



13 naxals, including seven women, killed in Maharashtra encounter  
page 8



Government wants 'manipulated media' tag off 'toolkit' tweets  
Page 8



## NEARBY



No sedition charges in Red Fort violence case

NEW DELHI

No sedition charges have been mentioned in the chargesheet filed by the Special Investigation Team of the Delhi police against Punjabi actor-activist Deep Sidhu and 15 others who were arrested in the Red Fort violence case.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

'Nearly 200 cases of black fungus in Delhi hospitals'

NEW DELHI

Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Friday said that 197 cases of black fungus have been reported in Delhi and there was a shortage of drugs to treat the infection. He cautioned COVID-19 patients against taking steroids without doctor's advice as it lowers immunity and increases chances of infection.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

13 Senari massacre accused acquitted

PATNA

The Patna High Court on Friday acquitted 13 accused persons in the Senari massacre case in which 34 persons were killed on March 18, 1999, by an erstwhile Maoist group in Senari village in central Bihar. A Division Bench acquitted the accused for lack of evidence.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

## SC: personal guarantors liable for corporate debt

Court clears insolvency proceedings under the IBC norms

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday upheld a government move to allow lenders to initiate insolvency proceedings against personal guarantors, who are usually promoters of big business houses, along with the stressed corporate entities for whom they gave guarantee.

In a judgment which will ring loud and clear across the business community, a Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat held that the November 15, 2019, government notification allowing creditors, usually financial institutions and banks, to move against personal guarantors under the Indian Bankruptcy and Insolvency Code (IBC) was "legal and valid".

The November 15, 2019, notification was challenged before several High Courts initially.

The Supreme Court had transferred the petitions from the High Courts to itself on a request from the government.

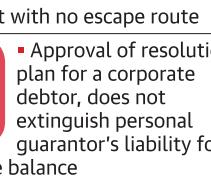
**Intrinsic connection** The court said there was an "intrinsic connection" between personal guarantors and their corporate debtors.



### The IBC Noose Tightens

The Supreme Court has dismissed challenge to invocation of personal guarantees for corporate borrowers under the Insolvency Code

- The decision is expected to boost banks' recovery efforts involving large bad loans
- Promoters and related parties, who often act as personal guarantors,



left with no escape route

- Approval of resolution plan for a corporate debtor, does not extinguish personal guarantor's liability for the balance

**The release or discharge of a principal borrower from the debt by operation of law, or due to liquidation or insolvency proceeding, does not absolve the surety/guarantor of his or her liability, which arises out of an independent contract**

JUSTICE S. RAVINDRA BHAT,  
SUPREME COURT JUDGE

Justice Bhat, who authored the 82-page verdict, said it was this "intimate" connection that made the government recognise personal guarantors as a "separate species" under the IBC.

It was again this intimacy that made the government decide that corporate debtors and their personal guarantors should be dealt with by a common forum – National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) – through the same adjudicatory process.

In this context, Justice Bhat referred to how the November 2019 notification

had not strayed from the original intent of the IBC. In fact, Section 60(2) of the Code had required the bankruptcy proceedings of corporate debtors and their personal guarantors to be held before a common forum – the NCLT.

"The adjudicating authority for personal guarantors will be the NCLT if a parallel resolution process is pending in respect of a corporate debtor for whom the guarantee is given," Justice Bhat noted.

The court referred to his bodily injuries highlighted in a medical report prepared

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



**Celebrating peace:** Palestinians waving national flags in front of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem on Friday. ▪ AP

## Israel-Hamas reach truce after 11 days of fighting

Death toll in violence touches 243

REUTERS

GAZA/JERUSALEM

A truce between Israel and Hamas took hold on Friday after the worst violence in years, with U.S. President Joe Biden pledging to salvage the devastated Gaza Strip and the UN urging new Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

Israel's bombardment of Gaza and militant rocket attacks on Israeli towns

ceased after 11 days under an agreement mediated by Egypt but with negotiations to maintain stability still to be held, it was unclear how long it would last.

Five more bodies were pulled from the rubble in the densely populated Palestinian enclave, taking the death toll to 243.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## A green warrior to the core is no more



**SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA: 1927-2021**

He was known for Chipko movement to save forests

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Well-known environmentalist and Gandhian Sunderlal Bahuguna is no more. Mr. Bahuguna, 94, died of COVID-related complications at AIIMS, Rishikesh, on Friday. He was one of the founders of the Chipko, or hug the tree movement, in the 1970s to save Himalayan forests.

Mr. Bahuguna also led the charge against the construction of big dams in the Himalayas in the 1980s. He was fervently opposed to the construction of the Tehri dam and sat on two long hunger strikes against the dam, which proved to be of no avail.

Mr. Bahuguna, who lived for decades in his Silyara ashram in Tehri Garhwal, inspired many young people by his passion for the environment. His ashram was open to young people, with whom he communicated with ease.

He wrote about the pro-

bлемы of deforestation for years – drawing a link between the lack of tree cover and the drying up of springs in the Himalayas. He also led a movement of women's groups, or mahila mandals, to enforce prohibition in Tehri Garhwal, which was then part of Uttar Pradesh.

Former Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh tweeted, "He had considerable influence on Indira Gandhi & his 4,000 km Kashmir to Kohima padayatra in '81-'82 to heighten public awareness, especially on forest protection, was a landmark. A charismatic man."

SIMPLY EXTRAORDINARY ▶ PAGE 9

Dressed in khadi, sporting a flowing white beard and a jhola on his shoulder, Mr. Bahuguna toured the length and breadth of India carrying his message of "save the Himalayas" to whoever would listen to him.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttarakhand Chief Minister T.S. Rawat were among those who condoled the pioneering environment leader's death.

Former Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh tweeted, "He had considerable influence on Indira Gandhi & his 4,000 km Kashmir to Kohima padayatra in '81-'82 to heighten public awareness, especially on forest protection, was a landmark. A charismatic man."

SIMPLY EXTRAORDINARY ▶ PAGE 9

Almost a four-fold rise in deaths, says official at Kolkata crematorium

BISHWANATH GHOSH  
KOLKATA

Pradip Chattopadhyay is accustomed to watching the dead being brought in, but even he is shaken by the news of the deaths being caused by COVID-19, so much so that he chokes momentarily when he thinks of those he has lost in the recent weeks.

"If someone goes to the hospital after a heart attack or because of any other disease, you have a fair idea how things are going to turn out. But with COVID-19, you never know. These days, when you hear of a relative or a friend contracting CO-

few hundred years old – where, during pre-COVID days, hardly 10-12 bodies were brought in on a daily basis. During the first wave of the pandemic last year, this number rose to about 20 and now, during the second wave, this figure oscillates between 35 and 45.

**Non-COVID deaths** "There is almost a four-fold rise in the number of dead being brought to the Garia crematorium alone. These are not COVID-19 victims; I am not even counting them at the moment. These are mostly non-COVID patients who have died because they have been unable to get timely medical attention due to the pandemic," he said.

"As for COVID-19 victims, they are brought in for cremation only after 10 p.m.

Healthcare workers dump medical waste at a COVID-19 hospital in Kolkata. ▪ PTI

VID-19, the first thing you ask yourself is: will they be able to make it?" he said.

Mr. Chattopadhyay, 56, is a sub-registrar at one of the seven crematoriums run by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation – he signs the all-important piece of paper certifying that one is dead and has been cremated. He is posted at the crematorium in south Kolkata's Garia – a facility easily a

The corporation assigns each crematorium a certain number of bodies every evening. My crematorium sometimes gets 20-plus bodies, sometimes just six. These cremations go on till about 6.30 in the morning, after which the crematorium is sanitised," he said.

Mr. Chattopadhyay, who joined the service in 1998 and has served at five of the crematoriums, said that even as a boy, he was only too keen to visit ailing relatives and friends in hospital or taking the dead to the crematorium, so he was never really disturbed by the sight of the ill or of corpses, "but the pandemic has shaken my very faith in existence."

"The whole thing is getting onto my nerves," he said. "Each day is like participating in a procession of the dead."

## Vaccinate, wear masks, Fauci tells India

Universal immunisation is key, says Chief Medical Adviser to U.S. President

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON DC

As India's daily COVID-19 infections approached the 2,60,000 mark, Anthony Fauci, Chief Medical Adviser to the U.S. President, urged the government to push very hard to get as many people vaccinated as possible.

"As I've said over and over, do whatever you can to upgrade and keep getting people vaccinated. You've got to continue to push very hard to get as many people vaccinated," Dr. Fauci told *The Hindu* during an interview recorded in Washington on Friday.

The infectious disease specialist led the White House response (including having to work around non-science based messaging from former U.S. President Donald Trump) as the U.S. faced a surge in coronavirus cases last year. On India, he said the timing of the end of the current wave would depend on a number of factors



Anthony Fauci

like vaccinations, targeted shutdowns and mask wearing, including indoors.

"Until more people get vaccinated, one needs to be concerned about making sure people wear masks,

particularly in indoor settings when the ventilation is not as good as you would expect, compared to the outdoors," Dr. Fauci said, adding that indoor mask wearing was a good idea until one was fully (not half-way) vaccinated. He also recommended shutting down States or regions experiencing a surge.

"You don't need to shut down for an extended period of time. You could shut down just enough to break the transmission cycle," he said.

INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 9

## SC grants bail to YSRCP MP Raju

Charges do not require custodial interrogation, says court

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday decided there is no need for the Jaganmohan Reddy-led YSRCP government in Andhra Pradesh to keep its Narasapuram MP and party's vocal critic, K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, now accused of sedition, in custody and granted him bail.

A Bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B.R. Gavai, after a hearing, which spanned the better part of the day and extended beyond normal court hours, gave Mr. Raju his liberty back.

The court referred to his bodily injuries highlighted in a medical report prepared

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju by the Secunderabad Army Hospital doctors and the fact that his charges did not require custodial interrogation to rule in his favour. The court said the possibility of ill-treatment could not be ruled out.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## HC quashes GST on oxygen concentrators

VIKAS DHOOT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday held the government's imposition of GST on oxygen concentrators imported for personal use as "unconstitutional" and said oxygen concentrators constitute a life-saving device during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Oxygen concentrator, on the face of it, is a life-saving device," Justice Shakti said. "In times of war, floods... pandemic, a different approach needs to be adopted," he noted.

The Bench said Mr. Raju's public statements against his party and the Chief Minister are very much on record.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## No doses left for 18-44 age group: Delhi govt.

Vaccine centres to shut from May 24

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Friday announced that all centres administering vaccines to those in the 18-44 age group will be temporarily shut from May 24 due to unavailability of vaccines.

The government had over the past few days shut nearly 235 vaccination sites due to shortage of vaccines for the 18-44 age group. The remaining 133 sites will also be shut now as the government has no vaccines left.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

have absolutely zero vaccines left for the 18-44 segment. When we started inoculating the 18-44 group, the drive was running in 368 sites. Covaxin supply has already ended, and Covishield supply is also nearing its end. As of Friday, those in the 18-44 age group are being jabbed in only 133 centres," Ms. Atishi said.

**Dwindling supply** For those over 45 years of age and healthcare/front-line workers, Ms. Atishi said the government has Covaxin in stock for less than one day and Covishield stock for eight days.

## IN BRIEF

## 'If cases surge, beds at IHBAS will be increased'

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi government and the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) on Friday assured the Delhi High Court that if there is another surge in COVID infections, the number of beds in the institute's COVID facility for patients suffering from neurological problems would be increased.

## Three held for slaughtering cows in Ranholi

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Three persons have been arrested for allegedly slaughtering cows in Outer Delhi's Ranholi, the police said on Friday.

DCP (Outer) Parvinder Singh said the accused have been identified as Shau (23) from Sambhal, Tanjeem (23), and Mohseen (30) – both from Shamli.

Two FIRs were lodged when remains of the cattle were found in Ranholi.

Shau resides in Uttam Nagar in Delhi and has one previous criminal involvement while Tanjeem and Mohseen live in Nangli dairy. "A vehicle and some knives have been recovered," Mr. Singh said. The gang has eight members in total and teams are looking for the remaining five.

Sources said a few gangs in, and outside Delhi are active in slaughtering cows.

"They work in a chain. There are people who identify the cattle and then they are brought to a vacant place where they are slaughtered and thereafter, cattle are transported to areas where they are consumed," said an officer said, adding that gangs are active from Mewat to Meerut.

TRIPURA RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
(Department of Power, Government of Tripura)

Vigyan Bhawan, Pandit Nehru Complex, Gorkhastoli, Agartala, Tripura

PNle-T No.F.6(296)/TREDA/NCES/2021/802 Date 20/05/2021

## NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

On behalf of Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency, Joint Director invites e-tenders for the work of design, manufacture, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of 1kWp grid interactive Solar PV Power Plants on turn-key basis vide DNle-T No.F.6(296)/TREDA/NCES/2021/801, dated 20/05/2021.

The tender papers may be downloaded from e-procurement portal <http://tripuratenders.gov.in> and deadline for submission of online e-bid is 15/06/2021 upto 2:00 PM.

(D S DAS)  
Joint Director

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MANDI  
Kamand-175075, District-Mandi (HP), India

## Notice Inviting e-Tenders

The Superintending Engineer, IIT Mandi, Kamand campus, Distt. Mandi (H.P.) Pin 175075 on behalf of BoG re-invites online item rate bids in two bids system for the work appearing at Sr. No.1 below from approved and eligible contractors of appropriate class enlisted with Central State Govt. organization/Central Autonomous body/ Central Public Sector Undertaking from contractors dealing with Civil work.

1-NIT No: IIT Mandi(CW)SE-1118/2021-22/306-08 dated 13-04-2021 Name of work: "Re-tender for Channelization of root water of various blocks (C29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 24, 23 and C-22, B-13, B-14, 23, 21, 20, 16, 09, 17, 24, 26, 25, 10, 12, 18, 15, 19, A10 and A12) at North Campus of IIT Mandi". Estimated cost Rs. 37,35,726.00. Earnest Money Rs.74,715.00. Cost of Tender document Rs. 1180.00 & completion period 120 Days. Last time and date of submission of bid up to 03:00 PM on 14-06-2021. Time & date of opening of bid at 03:30 PM on 15-06-2021.

The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website <http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.

The press notice is also available on <http://iitmmandi.ac.in/administration/tenderseoi.php>

Sd/-  
Superintending Engineer,

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR,  
SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, SOURA  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, MECHANICAL

E-Mail : [mechanicalskims@gmail.com](mailto:mechanicalskims@gmail.com)

## Short term Notice Inviting E-tenders

Gist of e-NIT NO. 08 OF 2021-22 Dated. 19.05.2021

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir, Executive Engineer, Mechanical, SKIMS, Soura, Srinagar, invites online e-bids in two (02) cover systems from Manufacturers/Authorized Dealers / registered/Reputed and experienced firms having expertise as detailed in the tender document for the following works:

S.No	Name of the Work :-	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)
1	Supply of bulk Type Cylinders for Disaster Ward at SKIMS , MCH Bemina	Rs. 21,00,000/-
	The complete tender document is available at website <a href="http://jktdenders.gov.in">http://jktdenders.gov.in</a> . Interested bidders/tenderers may view, download the e-bid document, seek clarifications and submit their bids online up to the date and time mentioned in the table below. Tender Document contains qualifying criteria for bidders. Bills of Quantities, & Terms and conditions of the contract and other relevant details.	
I)	Date and time of downloading/Sale of tender documents (Starting Date).	21.05.2021 at 11:00 Hours.
ii)	Date & Time of Bidding/Queries/clarification/Pre-bid meet	22.05.2021 at 14:00 Hours.
iii)	Last Date & Time of Bid Uploading	27.05.2021 upto 16:00 Hours
iv)	Date of Submission of hard copies (Original EMD/FDR & DD Only)	28.05.2021 upto 14:00 Hours
v)	Date & Time of Commercial/technical Bid (Cover-I) opening	29.05.2021 at 11:00 Hours ( or next convenient day) .
vi)	Date & Time of Financial Bid(Cover-II) Opening	Should be intimated separately.
vii)	Cost of e-bid Document	Rs.1000/- (Rupees one thousand only)
viii)	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit(CDR/FDR)	Rs. 42000/- (Rupees Forty- Two thousand only)
ix)	Completion Time	10 Days
x)	Budget Head	MPLAD for the year 2021-22

No.:SIMS 139 EX/MECH/547/2021-339-409-4617-19 Dt:- 19.05.2021

No.:SIMS 4619 Dated:- 21.05.2021

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Mechanical, SKIMS

## Many inoculation sites remain shut due to vaccine shortage

Volunteers at few other centres say only those in 45-plus category getting jabs

SHINJINI GHOSH  
NEW DELHI

A number of inoculation sites across the Capital remained shut on Friday due to vaccine shortage. Meanwhile, volunteers at a few other sites said the centres, where people in the 18-44 age group were being given the jabs, are now vaccinating only those above 45.

Despite vaccination banners and notices put on its gates, Ishani Government Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Saket remained closed for inoculations on Friday.

A guard at the school said: "The school has been shut for vaccination since May 14. There were four sites in this school and Covaxin was being administered here for the 18-44 age category. However, due to unavailability of vaccines, the sites are closed for over a week now."

Delhi government schools across the city, which had been converted into vaccination sites, saw a steady rush of people. With controlled crowds, civil defence volunteers and police personnel in place, these sites paved the way for several people to get vaccinated over the past few weeks.

The Gargi Government Sarvodaya Girls Senior Secondary School in Safdarjung Enclave was another site where the vaccination process for the 18-44 age category has been discontinued, said police personnel stationed at the gates.



A CISF jawan guards an empty vaccination site at Navyug School, Pandara Park, in Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR

tion sites, saw a steady rush of people. With controlled crowds, civil defence volunteers and police personnel in place, these sites paved the way for several people to get vaccinated over the past few weeks.

"Till Thursday, Covishield was administered to people in the 18-44 age category. However, on Friday we did not see anyone from this category probably because there were no slots available. At the four sites inside the school, vaccines for the above 45-year category is being administered now. People in this category can walk in directly and do not require prior appointments," a policeman at the school said. Outside one of the government schools in Malviya Nagar, where the vac-

cination process for both categories were being conducted, those receiving the shots said they felt relieved to have received at least one dose.

Waiting outside the Government Boys Senior Secondary School in the area, South Delhi resident Gaurav Chauhan, said: "I am here for my daughter's vaccination process. All these days getting an appointment and a slot was proving to be difficult. However, in the last few days, reports of the shortage of vaccine had really made us tense. We saw how young people got affected in the second wave and now I am glad that my daughter will at least get her first dose. Hopefully, the supply chain will normalise soon."

Civil defence volunteers present at the school said: "The vaccination drive has been going without a hitch in this school. As of Friday, Covishield is being administered to both categories of people and those above 45 can simply walk in."

"The chargesheet was prepared after going through scores of technical

## Red Fort case: no sedition charges against Deep and 15 others by SIT

3,000-page chargesheet submitted at Tis Hazari Court on May 17

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

No sedition charges have been mentioned in the chargesheet filed by the Special Investigation Team of Delhi Police against Punjabi actor-activist Deep Sidhu and 15 others who were arrested in the Red Fort violence case, said a senior officer on Friday.

"We have conducted a detailed investigation while preparing the chargesheet. The accused have not been charged under sedition. If more evidence or any new development happens in the case then they will file supplementary chargesheet in the case," the police officer said.

He added that a total 3,000-page chargesheet was submitted on May 17 before the Duty Magistrate at the Tis Hazari Court. It was the first chargesheet in the violence that happened during farmers' tractor rally on Republic Day.

"The chargesheet was prepared after going through scores of technical



Security personnel deployed at the Red Fort after the violence in Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

charged under IPC sections 186 [obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions], 353 [assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty], 308 [attempt to commit culpable homicide], 152 [assaulting or obstructing public servant when suppressing riot, etc], 397 [robbery, or dacoity, with attempt to cause death or grievous hurt], and 307 [attempt to murder]," as per the chargesheet.

**Key conspirators**  
In the chargesheet, the police have mentioned Deep and Lakha as key conspirators, who were acting on behest of farmers' leaders protesting at Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border.

After January 26 violence, the Delhi Police registered 43 cases across the city.

The SIT constituted by the Delhi Police Crime Branch that was probing the Red Fort incident on Republic Day. Over 150 persons were arrested in connection with the case.

Lakha Sidhana and six others are named as absconding accused as they are still on run.

"All 16 accused have been

properties owned by Sushil in Delhi-NCR. The brawl that happened inside the stadium was over a property dispute," added the officer.

On May 17, the police had announced a reward of ₹1 lakh to help catch the Olympic medalist and ₹50,000 for co-accused Ajay.

Kumar, employed with Indian Railways, was presently on deputation as an Officer on Special Duty at Chhatrasal Stadium, where the brawl allegedly took place on May 3 and 4 midnight. Wrestler Sagar Dhankar, 23, died while three others suffered injuries. +

## Foreign national nabbed for duping many people on pretext of supplying Remdesivir

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 41-year-old Nigerian has been arrested from Dwarika's Khanpur for allegedly cheating people on the pretext of supplying them Remdesivir injections at a higher price, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) S.K. Meena said the accused, Chieukem Daniel P.E., was arrested from his rented house.

The police said they received a complaint from a man that he was in urgent

need of three Remdesivir injections for his acquaintance, who was suffering from COVID-19.

**'₹25K for one injection'**  
He found the accused's number on social media and when he called, the accused agreed to provide the injection for ₹25,000 each and also asked for ₹10,000 advance.

The victim then paid the accused but did not get the injection.

During probe, call detail records of the accused were analysed following

which he was nabbed on Wednesday.

During interrogation, the accused allegedly told police he had come to India from Nigeria three-four years ago on a medical visa. His visa has expired but he along with his other associates indulged in cheating people on the pretext of custom clearance.

However, during the ongoing pandemic, they also started cheating people on the pretext of providing medicines and injections required for treatment of COVID, the DCP added.

## Wrestler's death: more police deployed at stadium

Officers' team reaches Punjab looking for accused Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has deployed an armed reserve police force at the entry gate of Chhatrasal Stadium and all security guards at the gates have been replaced with new ones. The move came after a brawl broke out inside the north-west Delhi stadium that led to the death of a wrestler earlier this month.

A senior officer said the deployment of a reserve police force is part of a precautionary measure. After the incident, the police had a meeting with the management of

the stadium over security measures.

## New security agency

"There was a recommendation to change the private security guards at the stadium gate because, on the day of the incident, the earlier ones didn't inform the police about the brawl immediately. A new private security agency has been given the charge of security at the main gate and it has been briefed by the management over the entry of visitors," said the officer.

Meanwhile, a police team reached Bhatinda in Punjab

after wrestler Sushil Kumar was spotted in the city.

"The Delhi Police team, along with Punjab Police, questioned the man who was identified after scanning ID through which a SIM card was activated.

We have got some leads stating that Sushil was spotted in Mohali on Friday afternoon," said the officer.

More than 15 police teams are on the lookout for Mr. Kumar in four States. "Delhi Police raided several gyms [akhadas] in Haryana in search of Sushil's associates. His father-in-law was also questioned. We are gathering details of the

## Labourer held for killing wife in north-east Delhi

## She had filed domestic violence case

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A man has been arrested for allegedly killing his 42-year-old wife in north-east Delhi on Friday morning, the police said.

During investigation, the police found that the couple had a matrimonial dispute going on between them.

"Victim had filed a domestic violence case against her husband in Karkardooma court. She had disowned her husband, alleging him of bad character," DCP said, adding that the couple has three children.

A murder case has been registered and further probe is under way.

juries and a mattock was found near the body. Her husband, who was near her at that time, confessed to the crime," the officer said.

During investigation, the police found that the couple had a matrimonial

**Timings****DELHI**

SATURDAY, MAY. 22
RISE 05:28 SET 19:09
RISE 14:39 SET 02:33
SUNDAY, MAY. 23
RISE 05:27 SET 19:10
15:45 SET 03:08
MONDAY, MAY. 24
RISE 05:27 SET 19:11
RISE 16:52 SET 03:45

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	33	19
Safdarjung	33	19
Palam	33	21

**Delhi Paliam Today**  
36°C Passing rain at few places during morning. Rise in temperatures likely. Day would turn warm with partly cloudy sky.

**Delhi Paliam Tomorrow**  
38°C A comfortable morning and hot day likely to prevail with mainly sunny sky.

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**IN BRIEF****US envoy, CM discuss pandemic strategy**

NEW DELHI  
Daniel B. Smith, Charge D'Affaires, USA, in a videoconference meeting with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday deliberated on how Delhi and the USA can work together to address the pandemic. The Chief Minister's Office tweeted, "H.E. Daniel B. Smith, Charge D'Affaires, USA @USAmbIndia called on Hon'ble CM Shri @ArvindKejriwal today. Both the leaders deliberated on how the State of Delhi and the USA can work together to address the COVID pandemic [sic]."

**BJP files complaint against CM, Deputy CM**  
NEW DELHI  
BJP spokesperson Harish Khurana has filed a complaint against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia accusing them of "fear mongering" regarding the possibility of a new COVID strain entering the country from Singapore. The complaint was filed under the National Disaster Management Act Section 54.

**Shrivastava now full-fledged police chief**

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI  
Senior IPS officer S.N. Shrivastava was appointed as full-fledged Commissioner of Delhi Police on Thursday, according to an official order.

A 1985-batch IPS officer, who is scheduled to retire next month, was holding the post of Delhi Police Commissioner as an additional charge till date.

The order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs stated that Mr. Shrivastava has been cleared for holding the post of Commissioner of Delhi Police until further orders. His name was cleared by the competent authority, the order said.

**BJP accuses AAP govt. of reduced testing**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI  
The BJP on Friday accused the Delhi government of reducing the testing rate so as to hide the real numbers and show that everything is under control.

The large number of deaths due to the virus had, however, put paid to this "design" as many patients continued to struggle for their lives while scores of others were forced to leave the city, said Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said.

The Delhi government in a statement said this is a frivolous allegation since Delhi has consistently been testing the highest nationally at 4,000 tests per million population, which is 4 times the national average.

# Nearly 200 cases of black fungus infection in Delhi'

Minister cautions those who have taken steroids to be alert

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT****NEW DELHI**

Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Friday said that 197 cases of black fungus have been reported in the Capital and there was a shortage of medication to treat the infection across the country. He said that the infection was caused due to increase in blood sugar levels and decreased immunity, which stems from taking steroids to treat complications arising due to COVID-19.

"COVID-19 patients who have been given steroids during treatment should be vigilant for one week after its closure and should not leave the house. They need to be extra vigilant and have minimal social interaction. When blood sugar increases, viruses, fungi and bacteria attack very rapidly. There is a problem of shortage of black fungus medicine in the entire country including Delhi," said Mr. Jain. He added



Satyendar Jain ■

said. He added that a healthy person has very low chances of getting black fungus and those that have taken steroids should be vigilant up to 7 days after the course.

**Pan-India pangs**  
Mr. Jain said that the problem of shortage of medicines for black fungus is not only in Delhi but in the whole country.

"Our demand is much more than what we are being given by the Centre. How can we equally distribute to hospitals when we have received less? Even the HC has stated that there is a shortage for its medicine in India and that the Centre should supply the medicines from anywhere they can," Mr. Jain said.

The Health Minister added that the medicines to treat the infection cannot be purchased from medical stores as this cannot be treated at home.

The Health Minister added that the medicines to treat the infection cannot be purchased from medical stores as this cannot be treated at home.

## Hospitals must reserve beds for certain categories'

You can't say no to PM or President: HC

**STAFF REPORTER****NEW DELHI**

The Delhi High Court said on Friday that there has to be reservation of beds in hospitals for treatment of certain categories of people such as the President and Prime Minister of the country.

A Bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh made the remark while hearing a plea seeking a centralised and transparent system to help COVID-19 patients locate a bed in hospitals.

"We can understand if there are some beds which are not used, there will be such a situation. If the Prime Minister of India or the President needs treatment, you have to keep a bed reserved for him in a hospital. That category has to be there. You can't say no," the court



stated.

Delhi resident Manjit Singh, who works in the hospitality industry, has said in his petition that in the current circumstances of health emergency, when demand for beds was more than their supply, "there should be some mechanism to ensure that allocation of beds to COVID-19 patients in the hospitals across the city is not arbitrary and unreasonable".

But a message in the housing society's WhatsApp group about a gurdwara offering free home delivery of food was a godsend for them.

"Both of us were down with the infection, and cooking was not possible. So we decided to avail of this facility offered by Sadh Sangat Gurdwara in South City-I. It was a great experience. The gurdwara's volunteers would leave the food at the society gate.

**ASHOK KUMAR****GURUGRAM**

Less than a month after Anil Dubey, a marketing executive with a real estate firm, shifted to Mapsko Paradise Housing Society in Sector 83 here with his wife and two children from Delhi in April, the couple got infected with COVID-19. With none of the relatives and friends around to lend a helping hand, the Dubeys were left in the lurch.

But a message in the housing society's WhatsApp group about a gurdwara offering free home delivery of food was a godsend for them.

The security guards then delivered it to us," said Mr. Dubey. He said that he, along with family, would visit the gurdwara after the situation returns to normalcy and make a contribution.

Tasneem, a teacher, recalled how the food was delivered in "neatly packed containers that could be used in the microwave oven and dis-

# Capital logs 3,009 new cases in 24 hours

63,190 tests conducted with a positivity rate of 4.76%; active cases stand at 35,683

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT****NEW DELHI**

The Capital recorded 3,009 new COVID-19 cases on Friday along with 252 deaths, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. The bulletin said that 63,190 tests were conducted in the 24 hours with a positivity rate of 4.76%. There are 35,683 active cases in the Capital out of which 20,673 are under home isolation.

The positivity rate fell to below 5% for the first time since it peaked on April 22 at 36%. The number of new cases has been the lowest since April 1, when 2,790 cases and nine deaths were recorded.

The cumulative figures now stand at 14,12,959 cases with 22,831 deaths and 13,445 recoveries.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that there were 16,712 COVID beds and 1748 ICU beds that are vacant in hospitals but warned of complacency. "We can see a prominent downward trend. We have dropped down significantly



RT-PCR test being conducted at Azadpur in the city on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

that Covaxin stock was absolutely over for 18-44 age group, and Covishield is also nearly finished, due to which a lot of centres had closed down. "Our distribution network is massive and is capable of inoculating up to 3 lakh people in a day in Delhi. The vaccine supply is completely controlled by the Centre and we can inoculate only what we are receiving from them," Mr. Jain said.

**100-bed facility opened**

Delhi Cabinet Minister and MLA from Babarpur, Gopal Rai on Friday inaugurated a 100-bed COVID care facility at the Ambedkar College in the Babarpur area. He said that this COVID care facility has 50 oxygen beds and 50 normal beds and this facility is connected with the GTB Hospital. Mr. Rai said that people living in north-east Delhi were facing problems isolating as it was a very congested area and hoped that the community Covid Care Centre would help those facing problems isolating at home.

haviour by all means," Mr. Jain said.

**On war footing**

The Minister said that even though there were fewer admissions of children in hospitals, the total number in this wave increased three times as compared to the previous ones. He added that people living in north-east Delhi were facing problems isolating as it was a very congested area and hoped that the community Covid Care Centre would help those facing problems isolating at home.

Speaking about the shortage of vaccines, Mr. Jan said

## Sadh Sangat Gurdwara, a helping hand for patients

Volunteers have been providing free food to those stuck at homes, infected by COVID-19



Volunteers packing food at Sadh Sangat Gurdwara at South City-1 in Gurugram. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The security guards then delivered it to us," said Mr. Dubey. He said that he, along with family, would visit the gurdwara after the situation returns to normalcy and make a contribution.

Tasneem, a teacher, recalled how the food was delivered in "neatly packed containers that could be used in the microwave oven and dis-

posed of keeping in view the comfort of the patients". Ms. Tasneem, her husband and their 12-year-old child availed the facility for almost two weeks last month after they were infected. "They continued to supply even after we were fully recovered till the time we did not ask them to stop. I recommended this facility to many of my friends

and relatives," said Ms. Tasneem, a Sector 31 resident.

The gurdwara management committee has been offering free home delivery of food to COVID-19 patients for almost a month now. "We daily deliver around 850-900 thalis for lunch and dinner each. Our own volunteers deliver it to the families within a radius of five km. For a distance beyond this, we prefer the families to send someone to collect the food," said Baljeet Singh, member of Gurdwara Sadh Sangat management committee.

"They listened to the genuine concerns of the residents fearing spread of infection and managed to get space inside the Government Law College for the facility. Hats off to this community which is always willing to lend a helping hand in any situation," said Mr. Wadhwa.

Besides, the management

## Samyukt Kisan Morcha writes to PM to resume talks over farm laws

There has been no talks between the two sides since Jan. 26

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA****NEW DELHI**

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of over 40 protesting farmer unions, on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging resumption of talks over the three farm laws they have been agitating against at Delhi borders since November last year.

Several rounds of talks between farmers and the government have failed to

break the deadlock over the three Central legislations. The farmers' body said in a statement on Friday it has again asked the government to reinitiate a dialogue with the protesting farmers.

A government panel had met farmer leaders on January 22. There has been no talks between the two sides since January 26 when the tractor rally turned violent.

"The SKM has written a letter to the Prime Minister,

**Checking point**

A doctor checking a patient at a COVID facility set up at Rakab Ganj Gurdwara in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

## CM provides ₹1 crore aid to kin of schoolteacher who died of COVID

Wife of corona warrior to be provided govt. job: Kejriwal

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT****NEW DELHI**

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday provided financial assistance of ₹1 crore to the family of corona warrior Nitin Tanwar, a primary schoolteacher, who died when performing various duties throughout the pandemic.

He was a resident of Delhi and is survived by his father, mother, wife, daughter and brother.

**Hard-working, dedicated**  
"Late Nitin Tanwar Ji was a very hardworking and dedicated teacher in our Delhi government school. He was

on compassionate grounds, the CM said.

Tanwar got infected by COVID-19 in the line of duty on December 12, 2020 and was admitted to the RML Hospital, where he died on December 14.

He was a resident of Delhi and is survived by his father, mother, wife, daughter and brother.

## Congress Ki Rasoi resumed to help needy

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT****NEW DELHI**

The Delhi Congress on Friday said that it had restarted its 'Congress Ki Rasoi' across Delhi to supply free cooked meals to the needy, and dependents of COVID-19 patients.

On the occasion of the 30th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress distributed four lakh masks, sanitiser, medicine kits, oxygen cylinders and concentrators, steam machines, dry ration, and ambulance services to the needy, Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said.

## DDC delivers over 2,000 oxygen concentrators

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT****NEW DELHI**

Using a unique tech-based solution and with the selfless contribution of several individuals and organisations, the Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi (DDC) has delivered over 2,300 oxygen concentrators to several Delhi government hospitals to help them in the treatment of patients in this difficult time, the Delhi government stated here Friday.

The streamlined process, the government stated, involves vetting medical equipment once received through donors, attaching a unique QR code and then supplying them to various hospitals as per their needs, the go-



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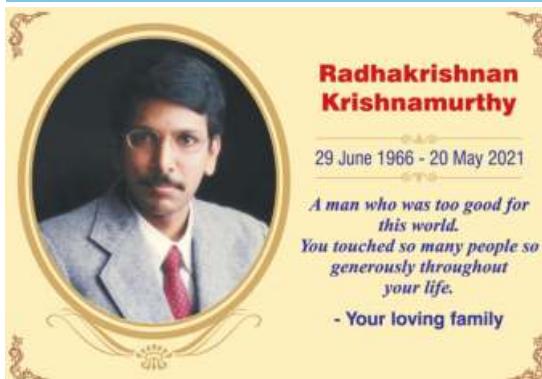
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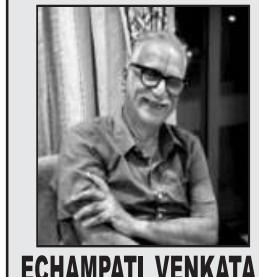
## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH



Read and Recite श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता  
by जगद्गुरु भगवान् श्री विष्णुर्यथस्वामी  
मनसा कर्मणा वाचा स्मरते ता मदाश्रयम्।  
सत्त्वं बुद्धिं एवं कृत्वा तात्पर्यमि भवतीक्ष्म॥  
I will follow the person who has devotion in M through his mind, action and speech until he sails across the ocean of 'Samsara Chakra'

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and Friends

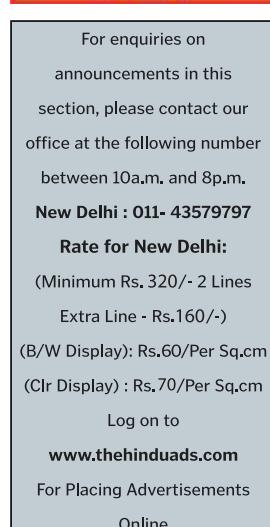
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## DEATH



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SECTION 1  
Chief Engineer (MZ), HP.PWD., Mandi  
(Name of Authority Inviting Bids)

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

The Superintending Engineer, 1<sup>st</sup> Circle, HP.PWD., Mandi on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the percentage rate/item rate bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana for each of the following works including their maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HPPWD/CPWD/P&T/Railways /other State Govt./Central Govt agencies. Non registered may submit the bids; however, successful bidder has to register in appropriate class with appropriate authority in HPPWD.

Sr. No	District	Package No.	Name of the work	Estimated Cost (Rs. Lakh)		Total Cost (Rs. Lakh)	Period of Completion (in Days)	Bid security (Rs. Lakh) (2% of Total Cost)	Eligible Class of Contractor/Firm
				Construction	Maintenance				
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1.	Mandi	HP-08-457	Balance work for the Construction of Shilhbadwani to Kathog road (Portion Shilhbadwani to Sudhar) Km. 0/0 to 5/0 ( L-026) under PMGSY Batch-II, Stage -II for the year 2017-18, Package No. HP-08-457.	100.55	27.30	127.85	365	2.56	Class-C & Above

All duties, taxes, royalties and other levies payable by the Contractor under the Contract, or for any other cause, but excluding GST shall be included in the rates, prices and total Bid price submitted by the Bidder and GST at prevalent rates will be added to the value offered by the bidder separately.

2. Date of release of invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 27-05-2021.  
3. Cost of Bid Form: Rs. 500/- (only non-refundable) in form of Demand Draft in favour of the Executive Engineer, Mandi Division No.I, HP.PWD., Mandi.

4. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website [www.pmgstenders.gov.in](http://www.pmgstenders.gov.in). The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in PMGSY may obtain the same from the website: [www.pmgstenders.gov.in](http://www.pmgstenders.gov.in). Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

\* Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

5. Submission of Original Documents: The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4(b)(a) (ii) of ITB with Executive Engineer, Mandi Division No.I, HP.PWD., Mandi/ Superintending Engineer, 1<sup>st</sup> Circle, HP.PWD. Mandi up to or before the time and date of submission of bids. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

6. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: 09-06-2021 up-to 1030 Hours.

7. The site for the work is available.

8. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore; bids must be submitted online on website [www.pmgstenders.gov.in](http://www.pmgstenders.gov.in). The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 1100 hours on 09-06-2021 by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.

9. The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are indicated in the Bill of Quantities. Further, the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.

10. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than ninety days after the deadline date for bid submission.

11. Bidders may bid for any one or more of the works mentioned in the Table above. To qualify for a package of contracts made up of this and other contracts for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate having experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.

12. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

The undersigned has right to extend or cancel the bids without declaring any reasons thereof.

Superintending Engineer,  
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Telephone No. 01905-224129,  
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HP / 0959/21-22

# Haryana to bear cost of treatment of BPL patients

Focus should now be on post-COVID complications: CM

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

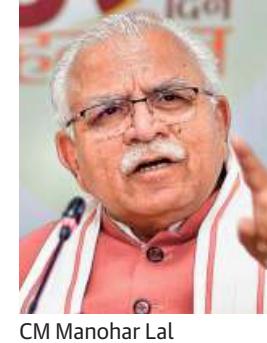
Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal announced on Friday that the entire treatment cost of below poverty line (BPL) patients undergoing COVID-19 treatment at private hospitals would be borne by the State government.

Earlier, the State government had announced financial assistance of up to ₹35,000 for BPL patients.

"All the BPL families who are not covered under Aushman Bharat scheme will be eligible to get this benefit and the Deputy Commissioner will ensure that this financial assistance scheme reaches grassroots level," said Mr. Lal.

The Chief Minister was chairing the eighth review meeting of COVID-19 management with government officials through video conferencing.

He said that while the go-



mucormycosis. He said at least 20 beds should be reserved for its treatment in all medical colleges.

"The Deputy Commissioners should ensure that every hospital of their respective districts should share real-time data of the patients suffering from this deadly disease and the referral for such patients should be made in medical colleges only," Mr. Lal said.

verntment and private hospitals of the State were putting up a tough fight against the ongoing second wave of COVID-19, the focus now should be on making adequate arrangements to deal with the patients suffering from post-COVID complications, including keeping a close vigil on mucormycosis (black fungus) cases.

The Chief Minister directed the Deputy Commissioner to closely monitor the increase in the cases of

vaccine manufacturers during a pre-bidding meeting on May 19.

As per the government's new vaccination policy initiative, the population within the age group of 18-44 years would be provided with free vaccines at the cost of the State exchequer. Subsequently, it was decided to procure the vaccines from the open market through global tender.

This came to light when the Rayagada district administration successfully persuaded the tribe to undergo

# Virus adds to Mizoram's Myanmar refugee crisis

A third of over 15,500 are in Aizawl

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The death of a Myanmar national in State capital Aizawl and COVID-19 infection among scores of others in a few districts has added to the refugee crisis in Mizoram.

"Almost a third of more than 15,500 Myanmar nationals who fled a military crackdown since the coup on February 1 are in Aizawl. One of them died at a COVID-19 centre in Aizawl on Wednesday, the 30th in the State due to infection by the novel coronavirus since May 2020.

The Mizoram government has been caught in a Catch-22 situation. It can neither ignore a March 10 order from the Ministry of Home Affairs to not let the refugees in nor prevent locals from providing accommodation and assisting the Myanmar nationals.

"The virus does not check nationality before striking. Taking care of infected refugees

gees in the districts is necessary for containment, but the hands of the government are tied because of the Centre's orders," H. Rammawii, vice-chairman of Mizoram's State Planning Board, said.

"COVID-19 cases have complicated the situation as more and more people are coming in to escape the escalating conflict in Myanmar. Local NGOs and individuals are providing assistance to the refugees out of humanitarian concern," he told *The Hindu*.

Some of those who crossed over are deserters from the Myanmar army and members of their families. The others include police personnel, government officials, lawmakers and political leaders, engineers and activists of a few NGOs.

The refugees belong to the Chin community, ethnically related to the dominant Mizos of Mizoram and the Kuki-Zomi people in Manipur.

## Odisha government to float global tender for vaccines

## STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Cabinet on Friday approved the global tender document for expeditious procurement of COVID-19 vaccines.

The State Cabinet under chairmanship of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik gave its nod to amendments and terms and condition for vaccine procurement following discussions with

vaccine manufacturers during a pre-bidding meeting on May 19.

As per the government's new vaccination policy initiative, the population within the age group of 18-44 years would be provided with free vaccines at the cost of the State exchequer.

Subsequently, it was decided to procure the vaccines from the open market through global tender.

testing. Earlier, Dongria Kondhs were not ready to get tested. They held the view that they were safe as devotees of Niyamraja, the supreme god of the Niyaingiri jungle.

**Alarming numbers**  
Alarmingly, the test positivity rate in one village is close to 75%. "Our team set up a camp at Gandili village in Bissam Cuttack block on

Thursday. Of 62 persons who underwent tests, 46 were found to be infected with the virus there. Similarly, of 58 persons who were tested at K. Bondili village, 16 had the infection," Saroj Kumar Mishra, Rayagada District Collector, told *The Hindu* over phone.

Earlier, 23 Dongria Kondhs tested positive in the Kalyansinghpur Block in the district.

## 80 of Odisha tribal group test positive

Positivity rate in one Dongria Kondh village close to 75%

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

A sudden spike with over 80 COVID-19 positive cases in the past one week has been reported among the Dongria Kondh, a particularly vulnerable tribal group living in the Niyaingiri hill range of Odisha's Rayagada district.

This came to light when the Rayagada district administration successfully persuaded the tribe to undergo

testing. Earlier, Dongria Kondhs were not ready to get tested. They held the view that they were safe as devotees of Niyamraja, the supreme god of the Niyaingiri jungle.

**GIST OF e-TENDER NOTICE NO: - 09 of 2021  
DATED:- 18/05/2021</b**

**IN BRIEF**



Former Union Minister Babagouda Patil dead

BELAGAVI  
Babagouda Rudragouda Patil, farmer leader and former Union Minister, died in Belagavi on Friday. He was 80. He was admitted to a private hospital after he suffered fluctuations in blood pressure a week ago, his family members said.

**Identify super spreaders, says KCR**

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has asked all District Collectors to identify and prepare lists of corona super spreaders, like RTC drivers and conductors, vegetable vendors and salesmen, among others, for taking up remedial measures. The government has decided to take up a special drive to vaccinate them, he said.

**All pass as Telangana declares SSC results**

HYDERABAD  
After cancelling the SSC public examinations in March this year due to the pandemic, the Telangana government released results declaring all the students, who paid the examination fee, as qualified. The results can be viewed on the websites [www.bse.telangana.gov.in](http://www.bse.telangana.gov.in) and <http://results.bsetelangana.org>

**HC orders cancellation of MPTC, ZPTC polls in A.P.**

VIZIANAGAR  
A single judge Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, comprising Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy, on Friday cancelled the MPTC and ZPTC elections held on April 8 by declaring the notification issued for them by the State Election Commission (SEC) on April 1 as illegal, arbitrary and violative of the Supreme Court's directions.

# No consensus on CLP leader in Kerala

Ramesh Chennithala, V.D. Satheeshan, P.T. Thomas and Radhakrishnan in fray

**G. ANAND**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Conflicting factional equations seemed to have complicated the selection of the next Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader in Kerala.

The I-group, led by Opposition Leader Ramesh Chennithala, arguably dominated the CLP. It purportedly commanded the allegiance of an estimated 12 out of the 21 Congress legislators. V.D. Satheeshan, another contender to the post, is also reckoned to be an I-group leader.

A-group veteran P. T. Thomas is also in the running for the post alongside Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan.

Former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy heads the

A-group. Mr. Chandy has not revealed his choice. Nevertheless, the opposing camps have claimed his "silent support".

Mr. Satheeshan's bloc maintained that legislators, primarily youngsters, had crossed factional lines to name him as their CLP leadership choice. The Chennithala camp suggested that it had the upper hand in the CLP and the tacit support of United Democratic Front (UDF) allies.

**Pressure of precedent**

A party insider said that pressure of precedent might favour Mr. Chennithala's chances.

Mr. Chandy had quit as



**Tough choice:** Ramesh Chennithala, centre, along with Mullappally Ramachandran and M.M. Hassan. ■ FILE PHOTO

CLP leader after the UDF lost the 2016 Assembly elections, paving the way for Mr. Chennithala's ascension as the Opposition Leader.

On the contrary, Mr. Chennithala's track record of digging out official corruption and bringing them to public notice might stand

him in good stead in front of the Congress national leadership. Both Mr. Satheeshan and Mr. Thomas had also spearheaded high-profile opposition forays against the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in the previous Assembly.

The Congress also report-

edly felt pressured that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) had stolen a march on the UDF by quickly naming its CLP leader, forming the Cabinet and assigning portfolios without any hint of strain.

**Generational shift**

K. Muraleedharan, MP, told reporters on Friday that a decision was likely in the next two days.

He said a generational shift in leadership was imperative to take the party forward.

Mr. Muraleedharan said he was willing to make way for the next generation.

He also noted that group equations should not govern leadership choices. Rajmohan Unnithan, MP, also voiced a comparable opinion.

# Pinarayi Vijayan retains Home, Veena George gets Health

**S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has retained the Home and Vigilance and IT portfolios held by him in previous Left Democratic Front (LDF) Ministry and has entrusted the crucial portfolios of Finance to K.N. Balagopal, Industries and Law to P. Rajeev and Health, Family Welfare and Women and Child Welfare to Veena George.

K. Rajan will look after the portfolios of Land Revenue and Housing; M. V. Govindan Master heads Local Self Governments, Excise; K. Radhakrishnan has Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes; Devaswom and Parliamentary Affairs; and V. N. Vasavani heads Cooperation and Registration.

## Pandal gets a new role

**STAFF REPORTER**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The 80,000-square feet pandal constructed at the Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram for the swearing-in ceremony of the LDF government on

Thursday has now been turned into a COVID-19 vaccination centre.

"We started the vaccination camp at the stadium on Friday morning," District Medical Officer K.S. Shinu said.

Roshy Augustine heads Irrigation; K. Krishnan Kutty heads Electricity and ANERT (Agency for Non-Conventional Energy and Rural Technology); A.K. Saseendran heads Forests and Wildlife; Antony Raju heads Transport; P. A. Mohamed Riyas heads Public Works Department and Tourism; P. Prasad heads Agriculture; G.R. Anil heads Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Legal Metrology;

gy; and Saji Cherian will look after Fisheries, Harbour Engineering, Fisheries University, and Culture. R. Bindu has been entrusted with Collegiate Education and Technical Education; V. Sivankutty heads General Education and Labour; and J. Chinchurani heads Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, Milk Co-operatives, Zoos, and Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

# Cyclone Tauktae: Uddhav hopes Modi will stand by Maharashtra

Relief package to be announced soon, says CM; BJP flays his brief visit to Konkan



Uddhav Thackeray

the *panchnamas* of the exact damage caused by Cyclone Taukte is completed. This is expected in the next couple of days...all help will be provided, no one will be deprived," the Chief Minister said.

The cyclone hit five talus in the Konkan particularly hard, while destroying more than 3,000 hectares of mango, cashew and coconut orchards in these districts besides other fruits and crops.

"We have conveyed to the Prime Minister that we [Maharashtra] expects a big package... The PM is a sensitive person, and we hope he will not leave the State in a lurch. The help should be increased. I do not want to pol-

icitise the relief issue," he said.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister's brief visit drew criticism from the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Pravin Darekar mocking Mr. Thackeray's three-hour tour and comparing it to a veritable cyclone.

"The Chief Minister might have taken the review at the Mantralaya in Mumbai itself...Instead of holding a review meet at pandals erected at landing zones here, he ought to have visited the afflicted fishermen, fruit growers, farmers, and people of the Konkan," said Mr. Darekar, who himself is on a tour of the region.

Advocate Yug Chaudhry, representing Ms. Singh, said this was a petition for medical bail and Ms. Bharadwaj was taken for numerous medical tests after the petition was filed.

He said, however, prisoners had a right to get their medical records under Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian Constitution and all pri-

# HC disposes of petition seeking Sudha Bharadwaj's medical bail

Allow her to talk to family members after hospital visit: counsel

**SONAM SAIGAL**

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday disposed of the medical bail plea filed by Sudha Bharadwaj, an accused in the Bhima-Koregaon violence case, after her lawyer said she had received medical treatment.

A Division Bench of Justices S.J. Kathawalla and S.P. Tavade was hearing a criminal petition filed by Ms. Bharadwaj's daughter Maaysha Singh seeking interim medical bail for her mother who was lodged at Byculla jail and had several co-morbidities and was therefore very susceptible to contracting COVID-19.

Advocate Yug Chaudhry, representing Ms. Singh, said this was a petition for medical bail and Ms. Bharadwaj

was taken for numerous medical tests after the petition was filed.

He said, however, prisoners had a right to get their medical records under Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian Constitution and all pri-

soners should be provided with their medical records. This would also cut down a lot of litigation, he said. Mr. Chaudhry also urged the court to allow Ms. Bharadwaj to talk to her family members and lawyer after a hos-

pital visit.

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, appearing for the National Investigation Agency probing the case, said, "This is for the State to consider because the prison is under the State. But I do not think that lawyers should be allowed; what will lawyers do for treatment? I understand family and doctor."

The Bench passed an order saying, "In our view, prisoners have the right to medical records under Article 21. All medical records, including tests and medicines, can be given to the petitioner (Ms. Bharadwaj). We go a step further to say this order should apply to all prisoners."

"A prisoner is entitled or allowed to make a phone call with an approved family member after a visit to the hospital by following the hospital protocol. This facility in our view apart from the petitioner should be made available to other prisoners," the HC said and disposed of the petition.

# Girl's body found off Palm Beach Road

**RAINA ASSAINAR**

NAVI MUMBAI

The body of a girl, suspected to be aged around 15-18 years, was found in a steel drum off Palm Beach Road at Nerul on Friday.

"The accused, taking advantage of the bad weather, is suspected to have dumped the body on the pathway that leads to a temple. Due to the cyclone and rain, nobody had visited the temple for around four days," Suresh Mengde, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone I, said.

After the murder, the body was wrapped with a piece of cloth and tied with a nylon rope before being put inside the drum. A devotee going to the temple noticed the drum and found the body. The drum has names engraved as 'Ashok' gifting it to 'Archana' on the occasion of Bhau Beez and the date mentioned is of November 13, 2015.

A Crime Branch team along with the Nerul police are trying to identify the deceased. The post-mortem report is awaited.

# Question marks over Mumbai's pre-monsoon works

Several areas see waterlogging following heavy rain triggered by Cyclone Tauktae



A man tries to walk in a flooded road in Parel as Mumbai experienced heavy rain along with gusty winds due to Cyclone Tauktae. ■ FILE PHOTO

said.

Now despite the preparedness, flooding at several parts of Mumbai and non-functioning of water pumps have led to a show cause notice being issued to three

BMC engineers.

Samajwadi Party MLA and councillor Rais Sheikh has written to Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal highlighting that despite its claims of being prepared several water pumps did not work and the storm water drain department failed to prevent flooding.

According to civic officials, the work on cleaning nullahs and clearing of silt had begun in October 2020 as the administrative procedures for issuing tenders were completed earlier.

An official from the BMC's storm water drain department told *The Hindu* that 406 spots within Mumbai had been identified for possible waterlogging and work had begun on them.

# ASHA workers demand better amenities to battle pandemic

**SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE**

PUNE

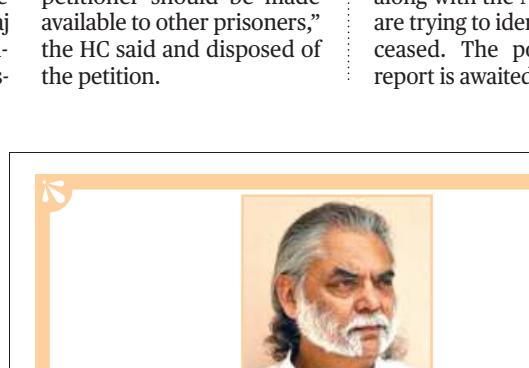
With rural areas of Pune and Maharashtra witnessing a surge in COVID-19 cases, the role of ASHA workers in tackling the pandemic has never been more critical. However,

with a few public transport options owing to the lockdown, many workers are compelled to walk six-eight kilometres in hilly areas to monitor and check on villages and hamlets.

These workers have been

demanding that the administration provide them with two-wheelers to assist them in their door-to-door monitoring and help screen potential cases.

"Every demand made by ASHA and Aanganwadi workers is justified. At a time when the second wave has led many authorities to keep to their homes, these underpaid ASHA personnel have been soldiering," Pune Zilla Parishad member Rani Shelke said.



DINESH MOHAN

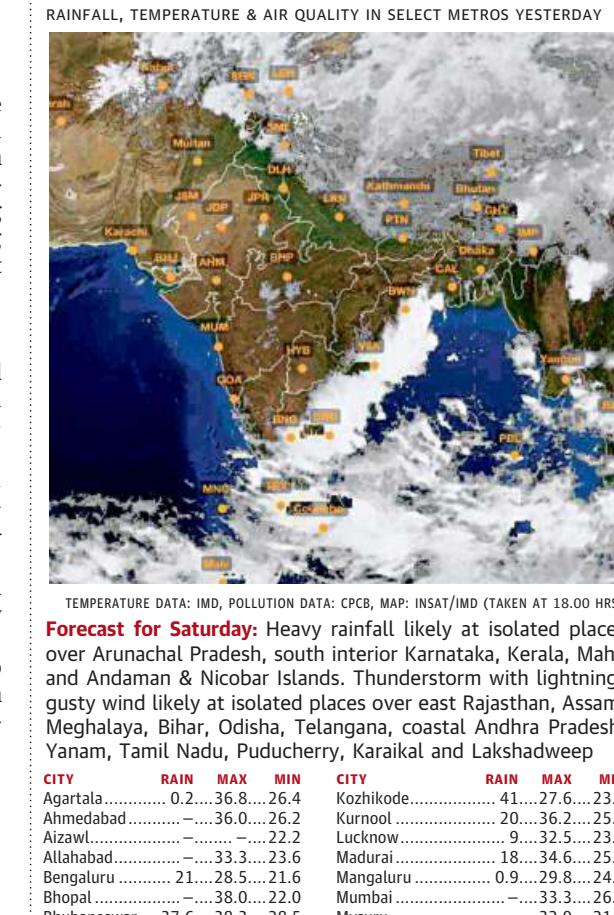
April 4, 1945 – May 21, 2021

With the greatest sadness and heavy hearts we regret to announce that Dinesh left us early morning, May 21, 2021.

Peggy Mohan, Arpit Midha and Kairi Satya Rakeshi, Rasika, Tarini and Rasesh Mohan Kavita, Joy, Manik and Meghana Acharya Keith, Margaret, Mark and Eve Ramesar

CM YK

**WEATHER WATCH**





## Extending safety

Staggering of vaccine doses should not be to merely buy time until more doses are available

Pursuing a policy of spreading the interval between two doses of vaccine, the Centre has now outlined more scenarios of second dose deferment. While lactating women are now encouraged to get vaccinated, those who have recovered from an infection ought to be getting vaccinated three months hence – the recommendation earlier was four to eight weeks. Those inoculated but who have tested positive should defer their second dose by three months after clinical recovery from COVID-19. The recommendations follow from earlier ones that advise increasing the interval from 12-16 weeks for Covishield, the more widely available vaccine. But there are two underlying principles behind these recommendations, the first being a vaccine shortage. Until early April, India had a very different scheme for its vaccination roll-out, appearing to take stock of availability as well as prioritising those at greater disease risk. It was the ferocity of the second wave that caused the government to panic and ‘free up’ vaccine supply applying a ‘to each his own’ approach. While this benefits a fraction of the privileged, it has not improved access as seen by the stagnation in daily inoculations and a fall in second dose recipient numbers.

The second principle is that the timing of the second dose for an optimal boost to the immune system is not clear. A general policy for childhood vaccines in India is a four to eight-week interval. However, clinical trials of the AstraZeneca vaccine in the U.K. (18-55 years) showed that binding antibodies (the ones that actually block viruses) were nearly twice as high in those who got their shots 12 or more weeks apart than in doses had within six weeks. The vaccine also appeared to be more protective in those above 18 with a longer dose interval. While antibody levels are a key marker of protection, they are not the only ones. Cell-based immunity, whereby the immune system confers long-lived immunity, counts too. Given that SARS-CoV-2 has been around for less than 20 months, there is uncertainty about the duration of protection. There are also documented cases of breakthrough infections as well as deaths even after a second dose. Though they fall within expected statistical boundaries so far, it is only more inoculations from now that will shed greater clarity on the degree of protection. Put together, these recommendations do buy policy makers time to stagger doses until more vaccines become available from August. On the other hand, the toll from India’s second wave continues to surpass similar daily figures from the U.S. and Brazil. Given that many Indians have still not been exposed to the virus and newer threatening variants abound, there is no reason to be complacent that people will be protected from future waves. The aim of vaccines is to prevent severe disease and death and all policy recommendations must be geared towards that goal. There is no room for knee-jerk reactions that can compromise this objective.

## Fitful approach

India must have data protection laws in place before acting against WhatsApp

The Centre’s recent notice to messaging service provider WhatsApp to withdraw its updated privacy policy is an avoidable intervention into what is a legitimate business decision. WhatsApp, early this year, updated its privacy policy, according to which users would no longer be able to stop the app from sharing data (such as location and number) with its parent Facebook unless they delete their accounts altogether. WhatsApp initially proposed a February 8 deadline. But an intense backlash against this decision, triggering an exodus of its users to rival platforms such as Signal, forced WhatsApp to push the update to May 15. Eventually, it decided not to enforce this as well, preferring to, as a spokesman told this newspaper, “follow up with reminders to people over the next several weeks”. WhatsApp has over two billion users in the world, about half a billion of whom are in India, and who use it for free. Its privacy updates are designed to make the business interactions that take place on its platform easier while also personalising ads on Facebook. That is how it will have to make its money. In its affidavit in the Delhi High Court, WhatsApp has reportedly said that it is not forcing users to accept the updated privacy policy. They have an option – to delete their accounts. And if WhatsApp is ready to take the risk of users abandoning it, why should the government intervene in the process? The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has sought a response from WhatsApp within seven days.

In doing so, MeitY has made a charge that WhatsApp has discriminated against its Indian users. Its letter to WhatsApp reportedly states that given that Indians depend on it to communicate, “It is not just problematic but also irresponsible, for WhatsApp to leverage this position to impose unfair terms and conditions on Indian users, particularly those that discriminate against Indian users vis-à-vis users in Europe.” First, it can be argued that there are enough alternatives to WhatsApp in the market. But more importantly, it has to be pointed out that Europe’s citizens are protected by strong data laws that go by the name of General Data Protection Regulation or GDPR. Where is the Indian equivalent of such laws? When will they be implemented? These are questions that the government should answer. These questions become even more pertinent because WhatsApp has reportedly said in its affidavit that it is being singled out, and that its policy is not different from those of private apps such as Google, BigBasket, Koo, as well as public apps such as Aarogya Setu, Bhim, IRCTC, and others. A fitful approach to issues concerning the user may do more harm to India’s approach to data protection and freedom than anything else.

# Trumping majoritarianism in the Hindi heartland

Regional assertion cannot work in Uttar Pradesh even if it may be a bulwark against the BJP’s expansionary plans



ZOYA HASAN

**T**he landslide victory of the All India Trinamool Congress in the West Bengal Assembly elections and the pushback of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have given rise to a pervasive belief that right-wing politics can be defeated by regional assertions. Undoubtedly, regional and cultural assertion in these States acted as an effective bulwark against the BJP’s expansionary plans in southern and eastern India. The regional-cultural tropes deployed by Mamata Banerjee, for example, worked so well that at one point, Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah was even forced to clarify that if the BJP is elected, someone from Bengal would be the Chief Minister. This underlines the effectiveness of regional culture and politics in trumping communal politics. However, this claim needs to be tempered by the realism that it cannot work in the Hindi heartland, which is dominated by caste and communal politics, and has so far not seen any serious ideological and political challenge to politics based on these identities.

Encompassing nine States whose official language is Hindi, namely Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) and Uttarakhand, this region retains a central position in the electoral strategies of the BJP and its larger political imagination. The party’s stunning show in these States propelled it to power in the 2014 and 2019 parlia-

mentary elections. Its continued political dominance in the heartland will neutralise its losses now as well as in future in States where it has been bested by regional players. I will focus here on U.P. to illustrate the limits of the regional assertion.

**Dimensions in the heartland**  
The Hindi heartland is clearly different. There are at least four important dimensions of this difference. First is the absence of regional identity in States such as U.P. This is evident from the debate on States reorganisation and the reorganisation of Uttar Pradesh in the 1950s. The compulsions of nation-oriented identity emerged very clearly from the discussions in the States Reorganisation Commission on suggestions for the division of U.P. for administrative convenience. U.P. leaders argued for a large and powerful State in the Gangetic valley as a guarantee of India’s unity.

In this sense, U.P. was considered the backbone of India and the centrepiece of political identity in modern India. Importantly, it was supposed to provide the chief bulwark against growing regionalisation and fragmentation elsewhere. Instilling a sense of regional pride, an essential part of Congress strategy in southern and coastal India, was not followed in U.P. U.P. was seen as the political heartland in contrast to Punjab and Bengal for instance, which were splintered and incorporated into two different nation states. As is well known, the bases of this post-colonial identity varied from its location in the freedom struggle to staking claim as the cultural homeland of Hindi and Hinduism. In both cases, it was centred in the idiom of the nation-state and strong central authority.

Second, although U.P.’s cultural



homogeneity remains a matter of disagreement, the idea of the heartland had great resonance among the political elite who opposed the demand for U.P.’s reorganisation. The long-standing traditions of composite cultural identity and shared plural cultures began to yield place to a singular homogenised identity. The Hindu-Urdu divide, which mirrored the communal cleavage of U.P. society, played a crucial role in this process. Urdu was excluded as it was seen to symbolise Muslim cultural identity in independent India, while Hindi was boosted to promote the development of a Hindu-Hindu heritage for this region. The project of homogenisation of Indian/U.P. culture as Hindu culture was quickened in later decades. Even though it would be hard to assume a direct link between Hindi dominance and communal politics of subsequent decades, it is nevertheless a fact that all political parties in the State used it as an ingredient of social and cultural differentiation and a means to consolidate political dominance.

**Role of communal politics**  
Third, it is clear that communal politics and communal movements have played a key role in U.P.’s modern history which in turn have diluted other identities.

In some respects, this process gained momentum in the wake of Partition which cast its long shadow upon political institutions and culture in U.P. and to a great extent affected the perspectives of Hindus and Muslims alike. Hindu nationalism was marginalised within the Congress party but many of its ideas were accepted in framing party policies. The State leadership was instrumental in forging a conservative consensus in the State under Chief Minister G.B. Pant who steered the affairs of the state for eight years after Independence.

The intensification of communal politics took a new turn with the mass mobilisation for the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya which was deftly used by the Hindu right to establish a major presence in U.P. and to facilitate the political reconstruction of U.P. through the promotion of a collective Hindu identity. The crusade for the appropriation of disputed shrines is central to the communalisation of politics and short circuiting the more complex process of political expansion for the BJP.

Importantly, this has laid the groundwork for building permanent electoral majorities through the deployment of ascriptive symbols in U.P. which, given its huge size, helps it to establish a strong base in the Hindi heartland to offset the appeal of countervailing identities elsewhere in India.

### Caste politics too

Finally, caste politics which was expected to counter Hindutva expansion has failed to do so; in fact, caste politics has become a building block for the BJP’s expansion. The party has reached out to Dalits, actively mobilising them and other backward castes to assimilate them into the Hindutva meta-narrative. Instead of erasing caste

from electoral politics, the BJP-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has sought to court fragments of castes as a way of undermining broad-based political movements and opposition to it. It has used the wider appeal of Hindu nationalism to co-opt backward castes and Dalits who are keen to align themselves to the larger narrative of Hindu nationalism.

### A reset is needed

While regional parties will continue to be significant in various States of the Union, the principal challenge of overcoming majoritarianism lies in the Hindi heartland, especially in U.P. Oppositional electoral alliances, notably the formation of a federal front,

are important strategies in this battle but it is no less important to challenge the ideological foundations of the majoritarian project through progressive and inclusive politics. This requires a reset of the basic political mindset in U.P. which can only be done by reviving the splendid heritage of the national movement in which this region played a central role and in which Gandhiji and Nehru played a heroic part. Invoking the spirit of the Bhakti movement which was the first major challenge to the religious orthodoxy of Hinduism would also help in resetting the cultural clock. This must, however, combine with much greater concern for the fundamental social and economic issues of the State, and making the struggle between communal and secular forces the central issue through public campaigns that address the problems of religious traditionalism and the cultural underpinning that this provides to the push to make India a Hindu state.

Zoya Hasan is Professor Emerita, Jawaharlal Nehru University

## The AIDS fight offers a COVID vaccine patent pathway

There are recognised ways to overcome the patents hurdle, ensuring social justice and boosting the COVID-19 battle



MURPHY HALLIBURTON

**I**n order to achieve global herd immunity and prevent new strains of COVID-19 from emerging, possibly for years to come, vaccines need to be affordable and available in massive quantities throughout the globe. This can happen through patent owners voluntarily licensing their products to other companies, especially Indian producers who are experienced at mass-producing low-cost medications. This can also be done by temporarily suspending patent rights for COVID vaccines, an option that is being pursued by India and South Africa through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and one that is legal in the event of a public health emergency, according to that organisation’s own rules. One way or the other, India and the world need several Indian pharmaceutical companies, not just the Serum Institute of India, to gain the right to make these vaccines if we are going to see an end to this pandemic any time soon.

**Turning point in the HIV fight**  
Decades of struggles over patent rights and access to medications for HIV/AIDS demonstrate that it is possible to navigate patent restrictions using something called “voluntary licenses” where a patent holder decides to license a product to other producers. The United Nations’ Medicines Patent Pool

and the World Health Organization’s COVID-19 Technology Access Pool are important tools in an effort to promote voluntary licensing for COVID products that so far have been ignored by pharmaceutical producers. Sharing patent rights through voluntary licensing would need to involve India’s large pharmaceutical sector whose production capacity helped make treatments for AIDS more affordable in low-income countries and helped mitigate that pandemic.

In the 1990s, the WTO began implementing a global intellectual property regime known as the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreement, or TRIPS. While TRIPS alarmed public health experts because of its potential to raise the price of essential medicines, voluntary licensing agreements between pharmaceutical producers were able to bring down the price of AIDS medications despite the TRIPS regulations.

Responding to anti-TRIPS activism from low-income countries and realising they would not be able to profit off of low-income markets anyway, some manufacturers placed licensing agreements to produce AIDS drugs for which they owned patent rights in the UN-affiliated Medicines Patent Pool. Several India-based companies then used these voluntary licenses to manufacture these drugs on a massive scale and sold them at prices they determined. In the case of Gilead, which placed more products in the Patent Pool than any other producer, their licenses required the licensee to pay Gilead a royalty of 3% of the sales of the drug and limit sales to low-income countries. This effort

brought down the price of key AIDS medications in these countries. Most significantly, tenofovir, a first-line treatment for HIV/AIDS, has come down in price from \$200-\$500 per person per year to \$39 per person per year in low-income countries now that 13 India-based pharmaceutical companies are producing it.

### Context of health emergency

It is also possible for governments to issue what are called “compulsory licenses” which override patent rights to allow local production or import of drugs by generic manufacturers in the event of a public health crisis. Since 2003, this right has been enshrined in the Doha Declaration addendum to the WTO’s TRIPS agreement and this is what India and South Africa are lobbying for, having recently been joined by the United States though not as of yet the European Union (EU). The Doha addendum, Section 5c, offers AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis as examples of what qualifies as a health emergency. By this standard, COVID-19 should easily qualify. In fact, not invoking Doha exemptions in this unprecedented health crisis would make this agreement meaningless. We may thus find compulsory licenses being issued in several countries for vaccines and treatments for COVID-19, although

ough manufacturers in India say they prefer to work with voluntary licences because there is more good will between companies while compulsory licences often come with a legal battle brought by the patent holder. Voluntary licences also enable production to begin more expeditiously as they usually are accompanied by “technology transfer” meaning that the patent holder reveals to the licensee how to manufacture the medication, sparing the licensee the lengthy and costly process of figuring out how to reverse engineer the product.

### The COVAX option

Some favour ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX programme, which was established to purchase vaccine doses and donate them to low-income countries but does not involve modifying patent rights. Similar ventures during the AIDS crisis were chronically underfunded and had only minor effects on that pandemic compared to the voluntary licensing and mass production of antiretroviral drugs from Indian producers. COVAX is also currently underfunded and the Director-General of WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, warned that people in the lowest-income countries might have to wait until 2022 to get vaccinated through this programme, which may actually be optimistic since COVAX has shipped around 68 million doses so far.

Similar concerns to those presented here were raised in last year’s annual meeting of WHO which established a patent-sharing pool for COVID products, the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool.

So far, no patent holders have joined this effort which is why India and South Africa called on the WTO to temporarily waive patent protections for COVID-19. Meanwhile, the UN Medicines Patent Pool stands ready to accept voluntary licences having added a placeholder for COVID-19 on the list of diseases they address. Hopefully, the EU will join the efforts by India and South Africa at the WTO, and pharmaceutical producers will realise, as some did during the AIDS pandemic, that voluntary licensing comes with better public relations and that they are not going to make money off low-income countries regardless of patent enforcement.

### A key step

Furthermore, the billions of dollars in government aid given to companies to help develop COVID-19 treatments should entail an obligation to enable the mass production of affordable vaccines. After all, as legal scholars have long explained, patents are not iron-clad ownership rights. They are a temporary contract that balances the public interest with the claims of the innovator. This is not just a question of social justice and ensuring life-saving therapies are available to the world’s poor. It is a necessary step to prevent deadlier, more contagious and possibly vaccine-resistant variants of COVID-19 from proliferating in an under-vaccinated world.

Murphy Halliburton, Professor of medical anthropology at Queens College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, is the author of *India and the Patent Wars: Pharmaceuticals in the New Intellectual Property Regime*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Rajiv Gandhi case

The political landscape of the country witnessed a sea change consequent to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. It unsettled many equations ranging from the political to governing a vast country such as India. Police personnel as well as members of the public lost their lives or were seriously injured on that night in Sriperumbudur. While the convicts have a right to pursue their case for release on their own, the *locus standi* of the Tamil Nadu government to take up the cudgels on behalf of the persons who were responsible for the

gruesome murders, belies reasoning (Tamil Nadu, “CM writes to President on Rajiv case convicts”, May 21). Nor have we heard of their remorse. It is unfortunate that the issue is being misused for political gains. There are thousands of undertrials languishing in prisons, with many not even being convicted of any offence. Being in a hapless state, they do not have the might to take on the system. One wishes that the Tamil Nadu government stays away from the issue and allows the law to take its own course.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Thane, Maharashtra

**Survey and relief**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently undertook an aerial survey of Gujarat where Cyclone Tautakai had made landfall and announced ₹1,000 crore for disaster relief. No one is complaining about this but this privilege of a Prime Minister’s survey and immediate relief was not accorded to the coastal areas in other States such as Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra where the cyclone also caused damage. Steps taken in a partisan manner are bound to raise questions.

S. KAMAT,  
Alto Santa Cruz, Goa

**Audits needed**  
It is laudable that while making an appeal to the general public, charitable organisations and corporates to contribute to the Chief Minister’s Public Relief Fund to fight COVID-19, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has made the assurance of transparency – the contributions would be exclusively used for COVID-19 mitigation measures, with official receipts in some instances. At this juncture, one is also reminded of the contributions made by the public and corporates to the PM CARES Fund, which

remains opaque. Are not public funds/contributions subject to an audit?  
THARCUS S. FERNANDO,  
Chennai

### In memoriam

It is unfortunate that a number of doctors across India have breathed their last, while on duty, due to

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:**  
The headline of a background story on the tragedy in the Arabian Sea – “Wrong call led to tragedy: barge owner” (May 21, 2020) – was wrong. The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation contractor, Afcons Infrastructure Ltd., which issued the statement, had only chartered the vessel. It is not the owner.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers’ Editor’s office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28525963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers’ Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. The Terms of Reference for the Readers’ Editor are on www.thehindu.com

# Invading virus, ill-equipped villages

With the discovery of several bodies in and near the Ganga, serious concerns have been raised on the extent to which COVID-19 has made inroads into the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. **Omar Rashid** reports on the State's efforts to ramp up facilities in villages where the health infrastructure is poor

"Ganga has revealed the truth!" exclaims Vishwambhar Nath Mishra, head priest of the Sankat Mochan temple in Varanasi. Located in the heart of the ancient city, the temple is where the faithful come to seek an end to their problems. But the region has been witness to a grisly sight over the past week. Semi-decomposed and bloated bodies have been found floating in the sacred river. Mishra, who is also a professor at the Indian Institute of Technology-BHU, says this indicates that the COVID-19 situation in rural Uttar Pradesh is far worse than it appears.

Ever since the bodies were discovered, police personnel have been patrolling the waters and ghats. They have set up pickets in at least seven districts and even offered a support sum of ₹5,000 to those who cannot afford wood for cremation, to dissuade them from immersing bodies in rivers.

The State police have so far admitted to having found 44 bodies floating in the rivers, mainly the Ganga, in the districts of Ballia, Chandauli, Ghazipur, Varanasi, Hamirpur and Kanpur. For residents of Ghazipur, where the bodies were first spotted in U.P., the sight was shocking. Balwant Singh Bala of Gahmar village says he has never seen anything like this before. "We are used to bodies floating in the river once in a while. But this time we knew that there was something very grave happening," he says. A senior police officer, who led the clean-up of the ghats with lime powder, agrees.

U.P. is officially yet to acknowledge that all or some of these were COVID-19 victims. Many observers suspect that these bodies could be of COVID-19 victims who were abandoned or disposed of in the waters by families due to lack of money for cremations, the waiting lines at cremation grounds, or the social stigma attached to the disease. Speculation intensified when countless shallow graves were found on the ghats of the Ganga in some districts, including Unnao, Prayagraj, Kannauj and Rae Bareli.

At the Baksar ghat in Unnao, cleaners, priests, locals and attendants of the dead say that though bodies have been cremated and buried there according to customs, in April, when the wave was at its peak, the number of bodies arriving at the ghat for final rites reached 70-80 a day against the daily figure of 15-20. Those who could not afford to buy wood and fuel for cremation chose to bury the dead, they say. Since there is no way of knowing whether the bodies in the river are of COVID-19 victims, the question of uncounted COVID-19 deaths in the State still hangs in the air.

## Battling COVID-19 in the villages

The pandemic has put tremendous strain on the fragile health infrastructure in U.P. and exposed the lack of preparedness in urban areas. Every day, there are desperate pleas for hospital beds, essential medicine and oxygen cylinders. Crematoriums and graveyards are packed. But now, the focus has shifted to the rural areas after the discovery of the bodies in the Ganga and the alarms raised in the wake of the recently conducted panchayat polls.

According to official figures, the daily number of positive cases and deaths has drastically dropped over the last three weeks. On April 30, the State had 3.1 lakh active cases. On May 21, this dropped to over a lakh. On April 24, the State had recorded 38,055 new cases out of 2.25 lakh samples tested, while on May 21, it recorded 7,735 out of the over 2.89 lakh samples tested. The recovery rate in U.P. is now 92.5%.

However, the spread of the infection in rural areas is alarming. During a testing drive in 89,512 villages, 28,742 villages (32%) reported positive cases, says Amit Mohan Prasad, Additional Chief Secretary, Health. Prasad, however, chooses to look at the bright side. "Sixty-eight percent of our villages are still safe from the infection," he says, adding that the government's focus is to keep testing in rural areas. Even after aggressive testing, new cases have been decreasing while recoveries are increasing, a government official says.

All these numbers offer little consolation to the bereaved. In Mau district, nursing staff Deepak Yadav's experience encapsulates the tragedy of battling COVID-19 in the hinterland where medical infrastructure is poor. After his parents tested positive (they were tested at home with a rapid antigen test kit), Yadav desperately searched for a hospital bed in Mau and in the neighbouring districts of eastern U.P. without success. He then arranged for oxygen cylinders at home. When his mother's health continued to deteriorate, Yadav dialled for an ambulance but the oxygen cylinder that came with it ran out in five minutes, he says. The local community health centre in Dohrihatal was shut. The family then went to a private hospital across the Gaghara river in Barhalganj in Gorakhpur but was told that it had no oxygen. In panic, Yadav tried to move his mother to his workplace in Deoria. Meanwhile, the private hospital which



Bodies, some of which are believed to be of COVID-19 victims, are seen partially exposed in shallow sand graves on the banks of the Ganga at Shringverpur ghat in Prayagraj. (Below): A cremation takes place at the Baksar Ghat in Unnao in early May. ■ PRABHAT KUMAR VERMA; OMAR RASHID



had rejected him earlier called him back following the intervention of a politician, he says. The entire episode lasted more than three hours, of which the family spent an hour stuck on a 3-km stretch of road in a traffic jam, which Yadav's brother, an Army jawan, frantically tried to clear. Yadav attempted resuscitation in the ambulance meanwhile, but by the time they reached the hospital, his mother had died. His father, who was also hospitalised for a few days, is critical at home. Barring two or three members, everyone in his house has tested positive for COVID-19.

Yadav, who was busy during the panchayat polls and vaccination drive, cannot explain how his parents who live a rural life got the virus. "It means the virus has spread in the villages," he says.

While a large part of the media's focus was on the worst-affected urban centres of the State such as Lucknow, Varanasi city, Kanpur, Prayagraj and Meerut, the pandemic steadily crept into the semi-urban and rural areas. In several districts, the death count doubled and even tripled within a fortnight in April. Large rural and backward districts like Chandauli, Hardoi, Shahjahanpur, Basti, Ghazipur and Sonbhadra have recorded a high number of deaths, between 230 and 320 each, indicating the devastating impact of COVID-19 in the rural areas of U.P.

## Problems with testing

Bihari Lal, a journalist in a Hindi daily in Chandauli, is among the dead. His son Ashutosh Jaiswal, who serves in the Railways, says his father faced no shortage of oxygen supply, but was not treated well at the private hospital where he was admitted. The family did not take Bihari Lal to a government centre as they do not trust government hospitals and found it easier to find a bed in a private centre, Jaiswal says. Bihari Lal, who also served as an LIC agent and ran a photo editing store, had developed a cough and fever after moving about during the panchayat polls, his family says. Initially, a local doctor prescribed some antibiotics for him. Then a blood test revealed that he had typhoid. While his fever subsided, Bihari Lal's oxygen levels continued to drop and he was admitted in hospital. A CT scan revealed that he had lung infection. Three-four days later, a rapid antigen test showed that Bihari Lal was COVID-19 positive.

Jaiswal feels that the initial delay in starting COVID-19 treatment may have cost his father precious time. According to a senior district official, this is a com-

mon concern as people rely on quacks and are slow to start precautionary treatment for COVID-19 as per the guidelines issued by the State.

For many days after his initial symptoms, Bihari Lal's family relied on the usual care and steam treatment as they believed that he was getting better. "People are taking the fever and cough lightly and going to doctors for usual treatment. When the doctor says the patient has COVID-19, they are unable to understand what to do," says Jaiswal.

Despite raising a flag on the district portal, Jaiswal says no sanitation work was carried out in his house in Purwa village after his father tested positive. Similar complaints were raised by people in other districts as well.

The State government says it is conducting a massive testing and door-to-door surveillance drive in 97,000 villages. This included a special drive from May 5 to 9. However, representatives of several villages have alleged that the administration has provided minimal facilities for testing. Testimonies from rural areas show that deaths and positive cases may be much higher than recorded as not all symptomatic or suspected cases are being sent for tests. This is due to infrastructural issues such as shortage of manpower and equipment, lack of accessibility and urgency, or hesitancy on behalf of the people.

In Unnao, front-line ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers, who go door to door to trace cases in villages, say they are at high risk as many of them do not have the necessary instruments to measure temperature or oxygen levels. They are not even provided sanitiser, they say. Veermati Singh, an ASHA worker, says all she was given was a medicine kit with some strips of tablets, mainly for fever; a face mask; and a pair of gloves. "People don't take us seriously. Why would they when I cannot even record their temperature and oxygen levels," she says.

Many who had COVID-19 symptoms and lung infection, detected through CT scans, say they did not get RT-PCR tests done. If they did have COVID-19, they would not have been officially counted in the State's daily case count.

## Inspecting deaths

On May 10, Seema Jaiswal, the Pradhan of Sauram village in Ghazipur, not too far from the Ganga, wrote to the district

magistrate stating that the number of people dying due to COVID-19 in her gram sabha was increasing by the day. She attached a list of 16 persons who had died. Manoj Kumar Jaiswal, her husband, says three more people have died since, including a six-month-old girl. Though he is not sure if they died of COVID-19, he says the symptoms could not have been anything else. *"Bas khasi aur bukhar"* (Just cough and fever!) Some had it for 2-4 days and died. Others had it for barely 12-24 hours and died, he claims. However, he is quick to add, "We can't say that they died of COVID-19. Only after testing will we be able to say that." Jaiswal alleges that no tests were carried out in the village till his wife wrote the letter.

The Chief Medical Officer of Ghazipur, Girish Chandra Maurya, visited the village to inspect the deaths. He says two-three people did die in the village but due to "age and natural process" or some other illness, not COVID-19.

The administration then held testing camps in two sessions. Of the 142 persons with symptoms, four were found positive through rapid antigen tests. They were put under quarantine. Medicine kits were distributed among the others. Three sacks of bleaching powder were provided to the village head for sanitisation.

Maurya admits that "more people are dying" in the rural areas in the second wave. This has scared the rural folk and has forced many to come forward to get tested, he says. "Now more people are also wearing masks. They feel they need to get tested and treated on time," says Maurya. The district had a target of conducting 2,000 tests per day but was testing 8,000 samples, he says. He adds that teams are especially being sent to the villages for testing drives. Neighbouring Chandauli was testing only 1,500-1,700 samples, says an official.

In Baghpat's Lumb village, the headman released on social media a list of 34-37 persons who had allegedly died of COVID-19 over the past month. After carrying out a survey, officials said the reports were false. The teams did not find any death due to COVID-19, says the Chief Medical Officer, R. K. Tandon. Officials say though fever was reported in a couple of cases, it was not correct to say that all deaths in the village were due to COVID-19. In the last two months, 20-25 persons had died, but due to other ill-

nesses, says Tandon. He also rubbished claims that no tests were being carried out. The administration tested 362 persons through RT-PCR and 428 through rapid antigen tests and found 21 persons positive for COVID-19. All of them have recovered, he says.

## The role of Panchayat polls

The spread of the pandemic in rural U.P. has coincided with the panchayat polls, which many have blamed for the spike in cases and deaths. Despite guidelines being issued, it was impractical to imagine social distancing and proper safety norms being followed in the tightly contested rural polls which had around 13 crore registered voters, over 2 lakh voting booths and 80,762 voting centres, and over 2.43 lakh officials and staff on polling duty.

While the government says that it conducted the polls on the instructions of the Allahabad High Court, it ignored several warnings, including by its own legislators, to defer the process of voting as well as counting when the second wave hit its peak. The counting could lead to a "super explosion" of COVID-19 cases in rural areas, wrote the Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from Hardoi district, Madhvendra Pratap, to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Concerned about the deaths of those on polling duty, teacher unions had declared that they would boycott the counting process on May 2.

However, after the Supreme Court allowed the counting process to go ahead, on assurances by the State government that proper COVID-19 safety norms would be followed, the unions called off their boycott. The counting centres across U.P. presented a worrying picture. Social distancing went for a toss. Large numbers of people, mostly men, gathered outside or lined up at the gates of the centres in close physical proximity to one another.

The U.P. Prarthik Shikshak Sangh, a union of primary teachers, alleged that 1,621 teachers and staff died of COVID-19 after being assigned duty in the panchayat polls and control rooms for the pandemic. The Allahabad High Court, which has taken note of the issue in regular hearings, reprimanded the State over the deaths and said the ₹30 lakh compensation offered to the kin of the dead was not enough. It suggested that the amount be increased to ₹1 crore. However, the government left the teacher unions fuming after it announced that it had confirmed only three deaths due to COVID-19. The kin of the deceased and the Opposition parties say this is a ploy by the government to avoid paying huge sums of compensation.

Lawyer Satyam Rai, whose father Pankaj Rai, a school principal, died on April 24 after serving in the second phase of the panchayat polls in Azamgarh, says the election could have easily been deferred given the surge in cases. Pankaj Rai, though he tested negative in a rapid antigen test, was diagnosed with "typical COVID-19" in his CT scan. He died before the RT-PCR test could be conducted and will perhaps not be counted among the 18,760 persons who have died in U.P. till May 21. "A person does not develop symptoms and die im-

mediately. The government's figure is pure eyewash," says Satyam, still reeling from his loss.

He is referring to the explanation offered by the State Basic Education Department, which said that only three teachers had died on polling duty. Citing the rules of the State Election Commission, the Education Department said that an official was considered to be on election duty only from the period he or she left their residence for training, polling and counting work till they reached their residence after work.

Dinesh Chandra Sharma, president of the union, which is at the forefront of the fight for the deceased teachers, says this guideline does not make sense since people develop symptoms and die days or weeks after exposure. "This is a scam of deaths," says Sharma, claiming that 80% of the teachers who had died had either RT-PCR or antigen test reports taken. "They have to change the rules for COVID-19. Saying that someone didn't die on the spot... how does that make sense," he asks. Following the furor over the issue, Adityanath instructed officials to amend the guidelines.

## Learning from the urban areas

As U.P. tackles the surge in rural areas, the Allahabad High Court recently said, "So far as the medical infrastructure is concerned, in these few months we have realised that in the manner it stands today, it is very delicate, fragile and debilitated." Adityanath, however, is confident. He said the results of "gaon-gaon, ghar-ghar" (village to village, door to door) screening and testing have shown that the rural areas are "safe to a large extent". At the same time, he has asked officials to further improve medical facilities in rural areas.

Neeraj Mishra, president of the United Resident and Doctors Association, U.P., who is himself recovering from post-COVID-19 complications, feels that the government should have judiciously used the experience in the urban areas to prevent the spread in the villages. "The administration should have been vigilant and active. But they left people to fend for themselves. There needs to be accountability," he says.

Meanwhile, in Ballia, Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada says no new bodies have been found floating in the Ganga after the initial phase. Nine police teams in the district are out on patrol. The final rites of the bodies found were carried out according to customs, the police say. However, five police constables in Ballia were suspended for insensitive behaviour after an unclaimed body was cremated with petrol and tyres on a ghat.

As the State takes fresh measures to arrest the growth of the virus in its villages and the debate over the bodies in the Ganga rages on, Mishra says there is no religious sanction for the disposal of bodies in the Ganga. Even the *jal samadhi* ritual for seers is done through a specific process of encasing the body in a box with stones, he points out. Highlighting the religious significance of the river for Hindus, he says, "The Ganga is not meant for this purpose. She is the giver of *mukti* and *bhakti*."



FROM PAGE ONE

## SC: personal guarantors liable for corporate debt

In fact, side by side bankruptcy proceedings before the same forum for both the corporate debtors and their personal guarantors would help the NCLT "consider the whole picture, as it were, about the nature of the assets available, either during the corporate debtor's insolvency process, or even later".

"This would facilitate the Committee of Creditors to frame realistic plans, keeping in mind the prospect of realising some part of the creditors' dues from personal guarantors," the judgment reasoned.

**Clears misconception**  
The court further corrected a misunderstanding among petitioners that approval of a resolution plan in respect of corporate debtors would also extinguish the liability of the personal guarantor.

The petitioners, mostly personal guarantors to stressed companies, had argued that an approved reso-

lution plan in respect of a corporate debtor amounts to extinction of all outstanding claims against that debtor. Consequently, the liability of the guarantor, which is co-extensive with that of the corporate debtor, would also be extinguished.

"The release or discharge of a principal borrower from the debt by operation of law, or due to liquidation or insolvency proceeding, does not absolve the surety/guarantor of his or her liability, which arises out of an independent contract," Justice Bhat clarified.

During the hearings, the government had justified the November 2019 notification extending bankruptcy proceedings to personal guarantors.

Attorney General K.K. Venugopal argued that by roping in guarantors, there was a greater likelihood that they would "arrange" for the payment of the debt to the creditor bank in order to obtain a quick discharge.

## Supreme Court grants bail to YSRCP MP Raju

An FIR has already been lodged on the basis of a detailed enquiry by the State CID. The Bench said the MP deserved bail considering the "totality of the circumstances and his health position".

The court referred to the fact that Mr. Raju had undergone a heart surgery too. The court however ordered Mr. Raju not to interact with the Press on "any subject which relate to the case".

Justice Gavai stressed that Mr. Raju should not display his injuries to the Press. "We will take it very seriously," the Bench noted.

The court imposed other conditions including the fur-

nishing of a personal bond of ₹1 lakh and two sureties before the trial court concerned. Mr. Raju should be given 24-hour notice before questioning. His interrogation should be done only in the presence of his lawyer.

The Andhra government

said in the court that Mr. Raju had consistently and deliberately abused his reach and authority as a public person to create disaffection among castes and communities.

His words and action had actually triggered violence, the counsel said.

Mr. Raju had earlier argued that the sedition charges were framed against him only to silence him.

## HC quashes GST on oxygen concentrators

"This is a George Floyd moment for the citizens of this country. The refrain is – 'I can't breathe' – albeit, in a somewhat different context and setting; although in circumstances, some would say, vastly more horrifying and ghastier. Chased and driven by the merciless novel coronavirus, the citizenry has been driven to desperation and despair," the judgement from the HC Bench of Justices Rajiv Shakdher and Talwani Singh noted.

The petitioner in the case, a senior citizen whose nephew had shipped him a concentrator as a gift, had challenged a May 1 notification that levied 12% GST on such imports from 28% earlier.

"Our attempt at nudging the State to take, what we thought was a reasonable stand, [and we dare say, a morally right position] has come a cropper," the judgment averred, before holding the GST levy unconstitutional.

When the matter was in-

itially taken up, the bench 'carried the impression that because of the prevailing chaos and confusion caused by the raging pandemic', the State had not granted the GST exemption on such imports 'due to an oversight'.

The court had asked the government to consider temporarily dropping the 12% GST levied on such imports altogether, citing the shortage of oxygen in the second wave of the pandemic. Its hopes of 'a course correction' from the Centre, however, didn't materialise.

"Our attempt at nudging the State to take, what we thought was a reasonable stand, [and we dare say, a morally right position] has come a cropper," the judgment averred, before holding the GST levy unconstitutional.

When the matter was in-

## Israel-Hamas reach truce after 11 days of fighting

This includes 66 children, with more than 1,900 wounded and critical infrastructure damaged as well as thousands of homes.

In Israel, the military said a soldier had been killed as well as 12 civilians; hundreds have been treated for injuries in rocket salvos that caused panic and sent people rushing into shelters as far away as Tel Aviv.

Palestinians who had huddled in fear of Israeli shelling poured into Gaza's streets, embracing one another in celebration in front of bombed-out buildings.

Mosque loudspeakers feted "the victory of the resistance achieved over the Occupation (Israel)". Cars driving around East Jerusa-

lem's Sheikh Jarrah at dawn flew Palestinian flags and honked horns, echoing the scenes in Gaza.

In the countdown to the 2 a.m. ceasefire, Palestinian rocket salvos continued and Israel carried out at least one air strike.

Egypt said it would send two delegations to monitor it as the warring parties said they were ready to retaliate for any violations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the operation had hit the ability of Hamas, the Islamist group which runs Gaza, to launch missiles at Israel.

Hamas however cast the fighting as successful resistance to a militarily and economically stronger foe.

## 13 naxals killed in Maharashtra

7 women among those dead in Gadchiroli encounter, says State Home Minister

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

Thirteen naxalites belonging to the Kasansur dalam were killed in an encounter in the Paydi-Kotmi jungle of Gadchiroli district, the Maharashtra government said on Friday.

"Today morning, police and naxalites had an encounter in which 13 naxalites were killed and their bodies have been recovered, out of which six are male and seven female," said State Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil, who was on an official tour of Gadchiroli.

### Extortion plan

According to the government, the C-60 squad of the Gadchiroli police had received a tip-off that a group



Jungle stash: Arms and ammunition recovered after the encounter in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

of naxalites was expected at the Paydi-Kotmi jungle in Etapalli area. "Gadchiroli district is known for tendu leaf collection which is used in bidi production. Naxalites recover extortion money out of this trade. The meeting between the tendu leaf con-

tractors and naxalites was planned and the C-60 squad got tip-off of the same," the Minister said.

Ankit Goyal, Superintendent of Police, Gadchiroli district, told *The Hindu* that the police reached the meeting site on Thursday night.

"We covered them and realising this, they fired at us. Our team retaliated and 13 naxalites were killed. More information will be made available soon," he said. The police recovered AK-47 rifles, an SLR gun, carbine, .303, 12 bore guns, explosives from the site.

"The naxalite movement is anti-democratic and poses a serious threat to India's sovereignty. The police force is capable of fighting against them," said Mr. Walse-Patil.

The Minister said Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray would be coordinating with his Chhattisgarh counterpart Bhupesh Baghel regarding the steps to be taken to stop cross-border activities of naxalites and to enhance surveillance.

## Activists' entry barred after Bastar firing

Inquiry ordered into deaths: police

VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

Days after three villagers were killed in police firing at Silger in Chhattisgarh, police said a magisterial inquiry will be conducted to probe the "encounter" deaths as per the Supreme Court guidelines.

The villagers killed on May 17 were part of a large group who were protesting the opening of a security camp at Silger in Chhattisgarh's Bastar, one of the worst Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas.

The police claimed that the three were Maoist sympathisers and were killed when the security camp was attacked.

**'Police theory false'**  
However, human rights lawyer Bela Bhatia said the police theory was completely false and it was the security forces who opened fire.

On May 13, the villagers had a conversation with some security personnel at the camp and five days later this incident occurred. The locals have been calling us on phone but the administration is creating hurdles, they are not letting me perform my duty as a lawyer.

She also shared a video by regional journalist Alok Putul where shots can be heard being fired at unarmed villagers when they blocked an under construction road.

Inspector General of Police, Bastar range, P. Sundarraj told *The Hindu* that the said camp was opened on May 12 and it was detrimental to the Maoists as the "camp is at their doorstep."

"The Maoists mobilised



P. Sundarraj, Bastar IG

their Jan militia cadres from far-off villages and compelled some local villagers to participate in the protest. On May 17, all of a sudden they started pelting stones, they wanted to burn the tents and they even fired at the camp, we were left with no option but to retaliate... it took us a couple of days to identify the bodies," Mr. Sundarraj said.

Ms. Bhatia said the villagers were demonstrating against the camp for five days.

"On May 13, the villagers had a conversation with some security personnel at the camp and five days later this incident occurred. The locals have been calling us on phone but the administration is creating hurdles, they are not letting me perform my duty as a lawyer.

She also shared a video by regional journalist Alok Putul where shots can be heard being fired at unarmed villagers when they blocked an under construction road.

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"The Maoists mobilised

## 120-yr-old inspires an entire J&K village

Dholi Devi has set an example for the younger lot by getting herself inoculated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

A 120-year-old woman has emerged as a 'poster boy' of vaccination in J&K, where vaccine hesitancy resulted in a slow progress of anti-coronavirus vaccination drive in March and April this year.

An official said Dholi Devi, 120, a resident of village Ghar Katiyas of Sub Division Drudu, Tehsil Latti in Udhampur was administered the first dose at a vaccination camp.

"Ms. Devi has set an example for younger people," the official said.

A family member, who accompanied Ms. Devi, told the media that they feel more confident to come forward for vaccination.

## Police to probe killing of dogs in Nagaland

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The police in Nagaland's Mon district have been asked to investigate the killing of eight dogs by a students' union members allegedly because their owners had failed to vaccinate them.

The students' union of Nokzang village had written a notice on May 8, warning "action" against canine pets that were not vaccinated during a drive on May 1. The union directed all dog owners to vaccinate their pets against rabies before May 15. But the notice was reportedly circulated on May 16, a day before members of the union shot the eight "infected" dogs for attacking livestock.

Mon Deputy Commissioner Thavaseelan K. said the police have been advised to file an FIR. Villagers said the union members also extracted a fine of ₹500 each from the eight families.

## Centre wants 'manipulated media' tag off 'toolkit' tweets

Order follows labelling of tweet by Sambit Patra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Hours after a tweet by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national spokesperson Sambit Patra on the alleged "Congress toolkit" was labelled as "manipulated media", the Union government has asked Twitter to remove the tag for "tweets on toolkit to defame government's COVID-19 efforts" as the matter is pending investigation before a law enforcement agency.

"The Ministry of Electronics and IT has written a strong communication to the global team of Twitter, registering its objection to the use of 'manipulated media' tag on certain tweets made by Indian political leaders with reference to a toolkit created to undermine, derail and demean the efforts of the government against the COVID-19 pandemic," the source stated.

On Thursday, the micro-blogging website flagged a May 18 tweet by Mr. Patra as 'manipulated media'. As per Twitter's policy, content may be labelled as 'manipulated media' or in some cases removed, if the company



Sambit Patra

said. "The government has asked Twitter to remove the tags affixed prejudicially to certain tweets in recent days in the interests of fairness and equity... Investigation will determine the veracity of the content, not Twitter," the source stated.

"The action by Twitter proves forgery of the highest order... The world should see and realise how India's ruling party is playing fraud in the middle of a pandemic," Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal said, addressing an online press conference.

"The action by Twitter proves forgery of the highest order... The world should see and realise how India's

media, or the context in which media are presented, are "significantly and deceptively altered or manipulated".

### 'Cong. stand validated'

"The Congress' stand has been validated by this Twitter action itself. What the Congress has been telling for the last so many days, so many years about BJP's false propaganda and spreading lies is actually validated by this single incident itself," Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal said, addressing an online press conference.

"The action by Twitter proves forgery of the highest order... The world should see and realise how India's ruling party is playing fraud in the middle of a pandemic," the party's senior spokesperson, Pawan Khera, said.

## Sunken barge death toll touches 60

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Eleven more bodies were recovered from the sunken Barge P305 off Mumbai coast, taking the death toll to 60. Fifteen persons are still missing five days after the incident.

"From Barge P305, there are 186 survivors and 60 bodies have been recovered. Navy is coordinating the search and rescue operations for the missing," the Navy said on Friday.

Accommodation Barge P305 with 261 persons on board sank 35 nautical miles off Mumbai on May 17 in cyclone Tauktae.

### FIR against captain

The Mumbai police on Friday registered an FIR against Rakesh Ballav, the captain of barge P-305, and others. Political parties have demanded action against state-run oil major ONGC, which had contracted the barge.

(Inputs from Mumbai)



Monsoon reaches Andaman and Nicobar

NORTH ANDAMAN  
The southwest monsoon has arrived over the Andaman and Nicobar islands on Friday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, indicating that it will soon reach the mainland.

Last week, the IMD said the monsoon was likely to make an onset over Kerala on May 31, a day ahead of its normal schedule.

### Stan Swamy seeks bail, says he can't walk or eat

MUMBAI  
Father Stan Swamy, 84, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, was on Friday produced before the Bombay High Court through videoconferencing. "I was brought to Taloja jail eight months ago and, since then, there has been a slow regression of my body. I can't write now, can't go for a walk, can't eat, someone has to hold the spoon for me," he told the court and sought interim bail.

### Pilot killed as IAF aircraft crashes in Punjab

CHANDIGARH  
A pilot was killed after a Bison aircraft of Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in Punjab's Moga district late on May 20. "The pilot, Sqn Ldr Abhinav Choudhary, sustained fatal injuries in the accident. IAF condoles the tragic loss and stands firmly with the bereaved family," said a tweet by the IAF. The IAF has ordered a court of inquiry into the incident that took place at Langeana village in Moga.

### New SP named in POCSO case: Assam Congress

## INTERVIEW | ANTHONY S. FAUCI

# 'India should push hard to get as many people vaccinated as possible'

Chief Medical Adviser to the U.S. President calls for widespread immunisation with short, localised lockdowns to break the chain of transmission

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

**Anthony S. Fauci**, Chief Medical Adviser to the U.S. President and Director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, warns that COVID-19 is very dangerous, and discusses the efficacy of a single dose of the vaccine across populations and the benefits of mixing vaccine candidates. Edited excerpts:

**When do you expect the current wave of the pandemic to subside in India?**

■ You know, that's going to depend on a number of things. First of all, I know India unfortunately has not had the opportunity to vaccinate as many people as we would like to see. Something like 3% of the population is fully vaccinated and somewhere a little bit more than 10% have received one dose. So, you've got to continue, to the best of your ability, to vaccinate as many people as possible. Until more people get vaccinated, one needs to be concerned about making sure people wear masks, particularly in indoor settings when the ventilation is not as good, compared to the outdoors.

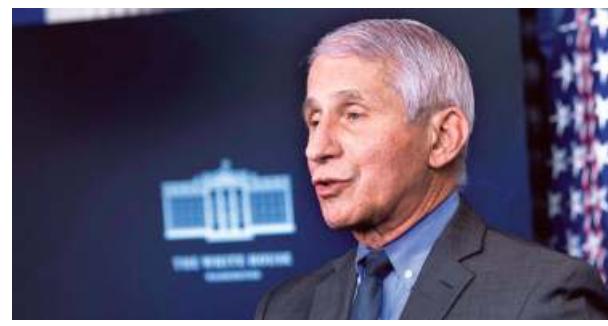
You know, I had been asked, several times by Indian journalists, about what my recommendation would be. And I had said that you should shut down whatever region or State in India is actually having a big surge. You don't need to shut down for

an extended period of time. You could shut down just enough to break the transmission cycle, which you can do. So, I think continue wearing a mask, pushing on vaccination to the extent you possibly can and where you have a high degree of infection... to make sure you keep it shut down until it [the surge] starts to come down.

**Are you advising wearing masks even indoors, with people who are halfway through their vaccination schedule?**

■ You know, the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] in the U.S. recommends that if individuals are fully vaccinated, they don't need to wear a mask indoors, but I would wait until you were fully vaccinated, as opposed to halfway through the vaccination procedure.

**How efficacious are the vaccines currently available in India with regard to viral strains in the country, and how efficacious are others that might be making their**



way to India (mRNA-based vaccines and Johnson and Johnson, for example)?

■ Yeah, the ones that have been looked at the most carefully have been the mRNA vaccines in the sense of looking at the antibodies that are induced by the vaccine and then matching them to see if they neutralise the B.1.1.7, which is quite prevalent in New Delhi. The 617 [B.1.617] in Maharashtra but the 1.1.7 in New Delhi... I mean, that's probably changing now. So, I'm not really quite sure today what the dominant ones [strains] are that are spilling over into other States. But 1.1.7 seems to be very well handled by the vaccines, certainly by the mRNA vaccines.

When we did studies and others did studies on looking at the antibodies that are induced by the standard vaccines against the B.1.617, the Indian variant, we find that it diminishes by a few fold, the

**Sometimes you have to modify your protocol because you don't have enough doses. So, at least for now, it might make sense to give more one doses than two**

efficacy, but not so much that you would expect that it would be a major problem of loss of activity. So, even though it diminishes it somewhat. We have more data with mRNA and with J & J [the Johnson and Johnson adenovirus-based vaccine], not so much with the other vaccines, but you might expect that those vaccines would likely be somewhat similar to the others.

There is another evolving situation in India with mucormycosis infections, especially among people who have diabetes and so forth. Are there any insights you can share with us based

on your experience in the U.S. or other countries?

■ We have not seen that. That is usually seen, as you said correctly, not only with diabetes, but for people who are on high-dose corticosteroids. So, I would want to look and see that perhaps that corticosteroids are being utilised liberally in India, for people with advanced disease. And if you have a combination of diabetes and on an immunosuppressive drug or an anti-inflammatory drug like glucocorticoids, I know from my experience as an infectious disease person, unrelated to COVID-19, but in other circumstances, that mucormycosis is almost always a complication in people who are immunosuppressed or whose immune system is not functioning well. You can see that in diabetes, particularly uncontrolled diabetes, but you could also see it in people who are on immunosuppressive drugs.

You've seen, we now have 60% of our population of adults who have received at least one dose and 40% or so of adults have been fully vaccinated. And the infection rate is starting to dramatically come down. Now it was at 60,000 a day, then 50 [50,000] and 40 [40,000]. And now for the first time, several days in a row, it's been less than 30,000 a day. Hopefully, it will continue to come down. That's what India really needs to do one way or the other. They've got to get more people vaccinated. That is going to be the solution. That will prevent a third wave. It will blunt the second wave, and it will prevent a third wave. So, whatever Indian needs to do to get vaccines into the arms of their people, that's what they need to do.

**Should the priority be getting the first dose in more people, rather than the**

middle of your second wave. So, before you start worrying about a third wave, I think you should try and get the second wave under control. I mean, you always worry about what's going to happen in the future. The real solution to this really is vaccination. We know that from experience with other diseases, and we see it with experience in countries like the United States.

■ If you have enough vaccines, you want to do both one and two, because we know that the second dose makes you much more protected, but sometimes you have to modify and change your protocol because you don't have enough doses. So, at least for now, it might make sense to give more one doses than two.

second dose to those who have already had dose one?

■ I know that there are a couple of drugs that are now in testing. There's one drug from Merck; there is one from Pfizer that we're looking at.

We're also doing what's called targeted antiviral therapy, similar to what we did many years ago with HIV drugs, where you look at the replication cycle of the virus and you identify vulnerable targets of the replication cycle, and specifically designed a drug to inhibit that particular vulnerable target. We've got to do that quickly because we are in need of better therapeutics.

**What is the most important message you have for India?**

■ Well, the most important message, as I've said over and over is, do whatever you can to upgrade and keep getting people vaccinated. You've got to continue to push very hard to get as many people vaccinated as you possibly can.

(Read the full interview at <http://bit.ly/InterviewFauci>)

## Bahuguna's simply extraordinary life

Apart from his environmental contributions, he gave us a wealth of ground truths

ASHISH KOTHARI

I first met him in 1979. As a group of youngsters beginning our journey into ecological issues, Chipko was already a legend, a movement to draw inspiration from. At a meeting in Delhi, Sunderlal Bahuguna spoke quietly but firmly about the havoc being caused by deforestation and road construction in the Himalayas, and of the resolve of villagers to stop this madness. His sing-song voice, his Garhwali phrases, the mix of cold science and grassroots wisdom in his arguments for why the Himalayan ecosystems had to be saved, the simplicity of his appearance – all these served to create a deep impression. Forty-two years later, the imprint he made on my mind and heart has been moulded and shaped by countless other women and men who have braved the odds to protect India's environment from destructive development, including the women of Chipko on the frontlines of saving Himalayan forests, whom we, as members of Kalpavriksh, met on treks through Tehri Garhwal in 1980-81. But like the seeds we carry within us from our parents, some original voices and personalities do not disappear even after decades. Sunderlalji's is one such.

Lots will be said about his contributions – the campaign to save Himalayan forests resulting in a ban on commercial felling above 30 degrees slope and above 1,000 msl (mean sea level) in



## TRIBUTE

1981; the movement against the Tehri Dam, a mega-project with devastating consequences due to submergence, tree-felling, displacement, and possible seismic impacts, unsuccessful even after Sunderlalji undertook one of India's longest fasts after Independence, over 56 days, and after an expert committee appointed by the Central government said it should not be built; his support for women-led movements against the liquor mafia in the hills, and for the Beej Bachao Andolan, a movement to save Himalayan agricultural biodiversity from being wiped out by the chemical-intensive Green Revolution; the untiring awareness campaigns across India and the world, including a jaw-dropping Kashmir-to-Kohima *padayatra* (foot march) in the early 1980s to bring attention to the entire Himalayan region; and even before

much of this, with his wife Vimla Ji, who was in his own words one of his strongest inspirations, the freedom movement and struggles against untouchability and caste discrimination.

The list of contributions can go on. But what I would like to remember him for is his personality. He was gentle, quietly persuasive, firmly strong in his beliefs and arguments, with occasional bouts of anger quickly left behind and replaced by his infectious smile. He showed delight in interacting with children and youth, charming them with the kind of open laughter only mountain people are capable of, giving them simple nuggets of wisdom.

Like his mentor Gandhiji, he had the ability to come up with pithy one-liners, such as "ecology is permanent economy". And in the simplicity of his lifestyle, he was always clad in khadi, ate

sparingly but healthily, no frills, and lived the life he preached.

In his insistence on ecology being the foundation of everything, and "development" being anything but development if it does not respect this, Sunderlalji gave us a wealth of ground truths.

Given the deepening chasm between India's governance and these ground truths (the hubris-filled Chardham and hydro-electricity projects in the Himalayas as painful manifestations), and his own health situation, which had been worsening even before COVID-19 struck, perhaps it is just as well that he does not have to live through these traumatic times. His was a life well-lived, and it is up to us to learn from it and continue struggling for ecological sanity.

*The author is with Kalpavriksh and Vikalp Sangam in Pune*

## Jaishankar to meet Blinken, UN chief

He is also expected to meet U.S. manufacturers on procurement of vaccines

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

Antony Blinken

& Johnson, as well as gifts of extra doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine that the U.S. plans to share with other countries.

"The External Affairs Minister will have two interactions with business forums on economic and COVID-related cooperation between India and the U.S.," the Ministry said. Mr. Jaishankar is expected to meet business representatives at the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership

Forum (USISPF) and the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) during the visit. In recent weeks, both groups have formed a "Global Task Force on Pandemic Response" along with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to work on several aspects of pandemic relief, including provision of 1,000 ventilators required by hospitals in India, 25,000 oxygen concentrators and coordination of human resources executives in India and the U.S.

**Meeting CEOs**  
Industry sources said Mr. Jaishankar would address a round table with CEOs of various vaccine and pharmaceutical companies, where U.S. manufacturers are keen

to discuss a more centralised procurement, rather than the current State by State mechanism, and would like to see India grant Emergency Use Authorisation for the U.S. vaccines soon.

Mr. Jaishankar is expected to make a stop at the United Nations, his first visit since India assumed its two-year term at the Security Council this January. Officials said the meeting with Mr. Gutierrez would focus on a range of issues, expected to include India's efforts against the pandemic, the Afghanistan talks process, where India plays a role as Chair of Taliban Sanctions Committee at the UNSC, the violence between Israel and Palestine, and UN reforms.

## Narada case accused now under house arrest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Friday constituted a five-judge bench to hear the Narada case. Earlier in the day, a Division Bench referred the case to a larger Bench and directed that the two arrested Ministers and other two leaders be put under house arrest instead of judicial custody. The next hearing is on May 24.

The Division Bench directed that the matter be heard before a larger Bench since one of the judges thought it was fit to grant in-

terim bail to the four. The order said the court found that guidance given by the Supreme Court on May 12 in the case titled *Gautam Navlakha vs National Investigation Agency* was applicable in these cases. "As far as interim relief is concerned, while modifying the earlier order dated May 17, 2021, we direct that considering the age and health issues of the accused, three of whom are

termed bail to the four. The order said the court found that guidance given by the Supreme Court on May 12 in the case titled *Gautam Navlakha vs National Investigation Agency* was applicable in these cases. "As far as interim relief is concerned, while modifying the earlier order dated May 17, 2021, we direct that considering the age and health issues of the accused, three of whom are

## Variable DA for workers in Central sphere revised

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Labour Ministry notified and revised the rate of variable dearness allowance (VDA) for different categories of workers engaged in various scheduled employments in the Central sphere, while modifying the earlier order dated April 1. It is expected to benefit about 1.50 crore workers.

The rate of wages – including variable dearness allowance area wise – per day for the unskilled, semi-skilled/unskilled supervisor, skilled/clerical and highly skilled employees engaged

in construction or maintenance of roads/runways/building operations ranges from ₹431 to ₹854. It varies from ₹431 to ₹645 for those in sweeping/cleaning and loading/unloading works.

The rates fixed for scheduled employment in the Central sphere are applicable to the establishments under the authority of the Centre, Railway administration, mines, oil fields, major ports or any corporation established by the Centre. These rates are equally applicable to contract and casual employees/workers.

The rate of wages – including variable dearness allowance area wise – per day for the unskilled, semi-skilled/unskilled supervisor, skilled/clerical and highly skilled employees engaged

**Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Ltd. (A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)**  
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TTD is conducting e-auction for sale of following varieties of HUMAN HAIR vide Auction ID No.21687 through Konigolu portal of Government of Andhra Pradesh on 10-06-2021.

**NEW VARIETIES OF HUMAN HAIR:** 1st variety ("27" & Above) Category 'A': 1,600 Kgs, Category 'B': 8,800 Kgs, 2nd variety ("19" to "26") Category 'A': 2,300 Kgs, Category 'B': 15,000 Kgs & Category 'C': 5,900 Kgs, 4th variety ("5" to "9"): 4,200 Kgs, 5th variety ("Below 5"): 57,000 Kgs. NOTE: Category 'A': True / Full Black hair, Category 'B': Grey / Partial Grey / Dyed Hair, Category 'C': Loose / Non Remy.

The above quantities of human hair are tentative and the actual quantities will be updated one day before the e-auction. For further details visit <https://konigolu.ap.gov.in/>. Contact O/o General Manager (Auctions), TTD on Ph: 0877-2264429 / Email:gnauctionsttd@tirumala.org.

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Online e-tenders are invited for "Construction of 7 meter wide cement concrete road from Ash dyke to Administrative Building and Raianwali Bypass to NH-62 at STPS, Suratgarh. Tender details are available on websites <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in/> and [www.sppr.rajasthan.gov.in/](http://www.sppr.rajasthan.gov.in/).

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Chief Engineer (' Generation and PED), VB, Pattom, Tvm

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Sl. No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Specification No	Total
1	CE/MTPS – I /METTUR	17 / 2021-2022	1

The tender Specification can be downloaded from TANGEDCO website, [www.tangedco.gov.in](http://www.tangedco.gov.in), [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in), <https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgap/app>

**CHIEF ENGINEER/MTPS – I /METTUR**

SID- DGM(Mtis)

## IN BRIEF



T.N. seeks 1 crore vaccine doses from Centre

CHENNAI  
The Union government must urgently supply at least one crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Tamil Nadu, as its current allotment of 13.85 lakh doses is meagre and insufficient, DMK MP T.R. Baalu told Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan at a meeting on Thursday. Mr. Baalu also appealed to the Union government to provide ₹300 crore to HLL's vaccine manufacturing plant in Chengalpattu to tackle the shortage.

## Child body moves SC against vaccine advisory

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) has moved the Supreme Court against the January 14 advisory of the Union government excluding pregnant and lactating women from COVID-19 vaccination. The petition said the notification was based on an unreasonable classification, was arbitrary and violated the right to life of a class of women. "The health of pregnant women and lactating mothers is inextricably connected with and directly impacts on the mortality and health of children," the petition added.

## U.P. to declare black fungus notifiable disease

LUCKNOW  
The Uttar Pradesh government will declare black fungus a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act. During a meeting on Friday, the CM said, "In compliance with the order of the Central government, black fungus should also be declared a notified disease on the lines of COVID. Order should be issued today and be made effective." The orders were not issued till late evening. However, a senior official said the process is on. The order will be issued after the approval of the file," Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said. PTI

## Ensure aid to vulnerable groups: Centre to States

NEW DELHI  
The Ministry of Home Affairs has written to the States to review the support facilities for vulnerable groups impacted by COVID-19. "In order to meet the new challenges arising out of recent wave of COVID-19, it is requested to undertake an immediate review of the existing facilities for vulnerable groups impacted by COVID-19 such as children who have been orphaned, senior citizens who may require timely assistance and support, and members of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes who may need guidance to access government support facilities," the letter stated.

# SII unresponsive to States, says Chhattisgarh Health Minister

T.S. Singh Deo urges Union government to foot the bill for COVID-19 vaccines

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

The Serum Institute of India (SII) is unresponsive to the State governments, Chhattisgarh Health Minister T.S. Singh Deo, said urging the Centre to foot the bill for COVID-19 vaccines instead of passing on the cost to State governments.

Speaking to *The Hindu* following a meeting with Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, Mr. Deo said, "There has been no response from the Serum Institute of India on queries from our side. There is nobody responsible who is talking there." Chhattisgarh has so far bought seven lakh vaccine doses on its own, and over four lakh doses are that of the SII's Covishield. He said that Bharat Biotech, which manufactures Covaxin, though attentive to the States, just did not have enough doses.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan chaired a virtual meeting on Friday on the COVID-19 situation and vaccination pro-



**The Centre's vaccination policy is comparable to demonetisation, where a certain denomination was cancelled without first printing the new notes to replace those cancelled, leading to a slide in the economy**

T.S. SINGH DEO,  
CHHATTISGARH HEALTH MINISTER

gress with the Health Ministers of Chhattisgarh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh and Puducherry, and the Lieutenant-Governors/ Administrators of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Lakshadweep.

## Problem flagged

Mr. Deo said that he had raised the issue with the Health Minister, urging the government to centralise vaccine procurement for the 18+ plus category too.

"This is a pandemic and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman gave an assurance in Parliament, allocat-

ing ₹35,000 crore for the vaccination programme. There was no reason to palm it off to the State governments," Mr. Deo said.

"The Centre's vaccination policy is comparable to demonetisation, where a certain denomination was cancelled without first printing the new notes to replace the cancelled, leading to a slide in the economy," he added.

Earlier this month, SII CEO Adar Poonawalla left for London. In an interview in London, he said that he and his family had left the country after unprecedented "pressure and aggression" over the demand for COVID-19 vaccines. The SII de-

clined to comment on the re-

marks made by Mr. Deo.

The Centre has now started allocating a vaccine quota for each State. Mr. Deo said that if they controlled the quota, then they must also pay for it. Out of the 68 lakh doses Chhattisgarh received from the Centre, Mr. Deo said that over 61 lakh doses have been administered.

The issue of "black fungus" spreading, often in the patients hospitalised for COVID-19 treatment, was also raised in the meeting. "So far we have had 102 cases of black fungus and one death.

The Centre has provided us only 500 vials of Amphotericin B injection. Doctors say we need at least 12,000 doses because these injections have to be administered over a 21-day period," Mr. Deo said.

He complained that drug manufacturing firms only listened to the Pharmacy Pricing Department, which came under the Union government. "So unless the Centre steps in, the States cannot do much," he said.

# Pandemic has made countries more self-seeking: Jaishankar

External Affairs Minister talks on COVID-induced anxieties

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has hinted that countries have failed to live by "commitments" during COVID-19. The pandemic has prompted countries to become self-seeking often resorting to broader definition of national security that disrupted supply chains, he said in a speech at a 'Future of Asia' event organised by Nikkei on Thursday.

"In the past, defence, policies and intelligence drove calculations, with some extrapolation into domains like resources, energy or technology. With some notable exceptions, its demands were balanced out by the requirements of global exchanges, economic efficiency and perhaps by social habits. These trends, in fact,

became stronger as the globalisation mantra took deeper root. The pandemic, however, saw capabilities leveraged, commitments dishonoured, supply chains blocked, logistics disrupted, and shortages created, with



S. Jaishankar

all the accompanying anxieties," said Mr. Jaishankar distinguishing the pandemic-era response of nation-states from the usual globalisation-driven concerns.

The policy-oriented speech is being interpreted as an admission by the Minister to the problems that India itself is facing in continuing with the Vaccine Maitri project, under which it had promised to deliver vaccines to all over the world and especially to the South Asian partner countries. On Wednesday, Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen called Mr. Jaishankar and reminded him that

Dhaka had not got the Covishield vaccine from Pune's Serum Institute of India despite placing orders. Similar problems have been reported from Nepal, Sri Lanka and African countries that were promised vaccine from the SII.

Ukraine has been lobbying for required doses from India for weeks but has not succeeded in getting even a small consignment, as India has prioritised the domestic process of vaccination due to the second wave of COVID-19. Mr. Jaishankar acknowledged that the process of prioritising self-interest had led to a degree of avoidance from "international" sphere.

"When economies slowed down due to material disruptions, we now understood the need for manufacturing security. Call it buying nationally, middle class concerns, dual circulation or self-reliance, there is no question that many polities are seeking to hedge against excessive exposure internationally," he said.

# PM must act rather than talk: Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi should act instead of giving speeches and advice, the Congress said on Friday as it shared the details of relief measures undertaken by the party to help those affected by COVID-19.

In response to Mr. Modi getting emotional during a video-conference with healthcare professionals and frontline workers of his Lok Sabha constituency of Varanasi, the party said India needed a strong resolve to fight the pandemic instead of tears.

# Singapore for united action against virus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The High Commission of Singapore in Delhi on Friday called for united action in defeating COVID-19.

In a social media post, it indicated that controversies that divide efforts would not deliver a successful strategy against the pandemic, and praised Singaporean real estate giant CapitaLand for contributing relief assistance to fight the virus in India.

# '1.3 billion doses a realistic estimate'

Epidemiologist counters figure projected by govt.

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

India ought to realistically expect around a 1.3 billion doses of vaccines from August to December and not the two billion that the Centre has projected, said epidemiologist and public health expert Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, in an interview to *The Hindu*.

The estimate that had been made by Dr. V.K. Paul, who heads India's COVID-19 task force, is premised on



Chandrakant Lahariya

vaccines from eight companies. Four of those vaccines (Biological E, Zydus Cadila, Genova Biopharma and Bharat Biotech Nasal) are in various phases of clinical trials, some in phase 1-2, said Dr. Lahariya and their success

and eventual licensing could not be predetermined.

"We have seen till now in the pandemic that nearly all manufacturers have fallen short of their projected production capacity and ability to scale up production. My analysis shows that by the end of July 2021, India is likely to conduct an additional 200 million vaccinations [that would take the total to 380 million total vaccinations]. A realistic estimate for vaccine availability for between August-December 2021 is around 1.3 billion doses."

Combining data from the serology surveys of the In-

dian Council of Medical Research, and inferring that there were 20-30 undetected cases for every confirmed one, it was likely that 50-60% of the population had already been infected and developed some immunity to the virus. Considering that the majority of infections have happened in March 2021 onwards, Dr. Lahariya reasons, this subgroup would have some form of protection from infection till December 2021.

The real challenge could come thereafter and preparations are key, he said.

(For the interview, log on to [bit.ly/Lahariyainterview](http://bit.ly/Lahariyainterview))

Highest number of samples tested on Thursday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

India recorded 2,49,314 new COVID-19 cases and 4,031 new deaths till 9.50 p.m. on Friday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,62,80,095 cases and 2,95,397 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 36,184 new infections, followed by Karnataka (32,218) and Kerala (29,673). Maharashtra recorded 1,263 new casualties on the day, followed by Tamil Nadu (467) and Karnataka (353).

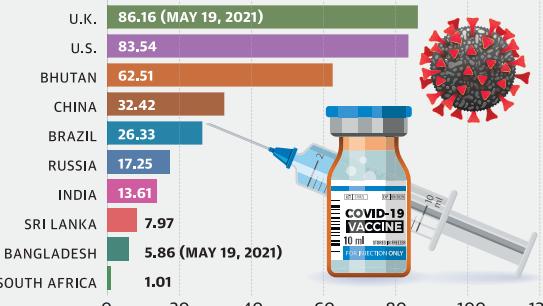
He said the High Court order has encroached into the "arena of governance" and breached the principle of separation of powers. The order needs to be set aside.

The High Court had ordered the State to provide within a month at least 20

## Vaccination rate

India has administered 13.61 COVID-19 vaccine doses per 100 people as of May 20, 2021.

A comparison with select nations



rashtra's fatalities includes backlog deaths which were not reported in the previous bulletins.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and

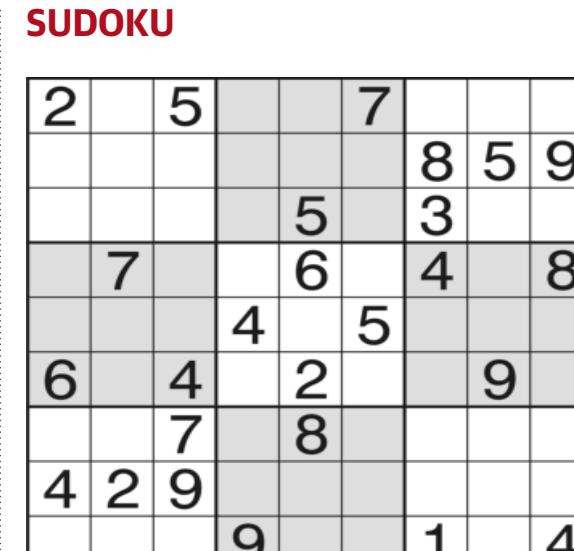
Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

As many as 20,61,683 samples were tested in the country on Thursday (the results for which were made available on Friday), the highest number of tests carried out in a single day in the country.

According to a press release from the Health Ministry, around 14.82 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Friday, which is 3.1 lakh doses more than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours.

In a social media post, it indicated that controversies that divide efforts would not deliver a successful strategy against the pandemic, and praised Singaporean real estate giant CapitaLand for contributing relief assistance to fight the virus in India.

# SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13253 | Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

V	A	T	I	C	A	N	C	I	T
S	B	M	D	I	O	A			
T	R	O	U	B	R	L	S		
I	S	T	S	E	A	E			
G	A	S	P	H	I	N	G		
D	E	O	G	R	A	F	E	K	
E	L	L	N	G	T	A	I		
P	E	L	O	T	O	N	R	I	S
X	A	N	A	D	U	E	L	A	T
S	T	A	S	T	E	S	D	N	S

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# FAITH

## Saiva Agamas explained

Thirumoolar was chosen by Lord Siva to be the recipient of the knowledge of Saiva Agamas. Thirumoolar, in turn, wrote the Thirumandiram, setting out philosophical truths. He says Lord Siva is beyond words and understanding. He is the only Truth. All other tattvas are maya, and will perish, says Thirumoolar. He says he will talk about this Siva, who is beyond comprehension, in the 3,000 verses, which constitute the Thirumandiram. Thirumoolar talks about the jnana which should be sought and also about the seeker of such jnana, elaborated R. Narayanan in a discourse. Saiva Siddhanta talks about pasu, pati and paasam. Pasu is the jivatma, searching for the Ultimate Truth.

Pati is Lord Siva, and pasam refers to the ties that keep a person under bondage, preventing him from reaching the feet of the Lord. These concepts too are contained in Thirumoolar's work. Jnana is Siva's sakthi. Thirumoolar refers to his work as a seed, which contains all the eternal truths. He has explained therein, everything about the Saiva Agamas. Just as a seed, though small in size, contains what is needed for a tree to grow from it, so does his work contain the entire knowledge of the Saiva Agamas.



## Instapick

**Ranipet toll gate:** Fauna and portraits of people now greet those passing by Ranipet toll gate, near Vellore. Under Nippon Paint India's CSR initiative, 47,341 sq ft of National Highway 46 features art on the theme, Living in Harmony with Nature. The project includes Ranipet bridge, and lockup rooms in police stations at Ranipet, Arakkonam and Sholingur. @nipponpaintindia

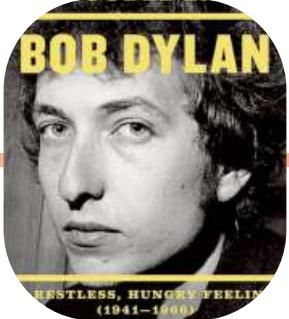


## Talking point

**BTS:** There seems to be no way but up for BTS! The Korean pop septet's highly-anticipated second English single, 'Butter', dropped on the morning of May 21 (IST), garnering 2 crore views in one hour. The band is also part of the upcoming *Friends: The Reunion* special.

## Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other events you just can't miss.



### Definitive Dylan

Clinton Heylin's new biography, *The Double Life of Bob Dylan: A Restless, Hungry Feeling (1941-1966)*, dives into the personal archives of over 6,000 items that Dylan sold in 2016. This promises to be the definitive story of his life. ₹3,023. Find the recipe for the white soup from *Pride and Prejudice* in *Martha Lloyd's Household Book: The Original Manuscript from Jane Austen's Kitchen*, to be published in June. Featuring recipes from the Austen family. ₹3,000, booleianshop.co.uk



### For those connected

Starting June, you can experience music in a new way on [Apple Music](#). The company is rolling out two features at no extra cost to subscribers: lossless audio and spatial audio with support for Dolby Atmos (which promises an 'immersive' listening experience). [Amazon](#) India, on the other hand, has launched [miniTV](#), a free video streaming service available within the Amazon app. Watch curated content across web series, comedy shows, tech news, and more. Presently, only on Android.



### Comedy track

Listen to *The Expert* who knows nothing but also everything. Comedian [Sorabh Pant](#) gives you his take on everything from politics and Bollywood to world news and sports. The show, which promises to be interactive, will have a new episode every Saturday. From May 22 onwards, 8.30 pm. ₹299. [in.bookmyshow.com](#). Or there's the special by actor-comic [Vipul Goyal](#), of *Humorously Yours* (web series) fame. May 23, 30. ₹599. [in.bookmyshow.com](#)



### Talking shop

[Jade](#) by [Monica and Karishma](#), has opened at its first international location in Santa Monica, Los Angeles, USA, coinciding with the 12th anniversary year of the couture label. The brand already has stores in Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. Consultations take place online; book at [jadebymk.com](#). They do lehangas, saris, tops, palazzos, skirts, shirts, jumpsuits, bibs, and outerwear like jackets and cover-ups. Looking for accessories? Try [thejewelfactor.com](#); prices from ₹600.



### Architecture biennale

The [17th International Architecture Exhibition](#), *How will we live together?*, opens today. Curated by scholar Hashim Sarkis, and organised by La Biennale di Venezia, it includes participants from 46 countries. Till November 21. [labiennale.org](#). Speaking of living spaces, the recently-held [NYCxDesign Awards](#) had unusual choices, such as Aryaman Giri Gundala's Perforated Lamp design in the Student Design category. Inspired by Bauhaus cut paper projects, he has optimised it for 3D printing.



### Photos and readings

Photo prints by Madhavan Palanisamy and others are part of [CPB Foundation's](#) initiative to raise Covid relief funds. [chennaiphotobiennale.com](#). For young readers, [NLF Imaginary Lines](#) has interactions with authors Kate DiCamillo (May 25) and Joseph Bruchac on (May 28). [neeliteraturefestival.org](#). [Prabha Khaitan Foundation's](#) [The Write Circle](#) launches in Chennai virtually with author Amish Tripathi and Vidyajyoti Raju Singh. May 28, 6 pm. On Facebook Live.



### Paris' new museum

Paris welcomes its latest museum as French billionaire [Francois Pinault's](#) long-delayed project finally opens today. It's located in the historic [Bourse de Commerce](#), a building reimagined by Japanese architect Tadao Ando. The museum will house Pinault's collection of contemporary art. [pinaultcollection.com](#). Over in Italy, researchers at the University of Florence have created a 17-ft tall [replica](#) of *Michelangelo's David*, using 3D printing technology, for Italy's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai this year. [expo2020dubai.com](#)

## SPIT TAKE

# Degree of gratitude

When all that stood between me and respectability were 100 beautifully bound pages

KRISHNA SHASTRI DEVULAPALLI

Not many folks know I actually went to college. I don't blame them. I haven't given anyone the impression of having been to one.

This piece is about that difficult time in my life, and is actually a belated thank you to that one person who was the sole reason I have a degree certificate, my proudest possession, in my cupboard today (sitting right next to my third-place certificate in the lemon-and-spoon race in Class 3, the cease-and-desist order from one of my editors, and my grandfather's Padma Bhushan.)

At the end of my third year, on the very last working day, when I went to the staff room to submit my final assignment – all that stood between me and a degree – the professor looked at me, and the beautifully bound 100-page assignment (which he didn't as yet know

contained select sections of the Madras Telephone Directory, 1986 edition, interspersed with the screenplay of *Enter the Dragon*) I had delicately placed on his table, and asked me a question teachers don't normally ask third-year students: who are you?

I told him,

'In these three years, I've never once seen you in my class,' he said.

That wasn't entirely true. I had gone to one. It was the first period on the first day of the first year. And had left midway using a technique US marines use in tropical jungles.

Not having a proper verbal response handy, I did what any self-respecting young man proud of his East Godavari heritage would do



• SREEJITH R KUMAR

under such circumstances. I gracefully swan dived for the professor's tiny Quo Vadis-clad feet.

I was escorted away by the peon and two assistant professors with my assignment still tucked under my arm and my legs backpedalling the air in vain.

College closed. For an entire week, my father, not a man easily fooled, kept giving me one particular look that appeared disturbingly familiar. When I realised it was the exact same look, Sivaji Ganeshan gives Srikanth in *Thangappathakam* when he finds out he's a smug-

gler, I figured something needed to be done. I didn't fancy having a premature end at the hands of my own father as he recited a nursery rhyme.

Using my underworld connections, by which I mean the college peon, I found out where the professor lived.

The next day, sporting copious amounts of penitent *vibuthi* on my forehead (actually, Johnson's Prickly Heat Powder), I landed up at the professor's doorstep at about 7 am.

Taking a deep breath, I rang the doorbell. There was no response. I

waited a decent interval and rang again. The door opened. It was a girl. She was about my age, dressed in a cotton nightie.

'Is Saar ... er ... Daddy at home?' I said.

'Whose Daddy?' the girl said.

'Yours?' I said tentatively.

'Ennango,' the girl called out, turning back. 'Someone for you.'

The professor appeared. He was wearing a towel and a sleeveless Bisbanian. There was still a bit of toothpaste foam around his mouth. He looked at me and made a sound like a bird of prey being garrotted.

'Ullae po, di,' he yelled. She

had already done that.

Channelling my inner Ekalavya, I just short of knelt, and held out my assignment. The professor took it without a word.

'Thank you, sir,' I said.

'Er... does anyone else know where I live?' he said.

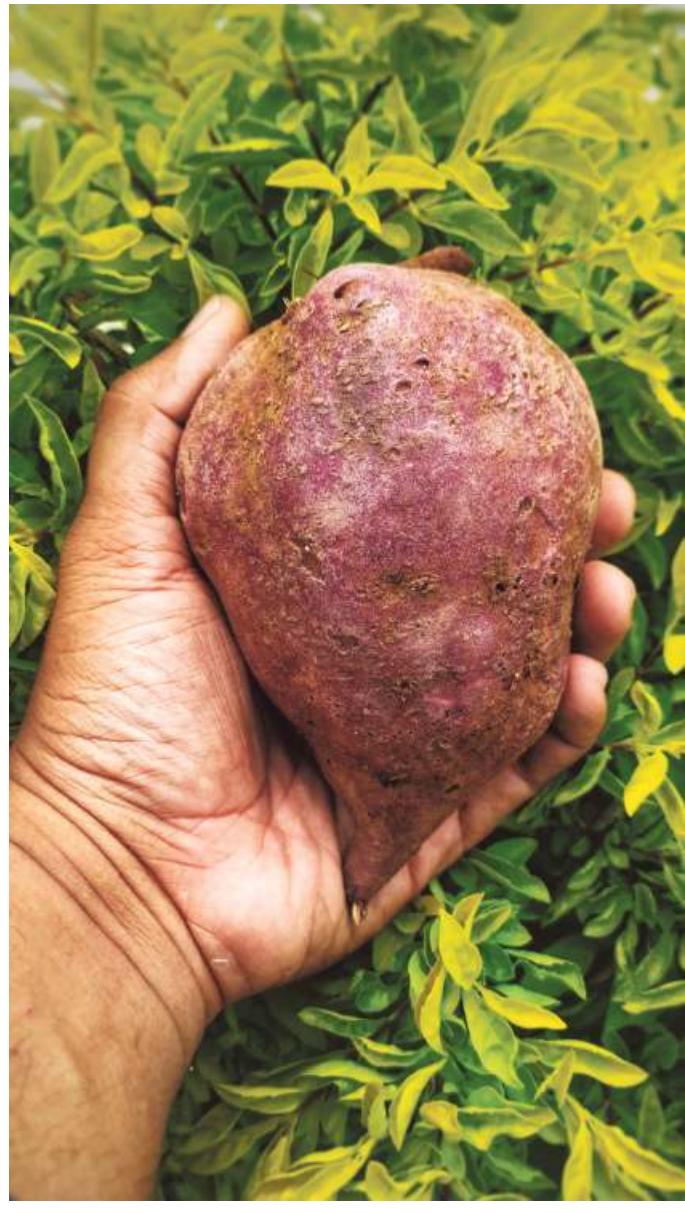
'Not a soul, sir,' I said.

I got 76% in my assignment.

So, guardian angel in a nightie, wherever you are today, consider this my official, if much delayed, thankyou.

KRISHNA SHASTRI DEVULAPALLI IS A SATIRIST. HE HAS WRITTEN FOUR BOOKS AND EDITED AN ANTHOLOGY.

• RACHIT KIRTEEMAN



## Korput on the map

In 2012, Korput, in the Eastern Ghats, was accorded the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) status. That is, it was declared as an area that was a repository of agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, and valuable cultural heritage. Here, sustainable systems provide food and livelihoods to small-time farmers.

# Deep purple from Odisha

The sweet-scented spuds from Sanjog Sahu's Mati Farms are a summer surprise at chefs' tables and will soon find a prominent place in restaurant menus

PANKAJA SRINIVASAN

Chindi Varadarajulu, chef and owner of Chennai-based Pumpkin Tales, is delighted with the purple sweet potatoes she has sourced this summer. They have brought back memories of her childhood in Singapore, she says. The potatoes, a deep purple with a sweet fragrance when cooked, are from Mati Farms, a farming enterprise in Odisha – the state leading in sweet potato production across India. "I have been actively looking for them for the past year. They are versatile and lend vibrancy to the simplest recipes," says Varadarajulu.

Earlier this month, Delhi-based farming initiative Krishi Cress, that offers locally-grown exotic produce, also added these spuds to their list. A client, beauty columnist and influencer Vasudha Rai, immediately took to Instagram to share her experience – delicious breakfast bars with the sweet potatoes, Medjool dates, coconut oil and pistachio. Sanjog Sahu, the young farmer behind Mati Farms, couldn't be more delighted. "Tie-ups with like-mind-

ed partners are gratifying, and have enabled us to tide over problems during these unprecedented times," he says.

### Growing a revolution

What started as a pilot project on Sahu's one-acre farm on the banks of the Chilika lake in late 2016, grew into Mati Farms in 2018 – incorporating smallholder farmers into its initiative. The *māti* in 'Mati Farms' is soil, in Oriya. "We refer to ourselves as Mati Farms in the plural. It's because even when we were just one tiny farm, the goal was to always create an optimal model that could be quickly adopted by smallholder farmers for profitability and environmental resilience," adds Sahu, 35, who discontinued a PhD at the University of Arizona and set up Mati Farms. "My research focussed on the relationship between agriculture and environmental change in the Eastern Ghats. During the course of my PhD, I interacted with the farmers there, and realised that I should be involving myself in something more actionable," he says.

As for its special fragrance, he calls it a "happy discovery". According to the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI), purple sweet potatoes have a high anthocyanin content of 90 milligrams per hundred grams. "But we still do not know much about the flavour profile and are conducting independent tests to understand this better," he adds.

are indigenously developed. "We conducted multiple trials to identify how it grows best, following which we expanded its production within our network of farmers. Our farmer group in northern Odisha, led by well-known organic mango farmer Lal Bahadur Mohanta, has successfully grown purple sweet potatoes in summer, a feat unheard of," says Sahu, about what is traditionally a winter crop harvested in September and March.

As for its special fragrance, he calls it a "happy discovery". According to the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI), purple sweet potatoes have a high anthocyanin content of 90 milligrams per hundred grams. "But we still do not know much about the flavour profile and are conducting independent tests to understand this better," he adds.

### The farmer network

Twenty three farmers are actively a part of Mati Farms, across the highland regions of Gajapati district, Korput, the foothills and uplands of Daitari at the Jajpur-Konjhar border in north-

ern Odisha, and coastal regions. Sahu says, "We handheld our network of farmers right from the seed stage to harvest, with knowledge transfer, organic inputs and troubleshooting, and have an assured buyback at fair prices. The farmers contribute their time, labour and land." The fact that sustainability is key here is what excites chef Varadarajulu.

"There are so many locally grown vegetables and fruits that we don't see anymore. If we do not cook with them, farmers will stop growing them and the younger generation will never

know about the wealth of local produce," she says.

### Making travel plans

Sahu observes that while growing exotic vegetables was easy, marketing them in eastern India was another matter. "Odisha's vegetable farmers are already good at growing what they do, leading the state to quietly become one of the largest producers of vegetables in the country. But the problem lay in finding a market for the perishables," he says, having now ventured into setting up a vegetable processing plant at Jagatpur.

Meanwhile, Varadarajulu plans to source more sweet potatoes in September. "I hope to convince vegetable markets to carry it. It will definitely be a big part of our menu as a seasonal vegetable," she promises. Sahu, who prefers the sweet potatoes baked in their jackets, is amused at the reaction of his folks back home. "As it trends across the globe as a superfood, they are bemused as to what the fuss over the humble sweet potato is all about," he concludes.

For details, visit [matifarms.in](#)



### Tribal connect

A lot of the sweet potatoes are grown in the uplands of the Eastern Ghats inhabited by tribal communities who have been growing them for centuries. The highlands are perfectly suited for the tubers that are cultivated between 800 and 1,600 metres above mean sea level.



(Clockwise from above)

Sanjog Sahu, a snapshot of the violet spuds at his farm, the breakfast bars made by Rai, and a sweet potato cut open

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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# Love notes and scented cards

A perfumer's pandemic journey shows us how the last months have reminded many of the power of smell and helped them reconnect with it



Nandan at her perfumer's table at Olaulim Backyards, and demonstrating a few mudras



■ SHAMEENA FERNANDES



■ SHIVANI GUPTA

## A thank you note

After about a year of running Dial-a-Perfume, I decided to culminate it in March, with a performance with my musician friend, Minam Apang, titled *Thief*. One hundred and twenty five people came for the performance (we were overwhelmed, but ensured separated seating) held at the gardens of Tamil Table in Goa. *Thief* is the story of what a jasmine flower feels when it is plucked. Because, at the end of the day, a perfumery is as much about the planet as the people, and the performance – with poetry, fragrances and music – was an apology of sorts to nature.

### JAHNVI LAKHOTA NANDAN

What is your first memory of smell? Mine is of smelling my sister's head the day she was born, August 16, 1979. I really liked that smell of a clean human scalp, talc, and also surprise. Forty years later, in late 2019, when people started losing their sense of smell at the start of the pandemic, in a collective anosmia, the question became even more pertinent.

I also started asking it a lot as part of a project that I started in Goa last year, along with impresario Sacha Mendes. We called it called Dial-a-Perfume. A phone-based service to speak with people about their memories of smell in a world where the unthinkable was happening, where 'loss of the nose' had become a symptom. People would call and I would try and interpret their words into a fragrance, and sometimes even a unique hand 'purifier'. These were called *Oté*, referring to hands in Japanese, a word that is believed to represent the final stages by which all actions become possible. To handle means to manifest, and hands create a passage from the conceptual to the real.

We also use our hands for gestures that can, at times, be even more powerful than words, such as the *mudra*. The photos here are of me in my studio, playing with *mudras* in gloved hands, while taking breaks from making the fragrances. My longtime collaborator and close friend, artist Shivani Gupta, shot them. They felt so eerie at the time, and still do actually, that I was hesitant to share them.

### The intimacy of perfumes

We set up a little perfumer's table at Olaulim Backyards, nestled in the forests of the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary by the estuary of the Mandovi river, in the midst of frangipani trees, fragrant Konkan lime and cashew trees. And Mendes helped us create the link with the community over WhatsApp, as all our spaces were shut.

Someone called us one Sunday and said that she would like to surprise her close friend in San Francisco. We chatted with her about her memories of happy smells and decided to make something. Of course, making an actual fragrance takes years, but for this project we decided to weave smells like a patchwork quilt, of streams of memories – the only thing that we could do in this complicated time. Then came the challenge of having to send something to San Francisco while being in a small village in Goa. Our studio and laboratory in Paris were shut at that time.

Creating in the midst of global mayhem is not simple; it demands a strong intuitive capacity, a love for the people calling, and the joint energies of many collaborators. The lady talked at length about smoke, forests, leather seats and chalk, and we decided to send a perfumed letter to her friend (a lover, I presumed), but weren't quite sure how to do it. None of the courier services were operating. In an ideal



## Meanwhile, from around the world

Support groups and smelling kits for those who have lost their sense of smell

**AbScentCovid19:** a Facebook support group for people who have anosmia (loss of the ability to detect smells) after contracting Covid-19.

**AbScent Parosmia:** a Facebook group that discusses parosmia (distorted sense of smell) and phantosmia (smelling something that's not there). Scientists and researchers weigh in, too.

**The Scent Guru Group:** offers smell training kits to help retrain your sense of smell. The Essential Awakenings Kit comes with six scents – think chocolate, cinnamon, mint and grass – clue cards, and a training guide. Approx ₹4,800, on thescentsgurugroup.com

**The Smell Project:** their kit comes with four essential oils – lemon, eucalyptus, rose and clove – a training guide, paper logs and smell jars. Sold out on amazon.in, you can order it on smellproject.com, for approx ₹3,000.

**Retail update from Bombay Perfumery:** "Our fragrances, 1020 [a play off between spicy ginger and calm vetiver] and Madurai Talkies [floral, with a heart of rose, jasmine, and violet], remain popular," says founder Manan Gandhi, adding that while "olfactive trends have remained similar, the emphasis on the use of naturals has been increasing over the last few years". While the pandemic has impacted the sale of fine fragrances, Bombay Perfumery has "seen an increase in candle sales". \*contact your doctor before using the kits

THE HINDU TEAM

scenario, my perfumery should have been an online service where people could receive any fragrance they wanted with just a click. And, quite honestly, that is the reason why my perfume colleagues – such as those in Paris or, for that matter, any of the selective brands and even niche perfumers, like my mentor and professor Marc Antoine Corticchiato – did so well despite the constraints. Infrastructure was a lot more resilient where they were.

But that is where being in a tiny village really helped us. One doesn't realise how amazing India Post is. Martha, our neighbour down the

street, worked there and very deftly packaged the fragrance and sent it off to San Francisco. It seems incredible right now that a love parcel from a tiny Goan village arrived safe and in time halfway across the world.

### Come, smell with us

Most conversations with people who called us were highly emotional because smell does that – it makes every topic a poignant one. Never before had we received so many messages from people both in India and outside, asking us for our catalogue of creations which they intended to link to their travels as scented reminders, at a time when memories were all they had. It was less about a particular place and more about a celebration of their summer holidays in various places. Smells heal; they have that incredible capacity though we don't exactly know how.

In the midst of all this, both my parents living in New Delhi fell sick with Covid-19 in a very brutal way. While my dad was in the hospital, I created a card game to distract and help my mother convalesce with smells. Every card represented a mood, an emotion, and a state of well-being. The highlight of the day would be to pick a card, and its corresponding oil would be her fragrance for that day. I think these smells sustained her during that difficult period. My parents recovered and I went back to my riverside studio.

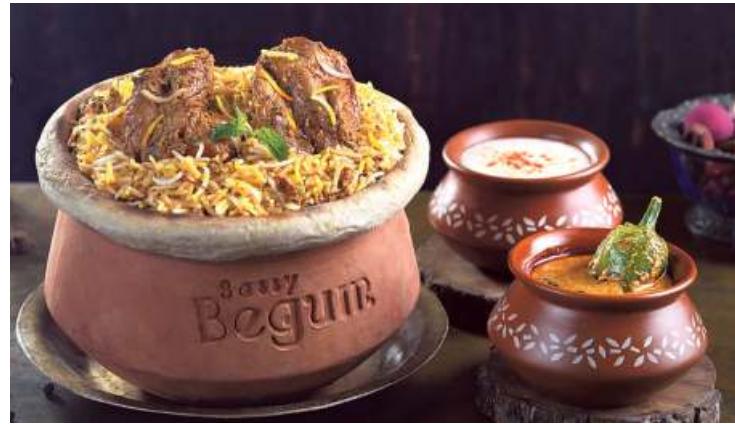
Many of us now know what everyday life is without scent. Or when the sense of smell has been altered. It is a world where newborn babies do not have a smell, and where food tastes of nothing. Earlier, we had worked with a few people who were anosmic, but today this invisible disability is in the open and we can do something about it. Since March 2020, we have been conducting Smell Meditations with Minakshi Kanoongo, a Delhi-based yoga therapist, and sharing these meditations at large with whoever needs it. We still don't know what we smell (there are contradictory studies about how smell molecules behave), and I so wish we could know that, but for those who have lost their sense of smell one thing is clear: everything or every time you smell, it builds a kind of muscle memory, similar to while dancing. So the most important thing is to keep smelling. Cut a lemon or an orange (citrus is the fruit of choice for the month of May), cut an apple, have a piece of ginger and smell it for a few seconds every day, consistently.

\*We recommend that all wellness routines be undertaken only after consulting a doctor

*Smell Meditations are every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, on Google Meet. To sign up, DM the team @theparfumelibrary.*

*Jahnvi Lakhota Nandan is the perfumer-founder of The Perfume Library, a space dedicated to the design of perfumes and performances.*

(Clockwise from right)  
Hyderabadi chicken dum  
biryani, mutton galouti kebab,  
Hyderabadi haleem with  
sheermal ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



lan and sheer khurma. There was vegetarian haleem (₹345), too, along with vegetable biryani (₹295).

We shared the meal with some dear friends of ours, one of whom, after years of demolishing meat and chicken, has turned into a fish eating 'vegetarian'. He really enjoyed the vegetable biryani and the *harabbara* kebab, prepared with spinach, cottage cheese, raisins and nuts, but didn't think much of the vegetable haleem. Who would?

After days of gloom, this meal gladdened my heart. I started with the *galouti* kabab atop a small *ulta tawa ka paratha*. The kabab was smooth, as it should be, and whetted my appetite for the next course, the biryani.

The Hyderabadi biryani was surprisingly light, and I relished its mild flavours. The meat was tender, the rice aromatic. The *salan*, spicy, yet not overly so (despite the presence of a giant green chilli in it) went deliciously well with the biryani.

I enjoyed the coastal-style prawns, crisp and hot, cooked with onions, tomato, curry leaves, pepper and lime juice. But what stole my heart was the *haleem*. The lamb, cooked with wheat over long hours (and I am told with some special spices), had a creamy consistency. The meat had soaked in the spices and had just the right smoothness. It wasn't very spicy, perhaps because people are increasingly opting for lighter versions of the spice-heavy food that they enjoyed in their salad days.

I ended the meal with some divine *sheer khurma* – *sevaiyan* – which was velvety and full of nuts. After that happy meal, I recalled a few lines that a friend had sent me that very morning:

This Eid

Stay home, stay closer to the close ones...

Celebrate the day  
Celebrate every moment, every breath

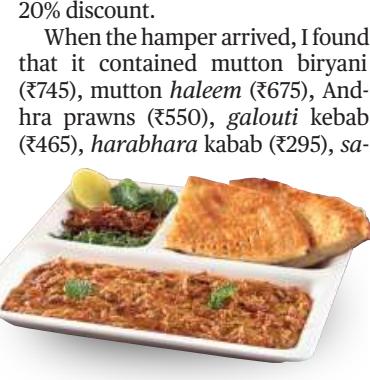
Because this Eid  
Is not the same.

*The writer is a seasoned food critic*



RAHUL VERMA  
Remember the time we thought we'd celebrate Holi with gusto? But the coronavirus hung around nastily, and we had to call off all plans of sitting together over a potluck lunch of mutton curry and rice.

Then I thought the April festivals would bring in cheer. But the virus, we realised last month, was going nowhere, so we postponed the festivities some more. There is always Eid, I told myself. But Eid, too, was quiet, with depression swirling around us. And then, like the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, I got to hear that there was a dip in the number of new cases in the city. And along with that came a WhatsApp message. 'Could we send



*The writer is a seasoned food critic*

CM YK

ND-NDE

# BIRYANI, with heart and soul

you some food for Eid?" it asked.

I humbly said yes, for the message came from a food outlet I have full faith in. It is called Sassy Begum, and the food that it serves is largely Hyderabadi. Hyderabadi Muslim food, its dishes packed with flavour, is among the best cuisines that you can get.

Sassy Begum (Ph: 9999122999) has four branches in Delhi: in Greater Kailash, Rajouri Garden, DLF Phase 1 Gurugram, and in Select Citywalk Mall, where it has a restaurant in the food court. If you place your order on the website, you get a 20% discount.

When the hamper arrived, I found that it contained mutton biryani (₹745), mutton haleem (₹675), Andhra prawns (₹550), galouti kebab (₹465), harabbara kabab (₹295), sa-

manhood in the making  
"More often than not, men are encouraged to keep their

emotions to themselves," says Deepa Narayan in one of the first episodes of her podcast, *What's a Man*. For this 10-episode series, Narayan – who worked for the World Bank for over 20 years – and her team interviewed hundreds of middle and upper-class boys and young men, not to mention prominent men from different walks of life – including Retired General HS Panag, author Amish Tripathi, comedians Abish Mathew and Neville Shah, among others.

Narayan, who has also been a senior adviser in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management group from 2003-2008, is no stranger to how gender dynamics have a ripple effect on the econo-

my. Countries where the wage gap is larger take that much longer to lift out of poverty, for example. In *What's a Man*, therefore, she tries to connect the dots between 'masculine' modes of thought and action, and how these ways of thinking influence larger societal structures and hierarchies.

Masculinity is a fraught topic in India. When people are not fixating on the physical attributes of political leaders ('looks too old to be a youth leader', etc) they are projecting their preferences on to their children. Male CEOs and Bollywood stars know that uploading a post-workout selfie on social media will win them a new legion of admiring young people. The film *Gully Boy* gave us the dictum 'bohot hard', meaning fierce or formidable in a typically masculine way. The super-popular comedian Zakir Khan has cultivated a persona called 'sakht launda' ('strict lad', literally). From a young age,

little boys know that there's a certain set of physical and behavioural traits considered desirable in a man – and a corresponding, mutually exclusive set for a woman.

**Fighting the persona**  
The interview res-

ponds that Narayan and her team (students from Ashoka University) elicited from children are worth listening to at length. For most kids, being a 'powerful man' meant being physically strong, with prominent muscles, essentially a real-life Marvel superhero without supernatural abilities. "Your parents aren't your only source of information when you're seven or eight years old," says Narayan, adding,

"In fact, they're arguably not the most important source. A lot depends upon their teachers and classmates. Children are a quick study and they figure out which attitudes are likely to be rewarded by society."

Remember Dhara Oil's TV ad from the 1990s, where the little boy and girl fawn over their super-dad? He plays cricket with them, attends their school functions dutifully, and he's always quick to jump to the next high-energy endeavour. It's a heart-warming ad, but remember that even this ad ended with the words, 'My Daddy strongest!', coupled with the father lifting his kids into his arms. 'Strength' is hard-coded into children's brains; what we can do with the help of podcasts like *What's a Man?* is to expand their idea of strength, to go beyond the merely physical, as it were.

*Stream the podcast on whatsamaman.com*

*The writer is a seasoned food critic*

CM YK

ND-NDE



(Clockwise from left)  
Album artwork from the podcast, Devraj Sanyal, Neville Shah, and Deepa Narayan ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



# MAN ENOUGH?

With her latest podcast, *What's a Man*, Deepa Narayan explores the various facets of being male today

### ADITYA MANJHA

There are different lenses through which one can view masculinity in India, but one of the more straightforward ones is Bollywood, that reliable barometer of public sentiment. In the '50s and the '60s, the typical hero was a stoic figure, coping with his (and, metaphorically, the country's) lack of resources, never showing a sign of weakness or visible vulnerability. Stoic silence soon gave way to red-hot rage: the era of Amitabh Bachchan and the 'angry young man' gave the average Joe a certain license to explode. And now, finally, we have heroes who aren't afraid to cry: Vicky Kaushal's famous weeping scene in *Masaan* and Ranbir Kapoor's many teary moments across the last decade, are examples.

**Manhood in the making**  
"More often than not, men are encouraged to keep their



CM YK

ND-NDE

# Clashes erupt in East Jerusalem after ceasefire comes into effect

Israeli police and Palestinians face off at Al-Aqsa compound after Friday prayers

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GAZA CITY

Scattered clashes have broken out between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem hours after a truce in Gaza went into effect.

Palestinians hurled stones and Israeli police fired stun grenades and tear gas shortly after Friday prayers.

Clashes at the holy site, which is revered by Jews and Muslims, were one of the main triggers for the Gaza fighting.

Immediately after Friday prayers, hundreds of Palestinians had held a celebratory demonstration at Al-Aqsa, in which they waved Palestinian flags and banners of the militant Hamas group ruling Gaza. It was unclear what set off the clashes.

Palestinians rallied by the thousands early Friday after a ceasefire took effect, with many viewing it as costly but clear victory for Hamas. Israel vowed to respond with a "new level of force" to any further hostilities.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has faced criticism from his hawkish base for ending the offensive prematurely, said Israel had done "daring and new things, and this without being dragged into unnecessary adventures." He added that Israeli forces had caused "maximum damage to Hamas with a minimum of casualties in Israel."

**Both sides claim victory**  
Like the three previous wars between the bitter enemies, the latest round of fighting ended inconclusively. Israel claimed to have inflicted heavy damage on Hamas with hundreds of bruising

**After the fighting** | The 11-day fighting between Israel and Hamas was the most intense conflict between the two since 2014

## CASUALTIES

**243** deaths in Gaza, including 66 children

**12** deaths in Israel, including one child

**1,900** were injured

of the rockets aimed at populated areas in Israel were intercepted by the Iron Dome air defence system, says IDF

Over **1,800** airstrikes were carried out by Israel

**16,800** homes were destroyed in Gaza in Israeli airstrikes

**4,000** rockets were fired by Hamas

Over **350** were injured in Israel

90% of the rockets aimed at populated areas in Israel were intercepted by the Iron Dome air defence system, says IDF

Over **1,800** airstrikes were carried out by Israel

**16,800** homes were destroyed in Gaza in Israeli airstrikes

**Soft target:** Smoke rising after an Israeli airstrike on Gaza City targeted the Ansar compound, linked to the Hamas movement, on May 14.

**Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the operation hit the ability of Hamas, the Islamist group which runs Gaza, to launch missiles at Israel**

**Hamas foreign relations chief Osama Hamdan says the organisation received assurances regarding Israeli policy toward Sheikh Jarrah and Al-Aqsa in East Jerusalem**



airstrikes but once again was unable to halt the rockets.

Hamas also claimed victory, despite the horrifying toll the war took on countless Palestinian families who lost loved ones, homes and businesses.

The ceasefire was brokered by neighbouring Egypt after the U.S. pressed Israel to wind down the off-

fensive. Mr. Netanyahu announced that Israel had accepted the proposal late on Thursday, while emphasizing that "the reality on the ground will determine the future of the campaign."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken plans to visit the region in the coming days "to discuss recovery efforts and working together to build better futures for Israelis and Palestinians," the State Department said.

The U.S. initially backed what it said was Israel's right to self-defence against indiscriminate rocket fire. But as the fighting dragged on and the death toll mounted, the Americans increasingly pressured Israel to stop the offensive.

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## Biden hails truce, says it's an opportunity towards peace

He credits Egypt for its role, says White House also involved



Joe Biden

plomacy toward that."

The ceasefire was announced one day after Mr. Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a telephone call that he expected "significant de-escalation" of the fighting by the day's end, according to the White House.

However, Mr. Netanyahu came right back with a public declaration that he was

"determined to continue" the Gaza operation "until its objective is achieved".

Hours before the ceasefire agreement was reached, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the Israelis had "achieved significant military objectives" in their strikes intended to degrade Hamas military capabilities and reiterated that Mr. Biden expected the Israelis to start "winding down" their operations.

Mr Biden, who studiously avoided extensive public comment about the Israeli military strikes, was facing mounting pressure from fellow Democrats to speak out against the Israelis as the death toll climbed in Gaza and tens of thousands of Palestinians were displaced by the aerial bombardment.

However, Mr. Netanyahu came right back with a public declaration that he was

intensely involved in an "hour by hour" effort to stop the bloodletting.

"I believe the Palestinians and Israelis equally deserve to live safely and securely and enjoy equal measures of freedom, prosperity and democracy," Mr. Biden said.

"My administration will continue our quiet, relentless di-

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## MARKET WATCH

	21-05-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	50540	1.97
US Dollar	72.83	0.39
Gold	47995	0.02
Brent oil	66.56	0.52

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	769.20	3.50
Asian Paints	2832.50	38.40
Axisc Bank	730.90	25.00
Bajaj Auto	4125.55	54.35
Bajaj Finserv	11265.15	37.25
Bajaj Finance	5631.75	43.00
Bharti Airtel	530.95	10.30
BPCL	461.05	6.25
Britannia Ind	3435.75	13.20
Cipla	926.90	2.70
Coal India	147.20	0.55
Divis Lab	4079.90	39.10
Dr Reddys Lab	5216.45	-19.85
Eicher Motors	2522.30	-8.30
Grasim Ind	1371.85	-3.40
HCL Tech	930.65	6.25
HDPC	2518.05	73.05
HDPC Bank	1497.30	64.50
HDPC Life	670.70	3.20
Hero MotoCorp	2884.40	19.30
Hindalco	389.80	4.60
Hind Unilever	2362.25	18.10
ICICI Bank	642.45	23.85
IndusInd Bank	1016.00	40.50
Infosys	1354.50	15.20
Indian Oil Corp	104.30	-0.40
ITC	209.05	2.05
JSW Steel	698.20	3.70
Kotak Bank	1757.65	49.45
L&T	1418.05	8.30
M&M	818.95	15.70
Maruti Suzuki	6814.65	76.80
Nestle India Ltd.	17497.10	211.75
NTPC	112.85	1.10
ONGC	112.75	0.95
PowerGrid Corp	227.95	-1.00
Reliance Ind	2002.55	17.15
SBI Life	969.25	0.10
State Bank	401.20	16.65
Shree Cement	2762.65	112.30
Sun Pharma	690.40	3.55
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	649.70	4.80
Tata Motors	313.10	5.40
Tata Steel	1113.10	8.05
TCS	3080.50	20.50
Tech Mahindra	980.50	7.40
Titan	1538.35	7.00
UltraTech Cement	6637.60	63.75
UPL	779.85	12.35
Wipro	512.70	4.45

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.63	72.95
Euro	88.75	89.15
British Pound	103.19	103.65
Japanese Yen (100)	66.83	67.13
Chinese Yuan	11.29	11.34
Swiss Franc	80.97	81.37
Singapore Dollar	54.60	54.84
Canadian Dollar	60.29	60.58
Malaysian Ringgit	17.53	17.63

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



**IndiGo opts for LEAP-1A engines to power fleet**  
NEW DELHI  
IndiGo said on Friday it had selected CFM International LEAP-1A engines to power its fleet of 310 new Airbus A320neo, A321neo, and A321XLR aircraft. The agreement includes 620 new installed engines and associated spare engines, as well as a long-term, multi-year service agreement.

**SEBI doubles AIF, VCF overseas investment cap**  
NEW DELHI  
Markets regulator SEBI on Friday doubled the overseas investment limit of alternative investment funds and venture capital funds to \$1,500 million. The decision was taken in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), SEBI said in a circular. SEBI-registered alternative investment funds (AIF) or venture capital funds (VCF) are currently permitted to invest overseas, subject to an overall limit of \$750 million. PTI

**Pfizer vaccine said to be stuck over indemnity**  
NEW DELHI/NEW YORK  
Pfizer and the Indian government are at loggerheads over a demand by the U.S. firm for legal protection from any claims linked to the use of its COVID-19 vaccine, sources told Reuters. India has not given any manufacturer indemnity against the costs of compensation for any severe side effects, which is a condition Pfizer has obtained in many countries where its shots have already been widely rolled out. REUTERS

**Gold bond issue price fixed at ₹4,842 per gm**  
MUMBAI

The issue price for the second tranche of the sovereign gold bond issue has been fixed at ₹4,842 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 - Series II or the second tranche will be open for subscription from May 24 to 28. The government has decided to issue the bonds in six tranches from May to September. The RBI will issue the bonds on behalf of the Government of India. PTI

**Wheels India posts Q4 net of ₹25.5-cr. as revenue rises 57%**  
MD Srivats Ram sees demand for tractors remaining stable

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Auto parts maker Wheels India on Friday reported a standalone fourth-quarter net profit of ₹25.54 crore, as against a profit of ₹4.62 crore in the year-earlier period, and said it expects demand for tractors to be stable as all the major factors driving rural demand continue to remain strong despite the second wave of the pandemic.

"If the rural side gets hit, definitely there will be an impact [on tractor sales] but if you look at all the factors that drive demand, they are still very strong," Srivats Ram, MD, Wheels India said.

"The MSPs [minimum support prices] are strong,

strong," he added.

"One domestic segment that has done outstandingly well last year is the agricultural tractors business," Mr. Ram said, addressing a virtual press conference to announce the financial results.

"We saw fairly strong growth in the tractor industry, and we were able to grow our business not only in the domestic but also in the exports market," he added.

Standalone revenue grew by 57% from a year earlier to ₹853 crore (₹545 crore) in the January-March quarter.

Mr. Ram said that the contribution of exports to total sales rose to 25% in the full financial year, from 20% in the previous fiscal period.

The water levels are fairly good, there is an expectation of good to normal monsoon, finance availability is there for the segment," he said. "So, given all these factors we believe that demand for tractors will continue to be stable if not

# RBI to pay ₹99,122 cr. surplus to Centre

Central bank's board approves transfer of higher-than-expected sum for July-March accounting period

REUTERS  
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India's board approved a significantly higher-than-expected surplus transfer to the government on Friday but it may not be enough to cushion the damage from a crippling second wave of the novel coronavirus.

The RBI announced a surplus transfer of ₹99,122 crore for the 9-month period from July 2020 to March 2021, the central bank said in a statement. The bank will move to an April to March accounting year from 2021/22, from a July to June year.

## COVID to hit tax revenue

The higher-than-expected dividend or surplus transfer to the government comes as the government is expecting a sharp sequential fall in tax collections due to the severe second wave of COVID-19



**Tough task:** The Centre is likely to find it challenging to meet its privatisation and disinvestment target of \$24 billion. ■ AFP

which has forced lockdowns in several States.

"This surplus likely reflects the central bank's higher income from their open market operations as well as receipts from FX sales, with its transfer to the govern-

ment's coffers providing some cushion to the pandemic-driven shortfall in revenues," said Radhika Rao, an economist with DBS.

The government had budgeted to receive a surplus of about ₹50,000 crore from

the RBI to be accounted for in the budget estimates for 2021/22, while in the previous full accounting year, the RBI had transferred ₹57,128 crore as surplus.

Barring 2018/19, this is the highest ever transfer by the RBI in an accounting period. In FY19, ₹1.76 lakh crore was transferred to the government which included a one-time transfer of extra reserves.

The government is likely to find it challenging to meet its privatisation and disinvestment target of \$24 billion while goods and services tax (GST) revenues are also likely to fall, a government official said.

"The government is also under pressure as it has no option to cut expenditure given that it needs to spend to spur some investment and perk up growth from record low levels that it hit last year.

The dividend is welcome but the government will need more and hope divestment can deliver," the official added.

## 'Provide a buffer'

Aditi Nayar, chief economist at rating agency ICRA, said the considerably higher surplus transfer would provide a buffer to absorb losses from indirect tax revenues anticipated in May and June this year.

"Moreover, high commodity prices at a time when demand and pricing power are subdued, would dent the margins of corporates in many sectors, compressing the growth in direct tax collections," she said.

The RBI also decided to maintain a Contingency Risk Buffer at 5.50% in line with recommendations of the Bi-

mal Jalan Committee report.

(With inputs from PTI)

## SBI Q4 net rises 80% to ₹6,451 cr.

Board declares ₹4 dividend; Lender skips FY22 guidance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

State Bank of India's (SBI) reported fourth-quarter net profit surged 80% over the year-earlier-period to ₹6,451 crore on account of an improvement in all parameters, Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said.

"There was an improvement in all areas and we expect the momentum to continue," Mr. Khara said at a virtual conference. "We are hoping the second wave [of COVID-19] will wane soon."

Mr. Khara, however, did not give any guidance for FY22 saying the current situation was fluid. He said the bank managed to bring its expenses, other than employee costs, under control.



For FY21, net profit rose 41% to ₹20,410 crore. Mr. Khara said the asset quality for the year was 'better than expected.' The board declared a dividend of ₹4 per equity share for FY21.

For the fourth-quarter, net interest income rose 19% to ₹27,067 crore. Interest income increased by almost 4% to ₹65,102 crore.

Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) improved by 68 bps YoY to 13.7% as on March.

Gross advances increased 4.8% to ₹25,39,393 crore even as large corporates reduced their borrowings as most shifted to corporate bond markets to mobilise resources. However, mid corporates and MSMEs continued their borrowings executives said.

Total deposits grew 13.6% to ₹36,81,277 crore.

Gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) dropped 15.2% to ₹1,26,389 crore. Net NPAs were down 29% to ₹36,810 crore. Slippages surged to ₹21,934 crore. Credit cost as at the end of FY21 declined 75 bps YoY to 1.12%.

Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) improved by 68 bps YoY to 13.7% as on March.

Markets rebounded sharply tracking firm global markets and supportive local cues, said Ajit Mishra, VP, research, Religare Broking Ltd. Other than banking and finance, realty and auto stocks rallied, he added.

## Hindalco Q4 net profit triples to ₹1,928 crore

Novelis, aluminium drive performance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Hindalco Industries Ltd. reported its fourth-quarter consolidated net profit rose threefold to ₹1,928 crore from ₹668 crore in the year-earlier period, on the back of improved volumes and operational efficiencies.

Consolidated revenue for the quarter stood at ₹40,507 crore as compared to ₹29,318 crore, a 38% year-on-year rise. For FY21, consolidated profit after tax (PAT) for continuing operations increased 38% to ₹5,182 crore.

"The results were driven by a strong performance by Novelis and India aluminium business, supported by higher volumes and better product mix, lower input costs, stability in operations and cost saving actions," the company said in a regulatory filing. Novelis reported an



all-time high EBITDA as a result of continued demand for innovative, sustainable aluminium solutions and outstanding operational performance across its expanded business, the company said. "Our record Q4 results have strengthened our balance sheet even further, absorbing the Aleris acquisition and restoring consolidated net debt to EBITDA ratio to pre-acquisition levels," Hindalco MD Satish Pai said.

Standalone total income during the quarter was at ₹24,593 crore from ₹15,423 crore in the same period of FY20.

The company had clocked a net profit of ₹188 crore in the

# 'With no baggage, Indians might do extraordinarily well'

They will have the benefit of being allowed a lot of follies to be committed because they will be playing a Test after a long time, says W.V. Raman

## CRICKET

SHAYAN ACHARYA  
MUMBAI

As head coach of the Indian women's team over the last couple of years, W.V. Raman enjoyed success guiding the side to the final of the T20 World Cup in 2020.

Last week, he was replaced by Ramesh Powar. Being a seasoned coach, Raman has moved on. However, he is always ready to talk about cricket.

In a chat with *Sportstar*, Raman talks about the road ahead for the Indian women's team and what they should keep in mind ahead of the tour of England and Australia. Excerpts:

**India will be playing a Test after seven years. Do you think that this is the right time for this team to venture into the longer format again? There is no such thing as the right timing or whatever.**



**Seasoned pro:** The Indian women's team benefited from W.V. Raman's vast experience. ■ FILE PHOTO

When the girls are doing well and there is a lot of interest being generated, I think perhaps the administration feels that it is the right time to try and engage them in the Test format. As far as the girls are concerned, it is a case of opportunity for them to try and gauge their skills, test themselves and prove themselves about how good they are in this format as well.

**What are the challenges that the players will face?**

They will have the benefit of

being allowed a lot of follies to be committed because they are playing after a long time. They will have that cushion because people will understand that it is not going to be easy for them to play Test cricket after seven

years and that too, an away game, especially in England, where the ball can perhaps seam. I am not saying that they will not do well, but if in the event, they can't do as well as expected, they will always have that leeway.

How do you see the fact that a lot of players will be playing red-ball cricket for the first time, that too, without practice games?

That's a good thing. They will not have any baggage in their heads, they might probably go out and do extraordinarily well. Everything is a matter of perception.

The thing is, it's like the case of a bumble bee being told that it can't fly because aerodynamically, it's not built to fly. But it flies because nobody has told it that you can't fly. Similarly, we do not have to tell too many things to the players who are young and have not played in a Test.

**Ahead of the England tour, if you are asked for one suggestion, what will that be?**

The most important thing is that they should live in the present. What is happening is something that will happen then. Gathering and talking to people who have

played in England in the past is one thing, but going meticulously about what is told to them by people who have played this format, may also not be a great way to go out and find out things for themselves.

After the England series, the Indian team will play a pink-ball Test against Australia. In a format where even the men's team has struggled, will it be too big a challenge for the women?

Look, it's like damned if you do, damned if you don't. Let them have some experience. Why are we even taking it for granted that the girls will also find it difficult or they will have a bad game?

Let's see how it pans out. Let them gain the experience, let them play and then only we can talk about it. Why are we even thinking of repairing something when it is not even needed. Let it all happen.

**'No official request' for Test rejig: ECB**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

The England and Wales Cricket Board says there has been "no official request" from India to move the dates of the five-Test series due to take place in August and September.

It follows reports that alterations to the schedule have been broached on an informal basis.

The postponement of the Indian Premier League as a result of the country's coronavirus crisis has created a fixture crunch.

Reports in the Indian press suggested officials at the Board of Control for Cricket in India had considered bringing forward their series in England, which is due to begin on August 4 and end on September 14 to create a viable window.

"We have had no official request to change dates," said an ECB spokesman.

## Bangladesh expects a tough fight

Shakib back after missing previous series against Kiwis

### SL IN BANGLADESH

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DHAKA

Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal urged his team to give the maximum as they bid to maintain their home dominance against Sri Lanka in the one-day series starting on Sunday.

Bangladesh has a strong record at home, winning all but one of its 12 matches since October 2018, though all of the victories were against struggling Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.

However, it lost 3-0 to Sri Lanka the last time they met in a one-day series, in Colombo in 2019.

"We have played with most of the Sri Lanka players. We know that they are a quality side," Tamim told a virtual press conference.



**Key player:** All-rounder Shakib will bat in his favourite No. 3 slot. ■ AFP

ence on Friday, ahead of the three-match series. We won't have anything easy, and we have to give more than 100% to win games against them."

Bangladesh has wel-

comed Shakib Al Hasan back after the all-rounder missed its previous series against New Zealand for the birth of his third child.

Shakib was also absent from the Test tour of Sri Lanka in April as he was playing in the Indian Premier League.

Tamim confirmed that the all-rounder would bat in his favourite No. 3 slot after Bangladesh jettisoned batsman Najmul Hossain.

Shakib starred at one-down in World Cup 2019, scoring 606 runs, the third-highest in the tournament after Rohit Sharma's 648 and David Warner's 647. He also took 11 wickets.

The remaining two matches are on May 25 and May 28, also at Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

A statement from the attorney representing almost all the top players said that the remuneration proposed to the players is one third

## SLC and top players locked in pay dispute

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's top cricketers, led by Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne and a host of seniors, including Dinesh Chandimal and Angelo Mathews, have refused to sign the central contracts offered by the board which they believe is far less compared to what the other countries offer.

If the dispute is not sorted out soon, it could affect Sri Lanka's bilateral series against India in July, where six limited-over matches are expected to fill the coffers of the cash-strapped board of the island nation.

The Sri Lankan players said in a joint statement that they were "shocked and dismayed" by SLC's decision to go public with the payment details of the players.

compared to a few other cricket-playing nations as per a Federation of International Cricket Association (FICA) report.

The SLC this week said that 24 of the top players had been offered contracts under four categories and had been time till June 3 to sign them.

Only six players are in Category A and their annual pay ranges between \$70,000 to 100,000. Batsman Dhananjaya de Silva draws the highest — \$100,000 — while the rest of them were to receive \$70,000.

The Sri Lankan players said in a joint statement that they were "shocked and dismayed" by SLC's decision to go public with the payment details of the players.

## WTC is like World Cup: Umesh

The India pacer talks about the role played by Kohli and Shastri

ANI  
NEW DELHI

Over the past few years, India's fast-bowling arsenal has risen through the ranks to be counted as one of the best in international cricket.



Umesh Yadav. ■ FILE PHOTO

With the UK tour coming up — World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand and five Tests against England — fans will once again expect the pace-bowling department to rise to the occasion.

India speedster Umesh Yadav is looking to put up a match-winning performance when the opportunity presents itself. He says he would like to win the World Test Championship (WTC) which,

ing on right now, during the lockdown, is of individual physical fitness and being strong mentally.

"We are all trying to stay positive and just looking forward to playing in the World Test Championship final. We are all training individually now so that when we come together, we are even better," said Umesh.

### Big influence

About Kohli and head coach Ravi Shastri, Umesh said: "Virat and Ravi bhai have worked really hard. The way Virat has handled the team, and the freedom and confidence the captain and coach have given to the players has been amazing.

"When the players step on to the field, there is a feeling of backup and support. All 11 players are in sync with each other. So, the coach and captain deserve credit for that."

## IN BRIEF



**Rankin calls it a day**

NEW DELHI  
England and Ireland pacer Boyd Rankin, the only cricketer to have played for two countries in all three formats, announced his retirement from international cricket. Rankin made his Ireland debut in 2003 and last played for the country in a T20I against Afghanistan in Greater Noida in 2020. The 36-year-old also played an Ashes Test for England on the 2013-14 tour besides seven ODIs and two T20s. He went back to play for Ireland after it received Test status in 2017. In all, he played three Tests, 75 ODIs and 50 T20Is.

Mr. M.P. Singh, who took charge as the Advisor to TTFI after completing his term as the Secretary General,

## TTFI announces financial help

Expects to disburse in excess of ₹1 crore

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

In a commendable gesture, the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) has finalised financial assistance to its COVID-affected players and coaches.

The TTFI's Executive Board meeting, chaired by TTFI President Dushyant Chautala on Monday, decided to consider all the players ranked among the top-16, at any time, and those coaches who have accompanied the National teams to be the beneficiaries.

Mr. M.P. Singh, who took charge as the Advisor to TTFI after completing his term as the Secretary General,



■ FILE PHOTO

"These are tough times for mankind and each one has lost someone dear to the pandemic.

"We, in TTFI, have tried

to make a small difference to those from our fraternity by finalising ₹1 lakh assistance to those on oxygen support, ₹2 lakh for those more seriously affected or on ventilator, and ₹3 three lakh to the families of those who have suffered fatality."

The affected families may write to the state association with all the relevant documents.

"We expect to disburse in excess of ₹1 crore after considering every single case."

"The TTFI, in consultation with the states, will ensure speedy payments to all the affected families," was the assurance from Mr. Singh.

## Doctor who led AFI's fight against doping passes away

Mendiratta was the architect of no-needle policy

### ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN  
KOCHE

A couple of weeks ago, long jumper M. Sreesankar had phoned Dr. Arun Kumar Mendiratta in Delhi regarding his COVID-19 vaccine.

"The doctor did not answer the call but after a few minutes, he sent a message which said, 'I'm not able to speak, I've been hospitalised due to COVID and I have a throat block,'" said the national record holder.

Mendiratta, the chairman of the Athletics Federation of India's medical commission, passed away in Delhi owing to COVID-related complications.

"He led AFI's relentless fight against age-fraud and doping. He was also the architect of our no-needle policy. Soft-spoken and genial,

Dr. Mendiratta will be missed by the athletics community," said Adille Sumarwalla, the AFI president.

He was supposed to go to Tokyo as the chief medical officer of the Indian contingent for this July's Olympics. He had accompanied Indian teams at various World championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and the Olympics during his long career with Indian sports.

He had also gone to many national junior and youth championships to oversee the weeding out of athletes who attempted to fudge their age. "I used to call him frequently, whenever I took vitamins or medicines, I

used to consult him," said Olympian K.T. Irfan, the country's leading racewalker, from Bengaluru.

"It's a big loss, I don't know whether we will get another doctor like him."

Asian Games champion Jinson Johnson said Mendiratta was very helpful. "If we had doubts regarding anything, he used to explain things patiently. Nobody expected this to happen," said the middle-distance star.

Meanwhile, Hima Das tweeted that Mendiratta had helped her a lot.

"Deeply pained... he helped me a lot during Commonwealth Games 2018 and Asian Games 2018," she said.

## Vidit heads a strong field

### CHESS

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi heads a strong field of 19 players battling for the lone Indian quota for the upcoming World Cup.

The event — All India Chess Federation Online Selection Tournament for World Cup — will take place from May 26 to 30 following a round-robin format. The winner qualifies for the World Cup at Sochi, Russia, from July 10.

"Since the prevailing pandemic ruled out Indian participation in the ongoing Asian championship, the FIDE allowed India a quota spot."

"The AICF had asked for two spots since the Indian players had won four spots last time. We are still hopeful of an additional spot before the list is finalised early next month," said Bharat Singh Chauhan, the AICF

## Tokyo Games will go ahead even if there's a state of emergency: IOC VP Coates

He is confident that the measures taken will ensure a safe and secure Olympics

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TOKYO

The IOC vice-president in charge of the postponed Tokyo Olympics said on Friday that the Games would open in just over two months even if the city and other parts of Japan were under a state of emergency because of rising COVID-19 cases.

John Coates, speaking from Australia in a virtual news conference with Tokyo organisers at the end of three days of meetings, said this would be the case even if local medical experts advised against holding the Olympics.

"The advice we have from the WHO (World Health Organisation) and all other scientific and medical communities is that all the measures we have outlined, all



Taking stock: Coates and Hashimoto, President, Tokyo 2020 Olympics Organising Committee, at Friday's virtual meeting.

those measures we are undertaking are satisfactory and will ensure a safe and secure games in terms of health," Coates said.

"And that's the case whether there is a state of emergency or not."

Public opinion in Japan has been running at 60-80% against opening the Olympics on July 23, depending on how the question is phrased. Coates suggested

public opinion might improve as more Japanese get fully vaccinated. That figure is now about 2%.

Messi to miss  
Barcelona's  
last match of  
the season



Messi can enjoy a rest before next month's Copa America. ■ REUTERS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BARCELONA

Lionel Messi will miss Barcelona's final La Liga game of the season against Eibar on Saturday in order to "enjoy a rest" before the Copa America, the club announced.

The Argentine, who is still in contract negotiations with Barcelona, was given permission to miss training on Friday by coach Ronald Koeman and, with the club now out of the title race, will not play in the away fixture against Eibar.

"The striker can enjoy a rest before next month's Copa America," Barcelona said in a statement.

#### TV PICKS

**Badminton:** BWF Spain Masters, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 5.30 p.m.  
**Archery World Cup:** Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m.  
**F1:** Monaco GP (Qualifying), SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 12.15 a.m. (Sunday)

#### IN BRIEF



Maguire to miss Europa League final

MANCHESTER  
Manchester United captain Harry Maguire is set to miss the Europa League final against Villarreal on Wednesday. United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjær downplayed expectations about Maguire returning from an ankle injury in time to play in Gdansk, Poland. AP

#### Olympian boxer Shakti Mazumdar passes away

KOLKATA  
Shakti Mazumdar, a boxer who took part in 1952 Helsinki Olympics, passed away here on Friday, according to a release from the Bengal Amateur Boxing Federation. He was 90 and was suffering from old age-related problems.

#### Bopanna & Skugor lose in quarterfinals

GENEVA  
Rohan Bopanna, seeded fourth in partnership with Franko Skugor of Croatia, was beaten 6-3, 3-6, [13-11] by Ariel Behar and Gonzalo Escobar in the doubles quarterfinals of the €481,270 ATP tennis tournament here. The Indo-Croatian combination had got a walkover in the earlier round. The two collected 45 ATP points and €4,710.  
**Other results:**  
**Pre-quarterfinals:** Skugor & Bopanna w/o Pablo Cuevas (Uru) & Guido Pella (Arg).



Buffon linked with Monza move

MILAN  
Gianluigi Buffon has been linked with a move to Silvio Berlusconi's ambitious Monza when the Italian goalkeeping great leaves Juventus at the end of the season, according to reports in Italy on Friday. The Serie B side is one of several clubs interested in signing the 43-year-old, Gazzetta dello Sport and Corriere della Sera reported. AFP

# Bala relishing her time in Scotland

The 31-year-old's stunning long-range strike against Spartans last week won rave reviews

#### FOOTBALL

SHYAM VASUDEVAN  
CHENNAI

Bala Devi is back to making headlines.

After becoming the first Indian woman footballer to score a goal in a professional European League, Bala's 30-yard wonder goal last week has garnered global attention.

The 31-year-old struck the stunning long-ranger during Rangers Women FC's 5-0 win over Spartans FC in the Scottish Premier League last Sunday.

"As a striker, it is very im-



Bala Devi... soaring high. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

portant to be able to decide in a fraction of a second. When I got the ball, I decided that I would shoot and I

scored. The team-mate who gave the assist was very happy, she perhaps did not expect me to score from so far

out," said Bala at a virtual interaction on Friday.

Bala, who joined Rangers on an 18-month contract in January 2020, is relishing her time in Scotland.

#### Good ball control

"I have the opportunity to play as a striker and as a No. 10 as well. I see it as an advantage because I can score and pass while playing as a No. 10. The support staff feel that my passing and vision are good and I can play both roles," the Manipuri forward said. "We discuss the qualities of each player and everyone mentioned that I am good in one-vs-one positions

and that my ball control is good."

Bala admitted that it was a little challenging to understand the Scottish accent initially. "It was very hard initially. My English was not as good and it was difficult when I came here. However, it does not impact our communication on the field as we take cues from each other's running position and make signs.

"The ideas are the same, only the terms used are a little different here. I have got accustomed to it now. For example, we say 'throw in' but they use the word 'bounce,'" she revealed.

Wizards eliminate Pacers  
Beal and Westbrook star in the Washington side's 142-115 win



Unstoppable: Bradley Beal moves in for the kill. ■ AP

#### NBA PLAY-IN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LOS ANGELES

Washington Wizards showed its ability to bounce back by rolling over Indiana Pacers 142-115 in the NBA's play-in tournament to grab the eighth and final seed in the Eastern Conference post-season on Thursday.

Russell Westbrook and Bradley Beal were back in top form, combining for 43 points and leading a 16-0 second-quarter run in the dominating win that came two days after a frustrating 118-100 loss to Boston Celtics in the play-in opener.

Beal finished with 25 points, Daniel Gafford had 15 points, 13 rebounds and five blocked shots, and Raul Neto added 14 points. Anthony Gill had 10 points. For Pacers, Malcolm Brogdon scored 24 points and Domantas Sabonis recorded 19 points.

It was 34-34 early in the second quarter when Wizards went on their run. Robin Lopez scored six points during the burst.

Wizards move on to play the top-seeded Philadelphia 76ers, with the first game scheduled for Sunday. The loss eliminated Pacers and ended the franchise's streak of five consecutive playoff appearances.

Beal made four three-pointers and also had five rebounds and four assists while playing 28 minutes.

He sat out the final quarter of the one-sided game to rest his strained left hamstring.

Rui Hachimura scored 18 points, Daniel Gafford had 15 points, 13 rebounds and five blocked shots, and Raul Neto added 14 points. Anthony Gill had 10 points.

For Pacers, Malcolm Brogdon scored 24 points and Domantas Sabonis recorded 19 points.

## Mairaj delighted to be training with Ennio

Hopes to prepare well and give himself a good shot at a medal in Tokyo

#### SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

It is the final stretch of preparation for the Tokyo Games despite all the chaos due to the pandemic. Mairaj Ahmad Khan is happy to be training with coach Ennio Falco, the 1996 Atlanta Olympics gold medallist, at his range in Capua, Italy.

"It was smooth travel. I reached here last week, flying through Paris and Rome. I am delighted to be training



Mairaj. ■ FILE PHOTO

with Ennio after about two years," said the 45-year-old Mairaj, who had missed the skeet final of the 2016 Rio Olympics in a shoot-off.

Having lost his father re-

cently, Mairaj faced a tough time, but took things in his stride.

#### Recovery break

"I have not lost any training. I am taking it as a good recovery break for the hectic training coming up from now till the Olympics. Ennio's range in Capua is the base for me till the Olympics. I will go to Tokyo from here. Before that, I will take part in a few local competitions in Italy," said Mairaj.

Mairaj had also trained for a week at the Dr. Karni Singh Range in Tughlakabad be-

fore boarding the flight to Rome. Being based in Europe could be the best thing at the moment, especially with a World Cup in Osijek, Croatia, scheduled just before the Games.

"We will decide next week about shooting in the World Cup after Ennio has a good look at what I need," said Mairaj.

Going into the 2016 Olympics, Mairaj had shot brilliantly in the World Cup in Rio that year, with 122 in qualification and missed a gold in a shoot-off. After such a high, in the run-up to the

## Ashok to officiate in Tokyo Olympics

#### WRESTLING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Ashok Kumar will be the only referee from India to officiate in wrestling matches of the Tokyo Olympics.

Asian championships and Commonwealth Games.

#### Referees' educator

He is a UWW referees' educator as well. Ashok, who is employed with the IAF, is also a qualified coach from NIS Patiala.



## Boxing coach Bharadwaj passes away

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

Legendary boxing coach Om Prakash Bharadwaj, the first from the discipline to be honoured with the Dronacharya award in 1985, passed away on Friday following prolonged illness and old-age issues, said a Boxing Federation of India (BFI) source. He was 82.

Bharadwaj had lost his wife about 10 days ago.

Bharadwaj, who coached the National team for several years up to the early 90s, played a crucial role in starting the boxing course at NIS Patiala in 1975. Under his guidance, Indians won medals in major sporting events such as the Commonwealth

Coach in Asia award around the 1990s," said Brig. Raja.

"As a chief instructor at NIS Patiala, he trained many well known coaches," added Brig. Raja. Ashok Gangopadhyay, who was the secretary general of IABF during the 1980s and worked with Bharadwaj, said, "He had good control over his voice and was good at coaching."

V. Devarajan, who was part of the Indian team to the SAG in Colombo in 1991 with Bharadwaj as the chief coach, said, "Bharadwaj Sir was a good motivator."

"Bharadwaj inspired a generation of boxers and coaches. His work as a selector was unparalleled," said BFI president Ajay Singh.

"He also got the Best

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