



VIJAYAN LEADS LDF
FOR SECOND TERM



AS RUSSIA LOOKS EAST



P6

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

US TO SHARE 20 MN
MORE COVID VACCINE
DOSES WITH WORLD

SAHA COMES HOME,
AVAILABLE FOR
TOUR OF ENGLAND

twitter.com/TheStatesmanLtd
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WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain.
The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 30 and 23 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: 0.1 MM

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 71% Min: 41%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 30.8°C (-9) Min: 26.8°C (0)
SUN RISES 05:28 hrs MOON RISES 10:34 hrs
SUN SETS 19:07 hrs MOON SETS 01:21 hrs

THUMBNAILS



A man being inoculated at Sarvodaya Vidhyalaya, West Vinod Nagar in the Capital on Tuesday.

Wrestler Sushil Kumar denied anticipatory bail: A Delhi Court on Tuesday refused to grant anticipatory bail to absconding Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar in the murder case of a wrestler, saying that he is prima facie the main conspirator and allegations against him are serious in nature. Additional Sessions Judge Jagdish Kumar denied the relief to Sushil Kumar against whom a case of murder, abduction and criminal conspiracy has been registered.

P4

Ex-IMA president succumbs to Covid-19: As many as 269 doctors have died during the second wave of the pandemic, risking their lives while treating Covid patients. Dr KK Aggarwal, a Padma Shri awardee and former National President of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), died of Covid-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi. According to the IMA, a total of 269 doctors have lost their lives during the second wave of Covid-19.

P4

Poll violence: SC to hear plea by kin of two killed BJP workers

NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear a plea filed by kin of two BJP workers, who were killed in poll related violence on 2 May in West Bengal, seeking court monitored probe and transfer of cases to CBI or Special Investigation Team (SIT).

A bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B R Gavai issued notice to West Bengal government and the Centre on the plea filed by Biswajit Sarkar, whose elder brother was killed and co-petitioner Swaranalata Adhikari, whose husband was killed in poll related violence.

The bench said that it would hear the matter on 25 May and asked senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani to serve the copy of the petition to standing counsel of the state government.

At the outset, Jethmalani said that this is a very serious case and state has not been taking any action into the brutal killing of two BJP workers, which happened on the day of counting of votes for assembly elections in the state.

He said that this is a matter which requires probe by a agency like CBI or a SIT under court supervision, as the state police has not been taking any action despite a complaint being made.

The murders took place when election results were declared in West Bengal.

One of the petitioners is the younger brother of a BJP worker, who was murdered and the other petitioner is the wife of the deceased, he said.

DETAILS ON PAGE 5

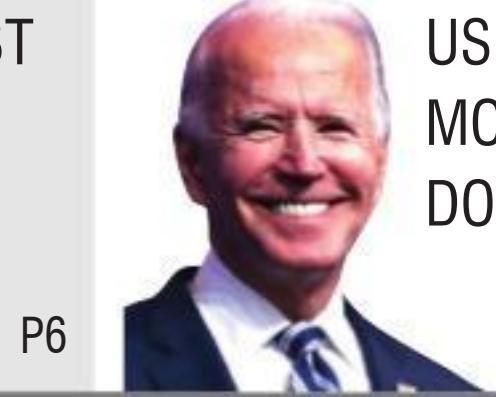
The Statesman

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P12

WEATHER

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The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 30 and 23 degrees Celsius respectively.

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RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 71% Min: 41%

TEMPERATURE

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THUMBNAILS



A man being inoculated at Sarvodaya Vidhyalaya, West Vinod Nagar in the Capital on Tuesday.



The numbers may be high, but they are gradually declining and through united efforts, we shall overcome this 2nd Wave

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING
ON THE PRESENT COVID-19 SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

₹ 2.5K permth, free edu for kids orphaned by Covid: Kejri

Rs 50K aid, ₹ 2.5K pension for virus-hit families; free ration for 72L card-holders: Delhi CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

The Delhi government will give Rs 50,000 ex-gratia to each family that has lost a member to Covid-19. It will also give a Covid-affected family a monthly assistance of Rs 2,500 if the deceased is an earning member, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced today.

He also said that the children who have lost both parents, or single parent, due to Covid will be provided a monthly assistance of Rs 2,500 up to the age of 25 years. The Delhi government will also take care of their education, the CM said.

All these announcements will be implemented after they are approved by the Delhi Cab-



inet, he reportedly said. Kejriwal also said that all 72 lakh ration card holders in the city will be provided free 10 kg ration this month. The poor and needy will be provided free ration even without ration card, he said.

The decision has been taken to help them cope with the hardships being faced by them

in the midst of a devastating Covid storm raging in the national capital.

"Every ration card holder in Delhi gets 5 kg of food grains (4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice) as monthly ration. But the Delhi government will arrange the distribution of 10 kg of ration to these needy people this time as given last year also during the first wave of the

pandemic. The additional 5 kg ration will be given under a Central government scheme for poor people. The scheme will be implemented in three-four days," Kejriwal said during an online press briefing.

"The Delhi government has come out with four such steps, including free ration to the needy, to help the people affected by the pandemic. A large num-

ber of people have been passing through a very difficult situation because of the coronavirus pandemic. We gave a serious thought to their problems and then decided to take these four steps for their welfare," he said.

The CM asserted that education of the children who got orphaned during these pandemic times or lost even one of their parents due to Covid or any other reason would not be allowed to suffer. All such children will get Rs 2,500 per month till 25 years of age and free medical help," Kejriwal said.

"Now the question arises where these funds will come from? We have already given thought to this question. We will avoid making extravagant expenditure. We have put curbs on corruption in various departments which will also help save funds," the CM added.

All those families whose earning members died as a result of the coronavirus infection will get Rs 2,500 as monthly pension plus the one-time ex-gratia payment of Rs 50,000 to help them during these tough times.

"If a family had a male earning member who died during this period, his wife will get the amount and vice versa. If the deceased was unmarried, his or her parents will get this financial help," Kejriwal said.

"Now the question arises where these funds will come from? We have already given thought to this question. We will avoid making extravagant expenditure. We have put curbs on corruption in various departments which will also help save funds," the CM added.

Black fungus cases rising in Delhi; doctors flag 'irrational' use of steroids

PTI
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

Hospitals in Delhi have reported a rise in the number of back fungus cases or mucormycosis among people recovering from COVID-19 during the second wave and it could be ascribed to "irrational" use of steroids at home without consulting a doctor, medical experts said on Tuesday.

The fungal infection, which affects the brain, lungs, and sinuses, can be lethal to those suffering from diabetes and having compromised immune systems.

According to Dr Suresh Singh Naruka, Senior Consultant, ENT, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, mucormycosis is more prevalent among people with low immunity due to diabetes, kidney disease, liver disorder, old age, cardiac issues, or those on medication for auto-immune disease like rheumatoid arthritis. "If such patients are administered steroids, their immunity reduces further, allowing the fungus to thrive," he said.

Dr Naruka said he has been dealing with three to four patients with severe mucormycosis every day as compared to one or two cases a month before COVID-19 began.

COVID-19 kills one or two percent of the people infected, while black fungus has a mortality rate of 75 per cent, he said.

Dr Abhinit Kumar, Head of ENT, Akash Healthcare, said he has been coming across one or two such cases a day for the last 10 days.

Dr Suresh Kumar, Medical Director of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, the Delhi government's largest healthcare facility, said steroids should be used under medical supervision when oxygen saturation is below 93 per cent.

The hospital said it has four cases of mucormycosis currently.

"All these patients have been referred here from private hospitals and nursing homes, which did not

open the fungal infection post Covid," he said.

Mucormycosis is a serious disease and requires hospital admission. Maybe, if diagnosed early, it might not require surgical intervention, Dr Swaroop said.

Amphotericin B Liposomal, used for the treatment of the fungal infection, is unavailable at most of the pharmacies, he said.

Dr Sumit Mrid, Head ENT, Max Hospital, Saket, said 15 to 20 cases have been reported at their facility in the last three to four days.

"We have operated on 14-15 patients so far and four to five surgeries are planned for Tuesday. The factors responsible are extensive use of steroids to an extent that people have taken them without doctor's advice at home," he said. Patients from rural areas are also coming in with mucormycosis, Dr Mrid added.

Sugar monitoring is important. The fasting sugar should be around 100-110 and thereafter, the level should not rise above 140, he said, adding one should seek medical advice if experiencing symptoms such as unilateral headache, facial pain, pain in the eye, decreased sensation on one side of the face, bloody nasal discharge.

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The hospital said it has four cases of mucormycosis currently.

"All these patients have been referred here from private hospitals and nursing homes, which did not

have Amphotericin B for their treatment," he said, adding LNJP has stock of three months.

Before COVID, the drug was not being used much. Now, the demand has risen, leading to a shortage of it, Dr Kumar said.

Dr Yudhyavir, Assistant Professor (Anaesthesiology and Critical Care), AIIMS, said the drug is not commonly available and is manufactured in lesser quantities.

He said steroids reduce inflammation in the lungs, but also reduce immunity and increase blood sugar levels in both diabetics and non-diabetics Covid patients.

This is leading to an explosion in the number of black fungus cases.

"This time people are aware of a lot of steroids being used in treatment of COVID and are using them without medical supervision. Even some administration officials are promoting use of steroids, which is dangerous, and leading to cases of mucormycosis," the doctor said.

Another official from the central government-run hospital said the healthcare facility has around 30 mucormycosis patients at present.

Dr Mohit Agarwal, Additional Director and Head of Medical Oncology Department, Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, said people have been self-medicating without consulting a doctor.

"Some patients have been taking medicines that doctors had prescribed to their friends or family members earlier. This is leading to inadvertent use of steroids."

The increase in the number of "black fungus" cases this year can be attributed to the high COVID case-load and more severe cases during the second wave. "The use of steroids has increased because of limitations of resources," Dr Agarwal said.

The hospital said it has four cases of mucormycosis currently.

"All these patients have been referred here from private hospitals and nursing homes, which did not

Fresh Covid cases drop to 4,482 in Capital; 265 deaths recorded

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

Delhi today logged 4,482 coronavirus cases ~ its lowest since April 15 ~ and 265 Covid-linked fatalities while the positivity rate dropped to 6.89 percent, according to the Delhi and government's latest health bulletin.

This is the second consecutive day that the number of Covid cases has remained below 5,000 in the national capital.

The Covid situation has been improving in Delhi with the number of cases and positivity rate going down steadily over the past few days. Medical experts have held the lockdown as the main factor behind this dip amid the raging second wave of the Covid pandemic.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had last Sunday announced the extension of the month-long lockdown in the city till May 24, saying the gains made so far in combating the coronavirus cannot be allowed to be lost now.

At 6.89 percent, today's Covid positivity rate in the city is the lowest since April 7 when it had stood at 6.1 percent. The number of new infections is the lowest since April 5 when 3,548 people were diag-

nosed with the disease, according to government data. However, the lower number of fresh cases was detected from relatively lesser number of tests - 65,004.

Delhi had reported 4,524 cases yesterday, 6,456 on Sunday, and 6,430 last Saturday.

The positivity rate was 8.42 percent yesterday, 10.40 percent on Sunday, and 11.32 percent last Saturday. On April 22, a positivity rate of 36.2 percent, the highest so far, was recorded.

The national capital had reported 340 Covid deaths yesterday, 262 on Sunday, and 337 last Saturday. It had logged 448 Covid deaths ~ the highest so far ~ on May 3.

According to today's health bulletin, as many as 9,403 people recovered from the infection during the last 24 hours. There are 50,863 active cases and 31,197 of these patients are in home isolation, it said.

The number of Delhi's Covid caseload mounted to 14,02,873 and its death toll rose to 22,111, the bulletin said. Over 13.29 lakh people have recovered from the infection in the city so far, it stated. Of the 24,305 hospital beds meant for coronavirus patients in the city, 9,906 were vacant, it claimed.

Kejriwal appeals to Centre to cancel flights from Singapore over virus strain 'very dangerous' for kids

PTI
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday appealed to the Central government to immediately cancel all air services with Singapore, saying a new strain of coronavirus there is said to be "very dangerous" for children.

This new strain of virus could invade India in the form of a third wave, he said in a tweet.

"The new form of coronavirus in Singapore is said to be very dangerous for children. It could reach Delhi in the form of a third wave. My appeal to the Central government: 1. Cancel all air services with Singapore with

immediate effect 2. Work on vaccine alternatives for children on a priority basis," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

While there is no known Singapore strain of the coronavirus or any known to have originated in the city State, Kejriwal appeared to be referring to a media report on Monday.

The report had mentioned the threat posed to Singapore's children by the variant first detected in India.

Reacting to the media report, Dr V K Paul, member (health), NITI Aayog, on Tuesday said, "We are examining it."

Earlier this month, the chief minister had said Delhi should prepare for a third wave of Covid-19.

Classified



MY DAUGHTER's birth certificate shows as Purbasa Basu, D/o. Pravat Basu in place of D/o. Prabhat Kumar Basu as per affidavit by Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Kolkata. Prabhat Kumar Basu, Pravat Basu and Pravat Kumar Basu belong to same person.

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Cries for beds, ventilators, oxygen and drugs are echoing in wilderness.

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER IN VEERAPPA MOILY

SLAMMING THE CENTRE OVER ITS HANDLING OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

115 cases of black fungus reported in Haryana

State govt sets up 20-bed wards in all medical colleges in a bid to control this fungal infection

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 18 MAY

With 115 cases of black fungus getting reported in the state, Haryana health minister, Anil Vij, on Tuesday said the state government has prepared 20-bed wards in all the medical colleges in the state to control black fungus, also known as mucormycosis, where specialists will treat patients suffering from the disease.

Vij said all the district medical officers of the state have been directed to refer black fungus patients to the nearby medical college immediately for treatment.

Medical colleges have all facilities and specialist doctors for treating black fungus. So far 115 cases of black fungus have been reported in the state.

The Haryana government has adequate medicines for the treatment of black fungus. The Central government is also importing injections against this infection from abroad, out



of which Haryana will also get some doses, Vij said.

Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, is not a new infection but the number of its cases has increased due to the Covid-19 surge. The possibility of fungal infection increases in patients who are diabetic, Covid positive and are taking steroids.

Several states have flagged cases of Covid-triggered mucormycosis, especially among patients who are diabetic. The Haryana health minister said the Covid-induced lockdown has led to a decrease in coronavirus cases in the state. On the day

health, Rajeev Arora, said a committee to review any disobeying by any person, institution or organisation of the notification or any order issued under these regulations will be constituted under chairmanship of the civil surgeon in each district.

Speaking on the matter, he said that these regulations may be called 'The Haryana Epidemic Diseases (mucormycosis) Regulations, 2021' and shall remain valid for one year from the date of publication. He said mucormycosis (black fungus) is a serious but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes. These molds live throughout the environment. It mainly affects people who have health problems or take immunosuppressive drugs (medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness). Patients are advised to seek early treatment, control diabetes, take steroids only if these are essential, and that there is no need for anti-fungal prophylaxis, Arora said.

HP Cong protests Thakur govt's Covid 'mishandling'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 18 MAY

Himachal Pradesh Congress on Tuesday staged a protest against the BJP government for failing to handle Covid situation in the state effectively and urged the government to make the registration process for Covid vaccination easier.

After staging a protest at the historic Ridge ground, state Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore said the BJP government failed to take pre-emptive measures to check the spread of Coronavirus in the state, resulting in the present situation.

"And now the vaccination process is moving at slow pace as Himachal is not getting adequate supply of Covid jabs."

Besides, the registration process for getting Covid jabs is quite difficult due to which youths in rural areas, being less tech savvy, are facing many issues and they aren't able to register themselves," he added.

He called on the state government to make the registration process an easier one and said the government should go for global tendering to acquire vaccines to ensure speedy vaccination of vulnerable population in the state.

Rathore further stated that the government should also focus on reducing test reports time and the reports, ideally should not be delayed by more than 24 hours.

He accused the state government of hiding the number of deceased due to Covid and added that many hospitals in the state were facing acute shortage of oxygen, ventilators and other medical equipment.



He expressed concern over the sudden spike in Covid cases in Himachal and said if the infection reaches our villages, then the situation will become quite grim in the state.

"The state government should increase testing for Covid and efforts should be made for door-to-door testing in rural areas of the state as these areas already face the problem of poor healthcare facilities," he stated.

Rathore further stated that the government should also focus on reducing test reports time and the reports, ideally should not be delayed by more than 24 hours.

He accused the state government of hiding the number of deceased due to Covid and added that many hospitals in the state were facing acute shortage of oxygen, ventilators and other medical equipment.

Haryana govt gears up to curb Covid spread in rural areas

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 18 MAY

The Haryana government has launched a campaign to contain any spike in Covid-19 cases in villages.

Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, after taking stock of the situation, on Tuesday directed all deputy commissioners to undertake the campaign on a war footing.

While directing the administration to mop up all resources to take the challenge head-on, the CM said in no case the pandemic would be allowed to spread its wings in villages.

He said that an atmosphere of positivity needs to be fostered in villages and the state government in any case must not fall short of contributing to it.

While directing that there should be absolutely no slackness in the door-to-door screening of Covid patients, the CM directed that adequate infrastructure must be in place well in time not only to treat the patients but to prevent further spreading of the virus. Khattar, who has been monitoring the day-to-day situation, has also directed strict adherence to the "test, track and treat" strategy to combat the threat under which patients with mild to moderate symptoms are put under home isolation for which the state government would provide "home isolation kit" containing oximeters and essential medicines.

This apart, multi-disciplinary teams comprising trainee doctors, Asha and Anganwadi workers have been rushed

HP govt requisitions pvt hosps for Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 18 MAY

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Tuesday said the government has decided to requisition private hospitals both within and outside the state for ensuring that the patients do not face any inconvenience in getting treatment.

Thakur said for this, the state government had approved charges for private hospitals as per facilities being provided to the patients.

Rs 800 per bed per day will be provided for ordinary beds whereas Rs 4000 would be given for oxygenated bed per day in these hospitals.

The state government has also decided that the private hospitals within and outside the state will be provided Rs 9000 per ICU bed per day for the Covid-19 patients, he said, adding the decision will facilitate Covid patients in getting better treatment and they will not have to suffer for the want of beds.

He stated that besides, the state government will provide dead body vans to carry the deceased to their native places so that people do not face any inconvenience.

Thakur also dedicated



Makeshift Dedicated Covid Health Centre (DCHC) Radha Swami Satsang Byas at Khaligarh in Mandi district today and the facility has 200 oxygenated beds, 20 bedded critical patients ward and central oxygen supply.

The DCHC also has an on the spot lab facility which would be manned by 140 health personnel.

He further stated that the health workers should remain in constant touch with the patients in home isolation so that their conditions could be monitored regularly.

Cries for beds, ventilators, oxygen and drugs are echoing in wilderness.

Govt officers living in ivory towers, not alive to Covid situation: HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

COVID-19 has not spared even a single family and still central government's officers are living in "ivory towers" oblivious of ground realities, observed the Delhi High Court which on Tuesday was of the view that manufacturing of Sputnik V vaccine in India is giving an opportunity to the nation staring at shortage of vaccines.

God bless this country, was another remark of a bench of Justices Mammoohan and

Navin Chawla which castigated the Centre for not being alive to the pandemic situation that is taking so many lives.

The bench said the collaboration of Panacea Biotech with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) for manufacturing of Sputnik V vaccine should be seen as an opportunity to ensure its usage here and in such matters instructions are to be taken from the highest authorities that too within 30 minutes.

It said "no one is applying its mind" when there is an opportunity for the govern-

ment to get millions of vaccines and it should use this as a window.

Otherwise, deaths will continue to happen. Every day you are castigated by each and every court and still you are not awake.

Which bureaucrat is giving you instructions. Is he not alive to the situation? God bless this country. That is why we are facing this situation. In such matters instructions are to be taken from the highest authorities that too within 30 minutes.

It said "no one is applying its mind" when there is an opportunity for the govern-

ment to be critical of the Centre's stand on the issue, said You (government) are so short of vaccines and you are not taking it through. May be it is an opportunity for you. Don't be so negative. It is like a raging fire and nobody is bothered. You people don't understand the larger picture or what.

The bench, which was

critical of the Centre's stand on the issue, said You (government) are so short of vaccines and you are not taking it through. May be it is an opportunity for you. Don't be so negative. It is like a raging fire and nobody is bothered. You people don't understand the larger picture or what.

TENDER

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT *NOTICE INVITING TENDER*

Sealed item rate/percentage rate tender on Form No. 6&8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Arki Division, HP, PWD. Arki on behalf of the Governor of Himachal Pradesh for the following works from the competent (In this regard the decision of the Executive Engineer shall be final) contractors enlisted with HP, PWD in appropriate class whose registration stood renewed as per revised instruction and also registered dealers under the Himachal Pradesh sales Tax Act, 1968. The application for tender form will be received on 18.06.2021 upto 4.00 P.M. The tender form will be issued on 19.06.2021 upto 4.00 P.M. The tender form will be received on 21.06.2021 upto 10.30 A.M. and will be opened on the same day at 11.00 A.M. in the presence of the contractors or their authorized representative who may like to be present. The form can be had from this office against cash payment as shown below (Non refundable) during the working hours on 18.06.2021 The earnest money should be deposited in the shape of National Saving certificate, Time deposit/Post Office saving bank account in any of the Post Office in H.P. duly pledged in the name of the Executive Engineer, Arki Division, HP, PWD. Arki and tender form will be issued only those contractors who will deposit the Earnest Money at the time of tender. The conditional tenders shall not be entertained. If holiday is declared suddenly by the govt. on the above date due to some reason the tender shall be received and opened on the next working day. The intending contractors/firms will have to produce all required documents at the time of making application such as Income Tax clearance certificate for the proceeding year, registration/renewal of registration and sales tax number (Under H.P.G.S.T.) Act. Special care should be taken to write the rates both in figures and in words, failing which their tender will be rejected. No tender form shall be issued to the contractors/firms who have already two works in H.P.P.W.D. The offer of the tender shall remain open for 120 days from the date of opening of the tender. The Executive Engineer reserves the right to accept or reject the tender without assigning any reason.

S.No.	Name of work	Estimated cost.	Earnest money	Form	Cost of form	Time limit
1.	C/o Barrighatti to Kallimata Mandir Pajina Kuffer Km: 0/0 to 5/0(SH:-P/L bitumenous concrete 30mm thick in Km. 3/500 to 3/900)	4,20,412/-	8500/-	6&8	350/-	1Months
2.	C/o Barrighatti to Kallimata Mandir Pajina Kuffer Km: 0/0 to 5/0(SH:-P/L bitumenous concrete 30mm thick in Km. 3/900 to 4/300)	4,20,412/-	8500/-	6&8	350/-	1Months
3.	C/o Barrighatti to Kallimata Mandir Pajina Kuffer Km: 0/0 to 5/0(SH:-C/o R.C.C. hume pipe culvert with wing wall at RD 4/560	1,47,429/-	3000/-	6&8	350/-	1Months
4.	C/o link road to village Giana Km: 0/0 to 0/675(SH:-C/o V shape drain in Km: 0/0 to 0/620	1,35,192/-	2800/-	6&8	350/-	1Months
5.	C/o link road from Kanswala to Changer Km: 0/0 to 2/0(SH:-P/L Kharana stone soiling in Km: 0/0 to 1,44,277 0/500)	1,44,277	3000/-	6&8	350/-	2Months
6.	C/o link road from Giana to Barog via Ghumari Km: 0/0 to 2/0(SH:-P/L soiling G-I in Km: 0/600 to 1/000)	1,33,331/-	2700/-	6&8	350/-	2Months
7.	C/o link road from Syari to Bambali Km: 0/0 to 2/0(SH:-C/o RCC hume pipe with wing wall at Rd 0/080)MGSY	1,47,429/-	3000/-	6&8	350/-	2Months
8.	C/o link road from Syari to Bambali Km: 0/0 to 2/0(SH:-C/o RCC hume pipe with wing wall at Rd 0/480)MGSY	1,47,429/-	3000/-	6&8	350/-	2Months
9.	C/o Thangar Harthu road Km: 0/0 to 3/0(SH:-C/o RCC hume pipe culvert with wing wall at RD 0/650 & 1/350	1,98,502/-	4000/-	6&8	350/-	2Months
10.	C/o link road to village Duh in G.P.Mamlih Km: 0/0 to 1/500(SH:-C/o essential parapets in Km: 0/0 to 1,53,474/0/750	1,53,474/-	3100/-	6&8	350/-	2Months
11.	C/o link road to village Duh in G.P.Mamlih Km: 0/0 to 1/500(SH:-C/o essential parapets in Km: 0/0 to 1,53,474/0/750	1,53,474/-	3100/-	6&8	350/-	2Months
12.	A/R & M/o to J.E. office HP.PWD,Shahaghat, Division, Arki, Solan(SH:-Jeffry and Gate at 3,18,966/-	6400/-	6&8	350/-	2Months	
13.	C/o Shahaghat Dadhog road Km: 0/0 to 5/0(SH:-C/o R/Wall at RD 9/440 to 9/450	2,32,501/-	4700/-	6&8	350/-	2Months

TERMS & CONDITIONS:- The tender documents shall be issued only to those contractors/firms who fulfill the following criteria:-

1. The latest renewal of enlistment/proof of valid registration and income tax clearance certificate/Permanent Account Number (PAN) must accompany the request for obtaining the tender documents.
2. The contractor should be registered under H.P. General Sale Tax Act, 1968 and a proof thereof must accompany the request for obtaining the tender documents.
3. The applications for obtaining tender documents must be accompanied with earnest money in the shape of National Saving certificate/Time deposit account in any of the Post Office in H.P./F.D.R. from any Nationalized Bank duly pledged in favour of the Executive Engineer. Tender applications received without Earnest Money shall not be entertained and out rightly rejected and no tender form will be issued.
4. Ambiguous/telegraphic/Conditional tenders or tender by fax/E-mail shall not be entertained/considered and will summarily be rejected.
5. The Assistant Engineer, reserve the right to reject/cancel any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons.
6. The offer of the tender shall remain valid upto 120 days after the opening of tender.

0827/2021-2022 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

Himachal Pradesh, Jal Shakti Vibhag E-Procurement Notice

* SHORT TERM NOTICE FOR Bids (IFB)*

The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Dharamshala District Kangra (HP) on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invite the item rate/lump sum contract bids from the eligible contractors/Firms. Bidders should be registered with Central Govt. or State Govt. or Central Govt. or State Government under takings. The Contractor/Firm who have experience in construction of similar work and who satisfy the qualification criteria of bid document need only apply. The scope of the work will be as under:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	EMD	Cost of tender form	Time limit

<tbl

India's future needs for the present Modi 'system' to be shaken out of sleep

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

IN THE BACKDROP OF ARREST OF PEOPLE FOR QUESTIONING PM FOR VACCINE EXPORT



Homeless and migrant labourers being served cooked food by Sikh volunteers, amid Covid-19 lockdown, in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ AGENCIES

Pakistani Hindu refugees: It has nearly been five years since they were given asylum and settled here at Majnu Ka Tilla, and nearly year-and-a-half since the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act, but a group of Hindu families from Pakistan still await basic amenities such as electricity for the lack of an Indian identity. ■ PTI

Elgar case: Bombay HC is likely to hear the medical bail plea of Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist Stan Swamy, an accused in the Elgar Parishad Maoists Links case, on Wednesday. The activist, arrested in October 2020, is lodged in Taloja prison and is bat-tling ill health. ■ PTI

Farmers block Union minister's convoy: A group of farmers blocked the convoy of Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar in Sheopur in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday demanding that the Centre scrap three new agri marketing laws. He was on his way to the district hospital when a dozen farmers blocked his vehicle. ■ PTI



Medics check on a patient at a Covid-19 Care Centre, established by the Indian Army, in Baramulla district, on Tuesday. ■ AGENCY

Booster dose effective even after 6 months: Experts on Covishield gap

Say jabs will not provide any great 'boosting' if given within less than a month or so of previous dose

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

Four to six weeks, six to eight or eight to 12? The increasing gap between two Covishield doses in India while the UK reduces its window has laypersons confused, but several experts say there is little reason to worry and second jabs anytime before six months can still be effective boosters.

The government last week extended the gap between two doses of the Covishield Covid-19 vaccine to 12-16 weeks, up from the previous maximum of eight weeks, on the recommendation of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI).

A day later, UK cut the gap from 12 weeks to eight weeks in view of the spread of the B.1.617 variant that originated in India.

Referring to concerns that India increased the gap primarily because vaccines were in short supply and many states had complained of acute shortage in supplies, immunologist Satyajit Rath said vaccine dosing is quite flexible and forgiving.

Once four weeks have passed, the next dose can be taken whenever practicable, until six months.

According to the scientist, vaccine doses will be safe no matter when they are taken but will not provide any great "boosting" if given within less than a month or so of the previous dose.

So vaccine doses can be taken any time after at least four weeks have passed from either the first dose or after an actual episode of Covid-19, Rath, from New Delhi's National Institute of Immunology (NI), told reporters.

Secondly, vaccine doses will give perfectly good boosting if given any time up to as much



A municipal employee cleans the Lal Chowk area of Srinagar during a lockdown on Tuesday. ■ SNS

Ex-IMA prez Aggarwal among 269 docs die of Covid-19

NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

As many as 269 doctors have died during the second wave of the pandemic, risking their lives while treating patients suffering from coronavirus infection.

Dr KK Aggarwal, a Padma Shri awardee and former national president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), died of Covid-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences here.

According to the IMA, a total of 269 doctors have lost their lives during the second wave of the Covid-19 infection. Among these doctors, the majority were aged between 30 and 55 years.

According to IMA data, Bihar recorded the maximum number of doctors who died of the infection. A total of 78 doctors have died in Bihar till now.

Senior doctors skipping Covid patients in JGMC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 18 MAY

Irk over the senior doctors skipping the Covid-19 wards in Jammu's Government Medical College (GMC), the top boss of the health services Atal Dulloo, financial commissioner, has written a letter to the principal asking her to direct the senior faculty members to make frequent visits to the patients suffering from the pandemic.

The GMC has daily been reporting the highest number of Covid-19 related deaths in J&K as senior doctors have reportedly left the patients at the mercy of paramedics and junior doctors.

It is worth mentioning that during a surprise visit last week to the GMC, Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha had asked the senior doctors to take care of the infected patients. However, pleadings of

the Lt-Governor and top IAS boss of health services seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

Dullo has in the letter said that immediate corrective measures were required for reducing the mortality rate in Covid positive patients. Such patients need to be properly looked after and treated which will help us in reducing the mortality.

Union minister Jitendra Singh also held a meeting with top brass of the health department on the issue of GMC.

Attendants of patients alleged that senior doctors were more interested in their private practice than attending patients in the hospital. Government medical colleges in J&K allow their doctors to undertake private practice.

The high court had recently directed the government to look into the system that was badly affecting the medical services.

Cyclone Tauktae hits Gujarat coast, weakens as it moves in

SNS & PTI
AHMEDABAD, 18 MAY

Dreaded cyclone Tauktae hit the Gujarat coast on Monday night but weakened in intensity as it moved to the hinterland thereafter.

At least seven people were killed due to the cyclone and rain-related incidents.

Almost entire Gujarat received incessant rainfall since last night causing damage to houses, uprooting of trees and loss to standing crops.

More than 16,500 houses have been damaged due to the impact of Tauktae cyclone, chief minister Vijay Rupani told journalists on Tuesday after chairing a review meeting on the situation.

Of the 1,400 hospitals treating Covid-19 patients, power supply was disrupted only in 16, said the chief minister adding that power has been restored in 12 of them by this morning.

Nearly two lakh people living in the vulnerable coastal areas were already evacuated by the administration before the cyclone had hit the coastline.

Banana plantations over 100 acres in south and coastal Gujarat have been flattened due to the impact of the gusty winds that swept through the state along with rains.

Thousands of nearly ripened Kesar mangoes have fallen off the trees in Talala of Gir Somnath district, a region famous for the sweet and juicy variety of the fruit.

After hitting the coastline on Monday night with a speed of nearly 160 kilometres per hour, the cyclonic storm moved towards central Gujarat on Tuesday morning causing heavy rains in the entire state.

By late Tuesday, the cyclone crossed Ahmedabad region causing more rains but weakened further as it moved northwards. Its wind speed also slowed down to about 110 km/h.

Porbandar, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Botad are the most affected districts due to the cyclone while all other places have received heavy rainfall.



Restoration works underway at the Gateway of India in the aftermath of Tauktae, in Mumbai, on Tuesday. ■ AGENCIES



A waterlogged road after heavy rain due to cyclone Tauktae in Surat, on Tuesday. ■ AGENCIES

In Mumbai, Tauktae claimed three lives and left 10 others injured over the past 24 hours when it passed close to the city coast, civic officials said on Tuesday.

The sea here has been very rough due to the impact of the cyclone and the huge tidal waves on Monday damaged several tonnes of garbage at chowpatties, Marine Drive and the iconic Gateway of India in Mumbai, they said.

Besides, nine people were injured in incidents of house and wall collapse, while one person got hurt in a tree fall, it said.

According to BMC, it received 2,364 complaints of tree fall, 56 related to waterlogging, 43 of house or wall collapse, 39 of short-circuit and two of boat accidents over the last 24 hours.

It said that the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) Mumbai centre recorded 207.6 mm rainfall at Colaba in south Mumbai and 230.3 mm at Santacruz in suburbs in the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 am on Tuesday.

The highest wind speed of 114 kmph was recorded at the Colaba pumping station. The cyclonic storm claimed

STRICT VIGIL



Police personnel fine people for loitering without reason, at Connaught Place, in the Capital on Tuesday. ■ SNS

Telangana runs out of vaccine, halts vaccination drive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 18 MAY

For the past four days the vaccination drive in Telangana has come to a stop due to low stocks of vaccines even as the pandemic continues to rage on the state.

According to health department officials the state has run out of Covishield and has only few doses of Covaxin left which are inadequate to meet the vast demand for second doses.

The state is currently vaccinating only those above the age of 45 as it is yet to roll out the drive for those between 18 and 44 due to lack of vaccines.

The state government had halted vaccination drive on 16 and 17 May citing low availability of vaccines and has failed to resume since then.

According to director of health Dr GS Rao there are nearly three lakh people waiting for the second dose of Covaxin but currently only 5,000 doses are available with the state government.

State government officials are unable to say when the drive will resume.

According to Dr Rao the Centre gave indications that some more doses will be sent in the next 15 days only then people who are due

will get their second dose.

In case of Covishield, there are no second doses after the Centre increased the interval between the two doses to 12 weeks. The allocation of doses are being done by the Centre. The state government will also float global tenders today to procure vaccines for the age group of 18-44.

Since the target population of 18-44 is 1.9 crore the chief minister will decide who among those age group will be given priority.

The state has reported 3,982 fresh cases of Covid 19 today along with 27 deaths. There are around 50 mucormycosis patients at Government ENT Hospital and Gandhi Hospital while another 40 are being treated in private hospitals.

A committee has been formed to examine requirement of antifungal medicines and examining the severity of each case it will give permission to procure the drugs.

Meanwhile, the Telangana government on Tuesday extended the lockdown till 30 May. As the ministers are busy monitoring pandemic curtailment measures and medical services at the field level, KCR cancelled the Cabinet meeting, which was scheduled on 20 May.

Court denies bail to Sushil Kumar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

A Delhi Court on Tuesday refused to grant anticipatory bail to abducting Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar in the murder case of a wrestler, saying that he is prima facie the main conspirator and allegations against him are serious in nature.

Additional Sessions Judge Jagdish Kumar denied the relief to Sushil Kumar against whom a case of murder, abduction and criminal conspiracy has been registered.

Wrestler Sagar Rana died, while two of his friends Sonu and Amit Kumar got injured, after they were allegedly assaulted by Sushil Kumar and other wrestlers on 4 May night, at the stadium premises in the national capital.

The judge noted that the allegations against the accused are serious in nature.

From the perusal of record of investigation so far, it reveals that prima facie the accused is the main conspirator of the murder.

AT A GLANCE

7 children orphaned, placed in foster care in HP: As the death toll due to Coronavirus continues to rise in Himachal Pradesh, seven children have lost both their parents to the viral disease and have now been placed in foster care, chief minister Jai Ram Thakur said on Tuesday. The state government will provide Rs 2,500 per child per month as financial assistance for maintenance of such children living with the extended families till they attain the age of 18 years. SNS

Veteran BJP leader Chaman Lal Gupta passes away: Veteran BJP leader and former minister of state for defence, Chaman Lal Gupta died in Jammu after a prolonged illness on Tuesday, days after undergoing successful treatment for Covid-19 at a hospital, his family said. Gupta (87) had tested positive for Covid-19 on 5 May and returned from Narayana Hospital on Sunday after successful treatment. His condition suddenly deteriorated in the wee hours and he breathed his last around 5.10 am, his elder son Anil Gupta said. SNS

Over 1,600 BSA teachers, workers died in UP since April: Over 1,600 teachers and workers of the Basic Education Department have died in Uttar Pradesh since the first week of April due to Covid-19, a teachers' body said on Tuesday, claiming that 90 per cent of them were on panchayat polls duty. Dr Dinesh Chandra Sharma, president of the UP Praamik Shikshak Sangh, claimed while 8-10 people died due to heart attack, the majority of deaths were due to Covid-19. PTI

Abducted Ritu Saikia in custody of Ulfa(I)



Saikia at Titabor in central Assam and consoled his parents and wife that the government was trying its level best to bring back him safely.

Sarma informed that as per the government sources Saikia is somewhere India-Myanmar border areas and he is keeping well. He also expressed happiness that Ulfa(I) had recently declared unilateral ceasefire because of the Covid-19 pandemic which would brighten the hope of dialogues with the separatist armed outfit. He commented that the people of Assam are fed up of disturbances and expect peace & progress.

Urging Ulfa(I) leaders to shun the path of violence Sarma asserted that nobody in the State today expects grenade blasts or abductions, but peace and tranquility. He categorically stated that the door for talks is always open to the militants.

TENDER

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM/ADDENDUM

Due to technical reasons, date of opening of tender is changed in respect of the NIT No. 558-Sig-16/M/Tender/1358 which is scheduled to be opened on 26.05.2021 for the work of "Installation, testing and commissioning of axle counter in connection with (i). Replacement of Analog Axle counter in loop line in SSB-JH section of Delhi Division; (ii). Provision of Dual detection of HASSDAC in block section of SPR section of Delhi Division", following changes are made:

S.No.	Description	As per NIT drawn	To be read as
1.	Date of Opening	Dated 26.05.2021	Dated 16.06.2021

All other terms and condition will remain unchanged.

Tender No.: 558-Sig-16/M/TENDER/1358 Date: 18.05.2021 1063/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)

Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-AMC-050-2021-22 Dated: 18.05.2021

Name of work with its location Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of HBL make IPS for 14 locations in Delhi Division for Three (03) years.

App. Cost of the work (₹) ₹ 53,23,224/- only

Address of the office Senior



Baba is not sad because he is away from us. What concerns him is the work that he was supposed to undertake to alleviate people's pain amid crisis

SHABHA HAKIM, DAUGHTER OF MINISTER FIRHAD HAKIM

AS HAKIM IS NOT BEING ABLE TO MONITOR THE CIVIC BODY WORKS IN THIS PANDEMIC TIME

THUMBNAILS



VIP road during a near complete lockdown in Kolkata on Tuesday. SNS

Mahesh Jaganath temple closed: The six-century-old Mahesh Jaganath temple at Serampore closed its doors for the devotees on Tuesday. The head priest, Soumen Adhikari said, with the severity of the pandemic and the imposition of the lockdown, the temple authority took the decision until further notification. SNS

Covid patient commits suicide: A Covid patient committed suicide within the dedicated Covid hospital at Onda in Bankura on Tuesday afternoon. The patient was found hanging from the ceiling fan with the help of a gamchha at an abandoned room close to his ward. He was a resident of Gogra village in the same Onda PS area. SNS

City hospital commissioners PSA 02 plant: Narayan Memorial Hospital has installed a 600 litre per minute capacity Pressure Swing Adsorption medical oxygen generation plant in just seven days, an official of the health facility said. The plant built at Rs 2.1 crore is equivalent to 126 bulk 47 litres cylinders of oxygen per day. PTI

Man protests outside Raj Bhawan with flock of sheep



A man protests with a herd of sheep outside Raj Bhawan on Tuesday.

KOLKATA, 18 MAY

Believing that governor Jagdeep Dhankhar ought to feel "sheepish" after sanctioning the CBI arrest of state government ministers in such a pandemic time, a man literally took a flock of sheep to the gates of Raj Bhawan to register his protest. It was identified that he represents a forum named 'Citizens against dirty politics and corruption'.

A spokesperson of the Kolkata Nagarik Mancha accompanied shepherds who took the animals near the North Gate of the Governor House.

They remained there for around 5-7 minutes before policemen, who were initially bewildered, drove the agitators and the sheep away from the high-security area.

Incidentally, Tuesday is the birthday of governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The Mancha spokesperson said that the organisation resorted to such a mode of protest as gathering of people is not allowed during the pandemic and prohibitory orders are in force in the area.

The Kolkata Nagarik Mancha has no link with any political party, the spokesperson said. Reacting to the incident, senior BJP leader Anupam Hazra said, "Such distasteful conduct against the first citizen of the state outside Raj Bhawan only showed Bengal in poor light." SNS

SC to hear plea by kin of 2 BJP workers killed in poll violence

Jethmalani says there is total inaction by state government and police has tried to subvert probe

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear a plea filed by kin of two BJP workers, who were killed in poll related violence on May 2 in Bengal, seeking court monitored probe and transfer of cases to CBI or Special Investigation Team (SIT).

A bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B R Gavai issued notice to West Bengal government and the Centre on the plea filed by Biswajit Sarkar, whose elder brother was killed and co-petitioner Swaranalata Adhikari, whose husband was killed in poll related violence.

The bench said that it would hear the matter on 25 May and asked senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani to serve the copy of the petition to standing counsel of the state government.



» A bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B R Gavai issued notice to Bengal govt and the Centre on the plea filed by Biswajit Sarkar, whose elder brother was killed and co-petitioner Swaranalata Adhikari, whose husband was killed

» The bench said that it would hear the matter on 25 May and asked senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani to serve the copy of the petition to standing counsel of the state government.

tigation. This was even encouraged by the state administration, he alleged.

The bench asked senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for West Bengal, whether a copy of the petition has been served upon the state, to which he replied that, he has not been served till now. It asked Jethmalani to serve the copy and listed the matter for further hearing on 25 May. Jethmalani said that the body of Abhijit Sarkar has not been cremated and court may direct that post mortem of the body be conducted and it should be videographed.

He said that the body should not be allowed to be cremated by the state government authorities till the next date of hearing and this is what the family wants.

The bench, however, did not pass any such directions instantly. The plea filed by advocate Sarad Kumar Singhania alleged that Abhijit Sarkar, was killed on 2 May, by a mob comprising 20 supporters of the All India Trinamool Congress party.

It said that the mob entered the house of Biswajit Sarkar, dragged his elder brother (Abhijit) and killed him in front of his mother and other family members.

Petitioner No.1 (Biswajit Sarkar), his mother who was also molested are the eye witnesses of this gruesome murder, while Petitioner No.2 (Swaranalata Adhikari) is the widow of Haran Adhikari, who was a local booth worker at Booth No.199A at Sonarpur Dakshin Vidhan

National Human Rights Commission, West Bengal Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Women and National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes," the bench ordered. It directed that complaint can be filed either by way of hard copy or online.

Hearing PILs over post-poll violence in the state, a five-judge bench directed that the commissions in turn will forward those complaints to the director general of police (DGP) immediately. "We direct that if any person has suffered on account of post-poll violence, he shall be at liberty to file complaint along with the supporting documents to the

Sabha. He was attacked with bricks, sticks, spade, shovel at his home and brutally killed in the presence of his 80 year old father, who was also kicked, the plea said.

It said that the Petitioners, who are both victims and eye witnesses have been constrained to invoke the extraordinary writ jurisdiction of this Court seeking fair investigation by a Court appointed SIT into the murders and large scale incidents of violence unleashed at the behest of a particular political party.

The plea said that the court should also examine the failure of the state administration which while identifying itself with this vengeful cause of the ruling political party in the State has chosen to turn a blind eye leaving victims of these

commisions.

On the last date of hearing, the bench had also requested the Advocate General representing the state to apprise the court about any designated e-mail id to enable the aggrieved persons to lodge their complaints online.

Petitioners had alleged that they were not permitted to lodge complaints in the police station and in some cases they were unable to do so as they had to run away from their places of residence owing to the post-poll violence.

The state government sought more time to furnish such information. The court directed that the information be furnished on the next date of hearing.

crimes remediless as the entire genocidal attacks are part of a well thought of political design of the party in power to take political revenge after declaration of results of assembly elections on 2 May, 2021. It also sought transfer of two murder cases registered in police station Narkeldanga and Sonarpur to be transferred to CBI or such another SIT as may be appointed by this court.

SC to hear plea of Bharati Ghosh on 28 May: The Supreme Court Tuesday agreed to hear on 28 May the plea of former IPS officer and BJP leader Bharati Ghosh who was earlier granted protection from arrest in connection with the 2019 Lok Sabha polls violence case till the conclusion of the Assembly polls in West Bengal.

Narada row: CBI writes to Speaker on arrest of leaders

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 18 MAY

the assent of the Assembly Speaker in making arrests of the ministers and MLAs in a crime like the Narada scandal.

"Since the crime is like any other ordinary crime, the CBI has exclusive power to make arrests and under no obligation to seek the sanction of the Speaker. Only offences related to the Assembly would require seeking sanction of the Speaker or is", said Bhattacharya.

CBI source said that the letter contained all details regarding the cases and under which sections the quartet (including TMC turncoat Sovan Chatterjee) had been arrested. The source also clarified that the CBI is under no obligation to seek sanction from the Assembly Speaker while trying the legislators and ministers in a cognizable offence. If arrests of ministers and lawmakers would have been made in the Assembly itself it would require the sanction of the Speaker, it argued.

Echoing the same refrain, Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, the lawyer and CPI-M Rajya Sabha MP while speaking to The Statesman, said, the CBI is under no obligation to seek

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar had recently granted sanction to prosecute the four leaders, following which the agency finalised its charge sheet and moved to arrest them.

The CBI has "sought permission from the Lok Sabha Speaker to prosecute Suvendu Adhikari, Saugata Roy, Prasun Banerjee and Kakali Ghosh Dastidar", who were all TMC MPs when the operation was allegedly conducted, the official explained.

"We are yet to get a sanction in the matter," he said, further clarifying that another political heavyweight Mukul Roy, who had also quit the TMC and joined the BJP in 2017, does not feature in the list.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, following Monday's arrest, had claimed that Adhikari and Roy were spared by the CBI as they have joined the BJP.

"It's clear that Suvendu and Mukul were kept out of this... as they now happen to be BJP members. We, however, have faith in the judiciary and the truth will come out soon," Ghosh had asserted.

The Central agency was learnt to have moved the apex court to file a caveat in not allowing the ruling TMC to have a unilateral hearing on the Narada case should the party move the Supreme Court on the scandal. Interestingly, the Narada pay-off scandal is being probed under the direction of the Calcutta High Court.

Meanwhile, the CBI is waiting for the speaker's nod to prosecute four political leaders in the Narada sting case, including BJP's Suvendu Adhikari - who was a TMC MP when the tapes surfaced -- one of its senior officials said here on Tuesday, scotching allegations of biasness levelled against the agency by sever-

LOCKDOWN



TOP: Deserted New Market during lockdown in Kolkata on Tuesday.

BHASKAR MALLICK

BOTTOM: Migrant labourers return from Delhi owing to Covid-induced lockdown, at Gazole of Maldia district on Tuesday.

Kolkata airport efficiently handling Covid crisis

KOLKATA, 18 MAY

The Kolkata airport authorities today announced that despite the prevailing Covid situation, passenger count has remained steady while the airport has been efficiently handling consignments of vaccines, oxygen, and Covid testing kits which are reaching the airport almost on a daily basis.

The airport authorities today shared that the airport has handled about 5.7K flyers that travelled through 84 flights yesterday. A total of 3254 passengers arrived in 44 flights while 2479 departed in 40 flights.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has already announced guidelines for both domestic and international passengers who are visiting Bengal or intending to catch a connecting flight from here. The rules required that international passengers coming in flights originating in UK, Brazil and South Africa must undergo a mandatory RT-PCR test on reaching here, at the airport. A 14 day home quarantine has been advised while those that test positive have to remain in institutional quarantine. Thermal screening and health profiling are being carried out at the airport.

fresh coronavirus infections, which took the tally to 11,52,433, it added.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified woman Namely : Shamoli, W/o Unknown, R/o Unknown, Age : about 40 years, Height : 5', Complexion : Wheatish, Face : Long, Built : Thin, Wearing : Black colour T-shirt and pink colour salwar has been found dead at Jamuna Khadar, Shastri Park Bus adde ke niche, Delhi on 14.05.2021. In this regard a case vide DD No. 17-Adated 14.05.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Shastri Park, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved in G.T.B. Hospital Mortuary, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this dead found woman may kindly inform to the following:- SHO P.S. Shastri Park, Delhi, North-East Distt., Delhi Ph. No. 011-22170120, 22170106

Bengal: Govt to set up safe homes in schools to isolate Covid-19 patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 18 MAY

Para Teachers' Unity Manch urged the government to engage its members to run the upcoming "safe homes" in schools.

homes as many were used as polling booths or for accommodating Central forces in the recently concluded polls.

"The DMs have been asked to identify the school buildings that have adequate infrastructure for being used as safe homes. They have been asked to mail the list of selected schools to the school education department as soon as possible," said an official.

Last year, a few schools were converted into safe homes but no such notification had been issued. The safe homes with an adequate number of beds and requisite supply of

30-bed safe home, with ambulance facility open at Tarakeswar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HOOGHLY, 18 MAY

A safe-home for Covid patients, at Bhimpur, Tarakeswar, was set up at a government guest home 'Pather Sathi' but could not be made operational due to staff shortages, has been finally made operational.

With the intervention of the health department the 'safe home' was inaugurated jointly by the Tarakeswar MLA Ramendu Singh Roy, state and district health department senior officials.

The district health department's senior official said, "At present the safe home has 30 beds, arrangements have also been made to provide instant

oxygen to patients in emergency.

However if a patient turns critical with the rapid fall of oxygen concentration in blood, they will be promptly shifted to a Covid hospital while ambulance services to free up hospital beds.

The Tarakeswar MLA Ramendu Singh Roy took innovative steps to provide ambulance services in remote villages. He said, "In the remote areas of villages, a normal ambulance cannot reach at the doorstep of an ailing patient due to kaccha road."

Hence, five totos were modified with attached oxygen gas cylinder to carry the patients from remote village areas to the safe home."

Amid a raging second wave of Covid, schools have been remained closed in the state. The state reported 19,003

Vijayan leads LDF for 2nd term as CM

SNS & PTI
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 18 MAY

Days after leading the ruling LDF to a stupendous electoral victory, CPI (M) veteran Pinarayi Vijayan was on Tuesday elected its Parliamentary Party Leader for a second term as chief minister but the omission of 'rockstar' health minister KK Shailaja from the new cabinet sparked a debate.

The CPI-M sprang a surprise in the formation of the cabinet with all the ministers in the outgoing Pinarayi Vijayan government have been dropped. Only Vijayan has retained his spot.

Shailaja, who was almost sure to make it to the cabinet, is the most prominent exclusion. The CPI-M state committee, which met here on Tuesday, has gone for a generational shift in the case of ministers and decided not to exempt Shailaja from this decision.

"There is no need to be emotional. I became the minister earlier because of the party's decision. I have absolute satisfaction in what I have done. I am confident that the new team can perform better than me," Shailaja said.

She was, however, entrusted with the position of party whip, a CPI(M) statement said here, even as the party took the position that all members except the CM should be fresh faces in the new cabinet.

Among the fresh faces is Vijayan's son-in-law P A Mohammed Riyas.

The state committee of the Marxist party nominated 11 freshers including two women as ministers in the new government which would be sworn-in on 20 May at the Central Stadium here in adherence to Covid-19 protocol.

Democratic Party state president George Sebastian sent a letter to High Court Chief Justice seeking its direction to the authorities concerned to shift the venue from the central

stadium here to Raj Bhavan, official residence of the Governor, and limit the number of participants to just 50.

The state committee, which met at its headquarters AKG Centre, elected Vijayan to lead the party, the statement said.

Sources said the party wanted to evolve a second generation of leaders in parliamentary politics and give them more serious opportunities. Party-central committee member M V Govindan, former Rajya Sabha MPs P Rajeev and K N Balagopal, senior leaders K Radhakrishnan, VNVasan, Saji Cherian and V Sivankutty are among those included in Vijayan's second cabinet. Veena George and R Bindhu, wife of CPI(M) acting secretary A V Jayaraman, would be the women members in the new ministry.

Riyas, Vijayan's son-in-law and national president of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), also managed to find a cabinet berth. The state committee meeting, chaired by senior leader Elamaraan Karim, picked M B Rajesh. The meeting, attended by polit bureau members S Ramachandran Pillai, Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, M A Baby besides Vijayan, also elected senior leader and former minister T P Ramakrishnan as the parliamentary party secretary.

Meanwhile, taking a cue from the CPI(M), ally CPI also nominated fresh faces to the cabinet. Newly elected MLAs K

Limits of incrementalism

The rocky relationship between the world's only superpower and its main challenger has, after four decades of engagement, once again collapsed into mutual distrust, suspicion, and dangerous one-upmanship. There is consensus among experts that the USA and China now appear to be locked on a collision course that has already fomented a trade war, seems likely to produce a new cold war, and could even result in dangerous military conflicts. Yet, despite Washington's largely legitimate concerns about Beijing's excessive domestic political control and aggressive foreign policy stances, the case for an incremental improvement in ties with China within the US policy establishment still has strong traction. A host of 'soft' issues are being highlighted as potential facilitators in reshaping the trajectory of Sino-American relations including higher education, avant-garde art, architecture, and law. The argument is that a focus on and promotion of these and other such would have an incrementally constructive impact on bilateral exchanges. As if on cue, a new book ~ Middle Class Shanghai: Reshaping US-China Engagement ~ by Cheng Li makes the case for American policymakers not to lose sight of the "expansive dynamism and diversity in present-day China".

There is, indeed, a long list of those who have made similar arguments over the past few decades; these bank on the emergence of an increasingly cosmopolitan, presumably outward-looking, and compatible-to-Western-values middle class proving to be a critical agent of change. These hopes have, however, remained largely unrealised and there is nothing to indicate that things will be any different this time around. The reason lies not so much in the various analyses of a changing China, which empirical evidence certainly backs, but in many strategic thinkers eliding the central theme of societal-cultural values in these parts wherein harmony and social cohesion trump individual freedoms and personal goals. If this sounds familiar, it's because it is ~ the 'Asian Values' debate of the 1990s which emanated from a sense of exceptionalism is arguably the most strongly embedded in the Chinese mass psyche. With a totalitarian state apparatus in place, upholding this principle is relatively easier than in democracies, hyphenated or otherwise. So, while reams are written premised on the hope that deepening cooperation between the USA and China in less contentious areas of engagement would lead to a progressive softening of Beijing's stand and what Samuel P. Huntington termed the 'Demonstration Effect' would do the rest thanks to an aspirational middle class, all indications are that such an approach would be a misreading of China. For one, everything is strategic in the Chinese worldview. Secondly, the assumption by the CPC leadership that the USA still has albeit futile designs on blocking the country's inevitable rise to great-power status is a longstanding one and it remains unchanged. The rest is, in a sense, all smoke and mirrors unless proof to the contrary emerges.

Subalterns & the Virus

The news-break from Odisha is much too frightful even at the mildest estimation. If Ganjam district in the southern part of the state was the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic last year, it is the western swathe of the state that has this year been mortally afflicted. It thus comes about that there were 11,000 fresh cases, including 21 deaths, in these districts, bordering Chhattisgarh, on Saturday. Though the spurt has been attributed to the spike in the neighbouring state, there is little or no reason to be overly confident over the fact that the Test Positivity Rate (TPR) has declined in the predominantly tribal western districts. It is imperative for the so-called "flattening of the curve" to be enduring, most particularly in regions that are by and large perdurable poor and its people are strangers to medical science. Predictably, the current second wave has been more dangerous than the first last year when 8,000 cases were recorded each day. This year, the daily afflictions have soared to 12,000. The worst affected districts are Khorda, Angul, Puri, Kalahandi, Kendrapara, Rayagada and Sundergarh. Khorda district reported the highest 1414 fresh cases, with the majority from Bhubaneswar. Odisha now has 106,471 active cases, representing 17.73 per cent of the total number of positive cases.

Not wholly unrelated to the dreadful scourge is the plight of the tribal settlers who belong to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in different parts of the state. At least two Bonda tribes, one of India's most primitive tribal groups, in Malkangiri district have contracted the infection, according to a report in this newspaper. This subaltern segment direly deserves special care in a state that has been plagued by the virus for more than a year. It is all very well to mobilise self-help groups and civil society in the wider canvas to sensitise the tribals. Vaccination is on the list of priorities, but Odisha struggles with a shortage of vaccines as do large parts of India. Another group that has been affected are the children of seasonal labourers or migrant workers who had recently begun to resume their duties. In rural Odisha, school children accompany their parents to the worksites ~ mainly brick kilns ~ and in the process make themselves vulnerable. A recent survey revealed that 82 per cent of migrant children who attended school during the first wave of Covid-19 are out school in the second wave. The pandemic has affected children, and fears that the third wave will hit kids are especially worrisome. Child labour supplements the family's income and this has been an adverse fallout of the potentially deadly second wave of the coronavirus. Thus children scarcely have an option other than to accompany their parents to worksites. The source of livelihood is also a source of the virus.

As Russia looks east

President Putin subscribes to a pragmatic Eurasianism, and the Eurasian Economic Union that came into effect in 2015 now consists of five countries: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. Simultaneously, the Russians pursue closer cooperation with China. However, it is possible to see neo-Eurasianism as a counter but not repudiation of the West



Russia's alignment and approach to regional integration has transitioned from focus on the West and neglect of regional integration in the 1990s, to efforts to reintegrate the post-Soviet space under Russian leadership and form a 'Greater Eurasia' transcending the post-Soviet space to include China. Key to understanding this approach is a declining Russia that struggles to maintain great power status. Initially, Russia neglected the post-Soviet states to favour integration with Europe and the West but when Moscow failed to find a place commensurate with its aspirations in the Western liberal order, it shifted to regional integration of the post-Soviet space in the hope of creating a future multi-polar world.

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov last March said that if the European Union "broke off relations, simply destroying all the mechanisms built over many years, we have only individual European countries that want to be guided by their national interests. Our relations with China are developing faster than what is left of relations with European countries ... in the East, there is an intensive agenda that grows richer every year." Lavrov was suggesting that Russia exercised a deliberate choice, but in reality Russia sees future challenges as originating from the West, and the concept of neo-Eurasianism as the ideal rubric driving closer relations with China.

The Russian tilt eastwards is a replay of the dispute between Slavophiles and westernisers, and the recognition that Russia needed to modernise, whether by adopting an European or indigenous model. This debate was the leitmotif of Russian intellectual thought throughout the nineteenth century, though the discussion had already been joined during the rule of Peter the Great (1672-1725) and Catherine the Great (1762-1796) who both had to enforce western norms on a large segment of reluctant Russian nobility. After defeat in the Crimean War, the aristocracy concurred that Russia was backward and in need of change.

Both westernisers and Slavophiles suffered from an inferiority complex with regard to the West. The westernisers juxtaposed their ideas against 200 years of Mongol conquest, regarding the iron-fisted rule from Mongol

capital Sarai (1242-1466) as responsible for Russia's autocratic nature, due to which Russia became forcibly separated from Europe. While geographically the vast Russian space spanning Asia placed Russia on the very periphery of Europe, this perception of disadvantage had to change and Russia had to embrace the West. Such views were contested by the Slavophile movement, which argued that Russian traditions of the Orthodox Church, mysticism, the Tsar and the peasant community were the foundations on which



The writers are, respectively, a scholar of Russian archives and a former Indian foreign secretary

to rebuild society with the slogan 'Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationalism' and intellectuals like Aleksey Khomyakov, Ivan Kireyevskii and Konstantin Aksakov extolled the superiority of the Russian way of life.

In implementation of this, Slavophiles yearned to free fellow Slavs from Ottoman and Austrian rule, but the Poles, then ruled by Russia, presented a stumbling block, being Slav but Catholic. In the 1920s, Russian émigrés from the Civil War reconstituted the Slavophile movement by replacing it with Eurasianism. Led from Sofia and Prague by Nikolai Trubetskoi and Pyotr Savitskii, this was presented as geographical and cultural nationalism.

One justification for Eurasianism was that the vast Russian landmass of continental size enabled its economy to be autarkic. The concept accepted that Mongol rule over Russia had forged a unique historical and cultural Russian identity, further enhanced by the

Orthodox Church. Although there was a fundamental incompatibility with Communism, especially regarding the role of religion and the internationalism of Communism, Eurasianism agreed with Communists that justice should be dependent on the state, and the state was responsible for a solid working-class and autarkic planned economy. This movement was terminated by the Soviets, ostensibly for being bourgeois, but due to repression of all opposition. When the Soviet Union ended in 1990, Eurasianism revived to restore Russian morale over the loss of Empire and the concept now appeals to nationalist Russian academics and politicians as rejections of the West and Atlantic domination.

Neo-Eurasianism encompasses a broad spectrum of supportive academics and their interpretations. It includes the theories of Lev Gumilov (whose Tatar grandmother claimed descent from the Mongols) who argued that Mongol occupation shielded an emergent Russian ethos from the West and allowed it time to achieve its unique maturity, and those of Alexandre Dugin, who wanted a totalitarian Russian-dominated Eurasian Empire to challenge the Atlanticist allies. For Russia to be respected, Eurasianism argues that it must recreate the golden age of the Soviet Communist era, evoke the patriotism of World War II and rehabilitate the Russian Empire as a natural historic process to present an alternative to United States-led globalisation.

President Putin subscribes to a pragmatic Eurasianism, and the Eurasian Economic Union that came into effect in 2015 now consists of five countries: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. Simultaneously, the Russians pursue closer cooperation with China. However, it is possible to see neo-Eurasianism as a counter but not repudiation of the West. Despite Putin condemning Europe's liberal values as 'sexless and barren' and 'dark chaos', the West continues the main focus of Russian foreign policy. Notwithstanding the growing economic, military and diplomatic strength of Russo-Chinese relations, the Orthodox Church and the inherent xenophobia throughout Russian society about Caucasians, Central Asians and Chinese are too strong for Russia to turn its back on the West.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Conflict in Israel

SIR, Israel is preparing for a ground invasion of the Gaza strip. With its troops and tanks close to its border with Gaza, it has pounded the territory with artillery and airstrikes, while Hamas has responded with rocket fire. With the two sides in the mood for all-out war, neither has shown any concern about civilian casualties. Israel, in particular, has targeted several apartment buildings in Gaza in the name of eliminating Hamas commanders. This included the Associated Press building. It has killed over a hundred civilians so far, including 27 children.

Human Rights groups are pointing out that both sides are engaging in violence that merits description as war crimes. Mixed communities of Jews and Arabs in Israel are engulfed in violence too. The present situation could draw neighbouring countries into the conflict. A geographic expansion of hostilities looms in a highly volatile region.

Just before the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, a disparate collection of parties was on the verge of forming a coalition to oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The possibility that Netanyahu ordered the airstrikes to put off the coalition's effort at government formation cannot be ruled out. Hamas may have lost several commanders in the

recent Israeli air strikes but its support among Palestinians is soaring.

The US has issued a statement supporting Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas' rockets. Noam Chomsky has come done heavily on the statement as it has made no mention of the Palestinians' right to defend themselves and is thus not even-handed in dealing with the actors. The US has also blocked a call for an open meeting of the UN security council to discuss the situation. Washington's obstructionist approach will encourage

Israel to escalate violence, and that will help neither the cause of peace in the region nor America's slipping global image.

Yours, etc., Shovanl Chakraborty, Kolkata, 16 May.

DAVID'S WAY

SIR, This refers to your editorial 'Tutor extraordinaire' (16 May). Unlike many of his contemporaries who have preferred the cool comfort of the commentary box, Rahul Dravid has been busy on the field spotting and nurturing raw talent. He has managed to surprise us all by showing us his wild side in a recent commercial. Greg

Chapell has gone on to remark that he has picked on the best Aussie brains and created a team hard to beat.

Hopefully the cricket authorities will acknowledge his contribution to the game in his second innings and reward him accordingly.

Yours, etc., Anthony Henriques, Mumbai, 16 May.

RAISE AWARENESS

SIR, The sad demise of Mamata Banerjee's brother Aseem Banerjee who succumbed to Covid-19 after battling for a month indeed creates a very gloomy atmosphere amid the rapid

rise in Covid cases in Bengal which surpassed the 21,000 mark on Saturday. Given the deteriorating condition of our state, our CM Mamata Banerjee has taken the right decision in announcing complete lockdown for a period of two weeks starting from May 16.

Although imposing a lockdown is not the ideal way for any government to contain the spread of this virus, governments of most states are compelled to take this decision to somehow break the chain of transmission.

It is quite annoying to see that some people of our state are still disbelieving the

outbreak of Covid disease and suspect a ploy to mislead people in order to benefit pharma companies.

To harbour such beliefs even after witnessing deaths and devastation around the world on a daily basis, shows the lack of ignorance of our brothers and sisters whose irresponsible behaviour in this critical time is aggravating the situation.

Our state government needs to raise awareness among the people regarding the lethal threat of this virulent virus.

Yours, etc., Iftekhar Ahmed, Kolkata, 16 May.

RESTRAINT NEEDED

SIR, This refers to the report, 'Governor visits Nandigram, hits out at CM' (16 May). A habitual critic of the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamul government, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has been given to ignoring the principle that constitutional heads should not air their differences with the elected regime in public. It is unfortunate that in West Bengal, the Governor and Chief Minister have been at loggerheads even in the middle of a raging pandemic. Governor Dhankhar's visit to Nandigram followed by Assam, in the aftermath of post-poll violence, was avoidable. Raj Bhavan needs to show restraint and not resort to actions which may give rise to the perception that Mr. Dhankhar is acting at the behest of the BJP high command. A cordial relationship is imperative for a healthy democracy and peaceful political atmosphere. However, the objection of the Chief Minister ~ who once supported them Governor Gopal Krishna Gandhi's criticism of the Buddhadev Bhattacharya-led Left Front government over firing at Nandigram ~ to Mr. Dhankhar's stinging observations gives rise to the suspicion that she has something to hide.

Yours, etc., S.S.Paul, Nadia, 16 May.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Awareness of Covid

The effects of large gatherings over Eid as well as multiple home visits will be apparent in the days to come and will largely depend on how far people complied with the SOPs. Only recently, as the virus ravaged India, and even now continues to bring unimaginable suffering there, officials in Islamabad warned we could be in a similar situation if precautions were not taken. The variant across the border, B.1.617.2., spread rapidly just as India was proclaiming it had beaten Covid-19 ~ a terrible fallacy that had lulled many into a false sense of security.

This misguided belief, propagated by India's top officials, was a major factor behind the mass gatherings and indifference to precautions ~ a trend that was witnessed in Pakistan some months ago when compliance fatigue and huge political and private gatherings were in full swing.

Pakistan cannot afford to be complacent. Our healthcare infrastructure and medical manpower do not have the resources to cater to a high volume of critically ill Covid-19 patients.

We have already lost over 200 doctors and at least 30 paramedics ~ an alarming figure given that Pakistan's overall recorded infections at each peak were far lower than badly hit countries like the UK, where nearly as many healthcare workers have died.

The high number of medical personnel deaths in Pakistan reveal the gaps in our healthcare system. With a new study showing multiple virus strains in Punjab, there is even more

DAWN
reason for concern. Given our lack of healthcare resources, the government's focus must be on ramping up testing, SOP compliance and vaccine coverage.

Mask-wearing, social distancing and limited gatherings, too, are key to keeping infections low. Super-spreaders like the Kumbh Mela in India have been linked to the crippling third wave of infections. Even when Pakistan emerges from the third wave, it should ensure that gatherings are restricted and mask-wearing is compulsory.

Above all, the government must make all-out efforts to encourage people to get vaccinated. As vaccine supplies come in, a mass awareness campaign should begin. This is essential, as the return to any kind of 'normalcy' is underpinned by mass immunisation.

While the government is doing a good job of managing vaccination centres, the real challenge lies in persuading reluctant members of the public to get the jab.

An awareness campaign that educates people on the dangers of contracting the virus and the protection the vaccine offers will encourage reluctant citizens to get themselves inoculated.



The debate on the origin of Covid-19, intense at one time, tapered off eventually as there was understandably more concern about treatment and preventive aspects. In addition, some analysts seemed to suggest this can be a divisive debate, involving allegations and counter-allegations, so it is better to avoid or postpone it as the world grapples with a serious challenge that needs us to work together.

There is sense in this view, of course, but despite this the debate on Covid-19 origins refuses to go away, and in fact there are reasons why it is acquiring a new momentum.

Firstly, the WHO team organized for this purpose submitted a report in March and this itself became an issue of much discussion. However, this report is along such predictable lines and the terms of reference, membership, pre-submission statements etc. were also such that the entire exercise looked more like a guided tour of China than a real and thorough investigation examining all possibilities.

In fact, even a highly placed scientist known earlier for his involvement in the cover-up of several aspects of the pandemic's origin was included as an influential member of the 'investigation' team. Understandably several scientists have called for additional investigation and even the topmost official of the WHO was compelled to admit that more work on this is needed and will be taken up.

Secondly, there is the question that the important work of treatment and prevention of Covid-19 as well as of avoiding a recurrence of pandemic is itself related to proper identification of the source of the virus. It is this factor which is indeed the most important reason why the debate on the origin of Covid-19 cannot really be avoided and in fact any attempt to neglect this or to cover-up important facts relating to this will result in high costs for humanity.

Thirdly, an additional reason for revival of interest is the realisation that the earlier phase of the debate had involved significant cover-up efforts and so there is need for renewed unbiased efforts to unearth the reality.

To summarize the earlier debate, two main explanations for the origin of Covid-19 had been discussed. The first was based on animal to human natural spread, the most likely being bat to human via an intermediary (likely to be an animal sold for meat in the Wuhan wet market). The second was the possibility of an accidental escape of an engineered virus or a genetically engineered virus from the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Covid investigation must be pursued



Initially both aspects received almost equal attention, but when a number of scientists and subject-specialists intervened to issue statements which sought to demolish the second possibility, interest in this declined.

However, it eventually emerged that a senior scientist-official who had played a key role in preparing and disseminating these statements was himself involved closely in the funding of this research and some other scientists who had been discounting the accidents were pursuing somewhat similar research relating to novel potential pandemic pathogens in their own labs.

This discovery led to renewed interest in what exactly was going on in the Wuhan lab and it was found that this work related to enhancing the ability of corona viruses by altering them to increase their ability to infect and harm human cells in humanized mice. What is more, while the Wuhan institute had a new lab in

the stated highest security category, this had been found to be wanting in inspections and anyway some of the coronavirus work had been conducted in the lower security labs.

This much could be confirmed, even though the Wuhan records had been sealed, as this research had been financed by a USA based government institute, through a New York based sub-contractor, and so some of the records of the research are available with the funders too - the main contractor a well as the sub-contractor.

Further it was revealed that these institutes had gone ahead with this funding to the Wuhan Institute despite there being a moratorium in place for some time (2015-17) on such funding.

Again, to place facts in perspective, such research relating to potential pandemic pathogens, in a broader way also referred to as gain-of-function studies, had been criticized several times by senior scientists for its

high risks but at the same time others had justified it on the rather suspect argument that this would contribute to preparing in advance for fighting future possible pandemics. As this research generally involves the lab-level creation of viruses that are more dangerous than those found in nature, many scientists and bio-ethicists had been warning against the great potential of harm should a dangerous virus escape. Such accidents had taken place in the past.

Despite this, enormous funds had been released for such research, all in the name of fighting possible future pandemics, and so many virologists and subject-specialists had also acquired a stake in their continuation. This includes not just civilian scientists, but also defense scientists and their institutions, because such research also has implications for biological warfare in terms of aggression as well as defense, a fact well known but not discussed generally.

If a serious mistake is made by the USA, then China rises fast to expose it. If a serious mistake is made by China when USA is very active to expose it. But here is a curious case of potentially lethal research conducted in China using American funds. Hence very powerful persons on the US funding side and very powerful persons on the Chinese side, helped by subject-specialists of other countries getting big funds for similar research, were all interested for their own reasons to cover up the possibility (no one can yet say with certainty) of an accident in the Wuhan institute.

But in the interests of finding a better cure and avoiding recurrence, it is important to know the truth. Hence the matter should be pursued very carefully to consider, among other possibilities, a serious lab accident and virus leak in the Wuhan lab.

The writer is a journalist and author. His recent books include *Planet in Peril and Man Over Machine* (Gandhi Ideas for Our Times).

Israel's 'Black Lives Matter' moment

JAMES L GELVIN

sideshow, not the main event.

That main event is an unprecedented conflict taking place on the streets of Jerusalem, Haifa, Lod and elsewhere. It's what scholars call an "intercommunal conflict," pitting elements of Israel's Jewish population against elements of Israel's Palestinian population who have had enough and have taken to the streets.

Hamas could not maintain its credibility as a movement if it sat by while Palestinians in Israel battled Jewish Israelis there. The reality is that Israel is having its Black Lives Matter moment.

As in the United States, a brutalized minority group, facing systemic racism and discriminatory acts, has taken to the streets. And, as in the United States, the only way out starts with serious soul-searching on the part of the majority.

But after the spate of Palestinian suicide bombings in the early 2000s that horrified Israelis and hardened their attitudes toward Palestinians, this is unlikely to occur.

Palestinian anger can be attributed to multiple issues. In April, Israel attempted to impede access to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem for Palestinians living in the West Bank. Israeli police then raided the Muslim holy site, reportedly after Palestinians threw stones at them, injuring 330. At the beginning of May, Mahmoud Abbas, the current president of the Palestinian Authority, which governs

the West Bank, cancelled the first Palestinian legislative elections in 15 years. Finally, when the current conflict spilled over into the West Bank, the Israeli occupation and continued colonization of Palestinian territory were thrown into the mix.

These significant issues explain Palestinian anger. However, the inter-communal nature of the ongoing conflagration is due to two other issues.

First, Jewish settlers attempted to evict eight Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency had settled the families in the neighbourhood during the 1950s.

Jewish settlers filed suit in 1972 claiming their right to the homes where those families lived. They argued that Jews had owned the Palestinians' homes before the division of the city in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. By right, they argue, the homes belong to their community.

Jewish neighbourhoods housing more than 215,000 encircle the predominantly Palestinian eastern part of Jerusalem, where Sheikh Jarrah is located. For Palestinians, the attempt to evict the families is representative of Israel's overall policy of pushing them out of the city. It is not only a reminder that in a Jewish state Palestinians are second-class citizens, but a re-enactment of the central tragedy in Palestinian national memory: the

Nakba of 1948, when 720,000 Palestinians fled their homes in what would become the state of Israel, becoming refugees.

The second reason for the inter-communal nature of the current conflict is the emboldening of Israel's extreme right-wing politicians and their followers. Among them are latter-day Kahanists, the followers of the late Meir Kahane. Kahane was an American rabbi who moved to Israel. Kahane's anti-Arab racism was so extreme that the United States listed the party he founded as a terrorist group. Kahane proposed paying Israel's Palestinian population \$40,000 each to leave Israel. If they refused, Israel should expel them, he argued.

Kahanism and like-minded movements are on the rise in Israel. A Kahanist was recently elected to the Israeli Knesset, or parliament, and Netanyahu courted his support when the prime minister was attempting to form a government in February, 2019. Kahanists and other ultranationalist thugs — the "Proud Boys" of Israel — march through Palestinian-Israeli neighborhoods chanting "Death to Arabs" and assault them.

The current crisis began on 6 May 2021. Pro-Palestinian protesters in Sheikh Jarrah had been breaking the Ramadan fast together each night of the holiday, a custom called iftar. On this particular night, Israeli settlers set up a table opposite them. In

the settlers' group was Itamar Ben-Gvir, the Kahanist deputy. Rocks and other objects began to fly. Then the violence spread.

In the coastal city of Bat Yam, a Jewish mob marched down the street busting up Palestinian businesses, while another mob attempted to lynch a Palestinian driver. The same scene was replayed in Acre, only this time it was a Palestinian mob that assaulted a Jewish man. Another Palestinian mob burned a police station to the ground in the same city. And in a Tel Aviv suburb, a man presumed to be a Palestinian was pulled from his car and beaten.

Lod is a city south of Tel Aviv with a mixed Palestinian and Jewish population. Not only was it the site of a Hamas missile strike that killed two Palestinians, it was where heavy fighting took place between Palestinian and Jewish mobs.

The fighting began after a funeral of a Palestinian man who was killed by an assailant presumed to be Jewish. It was so heavy at times that the Israeli government brought in border guards from the West Bank to quell the unrest. The mayor characterized what was happening in his town as a "civil war."

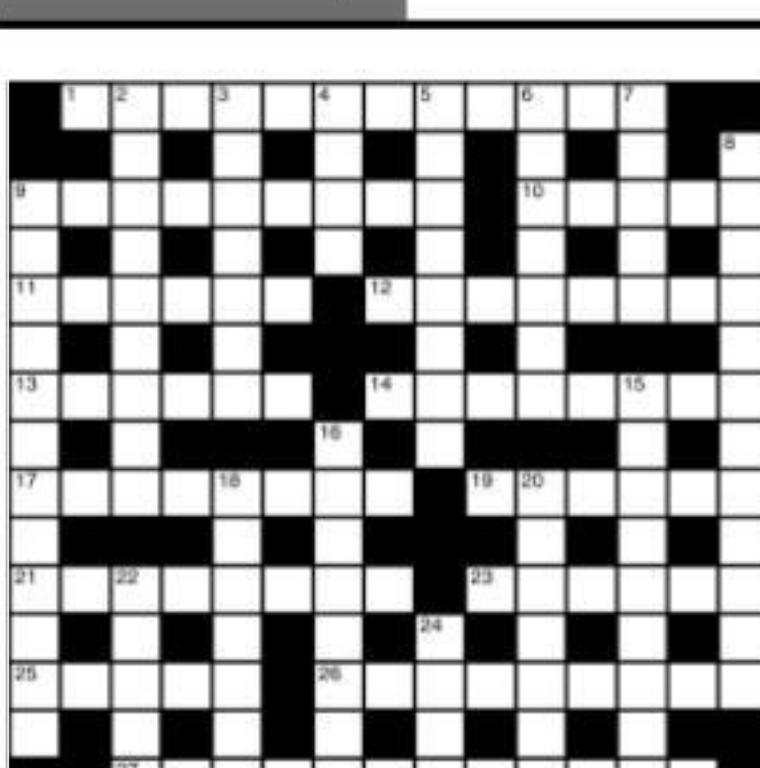
The mayor also reminded the residents of Lod, "The day after, we still have to live here together."

He did not explain how this was to happen.

The writer is Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History, University of California, Los Angeles. This article was published on www.conversation.com

NO 28916

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS

- 1 Level area with cluster of woods? (7,5)
- 9 Charlie feels bitter taking in another's curvy shapes (9)
- 10 Young creature mostly on back gets weaker (5)
- 11 Noted rescue ship in sea ... (6)
- 12 ... is Scotsman on vessel from Africa? (8)
- 13 Got to know King Cnut: sea, you heard, must withdraw (6)
- 14 Some brothels in kingdom's capital city (8)
- 17 Full development of fancy atrium they gutted (8)
- 19 Mathematician somewhere in Italy heading for Genoa (6)

DOWN

- 2 Crate rerouted after deliveries go too far (9)
- 3 Vote to have leader dropped sailors support (7)
- 4 Heard German's negative figure (4)
- 5 Indicated novel gets rude (8)
- 6 Regularly excel with displays for cakes (7)
- 21 Going west, protest about French road's condition (8)
- 23 Comparatively shrewd one that might have quarrel (6)
- 25 Cross being put in same complex tests (5)
- 26 Declining and becoming sad (5,4)
- 27 Controlling my tarpaulin all over the place covering nothing (12)
- 7 They're in the sky some time rising over British isle (5)
- 8 Type in good club that will supply ID (8,4)
- 9 Gave opinion about place and one is praised (12)
- 15 Awfully huge robin, one close to you (9)
- 16 Punish group breaking into places to the north (6,2)
- 18 Controls and rules not good I start to notice (5,2)
- 20 Reputable type of milk opened by puritan (7)
- 22 Remove weapon from some lunar module (5)
- 24 Notice something protruding from bird (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

The account given in our special cable service of the way in which Londoners spent or prepared to spend the Whitsun holidays shows that life in Great Britain is not entirely overclouded by the coal strike, trade depression, and the Irish troubles. The difficulties confronting the public, as we are told, did not quench the holiday spirit. If railways failed for want of coal, old-fashioned coaches and new fashioned char-a-bancs were ready to take their places as far as possible; and, if there were no other resource, the sturdy Briton strapped his knapsack to his shoulders and made for the open road. Railway-stations were besieged, and there were enormous queues waiting for seats in the few trains available. Many thousands must have been obliged to spend their holiday at home, but, it being an ill wind that blows nobody good. The big arteries of London, like the Euston and Old Kent Roads, "presented quite a picturesque and cheerful aspect." These details are worth noting. It would be quite easy to imagine a very different kind of picture, in view of the trials which the public has had to bear during the last few weeks. The whole account gives the general impression of invincible good temper together with a healthy optimism refusing to regard the troubles of the day as more than transitory misfortunes which, like everything else, will pass in their turn.

SUSPENSION OF PAYMENT BY DACCABANK

Dacca, May 18

In connection with the suspension of payment by the Dacca Bank, a meeting of the creditors was held on Sunday evening at which it was decided to reorganise the bank and put it on a sound basis. Rai Bahadur Pyarilal Das has consented to take up the managing agency and some of the directors have agreed to deposit a sum of Rs 70,000 for one year to enable the bank to be refloated. Upon an investigation of the financial position by the directors and a few other gentlemen, it has been found that the bank can carry on business provided it has a deposit to the extent of the aforementioned amount to start with. A scale has been fixed upon which creditors will receive payment.

ACCIDENT AT RANGOON DOCKYARD

Rangoon, May 18

A serious accident occurred in one of the slips of Dalla Dockyard this morning, resulting in twenty-three men being injured, two seriously. All were taken to the General Hospital in municipal ambulances. It appears that flat No. 91 of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, which is undergoing overhauling, was in the slip and workmen were dismantling the roof when the iron framework collapsed and buried the workmen underneath it. Aid was quickly forthcoming and the injured men speedily rescued from the ruins. Thirteen of the men returned to the dockyard later, after their injuries had been attended to.

ASSAM TEACHERS' CONFERENCE

The first Conference of Teachers and Educational Officers of Assam was held at Silhett, Rai Sahib Aghore Nath Adhikari, superintendent of Silchar Normal School, being elected chairman. This conference declares that the teachers as a body will stand by the authorities in all their attempts for steady and continued educational progress. That the curriculum now in force is already out of date and out of touch with the realities of life, and the altered economic and political conditions of the country. This conference, therefore, recommends that the Government do appoint a committee to revise the whole curriculum and that at least half the number of members on the committee do consist of elected representatives of Teachers and Inspecting Officers.

ELECTIONS IN ITALY

The General elections, based upon proportional representation, are proceeding amidst great excitement, especially in the provinces, where there have been conflicts between Communists and Fascists. The conflicts however, have not been of a serious nature. The Fascists organisation was originally started by ex-service men, and is determined to crush the Communists excesses which came to a climax in the autumn of 1920. Their policy of direct action developed practically into replacing the red terror by white, and they, with the Nationalists, agreed on the eve of the elections to co-operate with the Coalition Conservatives, Liberals, and Democrats, and to support Giolitti against the popular or Catholic party, the Socialists and Communists. Though results will not be known definitely till the week-end, the Coalitionists are already claiming a triumph.



India's economy will do well once vaccination reaches a critical mass.

ASHIMA GOYAL
RBI'S MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBER

THUMBNAILS

Suraksha objection: Mumbai-based realty firm Suraksha group, which is in the race to acquire debt-laden Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL), has written to financial creditors and objected to extension of deadline for submissions of bids, sources said. Suraksha group and state-owned NBCC are in fray to acquire JIL through insolvency process and complete around 20,000 pending flats. In a letter to JIL's Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) Anuj Jain and the members of Committee of Creditors (CoC), Suraksha said that extension is against the spirit of the Supreme Court's order in March this year on the pending insolvency matter of Jaypee group firm. PTI

CCI nod to Yes Bank: Fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Tuesday approved the acquisition of Yes Asset Management (India) Ltd and Yes Trustee Limited by GPL Finance and Investments Ltd. The proposed combination envisages the acquisition of 100 per cent equity shares of the two entities by GPL, as per a release. "By way of these acquisitions, GPL will acquire Yes Mutual Fund and become its sole sponsor," the release added. PTI

SBI allocation: State Bank of India has allocated Rs 71 crore to undertake various support initiatives to help the country combat the second wave of Covid-19. The bank has dedicated Rs 30 crore to set up 1,000-bed makeshift hospitals, 250-bed ICU facilities and 1,000-bed isolation facilities across some of the worst-hit states. These facilities would be set up in collaboration with government hospitals and municipal corporations of the respective cities, said a release. SNS

Kimberly-Clark contribution: Kimberly-Clark Corporation has contributed \$2.5 million (Rs 18 crore) to help the ongoing national efforts to combat the current Covid-19 surge. These emergency relief funds, channelled through its partner Unicef, will be immediately deployed for procurement of life-saving supplies and healthcare essentials, especially oxygen concentrators, setting up of oxygen plants and other requirements, the company said. SNS

Nucleus Software: Nucleus Software, provider of lending and transaction banking products to the global financial services industry, on Tuesday announced that Bank of Sydney has chosen Nucleus Software's flagship lending solution ~ FinnOne Neo ~ to accelerate its digital lending transformation strategy. SNS

Federal Bank rights: Federal Bank on Tuesday said its board has cleared Rs 148-crore capital investment into subsidiary Fedbank Financial Services through a rights issue. PTI

Stocks soar on decline in fresh Covid-19 cases

Rupee rises by 17 paise to close at a seven-week high of 73.05 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 18 MAY

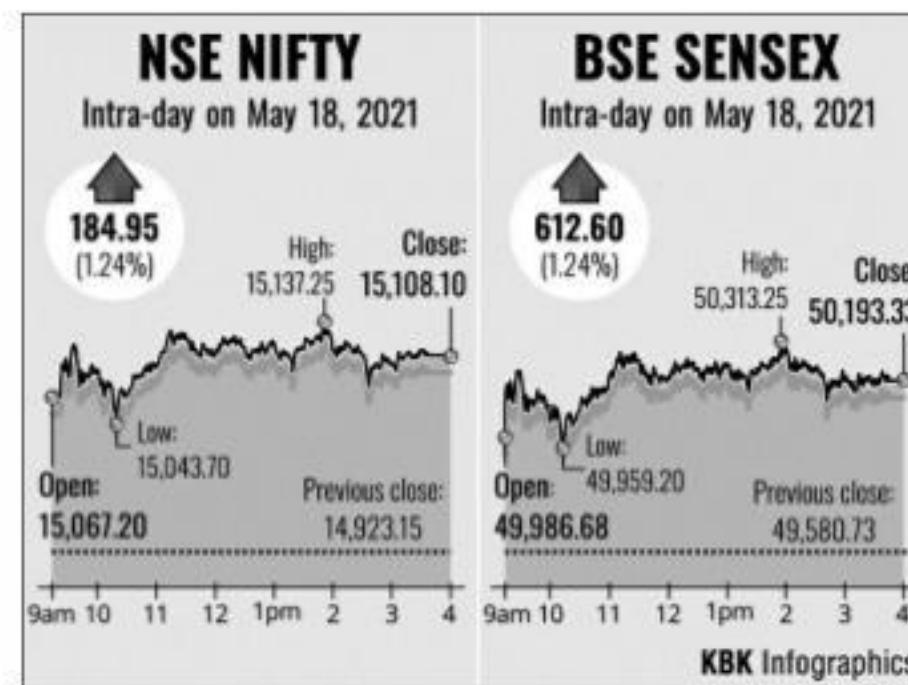
Equity benchmarks the Sensex and the Nifty today settled above the levels not seen in over two months as economic recovery hopes amid continuous decline in fresh Covid-19 cases further perked up investor sentiment.

Recapturing the 50,000-level milestone, the BSE Sensex soared 612.60 points or 1.24 per cent to settle at 50,193.33 points. This was the highest closing for the index since 16 March.

Likewise, the NSE Nifty went past the psychological 15,000-mark. At the closing bell, the NSE gauge quoted higher by 184.95 points or 1.24 points at 15,108.10 points, the best closing since 10 March.

On the Sensex chart, Mahindra & Mahindra was the top gainer, rallying nearly 6 per cent, followed by Bajaj Auto, Titan, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank and Larsen & Toubro.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, ITC, Dr Reddy's, State Bank of India and HUL suf-



fered losses. Sectorally, BSE auto, industrials, consumer durables, capital goods, power and utilities indices rallied up to 3.19 per cent. Telecom and FMCG indices fell up to 1.66 per cent.

In the broader market, mid-cap and small-cap indices outperformed the benchmark by rallying as much as 1.87 per cent. Large-cap index rose 1.22 per cent. "Domestic equities extended gains as early sign of decline in Covid-19 daily caseload and improving

prospects of faster economic recovery emboldened investors," said Binod Modi, head strategy at Reliance Securities. Additionally, strong cues from Asian markets also supported the rally in domestic market, he added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended on a positive note.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading with gains in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international

oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.82 per cent higher at \$70.03 per barrel.

In the forex market, the rupee rose by 17 paise to close at a seven-week high of 73.05 against the US dollar today, extending its gaining streak to the third straight session on positive domestic equities and weakening of the American currency in the overseas markets.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.18 and hit an intra-day high of 72.95 and a low of 73.18 during the session.

"Rupee gained for the third day in row to the highest in almost seven weeks as dollar drifted lower while equities roared after daily virus cases started declining," said Dilip Parmar, research analyst, HDFC Securities.

However, sharp gains were prevented on surge in crude oil prices, continued FII outflows, traders said.

The local unit settled at 73.05, the highest closing level since 26 March. On Monday, the rupee had closed at 73.22 against the US dollar.

Morgan Stanley sees Sensex at 61,000 by Dec in 'bull' scenario

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 18 MAY



like the higher infections continuing in second half, lack of adequate policy response from India and faltering growth can trigger such an eventuality.

Calling it a stock picker's market, the note advised investors to prefer domestic cyclicals the most in their portfolio strategy.

Listing out the positive factors, they said factory output is set to grow in double digits, the gap between real GDP growth and the 10-year bond yield suggests more upside to stock returns, policy certainty index is close to all-time highs and India's macro stability, which makes the brokerage believe that it will outperform other emerging markets.

The brokerage said its proprietary earnings index is suggesting a sharp uptick in earnings, which will be the best since the global financial crisis of 2008.

It said a proprietary sentiment indicator combines flows, volatility, implied volatility, trading volumes, breadth and price momentum to judge sentiment. It is a contra indicator right now, just below the neutral zone, it said.

COAI urges govt to remove fake msgs on social media linking Covid-19 to 5G

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

Tata Motors' loss narrows to ₹7,585 cr

NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

the second tranche of auction for commercial coal mining, offering 67 mines for sale.

Coal minister Pralhad Joshi launched the auction process in a programme held in New Delhi. This is the highest number of mines on offer in a particular tranche after commencement of the auction regime in 2014.

"This is the second tranche

of auction of coal mines for sale of coal which paves way for liberalisation of Indian coal sector enhancing efficiency, competition and private sector participation leading to development of a vibrant coal market, boosting economic growth and employment generation,"

the statement said. Out of the total 67 mines offered, 23 are under Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act and 44 under Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act.

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In March, India launched

Rajendra Kumar, COAI director-general S P Kochhar said: "To safeguard the national interest, we request your good office to kindly instruct all the social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc, to remove all such posts and misleading campaigns from their platforms on an urgent basis."

People have been sharing audio and video messages on social media platforms in which 5G towers are being blamed for rise in casualties across the country even though none of the companies have installed 5G technology anywhere in India.

Video messages show that people convinced with the claim want to bring down mobile towers.

"We would hereby like to

highlight that these types of rumours have spread over the past two weeks, mainly in semi-urban and rural areas.

"There has been a rise in such misinformation mainly in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab. We are concerned that this misleading and false claim / information might spread to other parts of the country as well," Kochhar said.

The department of telecommunications has also denied the claim of linking the Covid-19 pandemic to the 5G technology as false, and said it has no scientific basis.

"Moreover, it is informed that the testing of the 5G network has not yet started anywhere in India. Hence, the claim that 5G trials or networks are causing coro-

nirus in India is baseless and false," the DoT had said.

International bodies like the World Health Organization and International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection have also rejected claims of 5G having any ill effect on the health of people.

COAI said spreading myth around telecom services is against the national interest and may significantly impact the telecom operations.

The impact on the connectivity will deprive the public or government authorities from getting uninterrupted telecom services at this crucial juncture when telecom and Internet is essential for enabling work from home and various initiatives of the government including the vaccination, it said.

Coal mines auction gets good response

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

The Centre today said the second tranche of commercial coal mines' auction has received tremendous response which is reflected in around 50 mine specific tender documents being purchased by bidders till date. Moreover, many other prospective bidders are in the process of registration and purchase of tender documents from the auction portal, the coal ministry said in a statement.

"The response to this auction tranche, till now, has been tremendous," it said.

The bid submission date has been extended to enable interested parties travel to mine locations for inspection once the lockdown curbs are removed in states, it added.

In March, India launched



now comes for Rs 99.14 and diesel is priced at Rs 90.71 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan had the costliest petrol and diesel in the country at Rs 103.80 per litre and Rs 96.30 a litre, respectively.

Mphasis to create 800 jobs overseas

BENGALURU, 18 MAY

Information technology solutions provider Mphasis announced today the setting up of new centres in Mexico, Costa Rica and Taiwan, where it would create about 800 jobs in six months.

As part of a "large global deal" in the hi-tech industry, the new centres will accommodate over 800 people that will serve existing clients, the Bengaluru-headquartered company specialising in cloud and cognitive services said in a statement issued here.

The services offered out of these centres would be large-scale operations in the areas of application development, support, testing, operations, and financial analysis, the company said in the statement issued here.

As regards capacity of the plans, CIL said: "While the combined O2 generation capacity of 20 plants is a little above 12,700 litres per minute, four of the plants together generate 750 cubic metres per hour. One is a refill plant."



Of the 25 plants, five are being installed at CIL's own hospitals at an investment of Rs 4.25 crore covering 332 beds. Northern Coalfields Limited and Central Coalfields Limited will be putting up two plants each and Bharat Coking Coal Limited will set up one plant. The remaining 20 plants, which will entail an investment of Rs 30.75 crore, will be installed in district hospitals supported by CIL at district hospitals are expected to be completed by August," said a senior executive of the company.

CIL spent Rs 264 crore exclusively on Covid relief measures during financial year 2020-21, which is 50 per cent of its total CSR spend of Rs 523 crore during that fiscal.

"With the government declaring Covid measures as common CSR theme for CPSEs in FY'22, we shall further augment our Covid relief measures," said the executive.

Google rolls out News Showcase in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

Google today said it is rolling out its News Showcase in India with 30 news organisations, a move aimed at incentivising and supporting publishers in the country to curate high-quality content on Google's News and Discover platforms.

The tech giant is also stepping up its efforts to strengthen digital skills in newsrooms and journalism schools across India and will train 50,000 journalists and journalism students over the next three years.



The country's economy is (going) in the right direction. The economy is improving due to the actions taken by the government

PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN
COMMENTING ON THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 19 MAY 2021

09

Ten wounded, 4 critical in strike from Gaza

At least 213 Palestinians have been killed in heavy airstrikes till now, including 61 children and 36 women, with more than 1,440 people wounded

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GAZA CITY, 18 MAY

A strike launched from Gaza on Tuesday wounded 10 people in southern Israel, four of them seriously, Israeli medics reported, as Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers continued to trade attacks.

The projectile attack Tuesday afternoon hit a region in southern Israel, according to the Magen David Adom rescue service.

It came as Palestinians across Israel and the occupied territories went on strike in a rare collective action against Israel's policies.

With the war in Gaza showing no sign of abating and truce efforts apparently stalled, the general strike and expected protests could again widen the conflict after a spasm of communal violence in Israel and protests across the occupied West Bank last week.

Israel's airstrikes toppled a six-story building that housed bookstores and educational centers used by the Islamic University and other colleges,

leaving behind a massive mound of rebar and concrete slabs.

Desks, office chairs, books and computer wires could be seen in the debris. Residents sifted through the rubble, searching for their belongings.

Israel warned the building's residents ahead of time, sending them fleeing into the predawn darkness, and there were no reports of casualties.

Israel said it was targeting militants, their tunnels and rocket launchers across the territory.

"The whole street started running, then destruction, an earthquake," said Jamal Herzallah, a resident of the area. "This whole area was shaking."

Heavy fighting broke out May 10 when Gaza's militant Hamas rulers fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests against Israel's heavy-handed policing of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a flashpoint site sacred to Jews and Muslims, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers.



An Israeli air strike hits a building in Gaza City, on Monday. The Israeli military unleashed a wave of heavy airstrikes Monday on the Gaza Strip, saying it destroyed 15 kilometers (9 miles) of militant tunnels and the homes of nine Hamas commanders.

At least 213 Palestinians have been killed in heavy airstrikes since, including 61 children and 36 women, with more than 1,440 people wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not break the numbers down into fighters and civilians.

As the fighting drags on,

medical supplies, fuel and water are running low in Gaza. Ten people in Israel, including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier, have been killed in the ongoing rocket attacks launched from civilian areas in Gaza toward civilian areas in Israel.

The strike was intended to protest the Gaza war and

Israeli policies that many activists and some rights groups say constitute an overarching system of apartheid that denies Palestinians the rights afforded to Jews.

Israel rejects that characterization, saying its citizens have equal rights.

It blames the war on Hamas, the Islamic militant group

Biden supports Israel's 'right to self defence'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 18 MAY

The US President Joe Biden, in a telephonic call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, supported Israel's "right to defend itself" against indiscriminate rocket attacks and encouraged him to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians, the White House has said.

Biden welcomed efforts to address inter-communal violence and to bring calm to Jerusalem, the White House said in a readout of the call.

that controls Gaza, and accuses it of inciting violence across the region.

Leaders of the Palestinian community in Israel called the strike, which was embraced by the internationally-backed

During the phone call on Monday, Biden reiterated his firm support for Israel's right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks, it said.

He encouraged Israel to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians, it said.

The two leaders discussed progress in Israel's military operations against Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza, the White House said.

The President expressed his support for a ceasefire and discussed the US engagement with Egypt.

Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, where ministries and schools were closed.

Most businesses appeared to be observing the strike, and protests were expected.

» US reaches out to Arab leaders: Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his envoy reached out to Palestinian and regional Arab leaders on Tuesday as attacks between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers raged on, saying, "Our goal is to bring the current cycle of violence to an end"

» EU mulls ways to help defuse fighting: European Union foreign ministers are meeting Tuesday to discuss how to use the 27-nation bloc's political clout to help diplomatic efforts to end the fighting between the Israeli armed forces and Palestinian militants.

» Indian-Americans rally in support of Israel: A large number of Indian-Americans in Chicago rally in support of Israel during its conflict with the Hamas, which they alleged are indulging in terror attacks against the Jewish.

Moon seeks urgency on N Korea



South Korean President Moon Jae-in is hoping to use his first summit with US President Joe Biden this week to revive long-stalled talks with North Korea and urge the White House to embrace the issue with more urgency.

South Korean officials say they were heartened by the new administration's recent policy review, which called for a focus on practical diplomatic steps to reduce tensions while maintaining the final goal of removing North Korea's nuclear weapons.

But amid the global coronavirus pandemic, domestic economic and political challenges, and foreign policy crises elsewhere, the Biden administration has not signalled North Korea is a top priority, potentially complicating Moon's hopes of cementing his legacy. Moon is scheduled to arrive in Washington on Thursday for a four-day stay.

AGENCIES

Bangladesh arrests woman scribe under colonial-era law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA, 18 MAY

A senior Bangladeshi woman journalist, known for her investigative reporting, was arrested on charges of violating a colonial-era official secrecy law, the police said on Tuesday, triggering protests by the rights groups and her colleagues.

Rozina Islam, a senior reporter of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, the largest daily newspaper based on circulation, was on Monday

detained for over five hours by the Health Ministry officials for allegedly clicking a picture of a document with her cell phone without permission. She was later arrested by the police.

The ministry filed a case against her at around midnight under the 1923 Official Secrets Act while she spent the night under the police custody, the police said.

The judge said he would entertain the prosecution charge including her bail petition on Thursday.

Indonesia: Pro-Palestinian protest at US Embassy over Israel's airstrikes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JAKARTA, 18 MAY

Pro-Palestinian protesters marched to the heavily guarded US Embassy in Indonesia's capital on Tuesday to demand an end to Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip.

Waving Indonesian and Palestinian flags and signs that read Free Palestine, several hundred demonstrators gathered along a major street in Jakarta that runs outside the embassy. More than 1,000 police were deployed around

the compound, which is blocked off by concrete road separators.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim majority nation, does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel and there is not an Israeli Embassy in the country.

One group of protesters, organized by the United Indonesian Muslim Student Action group, chanted God is Great and Freedom for Palestine as they marched through downtown Jakarta to the United Nations mission.

Similar protests organized by union workers were held at the same time on Tuesday in other Indonesian cities.

Nepal crisis: CPN-UML forms 10-member task force to resolve dispute



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, 18 MAY

deputy parliamentary party leader Subas Chandra Nembang, the report said.

The other members from the Nepal faction in the taskforce are Ghanashyam Bhusal, Gokarna Bista, Raghu Panta and Surendra Pandey.

The other members of the Oli faction are Minister of Finance Bishnu Prasad Paudel, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, PM's Chief Adviser Bishnu Rimal and Lumbini Chief Minister Shankar Pokharel.

CPN-UML lawmakers of the Nepal faction had initially threatened to resign from the House of Representatives en masse.

However, the lawmakers dropped the idea after Oli withdrew action taken against four dissident leaders, including Nepal, for working against the party following a meeting between the two rival leaders on Thursday, ahead of the trust vote.

The CPN-UML, headed by Oli, is the largest party with 121 seats in the House.

Over 800 killed by security forces since coup: Myanmar activists

AGENCIES
YANGON, 18 MAY

More than 800 people have been killed by Myanmar's security forces since a wave of protests broke out across the country after the military seized power in a coup in February, an activist group said.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army ousted Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government and detained her and officials of her National League for Democracy party.

The military has responded to protests by pro-democracy supporters in cities and towns with lethal force, while there has been an upsurge in

fighting between the army and ethnic rebels in border areas and newly formed militia forces. As of Monday, 802 people had been killed in the junta's crackdown on its opponents, according to the activist group the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

"This is the number veri-

fied by AAPP, the actual number of fatalities is likely much higher," the group said in its daily briefing.

It detailed six additional fatalities including in towns in Chin state and in districts of the main cities of Mandalay and Yangon.

The junta has previously

disputed the number of civilians that have died and said dozens of members of the security forces had also been killed during the protests.

The activist group said 4,120 people were currently being detained, including 20 who had been sentenced to death.

UN vote on call to stop arms supply postponed: A 193-member UN General Assembly vote on Tuesday on a draft resolution calling for an immediate suspension of the direct and indirect supply, sale or transfer of all weapons and munitions to Myanmar has been postponed, diplomats said.

As spokesman for the U.N. General Assembly president said earlier on Monday that the body was due to vote on Tuesday.

Myanmar internet a "virtual battlefield": Myanmar's military rulers are seeking to limit access to the internet to an internal network of only whitelisted sites to quash opposition to their seizure of power, according to a report by the International Crisis Group.

It likened the internet to a "virtual battlefield" where the military is struggling to gain an edge because it lacks technological capacity, while social media companies like Facebook have banned military officials and many government agencies.

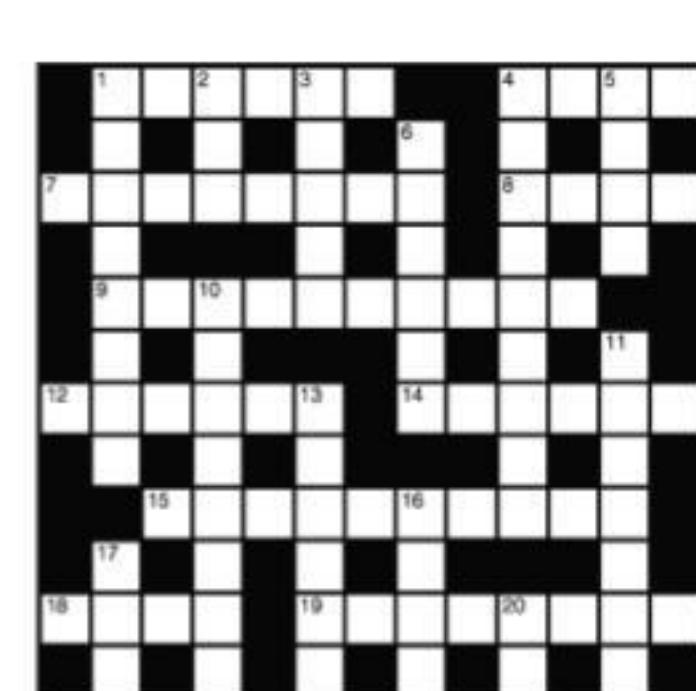
The task force is supposed to forge a consensus on resurrecting the party as it was on 16 May, 2018, according to MyRepublica news portal.

While Nepal's camp will be led by Bhim Bahadur Rawal, Oli faction will be led by

Agencies

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Widespread (6)
4 Beloved (4)
7 Optimistic (8)
8 Piece of verse (4)
9 Proficient person (4,6)
12 Unpleasant (6)
14 Sacred beetle (6)
15 Component (10)
18 Extinct bird (4)
19 Autocratic ruler (8)
21 Planet (4)
22 Mythological spirits of nature (6)

DOWN

1 Support the cause of (8)
2 Drinking vessel (3)
3 Hatred (5)
4 Belittle (9)
5 Old (4)
6 Population count (6)
10 Taxing (9)
11 Wary (8)
13 Mock (6)
16 Disparage (5)
17 Jot (4)
20 Snake (3)

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Sheikh, 12 Anæsthet, 14 Helen of Troy, 17 Home help, 19 Roar, 20 Rear, 21 Panner.

DOWN

1 Sure, 2 Esplanade, 3 Knock, 4 Staunch, 5 Bad, 6 Efficacy, 10 Potpourri.

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

• AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
• Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
• Vidyasagar Institute for Mental and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
• Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
• Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
• Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139
• Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
• SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

• ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
• INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air

FLIGHT INQUIRY

• AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 018001801407
• INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air

port 011-25671580; Terminal I 23860626 • Rajasthani Roadways 25671576, 18001803838 • JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111 • EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377

FIVE RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN

BY JUDD

PAR SCORE 15



The problem and the issue is that we don't have any way of knowing who is vaccinated and who's not vaccinated

AMERICAN PHYSICIAN-SCIENTIST AND IMMUNOLOGIST DR. ANTHONY FAUCI

World

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C
TOKYO	18°C	12°C
LONDON	17°C	9°C
DUBAI	30°C	25°C
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C
NEW YORK	10°C	07°C
MOSCOW	16°C	09°C

S= sunny, CL= clear, R= rainy...

THUMBNAILS



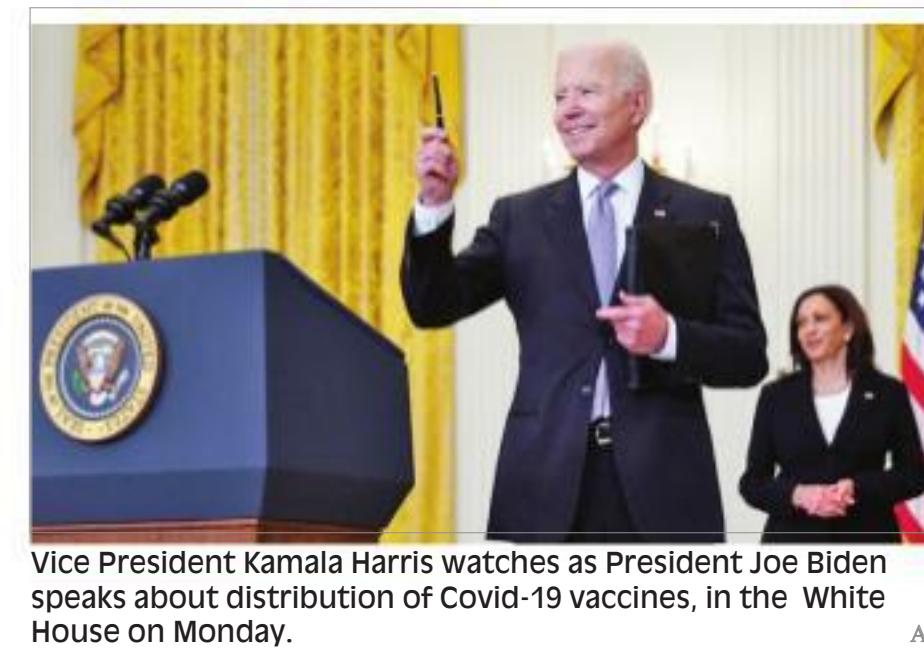
French President Emmanuel Macron, right, welcomes President of the Sudanese Transitional Council General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, left, for a dinner with leaders of African states, at the Elysee Palace, in Paris.

Shark kills surfer in Australia: A surfer was killed by a shark on Tuesday off the Australian east coast, police said. The man, aged in his 50s, had been surfing off Forster, 220 kilometers (137 miles) north of Sydney, when he was attacked late in the morning, a police statement said.

23 rescued from suspected smuggling boat: Twenty-three people were rescued on Monday from a suspected smuggling boat off the San Diego coast. The small boat was spotted shortly before 3 a.m. by a US Border Patrol video system as it drifted off the coast of Point Loma.

US to share 20m more Covid vaccine doses with world

Biden says over the next six weeks, the United States of America will send 80 million doses overseas



Vice President Kamala Harris watches as President Joe Biden speaks about distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, in the White House on Monday.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA WASHINGTON, 18 MAY

The United States will share 20 million more Covid-19 vaccine doses with other countries, taking the total number of such shots to 80 million, President Joe Biden said on Monday.

"Over the next six weeks, the United States of America will send 80 million doses overseas. That represents 13 per cent of the vaccines produced by the US by the end of June. This will be more vaccine doses than any country has actually shared to date, five times more than any other country. More than Russia and China, which have donated 15 million doses," Biden told.

"There's a lot of talk about Russia and China influencing the world with vaccines. We want to lead the world with this demonstration of our innovation, ingenuity, and the fundamental decency of the American people. Just as in World War II, America was the arsenal of democracy, in the battle against the Covid-19 pan-

demic, our nation is going to be the arsenal of vaccines for the rest of the world. We'll share these vaccines in the service of ending the pandemic everywhere," he said.

"We will not use our vaccines to secure favours from other countries," Biden said as he announced that in addition to the 60 million AstraZeneca vaccines, the US will give another 20 million Covid-19 approved vaccines.

"In March, we shared over four million doses of our AstraZeneca vaccine with Canada and Mexico. At the end of April, we announced that we would provide another 60 million doses of our AstraZeneca vaccine overseas," he said.

"And today, I'm announcing that we'll also share US-authorized vaccines doses of Pfizer and Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, as they become available, with the rest of the world as well. These are vaccines that are authorized to be put in the arms of Americans," he said.

"And by the end of June, when we'll have taken delivery of enough of such vaccines to protect everyone in the United States. The US will share at least 20 million doses of those doses—that extra supply—with other countries," Biden said. Biden's announcement was welcomed by US lawmakers and Indian-American community leaders.

"While I'm glad to see the

White House committing to sharing an additional 20 million Covid-19 vaccine doses with the world by the end of next month, this is only one step of the many more we need to take to reduce the threat of new mutant strains emerging from outbreaks abroad and

causing another deadly surge here at home," said Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi.

WHO reminds SI of its COVAX commitments

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said that once the devastating Covid-19 outbreak in India recedes,

the Serum Institute of India will need to get back on track and catch up on its delivery commitments to COVAX, the global initiative to supply coronavirus vaccines to nations around the world.

The World Health Organ-

isation Director-General said that the surge in Covid-19 cases around the world has compromised the global vaccine supply and there is already a shortfall of 190 million doses to COVAX by the end of June.

Earlier this month, SII CEO Adar Poonawalla said it was not possible to ramp up production overnight since vaccine manufacturing is a specialised process.

The SII has received total orders of over 26 crore doses from the Government of India, of which more than 15 crore doses have been supplied.

Blinken brings Biden's anti-Trump climate policy to Iceland

ASSOCIATED PRESS REYKJAVIK, ICELAND, 18 MAY

On a trip overshadowed by the crisis in the Middle East, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday touted the Biden administration's abrupt shift in its predecessor's climate policies as he visited Iceland for talks with senior officials from the world's Arctic nations.

In Reykjavik for a meeting of foreign ministers of the eight members of the Arctic Council, Blinken heralded President Joe Biden's return to the Paris climate accord and determination to combat climate change.

"We are very focused on reinvigorating our closest alliances and partnerships, and also our engagement in multilateral institutions, and being here really represents both aspects of that effort," Blinken told the foreign minister. He lauded Iceland for its strong support for human rights, climate change mitigation and the role it plays in NATO.

The Arctic is warming faster than the rest of the world and has been particularly hard hit by rising sea levels from melting sea ice and glaciers. Former U.S. President Donald Trump had alienated Arctic countries and others with his dismissal of the phenomenon and his withdrawal from the 2015 Paris agreement.

Trump's former Secretary



Spain, Morocco square off after 6,000 migrants arrive by sea

MADRID, 18 MAY

Spain faced a humanitarian and diplomatic crisis Tuesday after thousands of Moroccans took advantage of relaxed border controls in their nation to swim or paddle in inflatable boats onto European soil.

By Tuesday morning, around 6,000 people had crossed the border into the Spanish city of Ceuta since the first arrivals began early Monday, the Spanish government said, including 1,500 thought to be teenagers. The city of 85,000 people lies in North Africa on the Mediterranean Sea, separated from Morocco by a fence.

The sudden influx of migrants has deepened the diplomatic row between Rabat and Madrid in the wake of Spain's decision to allow in for medical treatment the chief of a militant group that fights for the independence of Western Sahara. Morocco annexed the sprawling nation on the west coast of Africa in 1975.

Migrants soaked with seawater kept reaching Ceuta on Tuesday although in smaller numbers than the day before due to heightened vigilance on the Spanish side of the border. "It's such a strong invasion that we are not able to calculate the number of people that have entered," said the president of Ceuta.

US report: Allies of El Salvador's President deemed corrupt



ASSOCIATED PRESS MIAMI (US), 18 MAY

Allies of Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, including his Cabinet chief, have been included in a list of senior officials in Central America deemed corrupt by the US State Department, according to a copy of a report obtained by The Associated Press.

The emergence of the list of purportedly five corrupt officials is likely to heighten tensions with Bukele, who is facing intense pressure from the Biden administration over the removal of several Supreme Court justices and El Salvador's attorney general.

The US has made strengthening democracy one of the pillars of its policy toward Central America, saying that rampant corruption is one of the root causes of illegal immigration.

A copy of the report, which was sent on Monday to members of the US Congress, was provided to The Associated Press by a Democrat staffer on the condition of anonymity.

ty because it has not been made public.

The list was originally included as a classified annex of a report sent to Congress in April in response to an appropriations request last year pushed by Rep. Norma Torres, a California Democrat who chairs the Central America caucus.

That larger list contained the names of 12 Honduran and Guatemalan politicians accused of corruption or believed to have ties to drug trafficking organisations.

The list of five Salvadoran officials deemed to have engaged in significant acts of corruption during their terms in office was declassified 4 May, according to the new report.

Unlike the bulk of Guatemalans and Hondurans on the list, none of the Salvadorans have been indicted or sanctioned in the US and their inclusion on the list would appear to have no immediate legal consequences. It nonetheless is likely to further strain relations between the Biden administration and Bukele, who has shown no willingness to back away from his consolidation of power that has drawn condemnation from senior US officials and lawmakers of both parties. Bukele's fledgling New Ideas party swept February legislative elections by a landslide, taking control of the unicameral congress.

Clinic helps long-haul patients in London's "Covid triangle"

ASSOCIATED PRESS LONDON, 18 MAY

Gary Miller drove a London taxi. Rohit Patel worked behind the till in a supermarket. Barry Bwalya was in customer service.

When the coronavirus tore through their London neighbourhoods in early 2020, they all got sick. More than a year later, they are still struggling.

"It's like a rollercoaster," said Miller, a previously fit, gym-loving 57-year-old who is coping with leg and joint pain, headaches and breathlessness. "There are times that I see light at the end of the tunnel. I feel like I'm taking one

step forward, and then all of a sudden—bang—I'm ill again and I take two steps back."

Even as London looks to life after lockdown, thousands of people are still grappling with long-term physical and mental effects of the virus. Help is coming through "long Covid" clinics, where medics, patients—and Britain's overstretched health system—are confronting the virus's enduring effects.

The hospital serves an area dubbed the "Covid triangle," three outer London boroughs that have had some of Britain's highest infection rates. It's a multi-ethnic area, home to many Black and South Asian Londoners, groups that saw



higher rates of serious Covid-19 illness and death than white Britons. High rates of poverty, crowded housing and residents in frontline jobs—including medics, taxi drivers and retail workers—all helped the virus spread.

Ainley began drawing on the expertise of colleagues from multiple disciplines to treat what has been labeled "long Covid," or long-haul Covid. His clinic was one of the first of 83 set up across England, backed by the state-funded National Health Service. Ainley said it aims to offer a "one-stop approach" to a complex problem.

"We will try and address all the components of your illness," he said. "When you get to the clinic you'll see myself, you'll see a physiotherapist, the occupational therapist, our clinical psychologist. I have access to other specialty members from cardiology, rheumatology, as I need to, based upon your symptoms."

Some patients have even been given singing lessons as therapy. There is no universal definition of long Covid, a term applied to a range of persistent post-viral symptoms. While most people recover within a few weeks, Britain's statistics office says almost 14 per cent still report symptoms 12 weeks later.

Ainley's clinic has seen 700 patients, with another 120 on the waiting list. Their symptoms are often mental as well as physical. Psychologist Marc Kingsley said many experience memory loss and "brain fog," as well as loneliness and low moods. "Some of the people I've spoken to have survivor guilt," Kingsley said. "They actually feel guilty about having survived where they saw people in front of them passing away."

"A lot of our patients say to us they don't feel that they can just talk to friends and family," he said. "They don't want to upset people." As well as home visits from physiotherapists, Miller gets phone calls from a therapist where he can talk about the frustration he feels. "It's nice to talk to other people and get a load off my chest," he said. "And to find out through her that there are people in the same boat as I am."

Biden moving to improve legal services for poor, minorities

ASSOCIATED PRESS DETROIT, 18 MAY

President Joe Biden plans to take executive action Tuesday to ensure minorities, low-income Americans and others have better access to quality legal representation after services dwindled during the Trump administration.

Biden will sign a memorandum directing the Department of Justice to restore key functions of the shuttered Access to Justice Office and to reestablish the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable.

The plans are laid out in a presidential memo first shared with The Associated Press. The White House said that Biden was directing the roundtable to examine the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on access to justice in both civil and criminal matters.

The pandemic "has further exposed and exacerbated inequities in our justice system" as legal services were curtailed, Biden wrote. He added that the problems "have touched the lives of many persons in this country, particularly low-income people and people of color."

Tuesday's memo is Biden's latest step to work toward reforming the criminal justice system and advancing racial equity. It comes almost a year after the death of George Floyd sparked global protests and demands for action to address structural racism.

In just the past few weeks, the department has opened investigations of police in Louisville, Kentucky, and Minneapolis. Federal prosecutors have charged four former Minneapolis police officers with civil rights violations in Floyd's death.



Russia's northernmost base projects its power across Arctic

ASSOCIATED PRESS NAGURSKOYE, RUSSIA, 18 MAY

During the Cold War, Russia's Nagurskoye airbase was little more than a runway, a weather station and a communications outpost in the Franz Josef Land archipelago.

It was a remote and desolate home mostly for polar bears, where temperatures plunge in winter to minus-42 Celsius (43 degrees below zero Fahrenheit) and the snow only disappears from August to mid-September.

Now, Russia's northernmost military base is bristling

with missiles and radar and its extended runway can handle all types of aircraft, including nuclear-capable strategic bombers, projecting Moscow's power and influence across the Arctic amid intensifying international competition for the region's vast resources.

The shamrock-shaped facility—three large pods extending from a central atrium—is called the "Arctic Trefoil" and is painted in the white-red-and-blue of the national flag, brightening the otherwise stark vantage point on the 5,600-kilometer (3,470-mile) Northern Sea Route along Russia's Arctic coast.

Other buildings on the island, which is called Alexandra Land, are used for radar and communications, a weather station, oil storage, hangars and construction facilities.

Russia has sought to assert its influence over wide areas of the Arctic in competition with the United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway as shrinking polar ice from the warming planet offers new opportunities for resources and shipping routes.

China also has shown an increasing interest in the region, believed to hold up to one-fourth of the Earth's undiscovered oil and gas.

Engineering the violin

Artificial intelligence and simulation may well rival Stradivarius

S ANANTHANARAYANAN

Musical instruments are known for complexity and precision, and the violin ranks as one of the most complex. The present form of the violin first appeared in the early 16th century, and present violins follow designs of master violin makers from the 18th century. Extremely high quality is now attained, but it has not been possible to match 18th century masterpieces.

Sebastian Gonzalez, Davide Salvi, Daniel Baeza, Fabio Antonacci and Augusto Sarti, from the Musical Acoustics Lab at the Violin Museum of Cremona, part of the Polytechnic of Milan, and the faculty of physical and mathematical sciences, University of Chile, describe in the journal, *Scientific Reports*, how they have used Artificial Intelligence to peer into the internals of 18th century violins, to understand the factors that made for their exquisite performance.

The characteristic of musical instruments is that each kind can produce the notes of musical scales according to its own quality of sound, and do it consistently. This is to say that the notes of a piano, for instance, have a similar purity or quality, or the mix of overtones, right through the different octaves. So also, a violin, or trumpet, has its own quality, and a skilled player can bring out sounds, typically of the violin or trumpet, of different pitch and loudness, or softness, to create music.

Building instruments to do this needs accurate balancing of a number of features, so that sounds produced are consistent in quality through the range of pitch and loudness that is possible with the instrument. For instance, the thickness and material of piano strings need to be just so. And the material of the soundboard, the materials of hammers, need to match and go together, so that the piano is suitable for a range of compositions. The design of the modern piano, hence, represents elaborate and sensitive coordination of its different parts.

The violin is much smaller than a piano and has much fewer parts. Its design, however, is no less complex. With just four strings, and not longer than a child's arm, the violin can produce notes of great purity and power, over nearly four octaves. To be able to do this consistently over its range, many parts of the violin need to be accurately shaped in keeping with the properties of materials used. The design of the violin took more than two centuries to grow to its present state. And the growth took place with concerted trial and error work of violin makers, violinists and composers to make the best use of, and exacting demands on the violin's capability.

The first step in making a violin is shaping the sides, or the outline of the instrument. This is done by creating a mould, and bending selected strips of wood, called the ribs, into the desired contour. When this is made, the specially carved bottom and top are attached, to create the resonating hollow for the sound when the strings are bowed. Next, the neck, which is shaped out of a single piece of wood, is fixed to the body to complete the structure.

As shown in the picture, the strings are attached from the tailpiece, over the bridge and to the pegs. The pegs enable the tension of the strings to be adjusted and there is provision, between the bridge and the tailpiece, for fine adjustment. Once the tension of the four strings are set, the note that any string sounds can be changed by the violinist's finger pressing the string on to the fingerboard. And after everything is in place, it takes fine correction over months, or years, for the violin to attain full timbre and volume.

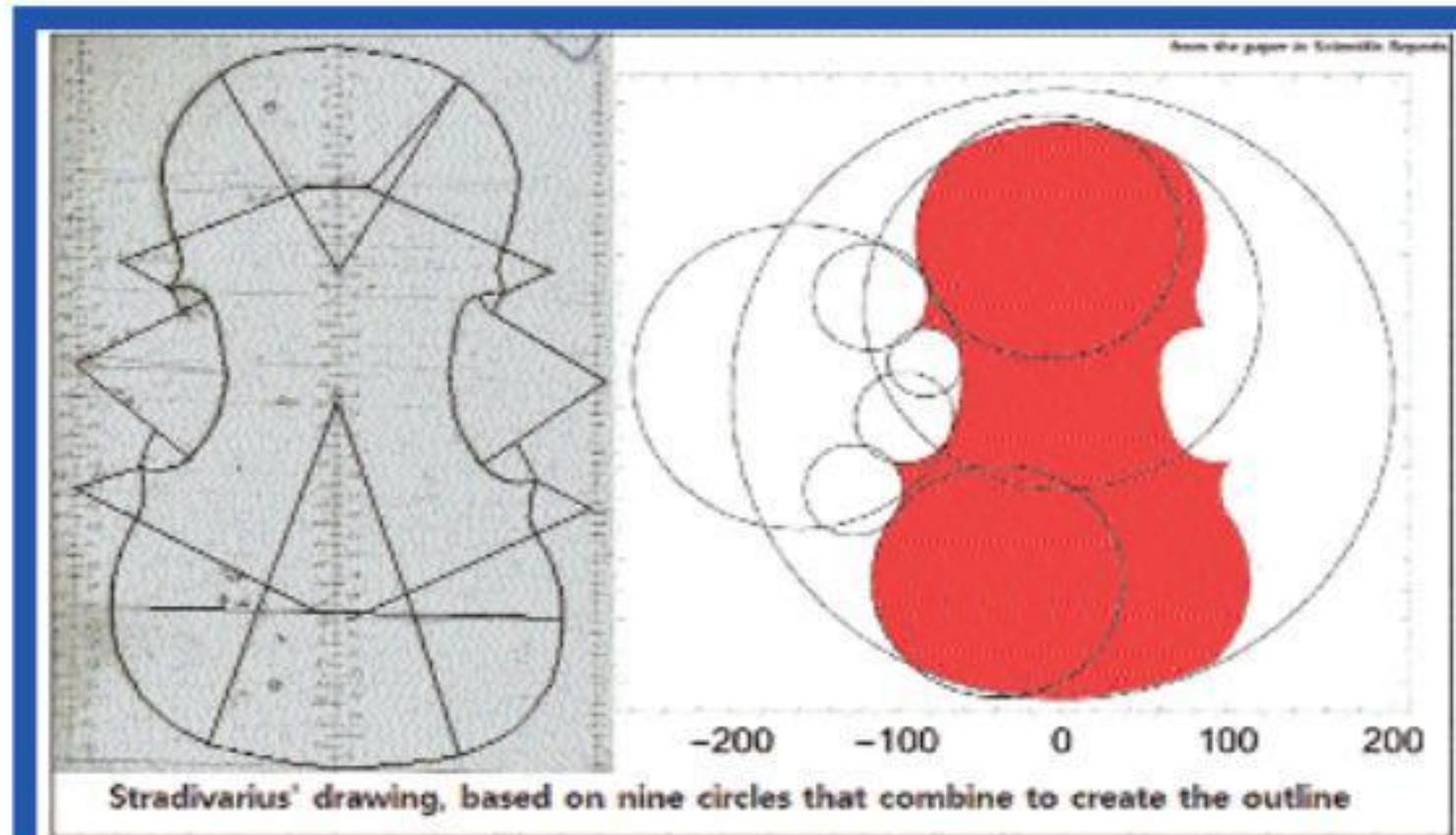
The current shape, or outline of the violin has come about after several iterations during the first 200 years of its development, the paper in *Scientific Reports* says. However, even geometrically exact copies cannot equal the perfection attained by old masters. This suggests that the difference may lie in the material, the wood sourced three centuries ago. Current violin makers have thus attempted "tweaking" the shape to compensate. Without, however, any notable success, as there is yet no science of how the contours affect and could improve the sound of a violin.

The authors of the paper hence used a different approach. They make use of computers and the methods of AI to create a dynamic model of the Stradivari violin and assess the role of the different aspects of its structure. Based on the evolving designs of violins down the centuries, the authors of the paper identified a list of features that affected how the violin performs, as well as units to measure the features. These measures, and the known, main sound frequencies that the violin supported, were then fed into an AI computer programme, to work out how far each of the identified features influenced the final product.

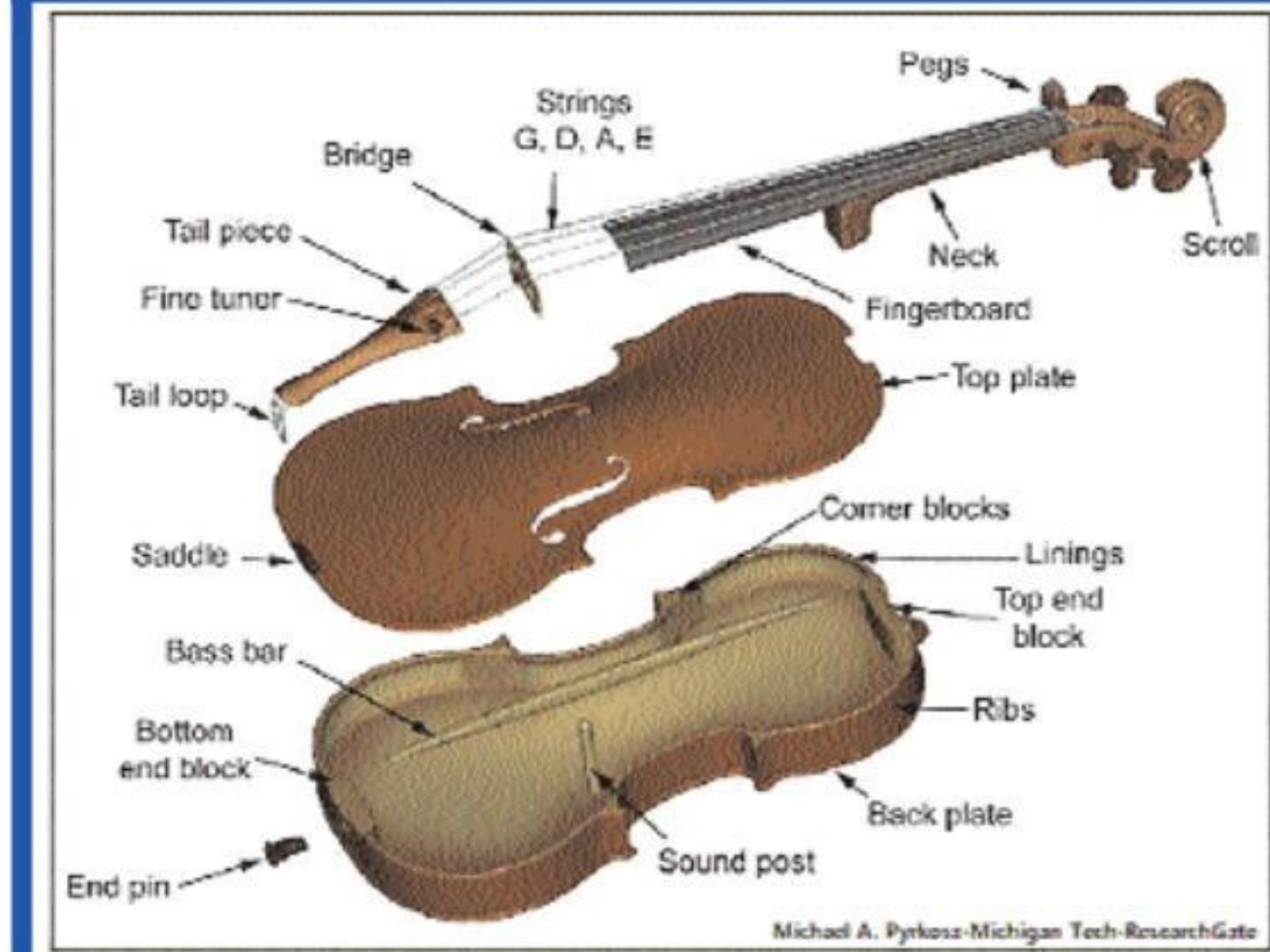
Artificial intelligence is so called because it is a computer procedure that mimics the way of learning of natural systems, like the human brain. For an infant to learn speech, for instance, the method is not of learning vocabulary and formal rules of grammar, as when an adult learns a foreign language. Instead, the infant brain collects the different sounds that it hears, and the objects, sights or sensations that accompany the sounds. Where certain sensations are repeatedly associated with particular sounds, the infant brain strengthens the connection and associates the sight or sensation with the sound alone – a first step in learning language.

When computer programmes are developed to mimic this process, we get in our hands a powerful means of "natural" learning, for computers can crunch huge data and work continuously for hours. AI programmes, known as machine learning, are hence used to analyse huge data, make weather forecasts, even train road vehicles to drive themselves, or learn language and work as a translator.

The selection of factors to be considered, the paper says, started from an original drawing by Antonio Stradivari, preserved in the Violin Museum of Cremona, Italy. We can make out from the copy shown here that the outline has been derived from nine circles of different diameters. The position of the centres and angles further specify the shape, of the "ribs" and the "top



Stradivarius' drawing, based on nine circles that combine to create the outline



Michael A. Pykoss-Michigan Tech-ResearchGate

plate". The shape is thus constrained by 20 parameters, the paper says, and in addition, there are parameters of the curvature of the top plate.

The quality of a violin is determined largely by the sound frequencies that are natural to vibrational modes of the top plate. And these frequencies depend largely on the shape of the plate. The parameters that specify the shape of the plate hence determine the frequencies the plate would support, and hence the sound quality. The relationship, however, is complex indeed, which is why studies so far have not been able to say what effect a change in one of the features would have on the sound produced.

The values of 1,750 sets of the 20 shape parameters and 10 of the corresponding known, main frequencies were then fed into a machine learning programme to "train" the programme. Next, the parameters of 250 other shapes were

fed in, to see if the main frequencies predicted were close to the actual frequencies. The result was that the programme was successful – it was able to learn from the "training set" and make accurate predictions!

The work is a proof in principle, that methods of AI can be used in violin design. This trial's description was limited to natural frequencies, but the method can be extended to cover more features and overall violin performance. "The ability to predict how a violin design sounds can truly be a game changer for violin makers, as not only will it help them do better than the grand masters, but it will also help them explore the potential of new designs and materials," the paper says.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

PLUS POINTS

Lens-less camera



Indian Institute of Technology-Madras and Rice University, United States, have developed algorithms for lens-less, miniature cameras. Such lens-less cameras have numerous vision applications in areas such as augmented reality/virtual reality, security, smart wearables and robotics where cost, form-factor and weight are major constraints.

In 2016, professor Ashok Veeraraghavan's lab at Rice University registered success in making a lens-less camera. They were able to develop a low-cost and low-weight ultra-thin lens-less camera where a thin optical mask was placed just in front of the sensor at a distance of approximately one mm. However, because of the absence of focusing elements, the lens-less camera captured blurred images restricting their commercial use. IIT-Madras and Rice researchers have now developed a computational solution to this problem. The team developed a de-blurring algorithm, which can correct the images taken from a lens-less camera. The findings were presented as a paper at the prestigious IEEE International Conference on Computer Vision and an extended version appeared in *IEEE Transactions on Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence*.

The research was led at IIT-Madras by Kaushik Mitra, head of the Computational Imaging Laboratory and assistant professor, department of electrical engineering. The research team included Salman Siddique Khan, Varun Sundar and Adarsh VR from IIT-Madras. Veeraghavan led the Rice University team, which included Vivek Boominathan and Jasper Tan.

Mitra said, "Lens-less imaging is a new technology and its true potential in solving imaging/vision problems has not been exploited completely. Therefore, we are working on designing newer and better lens-less cameras using data-driven techniques, devising efficient algorithms for doing inference on lens-less captures and looking into interesting and important applications like endoscopy and smart surveillance, among other areas, where one can fully realise the benefits of lens-less imaging."

For preterm birth



A new medical device that improves the prediction of preterm birth at a fraction of the cost of current methods, will help to reduce the global number of deaths and long-term complications caused by babies born prematurely.

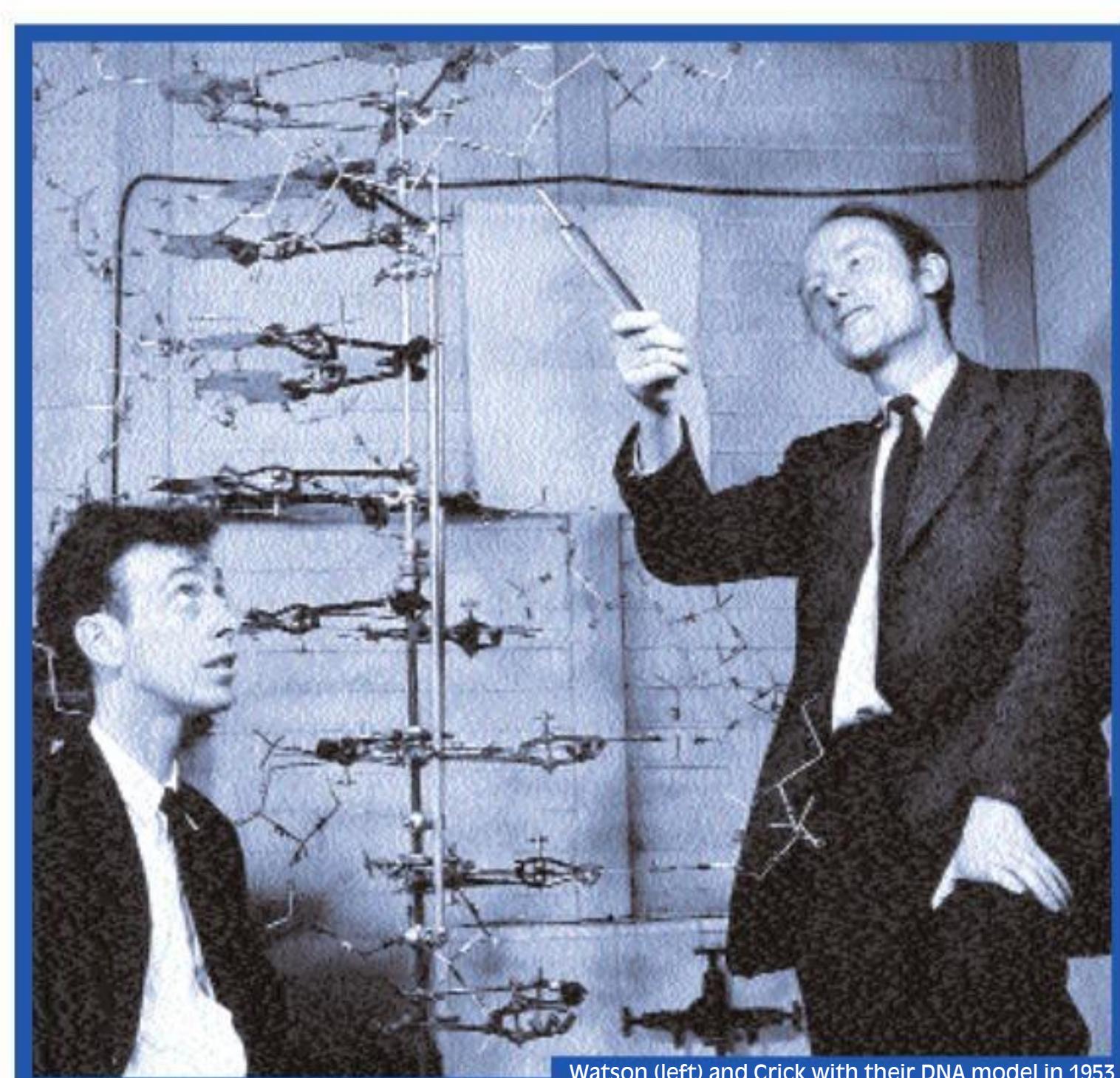
Pioneering research carried out on Electrical Impedance Spectroscopy at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, has led to the creation of the device, brought to market by EveryBaby, a UK-based company backed by South Korean investment.

Current technologies for assessing the likelihood of preterm birth, such as trans-vaginal ultrasound, are expensive and not always available – especially in poorer countries. The new device uses pioneering patented technology involving a novel method of impedance spectroscopy to pick up on changes to the composition and structure of cervical tissue as a mother nears birth. The device provides a higher degree of accuracy in an affordable, hand-held and portable device, giving huge potential for export to low-income countries.

Dilly O'Anumba, professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Sheffield and consultant at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trusts, said, "More than one in 10 babies are born too early and data has shown that preterm birth rates are increasing in many parts of the world."

"This pioneering technique will enable health care professionals to better prevent and manage preterm birth. It is not only more accurate than current methods but is significantly lower in cost making it more accessible, especially in low income communities where preterm birth rates are particularly high."

The World Health Organisation estimates 15 million babies are born preterm every year, with complications arising from premature births being the leading cause of death in infants under five years of age. Long term complications can be severe, and many survivors face a lifetime of disability, including learning disabilities as well as visual and hearing impairments.



TAPAN KUMAR MAITRA

One of the most significant features of the double-helical model of deoxyribonucleic acid is that it immediately suggests a mechanism for replication. In fact, a month after James Watson and Francis Crick published their now-classic paper postulating a double helix for DNA, they followed it with an equally important paper suggesting how such a base-paired structure might duplicate itself.

Here, in their own words, is the basis of that suggestion, "Now our model for deoxyribonucleic acid is, in effect, a pair of templates, each of which is complementary to the other. We imagine that prior to duplication the hydrogen bonds are broken, and the two chains unwind and separate. Each chain then acts as a template for the formation onto itself of a new companion chain, so that eventually we shall have two pairs of chains, where we only had one before. Moreover, the sequence of the pairs of bases will have

been duplicated exactly. (Watson and Crick 1953)"

The essence of the model Watson and Crick proposed for DNA is that one of the two strands of every newly formed DNA molecule is derived from the parent molecule, whereas the other strand is newly synthesised. This is called semi-conservative replication, because half of the parent molecule is retained by each daughter molecule.

Within five years of its publication, the Watson-Crick model of semi-conservative DNA replication was tested and proved correct by Matthew Meselson and Franklin Stahl. The ingenuity of their contribution lay in the method they devised, in collaboration with Jerome Vinograd, for distinguishing semi-conservative replication from other possibilities. Their studies utilised two isotopic forms of nitrogen, ^{14}N and ^{15}N , to distinguish newly synthesised strands of DNA from old strands.

Bacterial cells were first grown for many

generations in a medium containing ^{15}N -labelled ammonium chloride to incorporate this heavy (but nonradioactive) isotope of nitrogen into their DNA molecules. Cells containing ^{15}N -labelled DNA were then transferred to a growth medium containing the normal light isotope of nitrogen, ^{14}N . Any new strands of DNA synthesised after this transfer would therefore incorporate ^{14}N rather than ^{15}N .

Since ^{15}N -labelled DNA is significantly denser than ^{14}N -labelled DNA, the old and new DNA strands can be distinguished from each other by equilibrium density centrifugation. For DNA analysis, equilibrium density centrifugation often uses cesium chloride, a heavy metal salt that forms solutions of very high density. The DNA to be analysed is simply mixed with cesium chloride and the solution is centrifuged at high speed for a relatively long time (with a modern centrifuge, 80,000 rpm for eight hours, for example). As a density gradient of cesium chloride is established by the centrifugal force, the DNA molecules float "up" or sink "down" within the gradient to reach their equilibrium density positions. The difference in density between heavy (^{15}N -containing) DNA and light (^{14}N -containing) DNA causes them to come to rest at different positions in the gradient.

Using this approach, Meselson and Stahl analysed the DNA obtained from bacterial cells that were first grown for many generations in ^{15}N and then transferred to ^{14}N for one or more additional cycles of replication. What results would be predicted for a semi-conservative mechanism of DNA replication? After one replication cycle in ^{14}N , each DNA molecule should consist of one ^{15}N strand (the old strand) and one ^{14}N strand (the new strand), and so the overall density would be intermediate between heavy DNA and light DNA. The experimental results clearly supported this model. After one replication cycle in the ^{14}N medium, centrifugation in cesium chloride revealed a single band of DNA whose density was exactly halfway between that of ^{15}N -DNA and ^{14}N -DNA.

Because they saw no band at the density expected for heavy DNA, Meselson and Stahl

IT'S ALL ABOUT DENSITY

Here's how DNA replicates semi-conservatively in all organisms

concluded that the original, double-stranded parental DNA was not preserved intact in the replication process. Similarly, the absence of a band at the density expected for light DNA indicated that no daughter DNA molecules consisted exclusively of newly synthesised nucleotides. Instead, it appeared that a part of every daughter DNA molecule was newly synthesised, while another part was derived from the parent molecule. In fact, the density halfway between that of ^{14}N -DNA and ^{15}N -DNA meant that the hybrid DNA molecules were one-half parental and one-half newly synthesised, just as predicted by the semi-conservative model of replication.

The data from cells allowed to grow in the presence of ^{14}N for additional generations provided further confirmation. After the second cycle of DNA replication, for example, Meselson and Stahl saw two equal bands, one at the hybrid density of the previous cycle and one at the density of purely ^{14}N -DNA. This is also consistent with a semi-conservative mode of replication.

Meselson and Stahl concluded that the nitrogen of a DNA molecule is divided equally between two physically continuous subunits; that, following duplication, each daughter molecule receives one of these; and that the subunits are conserved through many duplications. Further experimentation was then required to prove that the "physically continuous subunits" into which DNA is partitioned are indeed separate DNA strands. Meselson and Stahl obtained this proof by heating the $^{14}\text{N}/^{15}\text{N}$ hybrid DNA to separate its two strands and then showing that one strand exhibited the density of a ^{15}N -containing strand and the other exhibited the density of a ^{14}N -containing strand.

Meanwhile, other researchers had used radioactive labelling and autoradiography to look at the process of DNA replication in eukaryotic chromosomes. In the end, Watson and Crick were proven right – DNA is replicated semi-conservatively in all organisms.

The writer is associate professor and head, department of botany, Ananda Mohan College, Kolkata



'NEXT GEN'

World number one Novak Djokovic (photo, left) has taken a swipe at all the talk about the younger generation of tennis players, saying rival Rafael Nadal and himself made up the "Next Gen." The pair clashed for the 57th time - in the Italian Open final on Sunday - with Nadal winning a 10th trophy on the Roman clay.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Women's cricket: Indian women's cricket team is set to play a Test in Australia after playing one in England next month. India, who play their first Test in seven years from June 16 in England, will play another one during the tour of Australia. They will also play ODI and T20I matches Down Under.



Hodgson retires: Roy Hodgson, the Premier League's oldest manager at 73, is leaving his role at Crystal Palace at the end of the season after four years at the club. "After more than 45 years of coaching, I have decided that the time is right for me to step away from the rigors of football," Hodgson said Tuesday.

'NEXT GEN'

World number one Novak Djokovic (photo, left) has taken a swipe at all the talk about the younger generation of tennis players, saying rival Rafael Nadal and himself made up the "Next Gen." The pair clashed for the 57th time - in the Italian Open final on Sunday - with Nadal winning a 10th trophy on the Roman clay.

ACENCIES

WASHINGTON, 18 MAY

While fans and pundits continue to debate who should be considered the greatest men's tennis player of all time, 23-time Grand Slam-winner Serena Williams says Roger Federer (in photo) gets her vote.

Rafa Nadal picked up a record-extending 13th French Open title in October to join Federer at the top of the list of men's Grand Slam-winners with 20 titles, while world No 1 Novak Djokovic, the youngest of the Big Three at 33, is on 18.

The 39-year-old Federer is this week playing only his second tournament since returning to the Tour in March after spending more than a year on the sidelines due to two knee operations. "I think two words



sum it up: Roger Federer," Williams, who turns 40 in September, told reporters at the Emilia-Romagna Open in Parma yesterday. "He's just a synopsis of greatness and class and amazing and real-

ly changed the game. You see players playing like him, moving like him, doing his techniques. The guy is (a) genius."

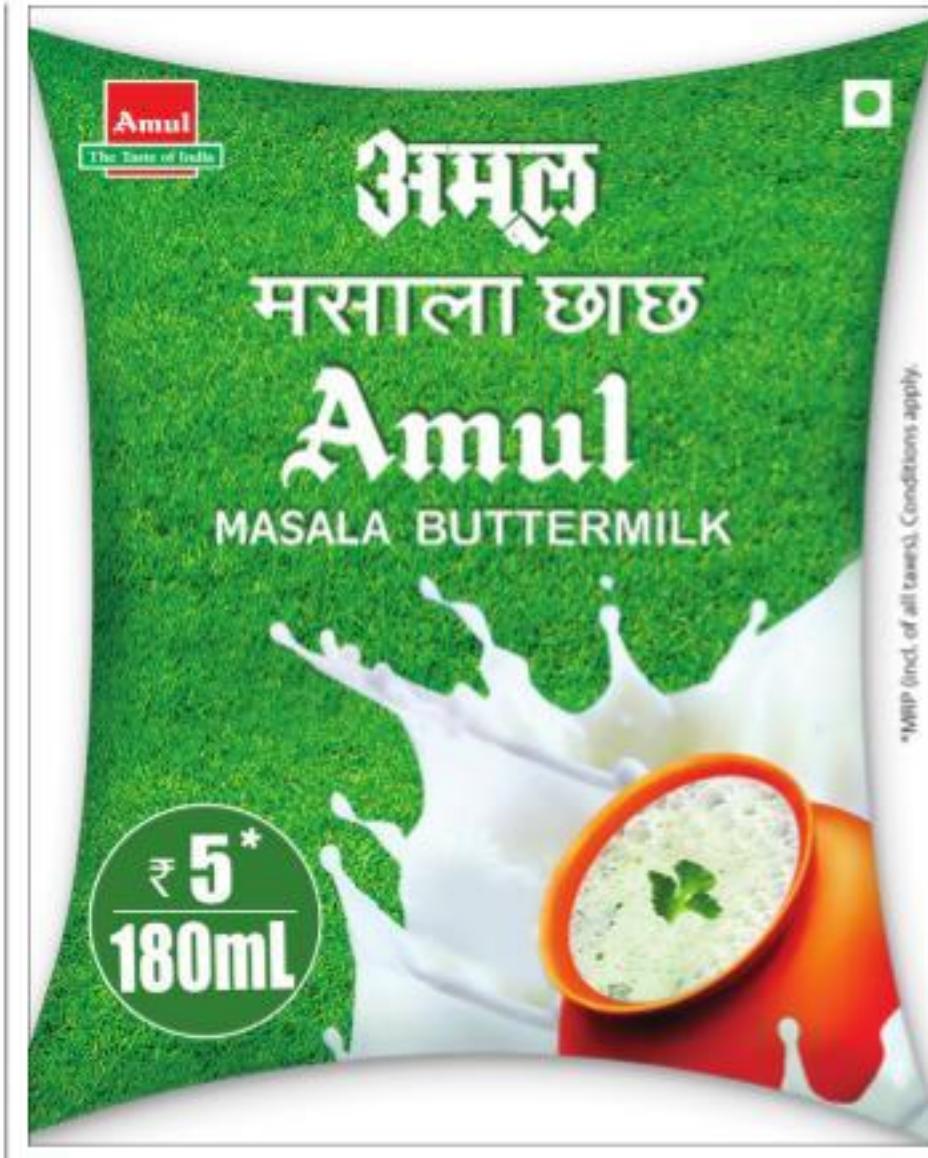
Williams won the last of her majors at the 2017 Australian Open before becoming a

mother. She has since been chasing a 24th major title to equal Margaret Court's record. The American won her first match yesterday since losing in the Melbourne semi-finals in February and said she

was a Federer superfan.

"I just feel like he is really the greatest player," Williams said. "You can't not like the guy, that's how I feel. His game is so fantastic. If I could only play like him."

Top-seeded Federer was to begin his campaign in Geneva later today against Spaniard Pablo Andujar, who said he had been looking forward to a match against the Swiss for a long time. "It was something that I wanted, to have a match against Roger, just to tell my kids and my grandkids when I get older that I played him," Andujar told reporters. "I think when you play Rafa, Novak and Roger ... these guys became myths, (they are) something above the sport. I would say that the most important is that they grew the sport."



*NMP (incl. of all taxes). Conditions apply.

Federer gets Serena's vote in GOAT debate

THUMBNAILS

Women's cricket: Indian women's cricket team is set to play a Test in Australia after playing one in England next month. India, who play their first Test in seven years from June 16 in England, will play another one during the tour of Australia. They will also play ODI and T20I matches Down Under.



Hodgson retires: Roy Hodgson, the Premier League's oldest manager at 73, is leaving his role at Crystal Palace at the end of the season after four years at the club. "After more than 45 years of coaching, I have decided that the time is right for me to step away from the rigors of football," Hodgson said Tuesday.

England tour green light for fit-again Saha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI/LONDON/
CHRISTCHURCH, 18 MAY

Wicketkeeper-batsman Wridhiman Saha (in photo) has recovered from Covid-19 and will be available for India's tour of England next month. Saha is at home in Kolkata after completing a long quarantine spell in a New Delhi hotel.

He is in the England-bound squad, subject to fitness. The 36-year-old was among the players who contracted the coronavirus in the currently-suspended Indian Premier League while playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"Wridhiman was back home yesterday after two and a half weeks of hotel quarantine in Delhi," a source

close to the player said. Saha will have to submit another negative test report before joining the pre-departure bio-secure bubble in Mumbai, where the squad will undergo a spell of hard quarantine before boarding the flight to England.

India are scheduled to take on New Zealand in the World Test Championship final from 18 June in Southampton. The five-Test series against England is to be held in August. Four days ago, Saha received conflicting results in two coronavirus tests, which prolonged his isolation.

In another development, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has said that he is excited to face India in the WTC final as he considers showdowns with Virat Kohli's

men a "fantastic" challenge. "When we play against India, it has always been a fantastic challenge and so it is really exciting to be playing against them," Williamson said in a video posted by the International Cricket Council on its Twitter handle.

"It's really, really exciting to be involved in the final, obviously to win it would be that much better," said the 30-year-old, considered one of the best current batsmen in the world.

Williamson said, "We saw the contests in the WTC had brought real excitement. The games were really tight, such as in the India-Australia series and our series against Pakistan as well where you had really to fight hard to get the results, which is really great."

New Zealand paceman Neil Wagner admitted that

India possessed fast bowlers who could exploit the English conditions but said that the wickets could change any time and become flat too.

"India have a lot of quality fast bowlers who have done well in different conditions, they can swing (the ball) under overcast conditions but when the sun comes out the wicket is flat and nothing happens. English conditions can change and so I am not getting carried away too much, trying to control the controllables."

Hanuma Vihari, who is in England for a county stint with Warwickshire, said that it would be great playing for India in the WTC final. "I am excited but I would want to be in that moment and not get carried away too much by the importance of the situation," he said, adding: "But

as a sportsman, to play for India in the final of inaugural WTC is always a great feeling."

Most of the New Zealanders have reached the UK as they play a two-match series against England starting on 2 June before the WTC final.

The Indians are expected to reach London in the first week of June.

Negative test

New Zealand wicketkeeper-batsman Tim Seifert, who contracted Covid-19 during the IPL, has tested negative and is on his way back home, his national coach Gary Stead has revealed. Seifert represented Kolkata Knight Riders and tested positive for the virus on 8 May.

"I heard from Tim just a lit-

tle while ago. I think the really encouraging thing is he's tested negative and my understanding is he's on a flight out of India pretty quickly as well," Stead was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"I don't know how long it's going to take him to get back to New Zealand or where he's heading via, but it's great news for Tim, that for a start his health is on the mend, to the point where he's not testing positive anymore," added the head coach. A New Zealand Cricket spokesperson confirmed that Seifert had left India.

Earlier, after testing positive, Seifert was awaiting his transfer to Chennai, where he was to be treated in the same private hospital as former Australia player Michael Hussey.

Rest understandable but let's keep talking: Broad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 18 MAY

Stuart Broad (in photo) hates missing a Test but the seasoned England paceman does not mind being "rested" sometimes either as long as the channel of communication is clear, which is something, he believes, did not happen when Ed Smith was national selector.

Broad is gearing himself up for a busy schedule with Tests against New Zealand and India lined up for the next three months. "Is it realistic I'm going to play every Test? No. But if the communication is done well then you understand the reasons for it," the 34-year-old Broad told the British media. "You understand why you might miss certain games to be fit for other games. That, along with building experience into different players."

Last year, Broad had publicly expressed his disappointment after being dropped from a Test against the West Indies. "I was disgruntled because the selectors had said the first Test team of the summer will be our best team. For someone who had been through the Ashes successfully, been through South Africa successfully and stayed fit, I felt it was my shirt," he said.

The red-ball specialist



believes he and fellow-veteran James Anderson make the best English bowling attack. "I don't think many could argue against Jimmy and I being in the best bowling attack in England, but if you need to get experience and overs into bowlers that is what it is. It's when the communication disappears;

dropped and others have had a career of being rested," Broad said that it had been frustrating for Jofra Archer, ruled out of the Test series against New Zealand after his long-standing elbow injury resurfaced. "He is in decent spirits. I think it's been frustrating for him. You know, the first time I was really aware that he had a bit of an elbow issue was in South Africa," he said.

Broad says that Archer can "play a huge part" in all three formats. "But he won't just be able to play every game. It's unrealistic to think that any all-format player - Ben Stokes included - can and that's when, without being disrespectful to any other type of international cricket, you do have to get him right for the games you want him right for," he said, adding:

"It's still too early for Jofra to start having doubts of whether he's a three-format cricketer, but he needs to get very clear in his mind what cricket he wants to be absolutely fit and firing for."

According to him, "there's a difference between being rested and dropped. I feel as though I've had a career of being

that's when players can't see reasons or see through it," he added.

He said that his career had been more about being "dropped" than "rested."

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