

OPINION 6
THE SINKING OF
A PAPER BOAT

WORLD 8
ISRAELI STRIKES KILL
42 IN GAZA CITY

SPORT 12
NAPOLI KEEP
CL HOPES ALIVE

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MANOJ
BAJPAYEE IS
ON A BREAK
10 VIVACITY

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 2,49,57,400 (+2,74,158)
DEATHS: 2,74,218 (+3,899)
RECOVERED: 2,11,48,375 (+3,59,154)
ACTIVE: 35,24,562
MAHA: 53,78,452 (+34,389)
K'TAKA: 22,03,462 (+31,531)
KERALA: 21,47,968 (+29,704)
UP: 16,19,645 (+10,505)
DELHI: 13,93,867 (+6,456)

CAPSULE

BIGGEST CONSIGNMENT OF OXYGEN ARRIVES

New Delhi: Setting a new record, the biggest-ever single consignment of 3,600 oxygen concentrators landed in New Delhi from China on Sunday amid Covid-19 crisis in India.

30 DIE IN VK SINGH'S VILLAGE IN 2 WEEKS

Bhawan: Over 30 people have died in Union Minister VK Singh's ancestral village in the past two weeks, the sarpanch said on Sunday as the unusually high number of deaths raised concern that Covid-19 could be the cause.

ISRAELI STRIKES KILL 42 IN GAZA CITY

Gaza City: Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 42 people on Sunday, medics said, making it the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and the territory's militant Hamas rulers nearly a week ago.

Kafan demand rises by 30 fold

Covid deaths keep looms running round the clock

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

There are things one takes for granted, like the cloth used to cover a body. Not any longer. The "kafan" (shroud), generally a thick, white, unstitched piece of cloth, is suddenly dearer. It is on account of the unusual spike in the number of deaths owing to Covid-19. More people are buying the cloth to drape their dear ones on their final journey than for the living these days.

In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, small handloom and machine looms are busy making bolts of "kafan". The production has been ramped up to meet the surge in demand. While these units produced 10,000 individual pieces of the shrouds a month, they are coping with the demand for a similar number every day. That's not it. They need to be cut to size, packed and transported as fast as possible.

Such looms in Bihar's Gaya are functional round-the-clock. The labourers have no shift breaks. They are meeting the challenge to dispatch the stuff not only to various places in Bihar, but Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal and even the north-eastern States.

An official of the Handlooms and Textile Department of Uttar Pradesh said that the demand of one lakh "kafan" per month man-



ufactured in Lohta area of Varanasi, Mau and Azamgarh has now nearly trebled. The powerloom units of these areas supply to entire northern India, from the Poorvanchal region to Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and other parts of southern India.

"Nowadays these are done on powerloom and it's no more a handloom material. Raw materials come from Gujarat and then made in looms of UP, Bihar and then supplied to most parts of India," said the official.

Underlining a factor of class divide, the official said as the making of the product is not a profitable one, it is mostly confined to areas where cheap labour is available, like in Bihar, UP and West Bengal. Manpur in Gaya is known as

the Manchester of eastern Bihar and the workers here are doing overtime to meet the demand for about 50,000 "kafan" per day for adjoining areas and other States. Besides cotton, the units from here also make shrouds out of polyester and silk.

"We have been working round the clock. Pained to make bolts of kafan. The demand is high, but we have been supplying with full integrity and at same price as earlier. No black marketing for this product," said Dwarka, who owns a small unit at Patwatoli, Gaya, which has several small units.

He said all religions require this piece of cloth and the price could vary from place to place and depending on sizes range from ₹100 to ₹1,000.

Tauktae disrupts LIFE, VACCINATION



Electric poles fell due to heavy rain and wind from Tauktae cyclone, at Biderahalli near Chikmagalur on Sunday. PTI

Cyclone claims 8 lives, inoculation drive suspended in coastal areas

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The anti-Covid inoculation drive in most parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu was affected on Sunday due to the cyclonic storm "Tauktae" that displaced thousands of people and claimed eight lives so far.

Keeping in view of India Meteorological Department's warning, most of the coastal regions in these states suspended the drive for two days—Sunday and Monday.

The inoculation was suspended for two days — Sunday and Monday in Mumbai, Palghar, north Konkan, Thane, Ratnagiri districts in Maharashtra. Gujarat has also suspended the drive for two days. The drive was also affected in Kerala, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka.

Heavy to heavy rainfall, gusty winds with 145 to 175 kmph, disruption in power supplies, floods in low lying areas, water logging and blockage of roads due to fallen trees impacted the inoculation drive.

As per preliminary reports, the cyclone has claimed eight people (two in Kerala, two in Goa and four in Karnataka), uprooted a large number of trees, electricity poles and damaged a large number of properties so far.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Tauktae which has taken the form of a "very severe cyclonic storm" is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and reach the Gujarat coast on Monday evening.

IAF, Navy poised for action

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bracing for Cyclone Tauktae, the Government has put the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Navy on stand-by with nearly 40 planes

ready to be deployed at a short notice. The IAF planes on Saturday morning airlifted teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to some parts of Gujarat where the cyclone is

likely to hit. Giving details here on Saturday, official said the Navy's ships, aircraft, helicopters, diving and disaster relief teams are on standby for rendering full support to the State Government.

Covid-19: Active caseload drops below 10K in Ranchi

State reports less than 50 deaths

PNS ■ RANCHI

The active caseload of Covid-19 dropped below the 10,000 mark in Ranchi on Sunday, while Jharkhand registered less than 50 Covid deaths for the first time in a day since the beginning of May, figures compiled by the health department highlighted, indicating an improvement in the Covid-19 situation in Jharkhand.

As per a bulletin released by the National Health Mission (NHM), the State reported at least 7,119 Covid recoveries against 2,321 fresh cases of infection on the day, which brought the active caseload in Jharkhand down to 36,540.

The active caseload in the State has seen a dip in the past one week and officials have attributed the fall to stricter lockdown measures.

At least 255 Ranchi residents were found infected by Coronavirus on the day, while 2260 Covid patients recovered here, bringing the active caseload down to 8,125, the NHM



A medic administers Covid-19 vaccine dose to a beneficiary during the 3rd day of 18 plus vaccination drive at a vaccination centre, in Ranchi on Sunday. Ratan Lal / Pioneer

in its bulletin.

Ranchi, however, accounted for at least 18 of the 48 Covid casualties reported in Jharkhand on the day, Sunday's developments took the Covid toll in Ranchi to 1,411 and that in Jharkhand to 4,479.

The state also completed vaccinating more than 1 lakh residents in the age bracket of 18 years to 44 years on Sunday. As per Government data, the first dose of vaccine against Covid-19 was administered to as many as 37,102 residents in

the aforementioned age bracket. So far, at least 1,11,203 residents in the age bracket of 18 years to 44 years have received the first dose of the vaccine in Jharkhand.

Almost all the 24 districts in the State reported a dip in the active caseload on Sunday. East Singhbhum reported 521 recoveries against 208 fresh cases of infection and the active caseload there stood at 3,685. The Covid toll in the district reached 901 as at least seven more patients died there

in the past 24 hours, the NHM stated in its bulletin.

Among other districts, Bokaro reported 429 recoveries against 233 cases, while Dhanbad reported 92 recoveries against 138 cases. At least 104 people were found infected in Hazaribag while 446 Covid patients recovered there. Giridih reported 236 recoveries against 99 fresh cases on the day.

The State on Sunday tested swab samples of 40,291 residents and around 5 per cent of them were found infected. So far, more than 3.15 lakh Jharkhand residents have been infected by Coronavirus and around 87 per cent of them have recovered, highlights Government data.

The growth rate of Covid cases also dropped in the State on Sunday. As per figures with NHM, the growth rate in Jharkhand was 1.09 per cent against the national average of 1.02 per cent.

The doubling rate in Jharkhand was 64.18 days against the national average of 68.36 days.

However, the mortality rate in the State was 1.41 per cent, higher than the national average of 1.10 per cent.

Covaxin effective against all corona variants in India, UK

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indigenously developed Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine — Covaxin — has produced neutralising titres (concentration) against all key emerging variants tested, including the B.1.617 and B.1.1.7, first identified in India and the United Kingdom, according to a study published in peer-reviewed medical journal Clinical Infectious Diseases.

A modest reduction in neutralisation by a factor of 1.95 was observed against the B.1.617 variant compared to the vaccine variant (D614G).



Chief Minister Hemant Soren meets the orphan and the disabled inmates of Cheshire Home for moral and financial support during Covid-19 pandemic, at Cheshire Home in Ranchi on Sunday. Ratan Lal / Pioneer

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LOCKDOWN

Jamshedpur: New drop gates to nab violators



18 CHECKPOINTS ACTIVATED

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

In view of fresh strictness enforced as part of the ongoing lockdown, the district administration has come up with fresh check posts. Police personnel have been deployed near Straight Mile Road near Keenan Stadium, Mango Bridge, Sakchi and other key locations. Vigil will be stepped up near the new bridge at Domuhani in Sonari and Adityapur Bridge. The administration plans more such points in view of rising cases of coronavirus.

"Following Government's orders, we have tightened our drive against violators. Anyone coming on road without valid return or pass is being taken to task. The vehicular movement through Dobo-Kanderbera road and Mango bridge has increased we have set up a new check post to nab

those violating norms. We have started the patrolling for keeping a vigil on the road so that commuters as well as the truck and trailer operators may feel secured while negotiating through it," said an official.

According to officials, only those carrying a valid movement pass, ID of their work-place in the city and involved in the supply of essential services are being allowed to enter from all entry points with the city. Police teams have barricaded the roads and set up locations. Vigil will be stepped up near the new bridge at Domuhani in Sonari and Adityapur Bridge. The administration plans more such points in view of rising cases of coronavirus.

All persons coming in through the borders of East Singhbhum district, have to report to the nearest institu-

tional/paid quarantine centres for coronavirus tests before proceeding to their destinations. The interstate/inter-district checkpoints mentioned under serial numbers are: 1) Pandih Checkpost, 2) Sonari Domuhani, 3) Adityapur (near the Kharkhar River Bridge under JNAC), 4) Kadma Toll Bridge under JNAC, Katin Chowk, Bankura Road, Patamda, 6) Haldipokhar Chowk, Potka, 7) Hata Chowk, Potka, 8) Keshpur Checkpost, West Bagudia, 9) Ghatshila, Jagannathpur, Baharagra, and 10) Kalladia Odisha Road, Baharagra.

Dhalbhum SDO Nitish Kumar Singh has given instructions to officials to ensure that people comply with the rule to wear masks when they are outside. He said that those found without masks are taken into task. "We have increased vigil and make meticulous plans to prevent a fresh wave of the disease. Action is being taken against those guilty of moving around in public places without masks," said Singh.

Start-up firms donate 33 O₂ concentrators to Palamu medical college

PNS ■ DALTONGANJ

Two Indian start-up firms - Action COVID-19 Team Grant and Swasthya - on Sunday donated 33 oxygen concentrators to the Medinair Medical College Hospital's Covid care centre, said the civil surgeon Palamu Anil Kumar Srivastav.

The civil surgeon said on Sunday morning he was informed of the consignment of 33 oxygen concentrators. He expressed his thanks to these two organisations for this very timely donation of the oxygen concentrators.

He said anything that helps save our Covid positive patients



whether big or small is most welcome. He said pulse oximeters are the most used thing now which is in the custody and care of the ward assistant and things which were used most are also likely to be defunct in the long run.

Srivastav said here also a little number of the pulse oximeters have become non-operational which he said has been asked to be entered properly in the official record as well.

Following the arrival of the sufficient number of the regulators for the medical oxygen cylinders the temporary arrangement invented by the civil surgeon Anil Kumar Srivastav has been set aside.

The temporary arrangement was the use of the discarded stethoscopes which were made to double up as forked pipe line for the supply of the oxygen to Covid positive

patients in bed.

It was this civil surgeon who had started this local arrangement to overcome the shortage of the regulators here.

Sources said aspirational district fellow of the Niti Aayog A K Chouhan here in Palamu played a major role in getting 33 oxygen concentrators for which the civil surgeon said Covid care hubs.

This newspaper had on Sunday carried a news story regarding no fan in summer in the Nursing Station here for which the civil surgeon said one wall fan has been installed for the convenience and comfort of the nurses on duty here and the problem of sweating out has been dealt with.

Second edition of online Summer Camp from today

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Tata Steel's sports department is set to organise the Summer Camp 2021 from May 17 to June 8 through digital means for the second time in a row. The objective of this year's summer camp is to promote health & fitness through training on various sports at health & fitness disciplines which is also in line with GOI's initiative Fit India.

The Sports Department has been organising sports camps in its operating locations of Jharkhand and Odisha for the last many years for school students. In view of the ongoing second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, the Company will leverage digital to connect with the young and budding sporting talent during the camp while ensuring safety. The camp, accessible across the globe free of cost, primarily caters to children in the age group 6-18 years through sports like cricket, basketball,



swimming and more. People in other age groups including adults can also benefit from modules on Yoga, Zumba etc.

The camp participants will receive basic induction from expert coaches on 19 sporting disciplines through specially curated online videos (available on Tata Steel's corporate website and YouTube channel every morning from 5 AM onwards).

The camp is being organised with 'GRITZO' as the Nutrition and 'ENERZAL' as the Hydration partner. More information on Summer Camp 2021 can be accessed at <https://www.tatasteel.com/corporate/our-organisation/corporate-initiatives/summer-camp-2021/>.

INBRIEF

BJP OPPOSES E-PASS SYSTEM FOR LABOURERS

Dhanbad: District BJP vice president Sanjay Kumar Jha has criticised the government for its "unrealistic" approach towards making compulsory issuance of e-pass for rural workforce especially for labourers, missions and women construction workers and vegetable vendors. The order indicates how much mental bankruptcy prevails in the government, the BJP said. Demanding withdrawal of such order, Jha said if workers are being asked to come for work there must be no binding of pass on them. Similarly, treating media persons alike indicates that government wants to hide the information.

CONGRESS LAUNCHES AMBULANCE SERVICE

Dhanbad: Minister for Rural Development Alamgir Allah inaugurated an ambulance for covid patients here at local circuit house. District Congress president Brajendra Prasad Singh who was present on the occasion said the ambulance would be made available to needy persons free of cost. The ambulance has been provided by Congress leader Ashok Singh and would be made available either through district Congress office secretary or via Kings Petrol pump.

MAN KILLS SON FOR NOT FULFILLING LIQUOR DEMAND

Girdih: In the village of Sakheyabad under the Jamua police station, a man murdered his son for not complying with his demand for liquor. On Friday, the body of Chinku Verma (14) father Vinod Verma was found floating in a well in Sakheyabad village. Holding a press conference at Jamua police station on Saturday, SDO Noushad Alam said that Sanjay Kumar Verma, a resident of Motileda in Bengabad, the maternal uncle of the deceased, had given a written application. The SDO said that on his instructions, research was started under the supervision of Police Circle Inspector Naveen Kumar Singh. In the course of research, it was revealed that Vinod Mahato, the father of the deceased, killed his son.

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Police launch mask checking drive in Bokaro

SURESH NIKHAR ■ BOKARO

In an attempt to check the spurt in Covid-19 cases, the Bokaro Thermal police have launched a mask-checking drive at different locations and are imposing penalties on the violators apart from educating people on the Covid-appropriate behaviour here on Sunday.

"Special drives were undertaken in Jharkhand chowk, Railway station, Railway gumi, Govindpur, Kathara, and Jarandih in Bermo sub division and cases were lodged against those who were venturing out without wearing masks. Several such cases have been lodged in the day," said Bokaro Superintendent of Police Chandan Kumar Jha and appealed to the people to localities to all the COVID protocols.

Jha said that in compliance with the orders of the Jharkhand government, in the wake of daily increase in the Covid-19 cases, police launched a special campaign to educate the public about the need of wearing face masks.

Meanwhile, a massive

awareness drive has been launched in the coal belt and the Inspector cum Officer in Charge Ravindra Kumar Singh appealed to the public of Thermal city, Kathara and Jarandih in Bermo sub division and asked them to wear masks and mentioned the social distance. Mostly police official of

Inspector Ravindra Kumar Singh visited several locations within his police jurisdiction. He took part in a special drive at Bokaro Thermal, Kathara Jarandih and Govindpur village and asked them to wear masks and mentioned the social distance. Mostly police official of

Bokaro thermal Police Station including K.K.Ray, Gautam Govind, Ravi Sharma and other officers participated in the programme.

The spread of Corona infection is increasing rapidly in Bokaro Thermal and its surrounding areas. Every day

people are getting infected, despite no improvement being seen in the habit of people on the way.

Every day the situation is getting worse, the administration is strict, yet the negligence continues on the part of the public, say police.

WEST BENGAL RESIDENTS GET JABS IN DHANBAD

PANKAJ KUMAR ■ DHANBAD

While a large number of Jharkhand citizens in the age bracket of 18 to 44 years are struggling to get a slot for vaccine against COVID-19, residents of neighbouring West Bengal are reaping benefits from vaccination centres within Jharkhand's territory.

Reports suggest that this happened at two vaccination centres located near the border of West Bengal in Dhanbad district where entry by foot too is easy.

These two centres happen to be De Nobili school Mathon premises and Kumardhubi High School premises, according to local people. In both these schools, students of West Bengal too have taken admission thus knowing the internal roads of movements and this made it easy for them to come to Jharkhand.

People from Barakar, Kalyaneshwari Asansol took the vaccine here. Since the

REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THIS HAPPENED AT TWO VACCINATION CENTRES LOCATED NEAR THE BORDER OF WEST BENGAL IN DHANBAD DISTRICT WHERE ENTRY BY FOOT TOO IS EASY

area is dominated by Bangla speaking population and it is not easy to pinpoint which state one belongs to.

Health authorities of Jharkhand remain unaware as their main focus is on completing the given targets.

When asked none of the senior officials at district level showed interest in this particular question.

Interestingly, one who spoke requested not to be named. He said since registrations are being done centrally and slots are booked by individuals this may have happened. "We cannot stop them from taking vaccines once registered," he said.

Meanwhile, people also complain of poor facilities at some of the vaccination centres like one in the heart of the town at the district border office.

This location has no alternate arrangement of power supply thus people were seen waiting in a room with no light and fan after vaccination.

30 support beds come up at Mango

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Following efforts made by Health Minister Banna Gupta 30 oxygen supported beds were started at Mango Keralia Public School.

Addressing reporters on the occasion, Gupta said that 30 oxygen supported beds have been launched for Corona patients and if needed, more beds will also be extended here.

"I was constantly demanding that Covid Hospital be made for public convenience in this area, so it has been launched today," said Gupta.

Civil Surgeon Dr. AK Lal, Mango Notified Area Committee special officer Deepak Sahai and others were present on the occasion.

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RISE IN BLACK FUNGUS

State asks hosps to set up care facilities

Letter shot to RIMS, TMH, Bokaro General Hospital

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Government has asked all the leading hospitals in Jharkhand to set up post-Covid care centres and improve the existing infrastructure for rehabilitation of Covid survivors following a rise in cases of Covid-induced Mucormycosis and fatalities caused by residual symptoms.

In a letter addressed to four State-run hospitals and the general managers of Tata Main Hospital in Jamshedpur and Bokaro General Hospital, the Government stated that in accordance with the recommendation of the 'Expert Committee of COVID-19 Management', all the hospitals are directed to set up post-Covid care facilities for management, treatment and counselling of Covid survivors without further delay.

In the letter addressed to the hospitals on Saturday



A medic collects swab samples from a woman for COVID-19 test, at centre in Ranchi on Sunday

evening, the Government has also asked them to appoint nodal officers for management of post-Covid care facilities. "The arrangements should be made in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for post-Covid counselling and treatment," the letter stated.

Even after the first wave of Covid-19 last year, the gov-

ernment had directed state-run hospitals to set up post-Covid care facilities. At present, there is a functional post-Covid care facility at the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Ranchi, where at least two patients of black fungus have undergone treatment so far.

The government's letter was addressed to RIMS, Tata Main Hospital, Bokaro General Hospital, SNMMC Dhanbad,

Sheikh Bikhari Medical College Hazaribag, Phulo Jhano Medical College Dumka and Medini Rai Medical College in Palamu.

Health officials said that the post-Covid care facilities will not only treat physiological problems in survivors but also address psychological problems caused by Covid-19. Many Covid survivors in the past have complained of anxi-

ety disorder, depression and obsessive-compulsive behaviour in Jharkhand, say psychiatrists.

Cases of post-Covid complications have been on the rise in Jharkhand since the second wave of the pandemic hit the state back in April. Besides life-threatening residual symptoms in survivors, cases of black fungus or Mucormycosis have also been reported in different parts of the state, say doctors.

While the government does not maintain an official record of Covid-induced black fungus cases, doctors say that at least 50 patients have developed Mucormycosis following the use of high dosage of steroids during their treatment for Covid-19.

"Some patients infected by black fungus need critical care, and it is important that hospitals get ready with the infrastructure to treat such patients," said Dr. Anindya Anuradha, an Ophthalmologist who has been treating Mucormycosis at Bhagwan Mahavir Medical Superspecialty Hospital here.

Govt begins distributing paddy seeds on 50% subsidy

PNS ■ RANCHI

In an attempt to support farmers of the State, the Department of Agriculture, Government of Jharkhand has started distributing seeds at 50 per cent subsidy. At present, seeds are being sent to such districts in the first phase where it is a tradition to start farming in Rohini Nakshatra on May 25. Addressing a Press meet at his office, Agriculture Minister Badal said on Sunday that many challenges have come up in the Corona period. "Many department officers have also been infected. Despite this, the department has taken initiative in the interest of farmers. In the first phase till May 21 and in the second phase till June 1, the work of providing seeds to all the districts is going on. Currently, 44,000 quintal seeds have been ordered. If needed, the Government will buy more seeds," he added.

Badal said that this was the first time after the formation of Jharkhand that an agricultural calendar was published in this year and it was mentioned in the calendar that Seed Festival



to be celebrated on May 25 but this could not be possible due to the global pandemic Covid. In such a situation, seeds were provided in Godda on May 12 and 1000 quintal seeds were sent there, he added.

Similarly, 300 quintal seeds to Sahibganj, 590 quintal to Garhwa, 577 quintal to Giridih, 415 quintal to Hazaribag, 500 quintal to Jamshedpur, 480 quintal to Jamtara, 200 quintal to Pakur, 190 quintal to Ranchi and 426 quintal seeds have been sent to Seraike. Priority has been given to the places where farming starts with the onset of Rohini Nakshatra. Seed is being provided before the beginning of sowing season. In the next phase, the remaining districts will get seeds by the end of this month. First order of total 428 quintals has been placed," said Badal.

The Minister also said that seeds are being made available to the districts according to the demand of LAMPS and PACS, Cooperatives of the respective districts. "Along with seeds, farmers also need fertilizer on time. Discussions are being held with the Central Government for fertilizer. It has been requested to make it available to the farmers at the rate of last year. The Centre has finalized three companies for this. The news of local retailer, shopkeepers from different parts of the State, charging more for fertilizer has come to the fore. The departmental Secretary and the Director have been given necessary instructions in this regard. If needed, a task force will also be formed to stop black marketing like last year. Middlemen involved in black marketing will be caught and there will be legal action," he added.

On the question of farmers' payment for paddy, Badal said that he has an eye on this issue. Farmers will be paid on receipt of the State. First order of total 428 quintals has been placed," said Badal.

Govt to focus on test, trace and treat strategy



Passengers outside Ranchi railway station on Sunday

PNS ■ RANCHI

Amidst the surge of COVID-19 cases in Jharkhand, the State Government has decided to focus on 'test, trace and treat' strategy. With the State going for stringent restrictions, with e-pass mandatory for movement on roads, the Government during this period has focused to break the Corona chain by going for more test, trace and treat strategy. The Government in this connection is working on two-pronged strategies - first, increasing the time slot for test and second is increasing the number of testing centres. The Government is focusing on carrying out Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) on a large number of individuals.

Rapid Antigen Test is also done by collecting samples from the nose or throat with a swab. Though the results can be revealed within 30 minutes, this test is not considered as accurate as RT-PCR test as it may not read into viral proteins that are part of Coronavirus at the initial stages.

RT-PCR test uses Real-Time Reverse Transcriptase (RT)-PCR Diagnostic Panels for detecting the presence of viral RNA and is quite accurate. The number of testing centres will be at least 2 to 20 according to city/area population. The biggest thing is that all these centres will be functional from 7 am to 10 pm. Additional Chief Secretary, Health Arun Kumar Singh has issued directives to all the DCs, Municipal Commissioners, Executive Officers and Special Executive Officers of state to focus on testing and tracing of suspected Covid patients.

As per Additional Chief Secretary (Health) directive at least 20 rapid antigen testing centres will be set up in the municipal areas of Ranchi, East Singhbhum and Dhanbad district. At least 10 booths should be set up in the remaining municipal corporation area, and at least 5 in the city council and at least 2 booths in the city panchayat area.

Additional Chief Secretary has also instructed for regular

cleaning, hygiene and sanitization at the Municipal area at appropriate places. At the same time, the Deputy Commissioners have been instructed to ensure the availability of test teams and required a number of test kits at the centre. At present the test is carried out at the test centre which is functional from 10 am to 3 pm, with the new directives it will be functional for more than 14 hours. Meanwhile, citizens have welcomed the decision of the state government to increase testing time and centres. Priyanka Poddar, the resident of Kanka Road area said, "We welcome the decision of the State Government to intensify testing and tracing. Now it is a well-established fact that the best way to check the infection is breaking the chain of the infection. It can be achieved only through testing and tracing. Patients who are tested positive should be isolated so as to break the chain of infection."

E-pass provisions cause confusion among residents

PNS ■ RANCHI

State police and administration on Sunday hit the road to clamp down the 12 days long stricter lockdown to break the chain of COVID-19 virus.

Roads largely remained deserted with policemen minutely checking if private vehicles plying on the road have the valid e-pass and people are not on the road without genuine reasons. At some places police personnel had to strictly deal with people who were gathering on the road without any cause. But there was no restriction on people who were travelling due to medical reasons. Heavy deployment of police force was seen across the state capital. Only vehicles listed under essential service category were seen on the road.

But the e-pass system introduced by the Government caused much panic and confusion among people due to conflicting and confusing provisions of the e-pass system.

The official website of the



Police personnel conduct E-pass checking during lockdown with the theme 'Health and Safety Week' to curb the surge of coronavirus in Ranchi on Sunday

government for e-pass <https://epassjharkhand.nic.in> repeatedly crashed creating further problems for people. The social sites including Twitter handle of chief minister Hemant Soren, health minister Banna Gupta and other officials remained flooded with people complaining about inadequacy and shortcomings of e-pass.

Initially, website reserved passes for only seven categories of work like construction, agriculture, grocery, medical and others. There was no clarity on whether people visiting vaccination centres

require e-pass as there was no slot for vaccination.

By late Saturday night and Sunday morning chief minister Hemant Soren and government officials ran for clarification over people pointing out shortcomings and anomalies.

The government clarified that people having an appointment for vaccination don't need e-pass. The Chief Minister said that over one lakh people have availed e-pass. The government further rectified and improved the website and additional criteria for the e-pass was added.

"Till Sunday morning I was desperately trying to apply for the e-pass but the website crashed. My vaccination is scheduled for Monday morning and I was not sure whether I can visit the vaccination centre without an e-pass. By afternoon I came to know that for vaccination no e-pass is needed. Also, I could successfully get e-pass for my husband," said Shilpa Mishra, a resident of Kanke road.

JPCC to observe Rajiv Gandhi's death anniversary amid restrictions

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) on Sunday announced that the party will observe the 30th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi across the State on May 21 with adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour.

The party will organise several programmes to remember the former Prime Minister. The party has decided that the death anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi will be observed as per the guidelines and protocol issued by the State Government in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

"A letter in this regard has been received from All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary KC Venugopal. In the light of the same letter, it is against the rules to hold any major conference in the Corona transition period, so the party has decided to organize the program under the guidelines and protocol issued by the State Government on this occasion," said Finance Minister Rameshwar Oraon.

On this occasion the party workers will focus this time on relief work of people, provision of food and essential medicines. "While the basic medicine kit will be prepared and distributed among the needy. The kit will contain the necessary medicines according to the demand. The JPCC Chief has also directed that the distribution programme at the State, district and block level will be carried out by volunteers wearing face masks, providing food to the relatives of the patients

ON THIS OCCASION THE PARTY WORKERS WILL FOCUS THIS TIME ON RELIEF WORK OF PEOPLE, PROVISION OF FOOD AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINES

in the hospital, ambulance drivers, funeral venues and other needy people," said Oraon. "Also, people should be helped in the registration of vaccination. All MLAs must give at least two ambulances from their MLA funds in or near their respective district. These programs should be conducted with the same readiness even after May 21. JPCC has been providing relief to all districts from its Ranchi headquarters since April 21," he added.

JPCC Spokesperson Alok Kumar Dubey informed that the State has been divided into four zones for the success of the programme and the Congress has entrusted four minister with the responsibility. Oraon has been assigned the charge of Ranchi and Khunti, Simdega, Gumla, Lohardaga and Latehar districts. Congress Legislator Party Leader, Alamgir Alam has been given the charge of Dumka, Sahibganj, Pakur, Godda, Jamtara, Deoghar, while Health Minister Banna Gupta will ensure the success of the programme in East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, Seraikela Kharsawan, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Dhanbad and Agriculture Minister Badal Patra has been given the responsibility of Palamu, Garhwa, Chatra, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Koderma.

Fresh Covid cases decline, recovery rate improves

PNS ■ RANCHI

The COVID-19 positivity rate in the State has been declining for the past few days, while at the same time there has been an increase in the number of recovered patients. Experts opine that this is a good trend in checking the infections from spreading. At the same time experts say that the peak period or phase of the second wave of corona from April 28 to May 7 has passed. If you go past two days, on Thursday the number of positive cases reported was 3776, while at the same time 7112 people recovered from infections. On the next day the confirmed cases dropped to 3157 while the number of discharged patients was 6762.

If a day wise figure is considered then the highest number of 8095 Covid patients was found in the state on 28 April. After this, in the first week of May, an average of 6000 patients were tested positive. However, after May 7, the number of new patients has been steadily decreasing and the number of recovered patients is also increasing. In the last four days, the number



A deserted road of a street during Lockdown with the theme 'Health and Safety Week' to curb the surge of coronavirus in Ranchi on Sunday

of new patients has been reduced to around 3000 a day. How deadly was the second wave of Corona, it can be gauged from the fact that out of the total death 4366 reported in the State, 3256 people lost their lives from April 1 to May 14 within 44 days. However, the figure is of the state govern-

ment. If you consider the number of cremations, the figure can be much larger. Indian Medical Association state secretary, Dr Pradeep Kumar Singh said, "It is a big relief for the state that the number of fresh cases is declining at the same time the number of recovered patients is

increasing day by day."

The state recovery rate has surpassed the national recovery rate and if the trend continues for days then the recovery rate will soon cross 90 per cent in coming days. In the state, in the past seven days 33,962 newly infected cases were found at the same

time 49,332 people recovered from infection. With this, active patients have reduced to 45 thousand. The result of the reduction of about 16 thousand active cases in 7 days is that the recovery rate in the state is now better than the national average. The national recovery rate average is 83.8 percent, while that of Jharkhand is 84.1 percent. Jharkhand has now reached 13th position in the entire country in terms of recovery rate.

On Saturday 3157 new patients were found, 6762 positive patients also recovered. Ranchi had the highest number of 465 new patients, but 2206 people also recovered from infection. Barring Singhbhum, Palamu, Ramgarh and Hazaribagh, new patients were found below 200 in other districts. Only one patient was found in Pakur.

Experts claim that the best way to beat the virus infections and get over the situation is to follow Government guidelines on Covid protocols. The government from Sunday has imposed strict restrictions and it is anticipated that infection rate will decline further in coming days.

Two Maoist commanders die due to Covid, claims Intelligence report

VILAY DEO JHA ■ RANCHI

The COVID-19 virus has now sneaked into the so-called liberated zones and camps of left wing extremist groups in Jharkhand as intelligence inputs suggest that at least two rebels succumbed to Covid 19 last week while over a dozen are battling for their life.

In the report submitted to the union ministry of home, about three days back, intelligence agencies have claimed that both rebels were the area commanders of banned outfit CPI (Maoist). They were active in Jamro; of Saraikela-Kharsawan district sharing a border with West Singhbhum and Khunti district. Intelligence sources claimed that over a dozen rebels of CPI (Maoist) are suffering from Covid 19 infection and the actual figure of infection and death can be more than that.

Jamro is one of the hotbeds of CPI (Maoist) where in February this year an encounter between security forces and rebels had taken place. The report claims that in



Suspected Maoists during a training session

Chhattisgarh around eight to nine rebels have died due to Covid 19.

Fearing arrest, they avoid visiting hospitals for treatment and test. During the last week of March, a Maoist Manish Yadav was arrested in Chhota after he turned-up at a Covid testing centre. He was wanted for planting landmines in 2015 to target police patrolling party. Rebels suffering from Covid 19 virus are claimed to be awaiting treatment at their hideouts from available quacks of villages. But they lack med-

icines, oxygen cylinders, PPE kits, oxygen flow meters and like to treat their ailing comrades. Rebels are unable to procure medicines, oxygen and other supplies due to heavy presence of security forces and anti-naxal operations. They are managing somehow by arranging home isolation medicine kits supplied by the Jharkhand government among people.

On being contacted Jharkhand Police spokesperson and ADG RK Mulk said that Jharkhand Police is also verifying the fact.

Keep ration shops open for longer period, States told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Worried over the reports that the ration for the month of May and June had not been distributed to the people facing enormous hardship due to the pandemic and the lockdown, the Government on Sunday asked the State Governments to keep ration shops, also called fair price shops, open for a longer duration on all days to ensure timely and safe distribution of the subsidised and free food grains to the poor.

Many ration card-holders say the facility has not begun yet despite announcements by the Centre and the State Governments. The delay in distribution of ration is forcing people to buy food grains from the open market at non-subsidised prices. Besides, ration card holders are also not getting any information about when food grains would be distributed.

Besides, the ministry has received several representations that during the current lockdown in some States/UTs, ration shops' timings have been curtailed due to which the intended beneficiaries might not be getting adequate time to lift their entitled food grains. Most of the States and UTs are under lockdown, and situation and ration shops are not allowed to open.

"In view of the ongoing



lockdown in some States/UTs, that may curtail the functioning hours of Fair Price Shop (FPS), an advisory has been issued on 15th May, 2021, to keep the FPSs open, preferably on all days of the month," the Union Food Minister said in an advisory to States and Union Territories.

The Centre is distributing highly monthly subsidised foodgrains of 5 kg per person at ₹1-3 per kg via ration shops to over 80 crore poor under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Over and above this, additional 5 kg of free grains are being distributed to the same beneficiaries under the PMKAY (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana) scheme for two months — May-June in order to minimise economic hardships being faced by the NFSA beneficiaries

during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the advisory, the Centre has asked States to keep the ration shops open for distribution of foodgrains under the NFSA as well as PMKAY scheme in a staggered manner throughout the day, maintaining proper social distancing and adhering to all Covid-19 protocols, it said.

To facilitate this, States have been requested to ensure that FPSs are exempted from the restricted hours of opening of regular markets as foodgrains are covered under essential items, it added. Further, the Centre has asked states to take necessary steps for timely distribution of foodgrains at their FPSs without causing hardships to the beneficiaries, and to give wide publicity to the measures undertaken in this regard.

Tauktae wreaks havoc across Kerala, K'taka, Goa

Likely to reach Gujarat coast today evening

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gale-force winds, heavy rainfall and high tides swept the coastal belt of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa as Cyclone Tauktae hurtled northwards towards Gujarat on Sunday, leaving four people dead, damaging hundreds of houses, uprooting electricity poles and trees and forcing evacuation.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Tauktae which has taken the form of a "very severe cyclonic storm" is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and reach the Gujarat coast by Monday evening. The IMD said Tauktae would cross Gujarat's coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district by early Tuesday morning and tidal waves are likely to inundate several coastal districts during the landfall.

The very severe cyclonic storm Tauktae over the east-central Arabian Sea moved nearly northwards with a speed of about 11 kmph during the past 24 hours, it said.

"It is very likely to intensify during the next 24 hours. It is very likely to move north-northwestwards and reach the Gujarat coast in the evening hours of May 17 and cross the State coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district around May 18 early morning," the IMD said.

With the cyclone intensifying, the wind speed along and off Gujarat coasts in Porbandar, Junagadh, Gir Somnath and Amreli districts will reach 150-160 kmph gusting to 175 kmph by Tuesday morning. It will reach a speed of 120-150 kmph gusting to 165 kmph over Devbhoomi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar districts during the same period, the IMD said.

"Gale winds with speed reaching 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph are likely to prevail along and off Valsad, Navsari, Surat, Bharuch, southern parts of Ahmedabad, and Anand districts, as well as Dadra, Nagar Haveli, Daman (Union Territories) from May 17 midnight till Tuesday morning," it said.

A nearly 3-metre-high tidal wave is expected in Junagarh, 1-2.5 metres above astronomical tide is likely to inundate coastal areas of Diu, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Bharuch, Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad, Anand, Surat and about 0.5-1 metre above astronomical tide is likely to inundate coastal areas of Dwarka, Jamnagar, Porbandar, Kutch and the remaining coastal districts of Gujarat during the time of landfall, the IMD said.

An estimated 1.5 lakh people are being shifted from low-lying coastal areas in Gujarat while 54 teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) have been deployed in the State.

Maharashtra too was bracing for impact as the Met department predicted the

Amit Shah holds review meeting with CMs of Tauktae-hit States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday held a review meeting with Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Administrator of Daman & Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli to assess the preparedness to deal with the situation arising out of Cyclone Tauktae.

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba chaired a meeting of the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC). The meeting was held through video conferencing with Chief Secretaries of the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. Secretaries of various Union Ministries also attended the meeting.

Chief Ministers Uddhav Thackeray and Vijay Rupani apprised Shah of the cautious and relief measures undertaken at coastal areas. "Shah said that a 24x7 control room is functioning in MHA, which can be contacted at any time for any assistance by the States. He said Indian Coast Guard, the Navy, Army and Air Force units have also been put on standby and surveillance aircraft and helicopters are carrying out aerial sorties.

Union Home Minister directed the senior officers to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely evacuated and all essential services maintained, including health and oxygen facilities, power, telecommunications, drinking water etc. and that these are restored immediately in the event of damages caused to them," said the MHA.

Reviewing the preparedness of the Central and State

agencies, Cabinet Secretary stressed that all measures should be taken to evacuate people in areas affected by the cyclone, so as to ensure zero loss of life and damage. Preparatory arrangements to restore power, telecom and other important services should be ensured. Gauba also emphasised that all steps should also be taken to avoid disruption of functioning of hospitals and Covid Care Centres and maintenance of regular supply of oxygen to them.

Necessary arrangements have been made in this regard to ensure uninterrupted functioning of hospitals and Covid Care Centres, along with ensuring generation and supply of oxygen to Covid facilities across the country.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) informed that they have deployed and made available 79 teams in the affected States.

and extremely heavy rainfall in Raigad on Monday.

Four deaths have been reported from Karnataka's Uttara Kannada, Udipi, Chikmagalur and Shivamogga districts in cyclone-related incidents.

The water level in many dams across Kerala showed a rising trend after heavy rains in the

catchment areas, prompting authorities to sound an alert. Gusty winds and heavy rainfall have been lashing several parts of Goa since Sunday morning. Power supply in a majority of areas of Goa has been disrupted as electric poles were uprooted due to the high-speed winds cause by the cyclone.

Modi talks to CMs, takes stock of Covid Status

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday spoke to the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry on the Covid-19 situation in the States and the Union Territory as they briefed him on the measures being taken to contain second wave of Covid-19.

Modi, who has been regularly speaking to Chief Ministers to take stock of the pandemic situation in States and Union Territories, has told the States that localised containment strategies were the need of the hour.

Besides, he has asked the States to ensure oxygen supply in rural areas.

According to sources, the Chief Ministers informed the Prime Minister that local guidelines were being followed and vaccination being accorded the highest priority.

The Prime Minister is to start next week his direct interaction with the District Magistrates of 54 districts to workout Covid-19 strategy following its second wave.

With 3.11 lakh fresh coronavirus infections, India saw the lowest rise in daily Covid-19 cases after a gap of 25 days, while the death toll rose to 270,284 with 4,077 fresh fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry.

NIA raids four locations in Madurai Facebook post case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday conducted searches at four locations in Tamil Nadu in connection with Madurai fundamentalist Facebook post case.

The case relates to incriminating Facebook post by accused Mohammed Iqbal, an extremist advocating ideology of ISIS and Hizb-Ul-Tahrir terror groups.

The searches were conducted at Kazimar Street, K. Pudur, Pethaniyapuram and Mehboub Palayam in Madurai.

During the searches, sixteen digital devices including laptop, hard discs, mobile phones, memory cards, SIMs, pen drive, and many incriminating documents were recovered, the NIA said.

The case was originally registered by Madurai police under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The NIA had re-registered the case on April 15 this year and took over the investigation.

Investigation has revealed that the posts on the Facebook page "Thoonga Vizhigal Rendu" is in Kazimar Street, the NIA said.

The posts were designed to incite communal disharmony among different religious groups in a manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order," it said.

Accused Md Iqbal alias Senthil Kumar of Kazimar Street, Madurai, was arrested on December 2 last year and is presently in judicial custody.

States, UTs asked to use IoT tools ensure water supply to villages

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The National Jal Jeevan Mission (NIJM) has asked all States and Union Territories (UTs) to roll out sensor-based IoT solutions to measure and monitor water supply in rural areas, so as to ensure water service delivery in rural homes by addressing various issues that cause disruption on a regular basis.

In a statement, the Jal Shakti Ministry said, "India has one of the most vibrant Internet of Things (IoT) eco-systems in the world, with various supporting enablers making it conducive for companies seeking to serve the global demand beyond national boundaries.

The Government of India has introduced a number of initiatives to leverage the benefits of these disruptive IoT technologies in multiple sectors."

To utilise this expertise, the NIJM, and the Ministry had set up a Technical Expert Committee to prepare a road map for measurement and monitoring of water service delivery systems in the rural areas. The committee has eminent members from academia, administration, technology and specialists from the water supply sector.

The committee met 11 times and despite the Covid pandemic, finalised the report, which has shared to the states/UTs and provides a framework to design, develop and establish a coherent system that is able to exchange the data at local and central level.

The broad framework will help the States/UTs in firming up the desired standards to meet the requirement of change from mere infrastructure to ensuring water service delivery. The NIJM, in partnership with state governments and sector partners, has started facilitating sensor-based water supply systems on pilot basis in several villages.

The data from 11 pilot locations about the daily water supply, its quantity and regularity are shown on the Jal Jeevan Mission dashboard.

"Many States like Bihar, Punjab, Haryana have come forward for the implementation. Sikkim, Manipur, Goa have completed basic survey works. Gujarat has begun navigating the sensor-based rural



water supply systems in 1,000 villages. A technology grand challenge launched by NIJM in partnership with MEITY, Government of India, is going to be showcases in 100 villages in states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Manipur," the Ministry said.

The data collected from the field locations will be transmitted to the state and Central server and can be used to monitor the functionality (quantity, quality and regularity of water supply) at the state and Central level. This will ensure to minimise service delivery outage and water loss and monitor the quantity and quality on a long-term basis.

The additional advantage of this data would be to analyse the demand pattern of the user groups over time and use this information for better management at the aggregate level.

Citing the eight-phase West Bengal Assembly elections, the

Modi wanted to become 'Vaccine Guru': Congress

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the Government's handling of the Covid pandemic, the Congress on Sunday also faulted its vaccine policy, saying the muddle arose because the "Prime Minister wanted to become the vaccine guru".

Addressing a virtual press conference, Congress spokesman Pawan Khera said, "The Government of India did not manage the crisis as well. When it came to negotiation with vaccine manufacturers, when it came to putting in place a vaccine policy, everything was centralised. Actually, it was not even centralised, it was individualised, because someone wanted to be a 'Vaccine Guru'."

He said that India was not short of oxygen but the government delayed setting up of 162 on-site oxygen plants across 14 states by 8 months and "when the crisis hits hard, the State Governments were left with no choice but to panic."

As we all know that the Narendra Modi wanted to be known as a "Vaccine Guru".

He said that India was not short of oxygen but the government delayed setting up of 162 on-site oxygen plants across 14 states by 8 months and "when the crisis hits hard, the State Governments were left with no choice but to panic."

Citing the eight-phase West Bengal Assembly elections, the



"super-spreader rallies" and the Kumbh Mela, Khera said that questions were being asked on the Government's decisions. "You can't have centralised decision-making and decentralised responsibility, both have to be decentralised, both have to be in tune with each other."

"Today, because of you, different states are negotiating with the same companies, vaccine manufacturers for their people. They will all get different prices... Why? Who will be answer these questions too?" he asked.

Khera alleged that when the nation was getting overwhelmed by the pandemic, one man with his government "still busy trying to save a fake image that he has built of himself. His fake image cannot be more important than my real life, than the real lives of my family members, my friends, my loved ones..."

Nishank receives int'l honour, dedicates it to Covid warriors

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has been honoured with "International Invincible Gold Medal" of 2021.

In a statement to the media, Tony Nader, president of Maharashtra Organisation world-wide and various Maharshi Universities, said that Nishank has been recognised for his extraordinary commitment and outstanding service to humanity through his writings, social and illustrious public life.

The decision was made after due deliberations by a high-powered committee duly constituted under the leadership of Nader, who is the global head of the organisation.

The statement further praised the relentless efforts and great commitment of Nishank to propagate ancient Vedic values, wisdom and traditional knowledge in the most scientific manner.

Nader lauded Nishank for his continuous support and



commitment to world peace programme.

The honour was announced at a two-day virtual session which was attended by representatives from over 110 countries. The award will be formally presented to the Minister on Guru Purnima this year.

Nader also congratulated the Minister for the most innovative, creative, scientific and inclusive New Education policy.

He added that the new education policy crafted by the government will go a long way in establishing human values globally as the base of modern education.

Accepting the award, Nishank said that he was grateful to the selection committee.

He dedicated his award to all the corona warriors who are

risking their lives to save the patients in this difficult time.

In his emotional address, Nishank said that he has just come out of covid infection. He has felt the pain and closely observed the dedication, struggle, duty, service of our doctors, nurses, health workers.

In order to save the lives of others, they put their lives in danger. He said, "We will definitely win on the strength of our Corona warriors."

Nishank said that he is very happy that his writings, social and public service have been appreciated.

He said he was committed to promote scientific research on Indian traditional knowledge and india's eternal life values of life so that it can benefit humanity.

Thanking Nader for his positive views on education policy, Nishank said that this policy not only help India to meet the upcoming global challenges but will establish the country as Vishwaguru in times to come.

PC questions Govt on fall in daily Covid jobs

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday questioned the Narendra Modi Government on the decline in the number of daily vaccination while taking a jab at Health Minister Harsh Vardhan over the shortage of vaccines.

"Why is the number of vaccinations administered going down every day? It was only 11,60,000 doses on Friday, bringing down significantly the daily average of May. It is a far from the 42 lakh doses administered on April 2."

"The only reason and explanation is shortage of vaccines. Of course, the loyal and obedient Union Health Minister will flatly deny any shortage of vaccines!" Chidambaram said.

Harsh Vardhan on Saturday reviewed public health response to Covid-19 and progress of vaccination in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra

Pradesh and Gujarat. All the state health administrators were advised to increase ICU and oxygenated beds, undertake oxygen audits, take stock of availability of medicines in the state and strengthen their medical workforce.

Detailing the ramping up of vaccine production, he said, "We will have 51.6 crore vaccine doses by the end of July including the 18 crore doses already administered. Sputnik has been approved."

This along with the slated approval of the new vaccine of Zydus Cadila, Serum Institute of India: Novavax vaccine, Bharat Biotech's nas vaccine and the Genovax mRNA vaccine will push the availability of Covid vaccines to 216 crore doses in the August-December period."

Nadda flags off medical supplies to Himachal, praises Anurag Thakur's role

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

BJP national President JP Nadda on Sunday flagged off a large quantity of Covid-19 relief materials to Himachal Pradesh under the party's 'Seva Hi Sangathan 2.0' campaign.

The Covid relief materials comprise nearly three lakh three-ply face masks, 50,000 N-95 face masks, 25,000 gloves, 10,000 face shields, 7,000 PPE kits, 6,000 oxygen mask, 3200 NMRMs, 1500 oxygen regulators, 250 nasal cannula and other medical items.

The BJP National President also flagged off consignment of medical equipment procured 17 mobile medical units under the "Saansad Mobile Swasthya Seva" with the help of Union Minister of State for Finance &



Corporate Affairs, Anurag Thakur.

Nadda praised the efforts of Thakur for this noble initiative in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as the biggest medical and health crisis in the history of mankind but all Indians under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have unitedly

fought this war against the pandemic and soon we will emerge victorious in this war against Covid," he said.

He urged all BJP office bearers, leaders and workers of Himachal Pradesh to ensure last mile delivery of all medical aid and other assistance in the state so that every single needy and poor person gets relief and are not left unattended from getting the medical supplies and relief materials.

Maha logs 974 deaths

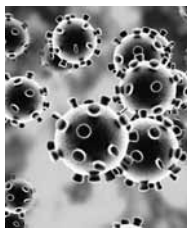
By RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 triggered daily deaths jumped to a staggering 974 — the second highest-ever number of fatalities recorded in Maharashtra, on Sunday, even as the infections came down further to 34,389. A day after Covid-19 claimed 960 lives and left 34,348 others infected, the number of daily deaths went up by 64 to touch a figure of 974, while the infections went down marginally to 34,389.

It may be recalled that on April 28, the number of daily deaths breached the threshold of 1,000 in Maharashtra to reach the figure of 1,035, which has been the highest-ever number of deaths recorded since the break out of Covid-19 in March-April last year. The daily tally on that day was a consolidated figure that had included 50 earlier deaths which had earlier not been accounted.

6,86,295 to 6,87,830.

The situation in Pune improved a bit as the 'active cases', which had come below one lakh mark early this week, improved once again as the 'active cases' dropped from 93,245 to 82,397. Mumbai with 33,574 active cases stood second in the State.



Farmer's stay anchored on the Ganga river during the Covid-induced lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday

Situation in Kerala grim as 29,704 more test Covid positive

By KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Covid-19 situation in Kerala continued to be critical as the number of new cases showed that 29,704 more persons were afflicted with the pandemic in the last 24 hours that ended at 6 pm on Sunday. The department of health said in its release that 89 lives were claimed by the pandemic and the Test Positivity Rate remained at 25.61 per cent.

In a simultaneous development, the Centre expressed its doubts over the figures released by the Government of Kerala and asked Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to be transparent in the details about the pandemic which he shared in his media briefing.

V Muraliedharan, Union Minister of State for external affairs, who is the new member of Kerala BJP, in a statement expressed reservations and doubts over the claims made by Vijayan viz-a-viz the pandemic. He reminded the Kerala Government that this was the time to be transparent in all details connected with the state of Covid-19 in Kerala.

"This alone will help all of us in fortifying a preventive mechanism to spread the transmission of the disease. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that this was the time to be honest and transparent."

The death tally from Kerala is a matter of serious concern, said the Union Minister.

59 fall prey to virus in J&K

By MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Covid-19 situation in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir continues to be grim even as elaborate measures are being taken to contain the spread of virus to rural pockets in the coming days.

The region reported 59 more deaths on Sunday and the positivity rate climbed further up to 11.27 per cent. A total number of 934 patients returned home and 4,141 fresh cases tested positive taking the active caseload to 51,623.



On the other hand, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha also visited Government Medical College, Jammu to take stock of the situation amid rising number of complaints related to poor patient care services in some of the Covid-19 wards.

During his visit, LG Manoj Sinha was informed that as many as 250 nurses would join GMC Jammu within three days, substantially adding to the available healthcare workforce.

Referring to the availability of Oxygen supply, the Lt Governor sought the status of two new Oxygen plants which are being set up by the J&K UT administration at GMC Jammu to augment its oxygen capacity.

While reviewing the progress being made for establishing an additional 100-bedded Covid ward, the Lt Governor directed the Principal and senior doctors of GMC Jammu to ensure the operationalization of the said facility at the earliest.

The Lt Governor also enquired about Covid care facilities, availability of oxygen support beds, functionality of

Oxygen Generation Plants, besides compliance of earlier directions including regular rounds of HoDs and senior doctors in the wards to examine the patients.

Earlier, the Lt Governor visited Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) 500-bedded under construction Covid hospital site at Bhupathi Nagar and took first-hand appraisal of the ongoing work.

The fully air-conditioned make-shift Covid facility with 125 ICU beds and ventilators will be completed by May 25, 2021.

The Lt Governor directed the Health Department to provide all support to DRDO, including arrangements of health related facilities, hiring/posting of doctors, paramedics, and other healthcare workforce well before the formal functioning of the hospital.

It was informed that Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) tanks with a capacity of 40 metric tons (2 tanks of 20 metric tons each) would be installed in this Covid care facility, besides the whole structure is prefabricated and fire retardant.

Bengal imposes strict lockdown, 158 violators held

By PNS ■ KOLKATA

Bengal reported a massive spike in death rate due to corona infection in the 24 hours intervening Saturday and Sunday even as the State administration went about imposing a strict lockdown that saw multiple arrests and seizures of vehicles in Capital Kolkata and elsewhere.

The State reported 144 deaths corona deaths between Saturday and Sunday—the highest so far—as 19,511 people tested positive for the disease. This is the lowest single-day spike reported in the preceding 10 days, Health Department sources said.



While Kolkata reported 3,951 new cases with 30 deaths the North 24 Parganas adjoining the State Capital witnessed a record 35 deaths with 4,279 infections sources said on Sunday morning adding the number of active cases in Bengal stood at about 1.3 lakh.

Meanwhile, even as the police administration imposed strict lockdown all over the State 158 people were arrested in Kolkata under Pandemic laws for breaking the lockdown protocol. The police also seized 38 vehicles for violation of Government orders.

All government and private offices, shopping complexes,

essential services related to healthcare, law and order, courts, power, drinking water and media would function.

The lockdown started from 6 am on Sunday and was liable to continue at least till 6 pm on May 30.

The State Government has already postponed the Secondary (Class X) and Higher Secondary (Class XII) exams that were scheduled to take place in the month of June. "No secondary and higher secondary examinations will be held in June," Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said adding, "The future dates of the examinations will be notified by the respective West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBSE) and West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education."

Cong MP Rajeev Satav dies of post-Covid complications

By RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a shocking development, Congress' promising leader and Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Satav died of post-Covid complications, after having battled for life for 24 days at Jehangir hospital in Pune Sunday morning.

A close associate of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, 46-year-old Satav had been admitted to the hospital on April 16 after he tested positive for Covid-19.

After he recovered from Covid-19, his condition suddenly worsened and he was put on a ventilator.

Satav, who developed Covid-19 pneumonia lung fibrosis after his recovery from the pandemic, was in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Hospital for more than a week now. His end came in the morning.

Satav, who is the son of former State Minister Rajani Satav, is survived by his wife and two children.

State Revenue Minister Balasheeb Thorat, who had visited Jehangir Hospital and met the doctors attending on Satav on Saturday, said that the latter had experienced some uneasiness on Saturday night but his impression was that the party MP would recover soon. Health Minister Rajesh Tope had said on Friday that besides Covid-19, Satav was also being treated for additional complications with the help of experts.

Given that Satav was very close to the Gandhi-Nehru family, Rahul and Priyanka used to be in regular touch with the doctors to inquire about his progress, party and family sources said. "I'm very sad at the loss of my friend Rajeev Satav. He was a leader with huge potential who embodied the ideals of the Congress. It's a big loss for us all. My condolences and love to his family," Congress leader

Rahul Gandhi tweeted.

"In Rajeev Satav we have lost one of our brightest colleagues. Clean of heart, sincere, deeply committed to the ideals of the Congress & devoted to the people of India. I have no words, just prayers for his young wife & children. May they have the strength to carry on without him," Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tweeted.

After being elected to the Maharashtra Assembly from Kalmnuri constituency in 2009, Satav was elected to Lok Sabha from Hingoli constituency in 2014. He did not contest the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. However, the Congress got him elected to Rajya Sabha subsequently.

Satav, who was the Indian Youth Congress president from February 2010 to December 2014, was the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in charge of Gujarat. He was also a permanent invitee to Congress Working Committee, the highest decision making body of Indian National Congress.

Meanwhile, mourning Satav's death, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said, "Congress leader and CWC special invitee Rajeev Satav's death has come as a big shock for all of us. He was a young, upcoming and talented leader. He had effectively discharged his role of observer assigned to him by his party during Gujarat elections. In his death, Maharashtra has lost a most promising leader."

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that in the untimely death of Satav, Maharashtra had lost a promising and well-poised leader. Satav forged friendships going beyond political affiliations. He had complete faith in parliamentary democracy and was known as a studious leader," the Chief Minister said.

Condolences pour in

By PMS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, senior leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, State Congress leaders were continuously in touch with the hospital treating the rising star of the grand old party, Rajeev Satav, and his sudden demise has come as a rude shock to the Congress and significantly Rahul Gandhi.

After the exit of youngster like Jyotiraditya Scindia and the loss of trust on Sachin Pilot who led a revolt in the party almost year ago, Satav was the Man Friday of the Gandhi family and had almost filled "that" space which had also seen stalwarts like Ahmed Patel who also succumbed to covid last November. AICC sources said Sonia and the Gandhi siblings were everyday enquiring the health status of Satav who had been admitted in Pune's Jehangir hospital.

In her condolence message, Sonia Gandhi said she is deeply pained by the tragic loss of the party leader, "who was a trusted colleague and a friend to all of us". She said it is also a personal loss to her. "Rajeev Satav was only 46 years old yet he rose from the grassroots to holding many responsibilities in a short time due to his unflinching dedication, sincerity and hard work," she said.

Satav had recently made into the party's highest decision making body, the Congress Working Committee. He was elected to Lok Sabha from Hingoli in Maharashtra in 2014 but did not contest in 2019. However, the Congress got him elected to Rajya Sabha. He was son of former state minister Rajani Satav. Satav was Congress General Secretary and incharge of party affairs in Gujarat. He was earlier president of Indian Youth Congress. He had his higher education in Pune.

Condolences poured in from various quarters including Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers and Congress leaders.

"We are deeply saddened by the demise of Rajya Sabha MP and companion, Rajeev Satav. His unwavering dedication towards the nation and the party carried out with pure simplicity will be greatly missed. Our condolences to his family, friends and followers. May he rest in peace," the Congress tweeted from its official handle.

All India Congress Committee general secretary K C Venugopal said the Congress has lost its frontline warrior, Congress Working Committee member, MP and a most promising young leader. "I am devastated by the irreparable loss. The party will forever miss his indelible dedication, connect and immense popularity," he said. Congress chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala said he is speechless as Satav is a huge loss to him both politically and personally as he was a close friend.

CYCLONE IMPACT



Jonathan Zaidi, Israeli Consul-General, paying homage to the mortal remains of Soumya

Kochi: The Christian community in Kerala is upset over the (M)-led LDF Government over the 'disrespect' shown to Soumya, a 32-year-old home nurse who was killed on last Tuesday in a missile attack by Hamas, a terrorist organisation in Israel and was described as an angel by that country's Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Soumya, hailing from Idukki in the State has been employed as a home nurse and was killed while taking care of her Israeli employer. The Hamas terrorists had unleashed missile attacks against Israeli families in Gaza in which Soumya was killed.

Though Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy had posted messages, condoling the death of Soumya, the messages were deleted within minutes when it was known that she was killed by the Hamas terrorists.

Her body was brought to New Delhi on Saturday by a special Israeli aircraft and was received by union

UP reports 311 deaths, fresh cases dip to 10,682

By PMS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh reported a further dip in fresh Corona cases with 10,682 new cases in the last 24 hours while 24,837 patients recovered in the corresponding period. However, the casualties during the period rose to 311.

The maximum deaths were reported from Meerut (27), followed by 20 in Lucknow, 13 in Kanpur, 12 each in Chandauli & Basti, and 10 in Shahjahanpur. Meerut witnessed the maximum number of fresh cases. Lucknow reported 525 fresh cases but the recovery was around three times at 1,944. The active corona cases in the state capital also came down to 11,045. Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Amit Mohan Prasad said in Lucknow on Sunday that 2,67 lakh people were tested for Covid on Saturday and 10,682 tested positive. The recovery rate now stands at 88.92 per cent.

Israeli Government condoles death of Indian woman



Minister of state for External Affairs V Muraliedharan and official of Israeli embassy in New Delhi. Later in the day, her mortal remains were flown to Kochi in an Air India flight where it was received by her relations. But no one from the State Administration was present at Kochi airport or at her residence in Idudki to console the family members.

The Israeli Consul General, Jonathan Zaidi and officials from the embassy had accompanied the body from New Delhi to Idudki as a mark of respect to Soumya who leaves behind

her husband Suresh and nine-year old son.

"Honoured to pay my respects and convey our sympathies to the family and friends of Me Soumya Santosh as she was laid to rest in her home town Keerthihur. May she rest in peace. Our prayers are with the family that lost an angel in a cowardly Hamas terror attack," said Zaidi in a message posted on social media.

Christian Association and Alliance for Social Justice (CASA), an umbrella organisation of various Christian factions in the State expressed their grief over the gruesome killing of Soumya and condemned the Hamas action in the strongest of words.

"Our sister was working as a home nurse in Israel and was murdered by the Hamas terrorists."

What was more shocking was the youth wing of the CPI(M) celebrating the murder instead of condemning such dastardly act," said Kevin Peters, convenor of CASA in a statement. PMS



Farmer's stay anchored on the Ganga river during the ongoing lockdown to contain the spread of the coronavirus on the outskirts of Srinagar on Sunday

Treatment for black fungus at Bowring Hospital, Govt to form expert panel: Min

By Bengaluru: Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar on Sunday said it has been decided to start treatment for 'black fungus' at Bowring Hospital here on a pilot basis, and later extend the treatment to medical colleges and district hospitals.

Noting that the treatment for black fungus infection is a bit costly, the Minister said he would discuss with the Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa regarding free treatment as he has also said a committee of experts would be set up to prepare a roadmap for treatment of the infected and how to curb the infection.

"Mucormycosis or black fungus is commonly seen among those who have less immunity or because of use of steroids. Those who have diabetes and are infected by Covid 10-15 days after they take

steroids, the infection begins through the nose and spreads to the eyes and its parts like optic nerves and optic chiasm," Sudhakar said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said there is danger of losing vision because of this and if timely treatment is not taken there are chances of death.

"After the infection was noticed in Maharashtra, we held discussions with eye specialists and experts (ophthalmologists) and from Monday at Bowring hospital, we are starting treatment for it," he said adding, "We are starting on a pilot basis, and will later continue in all medical colleges and some district hospitals."

Noting that Amphotericin B, the drug for black fungus infection is a bit costly, the Minister said a patient would require seven weeks of continued treatment to be cured and

treatment may cost ₹ 2-3 lakh per person.

"I will discuss with the Chief Minister and will suggest free treatment. Ultimately, he will decide," the Minister said adding those with black fungus issues should immediately consult doctors. The Centre is rationing the Amphotericin B drug and would be distributed to the State also, Sudhakar said adding that it was decided at the Covid task force meeting on Saturday to request the Centre to provide 20,000 vials of the drug.

He said he was in constant touch with Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers D V Sadananda Gowda and his Ministry in this regard and would also talk to the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

"There is no need for people to worry, but those with

diabetes or other secondary infections, those who are immunocompromised, with TB, HIV, cancer, with kidney or any other organ transplant, I advise all of them to exercise caution and not to use steroids without the doctor's consent," he said.

Also, he advised doctors to exercise caution while administering steroids to such patients. In response to a question, the Minister said it was difficult for now to say exactly as to how many are affected by black fungus or died of it, as people with such issues may have gone to private eye doctors. He said he was constituting by Monday a committee consisting of eye specialists (ophthalmologist), endocrinologists, diabetologists on how to treat black fungus infections under control and how to treat patients with such infections.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Keep going

Despite reverses, the nation needs to keep reminding of the goal ahead: Keep ourselves healthy

On April 19, at a virtual event organised by the All India Management Association, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar fielded a question from industrialist Sunil Munjal about India exporting or donating vaccines without first satisfying the domestic demand. The Minister said: "So ask yourself this question — can I go around and say 'guys, keep your supply chains flowing towards me and, by the way, the end product of the supply chain I am asking you raw material for — vaccine — but I am not going to give you the vaccine'. If you get into this, why are you exporting at all; then someone else will ask why am I exporting to India and that is so short-sighted and only really irresponsible, really non-serious people will make that argument and, by the way, there are some around as you would have noticed."



What he did not tell Munjal was that the vaccine doses donated by India, that is, given free to several foreign countries, were only 10.75 million out of a total 66.37 million doses shown as "Made-in-India vaccine supplies" on the Ministry of External Affairs website. A substantial part of it, 35.79 million doses to be precise, are commercial and licensing liabilities of the two vaccine manufacturers, the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech. Another 19.86 million doses are vaccines sent abroad because of the agreement the manufacturers had signed to obtain raw materials for producing the vaccines.

The last two types of supplies were tagged along with the free doses supplied. The vaccine diplomacy of New Delhi, called "Vaccine Maitri", began on January 21 and lasted till April 16. In this period, India had supplied abroad all the vaccine it possibly could and the rationale for this comes from no less a person than Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. At the inaugural Raisina Dialogue on April 13, he said: "...this year, despite many constraints, we have supplied vaccine to over 80 countries. We know that the supplies have been modest. We know that the demands are huge. We know that it will be a long time before the entire humanity can be vaccinated. At the same time, we also know that hope matters." During this period, doses were sent to 95 countries across the world. Now comes the part where the Government did not do what it was supposed to do during this period of "Maitri". On May 11, the cumulative doses given to Indians stood at 17.51 crore and no more orders were placed in this period even though shortages were being reported. In early May, the Government said it was still to receive 23 million doses from its previous order and placed fresh orders of around 160 million doses. These orders, for May, June and July, are supposed to be met by July. The manufacturers have their own compulsions meeting the orders in time and the vaccination drive awaits vaccines, free or paid for, in the meantime.

PICTALK



The faithful gather at St Peter's Square at the Vatican

AP

Too young?

The Myanmar people, most of them born after Suu Kyi came into the frame, are kicking up dust

The younger generation is leading the fight against oppression and exploitation around the world. Be it the students of Hong Kong or the youth of Myanmar, they are out to defend their democratic right at the cost of their lives. Ever since the Myanmar Army seized power in February this year, it unleashed a regime of terror. But the terror has not intimidated the young Myanmar. Thousands of people, mostly young, have been protesting and demanding the restoration of democracy. More than 770 civilians had been killed and over 3,738 detained. Yet the morale of the protestors is as high as ever.



As they say, democracy dies in the darkness; the young ones are keeping the torch lit. And they are doing it in style by making good use of social media to tell the world what is happening in Myanmar. They are finding ingenious ways to thwart the might of the State and military. Anti-coup protestors are exploiting the military's patriarchal values to their advantage. The Myanmar Army is rather conservative and ill-trained to deal with civil disobedience. Or, is it?

Yes, true that they would not go under the women's clothesline as it brings in bad omen. The protestors would circle their protest site by wires and hang women's clothes as protection. The Army may have bullets but they have bottles filled with petrol to keep them at the bay. Of course, it is not enough, but it has kept their fight going. It works. The social media campaigns are telling the world about the Army's wrongdoings. They post everything, their atrocities, and highhandedness. They have already won the moral high ground. But young Myanmar is not only fighting the army for restoration of democracy alone, it is also fighting a stagnant social system that is sexist and oppressive, mired in superstitions and dogmas. Generation Z typically less than 25 years of age is also working for a more fair, inclusive future. Myanmar is Southeast Asia's most traditional society. It has an archaic family structure, respect for authority, and gender inequality. Spousal rape and domestic violence are still legal and pervasive in Myanmar. Yet Myanmar's Generation Z activists are defying many of the social norms with their protests and taking down gender stereotypes. Every nation must fight its own evils and that is perhaps what is happening in Myanmar today. It is as much a fight against the Army as it is against the social disorder that has not been challenged for centuries.

The sinking of a paper boat

In these pandemic times, do we remember that we had a time filled with the zest for life, ambitions and hope? Where is it now?



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

It was the summer of the 71. Agra, my hometown, was flooded. Our house, on a higher ground, was a bit less affected; nevertheless, water had entered the ground floor and we were perched on the top. As the rescue boats went by, we children were busy floating paper boats as playthings. They were, though inanimate, like our aspirations and thoughts. The boats, of course, couldn't do a long course. But our imagination did. Those days we children had so much to do, so much to learn from the life around us that there was never a dull moment. Indeed, for the children who spent their childhood around 50 years back, they had a childhood quite different from the current crop.

Innocence! That's all we had. The world around us was our playground. It was all real; there was nothing virtual about it. Yes, we children knew so little about everything else that was not in our immediate vicinity. But that was fun, exploring on our own and enjoying every bit of it. Unlike now, the phones were unheard of. We had wires and umbrellas instead, which we made with a thread and two matchboxes.

But the connections they provided were pretty strong. The parents at that time were different. They hardly cared who the child studied at the school unless a complaint from the school came in. They would often forget the standard in which their child studied. The only day the father would come into the picture was when you got your annual report card.

And his only concern was that if the child was promoted to the next class. Else, the ear-twisting took place. That was more or less summed the early education. Playing a spy or Hit-Crun was the best past time. Children's extracurricular activities involved spreading papads and chips in the sun. The packaged chips would come much later. Eating out meant having golgappas at the street vendor. Of course, the *kulfi*wala occasionally announced his arrival with a



bell and we ran to have it.

Entertainment was hard to come by. We waited for the circus to arrive in town and made plans to go see it. We watched it with disbelief, often replicating the feat and hurting ourselves back at home. The *melas* were again something that we looked forward to. The charm, of course, was the merry-go-round and the giant wheel. It was dizzy but then enjoyment doesn't come cheap.

Those were the years of innocence and ignorance alike. As we grew up, we realised how little we knew about anything, yet we had learned so many lessons of life that stay with us forever. The parents did not care about the studies of their children; they cared about their health and so we, or rather, live with them. Life has turned virtual. It is a digital degeneration of sorts where you know a lot yet you are rudderless as the framework that comes with human interaction is missing. The pizza-burger generation is more about flaunting its feat

THOSE WERE THE YEARS OF INNOCENCE AND IGNORANCE ALIKE. AS WE GREW UP, WE REALISED HOW LITTLE WE KNEW ABOUT ANYTHING; YET WE HAD LEARNED SO MANY LESSONS OF LIFE THAT STAY WITH US FOREVER. THE PARENTS DID NOT CARE ABOUT THE STUDIES OF THEIR CHILDREN; THEY CARED ABOUT THEIR HEALTH

we believed them all. For us, there was a ghost on every *peepal* tree, and the djinns, *churails* and *dayans* were watching us when we returned late. Caring for them came naturally, partly out of affection and partly out of greed for stories and money that the parents refused. There was a close bonding with them. They became part of you.

Now that when I see my kids growing, I realise the children and their childhood have undergone a sea change. They are informed but not curious. They can get you the information you might have not known till your graduation. They don't play with matchboxes or waste time decorating *lanmashtami* models. They are always with their gadgets. They play with them or, rather, live with them. Life has turned virtual. It is a digital degeneration of sorts where you know a lot yet you are rudderless as the framework that comes with human interaction is missing. The pizza-burger generation is more about flaunting its feat

rather than enjoying it. The pictures of restaurants and places visited on the trip find floating on Instagram and Facebook. They might not see *churails* and *dayans* but have demons in their head which tell them to seclude them from the rest. You won't know if your child is at home because he is too much engrossed with the mobile that he needs no one else.

Last year in the monsoon, I told my young daughter how we floated paper boats in the puddles. She said that she did not know how to make one. I was excited as she showed some interest. I said, I will make one for you. I made one, gave it to her, and asked her to set it afloat. Fifteen minutes later, she was with her phone again, chatting, fished whatever happened to the boat she was supposed to play with. "It sank," she said with a flat face and submerged into her phone again.

(The writer is a columnist and documentary film-maker. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE AIR INDIA DISINVESTMENT PLAN

Sir Cairn says it remains open to talks with the Government to resolve the dispute, but it is not unusual in legal proceedings of this nature to seek attachment of the alleged assets of the debtor in foreign jurisdictions. Air India operates flights from India to New York, Chicago, Washington DC and other cities in the US. The suit brought by Cairn would seek to seize airplanes or other immovable assets, like sales offices that the carrier operates in some of these locations. As we all know, Air India has long been a loss-making entity and the Government has indicated that it is in an advanced stage of being disinvested with multiple parties having submitted offers, including the Tata Group.

This action against Air India could put a roadblock to that process as the Government was hoping to conclude the sale by September this year. Secondly, this can be seen as yet another setback in a continuing story of the retrospective tax law damaging India's international reputation when it comes to doing business.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Sir It is a matter of profound sadness that while the world is battling the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel is resorting to aerial bombardment in Gaza, inflicting casualties on the Palestinians. It exemplifies man's inhumanity to man and man-made suffering in this time of a global pestilence. The Israeli air strikes on Gaza have claimed the lives of at least 162 Palestinians, including 41 children. Of particular poignance is the fact that children become the victims of this escalation in violence. Every single death in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a tragedy for which the right-wing dominated, repressive Israeli Government is responsible. The interception of most of the rockets fired towards Israel by Hamas indicates the difference and disproportion in military power between the two sides. With 'unwavering support' from the Biden Administration, Israel is emboldened to

We are together in it, or not?



For the past several days, see that many people have been criticising Modi ji on the Corona issue. If these people can come forward and do some positive work in the interest of our country, that would be more than welcome. After all, what do they get from speaking against Modi? The Opposition also has a limit in democracy and if someone uses it only for their sole benefit, then that too is a travesty.

It is the absolute duty of every citizen of India that when calamity occurs, we all must fight together against it. Of course, the Central

Government must prepare it to deal with the disaster before it becomes a burden on the Centre.

It becomes the duty of every citizen of the country to serve it in this battle, at least at their own level, but do we actually do it? We need to change ourselves. Small efforts, on the part of each one of us, will have to be made. There are many villages in Haryana where small support groups are engaged in serving the people. The administration is also sending them help and they have also made arrangements at their level. Such work is also a unique quote of reflexes and dedication to society. If such support groups are raised above the rural level politics and taking everyone in confidence, then there should be no solution to any problem.

I, as a citizen, request you to do as much as you can. The country is currently facing a major crisis. In this order, many progressive things are being done by the system and the Government. Obviously, there are things untended. But let's not focus on the negatives.

Satyawan Saurabh | Bhiwani

continue its air offensive "as long as necessary". The issue at the heart of the conflict is Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. It is true that advanced warning and time to evacuate were given. There are global protests in support of the people of Palestine. Let's just hope for better sense to prevail across.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

LET'S NOT NEGLECT THE DECEASED

Sir — This refers to the news report, "Unremembered bodies float" (May 15). Bidding farewell to the dead through funeral rites was one of the earliest signs of our civilisation. The people wish peace for the dead through rituals according to their cultural and religious beliefs. It is a way of coping with the unknown. Social bonds are confirmed in the period of mourning through sharing and

support. But what seems unbearable is that people are being forced to bury bodies in the shallow soil of water banks or let them float away, something partially cremated and sometimes not at all.

It is as though the roots of the society are being torn apart, for the cultural and psychological damage caused by this unprecedented crisis is incalculable. If helpless citizens are unable to accord their loved ones even the minimum dignity in death because, perhaps, no one is around to take the bodies for cremation, or they can't afford the soaring prices of wood or the funeral — profiteers never rest — and have to throw bodies into the river.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes. Which society will condone or actions? They lost their father who died while being in Govt custody.

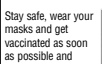


People's Conference chairman — Sajad Lone



We are concerned about the intercommunal violence across Israel

US President — Joe Biden

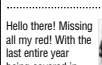


Stay safe, wear your masks and get vaccinated as soon as possible and follow all COVID guidelines

Actor — Madhuri Dixit-Nene



We have got a tour against India in mid-September. So, there are a couple of camps. Australia bowler — Megan Schutt



Hello there! Missing all my red! With the last entire year being covered in masks, and continuing to do so, missing a bit of the #redlipstick action.

Actor — Raveena Tandon

FIRST COLUMN

SHOULD YOU COUNT ON MUTUAL FUNDS?

Research shows that past returns and the age of the mutual fund have an impact on your savings



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Mutual funds are gaining popularity as a preferred investment avenue among Indians over the last decade. Particularly over the last five years, the industry has witnessed a huge increase in the number of folios which grew to 44.2 million from March, 2014 to June, 2019. What makes this growth interesting is the fact that it had largely come from the segment of individual investors, including both retail investors and high networth individuals (HNIs). This segment registered a growth rate of 15.5 percent during this period, which in turn contributed to a 27 percent rise in assets under management (AUM) of individual investors from ₹4 lakh crore in March, 2014 to ₹4 lakh crore in June, 2019. Since mutual funds have become one of the preferred investment destinations or investor, it is important to choose funds that will perform better than others.

One of the ways in which the performance of mutual funds is measured is through net inflows and outflows, which is the net result of the total money that has moved into and moved out of the fund for a particular time period. If the end result is positive, indicating



inflows, it means that more money has been invested into the funds and vice versa. Net flows are important as they provide the performance report of mutual funds. High net inflows are significant as they lead to higher AUM, which in turn increase company's profits. On the other hand, high net outflows, might lead to some tactical changes like changing the fund manager or the investment philosophy. Increase in the collective net inflows also leads to increase in the size of some individual mutual funds and also the size of the mutual fund industry as a whole. In addition, net flows can also provide an insight into the general collective predictive capacity of investors. So, an overall net inflow into any mutual fund may forecast its positive performance. So, if net flows are so important for any mutual fund, what determines that it gets positive inflows? Research shows that factors like past returns, the age of the mutual fund, higher expenses like higher advertising costs, lower fees and size of the fund family. Some strategic decisions, like changing the name of the mutual fund to match the current season trend also bring in extra inflows.

Size plays an import role in the performance of mutual funds. Several studies suggest that younger or new funds have higher performance as they enter the industry with higher skill sets and their relatively smaller exposure to market makes sure that any adverse market movements would have less impact on the performance. In addition, the increasing size of the industry also has an adverse impact on the performance. The larger the industry size, the lesser is the potential of any profitable trades, as adjustments to any anomalies, which may lead to a profit making, quickly happen, leading to less chances of booking profits.

Skill of the fund and the fund manager are an important determinant of mutual fund performance. Fund managers' compensation also contributes its performance. In cases where the compensation depends on performance, such mutual funds, due to an active strategy, end up generally becoming high performance funds and perform better than funds where managers use passive fund management style. So, a fund manager's skill in stock picking helps in generating a higher return.

Several studies show a predictive pattern of mutual fund analysis based on the above discussed determinants. Small investors should take advantage and make use of the skills of the funds and fund managers to beat the benchmark and hope to generate higher returns. (The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

Corona: Some real, though some hype

Somehow, the States and the Union Government are passing on the impression that they have been unable to meet the challenge of the virus. But why?

Thoughts of prospective troubles hardly come true, and most people die of visceral fear of spectre or something that doesn't exist. "Ninety per cent of our problems are caused by our own thoughts," says Hilda de la Rosa, a South African popular author and motivational speaker. She says, entrapped in our thought processes, we find it arduous to extricate ourselves from the thinking pattern we have imbibed over years. Unaware of the facts about morbidity and mortality due to Covid or otherwise, most people are caught with the fear psychosis that is taking a larger toll than the pandemic itself. The predicament has shaken people of all description. The pandemic 2.0 is hitting Indians with greater intensity and virulence but a sensible and broader perspective can reduce the hype and assure the implications of the current crisis are not as dismal as being made out.

Certain mystery shrouds the resurgence of Covid 2.0 with new strains. True, the plateauing of Covid cases in India by last fall led to public and government complacency about continuing risks. And the government toned down restrictions. As the going seemed manageable, shops, restaurants, wholesale and retail markets, malls, schools, public transport, businesses and public establishments tended to function normally. Export of jet fighters, plans to lay 75,000+ stations to charge electric vehicles, supply of domestically produced Covid vaccine to 87 countries and medicines to over 150 countries meant progression towards a vibrant economy and making of "atmanirbhar" nation. Naturally, the Indian buoyancy and optimism was not palatable to arms, oil, and pharma lobbies as they could lose huge businesses in India: a prospect of 5-billion-dollar PPE and masks deals alone came to a naught in one shot, oil companies were next. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who repeatedly said and meant 'desh nahin lutne dunga, desh nahin bikne dunga' was a common enemy who would not bend like Donald Trump of the US. For the global business magnates to flourish in India, Modi's downsizing with the aid of domestic disgruntled elements appeared the only option. To support them was neighbouring China. Possibility of China-sponsored biological war behind the abrupt rise in Covid cases in India bypassing the neighbouring countries with identical life style during April 10-15 cannot be ruled out. Accompanying this was the opposition's refrain of failure of Modi government to deal with Covid, enthusiastically supported by Western media. On April 20, international media showed large scale cremations and highlighted deficiencies in Indian health care sector. Strangely, at this hour, Pakistan also offered to help India.

The anti-government chorus was endorsed by UNICEF executive director Henrietta Fore on May 4: "The tragic situation in India should raise alarm bells for all of us." Most recent is the editorial in the medical journal *Lancet* summarizing undermining the government's efforts in dealing with Covid: the vindictive portion being, "Modi's actions in attempting to stifle criticism and open discussion during the crisis crisis are inexcusable." The statement suggesting the government "own up to its mistakes" is the tone of a hardcore political adversary and in bad taste, unbecoming of a medical publication. Reports about Chinese instigations behind the sordid coverage and observations on India's handling of Covid



AT HOME, DURING COVID 1.0, THE OPPOSITION DEcriED LOCKDOWNS FOR ITS ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS ON LIVELIHOODS. IN THE SECOND WAVE, AFTER THE STATES WERE ALLOWED TO DECIDE AT THEIR OWN LEVEL, THEY CHOSE LOCKDOWN. THEY ALSO CRITICISED THE EFFICACY OF VACCINE, THEN TOOK IT ONE BY ONE

The author is a blogger at www.bluntspicker.com and writes on health, spiritual, and social issues.



shall be revelatory.

At home, during Covid 1.0, the Opposition decried lockdowns for its adverse implications on livelihoods. In second wave, after States were allowed to decide at their own level, they chose lockdown. They also criticised the efficacy of vaccine, then took it one by one. The purpose was creating a public impression that government is unwilling and unfit to manage Covid crisis, something not in national interest.

Ambiguity in identifying the precise aetiology, genesis and manifestations of Covid 2.0 further tends to destabilise the poise of lay public. The doctors find it expedient to classify routine health issues as Covid in keeping with trends. The head of a prestigious health facility, Dr Arvind Kumar of Medanta, Gurugram: Consider any one of symptoms like sneezing, headache, fever, throat soar, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of smell or taste, skin patches, body ache as Covid case unless proved otherwise, and begin with self-isolation without wait for lab reports - even negative reports with either symptom must be treated as Covid. Such precepts further down the already diminishing morale of the patient and his kith and kin that needs bol-

stering in the nerve breaking era we are passing through.

As for the numbers game Covid, national morbidity and mortality data across states in specific time frames are subject to wide fluctuations because transmission of Covid is multifactorial in nature involving the vision of the government thestic measures it takes to control the pandemic including health facilities. Thus, it shall be naive to pronounce judgement on the performance of the governance based on infections and death data of few days, weeks or even months; policies and actions take long to show results. Taking the Covid data of April 28, 2021, though numerically India witnessed largest daily deaths (3647) compared to USA (954), Germany (320), France (344) and Italy (344), the deaths per crore population turns out to be mere 26 for India and 29, 38, 48 and 57, respectively, for these countries (source: worldometers.info). Thus, the narrative that India is worst hit by Covid smacks of foul play to tarnish the image of India.

Doctors are not knowalls in health matters but in a few weeks after Covid 2.0, how do they presume that all non-Covid diseases

have eclipsed altogether. Based on 2017 data, World Economic Forum analysis revealed 25,270 daily deaths in India, second to China at 28,036. The estimated global annual death toll for tuberculosis of all kinds in 2019 stood at 1.418 lakh and 79,144 in India; for HIV-related diseases the annual death toll was 5.9 lakh globally and 69,000 for India in 2017. These figures shall not be significantly different for 2020 and 2021. A fair, comparative assessment of quantitative changes in morbidity and mortality in pre-Covid and it a time frame shows that the Covid death toll as reported is misleading and ignores mortality from classical diseases. The actual Covid toll is not of the level we are told to make out.

The fear against COVID is largely visceral. It is the spectre of COVID that is the real threat, and not the virus itself. The virus with a life of around seven days is an issue only in about three to five per cent cases where specialist handling is required. We are undergoing times when each section of country has to lend a helping hand. Let us face the facts squarely, keep our peace and hope for the best.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGE OF OXYGEN IN THE STATE NOW, AND I ALSO I ONCE AGAIN APPEAL TO THE FARMER LEADERS TO SUSPEND THEIR PROTESTS. HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER — MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR



THE SITUATION IN HARYANA IS WORSE THAN THAT OF NEIGHBOURING DELHI. HEALTH MINISTER ANIL VIJ SHOULD RESIGN FOR FAILING TO HANDLE THE SITUATION. INLD LEADER — ABHAY SINGH CHAUTALA

Time to take hypertension, a COVID-19 comorbidity, head-on

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes; just stick around with a few simple tips

In India at least one in three adults in India have hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. The ongoing pandemic has revealed how people with hypertension are at greater risk of becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19. Research indicates that most people are unaware that they have high blood pressure and even if diagnosed, they are either irregular with their medication or discontinue taking it after a while. Studies have also shown that patients with hypertension but not on medications had a significantly higher risk of mortality compared with those on medication, if they got Covid-19.



VIKAS MAHATME

The author is a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

conditions, particularly hypertensives to ensure they continue their treatment, through telemedicine whenever possible and keep taking the prescribed medicines. On this World Hypertension Day, it is critically important for India to pay attention to this silent killer and take adequate precautions.

Dos and don'ts: Secure your supply of blood pressure medicines. Keep a stock of at least 90 days. Continue to take medicines for blood pressure and other chronic conditions such as diabetes as prescribed by the doctor.

If possible, regularly measure your blood pressure at home. If it fluctuates, consult your doctor remotely. Do not change your treatment without a medical opinion.

Avail of telemedicine facility if you develop coronavirus



symptoms or feel unwell. In the last one year, 35 lakh Indians have dialled E-Sanjeevani, the government's telemedicine platform for a medical consultation.

Avoid consuming excess salt in your food Risk Factors associated

with hypertension Hypertension can lead to severe health complications and increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and sometimes death. It is a primary risk factor for cardiovascular disease, including stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and

aneurysm. Uncontrolled hypertension may affect eyes leading to Hypertensive Retinopathy which may lead to irreversible blindness. Keeping blood pressure under control is vital for preserving health and reducing the risk of these dangerous conditions.

High blood pressure is often symptomless and quietly damages blood vessels leading to serious health problems. While there is no cure, using medications as prescribed and making lifestyle changes can enhance your quality of life and reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and more.

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes. If you already have high blood pressure, the same lifestyle changes combined with medication therapy (as recommended by your provider) can also help you control it. Certain individuals are more likely to develop high blood pressure than others if they have a family history of hypertension or consume diets rich in salt, saturated fats, consume tobacco or alcohol and are overweight. Stress

can also raise your risk of developing high blood pressure. Hypertension typically develops over the course of several years. Usually, you don't notice any symptoms. But even without symptoms, high blood pressure can cause damage to your blood vessels and organs, especially the brain, heart, eyes, and kidneys.

The first criteria to deal with hypertension or high blood pressure is early detection. Regular blood pressure readings can help you and your doctor in noticing any change. If your blood pressure is elevated, the health provider may need to check it over for a few weeks to see if the number stays elevated or falls back to normal levels. Treatment for hypertension includes both prescription medication and healthy lifestyle changes.

Israeli strikes kill 42 in Gaza City

PM Netanyahu warns war against Hamas will go on

AP ■ GAZA CITY

Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 42 people Sunday, medics said, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signalled the fourth war between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza would rage on despite international efforts to broker a cease-fire.

In a televised address, Netanyahu said Sunday evening the attacks were continuing at "full-force" and will "take time," as Israel "wants to levy a heavy price" from Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, he said, flanked by his defense minister and political rival, Benny Gantz, in a show of unity.

The Israeli airstrike early Sunday was the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and Hamas nearly a week ago, marking the worst fighting here since the devastating 2014 war in Gaza.

The airstrikes hit a major downtown street of residential buildings and storefronts over the course of five minutes after midnight, destroying two adjacent buildings and one about 50 yards (meters) down the road. At one point, a rescuer shouted, "Can you hear me?" into a hole in the rubble. "Are you OK?" Minutes later, first

responders pulled a survivor out and carried him off on an orange stretcher. The Gaza Health Ministry said 16 women and 10 children were among those killed, with more than 50 people wounded, and rescue efforts are still underway.

Earlier, the Israeli military said it destroyed the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader, Yahiyeh Sinwar, in a separate strike in the southern town of Khan Younis. It was the third such attack in the last two days on the homes of senior Hamas leaders, who have gone underground.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as international mediators work to end the fighting and stave off an Israeli ground invasion of the territory. But targeting the group's leaders could hinder those efforts. A U.S. diplomat is in the region to try to de-escalate tensions, and the U.N. Security Council is set to meet Sunday.

In its airstrikes, Israel has leveled a number of Gaza City's tallest office and residential buildings, alleging they contain Hamas military infrastructure. Among them was the building housing The Associated Press and those of other media outlets.



Palestinian rescue a survivor from under the rubble of a destroyed residential building following deadly Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City, Sunday

Islamic nations slam Israel — and each other's ties to it

AP ■ DUBAI

A league of Muslim nations on Sunday demanded that Israel halt attacks killing Palestinian civilians amid heavy fighting between it and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, even as fissures between countries over the recognition of Israel emerged.

A statement by the 57-

nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation heaped closely to previous ones issued by the Saudi-based group, including backing the decades-old call for Palestinians to have their own nation with East Jerusalem as its capital.

However, recent normalization deals between Israel and some nations in the group — as well as their own concerns about

Hamas — saw diplomats at points instead criticize each other.

"The massacre of Palestinian children today follows the purported normalization," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said. "This criminal and genocidal regime has once again proven that friendly gestures only aggravate its atrocities."

Pope denounces violence between Israel, Hamas

Vatican City: Pope Francis has denounced the "unacceptable" spiral of violence between Israel and the Palestinians, saying the deaths in particular of children was a "sign that they don't want to build a future but want to destroy it." Francis prayed for peace, calm and international help to open

a path of dialogue during his Sunday blessing, delivered from his studio window overlooking St. Peter's Square.

The pope said: "I ask myself: this hatred and vendetta, what will it bring? Do we truly think that we can build peace by destroying the other?"

GLOBE TROTTER

FOUR KILLED AS HEAVY RAIN, FLOOD HIT LANKA
Columbo: At least 4 persons have died and over 11,500 others affected due to heavy rains and floods prevailing in several parts of Sri Lanka for the last few days.

SENIOR JAMAAT-UL-BAKHAR ARRESTED IN B'DESH
Dhaka: A senior leader of the hardline Jamaat-e-Islami group has been arrested in Bangladesh for allegedly instigating violence in March during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country, police said on Sunday.

NEPAL'S COVID DEATH TOLL CROSSES 50 MARK
Kathmandu: Nepal recorded 145 new Covid-19 fatalities in the last 24 hours, pushing the death toll to 5,001, the Health Ministry said. The total coronavirus tally stands at 4,55,020 with 7,368 new cases, it said. Of the total new cases, 1,500 were reported from Kathmandu Valley in the last 24 hours. While 3,39,756 people have recovered so far, 1,10,263 others are undergoing treatment at various home and institutional isolation centres.

China calls for UN council action, slams America

Beijing: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called on the UN Security Council to seek an early de-escalation of violence between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers. He also blamed the US for the council's lack of action so far.

"Regrettably, the council has so far failed to reach an agreement, with the United States standing on the opposite side of international justice," the state-run Xinhua News Agency quoted Wang as saying in a phone conversation Saturday with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

He expressed support for a two-state solution, and said China, which holds the Security Council presidency this month, expects all parties to speak with a unified voice when the council discusses the conflict later Sunday. AP

UN head 'deeply disturbed' by Israeli airstrike

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

A UN spokesman says Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is "deeply disturbed" by the Israeli airstrike that destroyed a high-rise building in Gaza City housing offices of several international media organisations and residential apartments, and

is "dismayed" by the increasing number of civilian casualties.

"The secretary-general reminds all sides that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs," spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Saturday.

Refugees arriving in US unlikely to exceed cap set by Trump

AP ■ SAN DIEGO (US)

President Joe Biden, under political pressure, agreed to admit four times as many refugees this budget year as his predecessor did, but resettlement agencies concede the number actually allowed into the US will be closer to the record-low cap of 15,000 set by former President Donald Trump.

Refugee advocates say they are grateful for the increase because it's symbolically important to show the world the US is back as a humanitarian leader at a time when the number of refugees worldwide is the highest since World War II. But they're frustrated, too, because more refugees could have been admitted if Biden hadn't dragged his feet.

"About 10,000 to 15,000 is what we're expecting," said Jenny Yang of World Relief,

adding that Biden's inaction for months after taking office in January was "definitely problematic."

"That delay meant not being able to process refugee applications for four months. We weren't able to rebuild for four months, so it really was unfortunate," Yang said.

Biden first proposed raising the cap to 62,500 in February in a plan to submit to Congress, but then refused to sign off on it for two months before coming back April 16 and suggesting he was sticking with Trump's target.

Democratic allies and refugee advocates lambasted Biden's move, saying he was reneging on his campaign promise in the face of bipartisan criticism over his handling of an increase in unaccompanied migrant children at the US-Mexico border.

Afghan ceasefire ends amid calls for fresh peace talks

Kabul: A three-day cease-fire marked by violent attacks, saying its fighters planted an explosive device in a "worship place for disbelievers" before killing the "apostate Imam," or prayer leader. The statement claimed 40 worshippers were wounded.

The IS also claimed it blew up several electrical grid stations over the weekend. That left the capital Kabul in the dark for much of the three-day holiday that followed the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

In posts on its affiliated websites, IS claimed additional attacks over the last two weeks that destroyed 13 electrical grid stations in several provinces, with power stations bringing imported power from the Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The attacks have left nine provinces including Kabul with disrupted power supplies, said Sanger Nazai, a government spokesman. There was also concern that local warlords, demanding protection money from the government to safeguard stations in areas they control, may have been behind some of the destruction.

At least one local warlord was arrested last week after demanding protection money. On Sunday in the mostly

AP ■ BANGKOK

The US and British embassies in Myanmar expressed concern about reports of fierce government attacks on a town in a western Chin state, where the ruling junta declared martial law because of armed resistance to military rule.

The fighting began around 6 am Saturday when government troops reinforced by helicopters began shelling the western part of the town of Mindat, destroying several homes, said a spokesman of the Chinland Defence Force. It is a locally formed militia group opposed to the February coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Helicopters also took part in the attack.

According to the spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity for security reasons. "Mindat town is now under siege and is bracing for all-out assault by the junta troops from air and by land," said a statement by the Chin Human Rights Organisation.

The shadow National Unity Government, set up by the ousted government, was blocked by the army from taking their seats in Parliament, warned that "within the next 48 hours, Mindat can potentially become a detention facility compiled by several different watchdog groups say government security

already left the town of about 50,000 people, said a resident contacted by phone who was also fleeing.

The Mindat Township People's Administration, another opposition grouping, claimed that 15 young men had been seized by government troops and used as human shields. It said at least five defenders of the town had been killed in clashes and at least 10 others wounded.

None of these details could be independently verified, but a Myanmar state television broadcast Saturday night reported that fighting was going on, and acknowledged the town's defenders have been putting up stiff resistance against the army.

The military's use of weapons of war against civilians, including this week in Mindat, is a further demonstration of the depths the regime will sink to to hold onto power," the British Embassy said on Twitter. "We call on the military to cease violence against civilians."

The US Embassy said it was "aware of increasing violations in Mindat" and was reporting the military shooting civilians," and urged that evidence of atrocities be sent to UN investigators.

Detained allies compiled by several different watchdog groups say government security

forces have killed upwards of 750 protesters and bystanders as they have tried to suppress opposition to the military's seizure of power.

In April, security forces were accused of killing more than 80 people in one day to destroy street barricades that militants had set up as strongholds in the city of Bago.

In many or most cases, police and soldiers were trying to break up peaceful protests, though as they increased the use of lethal force, some protesters fought back in self-defence. In recent weeks there has been an upsurge in small bombings in many cities, mostly causing little damage and few casualties.

The junta says the death toll is less than 300, and the use of force was justified to quell what it called a coup.

Mindat's residents are only lightly armed, mostly with a traditional type of single-shot hunting rifle, but the territory around the town is mountainous and wooded, favouring defenders over attackers.

The report on state television MRTV listed past attacks on government forces and law enforcement most recently on Thursday, when it claimed a force of about 100 blocked security forces from entering the town, destroying one vehicle and leaving an unspecified number of security forces dead and missing.

China slams 'hasty' withdrawal of US troops from Af, urges UN to play 'due role'

Beijing: China has said that the "hasty" withdrawal of the US troops from war-torn Afghanistan has severely affected the peace process and the regional stability as it called on the UN to play its "due role" and urged the SCO to pay more attention to the situation.

The issue of US withdrawal from Afghanistan figured in the telephonic conversation between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Saturday.

Wang said that the "hasty withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan," which is expected to conclude by September this year, has severely impacted the Afghan domestic peace process and negatively affected the regional stability.

Under such circumstances, China expects the United Nations to play its "due role", state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Wang as saying. He, however, did not elaborate the US "due role". Wang also said that the eight-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), of which India and Pakistan are members, should pay more attention to the situation and Afghanistan's neighbours. AP

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI LABOUR DEPARTMENT, 5-SHAM NATH MARG, DELHI-110054.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 Act is applicable to every establishment in which five or more inter-State migrant workmen are employed.

All principal employers employing (or have employed during last 12 months) the workers through outsourcing are required to mandatorily register with Labour Department through e-district portal of Govt of NCT of Delhi on the link: <https://edistrict.delhigovt.nic.in/>.

Every interstate migrant workman shall be issued passbook by the contractor containing details of employment and shall be provided other benefits as provided in the Act. Please fulfil your obligation towards these migrant workers and also furnish details of Migrant Workers to the Labour Department for their benefit.

Labour Department has made operational Shramik Helpline (155214) where a migrant workman can seek assistance and guidance. Sh. Gurmukh Singh, Joint Labour Commissioner (Ph. No. 01125492133 and email: labdlcsw@gmail.com) is Nodal Officer in respect of Migrant Workmen and can be contacted for redressal of any grievance.

DIP/Shabdarth/0062/21-22

Labour Commissioner

Nine killed in shootout between two tribal groups in Pakistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

At least nine people were killed and five others injured in an exchange of firing between two tribal groups in Pakistan's Sindh province, according to a media report on

Police said the bodies and injured have been shifted to the hospital

Sunday. The shootout happened on Saturday between Ismaili and Chachar tribes near Kandhot over long-standing enmity, *ARY News* reported.

According to police, nine people were killed as a result of firing between them over long-standing enmity.

Police said the bodies and injured have been shifted to the hospital. Tensions between the two groups spread fear and panic in the area. A heavy contingent of police arrived in the area to defuse the tension.

German expert: New Covid jabs needed in 2022

Berlin: The head of Germany's independent vaccine advisory panel says it's likely that everyone will have to get vaccinated again next year against Covid-19.

Thomas Meriens told the Funke newspaper group in comments published Sunday that there isn't yet enough data to say when exactly booster shots will be needed, and officials will have to wait a few months to see whether protection against the coronavirus weakens in some groups.

Nearly 30.4 million people in Germany, or 36.5 per cent of the population, had received at least one vaccine shot by Friday

But he stressed that "the virus will leave us again," so the vaccinations currently under way won't be the last. He added: "In principle, we have to prepare for everyone possibly having to refresh their vaccine protection next year."

Nearly 30.4 million people in Germany, or 36.5 per cent of the population, had received at least one vaccine shot by Friday. More than 9 million, or 10.9 per cent of the population, had been fully vaccinated.

Bangladesh extends lockdown till May 23

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday extended ongoing nationwide lockdown till May 23 to contain the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bangladesh clamped a week-long nationwide lockdown on April 5, suspending public transport and shutting markets to combat the surge in Covid-19 pandemic.

The restrictions were later extended till April 28, then till May 5 and then till May 16.

"Lockdown restrictions are extended from May 16 in light of the current state of the pandemic," the Cabinet Division said in a statement Sunday.

All offices and organisations related to revenue collection have been included under emergency services, which will be out of the purview of the restrictions, the Daily Star newspaper reported.

Sharks use Earth's magnetic field as a GPS, scientists say

Portland: Sharks use the Earth's magnetic field as a sort of natural GPS to navigate journeys that take them great distances across the world's oceans, scientists have found.

Researchers said their marine laboratory experiments with a small species of shark confirm long-held speculation that sharks use magnetic fields as aids to navigation — behavior observed in other marine animals such as sea turtles.

Their study, published this month in the journal *Current Biology*, also sheds light on why sharks are able to traverse seas and find their way back to feed, breed and give birth, said marine policy specialist Bryan Keller, one of the study authors.

"We know that sharks can respond to magnetic fields," Keller said.

"We didn't know that they detected it as an aid in the navigation. You have sharks that can travel 20,000 kilometers (12,427 miles) and end up in the same spot." The question of how sharks perform long-distance migrations has intrigued researchers for years. The sharks undertake their

journeys in the open ocean where they encounter few physical features such as corals that could serve as landmarks.

Looking for answers, scientists have studied sharks in the wild. University decided to study bonnethead sharks — a kind of hammerhead that lives on both American coasts and returns to the same estuaries every year.

Researchers exposed 20 bonnetheads to magnetic conditions that simulated locations hundreds of kilometers (miles) away from where they were caught off Florida. The scientists found that the sharks began to swim north when the magnetic cues made them think they were south of where they were.

That finding is compelling, said Robert Hueter, senior scientist emeritus at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, who was not involved in the study. Hueter said further study is needed to find how the sharks use the magnetic fields to determine their location and whether larger, long-distance migrating sharks use a similar system to find their way. AP

GDP growth may be below 9pc in FY22: Care survey

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Amid a raging second wave of Covid-19 and subsequent restrictions on business activities imposed by several states, economic recovery is beginning to lose steam and the country's GDP growth is likely to be below nine per cent for the current fiscal, according to a survey.

At least 80 per cent of the respondents expect consumer demand for non-essential items as well as investment to be severely impacted due to the current Covid situation, the survey conducted by Care Ratings said.

The economic recovery is beginning to lose steam with infection rates scaling record highs. Almost seven out of 10 respondents expect GDP (growth) to be below nine per cent for FY22," it said.

According to the study, the majority of respondents expect the lockdown



announced by several states will stay till May-end.

Altogether, 54 per cent of the people, who participated in the survey, believe that the lockdown is a solution to the current COVID-19 situation in the country, it said.

Little more than three-fifth of the respondents felt that the current lockdown is not as stringent as the restrictions imposed last year, it

added.

Another rating agency CRISIL said India's GDP growth is likely to drop to 9.8 per cent in a moderate scenario, assuming the second wave of coronavirus disease peaks by May-end.

The economic growth may slip further to 8.2 per cent in the severe situation when the second wave of the pandemic peaks by June-end, it added.

M-cap of 8 most valued companies plummets over ₹1.13 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the top-10 most valued companies witnessed a combined erosion of ₹1,13,074.57 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and HDFC Bank emerging as the worst hit.

Among the top-10 most valued companies, only Reliance Industries Limited and State Bank of India managed to book gains on a weekly basis.

During the holiday-truncated trading week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent. The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services tumbled ₹1,20,054.79 crore to ₹11,28,488.10 crore.

Infosys witnessed an erosion of ₹15,168.41 crore, taking its market worth to ₹5,61,060.44 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank eroded

by ₹15,139.12 crore to ₹7,65,035.49 crore and that of Kotak Mahindra Bank plummeted by ₹14,398.04 crore to ₹3,38,358.80 crore.

The valuation of HDFC Bank dived ₹13,430.38 crore to ₹4,36,879.75 crore and that of Bajaj Finance tanked ₹9,844.62 crore to ₹3,21,592.05 crore.

The m-cap of Hindustan Unilever Limited diminished by ₹8,505.43 crore to stand at ₹5,58,442.28 crore and that of ICICI Bank, dipped by ₹6,533.78 crore to ₹4,13,243.07 crore.

In contrast, Reliance Industries added ₹3,518.62 crore to take its valuation to ₹12,27,855.04 crore and State Bank of India added ₹2,052.66 crore to help its m-cap reach ₹3,21,732.25 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries retained the most-valued company title followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, Hindustan

SBI to sell three NPA accounts next month for recovery of over ₹ 235 cr



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The State Bank of India (SBI) will sell three bad accounts to asset reconstruction companies or other financial institutions next month to recover dues of over ₹235 crore, according to a sales notice.

In terms of the bank's policy on sale of financial assets, in line with regulatory guidelines, SBI said it has placed Heavy Metal and Tubes Ltd, Khare and Tarkunde will take place on June 7, while that of Elize will be on June 8.

recovered a total of ₹235.32 crore.

Heavy Metal has outstanding dues of ₹116.91 crore to the bank, Khare and Tarkunde owes ₹99.84 crore and Elize International ₹18.57 crore. The bank has set the reserve prices for these NPA accounts for sale at ₹27.50 crore, ₹15 crore and ₹8 crore, respectively.

The auction of Heavy Metal and Tubes; and Khare and Tarkunde will take place on June 7, while that of Elize will be on June 8.

ARC/banks/NBFCs/Fls can conduct due diligence of these assets with immediate effect, after submitting expressions of interest and executing a non-disclosure agreement with the bank.

Ahmedabad-based Heavy Metal and Tubes is engaged in manufacturing of stainless steel tubes and pipes, while Nagpur-based Khare and Tarkunde is engaged in real estate business.

Elize International is a Kolkata based company engaged in manufacturing of clothing.

Amazon helps sellers procure oxygen concentrators for customers in India



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce major Amazon is working with sellers on its marketplace in India to help them procure about 9,000 oxygen concentrators for customers in the country.

The first batch of 1,000 oxygen concentrators have already landed in India, and are now available for purchase for consumers and business customers. The rest are expected to come through in the second half of the month.

Sellers on Amazon will now be offering oxygen concentrators along with other genuine and high-quality products like oxymeters, thermometers, masks, gloves, sanitizers and disinfectants for customers across India, Amazon India said in a blog-post.

"To address the growing customer demand and shortage of critical medical equipment, Amazon India is working with sellers on its marketplace to help them bring in about 9,000 oxygen concentrators for customers in India," it said.

Amazon's global procurement teams are helping interested sellers from India connect with global suppliers to enable them to procure oxygen concentrators, while simplifying supply chain complexities and facilitating the overall process, it noted.

"In the last few weeks, we have seen up to a 70x increase in search volume for oxygen concentrators and we are collaborating with our sellers to ramp up inventory of critical medical equipment including oxygen concentrators for our customers. Our focus is to enable an easy and convenient access to genuine, high-quality products for our customers in their time of need," Amazon India Vice President Manish Tiwary said.

India is registering a high number of COVID cases daily that has put extreme pressure on the healthcare infrastructure of the country.

The massive rise in infections in the second wave of the pandemic has led to hospitals in several states reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds and people turned to social media to procure oxygen cylinders, hospital beds, plasma donors and other resources.

Previously, Amazon had announced importing and donating 100 ventilator units, and that it is bringing in over 10,000 oxygen concentrators and BiPAP machines to India in collaboration with multiple partners.

The medical equipment will be donated to hospitals and public institutions to augment their capacity to help COVID-19 infected patients across multiple cities.

Go Airlines might face turbulence from possible floating-rate plane leases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The IPO-bound Go Airlines is set to induct 22 new planes in less than two years but expects that a possible shift to floating-rate aircraft leases might have an adverse impact due to higher interest rates.

The low-cost airline has filed draft papers for an initial share sale worth ₹3,600 crore and will be the first domestic scheduled carrier to get listed on domestic bourses in nearly six years.

Apart from the prospects of moving to floating-rate leases for new planes, issues related to brand 'GoAir' and certain related trademarks, and indebtedness, are among the risk factors mentioned in its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP).

All its 55 planes as of March 31, 2021, were under operating and fixed-rate leases and may be required to obtain floating-rate leases for future aircraft leases.

As a result, a significant increase in interest rates may increase our obligations under any floating-rate

lease and may adversely impact our results of operations," as per the DRHP.

As of April 2021, the company's aggregate indebted-

ness on a consolidated basis stood at ₹8,160.09 crore.

According to the DRHP, the brand 'GoAir' and certain related trademarks, are registered in the name of Go Holdings, in which one of the promoters Jehangir Nussli Wadia has 99 per cent stake.

In April 2021, Jehangir Nussli Wadia made an application to the National Internet Exchange of India, to transfer 115 domain names registered in the name of the company, from one domain registrar, namely Net4India Ltd to Network Solutions.

As per the DRHP, Go Holdings made two applications to the Registrar of Trade Marks, for registration of two word marks used exclusively by our company, namely 'Go Airlines' and 'www.GoAir.in'.

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Govt may table amendment to DICGC Act in monsoon session

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to ensure timely support to depositors of stressed banks, the government may bring amendment to DICGC Act in the monsoon session with the objective to provide account holders easy and timely access to funds to the extent of the deposit insurance cover.

Last year, the government raised insurance cover on deposit five-folds to ₹5 lakh with a view to provide support to depositors of ailing lenders like Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank. Following the collapse of PMC Bank, Yes Bank and Lakshmi Vilas Bank too came under

stress leading to restructuring by the regulator and the government.

The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is already ready, sources said.

It is expected that the Bill will be tabled in the upcoming monsoon session after being vetted by the Union Cabinet, sources added.

Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immediate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks.

As per the current provisions, the deposit insurance of up to ₹5 lakh comes into play when the licence of a bank is cancelled and liquidation process starts.

In a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, provides insurance cover to bank depositors.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget speech in February said the government had approved an increase in the Deposit Insurance

cover from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh for bank customers last year.

"I shall be moving amendments to the DICGC Act, 1961 in this session itself to stream-

line the provisions, so that if a bank is temporarily unable to fulfil its obligations, the depositors of such a bank can get easy and time-bound access to their deposits to the extent of the deposit insurance cover. This would help depositors of banks that are currently under stress," she had said.

It could not be presented in the Budget session due to curtailment of the last session following the spread of second wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

It is to be noted that the enhanced deposit insurance cover of ₹5 lakh is effective from February 4, 2020. The increase was done after a gap of 27 years as it was static since 1995.

India imports \$6.2bn gold in April

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

India's gold imports in April stood at \$6.2 billion on the back of strong consumer demand.

During the same period last year gold imports stood at just \$2.83 billion on account of the nationwide lockdown.

The surge in gold imports pushed India's trade deficit to \$15.1 billion in April 2021 as against \$6.76 billion a year ago. However, silver imports last month declined as per Commerce Ministry data. Silver worth \$11.90 million was imported during the period under review, down from \$105.75 million in April last year.

India's merchandise imports grew in April 2021, rising to \$45.72 billion, with an increase of 167.05 per cent over \$17.12 billion in April 2020. Exports grew to \$30.63 billion, higher by 195.72 per cent over the \$10.36 billion reported in April 2020.

Q4 earnings, pace of vaccination, global trends to dictate markets this week: Analysts



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Needless to say, Covid-19-related updates and progress of the vaccine drive will also be in focus. Religare Broking Vice-President (Research) Ajit Mishra

Needless to say, Covid-19-related updates and progress of the vaccine drive will also be in focus. Religare Broking Vice-President (Research) Ajit Mishra

Equity markets this week are likely to follow the quarterly earnings outcome of listed companies, pace of vaccination drive in the country and global market trends for further direction, according to analysts.

In absence of any major event, participants will be closely eyeing the performance of global indices, US bond yields, movement of rupee against the US dollar, and crude oil prices.

Religare Broking Vice-President (Research) Ajit Mishra said, "Needless to say, Covid-19-related updates and progress of the vaccine drive will also be in focus."

On the earnings front, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Indian Oil Corp, Havells, Hindalco and Federal Bank are some of the prominent names who will be announcing their results during the week along with several others, Mishra

added. The quarterly earnings from Canara Bank, JK Tyre & Industries, Havells India, JK Lakshmi Cement, JSW Steel and State Bank of India will also be watched by investors this week.

"Going forward, market will track the pace of vaccination, trajectory of active cases curve and management commentary of companies," Shiban Kurian, senior executive vice-president and head (equity research) at Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Co, said.

Investors would also track the Wholesale Price Index-based inflation data, to be announced on Monday.

Samco Securities Head (Equity Research) Nirali Shah said, "Indian indices have shown sturdy despite the increasing number of cases. However, sustainability at higher levels seems difficult if the situation aggravates."

She added that in addition, this fear of inflation flourishing in developed markets may continue to trickle down to India and keep domestic bourses under pressure. "Stock-specific volatility due to quarterly earnings cannot be ruled out."

During the holiday-truncated last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent.

Power consumption grows nearly 19 pc in 1st fortnight of May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Power consumption in the country grew by around 19 per cent in the first fortnight of May to 51.67 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to the power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first fortnight of May 2020 was 43.55 BU.

The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

During the first fortnight of May this year (from May 1 to 14), peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded growth of over 15 per cent over 146.54 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 13, 2020).

The power consumption in April grew nearly 40 per cent to 118.08 BU.

Petrol, diesel price hiked again; petrol price nears ₹99 in Mumbai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol price on Sunday was increased by 24 paise per litre and diesel by 27 paise, pushing rates across the country to record highs and that of petrol in Mumbai to near ₹99 a litre.

The increased led to rates in Delhi climbing to ₹92.58 per litre and diesel to ₹83.22, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan had the costliest petrol and diesel in the country at ₹103.52 per litre and ₹95.99 a litre, respectively.

In nine increases, petrol price has risen by ₹2.19 per litre and diesel by ₹2.49. Since March 2020, when the government raised excise duty on fuel to an all-time high, petrol price has increased by a record ₹22.99 per litre (after accounting for a handful of occasions when rates fell) and diesel by ₹20.93.

VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

This is the ninth increase in prices since May 4 when the state-owned oil firms ended an 18-hiatus in price revision they observed during assembly elections in states like West Bengal.

Rates had already crossed ₹100 mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and with the latest increase, price in Mumbai too was inching towards that level.

A litre of petrol in Mumbai now comes for ₹98.88 and diesel is priced at ₹90.40 per litre.

Telecom operators urge Haryana Govt to curb rumours linking Covid-19 spread to 5G

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on Sunday said it has urged the Haryana government to curb misinformation being spread regarding 5G testing being responsible for the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a letter to Haryana Chief Secretary Vijai Vardhan, the telecom operators have said some miscreants are spreading rumours that deaths and health problems faced by people due to Covid-19 are caused by testing of 5G and not coronavirus.

These rumours are spreading at a time when 5G testing has not even started in the country and the government has only given permission for doing 5G testing, which is yet to start, the COAI said in a statement here.

Telecom operators have kept Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh out of their list of

places for doing testing of the 5G network, the association said.

Recently, Haryana BKU chief Gurnam Singh Chudhri has hinted that the COVID-19 spread might be due to 5G testing being done.

The COAI letter stated, "We would hereby like to highlight that these types of rumours have spread in the past two weeks, mainly in semi-urban and rural areas. There has been a rise in such misinformation in the state of Haryana."

The letter stated that there have been incidences in Haryana wherein the farmer groups are also getting agitated over the myth of linking the COVID-19 pandemic with 5G services. Several farmers from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh have been sitting on three borders near Delhi for about six months demanding repeal of the new three farm laws.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that the cancellation period of following earlier announced cancelled trains due to operational reasons, has been extended upto 24.05.2021 as under:-

EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION OF UNRESERVED MEMU/EMU EXPRESS TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	
04184/04183 Delhi Jn - Tundla Jn - Delhi Jn MEMU Special Express	
04417/04418 Hathras Qiloh - Delhi Jn - Hathras Qiloh MEMU Special Express	
04427/04428 Hathras Qiloh - Hathras Jn - Hathras Qiloh MEMU Special Express	
04415/04414 Aligarh Jn - New Delhi - Aligarh Jn EMU Special Express	
04420/04419 Ghaziabad - Mathura Jn - Ghaziabad EMU Special Express	
04444/04443 New Delhi - Ghaziabad - New Delhi Special Express	

For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
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LEARN WHILE YOU LISTEN

The last several years have seen the rising popularity of podcasts. Touted to be the digital make-over of the radio, these have many advantages that cannot be ignored, says DUSHYANT KOHLI

Currently, India is witnessing a digital revolution. A huge part of our country's population is getting accustomed to the use of several digital platforms. Access to the internet has acted as a catalyst in this process. It has flooded the online platforms with a variety of content. Currently when an exceedingly large number of videos and written content is created and uploaded every day, the audio contents comprising podcasts, audiobooks, etc. are also rapidly gaining popularity and recognition. According to KPMG, India is the third-largest podcast-listening market globally and is expected to be valued at \$17.62 crore by 2023, growing at a CAGR of 34.5 per cent.

Since the onset of the Coronavirus and subsequently during the pandemic-induced lockdown, the demand for Indian regional audio content has increased considerably. More and more people are opting for podcasts that offer regional content in regional languages, along with the national and global ones for wide-ranging purposes including entertainment and e-learning. This format has shown its potential to cater to the needs of India's diverse population.

For aeons, listening has been a key element in the learning process. It

enables us to visualise everything better based on the tone of voice as compared to written text. Listening also involves comparatively less effort than reading, thereby contributing to an enhanced understanding with better attentiveness. Moreover, it is a known fact that people prefer listening to news and stories in their regional languages. It helps them process information seamlessly. As highlighted earlier, even podcasts are going the vernacular way to cater to the demand of a wide range of information. And this development is making them an integral part of people's daily lives.

When compared to traditional formats such as radio, interactivity has also become a noteworthy feature of



this digital advancement. Overall, it has made learning an easy and joyful experience.

Benefits of podcasts

There are numerous ways through which podcasts are able to fulfill the aspirations of the common masses.

The contents available on podcasts are made to custom-fit the needs of people from different regions. The verbal presentation of information becomes easy to understand and consume. At the same time, the cost-effectiveness of podcasts is a boon. They are mainly in the form of digital files that can

be downloaded or streamed easily over online platforms. Subscribing to high-quality audio content is also an option that users are preferring over reading these days.

Time-efficiency is possibly one of the best factors behind audio format's rapidly growing use. For instance, the working population of our country, which spends a few hours travelling every day, can make productive use of that time by listening to some news or learning a new language via podcasts. This will enable them to stay updated while utilising their precious time, thereby allowing them to keep pace with the fast-moving world. Being available remotely, such podcasts can be listened to anytime, anywhere and do not come with the limitation of location-specific traditional channels. They can also be tapped via various digital devices which is an added advantage. Furthermore, there are plenty of options available to choose from according to personalised listening needs such as educational content, inspirational content, news, audiobooks, entertainment based podcasts and a lot more. All these are adequate to provide enough options for one's needs.

There are several other features of podcasts that improve and enhance the learning and listening experience of a person. The audio contents are so engaging that it has the potential to increase the concentration power of students. Educational material, using the audio-guided format, is known to pique the interest of students to the extent that even tough topics become relatively easy for them to understand. Today, with the increased use of smartphones, relevant podcasts can be conveniently downloaded and listened to. It is being widely adopted as a teaching and learning resource. A prime advantage that comes with the use of audio contents is that audio format also minimises the scope of visual impairment, which is a key challenge these days owing to increased exposure to digital devices. Therefore, learning through listening should be encouraged even more.

In a nutshell, podcasts are a true gift of the digital revolution. They are giving time-tested formats such as radio their new digital makeover with the touch of a button experience. It barely comes as a surprise that there is an increasing number of takers for podcasts across the world.

(The writer is the Coo of Khabri)

WEBBED



DOCTOR SLEEP

In this sequel to *The Shining*, Danny, now a traumatised adult, is sought out by a young psychic as evil beings that feed on their powers close in. Starring Ewan McGregor, Rebecca Ferguson and Kyliegh Curran, the film releases today on Netflix.



SARDAR KA GRANDSON

A devoted grandson's mission to reunite his ailing grandmother with her ancestral home turns into a complicated, comic cross-border affair. Starring Arjun Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh and Neena Gupta, the film releases on May 18 on Netflix.



DOG GONE TROUBLE

The privileged life of a pampered dog named Trouble is turned upside down when he gets lost and must learn to survive on the big-city streets. The film releases on May 28 on Netflix.



Why Shilpa said no to grocery savings?

Whether it be sumptuous kitchen delicacies, useful backyard garden gyan or power yoga punches, actor Shilpa Shetty has proven that she can never go wrong when it comes to nutrition that's packed with taste and health. But, what does she do when her brother-in-law orders groceries with a 100-rupee budget?

Seen these days in a humorous television commercial for Nourish Chakki Fresh Atta with Extra Chokar by BL Agro Industries Limited, Shetty embodies every ounce of the wisdom of the modern Indian woman, especially when it is about making smart choices for the family. In her signature comic style, she educates her brother-in-law on the consequences of choosing ordinary food products with an interesting *Do Baatein* approach.

Dressed traditionally and elegantly in a pink kurta, the fitness icon takes the dining table talk one notch higher by convincing her family to look at the bigger picture while ordering atta or flour. In a rather endearing *dhobi* avatar in the Nourish commercial, she drives home the message that we are what we eat and immunity is not built by eating just about anything from the market shelves.

When it comes to healthy food choices, there's hardly anyone better than the fitness icon to explain the importance of choosing better. The TVC is the first in the series of three and has garnered close to 1.4 million views on YouTube within two weeks of being launched. Shilpa Shetty's fitness mantra? *Saadhna Chhodo, Nutrition Chhuno*.

—JMS

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed a significant transition in Indian cinema. While it was once widely believed that only a male star can turn a film into a blockbuster, today this formula has been rendered obsolete. Actresses are at the forefront now, and are taking up dominant, substance laden roles in order to be the ultimate voice of change. Celebrating the women of Bollywood, today we have listed five actors who stole the show with their knockout performances over the years.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas

A well known name across the globe, Priyanka Chopra Jonas has been breaking glass ceilings for the longest time and certainly needs no introduction. Her global superstardom and massive fanbase is proof that she's unstoppable. In her two-decade long Bollywood career, Chopra has delivered several path breaking performances in *Aitraaz* (2004), *Fashion* (2008), *Kaminey* (2009), *7 Khoon Maaf* (2011), *Agneepath* (2012), *Barfi!* (2012), *Mary Kom* (2014), *Dil Dhadakne Do* (2015), *Bajirao Mastani* (2015), *The Sky Is Pink* (2019) and the latest global release *The White Tiger* (2021) among many others. The National and Filmfare Award winning actress will be next seen alongside Keanu Reeves in *Matrix 4*. Other notable future releases include *Text For You*, an English remake of the 2016 German film *SMS für Dich*, and Russo Brothers' *Citadel*.

Yami Gautam

Ever since her dreamy Bollywood debut with *Vicky Donor* in 2012, Yami Gautam

WINDS OF CHANGE

The women of the film industry are changing the once prominent notion that a male star is a must for box office success

has managed to strike the right chord with the audience. In her career spanning over eight years, Yami has successfully established herself as one of the most versatile actors in the industry today. She is credited for various potent performances in films such as *Badlapur* (2015), *Kaabil* (2017), *Uri: The Surgical Strike* (2019), *Bala* (2019) and her recent release on Netflix, *Ginny Weds Sunny* (2020). Meanwhile, she is ready to take the box-office by storm with several releases lined up for this year. Taking note of her recent performances, Yami seems to be in no mood to stop and is sure to continue surprising cinephiles with her performances.

Taapsee Pannu

Think Taapsee Pannu and you know we are talking about a stellar, versatile performer. The Filmfare Award winning actress made a lot of noise with her 2020 release *Thappad* which is undoubtedly her most powerful performance till date. Taapsee is also known for her roles in films like *Saand Ki Aankh* (2019), *Mamrozia* (2018), *Mulk* (2018) and *Pink* (2016). The experimental actress has a couple of interesting projects in her kitty

including *Loop Lapeta* (an official remake of the 1998 German thriller *Run Lola Run*), *Rashmi Rocket*, *Dobaaraa*, *Hasen Dildar* and Rabul Dholakia's directorial biopic on Mithali Raj entitled *Shabash Mithu*.

Alia Bhatt

Hailed as one of the most bankable new age actors in the industry today, Alia Bhatt is known to be a director's favourite. Over the years, Alia has delivered some extra-

ordinary performances in her career ranging from *Intiaz Ali's Highway* (2014) and *Uda Punjab* (2016) to Gauri Shinde's *Dear Zindagi* (2016), Meghna Gulzar's *Raazi* (2018) and Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* (2019). Over the years, she has surprised critics and the audience alike with her performances. After making her debut with *Student of the Year* in 2012, she has grown to become a household name in a span of just eight years. Her forthcoming releases include Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, Brahmaputra, S.S. Rajamouli's *RRR* and Karan Johar's ambitious project *Takht*.

Anushka Sharma

Known for always giving something new to the audience, Anushka has time and again won hearts with author-backed roles, right from her debut in *Rab Ne Bana Di Didi* (2008) alongside Shah Rukh Khan. The actor who turned producer with *NF 10* (2015), which featured one of her most impactful on-screen characters, has delivered various powerful performances including *Sultan* (2016), *Sui Dhaga* (2018) and *Javed* (2018). According to reports, Anushka will be next seen in the biopic of Jhulan Goswami, the former captain of the Indian women's cricket team, tentatively titled *Chakdaha Express*.

TRENDBLAZER

MANOJ BAJPAYEE ON A BREAK

Actor **MANOJ BAJPAYEE** posted a gamut of pictures on Instagram on Saturday of mountain tops and a rainbow, while refraining from informing fans of his current location.

"Away from everyone and everywhere," he wrote as caption for the images.

On the work front, he was recently seen playing a cop in the digital film *Silence... Can You Hear It*. He will soon be seen in the second season of the popular web series *The Family Man*.

fairtalk

HIMANSHU KOHLI



'I remember my father used to counsel me and we used to have a talk regarding everything. We used to have even the most awkward conversations so that I don't make mistakes in the future. It's necessary to open up to your parents because the advice they give will always be in your favour. They would never let you do anything bad.'

dailytalk

GUL PANAG



'I have always done films that spoke to me and I was able to leverage my film career to do many other things. So, I made my film career an enabler of doing other things such as being a producer, entrepreneur, public speaker, motivational speaker. It's incumbent for me to make sure that I make choices wisely as an actor.'

KATY REGRETS OBSESSION WITH BOYS

KATY PERRY, who revisits her teenage years in the video of her latest single, *Electric*, says she would have liked it a lot more if she was less obsessed with the opposite sex when she was younger.

"I stumbled, I fell, I made mistakes. I learned from all of it. But I was pretty boy crazy. I think I was always searching for real love and true love," Perry said.



Good Samaritans step up

As the healthcare system gets overburdened, citizens of Rajasthan are helping the state government in the fight against COVID-19.
By Dr ABHA SHARMA

Last year, when the novel coronavirus raged havoc in our country, many people based in metropolitan cities opted to shift their parents or vulnerable family members to their native villages. For these places were considered safer and not much affected by the pandemic. One year later, the deadly virus has crossed urban boundaries to hit the rural hinterland with a vengeance. Now staying 'far from the city crowd' doesn't sound like an ideal option.

Who would like to take the risk of falling sick in a village or town given the near collapse of health infrastructure due to the rising COVID-19 cases?

Last month has seen a worrying surge in cases in rural areas of Rajasthan. Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota, Alwar and Bikaner are the worst hit districts in this western Indian state. The village chaupals, which witnessed elders recalling the harrowing tales of the devastating famine of 1856, now swear that this deadly virus is indeed a greater demon.

There has been a reported 15 per cent increase in COVID-19 cases in rural areas of Rajasthan during the last month. As per a rough estimate, almost 35 per cent of the total COVID-19 cases in the state are now being reported



from rural areas. Referring more and more patients from villages to cities is putting additional stress on urban medical infrastructure where both government and private hospitals are already running short of beds, oxygen and other life saving equipment.

From a partial lockdown (Red Alert Self-discipline fortnight) already in place since April, the state government has now announced a 'strict, complete lockdown' from May 10 for two weeks. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said at a press conference, "The decision to impose strict lockdown has been taken due to the rising COVID-19 cases in rural areas, increasing instances of youth

getting infected and the overall worrying surge in number of COVID-19 deaths." To break the chain, gatherings must be stopped, he added.

No more work on MGN-REGA sites while the construction material shops too will remain shut, except for some industrial units. In addition, a total ban on *Band-Baja-Baraat* and a cap of 11 persons, if any weddings are to be solemnized. Akha Teej or Akshya Tritiya, one of the most auspicious days for holding wedding across Rajasthan, will not witness any community wedding this season.

During last year's lockdown there were unfortunate instances of assaults on front-

line health workers and some migrants losing lives while walking long miles to get back home. The focus last year was on distributing food, ration supplies or masks and sanitizers. That scenario has completely changed this year, where there is a greater demand for health services.

That's why several volunteer groups are trying to help people through helplines and social media.

Public representatives, government officials and philanthropists are also donating funds to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to help fight the crisis. Help is pouring in from MPLAD/MLA funds to facilitate purchase of oxygen cylin-

ders, concentrators, PPE kits, N-95 masks, sanitizers and other lifesaving equipment.

While some organisations have come up with complimentary telemedicine services, some others have decided to provide oxygen concentrators/plants. "Given the shortage of oxygen, we have decided to donate at least 10 oxygen concentrators to help patients, who are in queue for a hospital bed with oxygen support," said Suresh Kalani of the Jaipur based Rajesh Kalani Foundation.

There are other good Samaritans who continue catering to the needs of COVID-19 patients in home isolation, by getting them food, groceries, medicines etc. On the con-

trary, there is no dearth of people who don't mind breaking the rules. Not wearing a mask, let alone properly, is a common phenomenon. Those loitering around with no justified reason are being quarantined by the police and being released only when they test negative. Such quarantine centers have been set-up in nearly all districts and sub-divisional headquarters.

Last year, the whole world awaited a vaccine as the ultimate ray of hope. We now have the vaccine and greater control over COVID-19 management, but this killer second wave has enveloped us with greater despair and gloom. It is not only more infectious but more virulent and is impacting even young people with new mutations of the novel Coronavirus coming to the fore.

Overcome by her father's death due to COVID-19, a daughter in Barmer district of Rajasthan jumped into the funeral pyre and is now struggling for life having sustained 70 per cent burn injuries. In another incident, afraid of infecting their only grandson, COVID-19 positive grandparents in Kota reportedly committed suicide by jumping before a train.

People with access and understanding of social media platforms are reaching out for help on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Aware and responsible citizens are helping others with verified information on hospital beds, oxygen supplies, blood plasma, and medicines. This is missing in rural areas. People are not only suffering due to lack of infrastructure but also because of lack of information. It is important that relevant information is made available and accessible to rural communities so that they can break the chain of this deadly virus.

—Charika Features

Life is short, make the most of it

Even a small act of kindness can contribute towards your moral progress, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

It is an incontrovertible fact of life that anyone who is born would die one day. Another important fact is that everyone is judged or would be judged by one's actions. The recent deaths of many notable personalities across the world during the pandemic witnessed a large number of VVIPs coming to pay their respectful homage, and of thousands of people expressing their feeling of deprivation, show how these personalities had carved a niche for themselves in the hearts of the people by their certain uncommon charismatic acts. These events of the demise of world-famous personalities that saddened the hearts of millions should indeed have provided people some moments for earnest introspection and deep reflection on their own personal life and acts. If people developed this into a sort of a good habit to consider such occasions as hidden reminders by the Cosmic Order, by whatever name it be known, they would become more sane than mundane and profane.

They would gradually, be uplifted to be themselves, the veritable saints rather than pay only lip-service to saints and be lost in the strong surge of grief and remorse. It has been well-said that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. So, such events, seen at a right perspective, could have served as rungs of a ladder to rise high. Death of these personalities that gave their admirers a jolt, could have served to push them high but lethargic as human nature is in this age, soon people would return to their earthly ambitions, petty objectives. Most would again go into a deep slumber of ignorance as earlier. For, this also is a fact of life that the mood of giving up negative habits or evil intentions is only evanescent and like white froth on the surface of dirty water. And very soon, one takes again to wanton and wild ways.

Whatever be one's philosophy of life, the truth is that even a small act of kindness paves the path of one's moral progress. It enables one to pay one's debt to the society, to leave a lasting impact on the sands of time and to earn the blessings of thousands or millions of men and women. So, the reward for one's virtues is greater than the reward for any other thing. Since the afore-mentioned virtues are considered as sublime or angelic, people reward such a person generously with their heart-felt devotion and ever-growing respect. One of these lessons could be learnt by asking the self this question: If a human being is a mere body and brain, whom do people pay homage to when the body and the brain become dead? For whom do they pray to the lord to give peace? If a person sincerely believes that there exists no entity other than the material, then where do the virtues or moral values, such as compassion, love, kindness, abide? Are these the qualities of matter that take some complex forms as a body and brain? On what basis can one substantiate or establish the mere assumption that these are qualities of things that are material? Aren't moral considerations often in conflict with attractions that relate to flesh, thus, indicating that the two are separate? Does not sometimes a person think of sacrificing life (body and brain) for a moral cause? Can a social order be run merely on the belief that man is an evolved form of matter? Do the moral and ethical principles not pertain to something that aspires for a higher and nobler order and makes efforts to be above the bondages of the material world?

If one argues with oneself on these or similar lines and takes into consideration the reported accounts of reincarnations, hypnotic regressions, near-death and out-of-body experiences, and the nature of moral values that are meant to regulate the body and the brain and are non-physical and of a higher order, then one will easily conclude that the real actor in the drama of life is a non-material entity, called the soul, self or attman. The body serves the purpose of a costume and also as an assemblage of instruments that are required by the soul to act and to make efforts. The body also serves as a medium for experiencing pleasure and pain. If one adopts this truth, one would be above all kinds of sorrows and miseries. This would also remind him/her that this life can come to an end at any moment and we should not postpone good acts but engage ourselves into these soulfully.

—JANS

Ayurveda to treat PCOS/PCOD



Polycystic ovarian syndrome or disease (PCOS/PCOD) is a common condition in women in their reproductive age caused due to hormonal imbalance. This hormonal breakdown results in irregular or prolonged menstrual periods, excessive body hair, acne, and hair loss. Because of this, Polycystic ovaries may fail to develop follicles and regularly release eggs, causing difficulty in conceiving. Ayurveda Diaries, on Tata Sky Fitness explains ayurvedic ways to treat these problems:

Ayurveda and infertility

Both men and women face issues of infertility. However, one of the reasons for infertility is the irregular metabolic fire that results in PCOS and ovarian disorder that results in PCOD. This disorder can be treated by various ayurvedic products.

Men can consume products like Ashokarishta, Ashwagandha, Shatavari and Guggul that helps them to build and strengthen vigour, increase vitality and metabolism. Also, products such as Kaunch, Musli and Shilajit help men in healing infertility.

Women with infertility issues need to make a drastic shift in their lifestyle and eating habits. One can start with giving up dairy products, meats, seafood and eggs from their diet. It has proven beneficial for women dealing with various menstrual disorders.

Ayurveda and PCOD/PCOS

Nowadays, four out of seven women complain of PCOS or PCOD, infertility or menstrual disorders. Therefore, women must adopt plant-based diet. One must include carrot, beetroot and spinach in their diet. They can make a soup and drink it every night for a 28-day cycle. It helps to purify the blood and rectifies the damage done to the uterus. Spices like fenugreek, carom seed in your dals or soups can work wonders for these women.

Seeds like chia seeds, flax seeds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds and sesame seeds are excellent source of protein for women following plant-based diet. Cumin seeds and fennel seeds help women prevent UTI. Coriander seed and cardamom seeds have proven to be best remedies for period cramps.

Fruits like pomegranate and Black grapes also help in purifying the blood that carries fresh oxygen to the uterus, thus helping to repair damaged tissues, muscles, and nerves.

One can also consume *saptashayam kashayam* or *Shatsumaram kashayam* for 3-4 months. It has proven to show good results for all gynaecological health issues. This should be practiced with yoga and exercise to strengthen the core muscles around the uterus and pelvic. Asana like the Camel Pose, Bow Pose, and Butterfly also help to build strength around the core.

—JANS



A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.

—Albert Einstein



OLDER ADULTS ADAPTED TO TECH IN LOCKDOWN

The COVID-19 lockdown led several older adults to adapt and engage with technology such as Zoom, WhatsApp or FaceTime, to stay in touch with loved ones or participate in exercise classes or religious groups, finds a new study.

The participants reported that lockdown had led them to engage with neighbours and other members of their communities for the first time, while several said social distancing had brought an additional meaning to life, by highlighting what was important to them.

Those who engaged in such activity were able to prevent high levels of loneliness, therefore, helping older adults to increase their digital literacy and use of remote social interactions could be a really important tool for addressing loneliness," said researcher Anna Whittaker from the University of Stirling.

According to the research, understanding the coping mechanisms adopted by some over the 60s during the pandemic will play a key role in developing interventions to help tackle loneliness, isolation and well-being in the future.

DENTAL PROCEDURES SAFE DURING PANDEMIC

Want to go for a dental check-up but afraid due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic? Take heart, according to a small study SARS-CoV-2 infection risk at the dentist's office is low.

SARS-CoV-2, the spread behind COVID-19, spreads mainly through respiratory droplets, and dental procedures are known to produce an abundance of aerosols, leading to fears that flying saliva during a cleaning or a restorative procedure could make the dentist's chair a high-transmission location.

Researchers from the Ohio State University in the US, set out to determine whether saliva is the main source of the spray, collecting samples from personnel, equipment and other surfaces reached by aerosols during a range of dental procedures.

"Getting your teeth cleaned does not increase your risk for COVID-19 infection any more than drinking a glass of water from the dentist's office does," said lead author Purnima Kumar, Professor of periodontology at Ohio State.



MIXING COVID VACCINE DOSES SAFE

Mixing COVID-19 vaccine doses — second dose from a different brand than the first — is safe, but may present more frequent mild side-effects such as a headache, chills or a fever, showed results of a preliminary study published in the Lancet.

The study led by University of Oxford researchers, earlier this year, began to investigate the effect of alternate doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and the Pfizer vaccine. The team examined more than 800 adults aged 50 and over who had received mixed vaccine doses at a four-week interval.

When given at a four-week interval, both of the 'mixed' schedules (Pfizer-BioNTech followed by Oxford-AstraZeneca, and Oxford-AstraZeneca followed by Pfizer-BioNTech) induced more frequent reactions following the 2nd, 'boost' dose than the standard, 'non-mixed' schedules.

However, the adverse reactions were short lived and there were no other safety concerns, the researchers said.

BLOW CONCH SHELLS TO KEEP VIRUS AT BAY

Yoga experts are now advising people to blow conch shells in order to strengthen the respiratory system. The age-old practice of blowing conch shells, known as *shankha*, after prayers, is said to help in fighting COVID by enhancing the lung power.

Yoga expert, Ratan Sinha of Prayagraj, said, "Blowing a conch shell is a part of Hindu and Buddhist tradition. Our elders blew the *shankha* regularly and their lungs were strong. They rarely suffered from respiratory problems."

On Sinha's advice, people in three Lucknow neighbourhoods at Stanley Road, Darbhanga and Civil Lines area have started blowing conch shells on a regular basis. The members of the group admit that there is no scientific evidence to prove that blowing conch shells helps prevent COVID-19 but they say it definitely helps one in lung exercise.

BREATHING EXERCISES AID KIDS WITH ADHD

Yoga and breathing exercises have a positive effect on children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a new study suggests.

The researchers, including Sergey Kiselev from the Ural Federal University, say that after special classes, children improve their attention, decrease hyperactivity, they do not get tired longer, they can engage in complex activities longer.

"Exercise has an immediate effect but there is also a delayed effect. We found that even has a positive effect on regulation and control functions in children with ADHD and one year after the end of the exercise," Kiselev said.

"This happens because the child's correct breathing is automated. It becomes a kind of assistant that allows a better supply of oxygen to the brain, which, in turn, has a beneficial effect on the behaviour and psyche of a child with ADHD," Kiselev added.



IGA IS QUEEN OF ROME

AP ■ ROME

Iga Swiatek continues playing like this, she might have no problem defending her French Open title when the year's second Grand Slam starts in two weeks. The 19-year-old Pole routed Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-0 with what is known as a "double bagel" score in an Italian Open final that lasted just 46 minutes Sunday. Swiatek lost just 13 points. "Definitely not the best day for me," Pliskova said. "Iga was playing great tennis today. It was the first double bagel in a WTA final in five years, since Simona Halep overwhelmed Anastasija Sevastova in Bucharest.

"I think you have just days like this in tennis where things are not going your way," Pliskova added. "I will just quickly forget about today."

Blasting winners at will with both her forehand and backhand, Swiatek led 17-5 in winners and committed only five unforced errors to Pliskova's 23. It wasn't always so easy this week for Swiatek, the surprise winner in Paris last year when she was ranked 54th.

She had to save two match points in her third-round victory over Barbora Krejickova then had to win twice on Saturday — beating both two-time Rome champion Elina Svitolina and 17-year-old Coco Gauff — after



her quarterfinal was pushed back a day due to rain. "It's been a tough week but I'm really happy that I got through everything," Swiatek

said. "I was super focused today so I'm really proud of myself." Swiatek's third career title will move her into the top 10 of the rankings for the first time on

Monday — to No. 9. Pliskova was playing in her third consecutive final at the Foro Italico, having won the title in 2019. The veteran Czech player

slammed her racket to the clay in frustration early in the second set and received a code violation warning for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Novak vs Nadal in men's final

Maybe the new generation of tennis players isn't quite so ready to end the eras of Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal. Titles for Stefanos Tsitsipas and Alexander Zverev in the Monte Carlo Masters and Madrid Open, respectively, raised speculation again that the Big Three — including Roger Federer — was expiring. Well, again, not yet. Djokovic and Nadal won a total of three matches over younger players on Saturday and will renew their record-setting rivalry in the Italian Open final on Sunday — exactly two weeks before Roland Garros starts.

Coach creating match situations for me in training: Sindhu



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The lack of competitions before the Olympics is a major concern for Indian shuttlers but not so much for PV Sindhu, who trusts her Korean coach Park Tae Sang to create match situations for her in training itself.

Owing to the raging Covid-19 pandemic, the Badminton World Federation has been forced to cancel the remaining three Olympic qualifiers in India, Malaysia and Singapore. These were to be the last set of events before the Tokyo Games in July-August. Asked if cancellations will affect her preparations, Sindhu said, "Well, we were thinking that Singapore will be the last event before Olympics but now we don't have another option, so I am playing matches against different players and my coach Park is trying to create match situations for me in training."

"Different players have different styles like Tai Tzu (Ying) or Ratchanok (Intanon) have different styles of play but Sindhu is there to guide me, to prepare me for it," Sindhu said.

"Obviously, we will be playing each other after a few months and there will be something new in our games, so I will have to prepare for that." Sindhu doesn't train with the rest of the Indian Olympic-bound team. She has been training at the Gachibowli indoor stadium in Telangana and does her fitness training at Suchitra academy.

The 25-year-old endorsed BWF's decision to cancel the events, saying while it is sad that competitions could not take place but life is more important than sports.

"It is sad that the whole world has come to a standstill but before sportspeople, we are human beings and life comes first," Sindhu said. "If tournaments happen, we don't know if we will be safe, we might think we will be but we can't be sure because we don't know from where this virus will come."

"For the moment, events are being cancelled and I know sportspeople are sad but I think it is good for the people. Organisers take a lot of measures and keep us in a bubble but still we need to be careful."

Sindhu, who had reached the finals of Swiss Open in March after returning to action following a long break, said she is improving as a player.

"It has been a good campaign so far this year. I have been improving as a player. My coach has analysed my game, so really looking forward to the Olympics. My dad also helps me a lot," she said.

Kohli best batsman in world: Paine

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness.

Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting sub plot during the historic showdown in which India became the first Asian country to win a Test series Down Under.

"For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world," the 36-year-old



Paine said on the Gilly and Goss podcast.

"He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good and he is so competitive."

"But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, He is certainly someone I will

always remember," he added. Interestingly, last year Paine had said that Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me."

He had also stated that the Australian team "loves to hate" the superstar for his awe-inspiring abilities with the bat.

Finally, Hussey leaves for home

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Having recovered from Covid-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey left for Australia on Sunday via Doha, a top official of the IPL franchise said.

Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for Covid-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday.

"Yes, Hussey has left for Australia via Doha by a commercial flight. He left in the early hours of Sunday," CSK CEO K S Viswanathan said.

Hussey, who had first tested positive for Covid-19 during the now-suspended IPL, is expected to reach home on Monday.

Hussey said, the other Australians involved in the 2021 edition of IPL took a detour to Maldives and quarantined there before heading back to Australia.

India Eves likely to tour Oz in Sept

New Delhi: The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September.

Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20Is.

"We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said on No Bull's The Cricket Podcast, hosted by Kate Cross and Alex Hartley.

"So, there's a couple of camps. I believe we are doing one in Darwin, which will be really cool. And then the tour against India."

And then pretty much from there things get crazy with Big Bash, WNCL, Ashes, World Cup, and hopefully the Commonwealth



Games."

The BCCI, in its last Apex Council meeting, had also approved the tour of Australia ahead of the World Cup in New Zealand next year. A home series against the Windies was also cleared.

The tour of Australia was originally planned for January this year but was postponed after the World Cup was put off to 2022 amid the Covid-19 pandemic. PTI

shortpasses

BREMEN SACK KOHFELD

BREMEN: Werder Bremen on Sunday sacked head coach Florian Kohfeldt and replaced him with club legend Thomas Schaaf for their final league game this season after the club slipped into the bottom three of the Bundesliga. After four years in charge, Kohfeldt has been shown the door with just next Saturday's home game against Moenchengladbach left as Bremen fight to stay in Germany's top flight.

ZIZOU IS LEAVING REAL

MADRID: Spanish media claimed early Sunday that Zinedine Zidane has already told his players that he intends to quit as coach at the end of the season. According to Onda Cero radio and Goal online, the Frenchman, who has a contract until 2022, informed his squad a week ago that he was going to leave when the season ends next week.

TEJASWIN CLINCHES GOLD

NEW DELHI: Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a Gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA. Representing Kansas State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record.

SPOTIFY BID TO BUY ARSENAL

LONDON: Spotify co-founder Daniel Ek said Saturday a formal offer to buy Arsenal had been rejected by the Premier League club's American owners. In a statement on Twitter, the Swedish tycoon said the club's owners, Kroenke Sports and Entertainment (KSE), had rebuffed his bid.

N KOREA OUT OF WC QUALIFIERS

SEOUL: North Korea has pulled out of next month's qualifying matches for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the AFC said on Sunday. No reasons were given for the withdrawal but South Korean media reported earlier this month that Pyongyang had said it would skip the qualifiers over coronavirus fears.

KAYLEE NARROWLY MISSES WR

SYDNEY: Australian 400m freestyle swimmer Kaylee narrowly missed the 50 metre backstroke world record on Sunday while setting the year's best time in the 200m individual medley as she ramps up preparations for the Tokyo Olympics.

TEAM SELECTION ON JUNE 15-16

NEW DELHI: The Indian para-athletics team for the Tokyo Paralympic Games in August-September will be picked during a 10-day trial to be held in New Delhi on June 15 and 16, the national governing body Paralympic Committee of India said on Sunday. Agencies

2018 sandpapergate monumental mistake: Sekar

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia bowling coach David Sekar, who was with the team during the 2018 ball-tampering scandal, on Sunday said it was a "monumental mistake" which could have been prevented and for which fingers can also be pointed at him.

"Obviously a lot of things went wrong at that time. The finger-pointing is going to go on and on and on. There was a lot of people to blame. It could have



been me to blame, it could have been someone else. It wasn't, which is unfortunate," Sekar told the Sydney Morning Herald. "Cameron (Bancroft) a very nice guy. He's just doing it

to get something off his chest... He's not going to be the last," he added. Sekar lamented that the incident is going to be associated with Australian cricket forever and there is nothing one can do about it.

"You could point your finger at me, you could point your finger at Boof (then coach Darren Lehmann), could you point it at other people, of course you could," he said.

"The disappointing thing is it's never going to go away. Regardless of what's said. We all

know that we made a monumental mistake. The gravity wasn't as plain until it all came out," he added.

The 54-year-old Victorian made the statement after Bancroft made a startling revelation that Australian bowlers at the time might have had some knowledge about the plot.

While Cricket Australia issued a statement saying that it was open to a re-investigation into the incident, Sekar said he was not sure what could possibly come out of it.

Spurs still in Europe race



Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg, left, celebrates with teammates after scoring Spurs second goal

AFP ■ LONDON

Harry Kane scored his 22nd Premier League goal of the season as Tottenham Hotspur beat Wolves 2-0 on Sunday to maintain their hopes of a top-four finish.

England captain Kane fired Spurs ahead on the stroke of half-time before Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg doubled their lead in the 62nd minute.

Victory left Spurs in sixth place, five points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, with a maximum of six points available to them from their final two league games.

The top four in the Premier League are assured of a place in the 2021/22 Champions League. Kane gave Spurs the lead running onto Hojbjerg's through ball behind centre backs Conor Coady and Romain Saiss.

The Spurs star side-stepped Coady's challenge and rounded goalkeeper Rui Patrício, before curling the ball into the corner of the net.

Hojbjerg made it 2-0 just after the hour when he followed up Gareth Bale's shot and tapped the ball in after Patrício could only parry.

Earlier, Crystal Palace twice came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2, with Tyrick Mitchell's first goal for the club sealing victory six minutes from time.

John McGinn's third goal of the season put Villa ahead in the 17th minute at Selhurst Park before Christian Benteke equalised against his former club with a 32nd-minute header.

But Palace fell behind again two minutes later when Anwar El Ghazi scored from close range.

The Eagles equalised for a second time in the 76th minute when Wilfried Zaha grabbed his 11th goal of the season with low shot deflected in off Ahmed Elmohamady.

The comeback was complete in the 84th minute when the 21-year-old Mitchell followed-up from close range after team-mate Eberechi Eze had misfired.

Victory lifted South London club Palace to 13th.

IPL helped Shami get his rhythm back

New Delhi: Veteran India pacer Mohammed Shami found his "rhythm" during the now suspended IPL and feels the UK tour will be a successful one for the team if it is able to replicate the stellar performance of the last six months.

India will leave for the UK on June 2 for three and half months during which they will play six Test matches starting with the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18.

With the Covid-19 wreaking havoc across the globe, the soon to be 31-year-old Shami said that too much of planning in these times is of no use.

"See, there is no point in planning too much as certain things are not in our control. Who would have thought that the pandemic would virtually destroy two years of our lives — hence I prefer to take it by each series or tournament as the case may be," the pacer told Gulf News.

"We have played some extraordinary cricket in recent times as an unit and naturally, the confidence level is high on the eve of our departure for England."

"If we can reproduce some of the form which we did over last six months, I am content it will be a great summer for us," said the man, who has 180 wickets from 50 Tests.



AFP ■ FLORENCE

Napoli keep CL hopes alive

AFP ■ FLORENCE

Napoli moved third in Serie A on Sunday with a 2-0 win at Fiorentina to keep their push for a Champions League return alive.

Lorenzo Insigne missed a penalty but sent in the rebound after 56 minutes with a Lorenzo Venuti own goal 11 minutes later sealing an important win for the visitors.

Napoli are third, two points behind Atlanta, who assured a third consecutive series of Champions' League football, with a 4-3 win at Genoa on Saturday.

AC Milan, are a point behind Napoli, occupying in the final Champions League berth, and play 16th-placed Cagliari later on Sunday.

Juventus are fifth, one point behind Napoli, but still in the running for a top four finish after a 3-2 win over newly-crowned champions Inter Milan on Saturday, with one match left this season.

Napoli's final game will be at home against midtable Hellas Verona, as they look to return to elite European football after missing out last season.

Juventus play their final game at Bologna desperate to avoid missing out on the Champions League for the first time in a decade.

Lazio will not play among the European elite next season after a 2-0 derby defeat to Roma on Saturday.

Sixth-placed Lazio are eight points behind Juventus having played a game less.