctly, you will surely get the desired outcome. In addition to that, it is important to be patient. There is no point comparing yourself with anyone and ponder over why someone else is selected and not me," the 23-year-old added.

The left-arm pacer was Gujarat's leading wicket-taker with 41 scalps in the 2019-20 season when his side made the Ranji Trophy semifinals.

The youngster said he was mightily impressed with the way the Indian team played and won in Australia and he just can't wait to see the senior players in flesh and bone, whom he has so far watched only on TV.

"I am excited to meet and

see all the cricketers *jinko abhee tak bass TV par India ke liye achha karte hue dekhna hai*. They have secured some big wins against Australia and England recently. So, I am looking forward to learning as much as I can from all of them."

"I am very excited to meet this team. Despite the injuries, we went on to win the series in Australia. I just can't wait to witness the team which has such a strong self-belief," Nagwaswalla said.

He is also a big fan of the team's bowling coach Bharat Arun.

"Under Bharat Arun sir, our fast bowling has seen a great transformation. We have a superb bench strength. I am sure I will get to learn a lot from Bharat Arun sir."



Pak seal series

AP ■ HARARE

Pakistan quickly took the one wicket it needed on Monday for another innings victory over struggling Zimbabwe in the second Test and a 2-0 series sweep.

It took only five overs on Day 4 for Shaheen Shah Afridi to end it by having Luke Jongwe caught behind by wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan for 37.

Pakistan won by an innings and 147 runs at Harare Sports Club to go with the innings and 116-run win in the first Test at the same venue.

Pakistan also claimed a slice of history with Afridi's 5-52 making him the third Pakistan bowler in the Test to take a five-wicket haul. He and Nauman Ali (5-86) took five each in the second innings after Hasan Ali's five in the first.

It's the first time Pakistan has had three bowlers with five wickets in a match, and the first time it has happened in Tests since 1993.

Zimbabwe continued on 220-9 in its second innings, on the brink of defeat and still 158 runs short of making Pakistan bat again. The home team added only 11 more runs to be all out for 231.

Zverev wins Madrid title

AFP ■ MADRID

Alexander Zverev recovered from a set down to defeat Matteo Berrettini 6-7 (8/10), 6-4, 6-3 and win the Madrid Open for a second time on Sunday as he clinched a fourth Masters 1000 title.

The German fifth seed recorded his third consecutive top-10 victory this week, having eliminated five-time Madrid champion Rafael Nadal and Dominic Thiem to reach the final.

Zverev, last year's US Open runner-up, added to his 2018 Madrid triumph as he denied Berrettini's successive titles following the Italian's win in Belgrade last month.

"It is great (to win this



title), especially after losing my last three finals I played at Masters 1000 events," Zverev said. "This is definitely special and I just want to enjoy this one"

Zverev is now targeting a second Rome title at the Foro Italico this week. He captured his first Masters there in 2017 before also winning in Montreal later that year.

"Rome is also an event I like and enjoy, so I hope I can perform in the same way as I did here and we will see how it goes there. I feel awesome," said Zverev.

After Rome, the German star will target a maiden Grand Slam title at Roland Garros. However, he has yet to get beyond the quarter-finals in Paris.

"To play well at Roland Garros, you have to play well during the season on clay. In that sense, it's (Sunday's win) important to me," said Zverev.

UEFA has issues with CL switch to London, Porto a backup

London (AP): UEFA has given the British government until Tuesday to offer the travel waivers it requires to move the Champions League final to Wembley or the all-English game could be played in Portugal instead.

The May 29 showpiece is set to be moved from Istanbul after Turkey was added to England's "red list" of countries with severe coronavirus outbreaks.

Porto is one of the back-up options after UEFA hit snags with its preferred location of London.

UEFA held talks with the British government on Monday but was unable to secure exemptions from

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quarantine for everyone they want to be able to attend a final in London — including sponsors of the Champions League, their guests and

media — people familiar with the talks told The Associated Press.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the talks.

UEFA has given the British government until Tuesday to decide whether authorities can offer all the travel waivers required.

Switzerland, where UEFA is based, is among the amber list of countries from which people arriving in England have to quarantine for 10 days, albeit organized individually rather than via the mandatory hotel isolation in place for arrivals from red-list countries.

ICC tribunal clears Gunawardene of corruption charges

Dubai (PTI): An independent anti-corruption tribunal of the ICC on Monday cleared former Sri Lanka player Avishka Gunawardene of corruption charges, allowing him to resume participation in cricket-related activities with immediate effect.

Gunawardene was facing two charges under the Emirates Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code.

The tribunal upheld one charge (2.4.6) against Sri Lanka's Nuwan Zoysa but dismissed the other three charges.

"The detailed decision will be announced to the parties in due course and remains subject to appeal," an ICC released said. Gunawardene was charged with Article 2.1.4 that relates to — Directly or indirectly soliciting, inducing, enticing, instructing, persuading, encouraging or intentionally facilitating any Participant to breach Code Article 2.1.



onship is very important," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose side lost 3-1 to Juve in the San Siro in January.

"We still have to fight. But I have a very young team, that is maturing as this evening proved."

PSL unlikely to resume in UAE due to COVID-19 travel ban

Karachi (PTI): The chances of PSL's sixth edition resuming in the United Arab Emirates in June diminished after the UAE government announced a ban on travellers from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The travel ban will come into effect from Wednesday.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) was in talks with the Emirates Cricket Board to seek permission from the UAE government to hold the remaining 20 matches of the PSL in Dubai and Abu Dhabi from June 1.

"The PCB was expecting things to be finalised in next 24 hours due to the Eid holidays in both countries but now with this ban imposed by the UAE government till May 12, the only option available to the PCB is to hold the

matches in Karachi," a source said on Monday.

He said the PCB was reluctant to have the matches in Karachi or anywhere in Pakistan given the experience of last March when the league had to be postponed due to a sudden surge in COVID cases among players and officials.

A board official has also said that the National Command and Operations Authority, which oversees COVID-19 situation in Pakistan, had also advised the PCB against holding the matches in Karachi.

"Their is one more suggestion to have it in Sri Lanka if not in UAE, but that will require a lot of logistical and other issues and will also be dependent on clearance from the government," another source said.

Pakistan's former captain and batting great, Javed Miandad, has advised the PCB against holding the PSL's remaining matches.

"I think this is not the right time to be playing cricket when all the focus is on saving lives from this dreaded virus," Miandad told a cricket website.

He criticised the PCB for thinking about even shifting the PSL matches to UAE.

"This is not the time to play cricket, it is the time to save lives. In these times of crisis, we should be more focused on saving lives rather than playing cricket."

"The whole world has been affected by the coronavirus. India, where the world cup was supposed to take place, is also severely affected by the epidemic," he noted.