



Report on politicians hoarding medicine is vague, says Delhi HC
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Israeli strikes hit Gaza tunnels as diplomats work for truce
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Wholesale inflation soars to record-high of 10.5% in April
Page 12



Australia's IPL contingent reaches home safely from the Maldives
Page 13

NEARBY



HC reserves order on plea to stop Central Vista work

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday reserved its verdict on a petition seeking a halt on the construction activities related to the Central Vista Project in view of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in the Capital. The court reserved its verdict after hearing both sides for over three hours.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Two Al-Badr militants killed in Srinagar

Srinagar Two Al-Badr militants were killed and two pistols were recovered from the encounter site near Srinagar's Khomoh area on Monday. The police identified the two as Wasim Bashir Pandit and Mudasir Ahmad Khanday from Pulwama's Kakpora and Bargam. "Both were part of groups involved in several terror crimes," the police said.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

U.P. police start patrolling the Ganga

Lucknow Following Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's instructions to prevent people from disposing of bodies in rivers, the police in several districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh have started patrolling the Ganga and villages located on its banks. Nine teams from five police stations along the Ganga have been deployed for the patrolling.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Delhi reports less than 5,000 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The number of fresh COVID-19 cases in the Capital went below the 5,000 mark for the first time since April 5. The positivity rate also fell to 8.42%, the lowest since April 9.

The health bulletin released by the Delhi government showed 4,524 new cases over 24 hours, 340 deaths and 10,918 recoveries. The bulletin said 53,756 tests were conducted on Monday, which was relatively lower than the 62,059 tests on Sunday.

There has been a downward trend in the number of cases. Delhi had reported 6,456 cases on Sunday, 6,430 on Saturday, 8,506 on Friday, 10,489 on Thursday and 13,287 on Wednesday.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 4

Tauktae fury: six killed in Maharashtra

Cyclone begins landfall process in Gujarat; about 1.5 lakh people evacuated to safer areas in State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI/MANGALURU

Cyclone Tauktae began the process of landfall on the Gujarat coast around 8.30 p.m. on Monday as the State braced for the impact of surging wind speeds of up to 210 km an hour. Earlier in the day, six persons were reported killed in Maharashtra, as the "extremely severe cyclonic storm" ran parallel to the Maharashtra coast and wound its way to Gujarat.

"Landfall process is continuing, it will take another three hours to complete its landfall process," the IMD said in a tweet at 9.16 p.m.

At least 1.5 lakh people were moved to safer areas in Gujarat with Tauktae expected to hit the coast between Porbandar and Mahua in Bhavnagar district, east of Diu, as the Army and NDRF personnel were deployed in the State.

"Focus is to save lives, speedy clearance of routes to ensure movement of oxygen and standby arrangements at COVID hospitals," an Army tweet said.

The storm is expected to whittle down to a "very severe cyclonic storm" – still rustling up wind speeds of up to 170 kmph – and by early Tuesday become a "severe cyclonic storm". Wind speeds are expected to remain around 100 kmph during Tauktae's track over land for most of Tuesday.

It is expected to peter out into a "depression" near Jodhpur by Wednesday. Storms are common in the



Brimming over: Waves crashing onto the road as Cyclone Tauktae hit Mumbai on Monday. ■ REUTERS

Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea in May, ahead of the monsoon onset – predicted to be May 31 this year – though climatologists have said there is an increase in the number of such storms in the Arabian Sea in recent years. Tauktae is the fourth cyclone in as many years over the Arabian Sea in the pre-monsoon months.

Havoc in Maharashtra

Six people died and nine were injured as the cyclone passed parallel to Maharashtra's coastline, leaving a trail of damaged homes and uprooted trees.

In Mumbai, with the heavy rain coinciding with high

tide, strong winds and heavy rain lead to hundreds of trees being uprooted and waterlogging in low-lying areas.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the highest wind-speed in the city of 114 kmph was recorded at 2 p.m. at the Colaba observatory.

The IMD had upgraded the warning to extremely heavy rainfall in Mumbai during Monday afternoon and evening, predicting winds will continue and escalate up to 120 kmph.

The administration moved over 12,400 citizens to safety from coastal Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri and Raigad districts. Two fishing

boats capsized in Devgad, in Sindhudurg, leaving one sailor dead. Another sailor was rescued, while three others are missing.

While three deaths were reported from Raigad, two people died in Thane district. Four of the nine injured were from Mumbai, two each from Ratnagiri and Raigad and one from Thane. In all, 2,542 houses were partially destroyed.

Flights diverted

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSIA), which suspended all flight operations from 11 a.m. on Monday, resumed operations at 11 p.m. More than 55

flights, both incoming and outbound, were cancelled and seven incoming flights were diverted to other airports.

Naval operation
In a daring operation involving the Coast Guard, the Navy and the Dakshina Kannada district administration, all the nine crew stranded on board the tug *Coromandel Supporter IX*, were rescued on Monday morning.

The vessel had run aground on a rocky formation off the Karnataka coast near Mangaluru.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 5 & 8

Two TMC Ministers among four held by CBI in Narada scam

They will be in custody till tomorrow

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

Four senior political leaders, including two Ministers of West Bengal's Trinamool Congress government and a party MLA, were arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Narada sting operation case and will remain in judicial custody till Wednesday.



Mamata Banerjee leaving the CBI office in Kolkata on Monday. ■ PTI

CBI action is a declaration of war: Sinha

Former BJP leader Yashwant Sinha, who recently joined the Trinamool Congress, said the action of the CBI against the party's leaders in the Narada case was

unparalleled and aimed at weakening the CM. ▶ PAGE 9

hours. Lawyers representing those arrested said Ms. Banerjee had dared the CBI authorities to take her into custody.

The four were virtually produced before a city court, where the CBI sought 14-day judicial custody.

As news of the arrests broke, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rushed to the CBI office. She remained on the premises for almost six

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

India records 2,31,781 fresh COVID-19 cases, 3,207 deaths

The cumulative case count crosses 2.5 crore-mark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

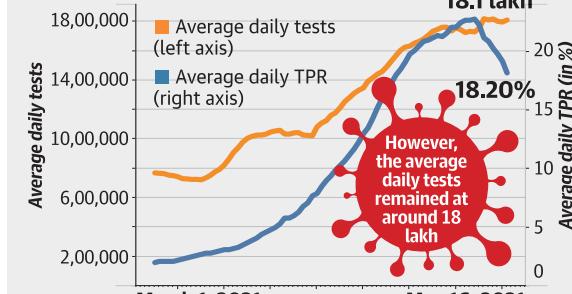
India's cumulative COVID-19 case count crossed the 2.5 crore-mark on Monday, the second highest globally. The country's tally is about 80 lakh less than the United States' cumulative infections and 90 lakh more than that of Brazil's.

As many as 2,31,781 new cases and 3,207 deaths were recorded until 9.45 p.m. on Monday. Karnataka reported 38,603 infections, followed by Tamil Nadu (33,075) and Maharashtra (26,616). Maharashtra also recorded 516 casualties, followed by Karnataka (476) and Delhi (340).

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Tripura, Uttarakhand and

On the decline

India's average daily Test Positivity Rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continued to reduce as on May 16



Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective State's health bulletins.

Only 15.74 lakh samples were tested in the country on Sunday (the results for which were made available on Monday), which is

around 2.6 lakh less than the tests conducted on Saturday. However, it is nearly one lakh tests more than those conducted on the previous Sunday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

A few clotting events after Covishield jab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Adverse Event Following Immunisation data in India showed that there is a muscle but definitive risk of thromboembolic events after administration of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine (Covishield in India).

A statement by the Health Ministry on Monday noted that the reporting rate of these events in India is around 0.61/million doses, much lower than the four cases/million reported by the United Kingdom's regulator Medical and Health Regulatory Authority. Germany has reported 10 events per million doses.

There were no potential thromboembolic events reported following administration of Covaxin vaccine.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

T.N. skips 'officials only' meeting with Centre

STAFF REPORTER

CHENNAI

Representatives from the Tamil Nadu School Education Department chose not to participate in the virtual meeting

organised for State Education Secretaries on Monday.

Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' had convened the meeting to discuss implementation of

NEP 2020 and the COVID-19 situation.

However, he had called for the participation of Education Secretary alone.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 8

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SC orders medical exam of YSR Congress MP

He is in the custody of the A.P. police

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday ordered that YSR Congress MP Kanumuri Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, who is in the Andhra Pradesh police's custody for sedition, be immediately taken to the Army Hospital in Secunderabad for medical examination.

A vacation Bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B.R. Gavai expressed concern about the health of Mr. Raju and directed that he be admitted in the Army Hospital.

</div

Kin of COVID-19 victims deprived of one final goodbye

Many lament not getting a chance to meet loved ones despite waiting outside hospital and making futile calls to enquire about health status

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

On Monday afternoon, Arunima Bhattacharjee (28) performed the last rites of her father Abhay (65) who succumbed to COVID-19 last night. She regrets not being able to see him one last time to bid goodbye.

Breaking down, Ms. Bhattacharjee, a lawyer by profession and resident of South Delhi, said that she wanted her father to know that she and her mother tried their best to save him but she didn't get a chance despite waiting outside Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital and making innumerable calls to the help desk.

"I just wanted to tell him that I didn't abandon him and you may be leaving us behind but me and Maa will try to be okay just the way you would have wanted. I wanted him to know we tried," she said sobbing.

Recalling her experience, Ms. Bhattacharjee said that



A family member of a COVID-19 victim being consoled outside a cremation ground in Ghaziabad on Monday. • R.V. MOORTHY

her father, who was also under treatment for neurological problems, was admitted to Lok Nayak Hospital on May 7. "I specifically told the doctors and nurses there during admission that he has neurological problems and he'll need attention but I didn't get any update on his health for three days. I kept asking the doctor that I wanted to visit him and three days later, they agreed to let me go inside wearing a PPE kit," she said.

What she saw had her in tears. "My father was in diapers and a tshirt which were soiled. He was confused and didn't know what was happening. I decided to shift him because I knew he would die there," she claimed.

After arranging a bed, she shifted him to Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital on May 14 and that was the last she saw of him. "I waited outside the hospital on May 15 and asked the reception and called on five help desk num-

bers, but they kept me waiting. I got no word. Eventually, my friend cried on the phone and that's when they shared details of his bed number," she claimed, adding she also took to social media for help on her father's update.

Neharikka Vij from AAP MLA Raghav Chadha's team then contacted the daughter

via Twitter and helped her with the health update on her father. "Thanks to her we got the update that he was okay," Ms. Bhattacharjee said.

Request for video call

On May 16, claiming that she herself was unwell as she had just recovered from COVID-19 about 10 days ago, Ms. Bhat-

achers and healthcare workers are dealing with more than they can handle. They cannot be expected to update families when they are trying to save lives

PRIVATE HOSPITAL DOCTOR

tacharjee did not visit the hospital and continued to call requesting the hospital for "one video call" but to no avail.

On Sunday night, around 10 p.m., she said she received a call from the hospital saying that her father had been put on ventilator. "I was on my way and I asked the hospital staffer to show me my father via video and tell him that he was going to be okay, but that did not happen," she said.

By the time she reached the hospital, she was informed that he had passed away.

Ms. Vij said that she got Ms. Bhattacharjee's call

around 11 p.m. on Sunday asking her to help with information on her father's health and if there was any way she could meet her father.

"I told her to calm down and carry a PPE kit and that I'll try if something can be done. When I called the doctor, he told her father had already passed away. I just didn't know how to tell her but within the next few minutes, she reached the hospital," the volunteer said.

Amit Phansalkar (45) from Pune, an IT professional, recalled how he saw his father for the last time when he was admitted in a hospital for COVID-19 in March. "Going into the COVID lift of the hospital... that was the last I saw of him," he said.

Mr. Phansalkar claimed it was nearly impossible to get updates about his father's health. "Most of the times, I would just tell the doctor that he can update me when he had the time because I understood they were swarmed

with work but I feel there should be a way to be able to contact COVID patients," he said.

Kartikeya Bhatotia, 24, resident of Pitampura, said that his father is admitted at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital and he tested COVID negative a week ago but they haven't been able to see him or get any update about him. "We don't know who is his doctor is. My father wasn't fully conscious for the last two weeks and we were dependent on a healthcare worker for information about my father," he said.

Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital refused to comment on the matter.

A doctor working with a private hospital, on condition of anonymity, said,

"Doctors and healthcare workers are in a terrible condition themselves. They are dealing with more than they can handle. They can't be expected to update families when they are trying to save lives".

Fix a formula to determine price of oxygen concentrators'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Centre if it can fix a formula to determine the MRP of oxygen concentrators which are being imported at huge numbers due to their demand during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rakha Palli said it was not asking the government to fix an exact price for the oxygen concentrators but to fix a principle on which they will be charged as people were being charged exorbitantly.

The High Court also said that there has to be a ceiling on the price of the product which could be sold in the domestic market by the importers. "There has to be some limit to it. Tomorrow, some Chinese manufacturer will say he will sell it at a five-time rate, it cannot be allowed," the court said.

"As a government, it is your responsibility that people are actually able to afford the product and not have to pay through their nose. They can't be taken for a ride. Shortage of a product cannot be taken advantage of," the High Court observed.

Central government counsel said the landed price is ultimately determined by the exporter. It was not possible for the government to fix the prices as there are different contractors in the market with different prices, sizes and names, it said.

The Centre's counsel, however, sought some time to obtain instructions and come back to the court with some answers by May 19.

During the hearing, the court permitted various private hospitals, which had sought immediate relief of oxygen supply to treat critically ill COVID-19 patients, to withdraw their pleas as the supplies have now been stabilised.

Police get 3-day custody of Kalra in oxygen concentrators case

He was arrested from a farmhouse on outskirts of Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A city court on Monday sent businessman and restaurateur Navneet Kalra to police custody for three days, said a senior police officer.

Mr. Kalra was arrested on late Sunday evening from a farmhouse on the outskirts of Gurugram. He was produced before a magistrate through virtual hearing.

Unearth whole nexus
Investigating Officer (IO) Kamal Kumar asserted that his custodial interrogation is required to unearth the whole nexus and conspiracy behind black-marketing and know the trail of money transaction.

The police said they have questioned him over the evidences they have gathered

from his restaurants during raids and disclosure of his staffers who were arrested during the raids on May 6 and 7 at his restaurants in Khan Market and Lodhi Colony.

The court is of the view that custodial interrogation of the accused is required for recovery of electronic devices used for the purpose of commission of alleged offences, to identify other victims exploited by him, for detailed investigation regarding his involvement and connections with Matrix and Classic Metals, the manner of procurement of oxygen concentrators, for detailed probe of financial transactions from his firm as well as to identify the other co-accused involved in the present case, as mentioned in

the order copy.

The case was transferred to Crime Branch but a team of South Delhi police was also tracking him. On Sunday, they got inputs regarding his presence at a farmhouse belonging to his brother-in-law in Sohna in Gurugram. A team raided the farmhouse and arrested him.

"We got suspicious about his presence at the farmhouse after his brother-in-law's mobile location was frequently found there. Mr. Kalra was using his servant's mobile phone to contact his friends and lawyers," said the officer.

The police said that Mr. Kalra was wanted in a case of alleged black-marketing and hoarding of oxygen concentrators during the second wave of pandemic.

AIIMS employee held for demanding ₹5 lakh to admit COVID-19 patient

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

An AIIMS staffer and his sister were arrested for allegedly demanding ₹5 lakh for admission of a COVID-19 patient in the ICU at a hospital here, the police said on Tuesday.

The accused have been identified as Pankaj Kumar, (45) who works at AIIMS hospital in haematology lab and his sister Kavalipt Kaur alias Mamta (36).

The call detail records of the accused duo were analysed which revealed their location in Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh. A team conducted raid in Rewari vil-

lage and arrested them.

The police said that an information was received from the COVID cell of Delhi police headquarters on May 9 about a complainant, Haripal, who alleged that a person named Bhushan Kumar and Sunil Kumar had taken ₹2.8 lakh for admission of his COVID positive wife to Safdarjung Hospital.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered. During investigation, Bhushan and Sunil said that complainant's brother-in-law Ravinder Pal Singh is known to Bhushan and that Singh had contacted him for arranging an oxygen

cylinder for his sister.

"Bhushan arranged an empty oxygen cylinder for Singh on humanitarian ground. On April 30, Singh again contacted Bhushan for getting her sister admitted to some hospital as she was in critical condition. Thereafter, Bhushan contacted his acquaintance Pankaj Kumar for admission," DCP (Rohini) Pranav Tayal.

Pankaj told Bhushan ₹5 lakh was needed for admission to any hospital and sent his sister's number and said she would manage the admission of patient, the officer said.

The proposal to announce cash reward was approved by the police headquarters on Monday, a senior police officer said.

"We are hopeful to get leads about Sushil after announcing the cash reward as he is a public figure and hiding for long at any place will be tough for him," said the officer.

Previously, a Delhi court had issued a non-bailable warrant against Sushil Kumar in the murder case of a 23-year-old wrestler at Chhatrasal Stadium.

The police had also issued a look-out notice against Sushil Kumar in the matter last week.

"Several police teams have been on the look-out for Sushil Kumar in Uttarakhand, U.P., Delhi and Haryana. After being named in the case, he remained at an ashram in Haridwar for a few days and later changed his location. He was last seen in Sonipat in Haryana," added the officer.

The officer added that Sushil is continuously changing his location and at several instances, police teams were a few minutes late to catch him. "We have arrested three of his accomplices and they have got details of Sushil's hideouts," he said.

₹1 lakh cash reward for wrestler's whereabouts

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday announced a reward of ₹1 lakh on Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar and of ₹50,000 on co-accused Ajay. They are wanted in a murder of a wrestler in north-west Delhi.

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The university said that the online application for

Vaccination on the move



A healthcare worker gives a vaccination shot to a man at a drive-through centre in Noida on Monday. • R.V. MOORTHY

Jamia ready for new session, releases prospectus online

Application submission till June 30

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia on Monday launched its e-prospectus for the academic session 2021-2022 for admission to various courses.

The university announced that it will be introducing eight new courses and four departments this session. The new departments are the Department of Design and Innovation, Department of Hospital Management and Hospice Studies, Department of Foreign Languages and Department of Environmental Sciences.

The university said that the online application for

DU teachers reiterate call for COVID hospital

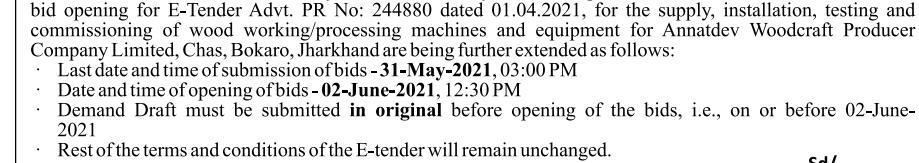
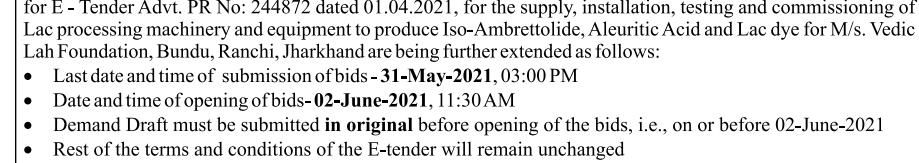
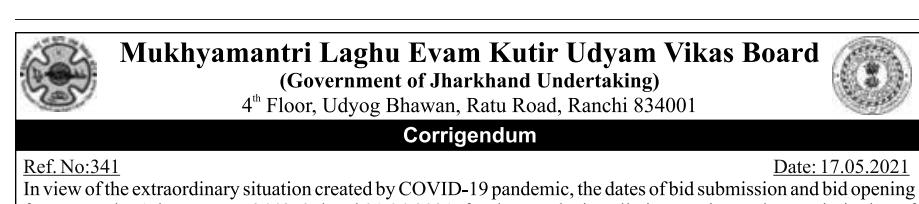
Rope in Patel Chest Institute, they plead

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

"Patel Chest Institute is a resource-surplus institute with crores of unspent fund which can be used for developing it as COVID-19 hospital," the letter, signed by DU Executive Council member Seema Das among others, stated.

Stating that the teaching community could no longer be a "mute spectator to expanding tentacles of fatalities around," the letter further said, "The absence of required action despite having financial and administrative resources at your command has been aggravating the pain and anguish of the university community."



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RISE 05:30 SET 19:07
RISE 10:34 SET 00:00
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 19
RISE 05:29 SET 19:08
RISE 11:34 SET 00:41
THURSDAY, MAY. 20
RISE 05:29 SET 19:08
RISE 12:35 SET 01:21

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	38 24
Safdarjung	38 24
Palam	38 27

Delhi Palam Today
32°C Cloudy sky and moderate surface winds likely. Rain and thunderstorm likely with gusty winds at some places.
Daily Palam Tomorrow

30°C Few spell of rain and thunderstorm with moderate winds likely at some places. Day would remain largely comfortable.
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PUBLIC NOTICE
PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Dr Umesh Dutt Galviya S/O Sunil Dutt Galviya R/O 15D Friends Colony West, Delhi-65 hereby declares that all my WILL that are being registered or are not registered stands cancel till date as being the only owner of all my movable as well as immovable properties. After my demise all my properties will be transferred in my company's name i.e Nakshatra Techno Commercials Pvt Ltd. (As the only nominee)

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Advertised E-Tendering Tender Notice - 778-BPL-C-Cont-15-2021, dated 17.05.2021. E-Tender is invited on behalf of the President of India acting through Dy. Chief Engineer-II (Construction), West Central Railway, Bhopal, for the following works:- S.No.: 1. Brief Description of work: Laying and Linking of New BG 3rd line track on MBC/PSC sleepers, transportation P. Way material & miscellaneous works between Lidhora Khurd (including) to Girwar (excluding) km 1063.883 to 1072.474 and Sagar to Makroniya (km 1049.657 to 1056.715) along with Sagar, Makroniya and Lidhora Khurd yard remodelling in connection with Bina-Katni 3rd line project. Approx. tender value : ₹ 785.12 lakhs. Earnest Money: 0. Completion period of work: 12 Months (including harvest and monsoon period). Due date of opening of tender: 09.06.2021. Cost of tender form: 0. The complete information of the above E-Tender is available on website www.reps.gov.in and also placed on the notice board of the office. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against above tenders.
Dy.CE/C-II/BPL
RailMadad Helpline 139

North body workers get due salaries

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

North civic body Mayor Jai Prakash on Monday said as much as ₹431.33 crore of the ₹432 crore grant released by the Delhi government over the weekend had been disbursed in the form of salaries to its employees across various categories.

According to the Mayor, salaries pending for had been cleared for most of the employees and the remaining would be disbursed at the earliest. "All sanitation workers have been disbursed salaries pending for March and April towards their salaries; we were struggling to get the Delhi government release this amount," the Mayor said. He said the total amount disbursed stands at ₹154.08 crore, other D-group sanitation workers given ₹42.51 crore, paramedical staff ₹1.57 crore, and the C-group employees given ₹20.92 crore.

Only 3 days of vaccine stock left for 18-44 group: Sisodia

Minister asks Centre to make doses available for the category

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Citing a shortage of vaccines, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday said the stock for the 18-44 years category would only last three more days.

He said the Delhi government may have to shut all the centres opened up for this category if the Centre does not provide fresh supply.

Mr. Sisodia said that in a letter addressed to the Delhi government, the Centre has committed to distribute 3.83 lakh doses for the 45+ age group, however, the same provision has not been extended to 18-44 age group.

"This is a grave issue that requires the immediate attention of the Central government. At the very least, they should match the doses for 45+ citizens and distribute 3.83 lakh doses for the 18-44 age group as well," Mr.

Sisodia said.

Mr. Sisodia said he wrote to the Centre on Monday, requesting them to make vaccine doses available for citizens between 18-44 years, make allocation data of vaccines transparent and open to the public.

Transparency sought

He said: "Currently the Centre allocates 50% of vaccines and passes on the responsibility for the rest to State governments. But, there is no transparency in the process. Allocation data, showing how many vaccine doses have been provided to which State and for which age group, should be on public domain."

He said the Centre should be transparent in its vaccine allocation data like it has shown transparency in oxygen allocation. He also requested that the information on the number of doses that

will be made available to the Capital in June and July be communicated to the State government so that it can plan its vaccination programme.

AAP MLA Atishi said 90,832 vaccine doses had been administered on Sunday, of which 79,353 were administered their first dose. The second dose had been administered to 11,479 beneficiaries.

"We will have five days stock of Covishield, but less than a day's stock of Covaxin for 45 plus age group after today's vaccination," Ms. Atishi said.

To cater to those people in the 45 and above age group who don't have smartphones and can't register online, Ms. Atishi said the government has added 97 schools where walk-in vaccinations for 45-plus, healthcare workers and frontline workers started on Monday.

City sees a dip in cases, positivity and testing

Fresh infections fall below 5,000 for first time since April 5

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The number of fresh COVID-19 cases on Monday went below the 5,000-mark for the first time since April 5 with the positivity rate also falling below 10%. However, the number of tests conducted had also fallen.

The health bulletin released by the Delhi government showed that 4,524 new cases had been added in 24 hours along with 340 deaths and 10,918 recoveries.

There has been a downward trend in the number of cases as well with Delhi having reported 6,456 cases on Sunday, 6,430 on Saturday, 8,506 on Friday, 10,489 on Thursday, 13,287 on Wednesday, 12,481 on Tuesday, and 12,651 on Monday.

The Capital at present has 56,049 active cases of which 35,141 are under home isolation. The number of cumulative cases stands at 13,98,391



A healthcare worker in a banquet hall that has been converted into a COVID-19 isolation centre in Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHKARAKAR

and the death toll at 21,846.

Despite the reduction in the number of cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said the strict implementation of the lockdown would continue for a week till May 24.

The test positivity rate in the Capital had peaked on April 22, when it was 36.2%. This was a few days after the lockdown was imposed on April 19.

'WhatsApp's new policy is against IT law'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday informed the Delhi High Court that the controversial new privacy policy of instant messaging app WhatsApp was against the Indian Information Technology (IT) law and rules.

The Union government made the submission before an HC Bench during a hearing of several petitions challenging WhatsApp's latest privacy policy, which, according to the platform, has come into effect from May 15.

WhatsApp said its new privacy policy had come into effect from May 15, but also clarified that it would not start deleting accounts of those users who had not accepted it and would try to encourage them to get on board.

The HC had issued notice to the Centre, Facebook, which owns the app, and WhatsApp on a plea by a lawyer who had claimed that the new policy violated users' right to privacy under the Indian Constitution. The Centre also informed the High Court that it had written to Facebook CEO on the issue and a reply was awaited.

The court will hear the case again on June 3.

Middle class, poor, labourers, migrants got nothing from the Delhi govt.: BJP

'Centre provided two months' free ration to 80 crore people'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

"Kejriwal [Delhi CM] announced on May 4 that 72 lakh ration card holders in city will be given free ration for May and June but the fact is it is Central government's policy under which it is being done. But the Delhi government has till date not acted on this which is why labourers, who have lost their jobs, are not getting even a single meal," he said.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said not even a single new ration card has been issued in Delhi in the last six years. Though over

72 lakh citizens had ration cards, thousands still did not; when the Delhi government asked for applications in this regard, 54 lakh applications were found to be valid but had not been issued ration cards till date.

"Most of them are migrant labourers or daily wagers. Despite the apex court's order, no poor has been given two times' meals now even after lockdowns. Why does the AAP government continue to lie on such an issue?" he asked.

last six years. Though over

72 lakh citizens had ration cards, thousands still did not; when the Delhi government asked for applications in this regard, 54 lakh applications were found to be valid but had not been issued ration cards till date.

The middle-class, poor, labourers and migrant workers of Delhi have got "nothing" from the government in the last six years except false promises and assurances, the BJP alleged on Monday.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said while the Centre, during the pandemic, had provided two months' free ration for 80 crore poor across the country, the Delhi government had left over 72 lakh ration cardholders in the Capital on their own.

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IN BRIEF



Jain Coral Cove owners to get full value of flat

KOCHI
Flat owners of Jain Coral Cove, one of the four apartments in Maradu here in Kerala, which had been demolished for violating the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules, will get almost the full value of their apartments. The approximate value of each apartment is estimated to be around ₹50 lakh. It was on January 11 last year that the Coral Cove apartment complex was demolished using controlled implosion.

A.P. plans FD for children orphaned in pandemic

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has instructed officials to arrange for a fixed deposit (FD) of ₹10 lakh for children whose parents have died of COVID-19. The deposit will be started in banks that provide the maximum rate of interest till the children attain the age of 25. Mr. Reddy, during a meeting on the pandemic on Monday, suggested that a plan be worked out so that the children receive the interest on the deposits on a monthly basis.

Kerala HC for control of lotteries of other States

KOCHI
A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Monday set aside a single judge's order restraining the State government from interfering with marketing and sale of lottery tickets of the Nagaland government in the State. The single judge had held that the Centre alone had the power to regulate and control the lotteries if it was run in violation of the law. The Division Bench has allowed an appeal to be filed by the Kerala State government.

Talks on Kerala Cabinet reach finality

In all probability, CPI(M) may get 12 Cabinet and Speaker posts; CPI may get four Cabinet posts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The profile of the next Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala took a more definitive form on Monday after a fortnight of hectic behind-the-scenes berth-sharing talks.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan hinted the discussions had reached a finality. When pressed whether new faces would populate the Council of Ministers, Mr. Vijayan said: "Wait till tomorrow."

Diverse team

Earlier, LDF convener A. Vijayaraghavan had said the next government would have 21 Ministers. The LDF has drawn from a diverse cross-section of society to form the next Cabinet, he said.

The LDF parliamentary

party will meet on Tuesday and elect Mr. Vijayan as its leader. The Chief Minister-designate would decide the composition of the new government.

In all probability, the CPI (M) would retain 12 Cabinet posts and the Speaker post. The party's State secretariat would finalise the nominees.

The party had withdrawn an array of veteran leaders from the electoral field to allow a new generation of activists to compete in the Assembly polls and gain legislative experience.

The CPI(M) is likely to follow a similar template for selecting Ministers to ensure more party persons gained administrative experience and rose to leadership positions.

However, it might retain



Preparations on: The Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram is all set for the swearing-in ceremony. ■ S. MAHISHA

veterans like Health Minister K.K. Shylaja.

The Communist Party of India will keep four Cabinet posts and the Deputy Speaker's office. Its State council is meeting here on Tuesday to finalise the party's nomi-

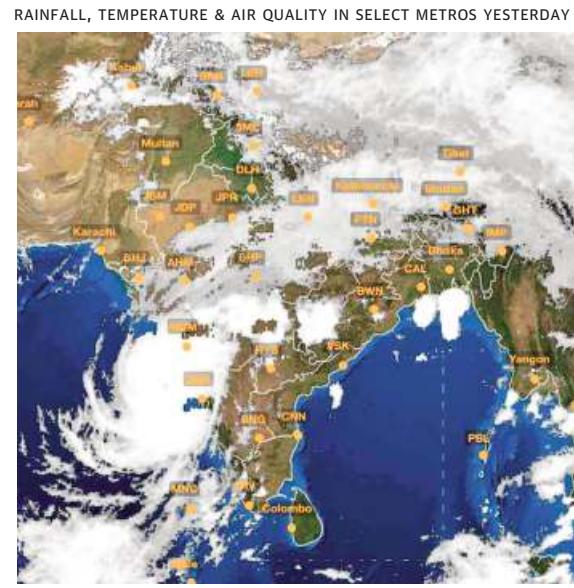
nees.

The Kerala Congress (M), the Janata Dal (Secular) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) may get one Cabinet post each. The party is likely to nominate Roshy Augustine to the Cabinet and N.

Jayaraj as the LDF Chief Whip. The CPI(M) had urged the Indian National League (INL), the Congress (S), the Kerala Congress (B) and the Democratic Kerala Congress (DKC) to hold a Cabinet rank for two-and-a-half years and concede the remaining term to another single-member ally.

The calculus triggered speculation that DC(K) MLA Antony Raju, who hails from the Latin Catholic Community, a critical demographic in Kerala, and INL legislator Ahammad Devarkovil would serve the first term and step down in favour of KCB(B) legislator K. B. Ganesh Kumar and Congress (S) leader Kadanappally Ramachandran. The LJD with a single member might have to settle for a board or corporation.

WEATHER WATCH



RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, coastal Karnataka and Kerala. Thunderstorms with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	4...	36.5...	26.3	Kozhikode	69...	29.8...	23.0
Ahmedabad	11...	35.2...	25.6	Kurnool	...	38.8...	27.2
Aizawl	...	28.6...	18.9	Lucknow	...	33.2...	29.2
Altafabad	...	39.5...	28.4	Madurai	...	39.2...	25.4
Bengaluru	...	32.6...	21.1	Mangaluru	11.8...	29.0...	24.4
Bhopal	10.4...	35.5...	23.6	Mumbai	12...	26.9...	24.8
Bhubaneswar	...	39.0...	27.9	Mysuru	...	34.3...	20.4
Chandigarh	...	41.4...	24.7	New Delhi	...	37.8...	23.6
Chennai	...	37.5...	28.6	Patna	...	40.0...	29.7
Coimbatore	1...	34.3...	23.0	Port Blair	2...	33.7...	27.1
Dehradun	...	36.7...	20.2	Puducherry	...	35.4...	25.6
Gangtok	13...	20.6...	15.8	Pune	9.9...	25.8...	22.2
Goa	...	32.0...	25.3	Raipur	...	39.0...	28.0
Guwahati	18...	30.0...	22.0	Ranchi	...	37.0...	24.6
Hubballi	...	29.0...	22.0	Shillong	...	26.5...	17.4
Hyderabad	...	36.4...	25.0	Shimla	...	30.2...	19.0
Imphal	...	29.4...	19.1	Srinagar	...	37.3...	11.1
Jaipur	...	34.6...	27.4	Thiruvananthapuram	5...	33.0...	23.9
Kochi	28...	31.6...	24.4	Tiruchi	...	39.6...	26.1
Kohima	...	35.0...	14.2	Vijayawada	5...	36.1...	28.0
Kolkata	...	39.2...	28.4	Visakhapatnam	5...	35.6...	27.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	18	33	42	38	53	■■■
Bengaluru	...	60	53	16	41	■■■
Chennai	15	3.3	9	130	...	■■■
Delhi	27	89	64	249	233	■■■
Hyderabad	...	59	13	21	30	■■■
Kolkata	10	19	14	40	41	■■■
Lucknow	...	49	38	246	181	■■■
Mumbai	...	2.2	44	51	74	■■■
Pune	...	33	72	47	40	■■■
Visakhapatnam	16	18	25	—	22	■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 239, indicating unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 21.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Their vessel drifted off amid rough weather on Saturday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Indian Coast Guard on Monday rescued 12 fishermen stranded on board their vessel since Saturday, amidst inclement weather, about 70 nautical miles (approximate 130 km) off Kochi.

The vessel, *IFB Jesus*, which was in distress was traced through consistent and continuous search by air-sea coordinated patrol.

First aid given

A Dornier aircraft of the Coast Guard identified the marooned boat and vectored its ship *Aryaman* for the rescue operation. Subsequently, all 12 fishermen on

the boat were provided food, water and first aid. Efforts to remedy the defect on *IFB Jesus* were futile due to rough sea conditions and

the inadequacy of spare parts.

The boat along with its crew was then towed to Thoppumpady in Kochi.

Back home: The crew and vessel at the Thoppumpady harbour in Kochi on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The decision to set up the council was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by the Chief Minister. ■ FILE PHOTO: PTI

For setting up the council, the inadequate of spare parts.

The boat along with its crew was then towed to Thoppumpady in Kochi.

Private players

The State government also took the important decision for involving private players as a part of public-private partnership to contain COVID-19 situation in the State. The State on Monday recorded 19,003 new cases and 147 deaths due to the infection.

Two hospitals denoted for overcharging

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A Bill has to be introduced in the State Assembly and then a nod from the State's Governor is required. West Bengal Legislative Council, the Upper House of the bicameral legislature in West Bengal existed till 1969, till a resolution was passed in the State Assembly for its dissolution. Not all States in the country have Legislative Councils.

Trinamool Congress government returns to power. Ms. Banerjee had indicated that certain members who will not face election can be nominated through the Legislative Council.

Chief Minister Mamata Ba-

nerjee and Finance Minister Amit Mitra are not members of the State Assembly. They can be easily nominated to the Legislative Council once the body is set up and will not have to face elections.

For setting up the council, the

State government also took the important decision for involving private players as a part of public-private partnership to contain COVID-19 situation in the State. The State on Monday recorded 19,003 new cases and 147 deaths due to the infection.

J&K witnessed the highest ever deaths – 73 – due to the pandemic on Monday, as the political parties decried the scarcity of vaccine doses in the Union Territory (UT), especially the Kashmir valley.

Peoples Conference leader and former Minister Syed Basharat Bukhari also asked the administration to address the mounting concerns on the shortage.

J&K Apni Party chairman Abdul Qayoom Wani said the shortage has created a panic-like situation in Kashmir.

"For days together not a single soul was vaccinated in Srinagar. While 95% of the population above 45 years has been inoculated in Jammu, it's shockingly only 30% for Srinagar," PDP spokesperson Najmu

Do COVID-19 drug kits have steroids, asks HC

Telangana govt. told to file affidavit

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

Seeking to know if the medicine kits given to COVID-19 positive persons in the State contained steroids, the Telangana High Court on Monday instructed the State government to file a detailed affidavit on how it was going to tackle Black Fungus.

Also known as Mucormycosis, the Black Fungus was reportedly spreading due to the misuse of steroids. The State needs to be cautious about the medicine kit it was giving to COVID-19 patients, the HC said.

A Bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayash Reddy, hearing a batch of PIL petitions on coronavirus related matters, sought to know specifically to COVID-19 patients, the HC said.

Two hospitals have been denoted by the Rewari district administration as dedicated COVID-19 healthcare centres for overcharging from the patients in violation of the rates fixed by the Haryana government.

"The two hospitals were served show-cause notices following raids at their premises this past week. The reply furnished by the hospitals was not satisfactory following which the two have been denoted. Both hospitals have been directed to not admit new COVID-19 patients. But they can continue to treat the patients already admitted till the time they are discharged," said Rewari Deputy Commissioner Yashendra Singh.

He said that beds were added to the existing hospitals so that the patients do not suffer due to closure of the two facilities. "It is a first-of-its kind action against any hospital in the State for flouting government guidelines on Covid charges," said Mr. Singh.



Unwarranted arrest

The casual resort by the police to the sedition clause continues to cause concern

The arrest of K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, an MP from Andhra Pradesh, on the grave charge of sedition, is yet another instance of the misuse of the provision relating to exciting "disaffection" against the government. The police in different States have been invoking sedition, an offence defined in Section 124A IPC, against critics of the establishment and prominent dissenters. It is not surprising that Mr. Raju, a vocal detractor of A.P. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, is sought to be prosecuted. However, his arrest is unwarranted, considering that he is being accused of only speech-based offences relating to his diatribe against his party leader and CM. It has predictably, and not without justification, invited charges of political vendetta. Even if one were to accept at face value the prosecution's claim that his speeches stoked hatred against communities – he had referred to alleged rampant conversion activities in the State – and attracted prosecution under Section 153-A or Section 505, was his arrest necessary? These offences attract a prison term of only three years and, under the *Arnes Kumar* ruling (2014) of the Supreme Court, there is no need to arrest a person for an offence that invites a prison term of seven years and less. Further, even sedition, which allows a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, also prescribes an alternative jail term of three years.

Mr. Raju has alleged ill-treatment while in CID custody. The Supreme Court has directed that he be examined at the Army hospital in Secunderabad in neighbouring Telangana. His bail petition is likely to be taken up later this week. It is unedifying to note that the CID has also named in the FIR, two television channels to which he gave interviews. While the legal process will take its course, it is once again time for a reflection on the need and relevance of the offence of sedition, a colonial-era provision used to imprison people for political writings in support of Indian independence, to remain on the statute book. That State governments and various police departments are known for the casual resort to prosecution under this section is a poor reflection of the understanding of the law among civil servants everywhere. It is now fairly well known that the section is attracted only if there is an imminent threat to public order or there is actual incitement to violence – ingredients that are invariably absent in most cases. In addition, it remains vaguely and too broadly defined (the term 'disaffection' is said to include 'disloyalty' and 'feelings of enmity'), warranting a total reconsideration. Recently, the Supreme Court decided to revisit the constitutionality of this section. While a judicial verdict will be welcome, it would be even more protective of free speech if the Centre abolished the provision.

Avoiding breakdown

The much-delayed convening of the GST Council comes at a critical juncture

After a gap of over seven months, the GST Council will now meet on May 28, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced last Saturday. That the Council, expected to meet every quarter, has taken possibly the longest pause in its functioning does not set a good precedent. Given the acrimony that transpired in its last few meetings over how the States' GST compensation dues for the pandemic-induced lockdown-dented 2020-21 were to be met, the long break makes Centre-State equations even more awkward. States later reluctantly agreed to the Centre's proposal to raise ₹1.1 lakh crore of GST recompense dues through special market borrowings, after the Finance Ministry backed off from insisting that States raise these loans directly. In the intervening period, the economy almost surged back to normalcy before being hobbled again by the second wave of infections. And unlike the first wave, there is a greater onus on the States now to figure out everything from what mobility restrictions to put in place, to vaccination sequencing, and the bigger headache of sourcing enough vaccines from within or outside India. A Council meeting before or after the Union Budget could have helped soothe States' frayed nerves.

Having ignored the call by several States for a Council meet all these months, citing the Assembly polls, the Centre will now also have to contend with a slight change in equations. The elan of re-elected State governments apart, a large State such as Tamil Nadu can no longer be expected to toe the Centre's line. There is much big ticket pending work on the Council's plate, but from the States' perspective, it would be necessary to get clarity on the modalities for receiving the ₹63,000 crore GST compensation still due to them, along with this year's dues, in a timely manner. Cash flow visibility would help them gear up better, be it for vaccines or subsequent COVID-19 waves. Even more pressing is the demand to drop GST on material to battle the pandemic, including the 12% tax on oxygen concentrators, 5% on vaccines, and on relief supplies from abroad. Ms. Sitharaman responded with a tweet storm to a missive on the issue from the West Bengal CM to the PM. This suggests an irascible approach on an issue that more States are raising. Tax experts believe solutions are possible to reduce the GST burden. The Centre had dropped the GST on sanitary napkins after strongly defending the tax, with one stated worry being cheap imports. In the case of vaccines and critical supplies, the more the imports, the merrier it is now. That the GST revenue will be shared with the States may be factually correct, but surely, neither the States nor the Centre are eyeing COVID-19 expenses as a fat source of revenue. An accommodative approach from the Centre could ensure India's fiscal federalism framework does not suffer an irretrievable breakdown at this calamitous juncture.

Counting the COVID toll in India

In order to understand the pandemic's extent, a district-wise estimation is the best bet to arrive at a national total



ANAND KRISHNAN

Last year, in these columns, I wrote about the many challenges in estimating deaths due to COVID-19 in India (<https://bit.ly/2Rs4hAZ>). While the challenges remain, the need for estimating COVID-19 deaths globally and in India to understand the magnitude of the pandemic is still there. Since direct counting of COVID-deaths is problematic, the approach most commonly used is the "excess" death approach which attributes all deaths beyond what is considered "normal" for that area and time to COVID-19. It includes deaths directly caused by COVID-19 as well as deaths indirectly caused due to the impact on access to care for other diseases during the pandemic and the lockdown.

Global estimates released

While official or unofficial estimates are available for some countries, two estimates have been released globally. Based on the World Mortality Dataset – the largest international dataset of all-cause mortality encompassing 89 countries – researchers estimated excess mortality and reported that it exceeded the number of reported COVID-19 deaths in these countries by over 1.6 times. It also said that this ratio is likely to be conservative as undercounting is likely to be much higher in countries which are not part of this dataset (<https://bit.ly/3eQ3Bye>).

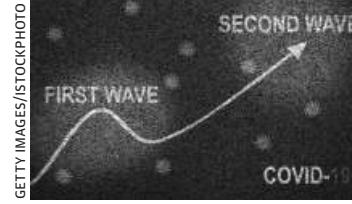
The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), a global leader in this area, recently re-

leased its estimates that put the global toll of COVID-19 deaths by May 3, 2021 at 6.93 million, a figure that is more than two times higher than the reported number of deaths of 3.24 million. India accounted for about 10% of them at 654,395 (only second to the United States with an estimated 0.9 million) which is about three times higher than the reported official figure (<https://bit.ly/30mAktg>).

The lower number of reported deaths does not imply undercounting, deliberate or otherwise. Even if there had been no under-reporting of COVID deaths in a country, this ratio is likely to be above one as excess deaths include not only those that are directly caused by COVID-19 and likely to be reported but also those where deaths occurred due to other diseases, either due to a lack of care or as a consequence of COVID-19. It is very difficult to tease out these proportions. We might have a better sense if we look at cause-specific deaths. But that kind of data is still more difficult to get.

WHO classification

The World Health Organization classifies countries into three categories based on their data availability for COVID-19 excess death estimation. First are those countries that have good data available and excess death estimation is possible (most countries in the above mortality dataset). Second is the group of countries whose data, though not good, is acceptable for use through some process of harmonisation or adjustment for incompleteness leaving the third category of countries where the data on deaths are not available or usable, forcing the adoption of an indirect approach of using data from other countries or a multivariate approach using covariates to arrive at these estimates. India and



China, which together constitute a third of the world population, are currently in category three, and unless we manage to provide some source of usable data, India will have to be content with an estimate generated by an external agency using an indirect approach.

Data for India

So, what do we know about the COVID-19 mortality in India? Data from Kerala, which is among the States with a very good vital registration system, showed that there has been a decline in deaths in 2020 as compared to previous years (<https://bit.ly/3eTBqJ3>). While it will need a closer look, under-registration of all deaths due to the pandemic is a possibility.

Data released by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, shows 22% excess deaths during 2020 in Mumbai region (<https://bit.ly/3hwwHEx>). An analysis of data from a panel of 2,32,000 households maintained by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt Ltd (CMIE) found that deaths from all causes between May and August 2020 numbered almost twice as many as compared with the same period in past years (<https://bit.ly/3ewpV4m>).

These are crude estimates based on the number of extra deaths reported as compared to previous years. Estimation of excess deaths needs a more sophisticated statistical approach which first defines a baseline, before estimating excess. The simplest ap-

proach for defining a baseline would be estimation of mean and standard error based on data for the last five years to provide a plausible range for a baseline. We could then see whether the registered deaths are beyond that range to estimate "excess" deaths. There are other statistical approaches which use different data distribution assumptions to define a baseline. This analysis should be done by age and sex on a weekly or monthly basis and correlated to the peaks of the epidemic.

My team analysed data from the Civil Registration System (CRS) of district Faridabad in Haryana, which has been reporting 100% registration of deaths in the past few years. We found that 7% higher deaths have been reported in 2020 as compared to 2016-19, with a 17% increase in deaths above 60 years. By applying well-accepted statistical techniques, we found that the period of excess deaths correlated with the pandemic peaks in the districts. Our range of estimates for excess deaths by different approaches resulted in a ratio of reported to excess death estimate to be between 1.8 to 4. This is not very different from that reported by the IHME, though its ratio included part of the second wave. This estimate should be read in the context that 80% of the population for Faridabad is urban and the serological survey in October 2020 showed a 31% seropositivity.

It is not appropriate to extrapolate these estimates to India as even within India, there are enormous differences in the severity and timing of the epidemic and its health system capacity. Thus, combining data at higher levels is likely to lead to errors in estimation. A district-wise estimation is our best bet to arrive at a national estimate. An assessment of the quality of CRS data should enable

us to identify districts with an acceptable quality of registration and generate estimates for them. For districts which lack an acceptable quality of registration, we could use alternative approaches. We are seeking access to the CRS dataset from the authorities and are hopeful of being able to generate national estimates in the next few months.

A continuing process

Our experience with an estimation of deaths in past influenza pandemics shows that different agencies come up with different estimates which leads to confusion among policy makers and the public. These are both due to data limitations and differences in statistical approaches. The long-term way out for countries is to address the data limitations while academics work on refining their approaches.

There will be more estimates of COVID deaths in the near future and the numbers will keep changing till some sort of a consensus emerges. However, putting up a number which is contested and debated is still good as it propels people to improve that estimate. The second wave has been deadlier, and undercounting is more likely to have occurred as the pandemic has spread to rural areas, and when access to testing has been adversely affected and many deaths are occurring outside hospitals. Refining our approaches using the first wave in 2020 would enable a much better estimation of the deaths in subsequent waves.

Dr. Anand Krishnan is Professor of Community Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi and a Member of the World Health Organization/United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Technical Advisory Group on COVID mortality

The Biden push-button to West Asia's diplomatic resets

Unprecedented interactions among the major powers are leading to a significant diplomatic churn in the region



TALMIZ AHMAD

Major West Asian nations have recently embarked on new diplomatic engagements with erstwhile rivals that could in time overturn existing regional alignments and possibly end ongoing conflicts that have wreaked havoc in several states.

The most dramatic interactions have been between senior Saudi and Iranian officials. After their meeting on April 9, the first since diplomatic ties were broken in January 2016, there have been other interactions, with technical committees set up to look at specific topics.

Again, since early this year, following the removal of the diplomatic and economic blockade on Qatar that was imposed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, Doha has made efforts to mend ties with both Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in tandem with similar initiatives of its doctrinal and political ally, Turkey.

On May 5, Turkey and Egypt had their first diplomatic meeting in Cairo after they had broken diplomatic ties in 2013, when Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi was overthrown in a military coup. The two countries, on opposite sides on almost all regional issues, are now exploring how to address their differences.

The Biden challenge

The driving force behind these unprecedented engagements is the advent of the Biden administration at the helm of politics in the United States. Within his first 100 days

in office, Mr. Biden has signalled a fresh U.S. approach to West Asian affairs. He has taken a tough line on Saudi Arabia, indicating a closer scrutiny of its human rights record and strong opposition to the war in Yemen.

Egypt too has concerns on the human rights issue, while seeking regional support for its differences with Ethiopia. It now seems the U.S. could re-enter the nuclear agreement, but Iran has concerns about the limitations to be imposed on its regional role.

Turkey could also experience fresh winds from Washington. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has built close ties with Russia, while threatening U.S. allies in Syria, the Kurds, with military force. Mr. Biden is expected to be less accommodative; his recent recognition of the Armenian "genocide" is already a fresh rebuke.

Besides concerns in West Asian capitals about a new U.S. approach to each of them, the broader message from Washington is that the U.S. is now likely to be less engaged with the region's quarrels. Mr. Biden seems to be reiterating earlier messages from his predecessors Barack Obama and Donald Trump that regional states should be responsible for regional security.

These signals of new U.S. policies have occurred even as the novel coronavirus pandemic is devastating West Asia. Besides the widespread infections and deaths, the viral epidemic has severely damaged regional economies, while oil prices remain in the doldrums, creating uncertainties for the producer states.

Finally, one major factor that is encouraging these unprecedented interactions among rivals is the recognition that the ongoing regional conflicts, in Syria, Yemen and Libya, despite the massive death and destruction, have yielded no mil-

itary outcome and now demand fresh diplomatic approaches.

Recent engagements

Following the first meetings in Baghdad, both Iran and Saudi Arabia have made efforts to improve the atmosphere. In a recent interview, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke of seeking a "good and special relationship" with Iran. The Iranian spokesman responded by referring to a "new phase of cooperation and tolerance".

The priority for the kingdom is to end the Yemen conflict: the lethal attacks from the precision missiles of the Houthis, said to have been provided by Iran, are a threat to national infrastructure and morale. The recent Houthi attack on oil-rich Marib is also a Saudi concern, while Iran would like the blockaded Hodeidah port which is partially open, to be used to rush humanitarian aid to the beleaguered Houthis. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has supported the Saudi offer of a ceasefire in Yemen.

Both countries also share concerns relating to the political impasse in Lebanon and the security of the waters of the Gulf and the Red Sea where a "shadow war" on oil and merchant vessels could escalate into a larger conflict. So far, both have paid a heavy financial price for their rivalry: Iran's role in Syria costs its exchequer a few billion dollars every month, while Saudi Arabia has spent several hundred billion dollars in buying

the Saudis' outreach to Egypt has been well received, since it appears to have moderated its ties with the Brotherhood, toned down anti-Egypt broadcasts on Al Jazeera television, and is a major potential investor in Egypt's flagging economy. To promote regional peace, Qatar's Foreign Minister has called for a structured dialogue of the Gulf countries with Iran, affirming its view that Iran is a major presence in the regional security scenario.

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Turkey is also exhibiting diplomatic dexterity. Despite differences with Egypt over Libya, the East Mediterranean waters and Turkey's affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey now sees Egypt as a valuable partner to promote peace in Libya and pursue their interests jointly in the East Mediterranean by challenging Greece, Israel and Cyprus.

Turkey has also made overtures to Saudi Arabia. Besides accepting the Saudi court verdict on the Khashoggi murder case (<https://bit.ly/3w5QwGS>), Turkey has indicated it could work with the Saudis against the Houthis and facilitate the post-war political process through the Islamist Al-Islah party. Turkey has also offered the kingdom its advanced drones to be used against Houthi missiles.

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Regional security

These are very early days and all sides concerned have a long way to go in resolving their differences. Egypt remains uneasy about Turkey's ties with the Brotherhood and its regional ambitions. Saudi Arabia has similar concerns about Turkey's doctrinal affiliations and its relations with Iran.

There are difficulties in reshaping Saudi-Iran relations as well. Iran may ease the pressure on the kingdom in Yemen and gradually

yield ground in Iraq: the latter has already conveyed its desire to be free from all external influences. However, Syria will test their diplomatic skills as they explore how to accommodate their competing strategic interests in that devastated country.

Still, this is truly a historic period for West Asian diplomacy: the major states are displaying an unprecedented self-confidence in pursuing initiatives without the heavy hand of western powers that have dominated regional affairs for at least a couple of centuries, and, in pursuit of their own interests, have nurtured deep animosities between many of them. This has left a pervasive sense of insecurity across West Asia and made the countries dependent on western alliances to ensure their interests.

A role for India? Today, states in West Asia appear poised to negotiate their strategic interests without outside intrusion. But, given that regional contensions are inter-connected, third-party facilitators will be needed to promote mutual confidence and prepare the ground for a comprehensive regional security arrangement which will bring together regional and external states with a stake in West Asia security.

This arrangement will have provisions for participating states to uphold regional peace and promote mutually beneficial cooperation in energy, economic and logistical connectivity areas.

Given its close ties with all the regional states, India is well-placed to build an association of like-minded states – Japan, Russia, South Korea – to shape and pursue such an initiative for West Asian peace.

Talmiz Ahmad is a former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Gaza crisis

The statement of the Israeli Prime Minister (Page 1, May 17) on the Gaza operations, that Israel was "still in the midst of this operation, it is still not over and will continue as long as necessary" is vicious. There are many solutions rather than resorting to flattening the area with weapons. Issues such as human rights seem to be falling on deaf ears. Sense must prevail.

URVASHI CHAUHAN,
Teheri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

Minister's remarks

In the report, "Demand for freeing temples from HR&CE dept. is nonsense," (Tamil Nadu, May 15), – Tamil Nadu Finance Minister P.T.R. Palanivel Thiagarajan has strongly objected to freeing temples from the HR&CE, criticising Isha Yoga Centre founder Jaggi Vasudev in the process. I belong to the Ramnad royal family where our samasthanam controls 56 temples in and around our home town, Ramnad. Tamil Nadu. While my niece is the chairman of the board, control still rests with the HR&CE and there is little she can contribute. Freeing temples from the government and putting together a board consisting of the family concerned and local persons of eminence will go a long way in preserving the temples. A visit to some temples will reveal the dismal state they are in. Mr. Thiagarajan should try taking over minority religious places,</p

Prioritising the right to life

A monthly cash transfer to informal workers will provide them relief and also revive the economy

PRABHAT PATNAIK, JAYATI GHOSH &
HARSH MANDER

The majority of India's working population is today reeling from the impact of multiple crises: a health emergency more ferocious than any in independent India; massive job losses and dramatic declines in incomes from work; and significantly increased mass hunger and worsening nutrition.

Many failures

The Supreme Court on May 13 directed the Centre and the State governments of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to provide free rations without insisting on ID proof to all migrant workers and to run kitchens providing free meals twice a day. The verdict was significant as this was the first time since the national lockdown last March that the apex court acknowledged a hunger crisis in the country that needed urgent state action. But it fell short of being path-breaking for three reasons: it did not extend the facility to the country as a whole; it did not extend the facility to cover cash payments by the state besides meals and ration; and it made the facility a state largesse rather than a right. Had it recognised a universal right to livelihood as the basis for its verdict, deriving from the right to life, all three lacunae would have been overcome.

The most brazen violation of the right to life by the state at present is its vaccine policy. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 is essential for defending one's right to life; and since the state must respect everyone's right to life, it must make the vaccine equally available to all irrespective of the recipient's capacity to pay. This can be accomplished only if vaccination is free. In many other countries, including the most privatised medical systems like the U.S., vaccines are being distributed free to all the people. India is making people (aged 18-45 years) pay to be administered these vaccines in private clinics – an obscene and counterproductive strategy to deal with a pandemic.

This is the outcome of many grave failures of the Indian government: it did not ensure adequate production through compulsory licensing of more producers; it did not order enough vaccines; it reneged on its responsibility to provide these vac-



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

cines to State governments; it introduced differential pricing, forcing State governments to compete with each other and with private clinics to buy vaccines; and it allowed price gouging by Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India.

The lack of consideration for lives is matched by callousness about the loss of livelihood that has come about during the second wave. At least 90% of workers are informal, with no legal or social protection, denied adequate compensation over the past year of lockdowns, restrictions and economic distress. But there is hardly any public outcry about the plight of the nearly one billion people whose lives depend on informal activities, and policymakers, especially at the national level, have completely abandoned them. The consequences of inaction are going to be dire and long-lasting, not just for people experiencing untold suffering, but for the country and the future economic trajectory.

A recent study called 'Hunger Watch' by a large collective of social groups found that even two months after the lockdown was lifted last year, two-third families reported eating less than they did before the lockdown, and a reduction in healthy food. For a quarter of the families surveyed, incomes had fallen by half. It also found that hunger was higher in urban India compared to rural. The recent knee-jerk lockdowns will stifle the attempts for revival.

A significant fiscal package

Even as the country confronts its greatest humanitarian crisis in half a century, India is one of the few countries in the world that has not come up with a significant fiscal package to

counter the health and economic effects of the pandemic. It has remained fiscally conservative, and actual Central government spending over April 2020 to February 2021 shows a rise in non-interest expenditure only by 2.1% of GDP. This explains why India's economy has been performing so poorly compared to other countries that were more battered by the first wave of the pandemic, since most of them had significantly larger fiscal packages that were also directed towards providing income support to people.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks of government spending on the backlog of infrastructure projects as the means for a recovery. If instead she relied on cash transfers to the millions of the labouring poor, it would have shielded them from slipping deeper into hunger and joblessness, and also spurred growth, because all of this would be spent for simple, domestically produced goods. Therefore, the 'multiplier' effects of this public expenditure would have been much higher than if spent on infrastructure projects.

Free rations and meals, as mandated by the Supreme Court, though beneficial, have very little expansionary effect on the economy, since the bulk of the commodities required come from decumulation of existing stocks of foodgrains. Thus, both the need to provide relief and the imperative to revive the economy demand that a monthly cash transfer, of about ₹7,000 per family (the rough equivalent of minimum wages), be made to people, over and above the provision of free meals and rations.

What the state needs to do urgently is to take a range of measures that prioritise the right to life, which also

remains the surest way of initiating assured (and equitable) economic recovery today. Among them are enabling expanded production and central procurement of COVID-19 vaccines, and distribution to States for free immunisation to all; universal access to free foodgrains of 5 kg per month to all those who require it for the next six months; cash transfers of ₹7,000 per household for at least three months to those without regular formal employment; increased resources to the Integrated Child Development Services to enable revival and expansion of their programmes; making the MGNREGS purely demand-driven, with no ceilings on the number of days or the number of beneficiaries per household; and covering urban India with a parallel scheme that would also cater to the educated unemployed.

Where, it would be asked, are the resources? In an economy with substantial unemployment, unutilised capacity and unused foodgrain stocks (about 80 million tonnes at present), resource mobilisation does not require curtailing anyone else's consumption. Even enlarging the fiscal deficit would cause no harm, except that it would gratuitously widen wealth inequalities and frighten globally mobile finance capital. To prevent both, a simple measure would be to introduce wealth taxation (though larger profit taxation will also suffice). These measures together would not cost more than an additional 3.5% of GDP, of which about 1% would flow back as extra tax revenue to Central and State governments, requiring 2.5% of GDP as fresh additional tax revenue. A 1.5% wealth tax levied on only the top 1% of households will be adequate to raise this amount.

These figures are only illustrative. But when U.S. President Joe Biden and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen are considering more radical measures, India should not shy away from measures that give substance and meaning to the term 'right to life' and the pledges of equality and fraternity in the Constitution.

Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, JNU, New Delhi; Jayati Ghosh is a Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, U.S.; and Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher

Walk the talk on TRIPS waiver

The government should offer Covaxin's technology to domestic pharmaceutical companies and foreign corporations



PRABHASH RANJAN

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are under an obligation to ensure that their domestic intellectual property rights (IPR) laws conform to the requirements of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. When the pandemic hit the globe, India and South Africa piloted the proposal to waive key provisions of the TRIPS agreement on COVID-19 vaccines, drugs, therapeutics, and related technologies. The core idea is that IPRs such as patents should not become barriers in scaling up production of medical products essential to combat COVID-19. The TRIPS waiver proposal, now backed by the U.S., is essential because it would give immunity to member countries from a legal challenge at the WTO if their domestic IPR laws suspend or do not enforce IP protection on COVID-19 medical products.

Foot-dragging on compulsory licences

It is uncertain when the TRIPS waiver would be adopted, or what conditions it would be subjected to. Meanwhile, nothing stops India from using the existing flexibilities under the Patents Act of 1970, such as compulsory licences, which are consistent with the TRIPS agreement, to increase the supply of COVID-19 medical products. While issuing compulsory licences for COVID-19 vaccines in the absence of technology transfer is easier said than done, they can be used to augment the supply of drugs and other therapeutics. For instance, Natco, an Indian pharmaceutical company, has requested a compulsory licence under Section 92 of the Patents Act for Baricitinib, a COVID-19 drug. Incyte Holdings Corporation owns the patent for Baricitinib with a licence to Eli Lilly, an American drug company. Likewise, there are demands that compulsory licences be issued for drugs such as Remdesivir to augment supply. Natco's application demonstrates that the option of issuing compulsory licences is available to the government. However, despite the nudging by the judiciary and others, the government inexplicably hasn't made use of compulsory licences in the pandemic. This is ironic because India has historically played a leading role in mainstreaming TRIPS flexibilities like the compulsory licence at the WTO.

To make matters worse, the Central government, in an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court a few days ago, suggests that is

suece of compulsory licences will not be effective. Specifically, the affidavit states that the main constraint in boosting the production of drugs like Remdesivir is the unavailability of raw materials and essential inputs. If that is the real bottleneck, and not IPR-related legal hurdles, why is India pushing for a TRIPS waiver at the WTO? After all, the TRIPS waiver is about overcoming legal impediments, not about addressing supply-side bottlenecks. The affidavit further states, "it is presumptuous to assume that the patent holder will not agree to more voluntary licences". Thus, the government believes that voluntary licences, not compulsory licences, are the way forward to address shortage of COVID-19 medical products. Interestingly, those who oppose the TRIPS waiver at the WTO advance the same argument.

The first step in advocating for the removal of IPR-related impediments at the WTO is to make use of the existing lawful means, even if insufficient, to lift the obstacles that come in the way of manufacturing patented products domestically. Therefore, the government's stand before the Supreme Court is not only contradictory with India's position at the WTO but also severely undermines it. This would make the TRIPS waiver negotiations arduous. To make its TRIPS waiver stand convincing, the government needs to make aggressive use of Sections 92 and 100 of the Patents Act to license all patents necessary to make COVID-19 medical products, without waiting for a private party to apply for a licence. An assertive posture on compulsory licences would also have the advantage of forcing several pharmaceutical companies to offer licences voluntarily.

Licensing Covaxin

India's development of Covaxin is a spectacular scientific achievement. Given the involvement of taxpayers' money in the development of Covaxin, the government has a stake in its IPR. Thus, the government should not only transfer Covaxin's technology to domestic pharmaceutical companies, to boost national supplies, but also offer it to foreign corporations. By unlocking its vaccine technical know-how to the world, India would demonstrate its resolve to walk the talk on the TRIPS waiver. Licensing Covaxin widely would enable India to live up to its reputation of being the 'pharmacy of the world' and also put pressure on developed countries to transfer their vaccine technology to developing countries. India must take a consistent stand on IPRs on COVID-19 medical products internationally and domestically.

Prabhash Ranjan is a Senior Assistant Professor at South Asian University's Faculty of Legal Studies. Views are personal

No learning from the Spanish flu

The governments of most countries have failed to understand and predict human behaviour

ANAND DAMANI

In the beginning of COVID-19 last year, thousands of people around the world shared an image on social media depicting the three waves of the 1918 influenza pandemic, commonly known as the Spanish flu. The image had the headline, 'Humanity should never allow a repeat of the same mistake made in 1918, in the time of COVID-19'. The image read, "The most severe pandemic in history was the Spanish Flu of 1918. It lasted for 2 years, in 3 waves, with 500 million people infected and 50 million deaths. Most of the fatalities happened in the 2nd wave. The people felt so bad about the quarantine and social distancing measures that when they were first lifted, the people rejoiced in the streets with abandon. In the coming weeks, the 2nd wave occurred, with tens of millions dead."

This post contained a mix of accurate and inaccurate information. The estimates are accurate and the second wave was indeed the most deadly. However, according to James Harris, a historian at Ohio State University, part of the reason why the flu spread like wildfire causing a second wave was because officials were unwilling to impose restrictions during wartime despite the existence of a new mutated strain.

Lessons from the past

This shows that we haven't been able to learn from history to prevent millions of infections and deaths worldwide. One would believe that knowledge makes one wiser. But in reality, knowledge doesn't change behaviour. Knowing about the Spanish flu is very different from having to live through a similar pandemic. Knowing about masks being protective doesn't make people wear them. Knowing about social distancing doesn't make people practise it.

In most countries, people got tired of lockdowns, wearing masks, staying at home and not socialising last year. Human beings are social animals after all. Social ostracisation has been shown to cause pain in the brain similar to putting up with physical pain. So, as the number of cases began to fall by the end of the first COVID-19 wave, governments and pe-



DATA POINT

On a slow lane, again | The growth of crucial high-frequency indicators of the economy decelerated from April after several States imposed lockdowns due to the second wave of COVID-19 infections in India. Public mobility reduced to levels observed during the nationwide lockdown in mid-2020. In Kerala, Karnataka and Delhi in particular, which were hit hard by the virus, visits to workplaces reduced by more than 70% from the baseline value

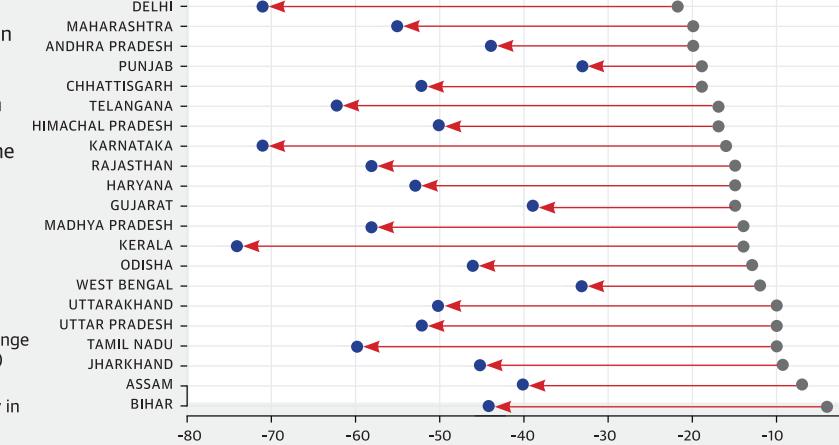
Week on week % INDICATORS	Feb. 8	Feb. 22	Mar. 8	Mar. 22	Apr. 5	Apr. 19	May 3	May 10
Google mobility index*								
Retail and recreation*	-25.1	-21.7	-20.9	-21.7	-26.4	-36.7	-54.9	-60.1
Grocery and pharmacy*	14	16	19.9	19.1	13.7	7.9	-13.4	-20.7
Transit stations*	-9.9	-5	-5.1	-5.1	-12.4	-22.7	-41.1	-45.6
Workplaces*	-15.1	-15.4	-11.4	-10.3	-22.6	-28.7	-43.4	-45.7
Electronic toll collections	1.7	15.5	-2	13.2	-11.1	-6.6	-8.5	-9.4
Power supply: Energy met	0.3	-2.4	4.1	1.8	-1.5	-3.3	0.9	-4.2
Railway freight	-0.2	1.7	1.3	2.9	-0.6	3.6	-2.1	-3
GST e-way bills	1.4	0.2	-7.5	3.6	-14	-6.2	-13.7	

WORKING FROM HOME

The chart shows the changes in workplace visits on May 13 (●) and Feb. 13 (●) across major States and UTs in India. The closer to zero, the lower the change from baseline period (January 3–February 6, 2020). Workplace mobility in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu fell significantly while it was relatively low in Punjab and West Bengal

*Mobility indicators data are % change from baseline (Jan. 3-Feb. 6, 2020)

Source: CRISIL report on COVID-19 and its impact on economic activity in India, Google Mobility Trends



Anand Damani is behavioural scientist and partner at Briefcase

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 18, 1971

3.5 lakh refugees in Coochbehar

Coochbehar, May 17: About 3.5 lakh evacuees from Bangla Desh are officially reported to have crossed into the Coochbehar district of West Bengal till Saturday. Of them about 1.5 lakhs have been accommodated in 85 Government camps. The rest are either putting up with relatives and friends or living in the open air.

Meanwhile, a PTI correspondent on a tour from Jalpaiguri to Haldibari found yesterday streams of evacuees anxiously waiting on the roadside and in open spaces to be taken to places of safety. Several hundreds were still trekking to the Indian territory through Haldibari, Deaganj, and South Berubari borders.

The Union Minister for Industrial Development, Mr. Molim Haq Choudhry, said in Lucknow yesterday that either the Pakistan Government or the countries which were responsible for arming it should bear the bill for the rehabilitation of the East Bengal refugees in India. The Indian Government, he added, apart from asking for compensation for their rehabilitation would also ask the Pakistan Government to take them back.

Mr. Choudhry said about 30 per cent of the refugees from East Bengal were Muslims while ten per cent belonged to other religions and the rest were Hindus.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 18, 1921

Cochin reform rules

The Diwan of Cochin has published the draft rules for the State Legislative Council and the people of the State do not appear to be much delighted over them. After the recent riots at Trichur the Diwan has fallen so heavily in prestige and public estimation that popular judgment on anything of his doing must naturally begin with prejudice. While therefore the public of the State would tend to be hypercritical, the Diwan will be felt, had a splendid opportunity in the drafting of the rules, not merely for recovering lost position but even for inspiring fresh confidence. Mr. Vijiaghavachariar has apparently not troubled himself about these points of view and has presented Cochinites with a set of rules which complete the Morleyan hesitancy of the

FROM PAGE ONE

Cyclone Tauktae fury: 6 killed in Maharashtra

While speed boats from Indian Coast Guard Ship, ICGS Varaha, rescued five crew, the Navy's advanced light helicopter IN 702 that joined the rescue operations from Southern Naval Command, Kochi, airlifted two.

Karnataka Revenue Minister R. Ashoka, who visited New Mangalore Port Trust to take stock of the situation following Tauktae's impact, ordered a statutory inquiry by the Dakshina

Kannada Deputy Commissioner to go into the reasons for the mishap of Coromandel as well as tug Alliance that capsized off Karnataka Coast on Saturday leaving two dead and three missing.

Since Tug Alliance was contracted to Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd., for its single point mooring operations, Mr. Ashoka said the company has agreed to pay ₹10 lakh compensation to the families of the deceased.

2 Trinamool Ministers among 4 held by CBI

The lawyers for the accused argued that there was no need for custody since the chargesheet had been filed. The defence added that custodial interrogation was not required in the time of a pandemic.

The Narada tapes, which were allegedly shot some time in 2014, were made public in 2016, months before the State went to the polls then. The purported videos showed about a dozen Trinamool leaders, MPs and Ministers accepting cash on camera from an operator of a fictitious company.

In March 2017, the Calcut-

a High Court directed the CBI to probe the tapes. The agency filed an FIR against 13 persons in April 2017, including the four persons arrested on Monday.

The TMC described the arrests as "political vendetta" and questioned why BJP leaders Suvenu Adhikari and Mukul Roy, who were both named in the FIR, had not been arrested. Mathew Samuel, who carried out the sting on behalf of the portal Narada News, also asked why Mr. Adhikari, now a BJP MLA and leader of the Opposition, had not been quizzed.

India records 2,31,781 fresh cases, 3,207 deaths

India's average daily test positivity rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continues to decline. It was 22.7% on May 9 and reduced to 18.2% on May 16.

Vaccinations too reduced sharply with only 6.9 lakh doses being administered in the country in the 24 hours

ending 7 a.m. on Monday. It is 10.4 lakh doses less than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours and 4.6 lakh doses less than what was recorded in the same period, one week ago. Only about 15.3% of the estimated adult population have received at least one dose of a vaccine as on Monday.

A few clotting events after Covishield jab: AEFI panel

Bleeding and clotting cases following COVID-19 vaccination in India are minuscule and in line with the expected number of diagnoses of these conditions in the country, a report submitted by the National AEFI to the Health Ministry noted.

The Ministry said that after alerts were raised in some countries on post-vaccination "embolic and thrombotic events" on March 11, 2021 particularly with AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine [Covishield in India], a decision was taken to conduct an urgent, in-depth analysis of the adverse events (AE) in India in the light of the global concerns.

The committee noted that as of April 3, 2021, 75,435,381 vaccine doses had been administered (Covishield: 68,650,819; Covaxin: 6,784,562). Of these, 65,944,106 were first doses and 9,491,275 second dose.

Since the COVID-19 vaccination drive was initiated, more than 23,000 adverse events were reported through the CoWIN platform from 684 districts.

Of these, only 700 cases (of the 9.3 cases /million doses administered) were reported to be serious and

severe in nature. The committee has completed an in-depth case review of 498 serious and severe events, of which 26 cases have been reported to be potential thromboembolic (formation of a clot in a blood vessel that might also break loose and carried by the blood stream to plug another vessel) events, following the administration of Covishield vaccine, with a reporting rate of 0.61 cases/ million doses," said the release.

It added that it is important to know that thromboembolic events keep occurring in the general population as background and scientific literature suggests that this risk is almost 70% less in persons of South and South East Asian descent in comparison to those from European descent.

Meanwhile the Health Ministry has separately issued advisories to Healthcare Workers and Vaccine Beneficiaries to encourage people to be aware of suspected thromboembolic symptoms occurring within 20 days after receiving any COVID-19 vaccine (particularly Covishield) and report preferably to the health facility where vaccine was administered.

SC orders medical exam of YSR Congress MP

The medical examination should be done by a board of three doctors constituted by the head of the Army Hospital. The examination should be videographed and the tape should be handed over to the Registrar General of the Telangana HC, who would in turn pass it on to the Supreme Court.

The Bench said the time Mr. Raju spent in the Army hospital should be treated

as part of his judicial custody. Mr. Raju would take care of his own hospital expenses. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, for Andhra, had agreed to Mr. Raju being medically examined at the Army hospital, but the lawyer had vehemently objected to admitting the MP in the hospital. Mr. Dave said the allegations against Mr. Raju were "very serious".

The Bench said the time Mr. Raju spent in the Army hospital should be treated

Armed forces on alert as Tauktae begins landfall

All fishing boats have returned: Coast Guard



Nature's fury: Heavy rain and winds battering the Bandra-Worli Sealink in Mumbai on Monday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Focus on keeping oxygen supply chain routes open

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The armed forces mobilised men and assets in preparation for Cyclone Tauktae.

Gujarat being a critical supplier of oxygen from ports to other States, efforts were on to ensure the routes were kept open and also opened at the earliest after the cyclone made landfall, an Army officer said on Monday after a coordination meeting chaired by the Gujarat Chief Minister through videoconference. Maj. Gen. V.K. Sharma, General Officer Commanding of the Army's Division at Ahmedabad, also attended.

"The priority is to ensure zero loss of life. The Army is also providing all possible assistance for making standby arrangements including oxygen, power supply and physical safety at all COVID hospitals," the officer said.

The Army has mobilised columns and Engineer Task Forces to the western coast from various parts of the country. It is continuously monitoring the situation for

likely intensity, maximum impact area and anticipated relief effort in coordination with the civil administration and other agencies, another officer said.

"Since the maximum impact is likely to be in Saurashtra, including Union Territory of Diu, 10 integrated teams are poised to be employed for aid to civilian authority in Diu. Ten teams have been sent to Junagadh area," the officer said.

Navy on standby
"The Navy has kept 11 diving teams on standby while 12 flood rescue teams and med-

ical teams have been earmarked for immediate response and deployment," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was informed on Monday at a review meeting held through videoconference, the Defence Ministry said. Repair and rescue teams have also been formed to undertake urgent infrastructural repairs post cyclone.

Three naval ships – Talwar, Tarkash and Tabar – are on standby with aid and relief material.

The other ships on the Western seaboard are also on standby for assistance to fishing and small boats

stranded due to rough weather while the maritime reconnaissance aircraft are continuously broadcasting cyclone warnings to fishermen, the statement said.

The IAF has deployed aircraft to transport personnel and material of the National Disaster Response Force to Ahmedabad.

On Sunday, it deployed two C-130J and one An-32 aircraft for transportation of 167 personnel and 16.5 tonnes of load of the NDRF from Kolkata to Ahmedabad. Another C-130J and two An-32 aircraft carried 121 NDRF personnel and 11.6 tonnes of load from Vijayawada to Ahmedabad while two C-130J aircraft transported 110 personnel and 15 tonnes of cargo for the NDRF from Pune to Ahmedabad.

The Navy also launched multiple search and rescue operations in response to SOS calls from ships.

In response to SOS by an Indian vessel adrift in the Arabian Sea, a naval helicopter was dispatched early on Monday for rescuing the stranded crew of Indian flagged tug 'Coromandel Supporter IX', which was adrift north west of Mangalore.

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The Coast Guard coordinates with stakeholders for accounting and safe return of all boats, vessels and fishermen and as on Sunday all the fishing boats of Gujarat and Maharashtra were reported to have returned to harbour or taken shelter in nearby ports, said Inspector-General K.R. Suresh, Deputy Director-General of Coast Guard (Operations & Coastal security).

"Our fishermen are the most vulnerable in cyclone and other adverse weather phenomena in view of smaller size of their boats and limited protection gears with them," Mr. Suresh told *The Hindu* in a written interview. "The painstaking efforts put in by the Coast Guard has paid dividends by resulting in no loss of fishermen life at sea as the cyclonic storm Tauktae crossed Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Lakshadweep islands," he stated.

There were a few rescue

operations which have been taken care of, Mr. Suresh said. We are also keeping a close eye on a few developing rescue situations off the coast of Maharashtra and have deployed ICG ships, he said.

Weather alert

As part of preventive measures, the Coast Guard has undertaken massive deployment of assets which Mr. Suresh said has translated into 117 ship days and 116 aircraft hours so far ensuring safe return of more than 7,000 boats, alerting/safe routing of 464 merchant vessels and timely rescue of 38 personnel.

"The Coast Guard Remote Operating Stations are incessantly relaying weather alert messages in vernacular languages on MMB radio for the seafarers and fishermen. Navtex warnings are being issued regularly and International Safety Net has been activated to alert the vessels in/transiting through area," he said.

Tamil Nadu skips 'officials only' meeting with Union HRD Minister

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

Representatives from the Tamil Nadu School Education Department chose not to participate in the virtual meeting organised for State education secretaries on Monday.

Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhrayan 'Nishank' had convened the meeting with State Education Secretaries to discuss implementation of NEP 2020, the COVID-19 situation, and online education. However, he had called for the participation of the education secretary alone, and not State Ministers of Education.

In a letter to the Union Minister on Sunday, School Education Minister Anbil

Mahesh Poyyamozhi had said it would be appropriate only if the Education Minister participated along with officials in such a high-level meeting. He had said that he was ready to participate and share views on the NEP implementation.

"Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had said that I should take part in it as the Minister and we subsequently wrote to the Centre. But there hasn't been any response, and we chose not to participate," Mr. Poyyamozhi told reporters at Tiruchi on Monday. "We are not looking to fight with them [Centre], but want to be able to participate and put forth our views on the NEP to the Centre through this meeting."

Both were part of groups involved in several terror crimes, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two Al-Badr militants were killed and two pistols were recovered from the encounter site near Srinagar's Khonmoh area on Monday.

"During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained, they were given repeated opportunities to surrender. However, they fired indiscriminately, which was retaliated

and resulted in an encounter. Both the trapped militants were killed," Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar said. According to an Army spokesman, two pistols, one hand grenade and three under-barrel grenade launcher grenades were recovered from the site.

The police identified the militants as Wasim Bashir Pandit and Mudasir Ahmad Khan from Pulwama's

Kakpora and Bargam. "Both were part of groups involved in several terror crimes, including planning and executing of attacks on police and security forces," the police said.

They said the nearest family members of the deceased will be allowed to participate in the last rites.

Mr. Kumar said only five militants were active in Srinagar. "There were six active

militants in Srinagar. One was recently killed in a gunfight at Anantnag's Kokernag area. Other five local militants will be killed or apprehended soon," he said.

Mr. Kumar said a vast network of militant supporters active in Srinagar district have already been arrested and booked under the Public Safety Act.

"Many are still on the police radar."

2 Al-Badr militants killed in Srinagar



A file photo of a vendor selling fruits in Malerkotla.

Malerkotla recently became the 23rd district in Punjab

VIJAYA SINGH

On May 14, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh declared Malerkotla the 23rd district of the State. This led to an angry response from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who took to Twitter to say that the Punjab government's decision of declaring its only Muslim-majority town a district was "a reflection of the divisive policy of the Congress".

Section 5 of the Punjab Land Revenue Act, 1887 says the "State government may, by notification, vary the limits and alter the numbers of tehsils, districts and divisions into which the State is divided".

How are new districts carved?

The power to create new districts or alter or abolish existing districts rests with the

State government. For example, in 2016, the Assam government issued a notification to upgrade the Majuli sub-division to Majuli district for "administrative expediency".

The State government has been vested with unfettered powers under Section 5 of the Punjab Land Revenue Act, 1887 to create new districts, says K.B.S. Siddhu, former financial commissioner (revenue) of Punjab. "This power is generally held temporarily in abeyance only during active census operations or during the delimitation exercise of Lok Sabha/Vidhan Sabha constituencies," Mr. Siddhu says.

Does the Central government have a role to play here?

Many States prefer the executive route by simply issuing a notification in the official gazette. How does it help? States argue that smaller districts lead to better adminis-

tration and governance. For example, in 2016, the Assam government issued a notification to upgrade the Majuli sub-division to Majuli district for "administrative expediency".

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Does the Central government have a role to play here?

The Centre has no role to play in the alteration of districts or creation of new ones. States are free to decide. The Home Ministry

comes into the picture when a State wants to change the name of a district or a railway station. The State government's request is sent to other departments and agencies such as the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Posts, Geographical Survey of India Sciences and the Railway Ministry seeking clearance. A no objection certificate may be issued after examining their replies.

What has been the trend?

According to the 2011 Census, there were 593 districts in the country. The Census results showed that between 2001-2011, as many as 46 districts were created by States. Though the 2021 Census is yet to happen, Know India, a website run by the Government of India, says currently there are 718 districts in the country.

The surge in number is also due to bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh into A.P. and Telangana in 2014. Telangana at present has 33 districts and A.P. has 13 districts.

the use of such plasma may have even played a role in facilitating new worrisome mutations to the virus.

The most recent study published in the British medical journal *The Lancet* on May 14 reported that in a double blinded trial involving about 5,000 patients who got the treatment in the U.K., again no benefit was found in reducing mortality, or on improving patient outcomes.

Though a trial by the ICMR on 400 patients last year – called the PLACID trial – had found no significant benefit from the use of plasma, it continued to find a place in the recommended guidelines.

Some experts have said

Gaza's rockets are part of resistance, says collective

Israel trying to snatch Palestinian land

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rockets fired by Palestinians against Israel are part of a "resistance" which is supported by international law, a group of writers and artists led by Arundhati Roy and Nayantara Sahgal has said.

In a statement, the collective accused the Israeli government of killing Palestinian children and blamed Israeli settlers for illegally trying to snatch Palestinian land.

"Palestinians in Gaza fired rockets at Israel. The rockets did not start or define the brutality that followed. The rockets came as part of a resistance – backed by international law – of an illegal occupation," the statement said. It said Israeli retaliation with "extreme force" killed civilians, including children. The collective urged the Egyptian Air Force to provide a 'no-fly zone' above Gaza strip, and pointed to the lack of political will in the Arab world to protect the Palestinians.

Patna HC 'aghast' at death data

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

The Patna High Court on Monday expressed concern over inconsistency in the death toll presented before a Division Bench of the court by government officials in two separate affidavits. The court then told the government to file fresh affidavits with verified figures within two days.

While hearing PIL petitions over the pandemic and its management, a Division Bench of the Patna HC observed, "We're aghast at the way in which two separate affidavits with two different figures of deaths in Buxar district are being filed before the court. The court deserves the correct and verified figures from the government."

'Appoint ECI members via collegium'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court seeking the constitution of an independent collegium to appoint members of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The petition filed by the Association for Democratic Reforms, represented by advocates Prashant Bhushan and Cheryl D'souza, said the practice of the government making the appointments to the poll body was a violation of the basic structure of the Constitution.

The petition said the recommendation to have a neutral collegium to fill up vacancies in the ECI have been given by several expert committees and commissions from 1975.

I too can face a sedition case in UP: MLA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rakesh Rathore, BJP MLA from Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh, has said he could face a sedition charge if he spoke too much.

In a video apparently showing him answering a reporter's question about the pandemic last week, Mr. Rathore was asked about a medical facility that was awaiting inauguration. "If I speak too much, then sedition charges will be invoked against me," he is heard responding.

'Interim report on leaders hoarding medicine vague'

HC takes exception to police report

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday described as "vague and whitewashed" an interim report submitted by the police exonerating politicians, including BJP MP Gautam Gambhir, accused of hoarding COVID-19 medicines during the ongoing pandemic.

The court took strong exception to the police's report that said the politicians were "actually helping people in getting medical aid".

'Openly advertising'
"What is the point of this kind of vague and whitewashed report? Point is, if some political leader is openly advertising that he will provide the medicine free of cost, then you have to find out where he is getting these medicines from. Does he hold a licence to distribute the medicine?" a Bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli asked.

"Just because some political figures are involved,

Arrests illegal, say Cong. leaders

They lack jurisdiction without Bengal Speaker's sanction, says Abhishek Singhvi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Legal experts in the Congress questioned the arrest of Trinamool Ministers by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday.

Four people – Ministers Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee, Trinamool MLA Madan Mitra and former Trinamool leader Sovan Chatterjee – were arrested earlier in the day in connection with the Narada sting case where the leaders were seen taking cash on camera. But all were later granted bail by a court.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, in a series of tweets, called the CBI action as "malafide", and questioned the Governor's power to sanction arrests instead of the Speaker.

No official word
The Congress, which targeted the Trinamool over the scam in earlier elections, however, officially did not issue any statement.

"Clear indicators of malafides of Central #Govt & #Cbi re #WB arrests. Necessity of arrest must exist before arresting. Power of arrest never means obligation to arrest. #Narada is a decade old; even tapes are of 2016; matter also came to #SC;



Trouble brewing: Paramilitary personnel standing guard at the CBI office in Kolkata on Monday. ■ AFP

why necessity/urgency 2arrest NOW," Mr. Singhvi said.

"Grave doubt if #Governor, whose partisan conduct is clear, merely cos he swore in Ministers in 2011, has exclusive power 2grant sanction! Why sanction after 5yrs of 2016 tapes & sudden arrests in 2021. Bad #WB election losers? #Vendetta? Electoral verdict 2b reversed?" he asked.

Mr. Singhvi, who is a Rajya Sabha member from Bengal and was supported by the Trinamool, alleged that the Ministers could not be proceeded against without the Speaker's sanction and claimed that the arrest

The imprint of partisan politics is writ large in the blatant abuse of prosecutorial processes ...

ASHWINI KUMAR
Congress leader

lacked jurisdiction.

Former Law Minister Ashwani Kumar said the arrest for alleged corruption was "a brazen attempt to browbeat Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee after her triumph in the recently held Assembly election".

"The imprint of partisan politics is writ large in the blatant abuse of prosecuto-

rial processes by the CBI against political adversaries of the ruling BJP. Resorting to arbitrary criminal prosecution and custody of the accused by enforcement agencies, to deprive citizens of their fundamental liberties is clearly against the first principles of our libertarian Constitution," Mr. Kumar said.

He said the detention militated against the recent judgments of the Supreme Court. "The insistence by the CBI on detaining the accused who are public men of high standing and not expected to tamper with the course of justice is clearly an abuse of authority."

INTERVIEW | YASHWANT SINHA

'CBI action is a declaration of war'

Bengal Governor is determined to annihilate State govt., says ex-Finance Minister

SOBHA NAIR

Former BJP leader and Union Finance Minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpeyi Cabinet, Yashwant Sinha, who recently joined the Trinamool Congress, said the action of the Central Bureau of Investigation against the party's leaders in the Narada case was unparalleled in Indian political history and was aimed at weakening the Chief Minister. Excerpts:

Do you believe that the CBI's action against the Trinamool Congress Ministers and leaders is an act of vengeance against the party?

■ It goes beyond that. It is a declaration of war against a State government by the Central government. They are using every agency they have, starting from the Governor to Central agencies like the CBI, to punish the Trinamool Congress for winning the election. This is absolutely brazen.

While they are acting against the Trinamool leaders, they are not acting against those who migrated to the BJP from Trinamool

and are also accused in the case. Only the Modi-Shah combine can act with such brazenness.

The Trinamool government already has a fractious relationship with West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar. Do you expect the tensions to escalate in this third term?

■ Mr. Dhankar has been specially selected for West Bengal because he will do exactly what the Prime Minister and the Home Minister tell him. He has absolutely no concern for democracy, constitutional values or limits of his authority. He is determined to annihilate the State government by interfering in their activities. He was completely wrong when he went out to so-called violence-affected areas. At a time when COVID-19 is raging, it doesn't seem to be of any concern for the Centre. Politics is supreme for the Modi-Shah combine.

Don't you fear that the administration will fall on the wayside if this kind of hostility between the Centre

■ No, never. Not even in the worst situation when Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency; things were not so brazen as they are today.

You quit the BJP protesting against the policies of the party. Why don't we see any voices of reason within the BJP speaking against the government, especially for the mismanagement of the pandemic?

■ The BJP today consists of slaves. They are slaves of Modi and Shah. Even a person like Rajnath Singh or Nitin Gadkari, who have their own following within the BJP and their respective States, have been completely subdued and subjugated. They don't have the courage to go against any of these people. Rest of them just don't matter, they are just so many heads of cattle.

There will be no implosion from within, unless the writing becomes clear on the wall and they realise that Modi-Shah do not have the capacity to bring them victory in the polls any more. Then there could be some movement within the BJP.

Are there any parallels to this kind of Centre-State relationship in the recent political history of India?

vent their grievances about COVID-19 management on social media.

'Innocent persons'

"Contrary to this, authorities are registering FIRs against the innocent persons over their hate speech against the Hon'ble PM with regard to his official functions over the second wave of COVID-19 crisis and government vaccine policies," the petition said.

The petition mentioned the "arrest" of over 20 persons in Delhi in connection with posters against the Prime Minister regarding the vaccination policy.

"At least 25 first information reports have been registered in connection with posters that surfaced across the capital questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the vaccination policy in a sarcastic tone. Police said that at least 25 persons had been arrested in connection with the cases," Mr. Yadav said in the petition.

The petition urged the apex court to quash the FIRs. The petitioner referred to the fact that the apex court, while hearing the *suo motu* case on COVID-19 management, had specifically told State authorities to not take penal action against those who seek medical help or

'Quash FIRs on posters criticising vaccine policy'

Free speech is guaranteed, says plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court to direct the Delhi Police Commissioner to stop the registration of first information reports (FIRs) against persons who have voiced their dissent against the Centre's vaccination policy and COVID-19 management by pasting posters and brochures in public places.

Advocate Pradeep Kumar Yadav said "free speech and expression" was guaranteed under the Constitution.

"Not a criminal offence" The Supreme Court in the Shreya Singhal judgment had held that sharing of information on social media was not a criminal offence under the Information Technology Act.

The petitioner referred to the fact that the apex court, while hearing the *suo motu* case on COVID-19 management, had specifically told State authorities to not take penal action against those who seek medical help or

Who are the four arrested in the Narada sting video case?

2014 operation showed Trinamool leaders accepting cash

SUDIPTA DATTA



Four years after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered an FIR in the Narada cash scam naming at least nine top Trinamool Congress leaders, the agency arrested four of them on Monday at its Kolkatta headquarters in Nizam Palace.

Of those arrested, two are Ministers in the newly formed Mamata Banerjee Cabinet – Firhad Hakim, Transport Minister and Chairman, Board of Administrators, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), and former Mayor, and Subrata Mukherjee, Panchayat and Rural Development Minister.

The Narada sting operation, carried out some time in 2014 by journalist Mathew Samuel and telecast in 2016 ahead of the Assembly election, showed top leaders of the Trinamool from Mukul Roy and Suvidhu Adhikari (both are now with the BJP and Mr. Adhikari is the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly) to Mr. Hakim, Saugata Roy, Sovan Chatterjee and Madan Mitra, acceptingly wads of money.

At his home office in Chetla in south Kolkata, he meets people in the morning to listen to their issues. Ahead of the poll, Trinamool poll strategist Prashant Kishor had met all KMC councillors and Mr. Hakim to drive home the point that they must spread the word on the series of welfare schemes the ruling government had launched.

In an interview to PTI, he said, "We are now fighting a big battle against the coronavirus. We have to bring the healthcare system of the

votes. He was a councillor at the KMC from 2000 to 2015 before winning the contest for Mayor in 2018, the first Muslim Mayor since Independence. After Mr. Roy left the party in 2017, Ms. Banerjee has leaned on Mr. Hakim, popularly known as 'Bobby'.

At his home office in Chetla in south Kolkata, he meets people in the morning to listen to their issues. Ahead of the poll, Trinamool poll strategist Prashant Kishor had met all KMC councillors and Mr. Hakim to drive home the point that they must spread the word on the series of welfare schemes the ruling government had launched.

An important leader of the minorities, Mr. Hakim campaigned hard in the run-up to the recent election to help consolidate their vote

Bodies at one crematorium outnumber Odisha's virus toll

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

At a time when controversy continues to rage over under-reporting of COVID-19 deaths, one crematorium in Odisha was found to have recorded 3,978 bodies in the second half of 2020 – twice the State's total COVID-19 toll during the corresponding period.

Information provided by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation in response to an RTI application said a total of 4,473 bodies were cremated at Satya Nagar crematorium in 2020. In the first six months of 2020 (January to June), the average number of cremations per month was 83 at the Satya Nagar crematorium.

In July 2020, 360 cremations were recorded and August registered the incineration of 712 bodies. September registered 1,288 cremations. October, November and December recorded 955, 442 and 221 respec-

tively. The total bodies cremated at Satya Nagar in the second half was eight times the number disposed of during first six months of 2020.

"The second half [of 2020] saw a dramatic rise in deaths across the State. Ironically, the State's [official] total COVID-19 death toll is almost half of the bodies cremated at one crematorium," said Pradip Pradhan, who obtained the information through the RTI Act.

TAMILNADU MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD.

No.	Tender Ref. no./Name of Goods with Quantity	Sale period	Pre bid	Submission	Opening
1	Tender No. D001/C-19 Vac/TNMSC/DRUG/2021 dt.15.05.2021 – Online / Offline vaccine. (3,50,000 nos.)	15.05.2021 to 04.06.2021	21.05.2021 Noon	05.06.2021, 11.00 AM	05.06.2021, 12.00 Noon

For details visit www.tenders.tn.gov.in and TNMSC website www.tnmsc.tn.gov.in

General Manager
Tender Inviting Authority

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BELLARY DISTRICT, BELLARY-583101

Telephone: 08392-277100, Fax: 08392-272538

Email: dcbellary@gmail.com

PAPER NOTIFICATION

Dated: 16-05-2021

The District Administration Bellary Expanding The Medical Infrastructure and other Medical Facilities at 1000 Bed Covid Hospital Torangallu to accommodate unprecedent raise in Covid-19 cases, following posts for 11 months on contract basis have been called for walk in Interview from the Date: 17-05-2021 to 20-05-2021 at District Health and Family Welfare Office Bellary During Office hours, Candidates attending the Interview should Produce Original Documents during the verification. For more information contact in Office hours Phone No: 08392-276250 or AAO 8951656265. Free Food and Accommodation will be provided for selected candidates.

1000 Bed Covid Hospital Torangallu Bellary District.

Sl.No	Posts Details	Numbers Required	Education	Salary (For Month)
1	Physician/ Pulmonologist	20	MBBS MD/DNB/Diploma in Chest Diseases	4,00,000/-
2	Anaesthetist	15	MBBS MD/Diploma	4,00,000/-
3	Doctors	30	MBBS	1,00,000/-

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: 1. The Appointment is Temporary on Contractual Basis, It will not be made permanent. 2. The Contract Period is for 11 months Only. 3. Applications of Doctors who

DRDO's drug launched for emergency use

'It can help patients overcome oxygen dependency'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The first batch of the adjunct COVID therapy drug, 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) – developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) along with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad – was on Monday released for emergency use. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh formally handed over the drug to Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

"One box each of the sachets of the drug were handed over to Dr. Randeep Guleria, Director All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Lt. Gen. Sunil Kant of Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS). More will be handed over to different hospitals across the



Rajnath Singh

country for emergency use," a Defence Ministry statement said.

An anti-COVID-19 therapeutic application of the drug 2-DG has been developed by Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a DRDO lab along with DRL. DRL will increase the pro-

duction of the drug which is expected to be made available to all hospitals by the first week of June, said K. Satish Reddy, Chairman DRL.

The drug is a good example of DRDO and private partnership, which will help patients in overcoming oxygen dependency by around 40%, Mr. Singh said, speaking at the event.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan said 2-DG was the first therapeutic drug for COVID which India has developed indigenously.

"Scientists have been working on the molecule for long and over the last one year clinical trials were conducted extensively in various hospitals across the country," said Dr. G. Sathesh Reddy, Chairman DRDO.

DRL will increase the pro-

4.32 lakh
Railway staff
vaccinated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Railways, which is seeing about 1,000 COVID-19 cases among employees daily on an average, has so far vaccinated around 4.32 lakh workers, Railway Board Chairman and CEO Suneet Sharma said on Monday.

Mr. Sharma said they are in talks with the State governments to immunise the remaining staff. The Railways is among the largest employers in India with over 12 lakh staff.

"The Railways has so far vaccinated 4.32 lakh employees. That is quite a fair number. We are in touch with State governments to vaccinate the balance staff. The first stage was 45 years and above and also the frontline workers like medical staff and RPF. They have been completed," Mr. Sharma said during a press conference.

Mr. Sharma said the Railways was taking all measures to ensure minimal time disruption of any operations and earliest resumption wherever temporary suspension occurs due to safety reasons.

The Railways also announced that it has so far delivered about 10,300 tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) in more than 600 tankers to States.

"... Railways is picking up oxygen from places like Hapa & Mundra in the West and Rourkela, Durgapur, Tatanagar, Angul in the East and then delivering it to States...in complex operational route planning scenarios," it said.

Modi urges more doctors to offer telemedicine services

He says people in villages and in home isolation will benefit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday interacted with doctors across the country dealing with the second wave of the pandemic, urging them to include oxygen audits, forming teams to provide telemedicine services to those undergoing home isolation and in rural areas and the new challenge of mucormycosis.

The meeting, held over video conferencing, saw the Prime Minister also stressing on psychological care along with physical care. "This long battle against the virus must be challenging for the



Narendra Modi

medical fraternity, but the faith of citizens stands with you in this fight," he is reported to have told the doctors.

He appealed to doctors to form teams for telemedicine, train final year MBBS students and interns to en-

sure that all tehsils have telemedicine services, and that home isolation should be guided by SOPs (standard operating procedures). He briefed doctors on the efforts being made to ramp up capacity of medical resources required, and said vaccination of health care workers had paid dividends in terms of safety. The doctors shared best practices and their experiences through both the waves of the pandemic, including proper and improper use of medicines.

The meeting was attended by NITI Aayog members and Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan.

Remdesivir production stepped up

Centre tells Madras HC that manufacturing capacity of 7 licencees enhanced

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Centre on Monday told the Madras High Court that seven Indian licencees of patented anti-viral drug Remdesivir were manufacturing only 27 lakh vials a month as on April 1 this year though their installed capacity was 38.8 lakh a month. Now, due to the surge in COVID-19 cases in certain parts of the country, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has permitted them to produce 1.19 crore vials a month.

Appearing before the first Division Bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Jus-



The anti-viral drug is also being imported.

tice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) R. Sankaranarayanan said the patent for Remdesivir was held by Gilead of the United States and only seven Indian companies were manufacturing the drug here under

licence agreements. The DCGI, V.G. Soman, jumped into action immediately when the demand for the drug increased recently.

In order to enhance the production capacity of the seven licensed manufacturers, the DCGI approved 35 additional manufacturing sites, apart from the 22 already in existence. It resulted in enhanced manufacturing capacity of 70 lakh vials as on April 23 and 1.19 crore vials as on May 15. Consequently, the Centre increased the allocation of Remdesivir to 53 lakh vials to various States for the period between April 21 and May 16.

The Union Ministry of Health is also procuring Remdesivir from other countries.

On the other hand, India was completely dependent on imports with respect to critical care drug Tocilizumab, the ASG said, referring to a report submitted by the DCGI and added that only limited stocks were being imported.

Nevertheless, he added that there were other drugs produced domestically. He said drugs such as Itiluzimab, Dexamethasone and Methyl Prednisolone were either equivalent to or better than Tocilizumab.

According to the Indian Medical Association (IMA) registry, 244 deaths have been recorded in the second wave with the youngest physician who died being Dr. Anas Mijahid, 25, from Delhi.

"While last year we lost nearly 730 doctors across India, this year in a short period of time we have lost 244 doctors. The second wave is

Bihar recorded the highest number of doctors – 69 – who died of COVID-19 in the second wave so far followed by Uttar Pradesh (34) and Delhi (27).

According to the Indian Medical Association (IMA) registry, 244 deaths have been recorded in the second wave with the youngest physician who died being Dr. Anas Mijahid, 25, from Delhi.

"While last year we lost nearly 730 doctors across India, this year in a short period of time we have lost 244 doctors. The second wave is

proving extremely fatal for all and especially those at the forefront of the battle. We have to actively increase vaccination cover among the medical staff to ensure that they have protection against the virus," said IMA president J.A. Jayalal.

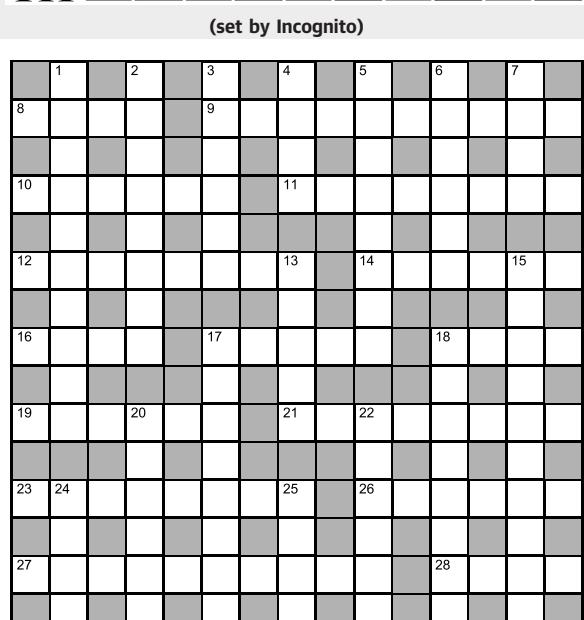
The following are the figures of fatalities according

to the IMA registry: Andhra Pradesh (21), Telangana (19), Maharashtra (13), Tamil Nadu (10), Karnataka and Odisha (8 each), Madhya Pradesh (5), Chhattisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir (3 each), Assam, Gujarat, Haryana and Kerala (2 each) and Goa (1).

The Health Ministry on Monday said the Central government has so far provided more than 20 crore vaccine doses (20,76,10,230) to States/UTs, free of cost. Of this, the total consumption, up to May 16 and including wastage, is 18,71,13,705 doses (as per data available at 8 a.m. on Monday).

TH CROSSWORD + 13250

(set by Incognito)



ACROSS

- 8 Mistakenly hear: "Bird!" (4)
- 9 Formulating a pill, Freud's motivated (3,5,2)
- 10 Versifier's attempt produces verse (6)
- 11 Rich water source racket (4-2-2)
- 12 One with police department enters residence for murder (8)
- 14 Legislation follows rascal's strike (6)

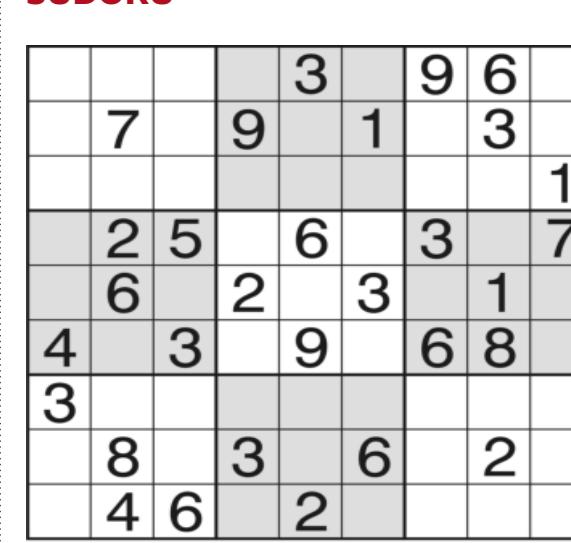
Display keystrokes of genius.
Type your answers into our online grids!

@ <https://qrqo.page.link/jjpTn>



- 16 Dynasty from Farmington (4)
 - 17 Defective vehicle? (5)
 - 18 Intoxicated guard giving up a hallucinogenic substance (4)
 - 19 Iron Man or Lady? (6)
 - 21 Pest throws around inn sauce (8)
 - 23 Stenographer's employer is a despot (8)
 - 26 Sea dog at sea gets prescribed quantity of medicine (6)
 - 27 Change distribution of ale ration around end of August (10)
 - 28 Perhaps match was unfinished. Not odd! (4)
- DOWN
- 1 Wrinkly oiled model containing ring in the measuring device (10)
 - 2 Move permitting movement of two pieces in single move on chessboard? (8)
 - 3 Rip Pip erroneously for writing materials (6)
 - 4 Sluggish movement of owls (4)
 - 5 Indian in large house yard displays wickedness (8)
 - 6 Rose put new rose (4,2)
 - 7 Enjoyment by day results in pay (4)
 - 13 In time, girls press for action (3,2)
 - 15 Wild ogre's following Kirk, a regular attender of Sunday sermons (10)
 - 17 Neat drinks made from fat bees having energy (4,4)
 - 18 Great Dr.'s disturbed by racer (8)
 - 20 Another egg missing in reproductive part (6)
 - 22 I moon and eat (6)
 - 24 Unemployed barmaid learned to some extent (4)
 - 25 Managed to contain some inundation in downpour (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13249

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Embodiment of dharma

Rama is praised as Dharmah in the Vishnu Sahasranama, said M.A. Venkatakrishnan in a discourse. Brahma praised Rama as the Supreme Dharma. Another name for Rama in the Sahasranama is Uttamah. The Sahasranama says, Dharmavid Uttamah. Dharmavid means one who knows dharma. Among all such persons, Rama is the best. Dasaratha, despite being Rama's father, went to svarga. Svarga is not a permanent place of stay for anyone. When one's punyas are exhausted, one has to be born again on the earth. Svarga is not synonymous with moksha. That being the case, why did Rama not grant moksha to Dasaratha? Why did He only give him the inferior position of being a resident of svarga?

Dasaratha, strictly speaking, should have gone to naraka. It is because of Rama's kindness that he went to svarga. Dasaratha did not deserve moksha. Dasaratha had made a promise to Kaikeyi, and in order to honour that promise, he banished Rama, the embodiment of dharma, to the forest. How can a promise to Kaikeyi be more important than the Lord Himself? People keep to the path of dharma in order to reach Him. When Dasaratha had the boon of having Rama beside him, he parted from Rama, to keep his word to Kaikeyi. Hence, he did not get moksha.

Vibhishana, on the other hand, left his country and turned against his brother because what the latter was doing was against dharma. He sought Rama and surrendered to Him. And Rama accepted Vibhishana, and explained Saranagati dharma to followers. When a lake or river gets full, water flows out through an outlet so that flooding is avoided. The Lord is so full of good qualities that there is a need for some of them to overflow and benefit mankind. And how else can He accomplish this by taking avatars?

Financial aid to be given to those who are unable to bear expenses of cremation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Following Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's instructions to prevent people from disposing of bodies in rivers, the police in several districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh have started patrolling the Ganga and villages located on its banks.

A number of bodies in a semi-decomposed state were found floating in the Ganga in Ghazipur and other districts recently, leading to suspicion that they could be of COVID-19 victims either abandoned or disposed of in the water due to financial constraints or waiting list at the cremation grounds.

In Ballia, on the border with Bihar, where the bodies were first sighted, the police are patrolling the river on boats as well as carrying out regular patrols in villages, said Vipin Tada, Superintendent of Police, Ballia.



Water watch: A police boat on the Ganga in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Nine teams from five police stations along the Ganga have been deployed for the patrolling, he said.

"We appeal to people that if they face any problems or

body and require financial assistance, they can take help from police or administration," the SP said.

In Ghazipur, the district administration, while appealing to people to refrain

from disposing bodies in the river, announced that it would provide financial assistance of ₹5,000 to those unable to bear expenses of cremation. River patrolling was done in Varanasi too.

Helpline for elderly in all States soon

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Social Justice Ministry said on Monday its helpline for senior citizens, Elderline, would be fully operational by the end of May, having already started in some States so far.

It said the facility had been made operational in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, with 475 calls received since April 28. In U.P., the call centre started on May 14. It said Telangana already had this facility for over a year.

The call centres can be reached by toll-free number 14567, the Ministry said.

Of the calls received so far, the highest were from Madhya Pradesh (163), followed by Karnataka (122), Uttar Pradesh (94), Tamil Nadu (71) and Rajasthan (25).

Israeli strikes hit Gaza tunnels as diplomats work for ceasefire

Military says it destroyed 15 km of tunnels used by Hamas fighters to take cover

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GAZA CITY

The Israeli military unleashed a wave of heavy airstrikes on the Gaza Strip early on Monday, saying it destroyed 15 km of militant tunnels and the homes of nine Hamas commanders, as international diplomats worked to end the week of fighting that has killed hundreds of people.

The latest attacks killed a top Gaza leader of the Islamic Jihad militant group whom the Israeli military blamed for some of the thousands of rocket attacks launched at Israel in recent days.

Residents of Gaza awoke by the overnight barrage described it as the heaviest since the war began.

The strikes came a day after the deadliest attack in the current round of hostilities between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers, which killed 42 people and flattened three buildings in Gaza.

Gaza's Mayor, Yahya Sarraj, told Al-Jazeera TV that the strikes had caused extensive damage to roads and other infrastructure. "If the aggression continues we expect conditions to become worse," he said.

The UN has warned that the territory's sole power station is at risk of running out of fuel, and Mr. Sarraj said Gaza was also low on spare parts. Gaza already experiences daily power outages for between eight and 12 hours, and tap water is undrinkable. Mohammed Thabet, a spokesman for the electricity distribution company, said it has fuel to supply Gaza with electricity for two or three days.



Soaring tensions: Smoke billowing from the port of Gaza City following Israeli bombardment from the sea on Monday. **AFP**

Blinken signals U.S. will not push for a ceasefire

ASSOCIATED PRESS
COPENHAGEN

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken signalled on Monday the U.S. still was not joining calls for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers as fighting entered its second week, with more than 200 people dead, most of them Palestinians in Gaza.

"In all of these engagements, we have made clear that we are prepared to lend our support and

good offices to the parties should they seek a ceasefire," he said.

He said he welcomed efforts by the UN - where the U.S. has so far blocked a proposed Security Council statement on the fighting - and other nations working for a ceasefire. "Any diplomatic initiative that advances that prospect is something that we'll support... But ultimately it is up to the parties to make clear that they want to pursue a ceasefire," he said.

Hamas also continued its rocket attacks, launching them from residential areas in Gaza and aimed at civilian population centres in Israel.

The war broke out last Monday, when the Hamas militant group fired long-range rockets at Jerusalem after weeks of clashes in the holy city between Palestinian protesters and Israeli

police. The protests were focused on the heavy-handed policing of a flashpoint sacred site during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers.

Call for strike

More protests were expected across the region on Tues-

day in response to a call by Palestinian citizens of Israel for a general strike. The protest has the support of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party.

Since the fighting began, the Israeli military has launched hundreds of airstrikes. Palestinian militants in Gaza have fired more than 3,200 rockets into Israel.

The Israeli military, meanwhile, said it struck 35 "terror targets" on Monday as well as the tunnels, which it says are part of an elaborate system it refers to as the "Metro," used by fighters to take cover from airstrikes.

At least 200 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes, including 59 children and 35 women, with 1,300 people wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Eight people in Israel have been killed in rocket attacks launched from Gaza.

Despite international efforts at a ceasefire, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that Israel's attacks were continuing at "full-force" and would "take time." Israel "wants to levy a heavy price" on the Hamas militant group, he said.

Hamas' top leader, Ismail Haniyeh, who is based abroad, said the group has been contacted by the UN, Russia, Egypt and Qatar as part of cease-fire efforts but "will not accept a solution that is not up to the sacrifices of the Palestinian people."

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi said his government is working to "urgently" end the violence.

Afghans who helped the U.S. now fear being left behind

300 interpreters have been killed since 2016

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL

He served as an interpreter alongside U.S. soldiers on hundreds of patrols and dozens of firefights in eastern Afghanistan, earning a glowing letter of recommendation from an American platoon commander and a medal of commendation.

Still, Ayazudin Hilal was turned down when he applied for one of the scarce special visas that would allow him to relocate to the U.S. with his family. Now, as American and NATO forces prepare to leave the country, he and thousands of others who aided the war effort fear they will be left stranded, facing the prospect of Taliban reprisals.

"We are not safe," the 41-year-old father of six said of Afghan civilians who worked for the U.S. or NATO. "The Taliban is calling us and telling us, 'Your stepbrother is leaving the country soon, and we will kill all of you guys.'"

The fate of interpreters after the troop withdrawal is one of the looming uncertainties surrounding the pullout, including a possible resurgence of terrorist threats and a reversal of fragile gains for women if chaos, whether from competing Kabul-based warlords or the Taliban, follows the end of America's mili-

tary engagement.

Interpreters and other civilians who worked for the U.S. or NATO can get what is known as a special immigrant visa under a programme created in 2009.

Both programmes have been dogged by complaints about a lengthy and complicated application process for security screening that grew more cumbersome with pandemic safety measures.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last month that the U.S. is committed to helping interpreters and other civilians who aided the war effort, often at great personal risk. The Biden administration is reviewing the visas programmes, examining the delays and the ability of applicants to challenge a rejection.

At least 300 interpreters have been killed in Afghanistan since 2016, and the Taliban have made it clear they will continue to be targeted, said Matt Zeller, a co-founder of No One Left Behind, an organisation that advocates on behalf of the interpreters. He also served in Afghanistan as a U.S. Army officer.

"The Taliban considers them to be literally enemies of Islam," said Mr. Zeller, now a fellow at the Truman National Security Project.

"There's no mercy for them."

China steps up vaccinations to 14 million in a day

There is a renewed push to immunise people after a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in several local clusters

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's health authority said the country had administered more than 400 million doses of vaccines as of Sunday amid a renewed push to guard against the resurgence of COVID-19 cases after the reporting of several local clusters in recent days.

A record 14 million doses were administered on a single day on Sunday, the National

Health Commission said. This follows a stepped up vaccination campaign that saw the last 100 million doses administered in just nine days, down from 17 days for doses to rise from 200 million to 300 million and 26 days from 100 million to 200 million.

China's vaccination campaign was slow to take off, attributed by experts to a combination of hesitancy and a broader lack of

urgency because of the low number of COVID-19 cases in China, which has managed to suppress outbreaks since last summer after months-long lockdown and continued restrictions on international travel that remain in place.

Officials sacked

Five cases were reported on Monday, including three in northeastern Liaoning and two

in Anhui province, which reported 14 cases earlier. The Anhui cases prompted a rush for vaccines in the province, with images on Chinese social media showing long queues braving heavy rains. Five officials from the two provinces were sacked after the emergence of cases, believed to be tied to a port city, the *South China Morning Post* reported on Monday.

Estimates for the efficacy

rates of China's vaccines have ranged between 60% and 80% in phase three trials conducted in several countries, but the vaccines have been found to prevent severe cases of COVID-19.

The newspaper reported Chinese authorities had approved a sixth vaccine for emergency use last week as it continues a stepped up campaign with plans to inoculate half the population by the middle of the year.

Singapore to shut schools as virus surges

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SINGAPORE

Singapore will close schools from Wednesday as authorities warned new coronavirus strains, such as the one first detected in India, were affecting more children in the city-state.

Authorities said on Sunday that primary and secondary schools as well as junior colleges would shift to full home-based learning from Wednesday until the end of the school term on May 28. The announcement came after Singapore confirmed 38 locally transmitted coronavirus cases, the highest daily count in eight months.

Iran to develop Farzad B gas field domestically, dumps India

India's OVL had discovered the gas field in 2000

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Iran on Monday gave the Farzad B gas field to Petropars, a domestic gas producer. This is a setback for India's energy ties with Iran asONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) had discovered the gas field in 2000 and has been part of the ongoing cooperation on that front.

According to Iran's news agency Shana, the deal was signed in an event on Monday which was presided over by Iran's Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zanganeh. The deal was signed between Mohammed Meshkinfam, CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company, on behalf of the National Iranian Oil Company, and Hamid Reza Masoudi, CEO of Petropars Group.

The Ministry of External Affairs has not yet commented on the development but OVL had discovered the Farzad B gas field in the Farsi region, which is located between the Iranian and Saudi territories. Monday's deal in Iran comes despite India's long-standing cooperation regarding the gas field and is indicative of the impact of the U.S. sanctions on India-Iran energy cooperation, which had been drastically reduced during the Donald Trump administration in the U.S.

Last year, Mr. Zanganeh had indicated that foreign talks on the Farzad B block had become difficult because of the sanctions. Monday's deal will pave the way for daily production of 28 million cu m of gas over five years, reported Shana.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA LAKSHADWEEP ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF PORT SHIPPING AND AVIATION U T OF LAKSHADWEEP Web: www.lakshadweep.gov.in NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The following Expression of interests (EOI) are invited by the Department Port Shipping and Aviation, UT of Lakshadweep:

- (1) EOI No.01-PSA-UTL-2021 - EOI for consultancy in expansion and Green powered helipad project at Kavaratti island of U T of Lakshadweep.
- (2) EOI No.02-PSA-UTL-2021 - EOI for air ambulance services from various islands of U T of Lakshadweep to Cochin.

Details of the EoIs can be downloaded from the visit website <https://lakshadweep.gov.in>. Last date of submission for EOI(1) is 29.05.2021 and EOI(2) is 05.06.2021.

Sd/- Director (PSA)

CAD-291

Office of the Chief General Manager (P&C)
IDCO, IDCO Tower, Bhubaneswar

OPR-14003/11/0008/2122

A ND-NDE

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal, www.Tendersodisha.gov.in and Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can only be seen in the e-Procurement portal as well as in IDCO website

Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OPR-14003/11/0008/2122

CMYK

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Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OPR-1

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	49,580	-1.74
US Dollar	73.22	0.09
Gold	47,595	0.92
Brent oil	69.41	1.49

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	754.20	20.65
Asian Paints	2782.75	8.25
Axle Bank	709.25	24.25
Bajaj Auto	3864.40	15.60
Bajaj Finserv	11249.35	277.85
Bajaj Finance	5430.10	99.75
Bharti Airtel	549.65	-10.75
BPCL	443.65	1.40
Britannia Ind	3507.25	5.80
Cipla	881.20	-22.85
Coal India	148.15	1.35
Divis Labs	4043.25	22.70
Dr Reddy's Lab	5250.30	53.45
Eicher Motors	2484.35	69.15
Grafix Ind	1393.85	26.85
HCL Tech	922.15	11.80
HDPC	2486.45	64.45
HDPC Bank	1440.25	53.40
HDPC Life	666.30	-4.30
Hero MotoCorp	2854.75	42.40
Hindalco	392.95	10.15
Hind Unilever	2376.25	-0.60
ICICI Bank	623.60	26.30
IndusInd Bank	956.45	65.60
Infosys	1329.40	13.00
Indian Oil Corp	102.00	0.95
ITC	212.60	0.35
JSW Steel	714.40	7.30
Kotak Bank	1744.15	37.50
L&T	1386.75	-28.75
M&M	753.55	12.05
Maruti Suzuki	6717.85	-18.55
Nestle India Ltd.	17037.95	-186.20
NTPC	111.55	0.15
ONGC	114.25	1.30
PowerGrid Corp	228.40	-0.45
Reliance Ind	1960.35	23.05
SBI Life	963.65	-14.75
State Bank	383.10	22.65
Shree Cement	27328.25	614.65
Sun Pharma	687.15	-4.30
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	653.30	8.15
Tata Motors	321.10	8.85
Tata Steel	1150.85	18.75
TCS	3069.75	18.25
Tech Mahindra	953.35	1.15
Titan	1468.30	12.45
UltraTech Cement	6532.35	164.25
UPL	770.75	27.45
Wipro	499.80	1.35

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on May 17

CURRENCY TT BUY TT SELL

US Dollar..... 73.01 73.33

Euro..... 88.81 89.20

British Pound..... 103.00 103.48

Japanese Yen (100)..... 66.91 67.21

Chinese Yuan..... 11.34 11.39

Swiss Franc..... 81.08 81.44

Singapore Dollar..... 54.69 54.93

Canadian Dollar..... 60.28 60.55

Malaysian Ringgit..... 17.67 17.77

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



TVS Ntorq surpasses 1 lakh in global sales

NEW DELHI
TVS Motor Company on Monday said its scooter brand Ntorq 125 has crossed one lakh sales milestone in the international markets. The company currently sells the scooter, which comes with various industry-first technologies such as bluetooth connectivity feature, in 19 countries across South Asia, Latin America, Middle East, and ASEAN. PTI

Poonawalla offloads Panacea Biotec stake

NEW DELHI
Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla on Monday offloaded his entire stake in Panacea Biotech amounting to 5.15% shareholding of the firm for ₹118 crore, through an open market transaction. The shares were picked by Serum Institute of India (SII). As per BSE block deal data, Mr. Poonawalla sold 31,57,034 scrips he held in the firm at a price of ₹373.85 per share. PTI

KKR to invest \$90 mn in eyewear firm Lenskart

BENGALURU
Private equity firm KKR said it had decided to invest \$90 million in Lenskart, an omnichannel eyewear retailer. The company on Monday signed a definitive agreement to invest in the eyewear firm, through a secondary stake acquisition. TPG Growth and TR Capital, which invested in Lenskart in 2014, will divest a portion of their holding in the firm. KKR will help Lenskart scale up operations in India and abroad.

Moglix raises \$120 mn, says it's now a unicorn

MUMBAI
Moglix, an industrial B2B commerce platform in manufacturing, said it has raised \$120 million in Series E funding based on which it has become a unicorn. The latest investment was led by Falcon Edge Capital and Harvard Management Company. This round also saw participation from existing investors, Tiger Global, Sequoia Capital India and Venture Highway, the company said.

AT&T spins off media via \$43-bn Discovery deal

Unwinds \$108.7-bn Time Warner buy

REUTERS

AT&T Inc, the owner of HBO and Warner Bros studios, and cable and streaming network Discovery Inc, the owner of lifestyle TV networks such as HGTV and TLC, will combine their media assets, the U.S. telecom giant said on Monday.

The proposed deal would put together one of Hollywood's most powerful studios, home to the Harry Potter and Batman franchises, with Discovery's stable of unscripted home, cooking and nature and science shows.

The deal also marks the unwinding of AT&T's \$108.7 billion acquisition of U.S. media conglomerate Time Warner in 2018, and underscores its recognition that TV viewership has moved to

Demand takes big hit on second wave'

Economic indicators moderate through April-May as COVID-19 cases overwhelm India: RBI Bulletin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

As the second wave of COVID-19 overwhelmed India and the world, the real economy indicators moderated through April-May 2021, senior officials of the Reserve Bank of India wrote in the RBI's monthly bulletin.

“The biggest toll of the second wave is in terms of a demand shock – loss of mobility, discretionary spending and employment, besides inventory accumulation,” while the aggregate supply was less impacted, they wrote.

“The resurgence of COVID-19 has dented but not debilitated economic activity in the first half of Q1... Although extremely tentative at this stage, the central tendency of available diagnosis is that the loss of momentum is not as severe as at this time a year ago,” they added. In



Demand shock: The biggest toll is loss of mobility, discretionary spending and employment, say officials. • AFP

an article on ‘State of the Economy’, the officials including Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra observed that agriculture remained robust at this critical time and industrial production surged after a two-month contraction on the tailwinds of a large favourable base effect.

The impact of the new infections appeared to be U-shaped, they posited.

WEATHERING THE STORM

“Each shoulder of the U represents sectors that are weathering the storm – agriculture at one end and IT on the other. On the slopes of the U are organised and au-

tomatic manufacturing on one side and on the other, services that can be delivered remotely and do not require producers and consumers to move. These activities continue to function under pandemic protocols,” they wrote.

In the well of the U were the most vulnerable – blue collar groups that had to risk exposure for a living and for the rest of society to survive; doctors and healthcare workers; law and order; municipal personnel; individuals eking out daily livelihoods; small businesses, organised and unorganised – and they warranted priority in policy interventions, the officials observed.

“It is in this direction that the Reserve Bank, re-armed and re-loaded, has stepped out... The road ahead is fraught with danger, but In-

dia’s destiny lies not in the second wave, but in life beyond,” they added.

NBFCs hit hard

In another article on the performance of NBFCs during the pandemic, the bank’s officials wrote that as the pandemic disrupted economic activity significantly, Non-Banking Financial Companies were hit hard. During Q2 and Q3 of FY21, the consolidated balance sheet of NBFCs grew at a slower pace.

“However, NBFCs were able to continue credit intermediation, albeit at a lower rate, reflecting the resilience of the sector. Among sectors NBFCs lend to, industrial sector, particularly micro and small and large industries, were the hardest hit by the pandemic as they posted decline in credit growth,” the article’s authors added.



On the runway: The process has moved to the financial-bid stage. • REUTERS

dian government in a long-standing tax dispute.

After inviting preliminary bids for 100% stake sale in AI, the government has moved to the financial-bid stage. The Tata Group is among the ‘multiple’ entities that had submitted preliminary bids for the debt-ridden carrier’s privatisation.

Centre sees no impact on AI sale from Cairn suit

It will deal legally after receipt of notice

JAGRITI CHANDRA

NEW DELHI

The government doesn’t see the disinvestment process for Air India (AI) being impacted by the suit filed by Cairn Energy against the national carrier in the U.S., according to a senior government official.

“[There is] no likely impact on the disinvestment process,” the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

He added that AI would deal with the suit legally when it receives a court notice, noting that the Department of Revenue was overseeing the Cairn case.

Lawsuit in U.S.

Cairn has filed a lawsuit in the U.S. against AI to enforce the \$1.2-billion arbitration award it won against the In-

SEBI invites comments on gold exchange

Regulator floats consultation paper

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has floated a consultation paper on the proposed framework for Gold Exchange in India.

The proposal was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her FY22 Budget speech.

SEBI, entrusted with the task of regulating the proposed exchange, including for vaulting, assaying and gold quality and delivery standards, said the existing stock exchanges may deal in ‘electronic gold receipt’ (EGR) through a separate segment.

The markets regulator has also suggested a new ex-

change exclusively for EGR that would have advantages such as better liquidity and single-price reference.

As far as transactions are concerned, SEBI working groups have suggested that an entire transaction be divided into three tranches.

It has been proposed that the vault manager should have a net worth of ₹50 crore and will be required to furnish security deposits.

The consultation paper is open for public comments till June 18 and can be accessed on the SEBI website.

Sichuan resumes cargo flights, brings relief to pharma firms

Industry sources up to 70% of inputs from China

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Indian pharmaceutical industry's fears of disruption in raw material supplies from China seem to have subsided with Sichuan Airlines resuming cargo services to India.

“Goods are coming from China, even other airlines are also operating,” said Ashok Kumar Madan, executive director, Indian Drug Manufacturers’ Association.

“We are not foreseeing any issues pertaining to shortage [of raw materials].”

Had the suspension of services continued for a longer time, it would have been a cause for concern. Sichuan Airlines resumed flights on May 9, he said.

Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India



plaintains on raw material availability. Some firms had even operated chartered flights to ensure continuity, he said.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals had earlier informed Pharmexcil and others that the airlines would restart services from Chengdu to Bengaluru on May 9 and to Chennai on May 12. It brought relief to the industry since it sourced 60-70% of drug intermediates, key starting materials and active pharmaceutical ingredients from China.

While availability is not an issue, rise in the prices of raw material is a cause for concern, said Mr. Madan. He said since February, API prices as well cost of transportation had shot up. The ripple effect continued to be felt, he said.

Shilpa unit to make Sputnik vaccine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

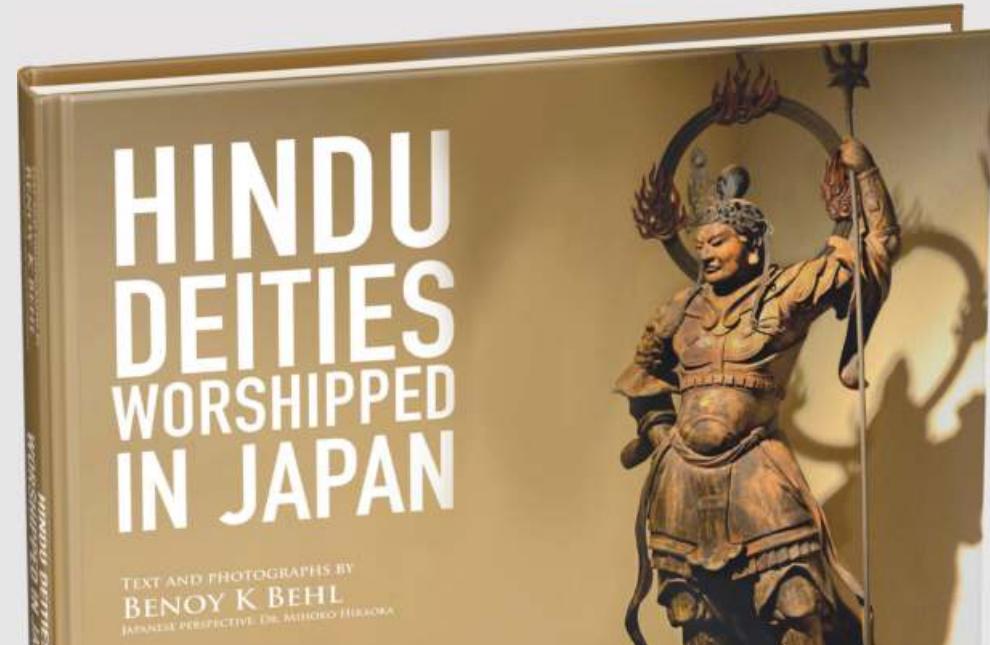
Shilpa Medicare has announced a collaboration with Dr. Reddy's Laboratories to produce Sputnik V, the Russian vaccine against COVID-19.

Its wholly owned subsidiary Shilpa Biologics has entered into a three-year definitive agreement with Dr. Reddy's to manufacture Sputnik V vaccine at its facility in Dharwad, Karnataka, Shilpa Medicare said.

The targeted production of the dual-vector Sputnik V for the first 12 months is 50 million doses from the commencement of commercial production.

The firms are also exploring the option of making Sputnik Light, the single-dose version of the vaccine, in the near future.

This coffee-table book opens a window to the practice of Buddhism in Japan, right from its arrival in that country 1,000 years ago to its growth through the worship of deities of Indian origin. Benoy Behl's images illuminate the pages and present an invaluable account of Japan's links with Hinduism and with its Buddhist past



₹ 2,500*

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM

Nadal wins record-extending 10th title

Gets the better of familiar foe Djokovic in the 57th showdown between the two



ITALIAN OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

After warming up for the French Open in style by beating World No. 1 Novak Djokovic 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 in the Italian Open final on Sunday, Rafael Nadal said he is heading to Roland Garros with confidence and a clear mind in search of a 21st Grand Slam title.

Nadal, 34, who claimed a record-extending 10th ATP Masters 1000 title in Rome, felt his game had improved through the week and would rest for a couple of days back home before heading to Paris for his title defence.

"I think I can work in a couple of things that I can do a little bit better or I can keep confirming that I am on the way," he told reporters on Sunday, after his 57th showdown with Djokovic ended in 2 hours, 49 minutes.

The two have won 15 of the last 17 Rome titles between them but Nadal leads their head-to-head in finals in the Italian capital 4-2. Victory also Nadal equal Djokovic's tally of 36 ATP Masters 1000 trophies.

"I think I have been improving this week, but I need to keep going with that improvement, because when you improve and you're able to do it every day for longer

I really wanted this 10th here in Rome. It was one of the first important titles that I won in my career

NADAL

time, then you feel more confident and more safe.

"So I just need to keep going. I know what I need to work (on) for the next couple of weeks, and I (am) going to do it."

"I really wanted this 10th here in Rome. It was one of the first important titles that I won in my career," Nadal said.

"After achieving 10 in Roland Garros, 10 in Monte-Carlo, 10 in Barcelona, I real-

ly wanted this one.

"I went through a lot of things during the week. Some positive, some great moments, some lucky moments, suffering moments. At the end I think I played a very solid week of tennis, it's the right moment to win an important title."

Djokovic also said his level of play last week has filled him with confidence about his chances at the French Open, where he lost to Nadal in last year's final.

"I was happy to play him because of the fine-tuning for Roland Garros...that doesn't get bigger of a challenge on clay than playing Rafa in finals," said Djokovic.

"Of course I'm disappointed not to win it, but at the same time I'm very pleased with the level of tennis that I managed to find in the later stages of this tournament.

"Going into Paris brings me good sensation. I actually now started to feel like I actually want to feel on clay. So I think if I manage to play the way I played last two days here, I think I have a good chance to go all the way in Paris."

Djokovic will next play a tournament at home in Belgrade in the week before the French Open kicks off on May 30 and will hope to arrive in Paris with a few more matches under his belt.

'Me, Rafa and Roger are reinventing the Next Gen'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

World No.1 Novak Djokovic took a swipe at all the talk about the younger generation of tennis players, saying rival Rafael Nadal and himself were the 'Next Gen'.

"The Next Gen young people? Me, Rafa (Nadal) and Roger (Federer) are reinventing the Next Gen. We are the Next Gen," Djokovic replied after accepting the runners-up trophy.

Both Nadal, 34, and 33-year-old Djokovic had ousted the last two 'Next Gen'



Djokovic says The Big Three is still at the top. ■AP

Tsitsipas, 22, respectively.

"Of course the Next Gen is there, is coming, whatever. But here we are still winning the biggest tournaments and Slams."

"I don't know what to tell you other than that. I'm not focused on the Next Gen even though I know people, you know, it creates a story. People like to talk about it. Fine."

"The guys are there. They are already establishing themselves in the top 5, top 10 of the world. Nothing new. But we are still there."

'Going to be an extra hard battle'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

Roger Federer said on Monday that he expects to return to the top tier of tennis even though the next generation of players will have gained ground during his lengthy injury lay-off.

Federer begins his comeback proper on Swiss home soil in Geneva on Tuesday, with the 39-year-old tennis legend starting a run of tournaments including the French Open, Halle, Wimbledon and then the Tokyo Olympics.

Federer returned to the courts in March, having been out for more than a year following two knee surgeries, winning his first match in Qatar before losing his second.

Doha was his first appearance since January 2020 and an Australian Open semifinal defeat to Novak Djokovic.

"I'm just concerned about where my game is at. The guys on tour are all in a good rhythm. The level that everybody is producing is great. I want to achieve that as well



Challenge at hand: Roger Federer prepares for the clay grind at the Geneva Open. ■REUTERS

again," Federer said.

"I'm excited about the come-back, that's what my focus needs to be on and not about trying to be at the same level as Rafa and Novak right now," Federer said.

But the 20-time Grand

Slam title winner added: "I believe I will be part of the top-tier."

He said the so-called

"Next Generation" of players

such as Stefanos Tsitsipas,

Andrey Rublev, Alexander

Zverev and Daniil Medvedev

plus 2020 US Open winner

Dominic Thiem would all

prove a much tougher challenge now.

"One thing is for sure, I would expect that the generation of Tsitsipas, Zverev, Rublev, Medvedev have all again gotten better naturally because they have more experience," he said.

"For me, that's going to be an extra challenge, extra hard for me to find that level, but I guess I knew from the get-go it was never going to be simple, regardless of whether I was going to be out for three months or almost a year and a half."

Das is India women's team batting coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former India opener Shiv Sunder Das has been appointed the batting coach of the Indian women's team for the tour of England.

Das, who played 23 Tests between 2000 and '02, scored 1326 runs, including two hundreds and nine half-centuries. He finished with an average of 34.89.

"It will be a good experience and I am looking forward to it," said the 43-year-old former Odisha skipper.

Das, who has honed his skills as a batting coach at the National Cricket Academy under Rahul Dravid's guidance, believes that the stint would help him while trying to solve the technical problems of the batters.

"I have been part of the NCA for the last 4-5 years and have been batting coach for the past couple of years. I would like to thank Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly for giving me this opportunity," said Das, who played



Guiding hand: Das' experience in England will come in handy when he interacts with the players. ■THE HINDU ARCHIVES

to solve their cricketing issues when they need you. My responsibility is to make them well prepared and match-ready," said Das, who was part of the Indian team that toured England under Ganguly in 2002 and scored 250 in a tour game.

"That was my highest score in England on that tour," he recalled.

Das believes that his experience of having played league cricket in England will prove to be helpful when he guides the players.

"It will help that I have played a lot of cricket in England, including international cricket and league cricket. I know the conditions and I will share my experiences with the players.

"A few of them have toured England multiple times and have quite a bit of experience. Whatever time we have, we will see how many training sessions we get, and make sure we use them properly," he said.

CA tried to sweep it under the carpet, says Clarke

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Former captain Michael Clarke won't be surprised if it comes to light that more players were aware of the ball-tampering plot in 2018 as he accused Cricket Australia of sweeping the issue under the carpet.

The scandal had led to a review of Australia's win-at-all-cost team culture and led to one-year bans being slapped on then captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and a nine-month suspension on opener Cameron Bancroft, who had the sandpaper in his possession.

The issue was put under the spotlight again when Bancroft last week revealed that Australian bowlers in the team at that time might have had some knowledge about the plot.

"If you are playing sport at the highest level you know your tools that good it's not funny. Can you imagine that ball being thrown back to the bowler and the bowler not knowing about it? Please," Clarke told Sky Sports Radio on Monday.

"I love how the articles in



Michael Clarke. ■FILE PHOTO

the paper are, 'It is such a big surprise that Cameron Bancroft has made a...' Actually, if you read his quotes, it is not what he did say as what he didn't say in regards to other people knowing about 'sandpapergate,' he said.

Following Bancroft's interview, Cricket Australia said it was open to a re-investigation into the incident and its integrity team has already approached the player for more information.

"What's the surprise? That more than three people knew? I don't think anybody who has played the game of cricket, or knows a little bit about cricket, would know that in a team like that, at the highest level, when the ball is such an important part of the game," Clarke said.

ICC rejects claims made by documentary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday dismissed claims made by news channel Al Jazeera that India's Test matches against England and Australia were fixed, saying the passages of play identified as fixed were entirely predictable, and therefore "implausible as a fix".

The documentary Cricket's Match Fixers released in 2018 had claimed that India's game against England in Chennai in 2016 and the one against Australia in 2017 in Ranchi were fixed. The ICC also cleared five people – filmed by the channel – of any

Finch to lead, big names return

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australia welcomed back its star players and picked four spinners in an extended 23-man squad named on Monday for a white-ball tour of the West Indies in July.

The team will be captained by Aaron Finch and will feature the return of Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, David Warner and Pat Cummins, who all missed the recent trip to New Zealand.

The tour starts with the first of five T20Is in St. Lucia on July 9 and ends with the third of three ODIs in Barbados on July 24 as the teams prepare for the T20 World Cup in India later this year.

Marnus Labuschagne however misses out, due to "logistical complexities" of joining the squad from the UK, which would necessitate him to undergo two weeks



At the helm: Aaron Finch's Australian team will play five T20s and three ODIs. ■FILE PHOTO

of quarantine. The squad: Aaron Finch (Capt.), Ashton Agar, Jason Behrendorff, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Moises Henriques, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Riley Meredith, Josh

Philippe, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Tanveer Sangha, D'Arcy Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinski, Mitchell Swepson, Andrew Tye, Matthew Wade, David Warner and Adam Zampa.

have had some knowledge about the plot.

"If you are playing sport at the highest level you know your tools that good it's not funny. Can you imagine that ball being thrown back to the bowler and the bowler not knowing about it? Please," Clarke told Sky Sports Radio on Monday.

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A ND-NDE

TV PICKS

Premier League: Star Sports 3 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m.; SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m. & 12.45 a.m. (Wednesday)

Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 12 a.m. (Wednesday)

IN BRIEF



Lee wins, book PGA Championship berth

LOS ANGELES

South Korea's Lee Kyoung-hoon defied rain, wind and a weather delay to fire a six-under par 66 on Sunday to win the PGA Tour Byron Nelson by three strokes and book a PGA Championship berth. Lee had eight birdies in his six-under effort, his 25-under par total of 263 putting him three clear of American Sam Burns. AFP

Serena sails past teenager Pigato

PARMA

Serena Williams brushed aside the challenge of local teenager Lisa Pigato in the opening round of the WTA tournament in Parma on Monday. Williams, ranked eighth in the world, beat the 572nd-ranked Pigato, making her WTA debut, 6-3, 6-2 in the first meeting between the two players. AFP

Biradar passes away

BENGALURU:

Former international marathon runner D.Y. Biradar passed away on Monday. Biradar represented India in the Commonwealth Games in 1970. Biradar was also a five-time National marathon champion. He started his career in Karnataka Police (KSRP) before joining Southern Railway. The Karnataka Athletics Association (KAA) condoled his demise.

Rana Goswami passes away

KOLKATA

Former Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president and Assam Cricket Association (ACA) secretary Rana Goswami passed away in Guwahati on Sunday night following COVID-19 related complications. He was 77 and is survived by his wife, son and daughter, said an ACA statement. Goswami, who was the ACA secretary for two terms from 1986 to 1992, held different posts in the association. A former-MLA and a noted social activist, Goswami was the manager of the Mohammed Azharuddin-led Indian team that toured Sharjah in 1995.

Archer ruled out of NZ series

England pacer Jofra Archer, who recently returned to action after missing the now-suspended IPL, has been ruled out of the Test series against New Zealand as his elbow injury has re-surfaced.

The 26-year-old played a game for his County side Sussex against Kent but had to be pulled out of the game after bowling just five overs in the second innings.

Divij and Arends lose

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
LYON (FRANCE)

Divij Sharan and Sander Arends was unable to capitalise on a strong start, losing 3-6, 6-2, [10-1] to fourth seeds Hugo Nys and Tim Puetz in the doubles first round of the €481,270 ATP tennis tournament in France on Monday.

The results: €481,270 ATP, Geneva, Switzerland: Qualifying (first round): Mackenzie McDonald (USA) bt Prajesh Gunnswaran 6-3, 3-6, 6-3. **€481,270 ATP, Lyon, France: First round:** Hugo Nys (Mon) & Tim Puetz (Ger) bt Sander Arends (Ned) & Divij Sharan 3-6, 6-2, [10-1].

Suarez puts Atletico closer to LaLiga title

Dortmund and Wolfsburg clinch Champions League qualification spots

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

Diego Simeone hailed Luis Suarez as "extraordinary" on Sunday after the Uruguayan scored the goal that could win Atletico Madrid La Liga, his late winner snatching a dramatic 2-1 win over Osasuna.

Atletico trailed Osasuna with nine minutes to go at the Wanda Metropolitano and faced a defeat that would not just have postponed its bid to be champion but allowed Real Madrid, which was beating Athletic Bilbao, to go top with one game left.

Stunning turnaround

Instead, Atletico scored in the 82nd and 88th minutes to pull off a stunning turnaround. Renan Lodi smashed in an equaliser before Suarez proved the hero, firing in from eight yards to spark mass celebrations.

Atletico's players and substitutes piled onto Suarez in the corner and at full-time, some of their players dropped to their knees, not with ecstasy, but relief, the title now just one win away.



Ecstasy: The match seemed to be slipping away from Atletico before Luis Suarez's late goal ensured victory for his side against Osasuna. ■ AFP

"These are moments of happiness," said Suarez. Meanwhile in Berlin, Borussia Dortmund and Wolfsburg clinched Champions League qualification on Sunday, while Hamburger SV's hopes of rejoining the Bundesliga were put on hold for another year.

The results:
LaLiga: Cadiz 1 (Mari 15+pen) lost to Elche 3 (Milla Peña 58, Gonzalez Polanco 64, Fidel 88); Atletico Madrid 2 (Lodi 82, Suárez 88) bt Osasuna 1 (Budimir 75); Alaves 4 (Pons 8, Duarte 21, Joselu 66, Rioja 72) bt Granada 2 (Jorge Molina 31, Puerto 63); Valencia 4 (Guedes 3, 49, Soler 19, 30) bt Eibar 1 (Gil 39); Barcelona 1 (Messi 28) lost to Celta Vigo 2 (Lorenzo 38, 89); Getafe 2 (Alena 13, Kubo 84) bt Levante 1 (Melero Manzanares 30); Real Betis 1 (Iglezias 57+pen) bt SD Huesca 0; Real Sociedad 4 (Isak 6, 16, Silva 28, Januzaj 35+pen) bt Valladolid 1 (Andre 82); Athletic Bilbao 0 lost to Real Madrid 1 (Nacho Fernandez 68); Villarreal 4 (Bacca 34, 47, 79, Gerard 66) bt Sevilla 0

Serie A: Fiorentina 0 lost to Napoli 2 (Insigne 56, Venuti 75+pen); Benevento 1 (Lapadula 13) drew with Crotone 1 (Simy 90+3); Udinese 0 lost to Sampdoria 1 (Quagliarella 88+pen); Parma 1 (Bruno Alves 32) lost to Sassuolo 3 (Locatelli 25+pen, Drefel 62, Boga 69); AC Milan 0 drew with Cagliari 0.

Bundesliga: Mainz 0 5 (Quaison 90+1+pen) lost to Borussia Dortmund 3 (Guerrero 23, Reus 42, Brandt 80); RB Leipzig 2 (Kluivert 51, Sabitzer 78+pen) drew with Wolfsburg 2 (Philipp 11, 45+1).

Jazz finish with best record in regular season

Stephen Curry takes the scoring crown as Warriors set up play-in match against Lakers

NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

Utah Jazz claimed top spot in the playoffs with league's best regular-season record (52-20), Stephen Curry captured the scoring title, and defending champion Los Angeles Lakers settled for a spot in the play-in round as Sunday's final day of the regular season saw all 30 NBA teams in action.

LeBron James scored 25 points as LA Lakers beat New Orleans Pelicans 110-98 but the win wasn't enough to get the Lakers directly into the playoffs.

Elsewhere, the Jazz claimed sole possession of the No. 1 spot in the NBA playoffs, with the best for the first time in franchise history by beating Sacramento Kings 121-99 behind a 33-point performance from Jordan Clarkson. The Trail Blazers earned the upper hand in the race for the sixth and final direct playoff spot with a 132-116 win over the Nuggets.

Scoring machine
Curry, who scored 46 points on Sunday, earned his second NBA scoring title as Warriors beat Memphis Grizzlies 113-101. Curry finished the regular season with a 32.0-point scoring average, claiming the league title over Washington Wizards' Bradley Beal.

Washington rallied to beat the Charlotte Hornets 115-110 to set up a play-in tournament clash with the Boston Celtics. Post-season teams: Eastern

Lakers, which finished se-

venth for a place in the play-in tournament that begins Tuesday and ends on Friday, next plays on Wednesday against Curry's Golden State Warriors, who have won six in a row.

The results: Wizards 115 lost to Hornets 110, Pacers 125 bt Raptors 113, Knicks 96 bt Celtics 92, Suns 123 bt Spurs 121, Warriors 113 bt Grizzlies 101, Nets 123 bt Cavaliers 109, Hawks 124 bt Rockets 95, 76ers 128 bt Magic 117, Heat 120 bt Pistons 107, Bulls 118 bt Bucks 112, Trail Blazers 132 bt Nuggets 116, Timberwolves 136 bt Mavericks 121, Jazz 121 bt Kings 99, Thunder 117 bt Clippers 112, Lakers 110 bt Pelicans 98.

Conference: Playoffs: 76ers, Nets, Bucks, Heat, Knicks, Hawks; **Play-ins:** Pacers, Hornets, Celtics, Wizards.

Western Conference: Jazz, Suns, Nuggets, Trail Blazers, Clippers, Mavericks. **Play-ins:** Grizzlies, Spurs, Lakers, Warriors.

The results: Wizards 115 lost to Hornets 110, Pacers 125 bt Raptors 113, Knicks 96 bt Celtics 92, Suns 123 bt Spurs 121, Warriors 113 bt Grizzlies 101, Nets 123 bt Cavaliers 109, Hawks 124 bt Rockets 95, 76ers 128 bt Magic 117, Heat 120 bt Pistons 107, Bulls 118 bt Bucks 112, Trail Blazers 132 bt Nuggets 116, Timberwolves 136 bt Mavericks 121, Jazz 121 bt Kings 99, Thunder 117 bt Clippers 112, Lakers 110 bt Pelicans 98.

Golden Arm: Stephen Curry, left, notched up a game-high 46 points en route to his second NBA scoring title as the regular season ended on Sunday. ■ AP

Two top-5 positions for Hero team

Buhler and Caimi finish fourth and fifth respectively at the Anadalucia Rally

MOTORSPORTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
VILLAMARTIN (SPAIN)

Hero MotoSports Team Rally missed out on podium but team riders Sebastian Buhler and Franco Caimi finished a strong fourth and fifth respectively at the Anadalucia Rally, here.

Rodrigues and Caimi started the final stage with the best chances of achieving a podium for the team.

Rodrigues made a strong start to the stage but settled on the side of caution owing to a couple of crashes and brought the bike home safely.

Caimi also made a strong final dash and managed to secure a fifth place in the last stage of the rally, his efforts rewarding him with a fifth place in the overall standings too.

With this, he managed to achieve a Top-5 finish in his very first rally in Hero MotoSports colors.

Difficult day
This was enough for him to earn a fourth place in the overall standings, building upon his win in the Prologue and a strong performance throughout the rally.

Sebastian Buhler, who had received a 15 minutes penalty yesterday owing to an engine change effectively lost his chance of an overall podium finish.

Yet, he put the new engine to good use and achieved good speed to finish the final stage in fourth place. He finished the rally on the eighth position in the overall rankings.

"The bike worked really well and the team also made a great job so everything was perfect," Buhler said.

Next up for Hero MotoSports Team Rally will be the Rally Kazakhstan scheduled from June 7-13.

Britain yet to decide on Pfizer's offer

Vaccine developer says would donate doses to inoculate athletes, officials

GENERAL

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

The British government is still deciding whether to accept an offer from Pfizer to fast-track Olympic and Paralympic athletes for coronavirus vaccines.

Jabs are only being given to Britons aged 38 or older – though this will be extended to those over 35 from next week – with younger people only getting inoculated if they have an underlying health condition.

"It's sensitive because the philosophy has been based on age and that's been proved to be the right thing," British Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said. "The biggest indicator is age

Vijay Singh pulls out of PGA c'ship

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KIAWAH ISLAND (USA)

Three-time major winner Vijay Singh of Fiji has withdrawn from the 103rd PGA Championship due to a back injury, tournament officials announced on Monday.

Vijay Singh won the 2000 Masters and the 1998 and 2004 PGA Championship titles and reached the World No. 1 ranking in 2004 and 2005.

The 58-year-old, who missed the cut at last month's Masters, has not played in the PGA since 2018 when he finished 78th.

Wyndham Clark, ranked 150th in the world, will replace Vijay Singh in the field of 156 when the year's second major tournament begins here on Thursday here.

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Our aim is to peak at the right time: Monika

Midfielder feels the focus is on speed, endurance and improvement

HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU

The Indian women's hockey players have become tech-savvy and now understand the purpose of the training sessions, experienced midfielder Monika said on Monday.

All work

Monika, who was part of the team that competed at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, said the sessions on Saturday mornings were the toughest.

"It is always a red session. They are mostly high-intensity training sessions where we focus on match situations," Monika said in a Hockey India (HI) release.

"The focus in each ses-

sion is either on speed or endurance. We have about two-three such sessions a week. Those are the days when our fitness levels are really tested."

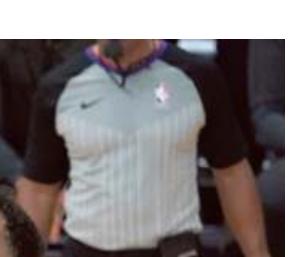
Better awareness

"Our awareness about each session and how does it help is much better now than before. Earlier, we would just focus on what the coaches said."

Monika added that the coaching staff is planning week-on-week training in such a way that the team peaks at the right time.

"The focus now is to keep improving on our strengths and work on the weak points. Our aim is to peak at the right time. Every player's workload is taken into consideration and improvement is mapped accordingly," she said.

"Our focus is to improve each day and be ready for the Games. The entire group is mentally prepared."



Golden Arm: Stephen Curry, left, notched up a game-high 46 points en route to his second NBA scoring title as the regular season ended on Sunday. ■ AP

CM YK