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militants killed in
encounter in Anantnag
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Pappu Yadav arrested
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violation charge
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China's population
growth slows to lowest
rate in decades
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Shreyas Iyer likely to
be unavailable for
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NEARBY



'Plea against Central Vista
a bid to stall the project'

NEW DELHI

The Centre has told the Delhi High Court that the Public Interest Litigation seeking a stay on the construction of Central Vista in New Delhi amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic was just another attempt to stall the project, which has been facing such attempts from the beginning on one pretext or the other.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Let more firms make vaccine, says Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday requested the Centre to allow more companies in India to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines by directing the two firms currently engaged in manufacturing them to share the formula with others. In a letter to PM Narendra Modi, Mr. Kejriwal also sought a national policy to vaccinate every one in a few months.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 5

'Cases rising in 15 States; positivity rate at 21%'

ICMR chief says more RATs will be conducted from now on

DEVESHEK K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI

The national COVID-19 positivity rate stood at 21% and 310 of the 734 districts had reported positivity greater than or equal to the national average, Balram Bhargava, Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said on Tuesday.

At the Health Ministry briefing, Dr. Bhargava said the country now had the RTPCR testing capacity of about 16 lakh a day and Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) capacity of about 17 lakh a day. Stating that a total of 19,45,299 tests were conducted on April 30, the highest ever in the world, he said the 30-crore landmark was achieved by May 7.

Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, Punjab, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh have shown continued increasing trend in daily new COVID-19 cases. On the other hand, 18 States and Union Territories have recorded continued plateauing or a decrease in cases.

Indicating a change in policy, the ICMR chief said since the infection was spreading fast during the second wave, RT-PCR tests had

Worrying numbers

According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as many as nine States had case positivity of more than 25%. The tables show the five States/U.T.s with the highest and lowest case positivity among 26 of them

FIVE STATES WITH HIGH POSITIVITY

State	Case positivity (%)
Goa	49.6
Puducherry	42.8
West Bengal	34.4
Haryana	34.3
Karnataka	32.4

FIVE STATES WITH LOW POSITIVITY

State	Case positivity (%)
Meghalaya	15.5
Assam	15.7
Bihar	16.2
Jharkhand	16.4
Arunachal Pradesh	16.4

been rationalised and RAT (Rapid Antigen Testing) increased for early detection, isolation and home care. He said multiple 24x7 RAT booths were to be set up in cities, towns and villages.

Advocating aggressive RAT usage in rural and remote areas, Dr. Bhargava said these tests would be allowed at all the government and private health care facilities. RAT booths would have to be set up in schools, colleges, residents' welfare association offices and other places, in cooperation with local communities. The go-

vernment would also encourage public-private partnership models.

Health Ministry spokesperson Lav Agarwal said an early declining trend had been noticed in the past couple of days, with the number of new cases coming down from about 4.14 lakh on May 7 to 4.03 lakh cases on May 9, and from 3.66 lakh to 3.29 lakh in the past 24 hours.

There were about 37 lakh active cases, while over 1.90 crore patients had recovered so far.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

26 killed as Israel targets Gaza with air strikes

Hamas rocket barrage kills 2 Israelis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GAZA CITY

Israel unleashed new air strikes on Gaza early on Tuesday, hitting a pair of high-rise buildings believed to be housing militants, as Hamas and other armed groups bombarded southern Israel with hundreds of rockets. The escalation was sparked by weeks of tensions in contested Jerusalem.

Since sundown Monday, 26 Palestinians – including nine children and a woman – were killed in Gaza, most by air strikes, Gaza health officials said. The Israeli military said at least 16 of the dead were militants. During the same period, Gaza militants fired hundreds of rockets toward Israel, killing two Israeli civilians and wounding 10 others.

In a further sign of rising tensions, Israel signalled it is

widening its military campaign. The military said it is sending troop reinforcements to the Gaza border and the Defence Minister ordered the mobilisation of 5,000 reserve soldiers.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "it was decided that both the might of the attacks and the frequency of the attacks will be increased".

But, in a potentially positive sign, Egyptian and Palestinian officials said Egypt was working on brokering a cease-fire.

The barrage of rockets and air strikes was preceded by hours of clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, including dramatic confrontations at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a sacred site to both Jews and Muslims.

RELATED REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 11

Relief on wheels



Road to recovery: A bus fitted with oxygen generators on display in Bengaluru. The Karnataka government is set to launch the 'Oxygen on Wheels' service to aid COVID-19 patients. Each bus can support up to six patients. ■ MURALI KUMAR K.

Amid surge, demand for air ambulances soars

Massive rise in requests for airlifting patients from northern States to Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai

JAGRITI CHANDRA

NEW DELHI

Last week, a Beechcraft King Air C 90 air ambulance from Bagdogra lost its right wheel while taking off from Nagpur after refuelling. The aircraft was carrying a COVID-19 patient for treatment in Mumbai. The pilot was alerted, but he kept flying to burn fuel before coming in to land. After hovering over Mumbai, he finally made a belly-landing without any casualties.

The incident highlights the multiple risks taken by the crew of air ambulances as demand for the services has surged amid the second wave of the pandemic. Families resourceful enough to charter these services do so to cut through the tardiness



Safety first: A patient being flown in an isolation pod of an air ambulance. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

of the COVID-19 response. Transporting critically ill patients is a difficult operation at the best of situations but transporting COVID patients needing urgent care raises additional challenges, the most important being isolating the patients and the crew. This in turn has

pushed up costs. The shifting of a COVID-19 patient from Delhi to Chennai would cost not less than ₹20 lakh, according to an operator.

A Mumbai-Hyderabad flight can set one back by between ₹6 lakh and ₹25 lakh depending on where the aircraft is and the medi-

cal staff and equipment on board. Despite the costs, aggregators and operators say the demand for air transportation of patients has increased 10-fold and yet many patients are being turned away as only a limited number of these air ambulances are equipped with isolation pods – mandated by the Union Health Ministry for ferrying COVID-19 patients. Evacuating patients in an isolation pod, a collapsible personal capsule with oxygen supply, also ensures the safety of the crew.

"Where we used to receive one or two enquiries for medical transportation, we now receive as many as 20 requests per day. A majority of them have to be rejected because availability of air-

craft is an issue. Our machines are being overused and there is a waiting period of at least two or three days," Sachin Wadhwa, co-founder of BookMyCharter, says.

Data with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation show only 18 companies are authorised to operate air ambulances with 26 aircraft cleared for medical transportation. "Those transporting COVID passengers have to abide by the guidelines of the Health Ministry and of the States of origin and departure," a DGCA official said. Hyderabad followed by Chennai and Mumbai are the most sought after medical hubs for these patients.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Delhi's death count crosses 20K

Last 5,000 fatalities reported in a span of just two weeks

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi crossed the grim milestone of 20,000 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday with 347 fatalities being reported over the past 24 hours. Of these, 5,000 deaths were reported in the past two weeks alone.

It took 161 days to reach the first 5,000 deaths in the Capital. Just 83 days later, the toll crossed 10,000. After this, the number of new cases and deaths started dipping. It took another 135 days for the toll to reach 15,000.

After a peak in November 2020, daily infections and deaths dipped steadily till March 2021. On February 9, no COVID-related death was reported in the city for the first time since June 2020.

The city started registering a spike in cases and



A man gets a COVID-19 jab in Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

that the actual number of deaths in the city is far higher than the official figures, but this has been denied by the Delhi government.

As per Tuesday's health bulletin, the city reported 12,481 new cases, taking the tally to 13,48,699. The death toll stood at 20,010.

A total of 70,276 tests were conducted in a single day and the TPR was 17.76%, down from 19.1% on Monday.

The TPR had shot up from 3.5% on April 1 to 36.2% on April 22. Since then, it has been steadily falling.

There are 83,809 active cases in the city.

Of the total 23,221 beds, 18.02% were vacant, but only 60 ICU beds were available, as on Tuesday evening.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 3

AN-NDNE



No rules for hunger: Attendants of patient and others wait in a queue with no social distancing norms to collect meals distributed by volunteers outside the RML hospital in Delhi on Tuesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Over 370 FIRs lodged, 91 arrests made in COVID-related crimes

Dismantled ecosystem of accused to reduce such frauds: police

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has registered over 370 FIRs against those committing COVID-related fraud, arrested 91 persons for the same, seized 95 of their devices and frozen over 200 bank accounts so far, officials said on Tuesday.

They said they have registered 372 cases and frozen 214 bank accounts. The total amount in the fraud is to the tune of ₹53.6 lakh, they added.

The police said they have adopted a two-pronged strategy. In the first one, the citizens are being facilitated for easy lodging of complaints at a helpline and a portal. The second one is proactively taking actions to dismantle the ecosystem of COVID

frauds.

There was a sudden change in the nature of distress calls. The police said overnight, they augmented the capacities of its helpline – 011-23469900 – for reporting COVID-related fraud cases.

Continuous analysis of registered cases and complaints indicated that while a majority of suspected SIM cards were sourced from one State but they were used in another State, they said.

The citizens were advised to follow safety tips during online transactions.

The daily reporting of cases has now reduced, said an officer.

We successfully curbed the rising trends of COVID-related crimes.

There are 20 teams in action on ground in several States; a substantial number of arrests are likely in the coming few days, the officials said.

The Director Generals of

Police of States concerned were contacted by Delhi Police Commissioner for coordinated effort to stop such crimes.

Teams from crime department, CyPAD and districts were sent to locate and dismantle the infrastructure of the accused, they said.

The citizens were advised to follow safety tips during online transactions.

The daily reporting of cases has now reduced, said an officer.

We successfully curbed the rising trends of COVID-related crimes.

There are 20 teams in action on ground in several States; a substantial number of arrests are likely in the coming few days, the officials said.

The Director Generals of

'Why would we come here again, but forced to go looking for a living'

Group of migrants in Greater Noida say they were forced into bondage during pandemic



The group of migrant workers outside the Gautam Buddha Nagar DM's office on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

He said the workers were owed around ₹20,000-₹25,000 each, being paid ₹400 to ₹500 a day. Ramkishor added that the group had worked under the hot sun for two months, with the children also asked to assist. He said he last attended school "before the lockdown", referring to the national lockdown imposed by the government in March 2020.

"Why would we ever come back here? We have seen now what it is like here. But there is nothing in the village for us; we wouldn't have left if there was an option. We will go wherever we have to earn a living," he said.

The workers said they had been waiting for some relief – food, money to return home and their wages – all day. Ramkishor said someone had offered them "biscuits". An official at DM Suhas LY's office said relief would be given to the group soon when contacted on Tuesday evening, as the workers remained camped outside.

Jailed activists' families share fears in the time of COVID

They speak of common worries about contracting the virus, treatment and uncertainty over release

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

A day after Pinjra Tod activist Natasha Narwal was granted bail to attend her father Mahavir Narwal's funeral, United Against Hate co-founder Khalid Saifi's wife, Nargis, said her husband lodged in jail is scared if he would be able to meet his mother.

Ms. Nargis and a few others, including activist Harsh Mander, Delhi University professor Apoorvanand, jailed journalist Sidhique Kappan's wife Raihanath



Pinjra Tod activist Natasha Narwal (in PPE) at her father's funeral in Rohtak on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

phone, and he got scared. He is scared if he would be able to meet his 80-year-old mother. Our daughter asked him when he will return home. He told her that he doesn't know if he will return at all," she said at the conference.

She said a few days ago, Khalid complained of fever, but his COVID-19 test wasn't conducted despite requests following which, she approached a court. A test was then ordered.

"Thankfully, he tested negative, but he was unwell for 15 days. I know how tough that period was for us be-

cause there was no one to take care of him. There are no provisions for hot water and steam," Ms. Nargis said.

Sharing another incident, she said a person in the barrack where Mr. Khalid is lodged had tested positive. She said neither other persons in the barrack were tested nor was the place sanitised, she said.

Umar's father on UAPA

Former JNU student Umar Khalid's father SQR Ilyas said Umar had tested positive for COVID while in jail but has now recovered.

"The law, which keeps un-

Man held for illegally selling medicines at higher prices

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old man was arrested for allegedly selling COVID-related medicines at exorbitant prices in west Delhi's Punjabi Bagh, the police said on Tuesday.

DCP (West) Urvija Goel said the accused has been identified as Lover Narula, resident of Paschim Vihar, who is engaged in the business of pharmaceuticals. The accused procured the medicines from his associate and sold them at ₹3 lakh each.

The police said they received information at Punjabi Bagh police station regarding black marketing of COVID-related medicines following which a raid was conducted. The police claimed to have recovered ₹30,4500 from the accused. They also recovered two Actemra 400 mg/20 ml Tocilizumab 400 mg/200 mL, 10 Liposomal Amphotericin-B for injection 50 mg, 14 Me-phentermine Sulphate injection I.P. Terminus 30mg/ml from him. Efforts are on to nab another accused, Rahul, they said.

Rajan recovers from COVID, back in jail

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Gangster Chhota Rajan, who was admitted at AIIMS for treatment after he tested positive for COVID-19, was taken back to Tihar jail on Tuesday following his recovery, said officials concerned.

He was found COVID-19 positive in the Tihar Jail on April 22 and was admitted to AIIMS on April 24.

On Friday, the jail administration had dismissed reports claiming that Rajan had died. "News of death of Tihar jail inmate Rajendra Sadashiv Nikalje @ Chhota Rajan s/o Sadashiv Nikalje is wrong [sic]," Director General (Prisons) Sandeep Goel had said.

Rajan, 61, is lodged at the high-security prison since his arrest after deportation from Bali in Indonesia in 2015.

GOVERNMENT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES NAHARLAGUN

No. COVID-19 (MDEV)CMRF/24/2020 Dated Naharlagun, the 10 May 2021.

TENDER NOTICE FOR 32 SLICE CT SCAN MACHINE

1. Competitive bids are invited for the procurement, installation and commissioning of three number of 32 Slice CT Scan unit for Bomdila, Ziro and Aalo General hospitals on turnkey basis under NESIDS in the Directorate of Health Services, Naharlagun. The tender fee receipt with Checklist, should be collected from Directorate of Health Services, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, PO/PS-Naharlagun, Papum Pare District, Pin 791100 Room No. 112. EMD in the form of Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque drawn on any nationalized Bank in favour of Director of Health Services payable at Naharlagun.

2. Time schedule

Date of uploading in website/ publishing tender paper	Website: https://arunachaltenders.gov.in
Start date & time for downloading tender documents	11/05/2021 at 1000hrs onwards
Pre-bid meeting	20/05/2021 at 1000hrs onwards at DHS Conference Hall, Naharlagun
Start date & time for submission of online bids	11/05/2021 at 1000hrs onwards
Last date & time for submission of online bids	25/05/2021 at 0900hrs
Date & time for opening of technical bids	25/05/2021 at 1100hrs onwards
Tender opening venue	Conference Hall, DHS Complex Naharlagun
Date & time of opening of price bids	Will be intimated on Website.

Address for communication: Planning and Development Branch, Directorate of Health Services, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, PO/PS-Naharlagun, Papum Pare District, Pin 791100
PH. NO. 0360-2350302/2244113
email: transportsupply@gmail.com & planningdevelopment@gmail.com

3. Tender fee is Rs. 5000.00 (Non-refundable)

4. The interested bidder must be registered with the e-procurement system of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh in the Website: <https://arunachaltenders.gov.in> using a valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and valid email address to be able to participate in the bidding process. On registration with the portal they will be provided with a user ID and password by the system through which they can submit their bids online.

5. The interested bidders can download tender documents from the e-tendering Website: <https://arunachaltenders.gov.in>.

6. Bidders must complete bid submission through online tendering system. Otherwise, their bids would not be available during online tender opening.

7. All the key dates and deadlines will be followed as per the time schedule in NIT unless explicitly amended through a corrigendum in the e-tendering Website: <https://arunachaltenders.gov.in>.

Sd/-
(P.Parthiban) IAS,
Secretary (Health & Family Welfare)
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.

DIPR / ARN / 00347-51/2021

HC raps JNU for apathy towards students, faculty

University yet to set up COVID facility

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Tuesday rapped Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) for "apathy" as well as lack of "swiftness and alacrity" in responding to requests by students and faculty to set up COVID care and oxygen production facilities on the campus, which has seen a three-fold rise in infections in three weeks.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said considering the "rigour" of the current pandemic, the JNU administration "ought to have reacted with swiftness

and alacrity" to the several correspondence sent to it from April 13 onwards. "You got the first letter on April 13 and today is May 11. Almost a month has gone by, but there has been no response from the Vice-Chancellor or the administration. There is complete apathy. I am shocked," Justice Singh said.

She noted that from 74 cases on April 18, the number of COVID-19 cases on the JNU campus has gone up to 211 on May 7, indicating a three-fold increase in three weeks.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said considering the "rigour"

Court issues NBW against Olympian in murder case

SAURABH TRivedi

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday issued non-bailable warrants against Olympian Sushil Kumar and six others for failing to appear before it in a murder case of a wrestler at Chhatrasal Stadium in northwest Delhi, said a senior police officer.

He said they have held three suspects and impounded nine cars that were allegedly used by the accused during the crime. The role of suspects is yet to be identified. They have been questioned based on the evidence collected in the case and con-

Navneet Kalra fails to get protection from arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday refused to give any interim relief to the accused yet," the judge remarked. The court was hearing the arguments on the issue of jurisdiction on the anticipatory bail petition filed by the businessman in connection with the seizure of oxygen concentrators from his upscale restaurants, including 'Khan Chacha' in Khan Market.

Additional Sessions Judge Sumit Dass also placed his anticipatory bail before the District and Sessions Judge which will now decide which court will hear the plea on Wednesday. "Bail application placed before the District Judge South East at 10 a.m. tomorrow; they will send it to

the concerned court. There is no interim relief or any sort of protection to the accused yet," the judge remarked. The court was hearing the arguments on the issue of jurisdiction on the anticipatory bail petition filed by the businessman in connection with the seizure of oxygen concentrators from his upscale restaurants, including 'Khan Chacha' in Khan Market.

Public Prosecutor Atul Shrivastava said since the matter was transferred to the Crime Branch, the court has no jurisdiction to hear the matter.

Timings

DELHI

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12
RISE 05:33 SET 19:03
RISE 05:51 SET 19:38
THURSDAY, MAY 13
RISE 05:32 SET 19:04
RISE 06:27 SET 20:32
FRIDAY, MAY 14
RISE 05:32 SET 19:05
RISE 07:07 SET 21:28

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 41 24
Safdarjang 41 24
Palam 41 25

Delhi Palam Today
38°C A comfortable morning and hot day. A spells of thunderstorm and dust storm with rain likely at some places.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
36°C A spells of rain and thundershower likely with gusty strong winds at some places. Sky will be cloudy.

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THE HINDU

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IN BRIEF

Vaccine row: BJP accuses Sisodia of dirty politics

NEW DELHI
The BJP has accused Manish Sisodia of indulging in "dirty politics" over allegations that the Centre had brought States to a point where they needed to "fight each other" for vaccines.

Covaxin stock for 18-45 age group exhausted: govt.

125 vaccine centres shut, says Atishi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Tuesday said that the Capital had exhausted its Covaxin stock for those between 18-45 age group, and nearly 125 centres have been forced to shut down. For Covishield, it said that stock for three days was available for those in the 18-45 years category. For healthcare and front-line workers and those above 45 years, only five days stock is left of Covaxin, and four days of Covishield, it added.

AAP MLA Atishi delivering the "vaccination bulletin" said that 1,39,261 beneficiaries had been vaccinated on Monday which was the highest till date.

Talking about the shortage of vaccines, Ms. Atishi said: "If we are not supplied sufficient vaccine doses by the Centre, we will be forced, and will have no choice but to halt the vaccination programme. We have been informed that 2,67,690 doses of Covishield will be supplied to us by Tuesday evening by the Centre. If these are delivered to us, we will be able to inoculate those between 18-45 age group for the next 6 days." Of the 1,39,261 doses inoculated on Monday, first doses accounted for 92,926. Of these, 983 healthcare workers and 3,500 front-line workers got their first dose. Approximately 24,000 first doses were inoculated to those above 45 years and for those between 18-45 years, 64,000 first doses were administered. As many as 46,335 were administered second doses too. The total number of doses administered till date was 40,35,812, the MLA said.



If we are not supplied sufficient vaccine doses by the Centre, we will have no choice but to halt the vaccination programme

ATISHI
AAP MLA

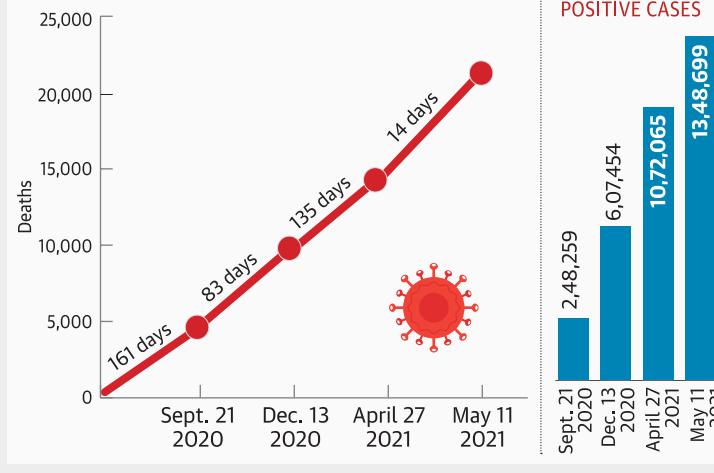
KILLER WAVE

First COVID-19 case in Delhi reported on: March 2, 2020
First COVID-19 death reported in Delhi on: March 13, 2020
45 year-old man with a travel history to Italy
68 year-old woman died at RML Hospital



Cremation of COVID-19 victims in progress at Nigambodh Ghat in Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

COVID-19 FATALITIES IN CITY CROSS 20K MARK



CUMULATIVE POSITIVE CASES

Source: DELHI GOVERNMENT

IGIA to suspend operations at T2 from May 18

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Indira Gandhi International Airport will temporarily suspend operations at Terminal 2 (T2) with effect from May 18 due to a drastic drop in passenger demand, a spokesperson said.

With this announcement, only Terminal 3 will be operational. Terminal 1 (T1) has remained shut ever since a two-month long ban on flight operations was imposed last year on March 25.

IndiGo and GoAir flights operating from T2 will be moved to T3. "The move will also help airlines and the airport to curtail staff deployment," according to the spokesperson.

THE HINDU

Air surcharge: Leh, Srinagar & onward — Rs. 5,00 and Kathmandu — Rs. 3,00.

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

500-bed facility attached to GTB to open today

The centre, slated to function from Tuesday, was delayed due to technical glitches

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 500-bed temporary facility for COVID-19 patients, which is attached to GTB Hospital, has not yet started admitting patients as work was going on inside the facility on Tuesday evening.

On Monday, Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said that it is "all set to start from Tuesday". "Due to some unavoidable technical glitches, the extended facility at GTB Hospital will be operational from tomorrow [Wednesday]. Team GTB is working day and night to ensure healthcare services are available to Delhiites,"



Nursing staff at the 500 ICU bed facility attached to GTB Hospital on Tuesday ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Mr. Jain said in a tweet on Tuesday evening.

Around 5 p.m. on Tuesday, work was still going on at different parts of the makeshift hospital, which has been created at Ramlila Ground next to GTB Hospital.

tal. "Since morning about 20 patients were brought here by family members, but we told them that the centre is yet to be opened for public," a guard said.

No social distancing

Also, there was a rush at the administration and accommodation area, where people who work at the centre were queuing to complete some procedure before leaving and there was no social distancing.

On Monday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that these beds will solve the scarcity of ICU beds in Delhi.

Allow more vaccine-making companies in India: CM to PM

'A national policy must be chalked out to vaccinate every one'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, requested the Centre to allow more companies in India to manufacture COVID-19 vaccination by directing the two companies currently engaged in manufacturing it to share the formula with others.

Mr. Kejriwal said the Centre should formulate a national policy to vaccinate every person within the next few months by increasing vaccine production, though the second wave is abating.

'End duopoly'

"Right now we are administering 1.25 lakh doses of vaccine every day. Soon we will start administering vaccines to more than 3 lakh people every day. But a major problem is the shortage of vaccines. We have only a few days of vaccine left in Delhi



Arvind Kejriwal ■

late a national policy to vaccinate every person within the next few months. Unless everyone is vaccinated, the battle cannot be won," he said.

"The Central government should take the formula for producing the vaccine from these two companies and give it to all those companies which can safely make the vaccines," he added.

In these difficult times, the Chief Minister said, the Centre had the power to execute this. It could make the vaccine-producing formula available to companies that want to make the vaccines.

"If you remember, when we faced the first wave, there was a shortage for PPE kits. Today, many Indian companies are making PPE kits. That is why we are not dependent on others. India houses some of the greatest industrialists and we have some of the biggest pharma companies in the world," he said.

and this problem is being faced countrywide," he also said.

He said only two companies are manufacturing the vaccines and, together, made only 6-7 crore vaccines per month. If things were to continue like this, vaccinating the entire country would take more than two years.

"Till then we don't even know how many [COVID] waves will come and how much destruction we will have to face. Thus we must increase the production of vaccines in India and formula with others.

Mr. Kejriwal said the Centre should formulate a national policy to vaccinate every person within the next few months by increasing vaccine production, though the second wave is abating.

"Right now we are administering 1.25 lakh doses of vaccine every day. Soon we will start administering vaccines to more than 3 lakh people every day. But a major problem is the shortage of vaccines. We have only a few days of vaccine left in Delhi

and this problem is being faced countrywide," he also said.

He said only two companies are manufacturing the vaccines and, together, made only 6-7 crore vaccines per month. If things were to continue like this, vaccinating the entire country would take more than two years.

"Till then we don't even know how many [COVID] waves will come and how much destruction we will have to face. Thus we must increase the production of vaccines in India and formula with others.

Mr. Kejriwal said the Centre should formulate a national policy to vaccinate every person within the next few months by increasing vaccine production, though the second wave is abating.

"Right now we are administering 1.25 lakh doses of vaccine every day. Soon we will start administering vaccines to more than 3 lakh people every day. But a major problem is the shortage of vaccines. We have only a few days of vaccine left in Delhi

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"Till then we don't even

IN BRIEF



Kunjukuttan enriched literature and cinema

KOZHIKODE
Madampu Kunjukuttan, who died in Thrissur on Tuesday aged 79, contributed greatly to Malayalam literature and cinema. He wrote novels like *Ashwathamavu* and *Bhrasht*, and penned the scripts of some fine films. He was also an actor, who dabbled mostly in character roles, despite making his debut as a hero. Madampu's second coming in cinema was facilitated by director Jayaraj. *Desadanam* was one of the biggest hits of 1996. Jayaraj and Madampu went on to work with some memorable films, including *Karunam*.

Kerala loses its firebrand woman leader

As a member of State's first Cabinet, K.R. Gouri piloted the land reforms Bill

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Legendary Marxist firebrand and former Minister K.R. Gouri, the lone woman member in Kerala's first Cabinet, died at a private hospital here on Tuesday. She was 102.

Ms. Gouri had been suffering from various age-related ailments for some time. The chief of the Janadhipathy Samakshana Samithi (JSS), Ms. Gouri breathed her last at 7 a.m. while undergoing treatment in the ICU.

Her mortal remains were consigned to flames with full State honours close to the final resting place of husband T.V. Thomas, Communist

leader P. Krishna Pillai and other revolutionaries near the Punnapra-Vayalar Martyrs' Memorial at Valiya Chudukkad here on Tuesday evening.

She was cremated in the presence of a small crowd consisting of her family members, leaders of the CPI (M), the CPI, the JSS and others.

In the morning, her mortal remains were brought to Ayyankali Hall in Thiruvananthapuram for public homage. Leaders cutting across political affiliations paid their last respects.

Prominent personalities, including Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Chief Minis-



K.R. GOURI 1919-2021

ter Pinarayi Vijayan, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac were among those who paid their last respects.

Ms. Gouri was born on July 14, 1919 into a wealth family as the seventh daughter of

K.A. Raman and Parvathi Amma at Pattanakkad in Alappuzha.

"I am just like any other common woman. I don't have the diplomatic flexibility of seasoned politicians. I am very straightforward in talking my mind and work-

ing it out the same way, with no holds barred. My rough nature has created a lot of friends and foes for me. There are a lot of people who hate me and love me due to my nature," wrote Ms. Gouri in her autobiography *K.R. Gouri Amma*.

One of the longest-serving members in the Kerala Assembly, Ms. Gouri, as Revenue Minister in the first Communist Ministry in 1957, piloted the historic land reforms Bill, which heralded the end of feudalism in Kerala.

The political history of Kerala and the Communist movement cannot be complete without Gouri Amma or Kunjamma, as she is fondly called by the masses.

(With inputs from Alappuzha bureau)

High test positivity, a challenge

Lockdown-bound Kerala, Karnataka reckon with 26% and 33%; 108 dead in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala's COVID-19 cases appeared to maintain a slowing pattern, but the test positivity rate (TPR) stayed over 25%.

The State registered 37,290 new cases on Tuesday after testing 1,99,748 samples. The TPR of 27.28% over three days registered 26.77%. Active cases climbed to 4,23,957 cases after a small drop.

Hospitalisations continued to rise and patients in hospitals rose to 34,149 with 4,007 persons admitted on Tuesday.

ICU admissions rose with another 46 cases. A total of 2,687 persons were occupying ICUs and 1,400 were on ventilator support. There were 79 more deaths added to the State's COVID toll.

Thiruvananthapuram re-



Precarious situation: A woman waiting to get admitted to a hospital at Anantapur in A.P. on Monday. ■ R.V.S. PRASAD

ported 35 deaths, mainly from May 7 to 9, Thirissur reported 11, Palakkad and Kannur 10 each, Kozhikode six and Kollam five deaths.

A total of 9,59,164 persons were on home or institutional isolation. Ernakulam had the highest active cases with 65,283 patients, while Thiruvananthapuram had 39,705 cases and 4,976 hospitalised

patients.

Karnataka on Tuesday reported 39,510 new cases, taking the total to 20,13,193. Of these, 15,879 were from Bengaluru Urban. With 480 deaths, the toll rose to 19,852. The State had 5,87,452 active patients. The TPR stood at 33.99%.

Daily tests stood at 1,16,238, including 1,04,659 cases and 4,976 hospitalised

RT-PCR tests. Andhra Pradesh reported 108 new deaths, the highest single-day toll, on Tuesday. There were 20,345 infections. Active cases stood at 1,95,102. The TPR of 86,878 samples was 23.42%.

In Telangana, Tuesday's incidence was 4,801 cases and there were 32 deaths, taking the infection tally and toll to 5,06,988 and 2,803, respectively.

A total of 298 persons died of COVID-19 in Tamil Nadu, with Chennai alone accounting for 92 deaths. The State reported 29,272 fresh cases on Tuesday, taking its overall tally to 14,38,509.

With 7,466 fresh cases, Chennai's overall tally surpassed the four lakh-mark.

(With inputs from Bengaluru, Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Chennai bureaus)

Hospital deaths: ₹10 lakh ex gratia to kin, says Jagan

11 died due to inadequate oxygen supply

STAFF REPORTER
GUNTUR

Expressing shock over the death of 11 patients at the SVRR COVID Hospital in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday ordered an ex gratia of ₹10 lakh to be paid to the kin of those who died reportedly due to the inadequate supply of oxygen.

During the weekly Span-dana review with Collectors, Mr. Jagan said, "These are difficult times and even yesterday, we had to airlift six empty oxygen tankers to Odisha, get them filled and bring them back to Gannavaram. These are the times we are living in and even while we are putting consolidated efforts, some things are not in our hands."

"These are testing times

'Eight deaths not due to lack of oxygen supply'

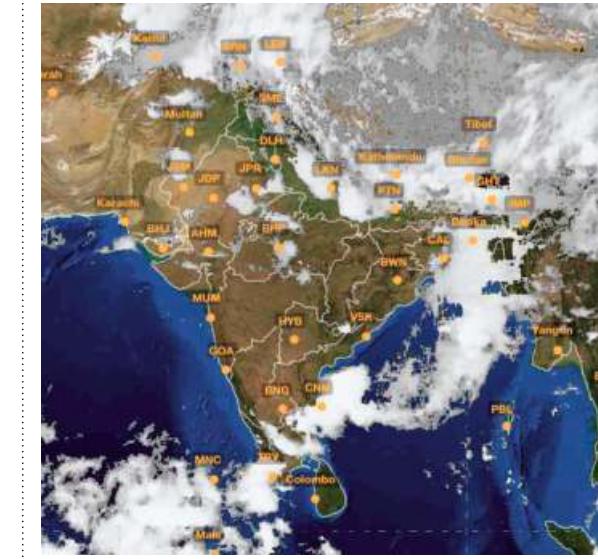
HYDERABAD
Authorities of the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) have denied the allegations that the death of eight COVID-19 patients were reportedly due to the lack of oxygen supply. It was reported that eight patients in the intensive care unit (ICU) at TIMS died on Sunday night. Top officials denied the allegations and said the liquid oxygen tank at the institute had enough of the resource.

and I request the Collectors not to get disheartened and be more vigilant and be more humane," the Chief Minister said.

"We should address these issues in a much more sympathetic manner," Mr. Reddy added.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, coastal Karnataka and Kerala. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Rayalaseema, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Lakshadweep

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	19.1	33.0	20.0	Kozhikode	4...35...	26.4	
Ahmedabad	—	41.1	27.2	Kurnool	—	38.3	30.2
Aizawl	—	26.6	14.9	Lucknow	—	38.0	25.6
Allahabad	—	39.2	25.8	Madurai	—	39.6	26.8
Bengaluru	—	33.9	23.3	Mangalore	0.5	31.7	25.4
Bhopal	—	40.8	24.0	Mumbai	—	34.1	27.2
Bhubaneswar	16.9	36.1	27.4	Mysuru	—	35.1	21.5
Chandigarh	—	35.0	24.0	New Delhi	0.2	34.0	24.2
Chennai	—	37.7	28.1	Patna	—	34.4	22.8
Coimbatore	—	36.3	25.8	Port Blair	1...	33.1	25.5
Dehradun	—	35.2	21.1	Puducherry	—	36.8	26.6
Gangtok	—	18.1	12.5	Pune	—	37.7	23.1
Goa	—	35.6	27.5	Raipur	18.8	35.0	24.2
Guwahati	2...	31.5	21.6	Ranchi	1...	32.2	22.4
Hubballi	—	31.0	24.0	Shillong	2.5	22.7	13.8
Hyderabad	—	38.9	29.1	Shimla	—	25.9	16.3
Imphal	11...	28.1	18.4	Srinagar	3.3	18.8	12.6
Jaipur	—	37.0	25.8	Thiruvananthapuram	27.5	32.5	25.2
Kochi	6.2	32.2	25.6	Tiruchi	—	40.0	27.4
Kohima	—	23.0	13.2	Vijayawada	—	39.0	27.6
Kolkata	—	34.7	26.8	Visakhapatnam	—	36.6	27.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES SO NO CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Thane, Maharashtra recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 258 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 12

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

Amid paucity, State to divert doses meant for 18+ towards second shot

Rajesh Tope urges Centre to expedite approval for other foreign COVID-19 vaccines

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Facing an acute shortage of COVID-19 vaccines and with the Centre unable to deliver Covaxin, the Maharashtra government will now use doses it purchased for the 18-44 age group towards the second dose for those above 45 years.

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Tuesday said that over five lakh individuals in the State were waiting for the second dose of Covaxin. "We have only 35,000 doses remaining, which were delivered by the Central government for those above 45 years. So, we have issued directions to use over 2.75 lakh Covaxin shots purchased by the State government for the 18-44 age group for the second dose," he said.

As per the Central government's vaccine policy, it will



Staying protected: A woman takes a selfie as a health worker administers the COVID-19 jab at a vaccination centre in Mumbai on Tuesday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

provide doses for citizens above 45 years while the State needs to procure shots for the 18-44 age group.

Mr. Tope said that the State was also awaiting the Centre's delivery of Covishield as over 16 lakh citizens were due for their second dose. "On Monday, I had a

detailed discussion with the Union Health Minister. But he conveyed that no doses of COVID-19 vaccines were available. Therefore, we will have to take a decision on using Covishield doses purchased by the State for those above 45 years," he said.

The Health Minister said

the Maharashtra government had written to Russian Direct Investment Fund, which sponsors Sputnik V, but it had received no response as of now. "I urge the Centre to speed up the process of granting sanction to other COVID-19 vaccines so that we can buy them from the global market," he said.

Mr. Tope also said that patients infected with Mucormycosis (also known as black fungus) had been found in many districts. "We have said that the government will take the financial burden of treating this disease under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya scheme. It requires a multi-approach treatment and may not be available in all hospitals. We are in the process to expand the scope by including costly medicines in the scheme," he said.

The Health Minister said

IMD warns of cyclonic storm

Maharashtra puts off transfers till June 30

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast this year's first storm in the Arabian Sea this week.

A warning of rough sea conditions, which is expected to develop starting Thursday, has been issued and fishermen from the coastal States have been advised against venturing into the sea from Friday. "A



A matter of concern

New variants do not always merit changes in public health response, but keep people alert

The Indian variant, B.1.617 and its family of related coronaviruses have been categorised as a Variant of Concern (VOC) by WHO, a classification which will now prompt greater international scrutiny of those who test positive overseas. While there are several so-called 'variants of interest', only three, other than the B.1.617, have been categorised as VOC – the U.K. variant (B.1.1.7), the South Africa variant (B.1.351) and the Brazilian variant (P2). Usually, in countries that detect emergent variants, it is the health authorities there who flag them as potential VOC. To qualify as one, the identified variant must be linked to increased transmission or be associated with more severe disease or found to be evading detection by diagnostic tests. Concerns that the B.1.617 may be playing a role in disease spread in India were expressed by scientists by mid-March. The INSACOG, or the Indian SARS-CoV2 Genomic Consortium, had flagged a variant with two concerning mutations, E484Q and L452R, that separately had been found in other variants elsewhere. INSACOG said they now seemed to appear together on a variant that was linked to a large fraction of cases in Maharashtra and began to be called 'double mutant' or even 'triple mutant' (as it also had another important mutation, P614R).

In March nearly 20% of the cases out of Maharashtra, which has consistently been among the most afflicted States, were being linked to the variant. However, it was in early April that this variant became formally classified as a lineage, B.1.617. It was only after the U.K.'s labelling it as a VOC that it was called so by health authorities in India. In fact, unlike the United States's CDC or Public Health England, India still does not have a classification criterion for labelling viruses as variants of interest, or concern. Classifying variants is not just a matter of mere academic interest. Based on the prevalence, some variants may go on to become the dominant strain in a region or multiple geographies. It then becomes the responsibility of vaccine companies to check whether their vaccines continue to be effective. Such studies have already begun in India, but while laboratory studies show that vaccines continue to be effective, some of the emerging variants do seem to be better at evading antibodies. Along with monitoring reinfections and cases of breakthrough infections (testing positive after being double inoculated), flagging variants must be seen as a crucial health response. Detecting newer variants does not always merit radical changes in public health response – such as masking up – but they go a long way in reminding people to continue being alert, viewing vaccines as an important defence but not a magic pill, and keeping health authorities on their toes.

Losing trust

Despite Mr. Oli's loss, Nepal's Opposition is still divided over an alternative government

Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's loss of a trust vote in Parliament on Monday comes at a particularly crucial time. The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only ravaged India but has also begun to affect its landlocked neighbour Nepal, leaving citizens reeling under oxygen shortages, spikes in the daily case load, and fatalities. Political instability is the last thing Nepal needs now, but the trust vote did little to resolve the issue of who will take over the role of leading the government. Mr. Oli won just 93 votes in the 271-strong House of Representatives where only 232 turned up to vote, with 124 voting against him and 15 members staying neutral. The leading party in the Opposition, the Nepali Congress (NC) led by Sher Bahadur Deuba, with 61 members voted against Mr. Oli along with the Pushpa Kumar Dahal-led Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre) with 49 votes. The Maoists had just recently de-merged from the Nepal Communist Party after a Supreme Court ruling de-recognised its merger with Mr. Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). Mr. Oli could not command the full support of his own party as the 28 legislator-strong Madhav Kumar Nepal-Jhalanath Khanal-led faction within the UML decided to remain absent from the House. Mr. Nepal had taken up the cudgels against Mr. Oli in the unified NCP along with Mr. Dahal, and had opposed Mr. Oli's decision to dissolve Parliament – a move which was also struck down by the Supreme Court.

Even more intriguing was the vertical split in another Opposition party, the Janata Samajwadi Party-Nepal (JSP) – the 15-member Baburam Bhattarai-Uppendra Yadav faction voted against Mr. Oli while the 15-member Mahantha Thakur-Rajendra Mahato-led group decided to stay neutral. While Mr. Bhattarai and Mr. Yadav have taken a clear ideological position in line with their stated goal of a federally restructured Nepali state favourable to the plain-dwelling Madhesis – something that Mr. Oli had steadfastly opposed – the other faction is inclined to support Mr. Oli in order to wrest concessions for the Madhesis. The net effect of the trust vote was a loss of face for Prime Minister Oli, and yet it is not clear if an alternative government can be formed by the Opposition as things stand. Mr. Deuba enjoys support from the Maoists and the Bhattarai-Yadav faction of the JSP but it remains to be seen whether the Nepal-Khanal faction will decide to resign from Parliament to enable a victory for the NC. Nepal's political class has been, more often than not, caught up in political tugs of war with frequent changes in regimes despite the people reposing their faith in democratic institutions through two "jan andolans" – the first removing absolute monarchy, and the second enabling a constitutional republic. At least now, when Nepal faces the onslaught of the novel coronavirus, the polity must rise to the occasion and work towards an alternative stable regime.

COVID mishandling foretold in the Budget

That the government did not come up with a detailed 'COVID-19 Emergency' Budget for the year 2021-22 is telling



PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

India has begun medically safeguarding not only her own citizens against COVID-19 but also those of 100 or more countries. I have provided ₹35,000 crores for Covid-19 vaccine in BE 2021-22...," was the bombastic claim made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech to the nation on February 1, 2021 (<https://bit.ly/33yHVAw>).

Ms. Sitharaman assured the nation that her government at the Centre was protecting not only Indians but also people of other countries against COVID-19 and that she had provided enough money. She also boasted that the overall Budget for health had been increased substantially and pointed to details in Annexure I of the Budget speech. In Annexure I, a table under 'Health and Wellbeing - Expenditure' lists ₹35,000 crore for 'Vaccination' under 'COVID-relevant Special Provisions'.

Zero amount

Logically, when the Finance Minister says that the Budget for 'Health and Wellbeing' is being expanded significantly, one would expect to see these details in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Budget. Page 155 of the 350 page 'Notes on Demands for Grants' lists the Health Ministry's Budget details for the year 2021-22. Item No.19 is clearly titled 'Covid-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness', which lists

an expenditure of ₹11,757 crore that was incurred in the previous year (2020-21) by the Centre in its fight against COVID-19.

But for the current year 2021-22, the amount budgeted for 'Covid-19 Emergency Response' is zero. One then ponders, wondering whether for some reason, COVID-related Budget provisions have been made under another expenditure item in the Ministry's Budget this year.

The answer is 'No'. It is a matter of alarm that there is no provision in the entire Ministry of Health's 2021-22 Budget for COVID-19 vaccinations and other related expenditure. Moreover, the Health Ministry's Budget for this year is lower than the amount spent last year when more money was needed to defeat the novel coronavirus this year. It turns out that ₹35,000 crore for COVID-19 vaccination has been allocated as "Loans/Grants to States" in the Budget of the Ministry of Finance.

Does this mean that when Ms. Sitharaman and the government sat down to prepare the Budget earlier this year, they did not think the Centre had any role to play in vaccination? Did they think that COVID-19 would just disappear providentially and that there was no money required this year for health supplies, infrastructure, and other expenses under the Health Ministry's 'Covid-19 Emergency Response package'? On what basis then did the Finance Minister say that her government would not only "safeguard" Indians but also the citizens of 100 or more other countries?

After this writer pointed this out first in a tweet, the Finance Minister gave a long and a bureaucratic response about how even if the vaccination amount is not budgeted under the Health Ministry, the Centre chose to intervene and dictate an irrational vaccination pricing policy that has a lower price for the Centre and a higher price for the States for the exact same vaccine?



ed under the Health Ministry, the Centre could still use the money to procure vaccines and give it as an 'in-kind' grant to the States. This misses the point.

This is not a squabble about the technical details of budgeting for activities under different heads. This is about the intent, thought and actions of the Narendra Modi government in the middle of a national health emergency. Either the government was callous about the nation's continued fight against COVID-19, or wanted to abdicate responsibility to the States entirely. If not, it would have made a meticulously detailed 'Covid-19 Emergency' Budget for the year 2021-22.

More questions

It is also justifiable to say that public health is a State subject, vaccination is the responsibility of the States, and hence, COVID-19 vaccination money should rightfully be given only to the States and not to the Health Ministry at the Centre.

In which case, the States should also be given the full rights to decide and implement a COVID-19 health policy.

How is it then that the Centre chose to intervene and dictate an irrational vaccination pricing policy that has a lower price for the Centre and a higher price for the States for the exact same vaccine?

If at the time of the Budget, the Finance Minister thought COVID-19 vaccination money was fungible and could be used either by the Centre or the States, then how does it square with the fact that with the same money, the Narendra Modi government would buy vaccines at a lower cost to vaccinate Indians above the age of 45 while the States would buy the same vaccines at a higher price for all others?

Vaccine is public good

It is amply evident that the Finance Minister and her government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic is like a deer caught in the headlights. The thought behind the Budget for COVID-19 is at odds with its health policies for COVID-19. A knee-jerk and confused vaccination policy, with varying price structures and quotas for the Centre, States and private hospitals for the same vaccine, has made a royal mess of India's vaccination efforts. The basic economic principle that a COVID-19 vaccine is an essential public good and not a private good like flight tickets to be priced differently for everyone, seems to have been lost on the government's policy makers. It has now put the lives of a billion Indians and India's \$3 trillion economy at risk.

Earlier in January this year, it was crystal clear that India would need to vaccinate the vast majority of its people to put an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also well-established then that there were at least two vaccines available in India and more could be imported, as the Finance Minister herself alluded to in the Budget speech. The approximate costs for these vaccines were also known. Presumably, the Finance Minister

and her team also knew the size of India's population, and that they should multiply the costs of the vaccines with the total number of people to calculate the total amount needed for vaccinations.

Then, all that the government needed to do was to explicitly budget for the vaccination amount and other attendant costs in this final battle against the virus. The Health Ministry should have negotiated one standard price for each type of vaccine and procured them directly. After this, the vaccines should have been distributed to the States to set up vaccination camps and vaccinate people. All this was blindingly obvious even in January before the Budget was prepared. Lives and livelihoods were at stake. Instead, the Finance Minister resorted to headline and narrative management using half-truths and misleading claims.

Ineptitude

Is the Narendra Modi government so incompetent and reckless that even after five months, and after lakhs of lives have gone and billions of dollars lost in economic output it is still struggling to come up with a coherent vaccination policy and save Indians from this deadly pandemic? Alas, the answer is a yes. Let us not forget that it is the same Prime Minister and his government who thought that invalidating all currency overnight, in 2016, would magically eliminate black money or locking down the entire nation last year at just four hours notice would defeat the coronavirus as quickly as 'the Pandavas won the Mahabharata war'.

Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and Chairman, Data Analytics department of the Congress party

Evaluate the Ladakh crisis, keep China at bay

A critical assessment of the stand-off offers New Delhi key lessons in managing the strategic competition with China



ARZAN TARAPORE

After over a year, the stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh shows no signs of resolution. Disengagement has stalled, China continues to reinforce its troops, and talks have been fruitless.

More broadly, the India-China bilateral relationship has ruptured. Political relations are marked by hostility and distrust. Reversing a long-held policy, New Delhi will no longer overlook the problematic border dispute for the sake of a potentially lucrative wider relationship; now, as India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has made clear, the relationship is conditional on quietude on the border.

Even if – a big if – disengagement continues, the relationship will remain vulnerable to destabilising disruptions. On the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and beyond, India's military and political leaders will need to learn the right lessons from Ladakh, to ensure they are better postured to meet the challenge of Chinese coercion.

Study and findings

In a recent study published by the Lowy Institute (<https://bit.ly/33ApECB>) – 'The crisis after the crisis: how Ladakh will shape

India's competition with China' – this writer has argued that the Ladakh crisis offers New Delhi three key lessons in managing the intensifying strategic competition with China.

Revamping strategies

First, military strategies based on denial are more useful than strategies based on punishment. The Indian military's standing doctrine calls for deterring adversaries with the threat of massive punitive retaliation for any aggression, capturing enemy territory as bargaining leverage in post-war talks. But this did not deter China from launching unprecedented incursions in May 2020, and the threat lost credibility when retaliation never materialised.

In contrast, the Indian military's high-water mark in the crisis was an act of denial – its occupation of the heights on the Kailash Range on its side of the LAC in late August. This action served to deny that key terrain to the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), and gave the Indian Army a stronger defensive position from which it could credibly defend a larger segment of its front line.

A doctrinal focus on denial will give the Indian military greater capacity to thwart future land grabs across the LAC. By bolstering India's defensive position, rather than launching an escalatory response, such a strategy is also more likely than punishment to preserve crisis stability. Over time, improved denial capabilities may allow India to reduce the resource



drain of the increased militarisation of the LAC.

Individual powers, even large powers such as India, will probably struggle to shift Beijing's calculus alone. To the extent that China adjusted its position in the Ladakh crisis, it did so because it was responding to the cumulative effect of multiple pressure points – most of which were out of India's control. Against the rising behemoth, only coordinated or collective action is likely to be effective.

Indian Ocean Region is key

The second key lesson of Ladakh is that China is more likely to be deterred or coerced with the threat of political costs, rather than material costs. Admittedly, the Chinese military's deployment to the LAC was also large and extremely expensive. But China's defence budget is three to four times larger than India's (<https://bit.ly/3ydmVgK>), and its Western Theatre Command boasts over 200,000 soldiers (<https://bit.ly/3bhOKW9>). The material burden of the crisis would not disrupt its existing priorities.

In

contrast, India successfully raised the risks of the crisis for China through its threat of a political rupture, not military punishment. A permanently hostile India or an accidental escalation to conflict were risks that China, having achieved its tactical goals in the crisis, assessed were an unnecessary additional burden while it was contending with the instability of its territorial disputes and pandemic response.

The corollary lesson is that India

have to make tough-minded strategic trade-offs, deliberately prioritising military modernisation and joint force projection over ground-centric combat arms formations required to defend territory.

This will be a politically formidable task – blood has now been spilled on the LAC, and for domestic political reasons, India cannot be seen to be passive on the border.

Rebalancing India's strategic priorities will require the central government, through the Chief of Defence Staff, to issue firm strategic guidance to the military services.

This response will be a test not only of the government's strategic sense and far-sightedness, but also of the ability of the national security apparatus to overcome entrenched bureaucratic and organisational-cultural biases.

As these three lessons show, the future of the strategic competition is not yet written. Thus far, India has suffered unequal strategic costs from the Ladakh crisis. Chinese troops continue to camp on previously Indian-controlled land, and worse, India may jeopardise its long-term leverage in the more consequential Indian Ocean Region. But if India's leaders honestly and critically evaluate the crisis, it may yet help to actually brace India's long-term position against China.

Arzan Tarapore is the South Asia Research Scholar at the Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University, and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the National Bureau of Asian Research

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

More horror

The news report (Page 1, May 11), of the bodies of suspected COVID-19 victims being found in the Ganga in Bihar, was horrifying. The reason given, that the poor may have resorted to this because of the exorbitant costs of cremation, made the report even more disturbing. This has happened at a time when the Union Government, especially the Prime Minister, has focused on conserving the river and in arresting its pollution, and has spent crores of rupees in trying to make this happen. The governments concerned have failed.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

■ It is distressing that the reason of funeral expenses

may be a factor. It must have been traumatic for the families to have done this after the stress of having been unable to save their loved ones in hospital. A crucial issue in all this is the cost of polluting a water body used by many others. Those who lost their lives deserve their last rites to be conducted with dignity and the State government ought to help the families.

J. EDEN ALEXANDER,
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

■ Apart from the disrespect to the departed souls, the contamination of the river is what terrifies me. It was in Jules Verne's novel, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, that one has read graphic descriptions of floating bodies of Indians. The novel was written in

1870, but to read, in 2021, about floating bodies of our fellow citizens along with graphic details is unimaginable and harrowing.

SUKUMARAN C.V.,
Palakkad, Kerala

■ The report exposes the lack of planning and a mishandling of the pandemic situation by the State administration concerned. The poor in particular are suffering a great deal and the authorities must lend them a helping hand. It is incidents such as these that are a test of the 'development' that State administrations are quick to boast about.

SALI GEORGE,
Udupi, Karnataka

■ The pandemic has exposed to the world the extent of the

poor state of many of India's systems. And there is only one answer from the government to all COVID-19-related questions: we never expected such large-scale devastation. The people are paying a heavy price for the way the government is handling the crisis.

Launching satellites at frequent intervals alone will not make a country technology-driven. There is no dearth of money for wrong priorities such as building statues and grand projects in the heart of Delhi. But there is no money for a free universal vaccine programme! In contrast to this are images of people gasping and fading away for want of hospital beds and oxygen. When the PM CARES Fund is reported to be flush with funds, one wonders

why we are not using the money to avert horrors as described in the report.

GIRISH RAMACHANDRAN,
Edathitta, Pathanamthitta, Kerala

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Not all crises are opportunities for reforms

The call for reforms today leaves out the stakeholders, which might undermine the very purpose of reforms



M. SURESH BABU

This year marks 30 years of the landmark economic reforms that permanently altered the production and distribution structures of the Indian economy. Swayed by the success of the 1991 reforms, albeit, at the macroeconomic level, there has been a growing clamour from economic commentators for some more doses of reforms in 2021. Both 1991 and 2021 have one thing in common: an economy facing a severe growth crisis. This raises two fundamental questions. First, is crisis a prerequisite for reforms? Second, given the magnitude of economic contraction, in 2021, are reforms capable of rejuvenating the economy or will they push the economy towards growth fatigue?

Crises and reforms

It is not very common to depart from initiating incremental policy changes to making fundamental shifts in economic policy. Big-bang policy reforms often face hurdles in terms of rules and routines. Overcoming these requires effort and conviction. Crises provide opportunities for radical changes as they break down the legitimacy of existing policy approaches. Crises thus create a space for new proposals and possibilities, which could have far-reaching consequences for the economy and society. Viewed from a sectoral perspective, during a crisis, the services delivered by some sectors do not meet societal expectations, which in turn sets the stage for institutional reforms to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of those sectors. For the policymaker, crises can generate increased demand for change and that could be the opportunity for which they would have been waiting. However, not all crises create conditions for widespread acceptance of reforms, as they could generate other by-products. Thus, to posit a linear causal relationship between crises and reforms could be erroneous.

Crises cause the breakdown of es-



Migrant workers from Odisha on their way to the railway station during the curfew hours in Visakhapatnam on May 7, 2021. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

tablished structures leading to instability. They create uncertainty as the prevailing behaviour and choices of actors change. This combination of uncertainty and instability sets the stage for a reorientation of policies, packaged and delivered under the banner of reforms. The argument for converting a crisis into an opportunity to reform arises due to three factors. First, during a crisis, group relations and modes of interactions change, which sets a suitable background for change. Second, at times of crises, authority replaces rules, which makes it easier to push the polices in a short time span. Third, during periods of crisis, the legitimacy of prevailing rules and routines diminish, which makes it easier for actors to depart from them.

2021 is not 1991

The character and consequences of the crisis of 1991 and 2021 are different. In 1991, the crisis of the economy was the product of endogenous factors, that is, factors which were operating within the economic system. The crisis of 2021 is different, as it is the product of a pandemic, which is exogenous to the economic system. The cause-and-effect relations are entirely different in the latter, as the cause originates from outside the economic system and the economy is forced to adjust to this

external shock. Further, in 1991, the crisis was limited to the Indian economy, while the present calamity has engulfed most global economies with varying intensities. This makes policy responses very challenging. In the former case, we could have India-specific policies, assuming that there would not be drastic changes in the rest of the world, while in the latter case, India-specific policies will have to be tempered with the dynamics of the rest of the world, as all affected economies are formulating policy responses at the same time.

The availability of a semi-fixed template for reforms eased the matter in 1991. The template, which had some generic measures for all the economies experiencing external sector imbalances, was a tried and tested one. This gave policymakers some headroom to anticipate the likely consequences in the post-implementation phase.

Two uncertainties

However, in 2021, the challenge is to evolve a country-specific package. Two uncertainties pose serious problems in charting such a set of measures. The first is the uncertainty with regard to the government's own revenues which would limit the policy space for interventions. Expenditure reduction is not a viable strategy for expanding the scale and scope of

policies in a situation of demand contraction due to the pandemic. The second is the unpredictability of global factors, as India's dependence on the global economy increased manifold after the 1991 reforms. Both these have the potential to jeopardise the effective implementation of strategic changes.

The magnitude and intensity of the crisis of 2021 is manifold compared to that of 1991. There is also a lag effect in the unravelling of the scale and extent of the crisis, which is surfacing slowly. To highlight this point, I use only one piece of empirical data. In its recent research report, Pew Research Center observes that a large section of India's population would be pushed into poverty as a fallout of the economic crisis driven by the novel coronavirus. To quote: "...the number of people who are poor in India (with incomes of \$2 or less a day) is estimated to have increased by 75 million because of the COVID-19 recession. This, too, accounts for nearly 60% of the global increase in poverty. Perhaps not surprisingly, media reports from India point to a spike in participation in its rural employment programme - originally intended to combat poverty in agricultural areas - as the many who have lost jobs in the reeling economy seek work. The number now participating is setting record highs in the programme's 14-year history". The enormity of the crisis is appropriately captured in the research cited above, which throws light on the circumstances of 2021 and its non-suitability as a year for radical reforms.

All crises do not inevitably lead to possibilities for reforms, even though some do create opportunities for fundamental changes. However, to gauge whether a crisis can be turned into an opportunity for reforms requires an in-depth understanding of the factors that led to the crisis. Further, all the three clusters of actors who are crucial agents in the policy process - political leaders, policymakers and implementers, and the relevant stakeholders - need to have a shared vision. In 2021, the call for reforms leaves out the stakeholders, which might undermine the very purpose of reforms itself.

M. Suresh Babu is professor of economics at IIT Madras. Views expressed are personal

Bengal and what it means for BJP

The party's further rise will depend on its politics and the Trinamool's functioning post-Mamata

SHAIKH MUJIBUR REHMAN

The results of the West Bengal Assembly elections can be seen broadly in two ways. It shows the failure of the Modi-Shah-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in defeating the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress. Yet, the performance of the BJP is remarkable - it has increased its seat share from three in 2016 to 77 in 2021. In some ways, this increase is reminiscent of the BJP's electoral journey at the national level from two seats in 1984 to 85 seats in 1989, accomplished through the Ayodhya movement. In West Bengal, the BJP has accomplished this task mainly through a polarised campaign in religious terms. From 1989 to 2014, it took nearly 25 years for the BJP to win a single-party majority in the Lok Sabha elections; however, that might not be its experience in West Bengal. In the wake of the decimation of the Left and the Congress, the possibility for the BJP to become West Bengal's ruling party depends on how the Trinamool is going to govern in a bipolar polity. Make no mistake: the BJP is the only national party that enjoys a special advantage and its hunger to expand is far more acute compared to the Congress's when the latter had an identical or even better national profile.

A force to reckon with

It is often argued that the BJP was an insignificant force with only two seats in the 1984 parliamentary election. However, what is overlooked is the fact that it received 7.74 % votes in 1984, which is more than the total vote share of the CPI (M) and the CPI in 2004, which was 7.07%. Interestingly, the Left parties had 53 seats in Parliament with that vote share and played a key role in the United Progressive Alliance-I regime. This means that the BJP was not as insignificant in 1984 as is portrayed in scholarly literature. Moreover, its vote share could have been greater than what it had received if not for the abnormal nature of the 1984 election, held after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Nonetheless, the BJP began to build on this limited social base with great so-

phistication, often with the active support of leaders such as Ms. Banerjee and Farooq Abdullah as National Democratic Alliance partners.

Election strategist Prashant Kishor remarked that a party can best secure 50%-55% of the votes through polarisation. One is not certain if this is true of all cases and States. Take Gujarat, for example, where polarisation certainly brought in more than 50% of the votes in one election, making it a paradigmatic case of the politics of polarisation in Indian electoral history. Consequently, that has helped the BJP return to power election after election. According to the 2011 Census, the Muslim population is 27% in West Bengal, but in Assam, it is 34.2%. Yet, the BJP was able to defeat the Congress-led Grand Alliance in Assam. It is another matter that former Congressman Himanta Biswa Sarma played a crucial role in scripting the Congress's defeat, which speaks volumes of the kind of Congress leaders who were once building secular India. Therefore, what has worked for the Trinamool in 2021 may not work forever. This leaves vast opportunity structures for the BJP to expand.

Inflection point

In the present Assembly, the gap in seats between the Trinamool and the BJP is 136. This makes the Mamata government immune to the experiments that the BJP conducted in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka to capture power. But the long-term future of the BJP partly also depends on how the Trinamool is going to shape itself in the post-Mamata period. If the Trinamool chooses to remain a populist party and becomes a dynasty party, it will become more vulnerable. It could still remain a contender like the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu or the Samajwadi Party in U.P. But if it chooses to institutionalise and create opportunities for bright leaders like Mahua Moitra, there is a fair chance that the party can have a future beyond Bengal.

Shaikh Mujibur Rehman teaches at Jamia Millia Central University and is the author of the forthcoming book titled, Shiksha-e-Hind: The Political Future of Indian Muslims



DATA POINT

Vaccination pace at record low

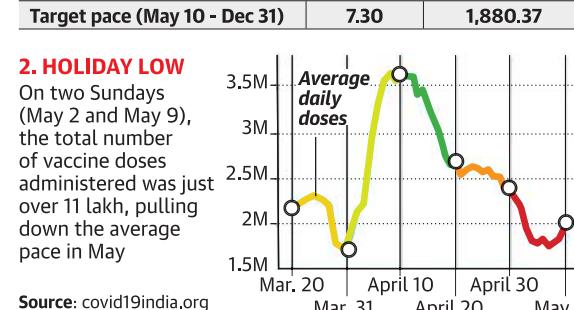
Despite opening up COVID-19 vaccination for all adults from May 1, the average number of doses administered in India dropped to very low levels this month. In the first 10 days of May, only 1.7 million doses were administered per day on average, lower than the 2.4 million doses administered in the previous 10-day period. If India is aiming to vaccinate all adults (940 million people*2 doses) by the end of 2021, the average daily dose has to increase to at least 7.3 million, four times the current rate. The high reduction in daily average doses administered in Maharashtra, Telangana, A.P., Karnataka and West Bengal led to the massive drop in India's pace. By Sumant Sen and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

1. DEGREE OF DROP | From May 1 to 10, 1.77 million doses were administered daily on average in India compared to the 2.48 million doses administered between April 21 and 30. At the current pace, India will be able to administer 316 million doses by July 31, which is about 184 million doses lower than the target (upper bound) of 500 million

Phases	Doses/day (mn)	Target achieved by July 31 (mn)
Phase 1 pace (Jan 16 - Feb 27)	0.33	65.52
Phase 2 pace (Mar 1 - Mar 10)	1.14	188.47
Phase 2 pace (Mar 11 - Mar 20)	1.89	296.22
Phase 2 pace (Mar 21 - Mar 30)	1.85	290.00
Phase 3 pace (Apr 1 - Apr 10)	3.65	510.14
Phase 3 pace (Apr 11 - Apr 20)	2.85	421.07
Phase 3 pace (Apr 21 - Apr 30)	2.49	383.80
Phase 4 pace (May 1 - May 10)	1.77	316.25
Target pace (May 10 - July 31)	4.04	500.00
Target pace (May 10 - Dec 31)	7.30	1,880.37

2. HOLIDAY LOW

On two Sundays (May 2 and May 9), the total number of vaccine doses administered was just over 11 lakh, putting down the average pace in May



Source: covid19india.org

How to adopt a child legally

During a crisis, an outreach programme must warn everyone not to entertain any illegal adoption offers



ANIL MALHOTRA

adopted. Any person or organisation offering or receiving such children for adoption in violation of the Juvenile Justice Act and the Adoption Regulations invites punishment up to three years and a fine of ₹1 lakh, or both.

Following procedure

The eligibility of prospective adoptive parents living in India, duly registered on the Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System (CARINGS), irrespective of marital status and religion, is adjudged by specialised adoption agencies preparing home study reports. Upon approval, as per seniority in the adoption list, prospective children are offered and pre-adoption foster care follows. The specialised adoption agency then secures court orders approving the adoption. All non-resident persons approach authorised adoption agencies in their foreign country of residence for registration under CARINGS. Their eligibility is adjudged by authorised foreign adoption agencies through home study reports. As per seniority, they are offered profiles of children and child study reports are finalised. CARA then issues a pre-adoption 'no objection' certificate for foster care, followed by a court adoption order. A final 'no objection' certificate from CARA or a conformity certificate under the adoption convention is mandatory for a passport and visa to leave India.

Not many know this. CARA must conduct an outreach programme on social media, newspapers and TV, warning everyone not to entertain any illegal adoption offers under any circumstances whatsoever. The legal process of adoption must be adequately publicised. The National and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights must step up their roles as vigilantes, as they are empowered by law to take effective action against those engaging in illegal activities. Social activists, NGOs and enlightened individuals must report all the incidents that come to their notice. Respective State Legal Services Authorities have the infrastructure and machinery to stamp out such unlawful practices brought to their attention. The media must publicise and shame all those involved in this disreputable occupation. Innocent children deprived of the love and care of their natural parents due to tragedies cannot fall prey to traders of human smuggling. At the same time, the police authorities need to be extra vigilant in apprehending criminals. A joint private-public venture must come into motion. Every citizen of the nation has a role to play in eradicating this unhealthy practice.

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The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 12, 1971

Pak. faces serious food shortage

Washington, May 11: Mr. M. M. Ahmed, Chief Economic Adviser to President Yahya Khan of Pakistan, admitted here yesterday that the country would be facing serious food shortage after three or four months as the present stock would last only till then. Mr. Ahmed, who is now in the United States seeking additional aid, said the entire Pakistan would need sizeable food assistance for the rest of this year and all of next year because of "civil war" in Pakistan. Mr. Ahmed added, "There is no danger of imminent starvation in East Pakistan, despite the recent civil disturbances there". He said there were approximately 686,000 tons of wheat and rice in East Pakistan at the end of March. An additional 801,000 tons, including 300,000 tons of rice, was in the aid pipeline, some of which could be transferred to East Pakistan, if needed. Mr. Ahmed conferred for 40 minutes with President Nixon and with Dr. Henry Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's National Security Adviser. He had also talks with World Bank officials and is expected to see the Secretary of State, Mr. Rogers, before leaving on Friday. Details of his mission were shrouded in secrecy but it was believed that he was seeking further international as well as U.S. economic aid. Aid has been delayed by Washington since the civil war broke out in East Bengal in March last.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 12, 1911

In England: Aldershot riot

London, May 9: A serious riot took place in Aldershot last night. Shop windows were smashed and looted by men in uniform who were accompanied by a large party carrying red flags. Two or three police were injured. The outbreak is apparently due to the discontent of reservists being called up in connection with the coal dispute. A later message states all is now quiet in Aldershot. The riot was apparently such as occasionally occurs on Saturday nights where large bodies of troops are gathered. It began by the smashing of omnibus windows. The soldiers concerned wore no badges but were excited by an erroneous report that some of their comrades had been detained in the guard-room. A comparatively small part actually took part in window smashing but a hundred soldiers followed the rioters and many of them treated the matter as a joke, although some remonstrated with the rioters.

FROM PAGE ONE

'Cases rising in 15 States; positivity rate at 21%'

Close to 2.50 lakh deaths (1.09% of the total cases) had been reported, he said.

Mr. Agarwal said 26 States had more than 15% positivity, nine with over 25% and 10 States with 20-25% positivity. The highest of 49.6% was in Goa, followed by Puducherry with 42.8% and West Bengal with 34.4%. On day-on-day basis, the overall positivity on April 27 was 19% and since then, it had gone down to 18%.

State-wise, the most number of active cases continued to be reported from Maharashtra (5,93,150), followed by Karnataka (5,71,026), Kerala (4,20,076), Uttar Pradesh (2,25,271) and Rajasthan (2,03,017). In 13 States/UTs, there were more than 1 lakh

active cases; 50,000 to 1 lakh in six and less than 50,000 in 17.

Mr. Agarwal said the Centre had provided about 17.01 crore vaccine doses for free to the States and the people had already got them. In collaboration with the States, 25.59 lakh doses were also given to the 18+ age group.

Sharing updates on oxygen availability, Home Ministry Additional Secretary Piyush Goyal said oxygen production in the country had risen from 5,700 MT per day in August 2020 to more than 9,000 MT per day in May.

There had been seven fold increase in the supply of liquid medical oxygen, from 1,320 MT in March to 8,943 MT on May 9.

25 decomposed bodies wash up in Ghazipur

Mr. Krishna said police were unable to identify the bodies or trace their source. However, he said it was found that they did not have a local source and could have flown down from other districts.

"We spoke to the locals and found out that they had performed the final rites of all the bodies that were brought to the ghats. The local Muslims too had buried their dead," he said.

While Mr. Krishna said it was difficult to ascertain if the bodies were of COVID-19 victims, he stated he had never seen so many bodies floating like this in the region.

The officer said that since many deaths due to CO-

VID-19 were reported in other cities close to the Ganga, there was a long waiting line at cremation grounds.

"It is possible that in hurry some disposed off the bodies in the river like this," he added.

Balwant Singh, the newly-elected head of the village Gahmar, which is one of the largest in the country, said the administration had sprayed lime to clean the area where the bodies were found and disposed.

Mr. Singh said the bodies did not belong to the village.

"The villages where the bodies are seen sticking to the banks are getting defamed," he said.

Circle officer of Saidpur said no body was in his area.

+ Amid surge, demand for air ambulances soars

"There are only six aircraft available in the country with isolation pods, and we have to move them from different locations across the country for our clients. So, if a patient is in Mumbai and our only available aircraft is in Delhi, then the cost of flying in from a different city will have to be borne by the clients," Mr. Wadhwa says.

On April 19, an air ambulance from Bhopal landed at the Begumpet airport in Hyderabad.

The patient was a 37-year-old pulmonologist, Satyendra Mishra, with extensive damage to his lungs, who had attended to multiple COVID-19 patients. The Madhya Pradesh government consulted Yashoda Hospitals in Hyderabad, and the young pulmonologist was airlifted to the southern city. After undergoing treatment, he recovered and was discharged on May 7.

Apart from Dr. Mishra, Yashoda Hospitals has treated 31 patients airlifted from other States, including non-COVID patients.

"Three of them underwent lung transplantation," A. Lingaiah, Director of Medical Services, Yashoda Hospitals Group, says.

At least 86 patients, most of them with COVID-19, have been airlifted to major corporate hospitals in Hyderabad in the past couple of months. The patients were from West Bengal, Bihar, Delhi, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha among others.

K. Hari Prasad, president of Apollo Group of Hospitals, says that nearly 20 COVID-19 patients in advanced stage of the disease have been airlifted from Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh in the past couple of months.

They underwent treatment at the hospital in Jubilee Hills. Though a large chunk of the demand is for travel from small towns to big cities with better medi-

cal infrastructure, there are also enquiries for travel from metros to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities as availability of beds in big cities has become a problem, says Rajan Mehra, CEO, Club One Air.

Hospitals in Tamil Nadu are witnessing similar instances of COVID-19 patients being brought back from northern parts of the country.

Planet-X Aerospace Services, which operates out of Coimbatore and Madurai, has airlifted COVID-19 patients seven times in just the past two months.

Patients were brought to cities such as Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchi on isolation pod-equipped aircraft, says Wing Commander A. Satish Kumar (retd), the company's Director and CEO. "The majority of patients we brought to Tamil Nadu was from northern States.

Their families wanted to ensure good medical care and extend emotional support by bringing them home," he says.

500% increase
A Bengaluru-based company says there has been a 500% increase in the demand for its air ambulance services.

In 2017, when the International Critical Care Air Transfer Team (ICATT) launched its air ambulance service, it was transferring 15 to 20 critically ill patients monthly. With the second wave of COVID-19, ICATT has been transferring 300 patients a month to different parts of India.

Rahul Singh Sardar, who runs the air ambulance service with Shalini Nalwad, says they were involved in the first few transfers of COVID-positive patients in the early days of the pandemic, and had procured isolation pods from Germany.

(With inputs from K. Shiva Shanker, Wilson Thomas, Afshan Yasmeen and Tanu Kulkarni)

'PIL plea against Central Vista another bid to stall project'

Centre says that by singling it out, the petitioner has made motive clear

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Centre has told the Delhi High Court that the PIL petition seeking a stay on the construction of Central Vista in New Delhi amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic was just another attempt to stall the project which has been facing such attempts from the beginning on one pretext or another.

The "intentions and motive" behind filing of the plea are evident from the fact that the instant project has been singled out by the petitioners despite several other agencies, including Delhi Metro, carrying out construction activities across the national capital, the Centre has alleged.

"The very fact that out of all these construction activi-



The area alongside the Rajpath dug up for the Central Vista project.

ties going on simultaneously for different projects by different agencies, the petitioner has chosen to be a public spirited citizen only with regard to one project only speaks volumes about his intentions and motive behind filing the present petition," the Centre's affidavit has

contended. Since the affidavit was not yet on record, a Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh listed the matter for hearing on May 12.

The court also allowed the early hearing application moved by the petitioners – Anya Malhotra, who works as a translator, and Sohail Hashmi, a historian and documentary film maker – who have contended that the project was not an essential activity and therefore, it can be put on hold for now during the pandemic.

In the affidavit filed in the court on May 10, the Central government has said that the Delhi Disaster Management Authority has permitted construction activities, during the prevailing curfew, where the labourers are re-

siding on-site.

It has said the workers were engaged well before the imposition of curfew on April 19. "It is submitted that in the meantime, a COVID compliant facility was installed at the worksite itself, to accommodate the 250 workers who had expressed their willingness to stay put and continue the aforesaid work. "The facility provides for strict implementation of COVID protocol and also adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour," the government has said in its affidavit. It has also said that the contractor has provided health insurance to all workers against COVID-19 and a separate facility for conducting the RT-PCR test, isolation and medical aid has also been set up at the site.

Maratha quota: Uddhav writes to President

'Ensure reservation for the community'

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday submitted a letter to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari for President Ram Nath Kovind urging him to step in to ensure reservation for Maratha community. Mr. Thackeray also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention.



Uddhav Thackeray

102nd Constitutional Amendment.

The letter to Mr. Modi requested steps be taken earliest to grant reservation to Maratha community.

The letter, explaining the history of Maratha reservation laws and verdicts by the Bombay High Court and Supreme Court, said, "The majority (Supreme Court Bench) has held that, in view of aforesaid 102nd Constitutional Amendment, all the States are denuded of their power, authority and jurisdiction to identify any community that falls in the category of SEBC."

The Supreme Court on May 5, struck down the Maratha reservation saying the State has no authority to accord Socially and Economically Backward status to Maratha community after

Three militants killed in Anantnag

They were given opportunity to surrender but they fired, resulting in encounter

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Three Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants were killed in a pre-dawn operation of the security forces in south Kashmir's Anantnag on Tuesday.

"Around 4 a.m., three terrorists were hiding in a residential house at Sheikhpura village, Vailoo area of Kokernag. During the search operation, the trapped terrorists were given an opportunity to surrender. However, they fired indiscriminately, resulting in an encounter. They were killed in the encounter," Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar said.



Encounter spot: Army jawans near Vailoo in Anantnag district in south Kashmir on Tuesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

He said the operation was halted for some time to rescue all civilians trapped near

the encounter site. The police identified the slain militants as Ilyas Ah-

mad Dar alias Sameer from Danwathpora in Kokernag, Ubaid Shafi alias Abdullah from Batamalo in Srinagar and Ajib Ahmad Lone alias Sahil from Khandaypora in Kulgam.

"Arms and ammunition including one AK-47 rifle, two pistols and incriminating materials were recovered from the site of encounter," the police said.

The police said the last rites of the slain terrorists would be performed after conducting medico-legal formalities and the nearest family members would be allowed to participate.

Money laundering case against Anil Deshmukh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a money laundering case against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and other unknown persons, based on a probe recently initiated by the CBI into allegations of corruption against him, according to a senior agency official.

The CBI registered the case on April 21, following which it carried out searches at various places linked to Mr. Deshmukh in Mumbai and Nagpur.

The case was instituted based on the findings of a preliminary enquiry launched on the directions of the Bombay High Court on April 5. The First Information Report (FIR) alleged an attempt to get undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of public duty.

Cut in GST can make vaccines cheaper, say experts

Finance Minister had said GST exemption to vaccine would be counterproductive without benefiting consumer

VIKAS DHOTI
NEW DELHI

An array of measures, including reduction in GST (Goods and Services Tax) rates, zero GST rate on critical raw materials, permitting GST-free imports as well as direct cash incentives to producers, can be used by the Central government to make COVID-19 vaccines and other critical supplies cheaper, say tax experts.

At present, GST is levied at the rate of 5% on vaccines and 12% on COVID-19 drugs and oxygen concentrators for domestic supplies and commercial imports. For oxygen concentrators imported for personal use, the government has reduced GST rate from 28% to 12% and

waived Customs duties.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday launched a staunch defense of the GST levies on COVID-19 relief supplies after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi mooting an exemption from these taxes amid the pandemic's escalating second wave.

The Finance Minister had said that exemption to vaccine from GST would be counterproductive without benefiting the consumer.

"If the government is exploring free vaccination to all the citizens, then the consumer of such vaccine will be the government. Thus, no matter at what rate it is



Tax talk: A concessional GST rate of 1% can be levied for COVID-19 vaccines, says an expert ■ FILE PHOTO

taxed, it may not directly impact the pocket of common man. It would be more of a revenue sharing issue between the Centre and the States," notes Siddharth Surana, adviser at tax consultancy RSM India.

Under the present policy,

A taxation expert, on condition of anonymity, says reducing the GST on final products as well as raw materials, or zero-rating supplies, will be a better option than an outright GST exemption.

Saket Patawari, executive director (indirect tax) at advisory firm Nexdigm, observes that the government could take measures to slash costs, including a possible special incentive scheme to refund taxes, outside the ambit of the GST law.

"A concessional GST rate of 1% can be levied for COVID-19 vaccines. Suppliers would be allowed GST credit benefit, which could be claimed as refund under an 'inverted duty structure re-

fund', typically claimed by pharmaceutical companies," Mr. Patawari states.

Alternatively, the entire COVID-19-related supply chains can be taxed at 5%, he suggests.

The tax expert quoted earlier asserts that reducing GST rates of raw materials could minimise the input tax credit issues and other options could also be considered to cut prices of COVID-19 supplies.

Experts have also called for easing of imports of critical medical equipment and materials by exempting them from Integrated GST, by putting end-use conditions in certain cases, if needed, to ensure they are not misused.

Fear of COVID haunts rural U.P.

Several cases of undiagnosed illness and deaths are reported across districts

OMAR RASHID
UNNAO

As per the official figures, the number of daily cases of COVID-19 in Uttar Pradesh has started declining. However, in its villages there is a growing sense of alarm due to a spurt in not only positive cases and deaths, but also in the number of people showing symptoms of the disease.

Unnao district recorded 93 deaths officially on April 10 which rose to 168 on May 11. The district has 1,986 active cases. However, as one travels through its villages, testimonies suggest that the figures could be much higher as not even all symptomatic cases are being tested. While inadequate medical infrastructure acts as a deterrent, there is also a reluctance among the people to get tested.

The case of retired bank cashier, Lalita Prasad, is typical. He first displayed symptoms of COVID-19 on April 24. After getting medicines from a quack in his village

Sairpur, his fever subsided but he continued to suffer from cough. He assumed he would recover as the symptoms were mild.

However, his condition started to deteriorate and he developed a pain in the chest. On May 1, he tested positive for COVID-19. After a struggle, he was admitted to a private hospital. Prasad initially showed signs of recovery but on the fourth day of admission, tests showed his lungs had suffered damage of up to 95%, his son-in-law Pradeep said.

On May 8, Prasad died, much to the consternation of the family who believed that villages were far safer than urban centres.

The family believes Prasad was infected during the campaigning for the recent panchayat polls which drew huge crowd, Mr. Pradeep said.

Mr. Pradeep has tested negative but he is worried for others in Sairpur. Nobody from the administration has

come to their house to take samples of those his father-in-law may have come in contact with, he said, adding that their house and neighbourhood were not sanitised despite his requests.

In Faridpur, farmer Kanhaiya Singh, 38, has for the past week been in self-isolation in a tiny room crammed with medical equipment, including a nebulizer, and other essentials. He has not been tested for COVID but CT scan reports show lung

damage. Mr. Singh got fever soon after two visits to Lucknow to buy medicines for his mother. He relied on a local chemist and purchased medicine to combat the fever. It provided him temporary relief.

Mr. Singh does not trust

<p

Congress creating false panic: Nadda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after the Congress Working Committee (CWC) demanded that the Union government "atone for its mistakes" in handling the second wave of the COVID-19, BJP president J.P. Nadda accused the Opposition party of "duplicity and pettiness".

In a four-page letter addressed to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Mr. Nadda accused the Congress of "misleading" people and creating "false panic" in the fight against the pandemic. He alleged that the conduct of Congress leaders, including Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi, "will be remembered for duplicity and pettiness". He said that Congress leaders, including a Chief Minister, were guilty of fostering vaccine hesitancy.

"Under Modi, the fight against the pandemic is driven by unwavering belief in science, support to innovation, trust in COVID-19 warriors and cooperative federalism," the BJP chief said.

Azad to head Cong. task force on relief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad will head a 13-member party task force to coordinate COVID-19 relief, said a statement from the party on Tuesday.

Other members include Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Jairam Ramesh, Mukul Wasnik, Ambika Soni, K.C. Venugopal, Randeep Surjewala and Youth Congress chief B.V. Srinivas.

Act in unison, NHRC tells Centre, States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A week after issuing an advisory, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday reiterated that the government must protect the rights of people during the second wave of the pandemic.

It said it also asked for 24/7 toll-free helplines and fixing of treatment prices. It had issued an advisory to the Health Ministry and all States and Union Territories on May 4.

PM Modi's G7 visit cancelled due to COVID-19 crisis

Visit was supposed to be his first major trip to the West

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not attend the G7 summit in the United Kingdom next month, the Ministry of External Affairs announced on Tuesday.

"While appreciating the invitation to the Prime Minister by U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson to attend the G7 Summit as a Special Invitee, given the prevailing COVID situation, it has been decided that the Prime Minister will not attend the

Nadda's letter is full of arrogance: Congress

Party presses for uninterrupted oxygen, free vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J.P. Nadda's letter to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi is a display of 'arrogance' by the Narendra Modi government but the principal Opposition party will continue to offer its constructive suggestions, the Congress said on Tuesday.

Mr. Nadda's letter, in which he accused the Congress of 'misleading' the people on COVID-19, came on a day when the Congress launched an online SpeakUp campaign to press for uninterrupted oxygen supply and free vaccination.

"Instead of writing an informed letter to the Congress president, BJP president Mr. Nadda may read the guest column in the *New York Times* on May 6, 2021. The authors are not Congress members. Their names may ring a bell in Mr.



Ajay Maken

Nadda: Dr. Abhijit Banerjee and Dr. Esther Duflo, Nobel Prize winners," former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram tweeted.

Addressing a virtual press conference, Congress general secretary Ajay Maken pointed out that the journals such as *Lancet* and *Nature* had detailed how the government had mishandled the pandemic. He said even the Indian Medical Association had been critical of the government's approach.

"So, when the BJP accuses the Congress of politicising, are they also accusing *Lancet* or *Nature*? Are they similarly accusing IMA that is an association of corona warriors with about 3.27 lakh members," Mr. Maken asked. "Unfortunately, Mr. Nadda's reply is full of arrogance. It does not behove of him to write like this."

He said Congress leaders have been in touch with top global experts to discuss the situation and based on their discussions, they had been offering suggestions to the Modi government.

"We [Congress] have got vast administrative experience and using that vast administrative experience, contacts with world's experts and scientists, we always come up with concrete suggestions. Why shouldn't the government call the Opposition parties and listen to what we have to offer."

BJP leaders worry over party image

Poor anticipation of second wave puts it on back foot, they say

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The second wave of the pandemic has left even the well-connected high and dry when it comes to accessing healthcare resources, a fact that has been highlighted by the death of four BJP MLAs in Uttar Pradesh alone, a letter from Union Minister Santosh Gangwar to U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath about the lack of resources in his constituency of Bareilly and the helplessness being expressed even within BJP circles in dealing with public distress.

The effect of all this not just in terms of what it means for the progress of the pandemic through the country but also for the reputation of Brand Modi is very much on the minds of BJP leaders.

On Tuesday, party president J.P. Nadda wrote a four-



High stakes: The political capital with Prime Minister Narendra Modi has helped BJP tide over crises. ■ PTI

about, recovery rates were not being highlighted.

The RSS, the ideological mother of the BJP, also announced, via its COVID Response Team (CRT) the launch of a campaign entitled "Hum Jeetenge" (we will win) also called "Positivity Unlimited" to counter 'negativity' around the fight against COVID-19.

The campaign will include an address by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat likely in the second week of May and daily lectures (online) by eminent achievers from across the country. A promotional title/poster from the event showcased Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Mr. Modi badly.

Security for BJP MLAs irks Trinamool

BJP is 'unable to accept the mandate of people', Bengal's ruling party says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has described the decision of the Union Home Ministry to accord Central security cover to the 61 newly elected BJP legislators in West Bengal as "arbitrary and infringement in the law and order situation of the State".

Trinamool spokesperson Sukhendu Sekhar Roy said the BJP was not only providing Central security to its elected MLAs but also to some candidates who got defeated in the recent Assembly polls.

"The State government does provide security to MLAs, depending on the threat perception. What makes the BJP MLAs superior to the other elected MLAs that they are being treated differently. The allocation of Central security to these MLAs is arbitrary, infringement of the law and order situation, which is a State subject and colossal waste of resources," Mr. Roy, who is also a Rajya Sabha member, stated.

All Central decisions like sending a team to the State and giving security to BJP MLAs reflected that the BJP was "unable to accept the mandate of people". "The people of West Bengal have given a clear mandate and by



Battle on: After a tense Assembly election campaign, the BJP and the Trinamool continue to spar in West Bengal. ■ PTI

interfering in the State's functioning, the BJP leadership is once again bringing out their fascist tendencies out in public domain," he said.

'Against Constitution'

Vappala Balachandran, former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, noted that the decision of the Centre was against the seventh schedule of the Constitution as law and order is a State subject.

"Under what provision of CrPC, the Central security personnel will be allowed to

carry arms? This is a totally wrong decision without any rhyme or reason. Did the MLAs approach the local police first for protection? The Central police can enter the State only when the local police or the magistrate requests their presence, during elections it is different... this has been done only to show the might of the Centre," Mr. Balachandran said.

The Ministry has asked the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to accord protection to the 61 BJP MLAs. They have been ac-

corded 'X' category security – three security personnel round the clock. A CISF official said they were not aware why the Ministry had issued such an order. "We have to mobilise 180 personnel who will be put on such duties, we are following the book, in all there are 65 BJP MLAs the CISF is protecting," he stated. Before the elections, they were providing security to four BJP leaders who have now been sworn in as MLAs.

The Ministry spokesperson refused to comment as the matter pertains to security of individuals.

Sops for kin of pandemic victims in J&K

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The J&K administration on Tuesday reached out to pandemic affected families of the Union Territory (UT) and announced a slew of financial support measures.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said senior citizens, who have lost the only earning member(s) of the family, will be provided special pension for life while children, who have lost their parents, will be given a special scholarship.

"Many of our near and dear ones have left us untimely due to COVID-19. The government has decided to reach out to each and every such family and they will be provided with financial assistance for self-employment by the Jammu & Kashmir Bank," the Lt. Governor said.

The government has also decided to provide ₹1,000 per month to all registered construction workers, ponywals, palki-walas and pitthuwalas for the next two months.

He said ₹55 crore would be released under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for emergency use during the crisis.



NIT No.PSCSMFL/RC/AP Tablets/2021-22 Dt. 11.05.2021
On behalf of State Procurement Agencies, Managing Director, Markfed invites short term e-Tender on the prescribed form available on <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> for the purchase of Aluminium Phosphide 5% Tablets on Rate Contract basis. The last date for submission of online e-Tender is 18.05.2021 till 04:00 pm, which will be opened on 19.05.2021 at 03:00 pm at Markfed House, Plot No.4, Sector 35-B, Chandigarh. The cost of tender form and earnest money shall be deposited through online mode only. For participating in e-Tendering process, the tenderer must be registered with e-Tendering portal <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. In case of any difficulty, please contact on 0172-2970263, 0172-2970284 and 91-628484511. The detailed terms and conditions can also be seen on Markfed's website www.markfedpunjab.com. Corrigendum/Addendum if any will be posted on e-Portal and Markfed's website only.

Managing Director
Markfed

KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION E-TENDER
ABRIDGED NIT
The Ch.Mpl.Engineer (SWM), KMC invites Expression of Interest (EoI) cum Request for Technical Proposal for the work mentioned below (Submission online).
Notice Inviting EoI Reference Number : KMC/SWM/EOI/RD/20-21
Scheme/Work(s) : "Engagement of a Project Implementer for an Eco Friendly Revenue Generating project for Kolkata Municipal Corporation on the new Bio-Remediated land at Dhapa". Last date and time of bid submission : 18.06.2021 upto 2.00 p.m. The document for Expression of Interest (EoI) cum Request for Technical Proposal and other details are available on and from 18.05.2021 (04.00 p.m.) from the website : <https://wbtenders.gov.in> and www.kmcgov.in
39/21-22

UNIVERSITY OF KERALA THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-34
No.18651/Advt-36/2021/PR No.UEDB/C-GP/EI/2021-2022
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Invites composite tenders as online bid for the Civil, Electrical and Electronic works in connection with the setting up of **Multimedia Theatre Class Rooms and Multimedia Class Rooms** in University Teaching Departments from registered contractors of appropriate class of registration in State PWD/CPWD/Eligible agencies/Total solution providers. The first period of tender is 120 days from the date of tender.
Last date and time of submission of tenders by online by speed post is on 31.05.2021, 5.00 pm and relevant documents by speed post is on 02.06.2021 at 3.30 pm. Date, time and venue of pre-bid meeting 24.05.2021, 11.00 am at Registrar's office at SH Campus, Palayam, Thiruvananthapuram. Date and time of opening of Technical bid 02.06.2021, 4.00 pm.
For more details visit "Tenders" in www.keralauiversity.ac.in or www.tenders.kerala.gov.in. Phone No.0471-2305631
Sd/- Dr.K.S.Anil Kumar
Registrar

Surabhi Rajkonwari of the BJP by 11,875 votes. He will be allowed to take oath under adequate security.

Mr. Gogoi has been in jail since December 2019 on charges of sedition and inciting violence during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Assam. Earlier in the day, he

wrote a letter to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma with 11 suggestions to handle the COVID-19 crisis.

The suggestions include free vaccination to all citizens above and below 45 years of age and free treatment or hospital care for all those testing positive for COVID-19.

He said ₹55 crore would be released under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for emergency use during the crisis.

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He said ₹55 crore would be released under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for emergency use during the crisis.

Earlier in the day, he

Mr. Gogoi had won the Sibsagar seat by defeating

CM YK

In Tamil Nadu, religious institutions step in to provide COVID-19 relief

To help families in distress, they have been opening quarantine centres, distributing provision kits and masks, and raising funds for vaccines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Pontiffs and volunteers of various religious institutions are leading the COVID-19 relief works in several districts in Tamil Nadu. Helping families in distress during the second wave, they have been opening quarantine centres, distributing provision kits, masks, funding vaccines and paying salaries in full.

The Dharumapuram Aadheenam's 27th pontiff Masi-lamani Desika Gnanasambanda Paramacharya Swamigal, who wanted to create awareness among the public, took the second dose of the coronavirus vaccine at a local hospital.

Math spokesperson Pan-nai C. Siva said the first round of vaccination for all staff and volunteers was ar-

ranged on the Math premises. Last year they had given jobs to a thousand men to renovate the buildings belonging to the Aadheenam, he added.

Fee waiver

At the Mayilam Bommapuram Aadheenam, the Sivag-nanam Palaya Swamigal has distributed rice and provisions to residents of Bom-marpalayam and the tribal communities of Irules and Narikuravas near Mayilam. Math spokesperson S. Thirunavukkarasu said they had not insisted upon students of two colleges being run by the Math to pay their fees with the result that hardly anybody paid the fees.

The pontiff said they were from poor families and cannot afford to pay fees. Despite the fact that there is

no income from the fees, the Math has paid the salaries of 150 persons fully all these months," he said. The Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam has converted the 30-bed Sankara Multi Speciality Hospital into a COVID-19 care facility. "We are at present treating patients with mild symptoms and waiting for uninterrupted oxygen facility to provide full-fledged services," said a Math spokesperson. To ensure functioning of the hospital's outpatient facility, the Math has given one of its buildings to the hospital. A quarantine facility has also been set up at the Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Viswa Mahavidyalaya University, which is also wait-ing for oxygen.

The Jayendra Saraswati Ayurveda College is giving

medicines at subsidised rates to increase immunity. It has also asked devotees to raise funds to sponsor the

treatment of COVID-19 pa-tients. The Hindu Mission Hospital and the Kamakoti Child's Trust hospital too

are providing treatment. Kanchi Sankaracharya Sri Vijayendra Saraswati has asked health services con-

nected with the Math to pro-vide treatment for COVID-19 patients in the best possible way," said a Mutt spokesperson.

The Archdiocese of Ma-dras-Mylapore has set up three groups to help CO-VID-19 patients. Episcopal Vicar of the Archdiocese Father Vincent Chinnadurai said they had formed three teams, one was a data team that kept tab of hospital beds, arranges ambulances and oxygen cylinders.

The second team collect-ed and distributed food to those in need and the third one ensured proper burials.

"Secretary of the Youth Commission Fr. Ronald Rich-ard is co-ordinating these services. Seven youngsters have volunteered for this and they stay at the San-thome school under qua-

rantine. Four young priests have also come forward to perform services at the cem-etry," he said.

Quarantine centre

The Masjid Javeed at 3rd Avenue in Anna Nagar has opened a quarantine centre for persons who are CO-VID-19 negative and need a place to stay for a few days. "It has been two days now and people keep asking us if we can take in COVID-19 positive persons, which we can't," said Mosque Com-mittee secretary M. Mo-hammed Yousuf.

Volunteers of the medical wing of the Tamil Nadu Mus-lim Munnetra Kazhagam continue offering burial or crea-ration assistance.

They have lent a helping hand with over 2,100 cases of different faiths so far.



Emergency care: The Masjid Javeed in Chennai has been turned into a quarantine facility for those with mild or moderate COVID-19. ■ JOTHI RAMALINGAM

U.P. to take steps for care of children

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Public compliance and the policy of trace, test and treat were yielding good re-sults against COVID-19 in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Tues-day, after the World Health Organization spoke of the State's house-to-house campaign in rural areas to contain transmis-sion.

Keeping in view the as-sessment of experts, special arrangements for the protection of children need to be made in all dis-tricts, Mr. Adityanath in-structed officials. "Paediatric ICUs with a capacity of a minimum of 10-15 beds in all district hospitals and 25-30 beds in medical col-leges should be prepared," he said. There should be a mi-nimum 100-bed paediatric ICU at the divisional head-quarters, he directed.

To check the spread in villages, the State govern-ment has recently started a testing and vigilance cam-paign in more than 97,000 revenue villages. It has de-ployed 1,41,610 teams and 21,242 supervisors from the Health department to ensure all rural areas are covered, said the WHO on May 7, in a report titled Ut-tar Pradesh going the last mile to stop COVID-19.

WHO said it now has field officers on the ground to monitor and share real-time feedback with the go-vernment. On April 30, there were 3.10 lakh active cases in the State. However, it had been reduced by 95,000 and now the State has only 2.16 lakh cases, the Chief Minister said.

Queries raised on DRDO's COVID drug

Experts flag lack of published data on performance in human trials, history of drug in cancer cure

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

A drug developed by the De-fence Research and Develop-ment Organisation (DRDO) has been approved by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for "emergency use" in those with moderate to severe COVID , but inde-pendent experts say that from the information so far available, the drug's utility in COVID care has not been es-tablished.

The lack of published data on its performance in human trials, opaqueness on whether the phase-3 trial objective-ly evaluated the benefit from, or lack of it, of the drug and the drug's history – of being an unapproved anti-cancer drug and therefore potentially able to harm healthy cells – some of the concerns contributing to the uncertainty, experts told *The Hindu*.

On the frontline: A team of doctors and nurses at work in a COVID-19 care centre near Ahmedabad. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

Hindu. 2-Deoxy-D-Glucose drug has historically been extensively tested for treat-ing cancer but is so far an un-approved drug.

The Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of the DRDO, in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories in 2014 as part of a collaboration, ac-

cording to Dr. Sudhir Chandra-na, Additional Director, IN-MAS, DRDO. The basic mechanism of the drug in-volves inhibiting glycolysis, or one of the ways in which cells break down glucose for energy. This approach while used to starve and kill cancer cells, could in theory work in inhibiting virus cells too, that were almost entirely dependent on glycolysis for replication.

Tests at the Centre for Cel-lular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, last year indicated that the drug demonstra-bly killed virus cells after which it progressed to trials in people.

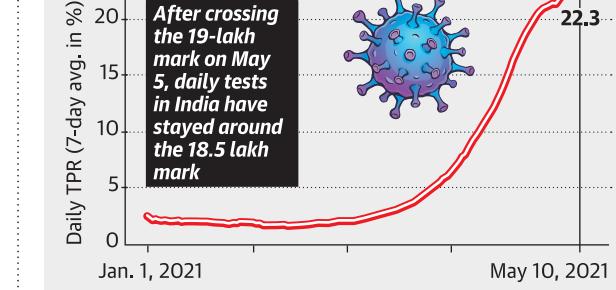
Dr Reddy's in its applica-tion to the SEC for Phase-2 trials in June 2020, noted that while the drug was yet unapproved, it had been tried in 218 clinical trials so far as an anti-cancer drug.

Announcing the success of the drug, a press state-ment from the DRDO said: "Clinical trial results have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxy-gen dependence. Higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in CO-VID patients."

"Cancer cells depend heavily on glucose for their sur-vival and hence by tagging them with 2DG we can re-strict cancer cell growth. Simi-larly, it can also affect high glucose utilising normal cells like brain cells (neurons) and could cause brain related side effects," Dr. Cyriac Abby Philips, who specialised in Hepatology and Liver Trans-plant Medicine, at Rajagiri Hospital in Kerala said in an email.

Surge continues

India's daily test positivity rate (TPR, positive cases identified for every 100 tests) stood at 22.3% as on May 10



3.15 lakh fresh cases, 3,588 deaths reported

18.5 lakh samples tested on Monday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India recorded 3,15,600 new COVID-19 cases until 9.30 p.m. on Tuesday. As many as 3,588 new deaths were also registered. The country has so far reported a total of 2,33,07,639 cases and 2,53,615 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 40,956 infections, followed by Karnataka (39,510) and Kerala (37,290). Maharashtra also recorded 793 casu-alities, followed by Karnataka (480) and Delhi (347).

The figures do not in-clude cases and deaths from Arunachal Pradesh, Chhati-singhpur, Jharkhand, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pra-desh and Punjab. The data are sourced from the respec-tive States' health bulletins.

Over 18.5 lakh samples were tested on Monday (the results for which were made available on Tuesday), which is 3.75 lakh more than the number of tests conducted on Sunday. It is also 1.86 lakh tests more than those conducted the pre-

vious Monday (May 3). After crossing the 19 lakh mark on May 5, daily tests in India have stayed around the 18.5 lakh mark.

The country's daily aver-age tests positivity rate (posi-tive cases identified for ev-ery 100 tests) continues to increase. As on May 10, it stood at 22.3%. It was 10.3% a month before.

Over 25.03 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Tuesday, which is 17.66 lakh doses more than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. It is also 7.69 lakh doses more than what was recorded in the same period, one week ago.

However, the daily vacci-nation rate in the country has declined significantly be-tween May 1-10 compared to April 21-30. In the first 10 days of May, around 17.72 lakh doses were adminis-tered daily in the country on average which is lesser than 24.87 lakh average daily doses given in the last 10 days of April.

U.S. in touch with Indian vaccine makers

Ambassador says production levels being watched



KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

The United States has been in contact with the Serum In-stitute of India and other vaccine manufacturers to boost production of vaccines against COVID-19, said the U.S. envoy to India on Tues-day. Addressing a virtual press meet, Charge d'Af-faires Ambassador Daniel B Smith described the second wave in India as a development that has "global impli-

"We are watching careful-ly the production levels at the SII and elsewhere. We have been in close touch with the SII to try to determine what raw materials we could provide, and assis-tance that we can provide to help boost production," said Mr. Smith. "The U.S. has also di-verted enough of Oxford AstraZeneca manufacturing supplies from its own pre-ex-is-ting orders to produce over 20 million vaccine doses in India."

The U.S., he said, will not use the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine as of now as it has "three vaccines available and the Biden administra-

tion has determined that that is sufficient for our needs". However, he said the policy regarding the extra Oxford AstraZeneca doses is yet to be finalised.

Mr. Smith's comments came weeks after SII's Adar Poonawalla urged the Biden administration for "raw ma-terials" for production of vac-cines. On April 16, Mr. Poonawalla had made a so-cial media appeal to the U.S. President, stating, "I humbly request you to lift the em-bar-go of raw material exports out of the U.S. so that vac-cine production can ramp up. Your administration has the details."

She said that the atten-dant had pulled her *dupatta* (scarf) and put his hand on her waist, saying that he would take care of her ail-ing husband. Bhagalpur police have constituted a team to probe the matter.

I was harassed in hospital, says woman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

In a video that has gone vi-ral on social media, a woman from Bihar has alleged sexual harassment by a hospital attendant at Bhagalpur where her husband was admitted for COVID-19 treatment.

The figures do not in-clude cases and deaths from Arunachal Pradesh, Chhati-singhpur, Jharkhand, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pra-desh and Punjab. The data are sourced from the respec-tive States' health bulletins.

Over 18.5 lakh samples were tested on Monday (the results for which were made available on Tuesday), which is 3.75 lakh more than the number of tests conducted on Sunday. It is also 1.86 lakh tests more than those conducted the pre-

Faith

Facing life with fortitude

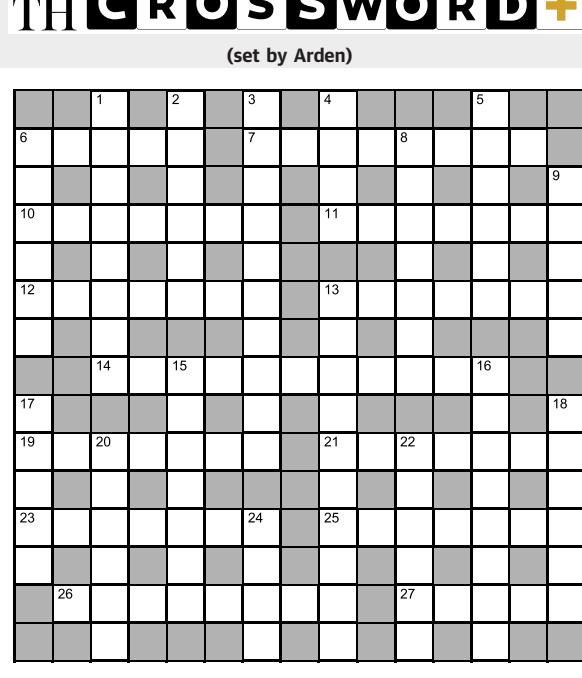
Sastras teach people to lead virtuous lives and avoid evil behaviour. But in life many who uphold dharma and truth face difficult situations, as for instance, the Pandavas. At the same time, Duryodhana and Dhritarashtra are somehow able to hold on to the kingdom, depriving the Pandavas of their rights. It is not easy for the Pandavas in exile to accept their state. As if to make clear many truths of life, there are many expositions of the stories of Nala, Harishchandra, Ra-ma avatar, and so on, wherein these worthy rulers too had to undergo much suffering while trying to adhere to virtue, truth and dharma, pointed out Sri B. Damodhara Dikshitar in a discourse.

Sage Brihadwasa relates the life story of Nala to the Pandavas to show that the difficulties he faced would make their own suffering seem much less in comparison. Nala's upright way of life had kept away Kali's influence for twelve years. But a seemingly innocent lapse on Nala's part is enough for Kali to enter his life in a sly manner and cause havoc. His brother Pushkara calls him for the game of dice and Nala comes completely under Kali's sway to the extent of pawning away even his good sense. Nala and Damayanti show that Time can bring about drastic changes in one's life and one has to bear with the challenges with fortitude. Sorrow and joy are related to the mind.

A person suffers when he accepts sorrow. Jadabharata does not feel the burden of palanquin; he did not carry it; it was merely placed on his shoulders. Sadasiva Brahmandra did not feel the pain when his arm was cut off. Thyagaraja was totally immersed in Rama Bhakti that he never considered hardships in life as difficult situations. Great people do not give any importance to these ups and downs in life.

TH CROSSWORD + 13245

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9				4				
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13244

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	6	9	1	5	2	7	8	4</td

Mercedes' new GLA is a luxury SUV with a strong performance, superior kit and spacious interiors

Acing the space race



SHAPUR KOTWAL

The new GLA, Mercedes' second-gen compact luxury SUV, has clearly grown up. More SUV and less sporty SUV-coupe, the new GLA is taller and built on a longer wheelbase, making it more spacious on the inside.

A lot of that added visual bulk comes from the higher roof, the resolute chin up front makes it look more robust and the squared wheel arches help give it more of an SUV look as well.

The designers have used creases on the bonnet to good effect and the upright chrome-studded grille catches the light nicely.

It isn't quite as exciting at the rear, but the wide base and the individually sectioned LED lights do give it a fair amount of character.

However, it is not all straight lines in profile though – the cowl is not very 'stand-up' and the roof starts to drop down towards the rear.

Inside, there is more than sufficient legroom and headroom, even for tall individuals. What adds to the feeling of space are

the pair of sunroofs that brighten up the cabin.

The GLA impresses up front as well, with its attractive 'deconstructed' dash – many of the elements appear to be freestanding. You get a pair of large flat-panel screens, a high-quality steering wheel, twist-to-close vents, and customisable LED mood lighting. The designers have used piano black on the centre console for greater separation, and the panel of brushed aluminium above the glovebox works well too.

What the new GLA also has in abundance, is that tough Mercedes build. That said, some plasti-



MERCEDES-BENZ GLA 220D 4MATIC SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	1950cc, 4 cyls, turbo-diesel
MAX POWER	190hp at 3800rpm
MAX TORQUE	400Nm at 1600-2600rpm
GEARBOX	8-speed dual-clutch automatic
LENGTH	4410mm
WIDTH	1834mm
HEIGHT	1611mm
WHEELBASE	2729mm
GROUND CLEARANCE	147mm
WEIGHT	1780kg



tics lower down in the cabin, don't feel quite as solidly built, the seats feel a bit stiff and there is some kit missing – you only get wired Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, keyless entry is absent and the USB ports are all Type C so you may need an adapter. Still, you do get 'kinetic seats' that make tiny adjustments every few minutes to take the load off pressure points in your back and thighs. Mercedes' MBUX system the AI-based voice assistant and radar-based Active Brake Assist that brakes for you if it senses you are going to hit an object.

Now moving to the driving experience – this GLA 220d gets Mercedes' 2.0-litre diesel putting out 190hp and 400Nm. Set in Sport, throttle responses are strong with the diesel delivering a lusty tug as soon as you

put your foot down, clearly helped by the 400Nm kicking in from just 1,600rpm. What also helps is the quick-to-respond new eight-speed twin-clutch gearbox that always seems to

All rounder
The new GLA is a sporty SUV. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

keep you in the powerband. Acceleration, as a result, is relentless and the GLA 220d hits 100kph in a seriously quick 7.4sec – almost half a second faster than the BMW X1.

Working along with the engine and the gearbox is the uprated chassis which is now considerably stiffer and more rigid. The new GLA also gets uprated suspension components including a wider track for improved stability. In addition, the 4WD or 4Matic system, in Sport, can now send 30% of power to the rear wheels.

The GLA does roll a bit when driven around corners quickly, but what helps make the GLA drive nicely is the direct and accurate steering and feelsome brakes. Once in the corner, there is a fair amount of grip and the GLA even feels comfortable if you keep on increasing the pace, the rear axle chipping in on longer corners.

Set in Comfort, the GLA becomes easy going and relaxing to drive. Throttle response is immediate, the gearbox only slurs and hesitates occasionally, and the steering is light and easy to twirl. There is some amount of rattle from the diesel at idle, with a bit of vibration creeping up from the floor too, but rev the engine and it smoothens up nicely.

The GLA even rides silently and without much body movement over poorly surfaced roads. The suspension comfortably deals with regular potholes with no real kick back and that is despite the large 19-inch wheels.

Mercedes' new GLA, straight off the bat, is a more accomplished luxury SUV. Space and comfort are much better to begin with, performance is stronger, it is more enjoyable to drive and even quality and kit on the inside are superior. There is some kit missing and the boot is not very large, though.

This version is likely to be a bit more expensive than rivals, at an expected price of ₹44-46 lakh.

If you are looking for a compact luxury SUV that delivers a strong all-round performance, Merc's new GLA has what it takes to be the best SUV in its class.

AUTO SNIPPETS



Ferrari reveals limited Edition 812 Competizione, 812 Competizione A

Ferrari has revealed the much-awaited 812 Competizione and 812 Competizione A, the limited-edition versions of the 812 Superfast and the 812 GTS, respectively. Ferrari says that it will be making 999 units of the 812 Competizione and 599 units of the Competizione A, with all units already sold out. Both cars are powered by a 6.5-litre, V12 engine that makes a monstrous 830hp – up 30hp from the standard car, making them the most powerful series production road-going V12 Ferraris ever made. The supercars also get a new high performance exhaust.



Skoda Kushaq to launch in June 2021

Skoda is set to reveal prices for its all-new mid-size SUV, the Kushaq in June 2021 with the car reaching showrooms by July 2021. When it goes on sale the Kushaq will come with two engine options – a 115hp, 1.0-litre three-cylinder turbo-petrol and a 150hp, 1.5-litre four-cylinder turbo-petrol. Both engines will come with a six-speed manual gearbox as standard, with the 1.0-litre TSI getting a six-speed torque converter auto and the 1.5-litre TSI getting a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic option. The carmaker will also offer ESC as standard across all variants, while a tyre pressure monitoring system and hill-hold assist are optional.



Wayne Burgess appointed as Ola Electric's VP of design

Having recently announced the set-up of its global design centre in Bengaluru for its passenger vehicle vertical, Ola Electric has now selected Wayne Burgess, a Jaguar veteran, to head its design unit for electric cars, while the company is also establishing a design studio in London. Wayne Burgess will serve as the Vice President of Design at Ola Electric. Ola's efforts to hire global talent show the company's resolve to make a mark in India's budding electric PV space. Ola is working towards indigenously developing an electric car which will be a compact model with limited range.

Q & A WITH HORMAZD



City friendly

Which is better – the Ford Endeavour 4x2 automatic or the Toyota Fortuner 4x2 automatic? I will be using it in the city for my daily office commute and also on weekends for family outings. It will be self-driven.

Rishi Ratta, Delhi

We would recommend the Ford Endeavour over the Fortuner because it is a much nicer car to drive in the city, thanks to a light steering and plusher ride. The new Fortuner is more responsive and far more powerful, but the Endeavour has enough grunt to be a good highway car too. Overall, the cabin quality, refinement and price factor make the Endeavour a better buy.

Roll the price dice

Will the Skoda Kushaq launch for around ₹20 lakh, like the Kia Seltos and Hyundai Creta or will it be under ₹15 lakh? If it launches at the same price as the Kia Sonet, then I can wait a month or so, but if not then I will book the Sonet.

Rush Jagani, Surat

The Kushaq is the same size as the Creta and Seltos and hence likely to be priced in the same bracket. It could be a bit more expensive, too, depending on the variant. It certainly won't be cheaper than the Sonet. So, if the Kushaq is beyond your budget, then you would do well to go for the Sonet, which is overall the best compact SUV today.

Hormazd Sorabjee is the editor of Autocar India. Mail your feedback and queries to roadshow@thehindu.co.in

CMYK

Something old, something new

While BMW has stayed true to the original 1936 R5 style wise, the R18's engine is a pleasant surprise, among other things

FIROZE IRANI

It won't be long before we are in an age where motorcycle companies will find it difficult to individualise the experience their battery-powered machines offer. BMW, however, appears to have no such qualms. Whether this is a last hurrah or just German humour, the R18 delivers an unforgettable internal-combustion experience.

What helps it do so is that massive engine it isn't shy of flaunting. The large-ribbed cylinders you see on this bike are 901cc each! That makes it much bigger than the GS' motor and the highest ca-



pacity twin-cylinder boxer engine on a production motorcycle.

On the move, it is smooth as can be with just the right amount of pulses coming through under the acceleration. Despite its gigantic size, this engine is no powerhouse. It only puts out 91hp which doesn't feel like a lot on a bike this

heavy. But what this engine aces at is making loads of torque – 158Nm to be precise, almost all of which comes in as early as 2,000rpm. It also doesn't complain as much as a V-twin at low revs and you can lug it from as low as 1,300rpm without protest. The R18 accelerates quite

Blast from the past With its round headlights, mirrors and instrument cluster, the R18 pays fitting tribute to the 1936 RS. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



BMW R18 SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	1802cc, twin-cylinder boxer, Air/oil-cooled
MAX POWER	91hp at 4750rpm
MAX TORQUE	158Nm at 3000rpm
WEIGHT	345kg
WHEEL BASE	1731mm
SEAT HEIGHT	690mm
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	16 litres
FRONT SUSPENSION	Telescopic fork
REAR SUSPENSION	Monoshock
FRONT WHEEL	19-inch
FRONT TYRE	120/70
REAR WHEEL	16-inch
REAR TYRE	180/65

briskly and maxes out its 200kph speed rather quickly. On the other hand, it'll also do around 60kph in sixth gear at idling rpm (950rpm) and cruise at 100kph at just around 2,000rpm.

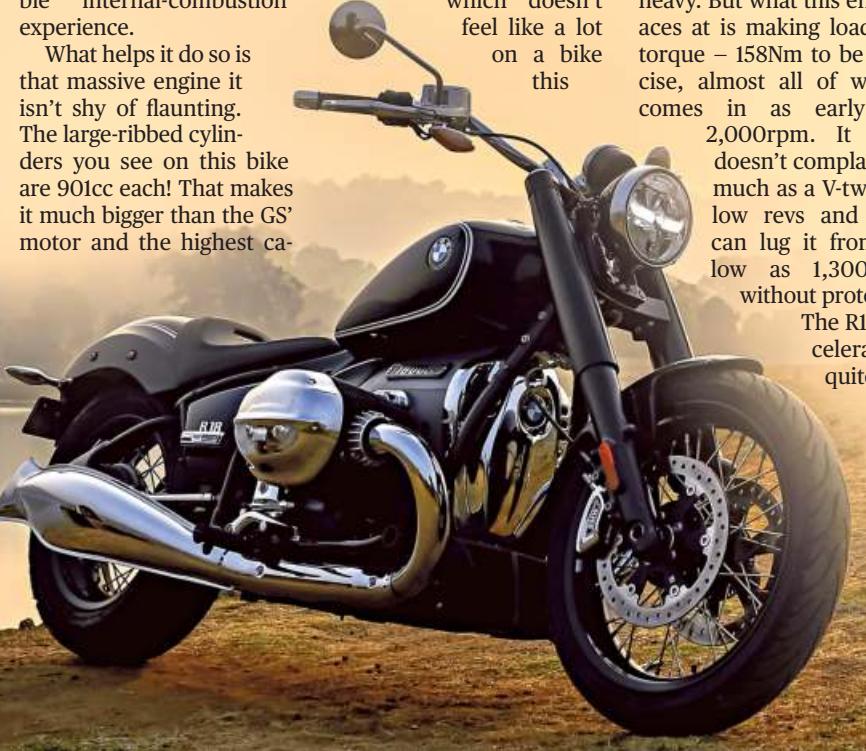
What the BMW is equipped with though is keyless ignition, switchable traction control, three riding modes and a digital-analogue gauge.

The R18 weighs 345kg and that kind of mass cannot be hidden. The weight becomes apparent while manoeuvring at low speeds. Thankfully, the clutch is reasonably light, which helps a lot. The huge cylinder heads stick out no further than the handlebar, and as long as you keep that in mind, it is smooth sailing.

At highway speeds, the R18 will make nearly every move you want it to. The bike changes lanes effortlessly and long, sweeping corners are properly enjoyable, with the only limitation being the low foot pegs. The sticky Michelin

'First Edition' and, at ₹22.55 lakh, it costs ₹2.65 lakh more than the standard variant. The additional cash gets you the white pinstripes, more chrome elements and a few other bits and bobs.

If you have your mind set on the R18, there's nothing that should stop you from having it in your garage.



and the suspension that is slightly on the firmer side only aid its handling abilities. The suspension on this bike has 120mm at the front and 90mm at the rear. As for the four-piston brakes being used at both ends, they have a dull initial bite, but easily bring this giant to a halt.

What could be a deal-breaker are the R18's ergonomics. While the wide handlebar and 690mm seat height fit the bill, your legs aren't positioned where they ideally should be. Limited by the engine coming in the way, BMW had to put the foot pegs as forward as they could. The bike is also missing cruise control as an option in India.

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An illustrated children's book takes a trip to the Mattancherry spice market in Kochi and traces the journey of spices from farm to kitchen

SHILPA NAIR ANAND

Annie and her *appoopan* (grandfather in Malayalam) are cooking in their home in Kochi when they realise they are almost out of spices – star anise, cardamom and cloves. Where else would they go for a refill but to the spice market in Mattancherry? Annie learns about spices – their journey from farm to kitchen – as she explores Mattancherry with her grandfather. Long-time friends Sruthi Vijayan and Sanjana Ranjit tell Annie and Appoopan's story in this deliciously illustrated children's storybook, *A Little Spice Is Extra Nice - Annie Goes To Mattancherry*.

Chennai-based photographer/travel writer Sruthi Vijayan and freelance illustrator/interior designer Sanjana Ranjit, who lives in Italy, collaborated on the project during lockdown, last year. The



idea was born out of a phone call in the initial days of the lockdown to check on each other. Sanjana was at home, in Chennai. As the conversation meandered about what each was doing, Sanjana told Sruthi about the illustrations she was doing to keep herself occupied. The call culminated in [plans for] a children's book.

A children's book was a first for both, "It was a great learning process. Once Sruthi and I discussed the theme for the book, I created a mood board to understand the visuals' look and feel. Then came the character designing. By this time, Sruthi had

Spice route (Left and above)
Illustrations from the book and the cover; (far left) Sanjana and Shruthi ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

further built on the story. Next, I worked on the rough sketches, the sequence of scenes, and the visual transition between scenes. Finally, I rendered the colours and textures to the images. It was a collaborative process. Sruthi and I shared a lot of creative inputs through the whole process and we learnt a lot through it all."

Locating the story in Mattancherry was a conscious decision.

"The setting had to have a visual character, we thought using spices [as motifs] would be a great way to integrate the two," says Sruthi.

Sanjana adds, "The thing I love most about Mattancherry is how different cultures and religions have co-existed there for centuries. It's a beautiful tapestry of customs, food and practices from around the world. It also has a long history of global spice trade. Both visually and historically, it was the perfect place for this story. And of course, the lovely ferry ride to Mattancherry has been one of my favourite things to do in Kochi – it's like a time portal into an old world.

The ferry scene in our

book is of my favourite illustrations!" Although her family is settled in Chennai, she has roots and extended family in Kerala.

Her references [for illustrations] were memories of trips to Kochi and photographs from Sruthi's documentary project on the city. "Every little nook and corner is an illustrator's delight."

A deep connection with food combined with the realisation that they aren't too many children's books about food or rather cooking, led them to the theme. The other intention was to get children interested in how food is made/sourced. "It's to give kids an idea of the long journey spices make before reaching their tables and homes," says Sruthi.

Sanjana adds, "Very early on, we had decided that we wanted to create a story about food – specifically, cooking. We felt it is an often ignored but essential

skill set. We zeroed in on spices since it is an essential part of Indian cooking. We knew that through spices we could talk about history, food, culture and even the economy."

The premise of the story – a man who cooks – was a conscious choice. "We wanted the grandfather to cook, to break the stereotype of a grandmother or a female family member cooking. At the end of the day, it is a book for children and we didn't want to get into anything too heavy or serious," says Sruthi.

With no contacts in the publishing industry nor any idea about how it works, they sent the book, illustration and all, to Speaking Tree, which published the book. They are planning two more books as part of the series.

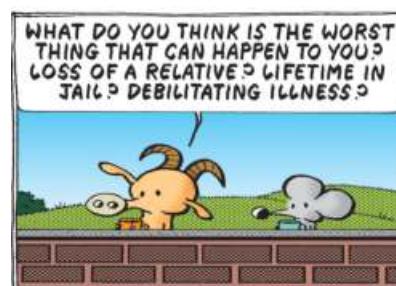
The book published by Talking Cub, an imprint of Speaking Tiger, is available on Amazon.



POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Different genres Dhruv says there are tomes on various topics including academic ones ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Within the PAGES

Fifteen-year-old Dhruv Advaith Kolagata runs a book collection drive for disadvantaged children

NIVEDITA GANGULY

Generation Yuva in Marripalem. Both centres are home to orphaned and abandoned children.

"Most of these children have loads of energy, which needs to be channelised. What is better than creating a reading space for them, especially when the outdoor world is shut for them?" Dhruv says there are books of different genres including academic ones.

Second phase

After successfully setting up libraries in two centres last year, the team of PURE Youth have initiated the second phase of book collection drive to set up similar libraries in juvenile homes across Visakhapatnam. "The collection has been slower this time because of the second wave of the pandemic. We have so far been able to collect 150 books,"

The organisation, that includes eight student members, has also been carrying out projects to support those affected by the pandemic.

Last year, during the migrant workers crisis, Dhruv started the Clothes for Confidence initiative to collect clothes for migrant workers who passed through the region.

"The situation in the second wave is different and deeply distressing. We have seen several senior citizens living alone in the city struggling to find information."

The team is currently supporting, coordinating information for patients and their families in search of hospitals, beds, oxygen cylinders, ICU, food, shelter and quarantine centres. The organisation has also set up two dedicated helplines with COVID-related information in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.



China's population growth slows to lowest rate in decades

12 mn babies were born last year, the lowest since 1961, according to census

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's once-in-a-decade population census has recorded a slowing population growth rate that will likely see China's population peak – and be overtaken by India's – by as early as 2025, experts said, with the number of births falling for the fourth consecutive year.

The seventh census, released on Tuesday by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in Beijing, noted 12 million babies were born last year, the lowest number since 1961, a year when China was in the midst of a four-year famine unleashed by Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward policy in 1958 that devastated the farm sector and claimed millions of lives.

China's population was 1.41 billion in 2020, according to the census, increasing by 72 million since the last census in 2010, recording a 5.38% growth in this period. The average annual growth was 0.53%.

The slowing growth rate, a consequence of China's stringent family planning rules over decades – known as the "one-child policy" but involving a range of varying restrictions across urban and rural areas – has evoked concerns of a rapidly ageing society and the impact on China's labour force, and fears that China will, as some experts have said, "get old before it gets rich".



Slowing down: A nurse with a baby at a hospital in Danzhai, in Guizhou province on Tuesday. ■ AFP

The census recorded 264 million in the age group of 60 and over, up 5.44% since 2010 and accounting for 18.70% of the population. Those in the 15-59 age group were 894 million persons, down by 6.79% since 2010 and accounting for 63.35% of the population.

Chinese experts on Tuesday acknowledged the seriousness of the problem, without linking it directly to the history of the Communist Party's harsh family planning policies, at a time when it is planning to mark its 100th anniversary in July.

In the lead up to the anniversary, China's Internet regulator said it had deleted more than 2 million posts containing "harmful" discussions of history, the *South China Morning Post* reported, with the party clamping down on any adverse commentary about its present or past.

China loosened family planning rules and allowed couples to have two children in 2016, but that has failed to mark a boom amid changing lifestyles and declining preferences, particularly in urban areas, for larger families.

Population decline

"China will likely enter a period of population decline soon," Huang Wenzheng, a fellow at the Center for China and Globalisation, in Beijing, told official broadcaster China Global Television Network.

"This might be the biggest challenge the nation faces in the next century."

The impact on the labour force and healthcare is a particular concern. China's workforce in the 15-59 age bracket peaked at 925 million in 2011, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said previously. That number was down to 894 million in this census

and would drop to 700 million by 2050, according to the Ministry.

The census did not offer a specific year for the population to peak, but experts said that could happen by 2025. "China's population will peak in the future, but there remains uncertainty as to when specifically it will happen," Ning Jizhe of the National Bureau of Statistics said. "For the next stage, we should continue to pay attention to changes in population growth and respond actively to risks and challenges in demographic development," he said.

The findings from the census were not entirely dire. The census also shed light on China's increasingly educated workforce and its rapid pace of urbanisation.

The number of people with a university education was 218 million, up to 15,467 per 100,000 of the population compared with 8,930 in 2010.

The average years of schooling for 15 and above increased from 9.08 years to 9.91 years and the illiteracy rate dropped from 4.08% to 2.67%, in part due to policies for nine years of compulsory and free education.

The urban population touched 901 million, accounting for 63.89%, up from 49.68% in 2010 with an increase of 236 million urban residents in the last decade.

On Monday, Israeli armed forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Haram esh-Sharif in Jerusalem, ahead of a march by Zionist nationalists commemorating Israel's capture of the eastern half of the city in 1967. More than 300 Palestinians were injured in the raid. In retaliation, Hamas, the Islamist militant group that runs Gaza, fired dozens of rockets that killed two Israelis. Israel launched an airstrike on Gaza in response, killing 26 Palestinians, including militants and nine children.

What's happening in Jerusalem?

Following Al-Aqsa raid, Hamas fired rockets and Israel bombed Gaza in return

STANLY JOHNY



Escalating tensions: Rockets being fired from Gaza City, controlled by Hamas, towards Israel on Tuesday. ■ AFP

tional city. But in the first Arab-Israel war of 1948, the Israelis captured the western half of the city, and Jordan took the eastern part, including the Old City that houses Haram esh-Sharif. Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site, and the Dome of the Rock are situated within Haram esh-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary). One side of the compound, called Temple Mount by the Jews, is the Wailing Wall (Western Wall), which is believed to be the remains of the Second Jewish Temple, the holiest site in Judaism.

Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War and annexed it later. Since its annexation, Israel has expanded settlements in East Jerusalem, which is now home for some 220,000 Jews. Jews born in East Jerusalem are Israeli citizens, while Palestinians in the city are given conditional residency permits. Palestinians in East Jerusalem, unlike other parts of the occupied West Bank, can, however, apply for Israeli citizenship. Very few Palestinians have done so.

Israel sees the whole city as its "unified, eternal capital", a claim endorsed by Donald Trump when he was U.S. President but not recognised by most other countries. Palestinian leaders across the political spectrum have maintained that they would not accept any compromise formula for a future Palestinian state unless East Jerusalem is its capital.

EXPLAINER

Tensions have been building up since the start of Ramzan in mid-April when Israeli police set up barricades at the Damascus Gate outside the occupied Old City, preventing Palestinians from gathering there. As clashes erupted, the police removed the barricades, but tensions were already high. The threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah escalated the crisis further in the last week of Ramzan.

Clashes erupted on the night of May 7 in Jerusalem between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police in which hundreds of Palestinians and over a dozen police personnel were injured. The Israeli authorities had given permission to the Jerusalem Day march, traditionally taken out by far-right Zionists through the Arab Quar-

ter of the Old City. Ahead of the march on May 10 (which was rerouted given the tensions), Israeli armed forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque with rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas to evict Palestinians, who Israel said had camped with stones and Molotov cocktail. Hamas issued an ultimatum to the Israeli troops to stand down from Al-Aqsa. By the evening, they launched rockets. Israeli strikes followed.

Sheikh Jarrah dispute
Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes when the State of Israel was created in historic Palestine in 1948 (the Palestinians call the events 'Nakba', or catastrophe). Twenty-eight of those Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem to settle there. In 1956, when East Jerusalem was ruled by Jordan, the Jordanian Ministry of Construction and Development and the UN Relief and Works Agency facilitated the construction of houses for these families in Sheikh Jarrah. But Israel

EU is suing AstraZeneca to get 90 million doses before July

The firm revised deliveries over production issues

told a media conference.

The Commission has launched two emergency legal actions against the company in a Belgian court, first to have the urgency of the issue recognised, and then to have a judge rule on whether the EU's case is well-founded.

After citing production problems in its EU manufacture, and refusing to divert doses from British factories listed as suppliers in the EU contract, the company offered revised deliveries.

At least 8 killed in Russia school shooting

Suspect described himself as a 'deity' and said he wanted to kill a 'huge number of people'



Gunman's fury: Law enforcement officials outside the school in Kazan, Russia, after a shooting incident on Tuesday. ■ AP

At least seven school children and one teacher were killed on Tuesday and many more wounded after a lone teenage gunman opened fire in a school in the Russian city of Kazan, the Mayor's office said, prompting a Kremlin call for tighter gun controls.

Two children could be seen leaping from the third floor of the four-storey School Number 175 to escape as gunshots rang out, in a video filmed by an onlooker that was circulated by Russia's RIA news agency.

Calling the attack a big tragedy for the whole country, Rustam Minnikhanov, the head of the wider Tatarstan region, said

there was no evidence that anyone else had been involved.

"We have lost seven children... four boys and three girls. And 16 people, 12 children and four adults, are in hospital," Min-

ninkhanov told state TV.

"The terrorist has been arrested. He's a 19-year-old who was officially registered as a gun owner."

Footage posted on social me-

dia showed a young man being pinned to the ground outside the school building by a police officer.

An unconfirmed social media account belonging to the alleged shooter, which was later blocked, contained posts in which he described himself as a bloodthirsty deity and said he planned to kill a "huge number" of people before shooting himself.

The alleged gunman was issued a permit for a Hatsan Escort PS shotgun on April 28, Alexander Khinshtain, a lawmaker in the lower house of Parliament, wrote on social media.

President Vladimir Putin ordered tighter gun regulations, the Kremlin said.

Saudi aid worth \$123 mn announced for Pakistan

Imran Khan is in Riyadh on a 2-day visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DUBAI

Saudi Arabia has announced 118 humanitarian projects worth over \$123 million for cash-strapped Pakistan in food security, health, education and water during Prime Minister Imran Khan's two-day visit, according to a report.

The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief)'s Supervisor General Dr Abdullah bin Abdulla said that the assistance was announced in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

118 projects identified
KSrelief announced 118 humanitarian projects for Pakistan at a cost of over \$123 million in food security, health, education, water and environmental sanitation.

He said that the kingdom has provided medical and preventive aid worth over \$1.5 million to combat the pandemic.

Mr. Khan's Special Representative for Middle East Affairs Sheikh Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi told the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) that the visit will push the march of the joint cooperation in the right direction in order to achieve the desired interests

Germany halts FB from sharing WhatsApp data

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BERLIN

A German regulator on Tuesday slapped a three-month ban on Facebook collecting user data from WhatsApp accounts and referred the case to an EU watchdog, citing concerns about election integrity.

The Hamburg Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, with jurisdiction over Facebook's branch based in the city, sent the order to the social network.

The tech giant informed WhatsApp users earlier this year that they must consent to a new data use policy to continue using the service.

The German authority said in an emergency decision that the terms of that agreement were now null and void for three months.

It will hand the case over to the European Data Protection Board, an independent EU body that enforces rules throughout the bloc.

The head of the German regulator, Johannes Caspar, said past Facebook data protection breaches as well as Germany's general election in September showed the "dangers" of "mass building of user profiles" that could be exploited.

MADHYA PRADESH ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD

'A' Wing, Urja Bhawan, Link Road No.-2, Bhopal-462016

Tele : (0) 0755-2768798, Fax : 0755 - 2768805

Email : edb-tender@mp.gov.in, Website : www.mpecotourism.org

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (RFP)

No./MPEDB/F470/2021/01

Date 13.05.2021

Madhya Pradesh Ecotourism Development Board, MP Forest Department invites tender (RFP) for appointment of Transaction Advisor (consultants) for establishment of Tiger Safari at Pachmarhi on Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis. The tender (RFP) duly completed as per prescribed format along with tender (RFP) fee must be submitted online before 07.06.2021 up to 17.00 hours through <https://mptenders.gov.in>. The Detailed tender (RFP) with application form & annexures may be downloaded from website www.mpecotourism.org. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

M.P. Madhyam/100707/2021 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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Date: 10.05.2021

ADVERTISEMENT FOR RECRUITMENT OF EXECUTIVES IN OMC LTD.

ADDENDUM

Pursuant to Advt. No. 55/OMC dtd.22.04.2021 and

Advt. No. 56/OMC dtd.28.04.2021 for recruitment of various

Executive Posts in OMC, the last date of receipt of applications as

mentioned in the aforesaid advertisements are hereby extended

to 01.06.2021 & 08.06.2021 in place of 15.05.2021 & 21.05.2021

respectively, owing to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic scenario.

All other terms & conditions of the above advertisements

shall remain unchanged.

Sd/-
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N.B.: Candidates are advised to visit OMC website ([https://omcltd.in](http://omcltd.in)) regularly for further updates.

CAD-266:

OIPR-30005/11/0022/2122

DIRECTORATE OF AGRICULTURE & FOOD PRODUCTION, ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

For Engagement of Agencies for Comprehensive Action Plan from Production to Marketing of Crops under Crop Diversification Programme.

Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited by the Directorate of Agriculture & Food Production, Odisha, Bhubaneswar from the experienced and interested organizations/Agencies for Engagement in Preparation & Implementation of Comprehensive Action Plan from Production to Marketing of Crops, under Crop Diversification Programme. The interested organization/agencies should offer their sealed EOI by 28.5.2021 up to 3.30 PM. Which will be opened on the same day in the presence of the person concerned /their authorized persons at 5.00 PM. The EOI document including the details of terms and conditions etc will have to be downloaded from the official website of www.odisha.gov.in / agrisnetodisha.ori.nic.in from 14.5.2021 to 1.00 PM of 28.5.2021. The Directorate shall not be responsible for any delay /difficulties /inaccessibility of the download facilities for any reason whatso ever.

The EOI must be delivered in written form to the undersigned in the below mentioned address by speed post /registered post in closed envelope super scribed as "EOI for Professional agency for Crop Diversification Programme" from 14.5.2021 to 28.5.2021 up to 3.30 PM.

The authority is not responsible for any sort of postal delay etc. The authority reserves the right to cancel/reject any or all the EOI without assigning any reason there of.

Sd/-
Director of Agriculture & Food Production, Odisha
OIPR-01034/11/0001/2122

L-16

Shreyas likely to be unavailable for Sri Lanka tour

Hardik and Dhawan front-runners to lead India's second-string squad for limited-over series

CRICKET

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

Shreyas Iyer is unlikely to recover in time to be considered for India's limited-over tour to Sri Lanka in July, which will clash with the Test squad's tour to England.

The Mumbai batsman is being touted as a contender to be India's future captain for the shorter versions of the game. However, ever since injuring his shoulder during the ODI series against England in March, Shreyas has been out of action.

Shoulder surgery

Having undergone a shoulder surgery on April 8, Shreyas is expected to take at least three months to return to competitive cricket. Even though Shreyas is understood to be off a sling, the medical staff of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is understood to have decided in consultation with the team management and



Forced break: Shreyas Iyer is expected to take at least three months to return to competitive cricket. ■ FILE PHOTO

the national selectors that his return should be aimed for the T20 World Cup, likely to start mid-October.

In Shreyas's absence, all-rounder Hardik Pandya and veteran opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan will be front-runners to lead India's

second-string squad to Sri Lanka. Despite BCCI chief informing *The Hindu* earlier this week that the tour will have three T20Is and five ODIs, it is confirmed that India will play three ODIs and three T20Is from July 13 to 27.

Considering the surge of COVID-19 cases in the neighbouring island, the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) is understood to have been working on two plans for the tour.

Depending on its government's clearance, the tour will either be played in Colombo or will be split into



In the reckoning: Shikhar Dhawan and Hardik Pandya... top contenders for captaincy. ■ FILE PHOTOS

Pallekele (near Kandy) and Sooriyawewa (near Hambantota).

Parallel FTP not surprising

The BCCI's decision to agree to tour Sri Lanka with a development squad, leading to two of India's squads based in two different continents at the same time may have raised a few eyebrows, but it was expected.

"It was bound to happen at some point, with stricter

quarantine protocols and limited windows available to respect bilateral cricket commitments," a BCCI official said on Tuesday, preferring anonymity.

In fact, in May 2020, *The Hindu* had reported that parallel Future Tours Programme (FTP) may be forced into the cricket calendar due to the hard lockdown across the globe last year.

While it didn't happen during India's tour to Australia, it will be a reality soon.

those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," Giles said as quoted by ESPNCricinfo.

There were 11 Englishman in various franchises in the suspended IPL.

Giles dismissed suggestion that this signals a change in approach from the ECB as the management had earlier allowed up to a dozen players to miss the Test series against New Zealand at the start of June due to their involvement in the IPL.

"The New Zealand scenario was very different. Those Test matches were formalised at the end of January, by which time all those contracts and NOCs (no objection certificates) were signed for full involvement in the IPL," Giles expressed hope that players would be allowed "a bit more freedom" from bio-bubbles as the England summer progresses.

The Test players are likely to enter their latest bubble from around May 28.

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The Test players are likely to enter their latest bubble from around May 28.

Nadal undecided about Olympics participation



Rafael Nadal. ■ REUTERS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Two-time Olympic champion Rafael Nadal on Tuesday became the latest top tennis player to admit that he had not yet decided whether he would participate in the Tokyo Games this summer, still giving himself time to decide according to "circumstances".

The 34-year-old Spaniard, who won the singles gold in Beijing in 2008, adding another gold in the doubles with Marc Lopez in Rio de Janeiro five years ago.

"In a normal world I would never consider missing the Olympics. There is no doubt about that. Everybody knows how important the Olympics are for me."

"Under these circumstances, I don't know. Let's see what's going on in the next couple of months. But I need to organise my schedule. Honestly I can't give you a clear answer because I don't know."

MCC rejects the idea of bamboo bats

Cambridge varsity study had highlighted the benefits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON



Darshil Shah with the prototype bamboo bat. ■ UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has shot down the idea of bats made from bamboo, saying it would be "illegal" under the current set of rules governing the game.

The guardian of the laws of cricket, however, said they will deliberate on the matter during their sub-committee meeting.

According to a study by Dr. Darshil Shah and Ben Tinkler-Davies from the University of Cambridge, bats made from bamboo are economically sustainable and are also stronger than the ones made from willow, which is traditionally used.

"Currently, law 5.3.2 states that the blade of the bat must consist solely of wood, so for bamboo (which is a grass) to be considered as a realistic alternative to willow would require a law change," MCC said in a statement on Monday.

"Importantly, the law would need to be altered to allow bamboo specifically, as even if it were to be recognised as a wood, this would still be illegal under the current law, which bans lamination of the blade, except in junior

'Don't think we will see those glory days again'

Ambrose laments today's youngsters don't know cricket's importance for WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KINGSTON

Pace legend Curly Ambrose believes the current lot of Caribbean youngsters doesn't really understand what cricket means to the West Indies and so the two-time World champion will never be able to relive the glory days again.

West Indies had lifted first two World Cup titles in 1975 and 1979 and it took 33 years for the team to claim another ICC World title when Dar-



Curly Ambrose. ■ FILE PHOTO

shril Shah with the prototype bamboo bat. ■ UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Most of the youngsters we have now probably don't quite understand what cricket means to West Indians in the West Indies and abroad.

"Because cricket is the only sport that really unites Caribbean people," Ambrose told Talk Sports Live.

No disrespect

"This is no disrespect to the players we have now because we have a couple of guys who have some quality in them and can become

Auger-Aliassime dispatches Schwartzman

Fokina oust Dimitrov; Busta pulls out; Bopanna loses in doubles first round

ITALIAN OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ROME

Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime stunned eighth seed Diego Schwartzman of Argentina 6-1, 6-3 in the second round meeting with Serena Williams, playing her first event since the Australian Open, when she came from a set down to beat Laura Siegemund 2-6, 7-6(3), 6-1.

Japan's Kei Nishikori also made the third round with a walkover against 11th seed Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain.

Earlier in the day, 16th seed Grigor Dimitrov crashed out in the first round when he was beaten by Spanish qualifier Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

The World No. 48 saved two set points in the second set as he dismissed the 2014 semifinalist Dimitrov 6-4, 7-6(2).

In doubles, Rohan Bopanna and Denis Shapovalov

were beaten 6-4, 6-4 by Marcus Daniel and Philipp Oswald in the first round.

On the women's side, Argentinian Nadia Podoroska, ranked 44 in the world, assured herself of a second round meeting with Serena Williams, playing her first event since the Australian Open, when she came from a set down to beat Laura Siegemund 2-6, 7-6(3), 6-1.

Auger-Aliassime had the measure of Schwartzman in straight sets. ■ GETTY IMAGES



Easily done: Felix Auger-Aliassime had the measure of Schwartzman in straight sets. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Watling to retire after WTC final

CHRISTCHURCH New Zealand wicketkeeper-batsman B.J. Watling has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket after the World Test Championship final against India. Watling, 35, has represented the Blackcaps in 73 Tests, 28 ODIs and 5 T20Is. He has scored 3773 runs and taken 259 catches in Tests.

Cricket needs to rediscover its evangelical spirit

Overlapping series in different countries or even the same one will help get through the calendar with greater ease



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

ing more people happy. But there's more to it than that.

Enough talent

It helps, of course, that India have enough players to field two full international teams, each capable of winning their respective series ahead.

The triumph in Australia where India put together a replacement team after injuries (and a childbirth) had deprived them of some top players clearly sent out a message. It also created an opening for bowlers in particular which they might not otherwise have had.

In any case, with the coronavirus squeezing the schedule, the Future Tours Programme will need to be planned differently. Overlapping series in different countries or even the same one will help get through the calendar with greater ease.

It will also mean that international teams which are not television favourites will get a chance to meet the popular ones more often. Anything will be an improvement from the current situation where they are treated like second class citizens.

Few other teams have the luxury of being able to field two teams simultaneously. England, yes. And perhaps Australia too.

But increasingly, as teams field different players depending on the colour of the ball, it is possible that Test cricket and one-day internationals (also T20I) will move on different tracks.

And that's not such a bad thing. Perhaps formats can be played simultaneously during the same tour. It would have been worthwhile experimenting during India's tour of England later this year where they play five Tests but no other internationals.

Top players, however, tend to be crucial to more than one format. Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ben Stokes, Kane Williamson, Babar Azam, Rashid Khan and others are invaluable members of their teams in all formats. But the idea would be to keep the best for the Tests while the best of the rest play the second rung white ball teams. This will mean a great deal to such countries which seldom, if ever, get to

play the top Test teams.

Cricket needs to rediscover its evangelical spirit. In 1929-30, England fielded two international teams, one led by Freddie Calthorpe which was the first to visit the West Indies, and the other by Harold Gilligan which travelled to New Zealand. Both hosts were recent entrants into the Test fold, and England felt it was necessary to promote the game in these new regions.

The more experienced team went to the West Indies, where the four-Test series was drawn 1-1 while the team to New Zealand won 1-0. England played Tests in Georgetown and Auckland simultaneously. But all that is incidental. What matters is the missionary zeal behind the tours. The spread of the game was important, and the established teams felt a responsibility towards the newbies.

Some of that thinking – so necessary to the game's spread, and so forgotten in the era of television money – ought to see India play Nepal or Oman while Australia play Papua New Guinea in ODI. I am not sure that contemporary

teams see this as part of their responsibility. The tension between what the cricket bodies believe is their duty and what television sees as its birthright does not exist.

Governing bodies have the dual responsibility of strengthening the sport in different parts of the world as well as generating funds for themselves.

Television has mainly the latter obligation. The result is that the governing bodies easily fall into line, and don't make enough of their bargaining power – the marquee matches.

Simultaneous tours or competitions will free up time for the marquee teams away from the somewhat rigid Future Tours Programme, enabling them to engage with the less powerful teams.

The India versus Sri Lanka series is a competition of equals and does not fit into this category. But the idea of a fielding two teams – even if it is just by three or four of the top sides – is a sound one, and can help raise the overall standard of the sport.

All that is needed is intent. And common-sense planning.

Anand and four other GMs to raise funds

CHESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand and four other Indian Grandmasters will play simultaneous online exhibition matches against other chess players on Thursday to raise funds for COVID-19 relief work in the country.

Any player who has a Chess.com blitz or FIDE standard rating of under 2000 can play with Anand by donating \$150 and with the other four GMs by paying \$25 as registration amount. Donations will also be accepted during the exhibition matches to be broadcast on Chess.com at 19:30 IST.

The website said it will match all donations up to a total of \$10,000.

All the proceeds from the simultaneous exhibitions involving Anand, Koneru Humpy, D. Harika, Nihal Sarin and R. Praggnanandhaa will go to Red Cross India and the Checkmate COVID initiative of the All India Chess Federation (AICF).

"We all know India is struggling hard against COVID-19. At this time, we all have been affected in some way. I don't think there is a single person young or old who has not been affected by this," Anand said in a video message posted on Chess.com.



You can play some of India's finest GMs, and have Chess.com match your donations. This is a little contribution from our chess fraternity."

IN BRIEF



Buffon to quit Juventus at end of the season

ROME Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon says he will leave the club when his contract expires at the end of the season but could still join another team if he receives a suitable offer. The 43-year-old joined the Turin club in 2001 and has been there ever since except for one season at Paris Saint-Germain in 2018-19. He has won 10 Serie A and four Coppa Italia trophies with Juve. **REUTERS**



Verratti likely to miss Euros due to injury

PARIS Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Marco Verratti will miss the rest of the season because of a right knee injury, the French club said on Tuesday. The Italian will be sidelined for four-to-six weeks, possibly forcing him to also miss the European Championship. Italy's opening match at Euro 2020 is scheduled for June 11 in Rome against Turkey. **AP**

Bengaluru FC squad returns home

BENGALURU The Bengaluru FC (BFC) contingent returned home, after their AFC Cup playoff match against Club Eagles at Male (Maldives) was postponed. The foreign players and staff travelled to their home countries from Male.



Andres Iniesta extends Vissel Kobe contract

TOKYO Spanish football legend Andres Iniesta celebrated his 37th birthday on Tuesday by signing a contract extension that will keep him at J-League side Vissel Kobe for two more years. The former Barcelona midfield maestro joined Kobe in 2018 in a deal worth a reported \$30 million a year and recently recovered from a serious thigh injury. **AFP**



ROME Zlatan Ibrahimovic will be out for at least two matches with a knee injury, just a month before the start of Euro 2020, AC Milan coach Stefano Pioli said on Tuesday. The Swede, who returned to international football in March after a five-year absence, suffered the injury during Milan's 3-0 victory over top-four rival Juventus at the weekend. **AFP**

Nagal stuns Kudla

SPORTS BUREAU HEILBRONN (GERMANY) Sumit Nagal beat sixth seed Denis Kudla of USA 7-5, 6-1 to move into the second round of the €88,620 Challenger tennis tournament here. However, Prajesh Gunnswaran lost to Italy's Alessandro Giannessi 7-6 (4), 6-1 in his opening match.

Ramkumar Ramanathan, who won two qualifying rounds in the €44,820 Zagreb Challenger on his return to the circuit after a six-week break, was beaten 6-4, 6-0 in the first round of the main draw by fellow-qualified Sebastian Baez of Argentina.

Fulham tumbles out of PL

Real Betis boosts its Europa League chances with win over Granada

EURO LEAGUES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON

Relegation, promotion, and now relegation again.

Fulham's rollercoaster ride between the top two divisions of English soccer has taken the London club back out of the Premier League, its fate sealed by losing to Burnley 2-0 on Monday.

Fulham joined Sheffield United and West Bromwich Albion in going down to the Championship, wrapping up the Premier League's relegation battle at the earliest ever stage – with three rounds still to go.

Burnley was one of four clubs – along with Brighton, Newcastle and Southampton – still mathematically not safe heading into the match at Craven Cottage.

Good news for Burnley

After first-half goals from



Rejected lot: Fulham players trudge off the field after losing against Burnley. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Ashley Westwood and former striker Chris Wood, Burnley was able to celebrate the prospect of playing a sixth straight season in the lucrative top flight – a stunning achievement by manager Sean Dyche given the budget he works under.

Borja Iglesias scored twice, including in the 87th minute, as Real Betis defeated Granada 2-1 to move closer to a Europa League spot in the Spanish league.

The victory moved Betis to sixth place with three rounds remaining, two

points in front of Villarreal. The teams in fifth and sixth places qualify for the Europa League next season.

The results: Premier League:

Fulham 0 lost to Burnley 2 (Westwood 35, Wood 44).

Laliga: Real Betis 2 (Iglesias 39, 87) bt Granada 1 (Machis 66).

Westbrook passes Robertson's mark



Numero uno: Westbrook made the record for the most triple-doubles in the NBA all his own on Monday. ■ AFP

NBA

REUTERS

ATLANTA

Washington's Russell Westbrook got his record-setting 182nd career triple-double on Monday, but the Atlanta Hawks came away with a 125-124 victory over the visiting Wizards.

Westbrook had 28 points, 13 rebounds and 21 assists, his 36th triple-double of the season, passing Oscar Robertson's career mark. It was his fifth triple-double in a row and his 18th in his past 21 games.

Stephen Curry scored 36 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 14.5 seconds remaining, as Golden State upended Utah in San Francisco. The game ended not long after the Warriors' spot in the post-season play-in tournament was secured when New Orleans Pelicans lost to Memphis Grizzlies.

DeMar DeRozan poured

in 23 points as host San Antonio moved a step closer to a spot in the play-in tournament with a big win over Milwaukee.

San Antonio, which has won two of its past three games, lowered its magic number for clinching at the 10th spot in the West to just one game.

Jonas Valanciunas and Ja Morant both had double-doubles as host Memphis clinched a berth in the Western Conference play-in tournament by beating New Orleans.

Kelan Martin scored 25 points off the bench to lead short-handed Indiana past Cleveland and closer to a berth in the Eastern Conference play-in tournament.

The results: Atlanta 125 bt Washington 124; Indiana 111 bt Cleveland 102; Memphis 115 bt New Orleans 110; San Antonio 146 bt Milwaukee 125; Golden State 119 bt Utah 116; Portland 140 bt Houston 129.

UEFA may move CL final to Portugal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON

Playing the all-English Champions League final on home soil at Wembley is proving problematic. Instead, the players and fans of Chelsea and Manchester City could be headed to Portugal.

UEFA's hopes of playing its club showpiece in Istanbul have been scuppered for a second consecutive season, this time by Turkey being added to England's "red list" of countries with severe coronavirus outbreaks.

But the government immediately talked with UEFA about the possibility of moving the May 29 final to Wembley.

Discussions between UEFA and the government failed to reach a resolution on Monday with the competition organiser wanting waivers to allow media, sponsors and guests to fly in without having to quarantine, people familiar with the talks told The Associated Press.

UEFA has given the British government until Tuesday to decide whether authorities can offer all of the travel waivers required. If not, UEFA will consider taking the final to Portugal just like last season. Porto's stadium is one of the backup options to play this season's final.

AFC's women's meet draw postponed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KUALA LUMPUR

The qualifying round draw of the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup to be held in India, scheduled for May 27 was on Tuesday postponed by the Asian Football Confederation until further notice due to rising COVID-19 cases in the host country and across the continent.

"Taking into consideration the current challenges and logistical arrangements, the AFC agreed the postponement of the draw was necessary due to rising COVID-19 cases in the host nation as well as across the continent keeping in mind the well-being and safety of all teams, players, officials and relevant stakeholders," the AFC said.

"More details on the new arrangements will be announced in due course," it added in the statement.

Olympic torch relay pulled off Hiroshima streets

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO

The Tokyo Olympic torch relay is being pulled off the streets in Hiroshima prefecture as COVID-19 cases rise in Japan barely 10 weeks before the opening ceremony.

Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki said that a ceremony next week without the relay is likely to still take place. This is at least the sixth change to the relay – from rerouting to cancellation – in the last several weeks.

Organisers warned before the relay began that changes and delays were expected in the face of the pandemic.

"It is certain there will be no relay on public streets since we are all trying to reduce going out, and how to do the ceremony without the relay on the streets is

still being discussed with the organisers," Yuzaki said on Monday.

The relay began on March 25 in northeastern Japan and is to end on July 23 at the opening ceremony of the Olympics.

Cancellation calls

The relay is heavily sponsored by Toyota and Coca-Cola and has proceeded despite some calls a year ago to cancel it to save money. It involves 10,000 runners crisscrossing Japan with organisers trying to keep crowds off the streets and urging them to maintain social distancing.

On Monday, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported that Hyogo and Okayama prefectures will also take the torch relay off public streets.

Have to be prepared for all situations: Rahi

Ace shooter feels pressure is important for peak performance

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI



Rahi Sarnobat.

As much as she sizzles in the international arena with her spell-binding mastery of rapid fire shooting with the sports pistol, Olympian and Asian Games gold medalist Rahi Sarnobat can be stunning with the depth of her thoughts.

A voracious reader who juggles four books at a time, the 30-year-old Rahi has meticulously taken notes of all her experiences over the years, to be best prepared for any situation.

Having been trained by top coaches like Anatolii Pidubnyi and Munkhbayar Dorjsuren, Rahi prefers to be in her "personal space" at the moment in the last

stretch of Olympic preparation in Croatia, especially in the absence of high performance coach Samaresh Jung.

"We have to be prepared for all situations. We have to perform on our own. I do discuss with professional psychologists. I get to know

that I am on the right track. I know the mistakes, problems and the pattern. I keep rating myself on my mental ability," revealed Rahi.

Precautions

Having recovered from COVID after the last World Cup in Delhi in March, when she won an individual silver behind compatriot Chinki Yadav, Rahi has made it a point to pack herself with adequate precautions.

"I am carrying a steamer. I am carrying spices. That is, Ayurvedic ingredients for preparing kadha. I hope not to be infected again. I am also carrying an oximeter and infrared thermometer," said Rahi during a media interac-

tion organised by Sports Authority of India (SAI).

She was categorical that pressure was important for peak performance.

"I want some pressure. I like the feeling of responsibility. More than the media or people, we have expectations from ourselves. It brings out the best in me. I am pretty sure that the expectations will be fulfilled as our young team has been brilliant."

She keeps it simple about the final stretch.

"As athletes, we should stick to our routine. We can't take things for granted. We have to keep working hard and spend time in a productive way. It will help us crack these Games," Rahi said.

LEND
A HAND,
BUT SANITISE
IT TOO.

When the pandemic hit us

first, we braved it together.

Sadly, the times are once

again challenging. While we

do our best to support one another, we need to stay cautious too.

Let us bring back all the habits we practised religiously last year.

The virus has not gone anywhere. Neither should our precautions.

THE HINDU

#KeepTheHabit



Sporting couple: P. Harikrishna is using the lockdown period to train with wife Nadezda Stojanovic. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

because of family commitments but real, serious practice will begin very soon as like anyone I have to be ready as and when the competitive circuit begins, hopefully, with the pandemic fading away," said the 35-year-old.

"Life has been really tough as there is complete lockdown again here (Prague). But it is inevitable. There are positives too like being with the family. Luckily, since Nadezda is a chess player it is handy though I prefer to have onboard training with my seconds, especially ahead of

the World Cup," he said.

"There are more benefits training and competing on the boards," he said.

Hari, who will be playing in his eighth World Cup with his two previous best performances being making it to the last 32 stage, believes that the pandemic is a real test of character for everyone.

"Whoever stays mentally tough, understands the ground reality better and continues to be focused on what he has to do will play better chess," Hari concluded.

"It is not that I was completely away from the sport



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