



UPSC postpones civil services preliminary exam to October 10
page 8



Innocent people visited Kumbh because they trusted govt.: Akhilesh
page 9



Joe Biden hopes Israel violence will end 'sooner than later'
page 11



Ramesh Powar returns as India women's team head coach
page 13

PRINTED AT • CHENNAI • COIMBATORE • BENGALURU • HYDERABAD • MADURAI • NOIDA • VISAKHAPATNAM • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • KOCHI • VIJAYAWADA • MANGALURU • TIRUCHIRAPPALLI • KOLKATA • HUBBALLI • MOHALI • MALAPPURAM • MUMBAI • TIRUPATI • LUCKNOW • CUTTACK • PATNA

NEARBY



Priyanka seeks probe into floating bodies

NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday said "what is happening in Uttar Pradesh is inhuman and criminal" and demanded a judicial probe by a High Court judge into bodies floating in the Ganga in the State. "The government is busy image building while people are suffering unimaginably," tweeted Ms. Vadra.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

NOT CONFIDENT ABOUT crack PRELIMS 2021? IAS TRY OUR 10 RED BOOKS ONLY AT 1000/- COMPLETE & CRISP NOTES
70+100 questions come From our PRELIMS RED BOOKS in 2020.
• 70+ Major Books Covered.
• Current affairs will be covered.
• Previous year papers
• Synopsis of India year book,
Survey & Budget 2021
Or 20% more than cut off
in GS Prelims 2021
Call - 921-7070707



THE HINDU
greets its readers on
the occasion of
ID-UL-FITR

Sputnik-V shots to be available in India next week, says govt.

We are working to secure, enhance availability of vaccines: NITI Aayog member

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Sputnik-V vaccine, developed by the Gamaleya National Centre of Russia, will be available in India from early next week, NITI Aayog member V.K. Paul said on Thursday.

"We are also proactively engaging with foreign vaccine manufacturers like Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson, asking them to apply for emergency use authorisation in India so that these vaccines can be easily imported and made available in India. Simultaneously, we, along with other like-minded countries, are stressing on IPR waiver for the COVID-19 vaccines. These two interventions, taken in conjunction, will ensure easy availability of vaccines not only in India but globally too," Dr. Paul said at a press conference.

Initial hiccups'
Stating that overall 216 crore doses of vaccines could be available in India between August and December, Dr. Paul said, "The current mismatch in demand and supply is just an initial dynamic situation, which is being faced across the world."

Speaking about Sputnik-V, Dr. Paul said local production is expected to begin in



Leading the way: A tribal head taking the vaccine at Anaiatti village in Nilgiris district, Tamil Nadu, on Thursday after officials convinced the community about its benefit. ■ M. SATHYAMOORTHY

July at Dr. Reddy's Laboratories in Hyderabad. Sputnik-V was given emergency use authorisation by the Drugs Controller-General of India (DCGI) in April and was first approved in Russia last year.

The Ministry, in a statement, said allegations about the delay in licensing for Covaxin and the delayed approval for technology transfer for manufacturing Covaxin were baseless.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
15 MORE DEAD IN TOP GOA HOSPITAL, HC TOLD ▶ PAGE 10

Covishield second dose now after 12-16 weeks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government has accepted the recommendation for extension of the gap between the first and second doses of the Covishield vaccine to between 12 and 16 weeks. The present gap is six to eight weeks.

In a statement on Thursday, the Union Health Minis-

try said the decision was based on "available real-life evidence, particularly from the U.K.". The COVID-19 working group, chaired by N.K. Arora, recommended increasing the interval to 12-16 weeks while suggesting no change in the interval of Covaxin doses.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Why not place convicts under house arrest, asks SC

Bench highlights 'alarming' congestion in prisons

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has thrown open the door to the legislature to "ponder" over the idea of placing convicts under house arrest to avoid overcrowding of prisons.

A Bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and K.M. Joseph, in a judgment, highlighted the "alarming" statistics of prisoners. The suggestion is relevant considering the spread of COVID-19. A few days ago, a Bench, led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, issued a series of directions, including the grant of interim bail and parole to prisoners to decongest prisons.

Justice Joseph said the occupancy rate in prisons had climbed to 118.5% in 2019. The court referred to the National Crime Records Bureau's figures of 2019 to

C A total of 18,86,092 inmates were admitted in jails in 2019. The number of undertrial prisoners was 3,30,487. Also, a very large sum (₹6,818.1 crore) is the budget for prisons. The tremendous overcrowding of prisons and the huge budget are both relevant in the context of the possibilities that house arrest offers

SUPREME COURT

show that 18,86,092 inmates were admitted in jails. The number of undertrial prisoners in 2019 was 3,30,487, which, in fact, constituted 69.05% of the total number of prisoners. Secondly, a very large sum (₹6,818.1 crore) was the budget for prisons. The "tremendous" overcrowding of prisons and the huge budget were both "relevant in the context of the possibilities that house arrest offers", the court noted.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 2

It concluded that "as regards post-conviction cases, we would leave it open to the legislature to ponder over its employment. We have indicated the problems of overcrowding of prisons and the cost to the State in maintaining prisons".

The 206-page judgment was based on a plea for default bail filed by activist Gautam Navlakha.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Test positivity rate below 15% in Delhi now

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The test positivity rate of COVID-19 cases fell to 14.24% in the city on Thursday, the lowest in a month, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. This means around 14 out of 100 people taking COVID-19 tests are now being detected as positive.

The last time the TPR was less than this was on April 13, when it was 13.14%.

With a more consistent supply of oxygen and a fall in the number of people in hospitals, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said Delhi currently has enough medical oxygen.

Delhi reported 308 COVID-19-related deaths over a period of 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 20,618.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 2

SC asks Delhi govt. to open meal centres

Court also directs U.P. and Haryana to provide food to migrant labourers

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the governments of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to open community kitchens in well-advertised places in the National Capital Region (NCR) to provide meals at least twice a day to migrant labourers stranded due to the lockdown in place to curb COVID-19 spread.

A Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah directed the Centre, Delhi, U.P. and Haryana governments to give dry ration to the migrant poor under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Scheme by utilising the Public Distribution System with effect from May 2021.

The court directed the authorities to not insist on



Hard times: The court also told the government to provide transport services for migrant labourers. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

any identity card from the migrant labourers while distributing dry ration and that they ought to be content with the self-declaration made by the workers.

The Bench ordered Delhi and Haryana to ensure that adequate transport is provided to stranded migrant labourers in the NCR who want to return home,

"The court has asked Delhi,

Haryana, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Odisha to file specific responses on steps taken and details of welfare schemes provided for migrant labourers.

The court has been protecting the rights of migrant labourers since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020.

During the hearing on Thursday, the Bench urged the Centre and the States to consider the "harsh realities" facing the migrant poor.

The hearing was based on an application filed through advocate Prashant Bhushan seeking urgent intervention from the Supreme Court to ensure food security, dry rations, cash transfer and transport facility for migrant labourers at nominal rates during the second wave of the pandemic.



SASTRA
ENGINEERING • MANAGEMENT • LAW • SCIENCES • HUMANITIES • EDUCATION

DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY

(U/S 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)



THINK MERIT | THINK TRANSPARENCY | THINK SASTRA

Admission to B. Tech. / 5-Year Integrated M. Tech. / M. Tech. / M.B.A. / M.Sc. (Intg.) / M.C.A. / B.Sc. / B.Com. / B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) / B.Com., LL.B. (Hons.) / B.B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) / B.A., B.Ed. / B.Sc., B.Ed. / B. Optom. / M. Optom. / M.F.A. / M.A. Programmes for the Academic Year 2021-22

BUILD YOUR FUTURE AT SASTRA

- 1 Merit Based Admission**
- 4 Impactful Pedagogy**
- 7 Translational Research**
- 2 World Class Infrastructure**
- 5 Global Exposure**
- 8 Extensive Collaborations**
- 3 Contemporary Curriculum**
- 6 Outstanding Placements**
- 9 Socially Responsible**

Degree Programmes (Application Fee)	Mode of Admission	Last Date for Application Submission
B. Tech. & 5-year Integrated M. Tech. (Thanjavur & Kumbakonam Campus) (Rs 650/-)	Based on +2 and JEE (Main) 2021 Scores *	July 31, 2021 (5.00 P.M.)
5-year integrated B.A. / B.B.A. / B.Com. / LL.B. (Hons.) (Rs 650/-)	Based on +2 and CLAT 2021 Scores *	July 31, 2021 (5.00 P.M.)
Other Programmes (Rs 650 / 350)	Rolling Admissions based on qualifying degree / exam scores available	July 31, 2021 (5.00 P.M.)

*Online Entrance exam on Arithmetic, Numerical & Reading Comprehension may be conducted if there is a delay in +2 or CLAT or JEE results.

Application may be Downloaded / Submitted Online at www.sastr.edu.
No in-person application forms available.

REGISTRAR



IET
The Institution of Engineering and Technology Accredited



THE WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS
National Institutional Ranking Framework 2020

RANKED

THINK MERIT • THINK TRANSPARENCY • THINK SASTRA

BTech student arrested for cheating

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 21-year-old BTech student was arrested from Punjab for allegedly duping 47 people on the pretext of providing ICU set up and oxygen cylinders at home for COVID-19 patients, police said on Thursday.

DCP (North) Anto Alphonse said that the accused has been identified as Aryan Singh alias Dhananjay, a resident of Noida who is pursuing BTech from a noted institute.

With the money acquired from cheating people, he stayed at luxury hotels. Police said he used Instagram to target his victims and also used the name of a well-known foundation to gain trust.

Police said a relative of a patient lodged the complaint stating that he has been cheated by the accused. The complainant said that he received a message on a WhatsApp group for setting up ICU facility at home and contacted him.

Delhi's demand down, can give extra oxygen to others: Sisodia

Satyendar Jain asks Union Health Minister to fix price of vaccines at ₹150

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday said that Delhi's daily medical oxygen requirement has come down with a decrease in new COVID-19 cases and that extra oxygen can be given to other States.

"We have written to the Central government on Thursday that Delhi's daily oxygen requirement now is only 582 MT, instead of 700 MT. We have informed the Central government that Delhi's quota is 590 MT and the extra oxygen we are getting could be given to other States which need more oxygen," Mr. Sisodia said in a video statement.

He also said that the SOS calls for oxygen from hospitals have also come down.

He said that the oxygen demand was directly proportional to the increase in cases. "During the peak period, we were getting regular SOS calls from the hospitals. Now, we



Workers refilling medical oxygen cylinders in Delhi. • FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

receive 1-2 SOS calls daily which are fulfilled without any delay. Delhi government is a responsible government and hence it is requesting the Centre to reduce the daily oxygen allocation of Delhi to 582 MT," he said.

Huge profits

Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday said that he has urged the Union Health Minister to fix prices of vaccines at ₹150 and added that vaccine manufacturers were

making huge profits.

"The manufacturers of Covaxin and Covishield have considered this crisis as an opportunity to generate high profits. So, when Covishield is being supplied to the Centre at ₹150 and at this rate, the chairman has stated on record that they are incurring profits," Mr. Jain said. "The company is manufacturing 6 crore vaccines every month. Even if we go by a profit of ₹10 per dose, and they give half of the vaccines to the

Centre, which is 3 crore, the estimated profit comes out to be ₹30 crore. Now, the same vaccine is being sold to State governments at ₹300, which means the profit doubles, while the cost of production remains the same... So, on 100 crore doses, [they are making] a profit of ₹16,000 crore," the Health Minister said.

Mr. Jain said that he has also told the Union Minister that instead of States going separately for international tenders for vaccines, the Central government should buy it for all States. He also said that about 100 vaccination centres are closed due to shortage of vaccines.

In a related development, North Delhi Municipal Corporation Mayor Jai Prakash said that Delhi government should allow vaccination of people above 18 years at all centres so that maximum number of residents can be vaccinated in a less time.

HC takes swipe at 'irritating' dialler tune on vaccination

'What is the point when there are not enough vials?'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday took a swipe at the "irritating" dialler tune message asking people to get vaccinated when there was not enough vaccine to inoculate everyone.

"You have been playing one irritating message on the phone whenever one makes a call, for we do not know how long, that you should have the vaccination, when you don't have enough vaccine," a Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli said.

"You are not vaccinating people, but you still say that vaccination 'lagavaaye'. Kaun lagayega vaccination

You are not vaccinating people, but you still say that vaccination 'lagavaaye'. Kaun lagayega vaccination

HC BENCH

ing," the Bench said, adding there should be more such messages instead of just one which is running for the whole time.

"Till like a tape it stops running or starts skipping, you will run it for 10 years," the court remarked as it asked the authorities to "have more of them [dialer messages]."

"When a person hears a different one every time, maybe it will help him/her," it said.

The High Court's suggestion came while hearing a bunch of petitions related to the COVID-19 situation in the Capital. During the hearing, the Bench also suggested us-

ing TV anchors or producers to create awareness amongst public about use of oxygen concentrators, cylinders and vaccination.

Awareness drive

The Bench said that one litre oxygen concentrator machine are being sold at ₹60,000 while it really does not serve any purpose. It also said that people with oxygen level at 90 think they are being treated, but they need to be informed that treatment is also required. The court also suggested that celebrities could interview doctors which can then be publicised.

"You need to do it fast," the High Court said as it directed the Centre and Delhi government to submit their respective reports by May 18 on what steps they are going to take for disseminating information on COVID management through print and TV media and also dialer tunes.

Not inclined to proceed in Hussain case: HC

Court order comes after it was told that his oxygen was not from Delhi quota

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday said it was not going to proceed further into the plea seeking inquiry against AAP MLA Imran Hussain for alleged hoarding of oxygen cylinders and distributing it free of cost to COVID-19 patients in his constituency.

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli took note of the submission of the Delhi government that he was not provided the oxygen by the State or refilers



from the quota allocated for COVID-19 patients.

The court also expressed satisfaction with the explanation and invoice submitted by Mr. Hussain to show that he had taken 10 cylinders on

rent and got them refilled from Faridabad.

Senior advocate Rajshekhar Rao, who is the amicus curiae, said the explanation tendered by Mr. Hussain "appears to be credible".

Image tarnished

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, appearing for the Delhi government, said that due to the instant plea the reputation of Mr. Hussain, a Cabinet Minister, was adversely affected and all the good work he did is brought to nought.

Mr. Mehra said the plea

was brought only against one party before the court and that too without doing any independent enquiry. There cannot be a fishing and roving enquiry, Mr. Mehra said, adding that it also deters the individual from doing any such work for the benefit of the people in the future.

The court, however, said it cannot stop anyone from coming to court. It also said that it did not ask the AAP MLA to stop his distribution if he was not taking oxygen from the quota allocated to Delhi.

Mr. Mehra said the plea

Data consultant launches website to ease plasma donation process

The group already has 2,000 donors spread across cities

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

In the second week of April, a 26-year-old data consultant who has thousands of followers on social media, decided to put the influence to good use and teamed up with a friend to create a website that brings together plasma donors for COVID-19 patients and help the needy.

Divya Jain, who had been amplifying requirements of oxygen and plasma on social media, roped in a tech-savvy friend and created the website fightagainstcovid19.org after buying a domain. "I was getting a lot of requests for oxygen, plasma, hospital and medicines and I thought I have a good social media presence so should put it to good use. I thought of doing it on small scale but then it grew to a seven-member team," she said, adding that all the members are her colleagues and friends.

The team now has Rikit Shahi from Hyderabad, Himanshu Pandit from Indore, Ayushi Saxena from Gwalior, Amit Pundir, Savita Bish and Padmini from Delhi. All of them operate from their homes and attend to the needs of their respective cities and nearby places.

Explaining the process, Ms. Jain said two types of people can use this website - those who can donate plasma and those who require it. "As soon as we get the information on plasma donation and that of plasma request, we call and verify the information and try to close the requirement within 12-24 hours," she said.

Another hassle for the donors, she said, is that because of the lockdown, people can't travel. But patients' families pitch in as it is their requirement. "The third biggest problem is the misconception that women can't donate. Hospitals tell patients' families that they won't accept women donors because their HB is low, which further makes them think that women donors are not accepted. We have to then force them to speak to doctors. So many women have successfully donated," she said.

Some hospitals, she said, are putting strict rules that only those who have recovered before 28 days or more can donate. "This is another misconception because there are donors who have recovered 20 days ago and their anti-bodies have developed," she said.

JANAKPURI SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL SOCIETY

(AN AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTE)

UNDER GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI

C-2B, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI-110058

Website: www.jsshs.org Website: www.health.delhigovt.nic.in

Email: Janakpurijssh@yahoo.com Contact us: 011-28504100

Dated:- 13/5/21

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW

In view of prevailing COVID-19 pandemic situation and in pursuance of order no. PA/SS-11/HF/2020/COVID-19/CD, 112604501/Prsecyhfw/3693-3740, dated: 29.04.2021 and corrigendum dated: 03-05-2021 issued by Health and Family welfare Department, GNCTD, Walk-in-Interview on daily basis shall be conducted in Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital Society for the engagement of Medical manpower on short term and emergent basis till 31/07/2021 as per details given below:-

S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Post	Honorarium per day per shift (Rs.)	Minimum Qualification
1	Specialist	25	8000/-	Post Graduate
2	Consultant	29	6000/-	MBBS
3	Intern/Medical Student/Dental/Ayush	30	4000/-	BDS/Having the prescribed degree for Ayush doctors
4	Nurse/ANM	51	2000/-	B.Sc (Nursing)/GNM

Reporting Time:- 10:00 AM Daily in the Office of Director

*The above mentioned vacancies are subject to change without any notice.

The applicants are required to produce original documents of qualification, residence proof and photo ID along with self attested copies.

Note:-

No leave of any kind/absence shall be allowed during this period.

[(COL.DR.H.C.SHARMA (Retd.)
MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT
JSSHS]

DIP/Shabdarsh/0060/21-22

Police trying to save Sushil: victim's kin

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has written a letter to Delhi government informing them about Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar being wanted in a murder case on Thursday.

Mr. Kumar, employed with Indian Railways, was currently on deputation, posted as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at Chhatrasal Stadium, where the brawl allegedly took place on May 3-4 midnight. It had resulted in the death of wrestler Sagar Dhankar (23) while three other suffered injuries.

"Around 10 days have passed but police have failed to record the statement of three victims who were also beaten up with the deceased Sagar, before a Magistrate under CrPC 164. Police are trying to save Mr. Kumar from day one of the incident and they are giving him more time by delaying his arrest," said a relative of the deceased.

The relative questioned why the police filed the FIR on the basis of general diary entry but not on the complaint of the other three victims.

A senior police officer said the investigation officer had recorded their statement. The eyewitnesses will be produced before a magistrate to record their statement after getting permission from a doctor.

DU teachers seek Union Minister's intervention

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

With no COVID Care Centre being set up by the Delhi University at the Patel Chest Institute, despite repeated requests by professors, a few members of the DU executive council on Thursday wrote to Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan seeking urgent intervention.

Stating that several teaching and non-teaching staffers of DU have died due to COVID-19, the professors sought immediate ramping up of facilities in the university.

The letter written by EC members Seema Das, Rajpal Singh Pawar and Finance Committee member Dr. J.L. Gupta said it was unfortunate that medical resources available in the university had not been utilised to their full capacity. "In the given scenario, there is an urgent need to revamp the facilities available at all medical centres and more particularly at Vallabhai Patel Chest Institute situated in the heart of the university. People are dying due to non-availability of beds and oxygen cylinders. Even within the university, we have lost near and dear ones working in the administration, departments and colleges..." the letter read.

The letter urged the Minister to give necessary instructions to DU V-C, who is also the Chairman of VPCI, to convene an emergency meeting of the VPCI governing body.

Training future leaders with 21st century communication skills

Introducing **STEP LIVE Junior+** An interactive English learning course for kids from classes 4-7.

Coach your kids with 10 LIVE classes on present day aspects of communication.

Speaking: Strategies to improve public speaking skills with focus on aspects such as persuasion, expression of emotions, etc.

Writing: Best practices to improve writing structure and introduction to using tools like PowerPoint

Listening: Engaging exercises and activities to actively develop listening skills

Practice: Practical tips and guidance to continue developing communication skills

Summer batch begins on 17th May Classes on all weekdays 11:00 am to 12:00 noon

To develop your child's overall communication skills, visit BIT.LY/JUNIORPLUS

Limited Seats!

Scan the QR code

CM YK

Timings		
DELHI		
FRIDAY, MAY 14		
RISE 05:32 SET 19:05		
RISE 07:07 SET 21:28		
SATURDAY, MAY 15		
RISE 05:31 SET 19:05		
RISE 07:53 SET 22:20		
SUNDAY, MAY 16		
RISE 05:31 SET 19:06		
RISE 08:42 SET 23:11		

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	35	21
Safdarjang	35	21
Palam	35	21

Delhi Palam Today
36°C A spells of rain and thunderstorm likely at some places. Day would be slight warm with gentle winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C A comfortable morning and hot day. A spells of rain and thunderstorm may occur at few places.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement or any statement made by any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD, the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, shall not be liable for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the publisher be held responsible. Editors & Employees of this newspaper/ company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

Kalra's oxygen concentrators were substandard, says report

He may face stringent charges if any patient is found to have had adverse effects

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

It has now emerged that besides being exorbitantly priced, the oxygen concentrators supplied by Navneet Kalra were of no use for COVID-19 patients and could have instead been counter-predictive, said Delhi Police citing medical experts on Thursday.

Mr. Kalra has been evading arrest after the Delhi police raided his restaurants in Lodhi Colony and Khan Market and recovered more than 500 oxygen concentrators. He has been accused of hoarding, black-marketing and selling the medical equipment at exorbitant rates.

A senior police officer said that they had seized a total 524 oxygen concentrators during the raids at Mr. Kalra's restaurants and Matrix Cellular's warehouse in Chhattarpur.

"The Delhi police had sent two different models of the seized concentrators for testing at Shriram Institute for Industrial Research. The report



A volunteer prepares beds with oxygen concentrators at a COVID care centre in New Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

found that an average output in terms of oxygen purity is found to be 32.7% and 38.2% respectively in a 9-litre and 7-litre model. The testing was carried out in the laboratory room air and the oxygen concentration was found to be merely 20.8%," said the officer.

He said that the report has been submitted in the court.

"The experts said that these oxygen concentrators are unfit for COVID-19 patients. A medical equipment that produces less than 90% oxygen is useless in case of

Covid-19," said the officer.

WhatsApp chats
He said that they have accessed WhatsApp chats of a group created by Mr. Kalra to sell oxygen concentrators. They found that people who have purchased these oxygen concentrators from Mr. Kalra have raised concern over the quality and wanted to return it.

"Oxygen concentration is of very poor quality with only 45% oxygen in a 7-litre cylinder. It is insufficient for a patient. The machine which

The experts said that these oxygen concentrators are unfit for COVID-19 patients. A medical equipment that produces less than 90% oxygen is useless in case of COVID-19

POLICE OFFICER

you are offering is of no use," one of the buyers raised a complaint in the WhatsApp group.

If during investigation it is found that any COVID-19 patient faced any adverse effects due to these substandard oxygen concentrators, then Mr. Kalra will face more stringent charges for putting a patient's life at risk.

The police said that Chinese oxygen concentrators were purchased for ₹12,500 and ₹20,669 and sold for ₹70,000 and above per piece.

Buyers used to queue up outside Khan Chacha restaurant in Khan Market to purchase them.

Anticipatory bail plea of 'Khan Chacha' owner Kalra dismissed

He is accused of hoarding concentrators in his eating joints

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday refused to grant anticipatory bail to businessman Navneet Kalra in connection with the seizure of oxygen concentrators, required by COVID-19 patients, from his upscale restaurants including 'Khan Chacha' in the national capital.

"Application is dismissed," Additional Session Judge Sandeep Garg said.

Fear of arrest

Fearing arrest, the businessman had moved the court earlier this week to seek bail in the case.

During a recent raid, 524 oxygen concentrators were recovered from three restaurants owned by Mr. Kalra and it is suspected that he has left Delhi along with his family.

These concentrators are crucial medical equipment used for COVID-19 management.

On Wednesday, the court had reserved the order on the pre-arrest bail after



Police during a raid outside Khan Chacha restaurant in New Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

hearing the arguments of both the prosecution and defense at length.

During the proceedings, public prosecutor Atul Srivastava had told the court that Mr. Kalra's custodial interrogation is required and that bail should not be granted as he is an influential person.

"His intention was to cheat the public at large and wrongfully gain. Had Delhi Police not busted the racket, many people would have been cheated," he said.

The prosecutor had also apprised the court about a lab report which showed that the seized oxygen concentrators are not working, have poor quality and their working capacity is only 20.8%.

'Oxygen on wheels' drive inaugurated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

State BJP president Adesh Gupta on Thursday inaugurated the 'oxygen on wheels' initiative started by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation and Aranya Foundation, keeping in view issues related to the shortage of oxygen in the Capital.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, South Delhi Mayor Anamika Singh and foundation chairman and former Mayor Ravindra Gupta were present on the occasion.

Mr. Gupta said the scheme had been started to prevent patients in need of oxygen from being forced to return home or suffer outside medical facilities.

Double whammy



Farmers sanitise the Singhu border protest site during their ongoing agitation against the Centre's new farm laws, in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

People above 45 years can walk in for jab

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday directed officials to allow walk-in vaccination for people above 45 years of age in all centres of Delhi.

Internet issues

"After reviewing the challenges of residents with regard to Internet accessibility and issues in registering online slots, we have made a decision to allow registration and walk-in vaccination in all vaccination centres of Delhi, for individuals above 45 years of age. For those falling in the 18-44 age group, she said, Delhi had eight days' stock of COVID-19 vaccine doses for those above 45 years of age as well as engaged in healthcare and front-line duties.

For those falling in the 18-44 age group, she said, Delhi had eight days' stock of COVID-19 vaccine doses available. Over 41 lakh doses had been administered in the city so far and 74,448 people having been vaccinated in Delhi on Wednesday, she said.

"Delhi currently has three days of Covaxin and two days of Covishield

Left with 2-3 days' vaccine stock for 45+ age group, health workers'

Atishi requests Central govt. to make more doses available

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi on Thursday said the Capital was left with just two to three days' stock of COVID-19 vaccine doses for those above 45 years of age as well as engaged in healthcare and front-line duties.

For those falling in the 18-44 age group, she said, Delhi had eight days' stock of COVID-19 vaccine doses available. Over 41 lakh doses had been administered in the city so far and 74,448 people having been vaccinated in Delhi on Wednesday, she said.

"Delhi currently has three days of Covaxin and two days of Covishield

stock for those above 45 years of age, healthcare and front-line workers. We request the government to make more doses available for this category," she said.

40.29 lakh utilised

The Capital, Ms. Atishi said, had so far got 43.20 lakh doses for 45-plus citizens, healthcare and front-line workers of which 40.29 lakh had been utilised.

Delhi had received 8.17 lakh doses of vaccine doses for the 18-44 category of which 4.27 lakh had been utilised and the remaining doses, primarily Covishield, could last up to eight days, Ms. Atishi said.

This, she said, even as the city had already run out

of Covaxin stock for the 18+ category and most of the centres administering the Bharat Biotech-manufactured vaccine had been temporarily shut till further orders.

"Dispensaries conduct routine immunisation of children on Wednesdays and Fridays. So, there were fewer vaccination centres on May 12," she said.

41.64 lakh doses

According to the vaccine bulletin issued by the Delhi government on Thursday, a total number of 41.64 lakh doses had been administered to beneficiaries across all categories in the city since the inoculation drive began on January 16.

HC: legal aid lawyers, judicial officers need to be vaccinated

Cannot send someone to war without a gun, says court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked if legal aid lawyers and judicial officers in the 18-44 age bracket, working to implement Supreme Court orders to decongest prisons due to the pandemic, can walk in for vaccination shots at the centres set up in district courts.

"You cannot send someone to war without a gun," Justice Navin Chawla remarked, adding legal aid lawyers and judicial officers also needed to be protected against the virus.

The High Court's query to the Centre and Delhi government came while hearing a plea by the Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLSA), represented by advocate

aid lawyers was a pan-India concern.

Centre's call

Delhi government said lawyers and judicial officers of 45 years or above can walk in for vaccination at the centres in the district courts, but that was not the case with regard to the 18-44 age group. The Delhi government said it does not have the discretion to allow walk-in of the 18-44 age group and a decision regarding it has to be taken by the Centre.

The High Court had earlier asked DSLSA to prepare a list of the legal aid lawyers and judicial officers who would need the vaccination, so that the same can be shared with the Centre and Delhi government for their consideration.

The residents of the Capital, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor stated, had bravely faced the first and second waves of the pandemic but were now "extremely worried" about the fate of their families during

the next wave.

"The people of Delhi have lost faith in the Arvind Kejriwal govt.'s capability to fight COVID-19's third wave as it has totally failed them during the ongoing second wave. It knew from September 2020 that a

strong wave will strike the country in the first quarter of 2021 but did little to make preparations to fight it," Mr. Kapoor alleged.

"I quote Delhi's ruling party's senior most MLA Shoaib Iqbal who recently said that the Delhi's health infrastructure has collapsed and we can't anymore leave the situation in the hands of the Kejriwal government and Delhi be put under President's Rule to take care of health services," he wrote.

Mr. Kapoor requested the L-G, as administrator of Delhi and as DCM chief to take over all public and private health services and ensure that hospitals and doctors are prepared for paediatric treatment.

TV actor booked for casteist remark in video

She has been charged under SC/ST Act after Dalit rights member filed complaint

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah actor Munmun Dutta aka "Babita Ji" has been booked under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act for an alleged casteist slur in a recent video. The FIR has been registered at Haryana's Hansi.

Superintendent of Police (Hansi) Nitika Gahlaut confirmed that the case was re-

gistered at City police station under Section 3(I)(u) of the SCs and STs Act. The case was registered on Thursday, said the police.

The FIR was registered following a complaint by Rajat Kalsan, convener of National Alliance for Dalit Human Rights. Mr. Kalsan complained against the actor on May 11 and also produced a compact disc with the video in which Ms. Dutta allegedly made objectionable com-

ments against the SC.

Ms. Dutta, in a make-up video, said she wanted to look good and referred to a particular Scheduled Caste to say that she did not want to look like them.

"Munmun Dutta has uttered the name of the Scheduled Caste with the intention to insult the entire Dalit community. The video has been released on an Instagram profile with lakhs of followers. My community

members and I have been hurt on watching the video," said Mr. Kalsan.

Ms. Dutta, following the controversy, apologised in a post on her Instagram profile three days ago, attributing it to "language barrier" and saying that she was "genuinely misinformed about the meaning of the word". "I sincerely would like to apologise to every single person who has been unintentionally hurt," said the post.

Anticipatory bail plea was dismissed by a trial court here on March 12.

The trial court had said that consent cannot be implied from the complainant's previous experiences with the accused. If the woman stated in her evidence before the court that she did not consent, the court shall presume that she did not,

the trial court had said while rejecting his anticipatory bail plea.

The woman, in her FIR filed at Chanakyapuri police station, had alleged that she was raped by Mr. Hiremath at a five-star hotel here on February 20.

Mr. Hiremath's counsel, however, claimed that there had been a history of previous sexual relationship between the accused and the complainant.

Mr. Hiremath is facing charges under sections of the Indian Penal Code.

HC breather for scribe in rape case

Woman had alleged that she

Pvt. hospitals raided in Rewari

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM
Raids were conducted at two private hospitals in Rewari on Thursday following complaints of charging over and above the rates fixed by the Haryana government for the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Both the hospitals have been issued show-cause notices to be replied within 24 hours. Acting on the direction of Deputy Commissioner Yashendra Singh, a team comprising Dy. Magistrate Naib Tehsildar Nisha, and three doctors – Vishal Rao, Pradeep Yadav and Suresh – along with the police mounted raids at the premises of Kaptan Nandlal Hospital in Rewari and Medi Home Hospital in Dharuhera for overcharging from the patients.

Global tenders may speed up vaccination drive in Rajasthan

State to route procurement via National Health Mission for purchase of 1 cr. doses

MOHAMMED IQBAL

JAIPUR

After the decision to float global tenders for procuring COVID-19 vaccines from foreign countries, Rajasthan expects to speed up inoculations for those in the age group of 18 to 44 years.

The State government decided to issue an expression of interest (EOI) through the National Health Mission as a nodal agency for purchasing one crore doses.

CM tweets

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said on Thursday as many as 11 States had so far floated global tenders, which would result in the procurement of vaccines at different prices

for each of them.

The States were forced to purchase vaccines from international manufacturers because of the inadequate supply of vaccine shots, he said. "It would have been better if the Union government had taken out the global tender and distributed the vaccines to the States in a planned manner... We can protect ourselves against the third wave of pandemic only through complete vaccination," Mr. Gehlot tweeted.

The decision to import vaccines was taken at a meeting of the Council of Ministers, held through video-conferencing, in which a serious concern was expressed over the fast-spreading infec-

tion and the shortage of vaccine shots. The Council of Ministers also approved direct purchase of virus treatment drugs and equipment from the companies.

Medical and Health Minister Raghu Sharma said the vaccination camps at several places had to be closed because of the paucity of doses, while 20 lakh doses were urgently required for the continuation of inoculations. A proposal for relaxing the financial processes for transportation of liquid medical oxygen for the survival of affected people was also approved at the meeting.

The Council of Ministers decided that the Ministers-in-charge would visit the districts regularly to provide relief to the people.

It was informed at the meeting that a work order had been issued by the Urban Development Department to set up 105 oxygen plants in 62 urban body areas.

Meanwhile, BJP State president Satish Poonia said on Thursday the State was trying to hide its shortcomings on the front of COVID-19 management by blaming the Centre.

He said though the Centre was supplying all essential items for treatment of patients, the Congress leaders were making "false statements" and weakening people's morale.

Priyanka seeks judicial probe into bodies floating in Ganga

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Congress general-secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday said "what is happening in Uttar Pradesh is inhuman and criminal" and demanded a judicial probe by High Court judge into bodies floating in the Ganges in the State.

"What is happening in UP is inhuman and criminal. The government is busy image building while people are suffering unimaginably. There must be an immediate judicial enquiry headed by a High Court Judge into these events," tweeted Ms Vadra, who is the general secretary in-charge of U.P.

Her tweets came on a day when there Unnao district authorities ordered an inquiry over fresh reports of some bodies being found buried on the Ganga riverbank in the Bighapur Patan tehsil area. There were also reports of bodies floating in the Ganga in Ballia and other places of U.P. and Bihar. "Bodies are floating in the ganga in Ballia and Ghazipur. Reports are coming in of mass burials on the banks of the river in Unnao. Official numbers from cities like Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Jhansi and Kanpur appear to be grossly under-reported," she said in another tweet.

Earlier this week, the discovery of floating bodies in the Ganga river at Buxar on the Bihar side of the river had triggered a war of words between U.P. and Bihar.



Priyanka Gandhi.

Treatment rates fixed by Haryana govt. exorbitant'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

The Charkhi Dadri unit of the Congress Corona Relief Committee has demanded the immediate intervention of the State government to stop the alleged loot of the private hospitals in the name of treatment of COVID.

Farmer leader Raju Maan, also a member of the co-ordination committee, said the rates fixed by the Haryana government for the treatment of COVID patients in private hospitals were "exorbitant" and "unaffordable". "Most of these private hospitals lack even basic amenities, but are charging the rates of five-star hotels," said Mr. Maan, adding that some hospitals were charging extra for medicines and tests.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

OBITUARY

Mjf. Ln..K. KUPPUSAMI
Founder - K Square group of companies
With profound grief we share the sudden demise of our beloved father.
"Selfless yet ambitious and a wise mentor. He has left behind a legacy to cherish and honour"
You will remain with us forever in our hearts and memory.
In Grief
Wife: K. Bakkialakshmi, Brother: K. Ravi,
Sons: K. Balaji, K. Sathish Kumar,
K. Senthil Kumar, K.R. Srinivasan, Family,
Friends and K Square Staffs.
Korattur North, Chennai - 600076.



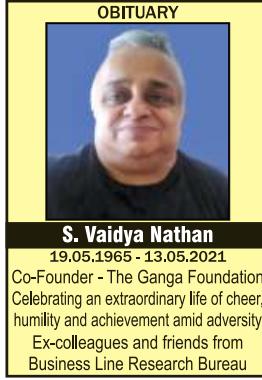
Mrs. Vasanthi Devasahayam
Loving Wife, Mother, Grandmother,
Sister & Aunt.
Went into the glory of God
on 13.05.2021

For enquiries on
announcements in this
section, please contact our
office at the following number
between 10a.m. and 8pm.
New Delhi : 011- 43579797
Rate for New Delhi:
(Minimum Rs. 320/- 2 Lines
Extra Line - Rs.160/-)
(B/W Display): Rs.60/ Per Sq.cm
(C/I Display) : Rs.70/Per Sq.cm
Log on to
www.thehinduads.com
For Placing Advertisements
Online
DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

DEATH



Smt SHANTHA SREENIVASAN
(Former staff - 23 ED , IAF , Avadi)
Beloved Wife of
Lt CDR A K Sreenivasan
Passed away peacefully at her
residence on 13 May 2021
Deeply mourned by Family & Friends
044 26204471 / 90253 21047



S. Vaideya Nathan
19.05.1965 - 13.05.2021
Co-Founder - The Ganga Foundation
Celebrating an extraordinary life of cheer,
humility and achievement amid adversity
Ex-colleagues and friends from
Business Line Research Bureau



S. Srinivasan, 71 Yrs.
Retired UCO Bank Manager
Attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on
Tuesday the 11th of May, 2021.
Leaving behind grieving
Nandini (wife), Daya (Daughter)
Govindarajan (Son in Law)
Vishnu and Sandhya (Grandchildren),
Mythili Raghavan (Sister) and Nephews
Relatives and friends
Condolence messages to:
Mrs. Nandini Srinivasan: +91-98105-19229

In memory of your loved ones
To dedicate a space in this section,
Please contact:
011-43579797
from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. &
For Placing Advertisements
Online log on to
www.thehinduads.com

DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

KARNATAKA STATE MEDICAL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED ®

PHI Building, Opp. To SJF Polytechnic, K.R.Circle, Sheshadri Road, Bangalore - 560001. Phone: +91-80-29619801 Email: md.ksmcl@gmail.com

No. HFW/KSMCL/Covid/INJ. Vaccine/INT/26/2021-22 Date: 13-05-2021

Short Term Global Tender

Ref: 1) Global Tender Notification No. HFW/KSMCL/Covid/INJ. Vaccine /INT/26/2021-22, Dated:13.05.2021. (2) Quotation Notification No. HFW/KSMCL/Covid/IFQ/INJ. Exoxaparin/27/2021-22, Dated: 13.05.2021. (3) Quotation Notification No. HFW/KSMCL/Eqpt/Covid-19/RTPCR Consu/27/2021-22, Dated:13.05.2021. (4) Quotation Notification No. HFW/KSMCL/Eqpt/Covid-19/RAT/28/2021-22, Dated:13.05.2021.

Nationwide Quotation is invited through KSDLWS website under KTPP Act 1999 and Rules 2000 under 4(a) exemption for the following quotations:

(1) Short Term Global Tender for supply of Vaccine for Covid-19. (2) Quotation for supply of Exoxaparin Sodium Injection 40mg/0.4ml, Ampoule with Syringe, combipack. (3) Quotation for Supply of RTPCR Consumables (4) Quotation for Supply of RAT

Details regarding specification, Terms and Conditions and other information are available in the website www.kdlws.kar.nic.in from 14.05.2021 to 24.05.2021, 14.05.2021 to 17.05.2021 & 14.05.2021 to 18.05.2021 the eligible firms shall Mail the KSMCL quotations in password protected PDF to E-mail ID: ksdls covid-19.procurement@gmail.com before 5.30 pm on 25.05.2021, 5.00 pm on 17.05.2021 & 5.00 pm on 18.05.2021. Further information if any may be obtained from this office during working hours.

Sd/-
Managing Director
(Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Limited)

DIPR/DDU/Zen/R0-364/2021-22

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.

6 Feet
Follow Physical Distancing
Maintain Hand Hygiene

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.

Regd. Office :- PSEB H.O. Building, The Mall, Patiala

Corporate Identification Number (CIN) : U40109PB2010SGC033813

Contact No. 96461-18773

TENDER ENQUIRY No.: QQ-2314/PO-P

Chief Purchase Officer/ MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL, 2nd floor, Multistory Building, The Mall, Patiala, invites E-Tender for Procurement of 2,80,000 No. 11 KV Composite Polymer Disc Insulators (Tongue & Clevis type), EMS 45 conforming to IEC 61109, IS-731-1971 & IS-2633/1972 (with latest edition/ amendments if any) and as per PSPCL specification no. OG-2314/PSPCL/PO-P. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 13.05.2021 onwards.

NOTE: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

DPRB 76155/12/250/2021/4532

C185/21

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (AB-PMJAY)
State Health Agency, THPS, Govt. of Tripura

Notice Inviting e-Tender

Tender Ref. No Z27028/1/21/THPS/ISA Date: 12/05/2021

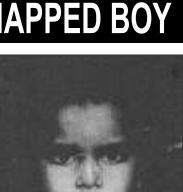
Notice Inviting e-Tender is hereby invited on behalf of the Tripura Health Protection Society, Govt. of Tripura from resourceful, experienced and bonafide licensed TPAAs for "Selection of Implementation Support Agency (ISA) for implementation of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna in the State of Tripura".

The details of tender are made available on website <http://tripuratenders.gov.in>. The last date/time of online submission of the tender documents is upto 02/06/2021 at 4.00 pm. All future modification /corrigendum / communication (if any) shall be made available in <http://tripuratenders.gov.in> portal.

(Dr. Siddharth Shiv Jaiswal, IAS)
Executive Secretary, THPS
Government of Tripura

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED BOY

General Public is hereby informed that one boy (depicted in the photo) namely Pankaj S/o Sh. Rambaran R/o H.No.A-898, Part-I, Gali No.13, 1st Pusta, Sonia Vihar, Delhi Aged-4 Years 6 months has been reported missing/kidnapped since 04.08.18 at 3:30 PM vide FIR No.388/2018 Dated 04.08.18 u/s 363 IPC registered at Police Station Khajuri Khas, Delhi. His physical description is as under:-



Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 2'6", Face: Round, Built: Medium, ID: Mark of Foda/Boil on front side of Nose, Clothing: Red coloured Baniyan, Katchha/underwear and bare foot.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped boy, may inform, Anti Human Trafficking Unit, Crime Branch, Delhi at E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in or website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Sd/-

Anti Human Trafficking Unit,
Crime Branch, Sector-16,
Rohini, Delhi

Tel.: 011-27892844, 66

Mob.: 0750871236

Brijesh
Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far, if any one having any information about this person please inform undersigned.
E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639 P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi
DP/1015/ON/2021 Ph.: 011-27787593, 7065036324

SEARCH FOR MISSING
General Public is hereby informed that a male person namely **Brijesh**, S/o **Budhiram** R/o VPO Sannoth, Near Jatav Chopal, Delhi, Age: 40 years, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Medium, Face: Round, Wearing: Chocolate Colour T-Shirt & Blue Colour Half Pant and Red Colour Chappal in his feet has been missing from his home since 12.04.2021 at 9.00 am. In this regard vide DD No. 52A, dated 17.04.2021 has been registered at PS. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far, if any one having any information about this person please inform undersigned.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639 P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi
DP/1015/ON/2021 Ph.: 011-27787593, 7065036324

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION
General Public is hereby informed that one baby girl namely **Unknown**, D/o **Unknown**, R/o **Unknown**, has been found in an abandoned condition near India Gate Canal, Man Singh Road, Red Light Park New Delhi on 11.04.2021 at 04:40 am from the area of P.S. Tilak Marg, New Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 51/21 U/s 317 IPC dated 11.04.2021 has been registered at P.S.

Tilak Marg, New Delhi. The description of the baby girl is as under:- Age: About 7 days, Sex: Female, Weight: 3 Kg 100 gm, Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 15", Face: Round, Built: Medium, Wearing: Pink colour dress with red & green colour top. She was admitted for treatment in Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital, Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the baby girl's family but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this baby girl's family kindly inform to the following.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in

Karnataka govt. pulled up by HC

'Submit district-wise data to Centre for the vaccines needed for the second dose'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Questioning why the State government overlooked a series of advisories by the Central government on the need for the timely administration of the second dose of COVID-19 vaccines, the Karnataka High Court on Thursday said the people of Karnataka would not have faced such a desperate situation to get the second dose had the State adhered to the guidelines issued since April.

The court directed the State government to adhere to the advisories on the priority to be given to the second dose and also submit to the Central government the district-wise need of the two types of vaccines for the second dose.

A Special Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Aravind Kumar, issued the directions while noticing that the Central govern-

The government must tell the truth to the public. Let people unnecessarily not go to vaccination centres. You [State government] must come clean

KARNATAKA HIGH COURT



ment's advisories were very clear on the timely completion of the second dose.

"The government must tell the truth to the public. Let people unnecessarily not go to vaccination centres. You [State government] must come clean," the Bench orally observed while pointing out the inconsistency in the data on the vaccines required for the second dose and serious lapses on the part of the State government in the timely administration of it.

The Bench pointed out that the data submitted earlier indicated a requirement of 26,08,907 doses of the vaccines for the administration of the second dose to those who have already completed four to six weeks after taking the first dose.

However, the data submitted by the State government on Thursday stated that only 19,97,729 doses were required for the second dose, the Bench said.

It also noticed from the submissions of *amicus curie* Vikram Hilgot that an additional 5.28 lakh doses of the vaccines were required for health and frontline workers to administer the second dose.

SSLC exam postponed in State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

In the wake of increasing pressure from parents and students, the Karnataka government has decided to postpone the Class 10 Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) examination.

"The SSLC examination, slated to start from June 21, stands postponed," said Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar on Wednesday.

"The increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the State, coupled with concerns from parents and students, has resulted in this decision." The exam was to be held from June 21 to July 5.

A.P., Telangana MLC polls put off due to pandemic

Will decide at appropriate time: ECI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday deferred the MLC elections due in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana due to the pandemic.

The term of office of three members of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council and six members of the Telangana Legislative Council was set to expire on May 31 and June 3 respectively, the ECI said, adding that as per Section 16 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the seats are required to be filled before the expiry of the term.

"The Commission has reviewed the matter today and has decided that due to outbreak of the second wave of COVID-19 in the country, it would not be appropriate to hold biennial election to the authorities like the national and state disaster management authorities, it stated.

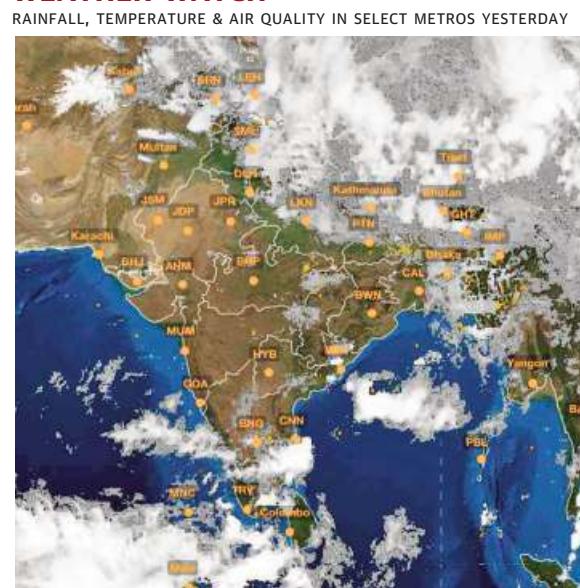


Police screening motorists during the lockdown in Hyderabad. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

respectively till the pandemic situation significantly improves and conditions become conducive to hold these biennial elections," the ECI said in a statement.

It would take a decision at an "appropriate time in the future" after taking into account the inputs from the States concerned and assessing the situation from authorities like the national and state disaster management authorities, it stated.

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at a few isolated places over Sikkim, West Bengal, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Lakshadweep. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttarakhand, central Maharashtra, Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 1...	31.7...	24.9	Kozhikode	... 1...	31.7...	26.0
Ahmedabad	... 41.3...	34.8...	24.5	Kurnool	... 37.8...	28.0	
Aizawl	21.2...	24.8...	16.1	Lucknow	0.8...	32.0...	20.6
Al tahab	... 34.0...	23.9		Madurai	... 37.8...	27.4	
Bengaluru	... 31.9...	20.7		Mangalore	... 33.1...	22.0	
Bhopal	... 40.7...	24.5		Mumbai	... 33.7...	28.0	
Bhubaneswar	32.8...	35.9...	27.9	Mysuru	6...	35.0...	21.5
Chandigarh	0.6...	30.0...	27.1	New Delhi	0.3...	31.3...	21.3
Chennai	... 37.2...	28.8		Patna	1...	32.0...	20.0
Coimbatore	... 35.2...	25.2		Port Blair	... 34.6...	26.2	
Dehradun	19.1...	28.2...	18.4	Puducherry	... 35.5...	26.8	
Gangtok	1.5...	16.6...	13.6	Pune	... 36.7...	27.7	
Goa	... 36.0...	27.6		Raipur	3...	37.2...	26.9
Guwahati	13...	31.8...	19.7	Ranchi	0.8...	31.2...	19.0
Hubballi	... 32.0...	24.0		Shillong	11...	22.0...	14.1
Hyderabad	7...	38.8...	23.5	Shimla	11...	15.7...	9.1
Imphal	9...	25.4...	17.6	Srinagar	13...	21.9...	9.1
Jaipur	... 38.0...	25.2		Thiruvananthapuram	95...	33.1...	23.3
Kochi	51...	31.2...	25.2	Tiruchi	... 39.6...	28.0	
Kohima	3...	23.6...	14...	Vijayawada	... 37.6...	27.8	
Kolkata	9...	32.8...	22.3	Visakhapatnam	... 36.6...	27.8	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	31	34	26	73	86	...
Bengaluru	6	60	61	34	51	...
Chennai	15	4	9	273	324	...
Delhi	8	6	46	124	119	...
Hyderabad	3	30	16	34	58	...
Kolkata	6	34	21	46	49	...
Lucknow	7	32	78	79	103	...
Mumbai	83	31	12	39	93	...
Pune	6	12	54	33	39	...
Visakhapatnam	14	36	7	21	48	...

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Thane, Maharashtra recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 259 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 10.

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

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

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

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

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

Karnataka's test positivity still high at 27%

344 more lives lost in State; Bengaluru records over 15,000 cases; A.P. has 2,01,042 active cases

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU



Frantic rush: A patient being taken to the COVID-19 ward at a hospital in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

Thursday, 68,658 people were vaccinated.

Andhra Pradesh reported 89 more deaths and 22,399 new infections on Thursday.

The death toll touched 9,077 and the last 1,000 deaths were reported in just 12 days. The number of active cases crossed two lakh.

Over a third of active cases were in West Godavari (13.74%), Chittoor (11.04%) and Visakhapatnam (10.16%) put together.

Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram reported 11 deaths each, Chittoor and East Godavari nine each, Krishna and Prakasam eight each, Srikrishna seven, Guntur six, Nellore five and Kadapa, Kurnool and West Godavari four each, while Anantapur reported three deaths in the past day.

In Telangana, 4,693 tested positive on Thursday while tests were ramped up to 71,221 from 69,525 the previous day. The number of deaths stood at 33. The official bulletin said active cases had reduced to 56,917.

Greater Hyderabad and surrounding districts showed high figures, with GHMC having 734 new positive cases.

Tamil Nadu recorded 30,622 fresh cases of COVID-19 on Thursday. Chennai saw a marginal dip as its daily tally dropped below 7,000 after four days. A total of 6,991 people tested positive for COVID-19 in the city.

The State recorded 297 deaths.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Chennai bureaus)

Maharashtra extends 'Break the Chain' restrictions till June 1

Negative RT-PCR test made must for entering State by any mode of transport

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Even as the cases have been declining somewhat in the State in the last few days, the Maharashtra government on Thursday decided to extend its 'Break the Chain' restrictions currently in force till June 1.

An order issued by Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and the Disaster Management Act, 2005, extended all previous curbs that had been imposed under the orders of April 13, 21, and 29 "till 7 a.m. on June 1".

The order mandates that any person entering the State by any mode of transport will have to carry a negative RT-PCR test report which would have to be issued a maximum 48 hours before his entry into Maharashtra. "The restrictions on persons arriving



Festive rush: Shoppers throng Mohammed Ali Road in Mumbai on the eve of Id on Thursday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

from places of 'sensitive origins' as per orders dated April 18 and May 1 will be applicable to anyone arriving from any part of the country into the State," the directive said.

It further says that in case of cargo carriers not more than two persons may be allowed to travel in the same. In the event of these carriers originating from outside the State, they would have to enter with a negative RT-PCR test. The directive has ordered local district administrations to keep a "special vigil over rural markets and

agriculture produce market committees (APMCs) and ensure COVID-19 appropriate behaviour".

The order further empowers district administrations to shut down APMCs after reviewing the situation on case-by-case basis in the event of indiscipline behaviour by errant citizens and vendors or violations of pandemic norms on their part.

At the cabinet meeting held on Wednesday, there was a general unanimity on the imperative to extend lockdown-like restrictions until cases and fatalities had drastically dropped in the State.

While a number of districts in north Maharashtra and the Marathwada region besides cities like Mumbai and Pune have been showing a declining trend, cases are on the rise in the sugar heartland of western Maharashtra.

Our work speaks for us, says Deputy CM office

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Faced with criticism for seeking a private agency to handle publicity of his office, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday ordered to cancel the tender.

The Deputy CM office

from the Centre how a 'non-permitted' vaccine was allowed to be administered to the residents of France and their relatives living here.

"Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V are the 3 vaccines that are permitted in India by our government. According to information received by me, the French Embassy in India had procured the Moderna vaccine and it was being administered to its nationals in Navi Mumbai despite only three other vaccines being permitted in the country



Temporary respite

Price stability must be maintained even as steps to boost demand are taken

The latest retail inflation and industrial output data from the National Statistical Office (NSO) offer some relief from the pall of gloom cast by the relentless second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Provisional headline inflation slowed to a three-month low of 4.29% in April, helped by softer food prices and a statistical base effect. The rate using an imputed index for the year-earlier period was 7.22%. A separate NSO release showed March industrial output jumped by 22.4%, benefiting again from the fact that the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had posted an 18.7% contraction in March 2020, when the economy was halted by the start of a nationwide lockdown. A closer look at the inflation data reveals a substantial cooling in the prices of cereals, milk and milk products, vegetables, and pulses and products. While both cereals and vegetables saw a deflationary trend widen to -2.96% and -14.2%, respectively, dairy products, which have the second-largest weight in the food and beverages category, also slid into deflation territory at -0.13%. And price gains in pulses, which had been bothering monetary policy makers by having been stubbornly stuck in the double digits over an 18-month stretch, decelerated into single digits to reach a 20-month low of 7.51%. The combined impact slowed inflation across the food and beverages group by more than 250 basis points to 2.66%.

Still, the same Consumer Price Index data also point to persistent price pressures that could potentially fan faster inflation in the coming months, especially at a time when the socio-economic burden of the crippling pandemic and the impact of the lockdown that several States are resorting to is yet to be fully gauged. Price gains in meat and fish quickened to 16.7% and was little changed at 10.6% in the case of eggs, while inflation in oils and fats accelerated almost 100 basis points to 25.9%. Transport and communication also remained in the double-digit range at 11.04%, despite benefiting from the virtual freeze in the pump prices of petroleum products that coincided with last month's Assembly elections. Now, with global crude oil starting to firm again and local petrol and diesel prices resuming their upward trajectory, the prospect of haulage costs – for transporting goods from factory and farm gates – rising in the near term is very real. Add to the mix rising international commodity prices and the outlook for inflation gets even more cloudy. Industrial production numbers may also provide cheer only for a limited period, aided in no small measure by output having cratered in the first few months of the last fiscal. IHS Markit's PMI survey for April showed new orders and output having slowed to eight-month lows, and with the pandemic-triggered factory shutdowns threatening supply disruptions, industrial production and inflation face challenges. Policymakers must stay vigilant to ensure price stability even as measures to bolster demand are the need of the hour.

Assam brew

Himanta Biswa Sarma cannot continue with the BJP's evasive position on citizenship

The transfer of power in Assam, from Sarbananda Sonowal to Himanta Biswa Sarma was a smooth affair albeit mediated by the Bharatiya Janata Party's central leadership. Mr. Sarma has been the key strategist and troubleshooter for the BJP, not only in Assam, but in the entire northeast, for six years now. It would have been unsustainable for the party to keep him away from the post of the Chief Minister any longer. He was a key figure in the Congress until 2015, when he walked out of it to instantly emerge as the face of the BJP. A champion of pluralism as a Congress leader, Mr. Sarma grew strident as a polarising figure in Assam as a BJP leader. The BJP won Assam for a second consecutive time on the back of intense Hindu consolidation that swept through autonomous tribal regions, and across Bengali and Assamese speakers. Mr. Sarma has said his government would expand the welfare schemes started in the BJP's first term, particularly targeting women and tea garden workers. That is hardly a controversial move, apart from the additional burden it might put on the State finances. The real challenge for him is in balancing the conflicting expectations of the constituents of the party's support base with regard to the new citizenship regime legislated by the Centre.

Mr. Sarma's government has already moved the Supreme Court for a re-verification of the Assam National Register of Citizens (NRC). The State government alleges "major irregularities" in its making – ineligible inclusions and unreasonable exclusions. An application by the State also prays for the deletion of illegal voters from Assam's electoral rolls. The final draft of the NRC published in August 2019 had excluded 19.06 lakh out of 3.3 crore applications for lack of adequate documents establishing them as Indian citizens. Some think too few have been excluded. The CM wants up to 20% re-verification in the NRC for areas bordering Bangladesh and 10% for interior areas; and the Supreme Court's guidance on the issue if discrepancies are found. The BJP's evasive position on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which Assamese nationalists fear will open a floodgate of Bengali Hindus into the State besides granting citizenship to those who are already there, has been successful as an electoral strategy this time. That it is a central law and the State has little to do with it is technically correct, but it is disingenuous for a party that is in power at both levels. The BJP has been riding a tiger on the citizenship question. The party must use its fresh mandate in Assam as an opportunity to refresh its approach towards peoples and their movements in the northeast with compassion and realism.

The crime of enforced disappearances must end

Cases especially in Asia are not decreasing, with domestic criminal law systems insufficient to deal with this atrocity



TAE-UNG BAIK

The democracy movement in Myanmar is at a critical juncture. On February 1, 2021, the military launched a coup d'état to overthrow the democratically elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy.

The military is committed to suppressing the people's movement, and the police are carrying out unimaginable acts of violence and oppression against those demanding freedom of expression and the restoration of democracy.

Since the coup, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) has received reports of enforced disappearances from the family members of victims. There is concern that there will be a plethora of cases of enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, and even murder if the situation continues to deteriorate.

Myanmar is not the only country in Asia that enforced disappearances are becoming a major concern. There are other leaders and regimes that have the mistaken notion that they can do anything to maintain their power. Regrettably, this includes using enforced disappearances as a tool to suppress the people.

Concerns around minorities

In China, the Working Group has received numerous reports from family members and concerned civil society organisations that a massive number of enforced disappearances have occurred in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Under the pretext of re-education to prevent terrorism, members of the Uyghur minority ethnic

group are forcibly sent to what Chinese authorities call 'vocational education and training centers', with no information on their whereabouts and fate given to their families.

The Working Group Chair has met many people from the region who are trying to find out what happened to their family members and they are living in fear. It is especially concerning because the basis for such forced disappearances is often very trivial: for example, having relatives living abroad or maintaining international contacts could lead to an enforced disappearance. Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location (RSDL) under Article 73 of the amended Criminal Procedure Law, is used against individuals accused of endangering state security, and is another issue of serious concern. Because RSDL places individuals under incommunicado detention without disclosing their whereabouts, it may amount to a form of enforced disappearance.

Post-conflict issues

Sri Lanka has experienced more than three decades of domestic conflict, which was accompanied by various forms of enforced disappearances. It seemed that there was some hope developing because of efforts by the government to confront its history. However, recently, the government is weakening initiatives it previously started to search for and investigate enforced disappearances and has now returned to promoting a culture of impunity for these crimes.

It is also disheartening to point out that enforced disappearances are being committed in the name of counter-terrorism measures. Increasing numbers of enforced disappearances are being reported in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and it does not seem that the situation will improve in the near future.

Enforced disappearances became widely known to the world



in the 1970s and the early 1980s during the 'Dirty War' in Argentina where the Argentine military dictatorship committed the forceful disappearances of some 30,000 of its own citizens while denying that they kidnapped, tortured, and murdered them. To fight against these gross and systematic human rights violations, the UN Commission on Human Rights established the Working Group in 1980 as the first special procedure mechanism of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

An enforced disappearance is defined by several constituent elements. First, it is characterised by the deprivation of liberty, where persons are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived of their liberty. Second, there are grounds for seeking governmental responsibility for the act, including of officials of different branches or levels of government or by organised groups or private individuals acting on behalf of, or with the support, direct or indirect, consent or acquiescence of the government. Third, such an act typically occurs in the context of a state's continuous refusal to take relevant action, including refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of their liberty, which places such persons outside the protection of the law.

Remedial measures

Under the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance (1992), the Working Group works to assist fa-

milies of disappeared persons to ascertain the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared and to assist and monitor states' compliance. Additionally, with the assistance of the secretariat members based in Geneva, the Working Group monitors states' compliance, and documented cases of enforced disappearance. The Working Group receives individual petitions from victims' families and civil society members, and channels them through to the relevant governments to demand searches for the disappeared persons, investigations, and punishment for those responsible. The WGEID also presses states to offer remedies, including compensation and a guarantee of non-recurrence of the violations.

Since its inception, the Working Group has transmitted a total of 58,606 cases to 109 states, and as of 2020, the number of outstanding cases under active consideration stood at 46,271 in a total of 92 states. Unfortunately, the number of cases of enforced disappearances in Asian states is not decreasing and we are seeing a rapid increase in some countries.

The Working Group has serious concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on enforced disappearances. Not only have enforced disappearances continued during the pandemic, but it has generated new contexts for enforced disappearances and has reduced the capacity of all actors to take the necessary action to search for and investigate cases of disappeared persons.

Ratifying the Convention

To protect the right to be free from enforced disappearances, the international community adopted the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2006, which became effective in 2010. However, the number of participating states is still very low compared to other treaties. Among 63

member states of the treaty, only eight states from the Asia-Pacific region have ratified or acceded to the treaty. Only four East Asian states – Cambodia, Japan, Mongolia, and Sri Lanka have ratified it.

Asian countries should consider their obligations and responsibilities more seriously and reject a culture of impunity in order to eradicate enforced disappearances. They should also understand that their domestic criminal law systems are not sufficient to deal with the crime of enforced disappearance. An enforced disappearance is a continuous crime that needs a comprehensive approach to fight against it.

While working as an expert for the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group for the past five years, I have come to understand that one of the most tragic dimensions of the crime of enforced disappearance is the suffering that is inflicted on the people who know the victims. Enforced disappearance is a serious crime that goes against the philosophy of humanity. The pain and suffering of the family members do not end until they find out the fate or whereabouts of their loved ones. Bottles of water and facial tissues should always be readily available when interviewing the family members of the disappeared persons because their stories cannot be told without tears.

Mothers looking for sons, wives looking for husbands, and the children looking for parents demonstrate the endless chain of tragedy in our contemporary world. This human atrocity must end immediately. I hope that the international community will strengthen its efforts to eradicate enforced disappearances as soon as possible.

Tae-Ung Baik, Professor, is Chair, UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The article has been co-published with the *'Melbourne Asia Review'* (<https://bit.ly/3fdkWjd>), Asia Institute, University of Melbourne

Mucormycosis risk mitigation in the COVID battle

Diabetes control can lower the chances of dangerous side-effects in COVID-19 treatment such as this fungal infection



V. MOHAN

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to play havoc all over the world and India is no exception to this. While 70%-80% of those affected with COVID-19 recover without many side-effects, about 20%-30% of patients affected with symptomatic COVID-19 might require hospitalisation – here, a minority can get worse and require treatment in an intensive care unit (ICU). Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic was first described from Wuhan in China, it is quite clear that it is people with comorbidities such as being of an older age, obese, having uncontrolled diabetes, heart or respiratory diseases and malignancies, who fare badly.

New worry

The new fear after the treatment of COVID-19, especially in an ICU setting, is contracting a severe disease known as mucormycosis. This is a serious, but rare, fungal infection caused by a group of fungi known as mucormycetes. Mucormycosis usually affects people who have poor immunity, and those with uncontrolled diabetes

have the highest risk of developing it. Other risk factors of mucormycosis include steroid treatment, those who have malignancies, HIV/AIDS and those who have been treated with medicines such as deferoxamine for iron overload conditions. When the COVID-19 infection takes a more serious turn, heavy doses of steroids are given to the patient as a life-saving measure. Unfortunately, this can precipitate new onset diabetes in those who do not have diabetes, or substantially raise blood glucose levels in those persons who already have diabetes. This sets the scene for the development of mucormycosis.

Types and diagnosis

Mucormycosis is of several types, of which the commonest is rhino-orbital-cerebral mucormycosis. This starts as a common cold or sinusitis, but soon spreads to the eyes producing redness of the eyes, and later bulging of the eyes known as proptosis. It may eventually lead to paralysis of some of the eye muscles, or even to blindness. It can also spread to the brain, and if this occurs, the prognosis is very grave. Other forms of mucormycosis include the pulmonary form in which the lungs are mainly involved and less common cutaneous mucormycosis or disseminated mucormycosis, where it spreads throughout the body. The last two are also associated with very poor prognosis.

A very high index suspicion of mucormycosis is needed by the clinician treating COVID-19 cases, particularly in the setting of diabetes and steroid use. If the condition is diagnosed early and aggressive treatment given, the prognosis is good. Antifungal drugs such as Amphotericin B are used, but they are quite toxic and also expensive. If the involvement is extensive, radical surgery may be needed as a lifesaving measure in some cases, including removal of the jaw or the eye.

Sugar control, steroid use

It is very important for those with diabetes to keep their sugar levels under very good control. The dose of antidiabetic drugs will have to be adjusted and, in most cases, insulin would be needed to keep the sugars under control throughout the day. If steroids have to be used, their judicious use is recommended. For e.g., steroids should be given only at the appropriate stage



of the disease, in optimal doses, and for as short a period of time as possible. Meticulous hygiene and care of the equipment inside the ICU including oxygen tubes and ventilators should be done in order to reduce the risk of fungal and other infections. In the case of mucormycosis, the adage 'prevention is better than cure' could not be more true. It is worth emphasising the point that steroids do not have any role in the prophylaxis or the prevention of COVID-19. Indeed, steroids reduce one's immunity and may actually increase the risk of developing COVID-19. Also, in the initial phase of viremia (medical term for viruses present in the bloodstream), the use of steroids can actually disseminate the virus widely, thereby worsening the COVID-19 infection. It is only when the cytokine storm is suspected, (which usually occurs in the second week of the COVID-19 infection) that steroids should be used, and that too with discretion.

Monitor blood glucose

I find that in many patients who were put on steroids for COVID-19, their blood glucose levels are not adequately monitored, leading to extremely, and often dangerously, high blood glucose levels. This can also precipitate diabetic ketoacidosis – a classic situation where the more dangerous forms of mucormycosis occur. Hence, those treating COVID-19 infection must

pay equal importance to the control of diabetes.

To those with diabetes, my advice to them would be to have a healthy diet which has a lot of vegetables and less cereals (rice or chapati) and include more protein in the form of bengal gram, green gram, black gram, or mushroom. They must also have an active and regular exercise programme. It is very important for them to have their medicines regularly and if the sugars are not under control, to switch over to insulin if needed, at least for a short period. All these measures will help to effect good control of diabetes which can reduce the risk of developing COVID-19 and also its dangerous side-effects including mucormycosis.

Finally, frequent monitoring of sugar levels should be done by using a hand-held blood glucose meter. It is possible to wear a small sensor patch on the upper arm which can continuously monitor a person's blood glucose levels and thus keep it under good control throughout the day.

It is also very important to get oneself fully vaccinated. Vaccination will ensure that the risk of developing severe COVID-19, requiring hospitalisation and thus the risk of developing dangerous infections such as mucormycosis, can be drastically reduced.

Dr. V. Mohan is Chairman, Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

PSU vaccine production

The mess over procuring vaccines, with some States now deciding to float global tenders, shows the pivotal role played by the public sector in the health care of the people at large. The villainous role some politicians played in closing vaccine production units in the public sector, including the universally known Pasteur Institute, is to blame. Though they are limping back, crucial time has been lost.

S.S. RAJAGOPALAN,

Chennai

Vaccine issues

It is a sorry state of affairs that some States are now having to suspend vaccination for those in the age group of 18-44 as there

is no vaccine stock. As things stand today, the central government's vaccine policy is falling apart with chaos evident in supply and pricing. That some States are now preparing to float global tenders for the supply of COVID-19 vaccines highlights the level of frustration.

J.P. REDDY,
Nalgonda, Telangana

■ My wife and I, 67 years and 69 years, respectively, had our first dose of 'Covishield' on March 11, and our second on April 22 on completion of six weeks from the date of the first dose – the official norm of inter-dose interval. There are now media reports that this norm has been or is to be changed to 12 to 16

weeks. If this is true, what is the impact on us and scores of others who received the second dose six weeks from the date of the first dose? Will the ICMR likely prescribe a third dose for us and others in our category? Can we reasonably presume that the stretch in inter-dose interval is just an administrative strategy to control the scramble for the second dose in view of the heavy shortage of vaccines? I am assuring myself that the ICMR is the competent body to handle such issues and would offer its advice on a scientific basis.

P.G. CHACKO,

Bengaluru

■ The government should provide free diagnosis, treatment and, in the event

of the unfortunate, the expenses too. I wonder why some of our political leaders, knowing that the pandemic has assumed the nature of a 'human catastrophe', failed to make such a plea to the Prime Minister. The Opposition's petition (Page 1, May 13), by adding issues such as the Central Vista and farm laws apart from making insinuations against the Prime Minister, seems to reduce the gravity of the main demand – 'free, universal vaccination'. The fact that Opposition leaders have not supported a single policy or programme of the government of the day also appears to question their sincerity.

P.R.V. RAJA,

Pandalam, Kerala

■ It is clear that providing for private sector sale of the vaccine is not only discriminatory but likely to prove wasteful too. A pandemic is surely no time to go for the statistically neat sounding formula of 50-25-25. State governments and the Opposition must also bear its share of the blame for having demanded a full roll-out of the vaccine, unmindful of its availability. A more reasonable and fair mechanism would have been to gradually increase the range of the age-groups eligible for vaccination. Whatever be the way ahead, the apartheid of digital and resource mandatoriness for availing vaccination has to go.

FIROZ AHMAD,

Should political prisoners be released during the pandemic?

PARLEY

Political prisoners can be let out on bail and be treated like they are in detention

As the second wave of the pandemic rages across India, the country's overcrowded prisons are in danger of becoming major hotspots for the spread of the disease. Dozens of political prisoners, mainly civil rights activists, continue to languish in prison indefinitely with no possibility of their trials commencing any time soon. In a conversation moderated by Jayant Sriram, Sanjay Hegde and V. Suresh discuss whether political prisoners should be released in view of the pandemic. Edited excerpts:

The Supreme Court has dismissed the bail plea of Gautam Navlakha in the Bhima Koregaon case. When we talk about political prisoners in India, there are a few prominent cases that come to mind thanks to the media – activists arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case, activists arrested during the anti-CAA [Citizenship (Amendment) Act] protests, and those detained in Kashmir. How many others are there that we just don't hear about and who is not getting any legal aid right now?

V. Suresh: The unfortunate reality is that people seem to think that political prisoners are there only with regard to these high-profile cases. Actually there are cases from about 12-13 States – hundreds of people have been arrested and kept in prison for what are essentially political offences. This means that they have been put in prison on account of their political affiliations or allegations that they participated in conspiracies of a political nature. It's a pity that many of these prisoners are not known; their cases have not come to the public eye. There are hundreds of Adivasi prisoners in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. There are people belonging to the minority communities in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, apart from Delhi and other places.

Even during the pandemic, we see that political prisoners are repeatedly denied bail with no

indication that the trial for the offences they have been put in jail for will start any time soon. What could be the justification for keeping them in prison?

Sanjay Hegde: You have to see why they were arrested in the first place. They were arrested because a political executive, headed by the respective Home Ministries, whether of the Centre or the States, said, do something about these people. The police then file an FIR, do an investigation which results in a charge sheet, and then arrest the person. The arrest is then defended through the courts, and when particularly harsh provisions like the UAPA [Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act] are applied, then, thanks to certain judgments of the Supreme Court, there's almost no chance of the person getting bail in the interim period. Now, if the UAPA is invoked, or if something like sedition is invoked, technically, the sentence could extend to life. So, these people do not even have the benefit of ordinary administrative orders which have been passed, which say that anybody likely to face a sentence of less than seven years can be released during the pandemic. The courts themselves have passed such orders. It's a different thing that these trials do not even start. And when they are heard, it will be after the 14 years that a normal life sentence entails. We do not have a system in the country; we have a process. And the process is the punishment.

For prisoners held under provisions like the UAPA, is there any other recourse during the pandemic other than repeatedly applying for bail?

SH: The only other recourse is political, i.e., if the charges are dropped. The state always has the right to withdraw charges. The moment the UAPA or anything is invoked, the judges give it extremely careful attention, more than it deserves, and tend to lean more towards keeping the person detained. None of our laws were built with the idea that a



When you have such a low conviction rate [under the UAPA], what is the justification for keeping people inside for long periods during the pandemic when they are at the mercy of the prison administration?

V. SURESH

UAPA and sedition cases.

Let's look at the conviction rates as per the NCRB [National Crime Records Bureau] report of 2019. The conviction rate for the UAPA shows a very low 3.1%. If you take earlier laws like TADA [Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act], it was 1.4%. POTA [Prevention of Terrorism Act] was relatively better, but on the whole, we have abysmal conviction rates. These conviction rates in many cases are poor not because the investigating officers goofed up but because these offences often did not actually take place, they were cooked up.

As Mr. Hegde mentioned, the process itself is the punishment and in PUCL [People's Union for Civil Liberties], we have been arguing that if you let people out on bail, that itself will reduce the harshness of many of these laws.

Now, in a context like COVID-19, there has been a classification of prisoners into those who are facing a sentence of seven years or less, those who are facing a sentence of more than seven years and those who have been convicted under special laws like the UAPA. This clas-

sification was made by a committee set up by the Maharashtra government and it recommended that only the first category can be eligible for release, to decongest the prisons.

This categorisation defies common sense. When you have such a low conviction rate, what is the justification for keeping people inside for long periods during the pandemic when they are at the mercy of the prison administration?

This was challenged in the Bombay High Court by the NAPM [National Alliance of People's Movements] and went up to the Supreme Court as well, but the classification of prisoners was upheld.

Now, the latest order of the Bombay High Court in a PUCL application before it records that 241 prisoners tested positive. Another worrying fact is that a number of jail staff, too, have tested positive. So, when you look at it from any which angle – jurisprudential, political or humanitarian – there's no justification for keeping these prisoners in jail for such long periods. The courts have also recorded the fact that 95% of the people who were let out on interim bail had reported back when the situation had improved in January this year. So, there's no reason why these prisoners should not be out on bail.

Dr. Suresh brings up an issue here, that in India and globally, prisons are considered hotspots for the virus to spread. There have been numerous instances in which the courts have noted that there is an overcrowding of prisons. Have any reforms or solutions to this problem been advocated?

SH: The courts can pass orders but the responsibility for implementation lies with the administration. And if the administration doesn't implement it during a pandemic, it is hardly likely that there will be material before the courts to pull up the administration in contempt or anything like that.

To the best of my knowledge, all that the administrations have been doing is trying to decongest prisons, but this by itself is no guarantee against infection. We have no idea about prisoners' vaccinations. The congestion still continues because

even if people are released on bail or parole, many are unable to meet bail conditions, for instance.

The point is that unless the administration as a matter of policy really looks at all these prosecutions that it has launched and says, okay, where there are no repeat offenders, where the offences are relatively marginal, where people have spent a year or two in prison, it is better to just close the file by withdrawing the prosecution, or accepts plea bargains from the prisoners, so that they can be released into society and into the slightly better safety that the outside world affords, what they're essentially doing is allowing the possibility of small sentences to degenerate into a sentence of death within the prison walls.

VS: Look at what happened with the case of Sudha Bharadwaj or Sidique Kappan, both very well-known cases. Sudha Bharadwaj was said to be COVID-19 negative but she fell very ill over the past couple of weeks. Kappan, who tested positive for COVID-19, was shifted from a U.P. jail to Delhi because of the Supreme Court. And even before the order had been worked out, the U.P. police took him back, right under the nose of the Supreme Court. Now this shows the type of disdain that the executive has towards the Supreme Court.

In the case of political prisoners, nobody from outside can go in, there is no communication from inside coming outside. So, if at all you get to know what the situation is outside, it's more by accident than by a system in place, which makes it all the more important for us to open up these jails. Otherwise, you will only have a sense of casualties which will add to the number of COVID-19 deaths. What's the point in talking about it in a post-mortem manner when you could have very easily ensured that there is better care for these prisoners? The examples of Sudha and Kappan are only examples; there are probably numerous other examples in other States which are never heard about – Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra, and various other States. I think we need to really focus on many of these States because we don't get to know what's happening there.



V. Suresh
is National General Secretary for the People's Union for Civil Liberties



Sanjay Hegde
is Senior Advocate,
Supreme Court of India



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

Reforming medical education

An unfettered market approach is not the answer to the health workforce crisis

SOUMITRA GHOSH

India's health systems have been confronting numerous challenges. In order to effectively address these challenges, our health systems must be strengthened. One of the critical building blocks of the health system is human resources. The serious shortage of health workers, especially doctors, in some northern States is a major impediment for achieving the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. Health workers are critical not just for the functioning of health systems but also for the preparedness of health systems in preventing, detecting and responding to threats posed by diseases such as COVID-19. If urgent action is not taken, the shortage will amplify and health systems will get further weakened.

The workforce crisis has been aggravated by the imbalances within the country. For instance, the doctor-population ratio in northern States is far short of the required norm, while the southern States, barring Telangana, have enough doctors in possession. There is also a general lack of adequate staffing in rural areas.

Shutting out the poor
These health system challenges will remain largely unaddressed with the government's market-oriented approach towards medical education.

There is no denying that in order to meet the significant shortfall of qualified doctors in northern States, scaling up of medical education is warranted. However, certain proposals, such as the NITI Aayog's proposal of allowing private entities to take over district hospitals for converting them into teaching hospitals with at least 150 MBBS seats, may sound attractive but there are reasons to be deeply concerned. Through the implementation of such a policy, the private sector in medical education will be encouraged; it will also directly aid the corporatisation processes of healthcare provisioning while the under-resourced public health system will be a collateral damage.

District hospitals are considered as the last resort for the poor. This will change. The corporatisation will make the services very costly and exclude them from getting care. Even from the perspective of producing more doctors to meet the shortages in under-served areas, this is unlikely

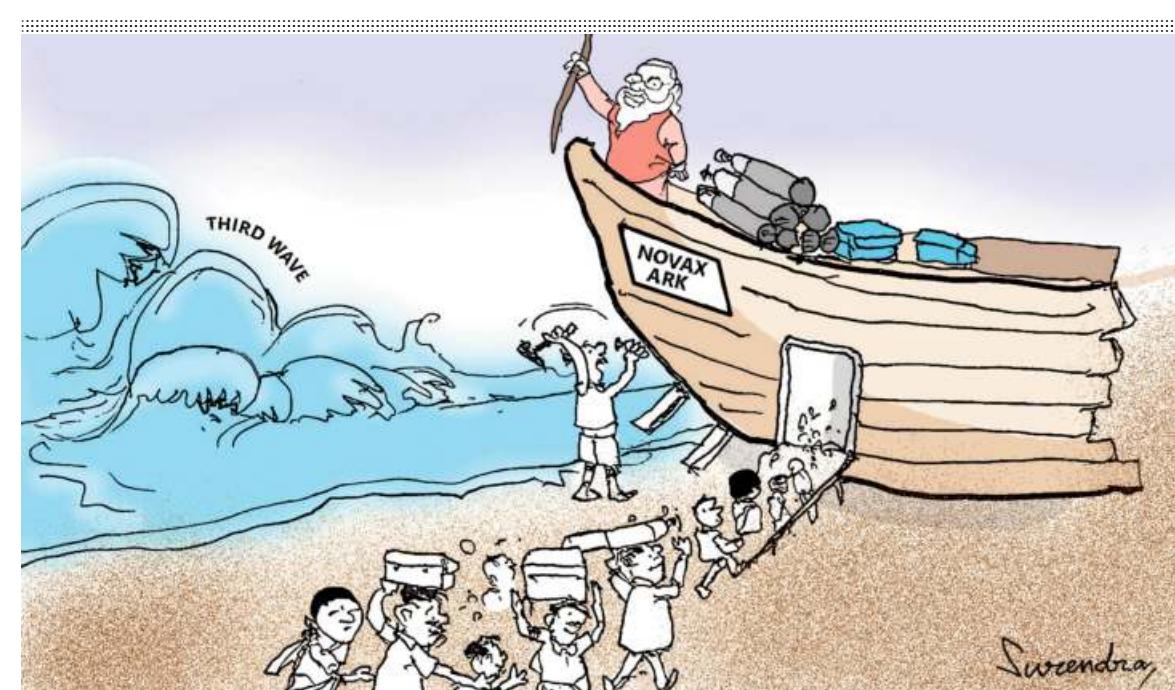
to yield the desired result. Private players treat medical education as a business. Thus, it would shut the door on a large number of medical aspirants who would otherwise have a strong motivation to work in rural areas but do not have the means to finance themselves. Additionally, the medical graduates trained in such private sector 'managed' medical colleges will prefer to find employment in corporate hospitals and not in rural areas to regain their investment. Further, this proposal is not aligned with India's national health policy goals like achieving universal health care and health equity. Instead, it will widen health inequalities further.

Solving doctor shortage, therefore, needs long-term thinking and commitment from the political leadership. The government should learn from previous cases of public-private partnerships (PPPs). In the past, contrary to the expectation that markets would help increasing access to primary and tertiary care for the poor through private players, the evidence supporting their effectiveness is very limited. In fact, many PPPs had to be shelved owing to the non-compliance of the agreement conditions by the private sector under which they were also supposed to cater to the non-paying patients.

A public good
An unfettered market approach or a regulated market with medical colleges that are publicly funded but privately operated, providing competition for traditional government medical colleges, is not the answer to the health workforce crisis. Medical education is a public good as its purpose is to improve the population health and decrease disease burden.

The pandemic has provided us an opportunity to make medical education a public good once again. There should be a substantial step-up in public investment in medical education. By establishing new medical colleges, the government can increase student intake as well as enhance equitable access to medical education. Besides, it must allocate adequate financial resources to strengthen the overall capacity of existing medical colleges to enrich student learning and improve output.

Soumitra Ghosh is Associate Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences



NOTEBOOK

Fact and fiction in a fake news epidemic

Only science, free from politics, can help us understand the origins of the virus

ANANTH KRISHNAN

Was this the smoking gun? "Chinese military scientists discussed weaponising SARS coronaviruses" was the headline of a report in *The Australian*, which flashed on my WhatsApp one morning this week. Before noon, I'd received the report from half a dozen people with the familiar prescription: "Must read!"

The report said it had unearthed a leaked document written by Chinese military scientists speaking of weaponising coronaviruses, confirming what has for long been suspected by conspiracy theorists ever since the pandemic began in Wuhan, China.

But there was a small catch. The secret document cited in the report was from a not-so-secret book published in China in 2015, which is still available in Chinese bookstores. It also turned out that the authors, including Xu Dezhong, formerly a professor at the Air Force Medical University, were speaking of

first SARS epidemic being "weaponised" not by China, but by foreign powers unleashing a virus on the Chinese population. Not that these two details made much of a difference as the story continued to go, well, viral.

The belated publicity was not entirely bad news for Mr. Xu. On one online Chinese bookstore, Dangdang, there was a "10-fold increase" in the price of the book, observed Pan Chengxin, a professor at Deakin University in Australia. The book, by most accounts, wasn't taken very seriously in China – perhaps until this week.

Shortly before *The Australian* report, another article on the origins of COVID-19 evoked discussion. A 10,000-word essay by Nicholas Wade, previously a science reporter for *The New York Times*, made a strong case for why a laboratory accident couldn't be ruled out, citing, among other things, the outbreak beginning in Wuhan, home to the premier Chinese lab

studying coronaviruses; the absence of a natural bat population there; and the inability to find an intermediate animal host, as was found after the first SARS epidemic, establishing its natural origins. Mr. Wade went a step further, suggesting there were scientific reasons to suggest this virus was not natural. That claim was, however, rebutted by many virologists including Kristian Andersen, who pointed out that his argument of an unusual "furin cleavage site" being a smoking gun was "the only specific argument put forward to support a lab leak" and was "false".

If you are confused at this point, you are not alone. For news reporters trying to separate fact from fiction, furin cleavage sites and codons might as well be Latin or Greek.

What Mr. Wade did, however, get right is his conclusion that there is no clear evidence either to support or rule out whether the virus came from nature or a lab. Indeed, a lab

accident and natural origins are not mutually exclusive possibilities, considering we may never know if the natural source was in a cave or in a cage.

Further muddying the search for origins is the politics. If the Trump administration in the U.S. prematurely wanted to claim the virus was lab-made despite thin evidence, China has spread its own conspiracy theories, with one Foreign Ministry spokesperson claiming that the virus was brought by the U.S. army to Wuhan. China has also been far from forthcoming, delaying access to Wuhan and not providing a WHO team with raw data. And forget about foreign researchers ever getting unrestricted access to the insides of Wuhan's labs, all of which will only lead to more doubts.

Ultimately, only science, free from politics, can give us a clear answer. But good science takes time, which is in short supply in an age where we demand immediate answers.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 14, 1971

President's rule for Gujarat

The President, Mr. V.V. Giri, to-day [New Delhi, May 13] issued a proclamation taking over administration of Gujarat State. The State Assembly has also been dissolved. This step has been taken following a report received from Mr. Shriman Narayan, Governor, that since no party was in a position to form a Government following the resignation of the Hitendra Desai Ministry, President's rule should be imposed. The Governor's report was not, however, released since it has to be placed before Parliament first before it is made public. But it is learnt that the Governor had clearly indicated that the political situation in the State was such that the party alignments had become uncertain and it would not be possible for any group to form a stable Ministry either alone or in association with others. He has also recommended dissolution of the State Assembly as advised by Mr. Hitendra Desai. To-day's action of the President paves the way for a mid-term election in the State which is expected to be held some time in November or December.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 14, 1921

Repression and violence

Mr. C.F. Andrews writes: It is with the deepest sense of pain, that I am obliged to write to the Press once more, in order to make a double protest. On the one hand, certain acts on the part of those who represent the Government of India in its official capacity, such as the imprisonment of young students, the prohibition of the wearing of Gandhi caps, the licentious use of Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code – these and other arbitrary and high-handed measures appear to me to have had the inevitable effect of inflaming the passions of the people. It is true, I have come across instances of admirable self-restraint in the exercise of penal force on the part of Government officials and to these I would bear personal testimony but there have been other instances, which have savoured directly of tyranny and against these I would make emphatic and indignant protest. On the other hand I have to protest against the violence of speech and the increasing action of violence on the popular side. During the past few weeks, I have been in constant touch with huge crowds of famished and desperate people, who have been on the strike in our great cities. I have, through this experience, realised more than ever before, how inflammable this material is; and if I have myself transgressed the bounds of calm and reasoned statement, in the excitement of the time in which we live, I sincerely regret it.

FROM PAGE ONE

Sputnik V to be available in India next week: govt.

Central Government in its new liberalized strategy, has made specific provisions that vaccines for COVID-19, which have been developed and are being manufactured in foreign countries and which have been granted emergency use authorization by National Regulators of United States, European Medicine Agency (EU), United Kingdom, Japan or which are listed in WHO (Emergency Use Listing), will be granted emergency use approval in India," it noted.

The Ministry added that it also provides for post-approval parallel bridging clinical trial in place of conduct of prior local clinical trial as per the provisions pre-

scribed under Second Schedule of the New Drugs & Clinical Trials Rules 2019.

Dr. Paul explained that the new "Liberalized Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy" aims at liberalised vaccine pricing and scaling up of vaccine coverage to incentivise vaccine manufacturers to rapidly augment their production and to attract new vaccine manufacturers.

"It would make pricing, procurement and administration of vaccines more flexible and ensure increased vaccine production as well as wider availability of vaccines in the country," he said.

Covishield second dose now after 12-16 weeks

The panel had also recommended that those infected with COVID-19 should be administered a vaccine after six months and people who had received plasma during treatment should get vaccinated at least after 12 weeks.

The Ministry said the recommendation of the COVID working group was also accepted by the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVC), headed by Dr. V.K. Paul, Member (Health), Niti Aayog, in a meeting on May 12.

At a press conference on Thursday, Dr. Paul said that the dosing interval extension had been recommended after a careful study without pressure from anyone

Dhankhar ignores Mamata view, visits riot-hit areas

Relations between Mr. Dhankhar and Ms. Banerjee have been far from cordial. The Trinamool Congress has been repeatedly accusing the Governor of "working to further the interests of the BJP in the State".

The visit to Cooch Behar is the first instance of a flashpoint in relations bet-

ween Raj Bhavan and the State Secretariat in the third term of the Trinamool government, which began on May 5. Earlier, there had been differences over the Governor summoning officials of the State government and commenting on the law and order situation in the State.

'Why not place convicts under house arrest'

Mr Navlakha had said he had spent several days in house arrest.

In the judgment, Justice Joseph elaborates the rather "long" history of house arrests starting with that of St. Paul the Apostle in Rome. Drawing vignettes from 'A Brief History of House Arrest and Electronic Monitoring' by J. Robert Lilly and Richard A. Ball, he refers to how "societies found in Poland, South Korea, India, and the Soviet Union are known to employ 'house arrest' primarily to deal with troublesome political dis-

senters". Justice Joseph details how 'house arrest' in India has its roots in laws providing for preventive detention.

He then moves on to how ankle bracelets have become an indispensable appendage to monitor compliance of house arrests in foreign countries.

He said how these bracelets were the product of an inspiration of a New Mexico district court judge "who read a comic strip where Spiderman was being tracked by a transmitter fixed to his wrist".

Congress mulling change in leadership in Kerala

BIJU GOVIND KOZHIKODE
After being roundly criticised for its rickety organisational structure, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) is contemplating a change of guard, replacing Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president Mullappally Ramachandran as well as Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Ramesh Chennithala.

The State leadership has been facing mounting demands for their immediate ouster for the downfall of the party in the Assembly election. Never before has the Congress party been electorally routed in recent

times.

The party won 21 seats this time, one less than in the 2016 Assembly election. However, its popular vote-share moderately improved to 25.1% from 23.8% last time. This has been attributed to the increase in the number of seats the party contested: 93 against 87.

Sources said the organisational revamp from the top would strengthen the mandalam and booth committees, and bring in a coordinated mechanism in the party.

The debilitated apparatus had resulted in the inability of the party leadership to chalk out a strategy for the Assembly election.

China told to keep prices stable

Expecting medical supply chains to remain open: India's envoy in Hong Kong

ANANTH KRISHNAN



A mobile oxygen concentrator. ■ FILE PHOTO

India has asked Chinese authorities to ensure prices for key medical supplies remain stable as costs for oxygen concentrators and other critical goods have surged on the back of rising demand.

"Our expectation at this point is that the supply chain should remain open and product prices should remain stable," Priyanka Chauhan, India's Consul General in Hong Kong, told the *South China Morning Post*.

"Even if there is a little bit of supply demand pressure, there has to be some stability and predictability to product prices," Ms. Chauhan said. "And there has to be a sense of governmental level support and efforts. I don't have the information as to how

much influence the Chinese government can have in this matter but if they can, then it would be welcome."

Chinese media are reporting that oxygen concentrators that were listed as selling for 1,000 yuan (around ₹11,000) on Chinese e-com-

merce websites such as Alibaba's Taobao are now selling for four or five times that amount and the final cost borne by individual buyers once the goods are sold in India is even higher.

Ms. Chauhan "appreciated the need for travel bans based on public health concerns, but added that India was asking China to facilitate cargo flights so that supplies could be delivered", the *South China Morning Post* reported, adding that "state-owned Sichuan Airlines Logistics suspended cargo flights to India for 15 days last month in response to the surge, which the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India warned would have a cascading effect on supply chains".

"Unreasonable control

should be avoided and transport linkages should be maintained," she said, adding that a phone call between the two Foreign Ministers had helped with some approvals but flights had not yet returned to the same frequency as earlier.

Since April, orders for at least 40,000 oxygen concentrators have been placed by Indian companies with Chinese firms, of which 21,000 have so far been delivered, along with more than 5,000 ventilators, 21 million face masks and 3,800 tons of medicines, according to Chinese customs figures.

On Sunday, the first batch of 100 oxygen concentrators and 40 ventilators donated by the Red Cross Society of China arrived on a cargo flight from China.

'Sweden assessing aid requirement'

Working closely with partners: envoy

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

Swedish companies operating in India have lost employees and their family members to the pandemic and Stockholm is assessing the required aid that will be sent to deal with the humanitarian crisis.

"We are working closely with partners in India to get an understanding of what is required on ground. It is heartening to see so many stepping up to the challenge – from government and large companies to individuals, including the Indian diaspora community in Sweden – each contributing to make a difference," said Ambassador of Sweden Klas Molin.

In a press statement, a group comprising Swedish businesses, agencies, individuals and the government said there are approximately 220 Swedish companies present in India with around 2,00,000 direct and more than 2.2 million indirect employees.

The Swedish Chamber of Commerce India (SCCI) has begun a move to save lives, livelihood and undertake preventive measures.

The Sweden India Business Council in Stockholm is coordinating with business houses of Sweden to provide medical supplies and care through Indian NGOs like Pratham, Indian Red Cross Society and Doctors without Borders.

Chhattisgarh stalls work on new Assembly

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Chhattisgarh government has put the construction of a new Assembly building complex on hold in the wake of COVID-19 situation, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel tweeted on Thursday.

The move comes two days after BJP president J.P. Nadda had written to Congress president Sonia Gandhi in which he had pointed out that "the people were contrasting the Congress stand on Central Vista with the Chhattisgarh government going ahead to build a new Assembly complex".

The Congress has been asking the Centre to spend the amount earmarked for the Central Vista project on tackling the pandemic.

Railways to revise pay for doctors

It has decided to pay medical practitioners on a par with State governments

**S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI**

The Indian Railways will pay medical practitioners (hired on contract) salary on a par with State governments.

The decision was taken after the authorities found it difficult to engage the doctors in the existing pay structure that was less compared to what the respective States were paying. The health infrastructure of the railways, one of the largest employers in the country, caters to the needs of about 12 lakh employees and their family across the country.

According to sources, the Ministry of Railways in a note to General Managers of Zonal Railways said that a decision was taken to extend the engagement of medical practitioners over and above the vacancies in Indian Rail-



A file photo of a doctor screening a migrant worker's family as they enter Thivim railway station in Goa.

way Health Service to meet local requirements for handling COVID-19 pandemic.

However, there were difficulties in engaging doctors in the present pay structure and there was a demand for parity with the remunera-

tion being paid by State governments. It was decided to empower General Managers to revise the salary paid to doctors on contractual assignment for a period of six months with effect from April 28, 2021 as a temporary

measure. The railways also decided to extend the engagement of retired para-medical staff, and hire para-medical staff on a contract basis over and above the sanctioned strength to manage the pandemic. The engagement will be valid till March 2022.

Order for Remdesivir

In a related development, the railways placed an order with M/s Cipla for supplying 7,500 doses of Remdesivir antiviral drug to 23 zones, production units, factories and others across its network, the sources. In a bid to boost the movement of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) by train, it was decided not to levy haulage charges on dummy or empty containers loaded in LMO container rakes, they said.

CJI hails judiciary, staff for braving the pandemic

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana paid tribute to the judiciary and court staff across the country for braving the "terrible psychological and mental strain" of the

pandemic in the line of duty.

"Thirty-four judicial officers and three Honourable Judges of the High Court have lost their life braving this pandemic," the Chief Justice said.

Webinar on how COVID is redefining jobs, life

Session to be organised on May 16

**STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI**

A webinar on "How COVID-19 is Redefining Jobs & Lifestyle" and its impact on students will be held on May 16 as a part of the webinar series organised by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) in association with The Hindu Group.

The SRM Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021 webinar series spotlights science, engineering and technology courses and their relevance to the 2020s workplace.

The webinar will begin at 11 a.m. on May 16. To register for the free webinar, visit <http://bit.ly/SRMTH6> or Scan the QR Code given.

SRMJEEE will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 will be held on May 23 and 24, and phase 2 will be held on July 25 and 26.



Name of Patient: Athmaja U.S. 1 Year. Hospital Name: Christian Medical College, Diagnosis: Aplastic Anemia. This is a type of Blood Disorder which is life threatening. The treatment option for her would be to undergo Allogeneic Stem Cell Transplantation. The estimated cost Rs. 35,00,000/-
Save Poor Lives Donations by Cheque / D.D. / M.O. favoring Save Poor Lives and on the back write Ac. No. 2000013487, State Bank of India, Raja Annamalaiapuram Branch, Chennai - 600028. Ph: 044-42044165, Mobile: 9884607377, E-mail: savepoorlivess@gmail.com Our website: www.savepoorlivess.com DONATION SENT TO VARIOUS HOSPITAL IN APRIL MONTH FOR Rs. 2,55,650/-

Assam NRC authority seeks reverification of citizens' list

Application before SC highlights major irregularities

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI**

The Assam National Register of Citizens (NRC) authority has approached the Supreme Court seeking a comprehensive and time-bound re-verification of the citizens' list, highlighting "major irregularities" in the process.

The NRC Coordinator filed the application on May 8, two days before newly-appointed Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the BJP-led government favoured 100% re-verification of the citizens' list.

Cards) Rules, 2003.

The notification for starting the Supreme Court-monitored exercise to update the 1951 NRC in Assam was issued in December 2013. The final draft published in August 2019 had excluded 19.06 lakh out of 3.3 crore applications for lack of adequate documents establishing them as Indian citizens.

Highlighting some "glaring anomalies", the plea admits the NRC process helped create a "huge digitised database of NRC of 1951 and the electoral rolls of Assam up to 1971, as also the digitised details of NRC applicants".

the Registrar General of India, the application states that some "issues of substantive importance" cropped up while preparing the rejecting slips, thus delaying the process.

Each of the 19.06 lakh people left out of the draft NRC are required to approach the nearest Foreigners' Tribunal within 120 days of receiving a rejection slip for weighing their citizenship claims.

Highlighting some "glaring anomalies", the plea admits the NRC process helped create a "huge digitised database of NRC of 1951 and the electoral rolls of Assam up to 1971, as also the digitised details of NRC applicants".

The Union Public Service Commission said in a statement: "Due to the prevailing conditions caused by the novel coronavirus, the Union Public Service Commission has deferred the Civil Services Examination, 2021, which was scheduled to be held on June 27, 2021. Now, this examination will be held on October 10, 2021."

The decision comes after the UPSC, last month, postponed the interviews to be held as a part of the 2020 examination.

CMK

CMK

INTERVIEW | AKHILESH YADAV

'Innocent people went to Kumbh because they trusted the government'

The government's messaging was wrong and the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic was hidden from the citizens, says the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

AMIT BARUAH

Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav believes that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a terrible health situation in the State's rural areas. The Samajwadi Party (SP) chief also believes that people were fooled into going to the Kumbh Mela because the reality of the pandemic was hidden from them. Excerpts from an interview:

What story do bodies of suspected COVID-19 victims in the Ganga and Yamuna tell us about the management of the pandemic?

■ Are you talking about planning? Forget planning. If the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] wanted, it could have learnt from our writers, poets and our history. In 1918, when the pandemic [the Spanish flu] hit, Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala' wrote, 'till the gaze travels we can only see bodies and more bodies'. But the BJP has never learnt from history or its mistakes.

Many believe that the Kumbh Mela was the biggest super-spreader event that took COVID-19 to the interior villages of U.P., Bihar and other north Indian states. Do you agree?

■ I would say that people's religious beliefs and their faith have been played with. The government's messaging was wrong. The BJP declared that they had defeated COVID-19. Other than elections, the BJP can't plan for anything. Innocent people went to Kumbh because they trusted the government, but the reality was hidden from them.

Please remember that it was declared in Davos in January that India had defeated COVID-19 and had also helped 150 countries. Today, everyone can see what is happening in India – other countries are sending aid to us.

From western to eastern Uttar Pradesh, many videos paint a sorry picture of health facilities in the State. What is the feedback that you are getting?

■ Health services in the State are working because of doctors, nurses and support staff. I had said in the beginning of April that the cancer institute [in Lucknow] should be turned into a COVID-19 hospital. It took three weeks for the Chief Minister [Yogi Adityanath] to make it happen. The situation in rural areas is terrible. The BJP hasn't planned anything from last year onwards. In



C The BJP had declared that they had defeated COVID-19...Today, everyone can see what is happening in India

Uttar Pradesh, it has become a crime to express your anguish.

At the best of times, medical treatment for the poor in U.P. is a challenge. How would you have done things differently given that you were the Chief Minister of

the massive State for five years?

■ History teaches us that there are more than two waves in a pandemic. After the first year, I would have set up a committee, which would have worked on increasing the oxygen capacity and making vaccination free. And, I would never have threatened people that their property would be confiscated or that I would apply the NSA [National Security Act] on them.

A panel constituted by the Prime Minister warned about a "second wave" in March but because of the elections, no one listened to them. It is essential to listen to the views of specialists.

The pandemic is not just an illness but leads to several social problems like unemployment and malnutrition; patients with other diseases don't get treatment, and

mental health suffers. Women and children suffer the most as domestic violence and abuse grow. This needs a helpline and other relief. We must also collect accurate data so that people get the correct picture.

It would appear that the Opposition in U.P. is unable to hold the Yogi government accountable. Is it that the Opposition is weak and unable to present an alternative to the BJP?

■ See, in any democracy, all four pillars are required to make a government accountable. The BJP has spared no effort to ensure that this does not happen. Please see the results of the panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh – we are doing our job. Every member of the Samajwadi Party is engaged in helping people, but we are not publicising this.

Elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly are to take place in early 2022. Your alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) came a cropper in 2019 for the Lok Sabha. Will the SP go it alone in the upcoming Assembly poll?

■ India's foundation is the federal structure. First, the battle will be for the State, and second, for the country. The BJP wants to impose its ideology on everyone but India is a country of great diversity. We can't say one language, one society, one State or area is better than another. We are all equal. But, still, Uttar Pradesh has a key role to play in the country's politics and in 2022, the State will deliver a powerful blow to the BJP.

giving its all. Second, the politics of division and humiliation does not always work. Many other lessons, too, but for the moment, it would not be appropriate to elaborate.

Is there a larger message to the Opposition here or will regional heavyweights remain content to occupy the political space in their respective States?

■ India's foundation is the federal structure. First, the battle will be for the State, and second, for the country. The BJP wants to impose its ideology on everyone but India is a country of great diversity. We can't say one language, one society, one State or area is better than another. We are all equal. But, still, Uttar Pradesh has a key role to play in the country's politics and in 2022, the State will deliver a powerful blow to the BJP.

What is the political message from the recent Assembly elections, especially the massive victory of Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal?

■ First, the BJP lost despite

OCIs stung by Home Ministry notification

Many are concerned as the fresh rules require professionals in certain fields to obtain a 'special permit'

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Home Ministry's March 4 order that required professional Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), such as journalists, engineers and researchers, to notify the Ministry about their activities in India has left them in the lurch.

A portal that was to come up for the purpose is not operational yet. A Ministry official said it was delayed as several officials in the Ministry's Foreigners Division had tested positive for COVID-19 in the past month. The official said the OCIs could intimate the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) through e-mail till the portal is activated.

Rajanna Sreedhara, president of the Association of Resident OCI and Families (AROCIF), said they believed the notification was discriminatory adding that they planned to challenge it in the High Court but the plan is currently on the back burner due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Long delay: A portal that was to come up for OCIs to notify the government is not operational yet. ■ FILE PHOTO

nary adding that they planned to challenge it in the High Court but the plan is currently on the back burner due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NRI quota seats
On March 4, the Ministry issued a gazette notification that OCI cardholders could claim "only NRI (Non-Resident Indian) quota seats" in

educational institutions. It specified that OCIs could only pursue the following professions – doctors, dentists, nurses and pharmacists, advocates, architects and chartered accountants, and the rest would require "special permission".

OCIs are of Indian origin but hold foreign passports. India does not allow dual citizenship but provides cer-

tain benefits under Section 7(B)(I) of the Citizenship Act, 1955 to the OCIs. So far, 37.72 lakh OCI Cards are said to have been issued.

The notification said that OCIs shall be required to obtain a "special permission or a special permit" from the competent authority or the FRRÖ or the Indian mission "to undertake research, missionary or Tabligh or mountaineering or journalistic activities or internship in any foreign diplomatic missions".

"The notification does not mention IT professionals, a large number of OCIs are engineers; so will they have to apply for employment visa? It says permission required to conduct research ... this will place undue burden on scientific, pharmaceutical, medical, biotechnology and other research fields," Dr Sreedhara said.

Anjana Hulse, an OCI and Bengaluru resident, said her son secured All India Rank 2 in the Kishore Vaigyan Protashan Yojana examinations held by the government, but added,

"We are not sure of getting admission in the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru," she said.

SC for hike in compensation to under-40 and self-employed road accident victims

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that an extra 40% should be added to the income of deceased road accident victims who are aged below 40 years and are self-employed, while calculating compensation.

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana said the additional amount should be included in the income of the dead person as "future pros-

psects". The recent judgment, authored by Chief Justice Rama

accordingly. Chief Justice Rama referred to a Constitution Bench decision in *National Insurance vs Pranay Sethi*, which had "clearly held that in case the deceased is self-employed and below the age of 40, 40% addition would be made to their income as future prospects".

The High Court had earlier held the victim ineligible for future prospects because she was self-employed.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH Department of Fisheries

Advertisement No.935/C/2020 Date: 14.05.2021

Leading vendors/ Suppliers/ agencies/ companies are called for Request for Proposals (RFP) and Expression of Interest (EoI) to respond for the following of various infrastructure facilities for promotion of domestic marketing of fish & fish related products in the state of Andhra Pradesh

- RFP:** Selection of Agency for establishing and handing over of (1) Fish Value Added Unit with dining facility and (2) Fish Kiosk with necessary accessories
- RFP:** Selection of agency for establishing and handing over of Integrated Live Fish Vending Centers with necessary accessories
- RFP:** Selection of agency for establishing and handing over of Integrated Aqua Hubs with necessary accessories
- RFP:** Selection of agency for establishing and handing over of Integrated Mini Fish Retail Outlets with necessary accessories
- EoI:** Empanelment of Vendors for supply of fully modified (1) Fish Vending cum Food Cart (Modified 4-Wheeler Vehicle) (2) 3 Wheeler Fish Vending Cart (Modified Electric Vehicle) across the state of Andhra Pradesh

The detailed RFP and EoI documents can be downloaded from the website of <https://tender.apeprourement.gov.in> and www.fisheries.ap.gov.in from 14.05.2021 and the last date for submission of bid is 29.05.2021. For more details contact: Office of the Commissioner of Fisheries, A.P., Vijayawada. Website: www.fisheries.ap.gov.in, email: apfisheriestender@gmail.com. DIPR 91PPCL, Dt: 13-05-2021 Sd/- Commissioner of Fisheries (FAC)

Bengal FM calls for GST Council meet

He is the second State Finance Minister to raise the issue in the last 10 days

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

There is an urgent need to call a meeting of the GST Council, especially with the brutal second wave of COVID-19 that is likely to severely hit the economy, West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra said in a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday. The council has not met since the virtual meeting it held in October last year.

Mr. Mitra is the second State Finance Minister to raise the issue in the last ten days. In a letter to Ms. Sitharaman, Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal made a similar demand on May 5.



C Not meeting every quarter to discuss vital issues is not in line with the very principle of cooperative federalism

AMIT MITRA, BENGAL FINANCE MINISTER

Mr. Mitra reminded Ms. Sitharaman that the rules dictate that the Council must meet once every quarter of the financial year. "You would agree that not meeting every quarter to discuss vital issues is not in line with the very principle of cooperative federalism," he said. The alarming shortfall that is expected in the compensation to the States needs to be discussed urgently, he said.

As per the government of India's projection, the shortfall was expected to be to the tune of ₹1.56,164 crore in 2021-22, without taking into account the impact of the current COVID-19 crisis.

Opposition parties, including the Congress, have also been demanding that GST be waived on key medical items required to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

deeply distressing," he said. GST revenues constitute nearly 50% of the State government's revenue. With the States being the majority stakeholders in the GST Council, they hold the deciding power. Mr. Badal had earlier pointed out that the committee of officers or the GST implementation committee was formed only for mundane matters, but in the absence of the Council's meeting, it is bringing about substantive changes without consulting States.

Interest firms shall submit their EO proposal in either hard or soft copy to the following address and email address at or before 15.00 hours on 31.05.2021.

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD.
(Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Kerala)
THYCAUD P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695014
Phone: 0471-2490000, Fax: 0471-2490001
website: www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, e-mail: kmscl@gmail.com
CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC01616

QUOTATION
Dated : 13.05.2021

Password protected e-mail quotations are invited for the supply of the following items

Sl. No	Quotation No.	Description	Last date of Online submission
1.	Q94/2021	Cryogenic Liquid Medical Oxygen Transport Vehicle of various capacity on rental basis.	18.05.2021 11.00 am.

Quotation documents and all other information related to quotation and bidding process can be downloaded from the website: www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in. Sd/- Managing Director(Tender Inviting Authority)

Tamilnadu Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (TIDCO)
(A Government of Tamil Nadu Enterprises)
CIN-U65993TN1965SGC005327

No.Projects/SK/EOI-COVID/2021 Dated 14.05.2021

INVITATION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited from Indian/Overseas firms to establish facilities to manufacture COVID related high end medical technology devices, Oxygen plants, Oxygen concentrators, Vaccines and Covid related drugs through a Joint Venture with TIDCO. The minimum investment from the private partner should be Rs.50 crores.

Interested firms shall submit their EO proposal in either hard or soft copy to the following address and email address at or before 15.00 hours on 31.05.2021.

CHAIRPERSON & MANAGING DIRECTOR
Tamilnadu Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (TIDCO)
19-A, Rukmini Lakshmi Path Salai,
Egmore, Chennai – 600 008
Ph: 044 – 2855 4421 / 2852 9111; Fax: 044 – 2855 3729
E-mail: senthilkumar@tidco.com; Website: www.tidco.com

Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute
(Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Govt. of India)
Post Box No. 1003, Ernakulam North P.O., Kochi - 682 018, Kerala, India
Phone: 91 484 2394867 / 2395407, Fax: 91 484 2394909 / 2399865, Email: cmfri@cmfri.org.in, Web: www.cmfri.org.in

CMFRI Platinum Jubilee - Celebrating 70 years of Excellence in Research
F. No. 14-6/2021-Cdn. Dated 11.05.2021

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Director, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, PB No.1603, Ernakulam North P.O., Kochi-682018 invites sealed tenders from the competitive bidders to out- license Cadalmin™ Immunoboot extract (Cadalmin™ IB), to promote innate immune system and Cadalmin™ Antiosteoporotic extract (Cadalmin™ AOE) for combating osteoporosis developed by ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. Tender document issued by this office or downloaded from our official website (www.cmfri.org.in) to the address (The Director [attention: Assistant Administrative Officer-Coordination], Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, PB No.1603, Ernakulam North P.O., Kochi-682 018, Kerala), from 25 days of publication of the advertisement. Last Date for submission of EOI : 04.06.2021. Sd/- Administrative Officer

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike
Office of the Executive Engineer, Bengaluru South Division, Amruthnagar, Konakunte Main Road, Soudamini Layout, Bengaluru-560 062.

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER
(Through GOt-e-Procurement Portal Only)
(Single & Two Cover Tender)

The Executive Engineer, (Bengaluru South Division), BBMP, Bangalore-62. Invites tenders from eligible Contractors registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, or equivalent Registration with KPWD/CPWD/BWSSB/Railways/MES/National Highway or any State Government Organisations for the Construction of works detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Apprx. Value of work (Rs. in Lakhs)
1.	Temporary Control Room for Rainy Season in Ward No. 191 & 192 Begur Sub Division (SC).	25.00
2.	Control room for the Year 2021-22 in Ward No. 192 Begur Sub Division (Others).	15.00
3.	Control room for the Year 2021-22 in Ward No. 195 Anjanapura Sub Division (Others).	25.00
4.	Control room for the Year 2021-22 in Ward No. 184 Uttarahalli Sub Division (Others).	25.00
5.	Improvements to Park at Narayana Nagar in Ward No.197 Vasantha pura (Others).	70.00
6.	Developments and Improvements to Parks at 8th Main M.S. Ramaiah City in Ward No.195 Konanakunte (Others).	100.00
7.	Developments to Parks at 5th Main and 1st 'A' Cross at M.S. Ramaiah City in Ward No. 195 Konanakunte (Others).	100.00

Note: As per GOt Order No.: क्र. 675 expenses - 12/2020, Bangalore, Dtd: 22-12-2020 and Commissioner BBMP Order No.,

IN BRIEF



Modi to meet DMs of high caseload districts

NEW DELHI Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold review meetings with district magistrates (DMs) of high COVID-19 caseload districts over video conference on May 18 and May 20 in the presence of the Chief Ministers concerned. The DMs of 46 districts from nine States would meet Mr. Modi on May 18 and those of 54 districts from 10 States on May 20, sources said.

NHRC notice to govt. on bodies in the Ganga

NEW DELHI The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday issued notices to the Centre and Uttar Pradesh and Bihar governments on a complaint about bodies found floating in river Ganga in the past few days. People have expressed apprehensions that the bodies found floating in Bihar were of COVID-19 fatalities from Uttar Pradesh.

Sugar mill produces oxygen from ethanol

MUMBAI The Dharashiv Sugar Mill in Maharashtra's Osmanabad district has become the country's first establishment to produce medical grade oxygen from ethanol. Mill chairman Abhijit Patil said, "We thought that the experiment would take three months. But we worked on a war footing with Moj Engineering System and completed it in 17 days."

Punjab, Haryana for global vaccine sourcing

CHANDIGARH The Punjab Cabinet on Thursday decided to join the COVAX facility alliance for global sourcing and procurement of vaccines at the best price to address the problem of shortage amid the deadly second wave. Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij said global tendering will be done for vaccine purchase.

Bihar govt. extends lockdown till May 25

PATNA Bihar has extended the lockdown till May 25 in the wake of rise in COVID-19 cases. Earlier, it was imposed from May 1 to May 15. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said that the lockdown was helping to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Doctors in Unnao resign citing 'harassment'

LUCKNOW More than a dozen doctors posted in rural hospitals in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh collectively resigned, alleging harassment and misbehaviour by administrative officials. The 16 doctors, posted at community health centres and primary health centres, submitted their resignation letters to the chief medical officer (CMO) of the district on Wednesday.

India still resists community spread tag

WHO classification has implications for the kind of approach that is taken to control the pandemic

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

In spite of adding the highest number of COVID-19 infections to the global caseload every day, India continues to label itself as a country with no community transmission (CT), opting instead for the lower, less serious classification called "cluster of cases", according to the latest weekly report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on May 11.

Countries such as the United States, Brazil, United Kingdom, France – and a perusal of the list of over 190 countries suggest the majority – have all labelled themselves as being in "community transmission". Among the 10 countries with the most number of confirmed cases, only Italy and Russia do not label themselves as being in community transmission. Both countries have been on a declining trajectory for at least a month and together contribute fewer than



Test and trace: A health worker collecting a sample for COVID-19 testing in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

20,000 cases a day – about 5% of India's daily numbers.

India, since the beginning of the pandemic, has never marked itself as being in community transmission.

Broadly, CT happens when new cases in the last 14 days cannot be traced to those who have an international travel history, when cases cannot be linked to a specific cluster. The WHO guidelines further suggest

four subcategories within the broader definition of CT. CT-I implies "low incidence of locally acquired, widely dispersed cases... and low risk of infection for the general population" with the highest, a CT-4 suggesting "very high incidence of locally acquired, widely dispersed cases in the past 14 days and very high risk of infection for the general population".

The cluster of cases classification says, "Cases detected in the past 14 days are predominantly limited to well-defined clusters that are not directly linked to imported cases. It is assumed that there are a number of unidentified cases in the area. This implies a low risk of infection to others in the wider community if exposure to these clusters is avoided."

Positivity rate

India's national positivity rate, or the proportion of tested cases returning positive, is around 21% and 533 of the 734 districts had reported positivity greater than 10%. There are 24 States with more than 15% positivity and 10 with over 25%, according to figures from the Health Ministry on Thursday.

An expert told *The Hindu* that India's refusal to describe itself as being in community transmission was an "ostrich in the sand" approach since being in CT –

far from being stigmatic or an indicator of failure – had a bearing on how authorities addressed a pandemic.

If cases were still a cluster, it would mean that the government ought to be prioritising testing, contact tracing and isolating to prevent further infection spread. CT, on the other hand, meant prioritising treatment and observing advisories to stay protected. "We may have been in community transmission since last April. Testing continues to be useful for forecasting the future course of the pandemic (through random tests) and preparing for it," said Dr Jacob John, epidemiologist and Professor, Christian Medical College, Vellore. "Or it is useful if there is a specific course of treatment, or medicine, that can be prescribed once someone tests positive. However, that's not really why the government seems to want to avoid the term. It just makes us look stupid."

15 more dead in top Goa hospital, High Court told

26 died at the same facility on Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Fifteen more COVID-19 patients died at the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in the early hours of Thursday, the State government told the Bombay High Court, two days after 26 coronavirus patients had succumbed at the same facility.

Direction to govt.

The court said the Centre should ensure that the allotted quota of medical oxygen is made available at the earliest to Goa, which is reporting a very high test positivity rate.

The judges said they were pained that logistical issues should give rise to such serious consequences.

"We expect the State administration to find out ways and means to overcome these logistical issues, so that, precious life is not lost on account of any deficiencies in the matter of supply of oxygen to patients."

The court observed that despite its order on providing medical oxygen to COVID-19 patients at the GMCH, there were 15 deaths during the dark hours of 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. in the go-

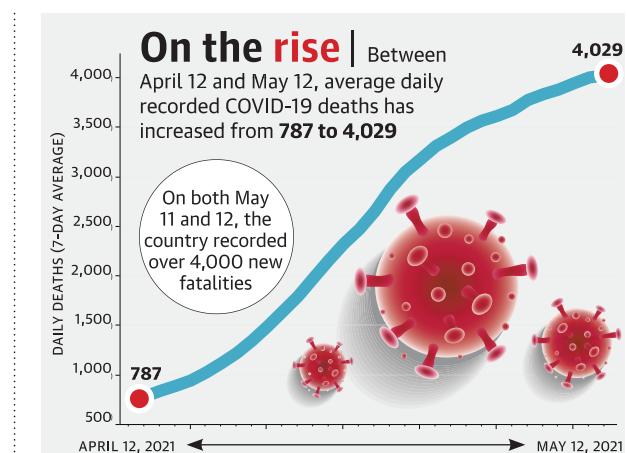
Nod for trial of Covaxin in 2-18 age group

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Drugs Controller General of India has accepted the recommendation of the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) and accorded permission to conduct the Phase II/III clinical trial of Covaxin in the 2-18 age group to Bharat Biotech on May 12.

A release issued by the Health Ministry on Thursday said the trial would be conducted in 525 healthy volunteers.

"In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two doses at day 0 and day 28," noted the release.



3.28 lakh fresh cases, 3,700 deaths recorded

Total recoveries cross 2 crore mark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India recorded 3,28,435 new COVID-19 cases until 9.40 p.m. on Thursday. As many as 3,700 new deaths were also registered. The country has so far reported a total of 2,40,31,659 cases and 2,62,053 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 42,582 infections, followed by Kerala (39,955) and Karnataka (35,297). Maharashtra also recorded 850 casualties, followed by Karnataka (344) and Delhi (308).

As many as 3,24,050 new recoveries were also recorded on the day, taking the total recoveries past the 2 crore mark.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

Over 18.64 lakh samples

were tested in the country on Wednesday (the results for which were made available on Thursday). It is 1.19 lakh less tests than those conducted on Tuesday and also 58,537 less than those conducted the previous Wednesday (May 5). On Tuesday, over 19.8 lakh samples were tested, the highest in a single day.

Only around 18.94 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Thursday.

Only about 4.2% of India's adult population have received both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine as on May 12. Among major States/UTs, the three with the highest coverage of both doses are Gujarat (7.6%), Delhi (7.5%) and Kerala (7.2%).

On the other hand, the three with the lowest coverage of both doses are Uttar Pradesh (2.04%), Bihar (2.22%) and Jharkhand (2.54%).

Elderly man chained to bed in hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

An elderly prisoner with breathing trouble, who was admitted to a hospital in Uttar Pradesh's Etah district, was chained to his bed by his leg with a handcuff.

The visuals of the man circulated on social media showed him sitting on the bed with an oxygen mask and his leg chained. The man was said to be 90 years old but the age could not be confirmed.

Director General (Prisons) Uttar Pradesh, Anand Kumar, has suspended a jail warden.

40,000 Tocilizumab vials for States, UTs

N. RAVI KUMAR
HYDERABAD

ceuticals towards supply to the health institutions under other ministries.

A fortnight ago, the Centre allocated 9,900 vials (200 mg) of Tocilizumab to the States/Union Territories and Central health institutions.

The second lot of Tocilizumab arrived on May 10, senior officials from the MoHFW and the Department of Pharmaceuticals said in a joint communica-

tions rights. "Any exercise of statutory powers either under the Patents Act, 1970 read with TRIPS Agreement and Doha Declaration or in any other way can only prove to be counter-productive at this stage," the Centre said in the affidavit. The go-

party rights. "Any exercise of statutory powers either under the Patents Act, 1970 read with TRIPS Agreement and Doha Declaration or in any other way can only prove to be counter-productive at this stage," the Centre said in the affidavit. The go-

out that the MoHFW recently also allocated 50,024 vials (80 mg) received through donation among the States and Central health institutions.

The allocated vials were being placed at the disposal of the health departments of the State governments/UTs for supply to government and private hospitals. The State governments should advise them to contact the health department to source the drug, the statement said.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

Over 18.64 lakh samples

SUDOKU

7	8	9						
9			5	1	6			
5			2	4	8			
4	8		1					
	9		3					
	7			4	5			
4	7	3		1				
1	3	8		9				
		1	5	3				

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13246

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Vedas are infinite

The Vedas provide both worldly or the objective type of knowledge as well as the transcendental kind of knowledge. In a discourse, Swami Omkaranda, who passed away on May 10, drew attention to many salient features of the Vedas which are the primary source of all knowledge. The term Veda is derived from the root 'Vid', which means knowledge or jnana. Since knowledge is infinite the Vedas too are infinite. Another characteristic of the Vedas is that they are 'sabda pramana.' This means that the Veda sabda in the form of utterances, sounds and words carries significant meaning and thereby it becomes the instrument that provides knowledge. So the Vedas are synonymous with knowledge.

A human being assimilates knowledge of the immediate world around through the senses such as the eye, the ear, etc, which serve as instruments for providing knowledge. It is also true that what one knows is limited and that there are many areas of knowledge still to be known. In the Gita, Krishna makes it clear that true jnana is spiritual wisdom and is totally different from any kind of the objective knowledge that most of us are familiar and even proficient in. Sage Narada confesses to Sanatkumara that though he is well versed in all kinds of scriptural knowledge he still feels a thirst for something else.

Sanatkumara affirms that only 'Self knowledge,' the 'atma tattva,'

Produced with a minimal carbon footprint, meads rely on existing bee colonies on farmlands, and are slowly making a buzz in India



ANISHA MENEZES

What is the most sustainably produced alcoholic beverage? It is a non-grain recipe, once known as the elixir of the gods: Mead. Crafted from honey and water and fermented by yeast, mead leaves a small carbon footprint since it depends on bees and nectar already available on existing farmlands, unlike grains that are cultivated specifically for beer, rum or whiskey.

In terms of alcohol content, mead is closer to wine than beer, ranging between eight to 20% ABV (the amount of alcohol/ethanol in a drink). Mead is widely thought to be one of the oldest alcoholic beverages, with evidence of a fermented beverage made of honey, rice, and fruit dating to 7BC in China.

Over the past decade, meaderies in India have slowly been taking this story forward in some pockets of the country. In barely a year since it opened, Nashik-based Cerana Meads is supplying to select hotels and restaurants in Mumbai, Pune, Thane and Nashik.

Pune-based Moonshine, which holds the distinction of being Asia's first meadery, has been around since 2018 and retails its experimental wares across retail at about 200 stores

All about the honey

and 200 restaurants across Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Nashik, Navi Mumbai, Thane and Goa.

"We began with just two tanks when we were testing the waters for mead, then we scaled up with two larger tanks and now we have 20,000 litre tanks like the ones at wineries, at our factory. Our idea is to have a pan India footprint and build a global brand," says Moonshine co-founder Rohan Rehani. Clearly, mead is in demand.

Built by curiosity

For Yoginee Budhkar and Ashwini Deore, co-founders at Cerana Meads in Nashik, starting a meadery in 2020 was a natural progression of their interest in beekeeping and their fascination with fermentation. Yoginee

explains, "While doing my doctorate in Food Engineering and Technology, I had a fortuitous introduction to meads while visiting a professor in the UK. My

friend and fellow PhD scholar Ashwini was enthusiastic about creating an innovative product from agricultural resources, and her love for wine and spirits led us to Cerana Meads."

Along with its flagship mead, the meadery has collaborated with breweries in Maharashtra and Karnataka to make bragots, melding malt and mead, and also makes India's very first payment – a mead using grapes. Their version uses Chenin blanc grapes from Nashik.

Cerana's melomels, which are fruit-infused meads, highlight both local produce and natural honey. Our jamun (black plum) melomel uses local jamun and

jamun honey, which is earthy and spicy. For our pomegranate melomel, we have a lychee honey that has floral notes. We also use multi-floral honey from forests in Himachal Pradesh, where you find citrus fruits and flowers," says Yoginee.

All of Cerana's offerings are priced at ₹180 a pint except for their Yule spice sold in winter at ₹450. The products find takers among the 25-40 age bracket, largely upper middle class consumers who have travelled and are curious to try out home-grown craft beverages. Says Cerana customer Shilpa Brahma from Pune, "Their jamun melomel and yule spice continue to



Bitten but not shy
Bee Whisperer Akshay Borse at work for the Moonshine Project.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT ■



be my favourites. Being a home-baker, I have also used Yule spice for cake preparations when I've invited friends for dinner and dessert."

Business of bees

The founders at Cerana have undergone training in beekeeping. In every natural hive, a portion of the honey is used as food for the bee larvae, and the surplus gets stored in the upper one-third of the structure.

Manmade bee-boxes mimic this ingenious design. The upper one-third of the bee-box, called the super, is where honey is stored. The lower two-thirds, called the brood box, houses the queen and worker bees. "It took us painstaking effort to convince beekeepers to start using only the supers for their honey collection, instead of invading the brood box, and we buy only that honey for our mead production," states Yoginee.

Honey is also important to entrepreneur duo Rohan Rehani and Nitin Vishwas, who started Moonshine. Back then, meads did not exist in the Indian excise lexicon. Now Moonshine Meadery in addition to its regular stream of meads in the market, has branched out to a special Moonshine Honey Project.

Moonshine has its own 'bee whisperer', Akshay Borse, with two years of experience on the field, 10 harvests across the country, and probably 1,000 bee stings, Akshay has made it his mission to change the way

beekeeping is practised in the country," adds Rohan. The Mustard honey harvested from Doonda, Rajasthan, in January 2021, tastes like a lemon glaze, quite counterintuitive to the memory of pungent mustard.

"Our latest harvest was in March, an acacia honey which we will use for the next edition of the Project X mead, to highlight the wonderful single-origin honey that our country has to offer," states Nitin. To revive beekeeping, bee-boxes have been set up in and around Pune, and the Mulshi valley.

The post-processing filtration and packaging is carried out below 38 degrees Celsius, to preserve all the bio-enzymes produced by the bees. The lockdown has been busy at Moonshine, with the launch of MeadLABS, gluten-free meads celebrating seasonal fruits and honey, priced between ₹130 in Goa to ₹190 in Maharashtra. The meadery plans to expand retail in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala by 2022.

The grilled pineapple mead is made with rum-soaked pineapple that has been grilled over coal, combined with a multi-floral honey. For the guava-chilli variant, white and pink guavas meet multi-floral honey and the feisty Naga ghost chillies. The bourbon-soaked apple mead is crafted by ageing Moonshine's apple cyder mead over bourbon-infused French oak chips.

Shinchita Majumdar, a regular mead patron says, "Moonshine Meads are pure art in a pint. The guava chilli, grilled pineapple and coffee and my current favourites." Rohan agrees, "Meads lend themselves to so many iterations; combining Indian flavours and Indian honey is a thing of beauty."

Mead is widely thought to be one of the world's oldest alcoholic beverages

HORS D'OEUVRES



Royal stamp of approval

Queen Elizabeth II of UK has approved the sale of two types of beer made from ingredients that grow on Sandringham Estate, her country residence in Norfolk. Being sold at the estate's gift shop, the Sandringham Best Bitter and Sandringham Golden IPA are manufactured in the local Barsham Brewery. The latest tippsles are being advertised as having 'organic laureate spring barley harvested from the royal estate, and crystal clear water drawn from a nearby bore hole'. In keeping with the fauna commonly found on the estate, logos for the Best Bitter and Golden IPA feature a hare and pheasant respectively. Priced at \$5.55 (₹414.39), the 500-ml craft bottles come equipped with a 4.3% (Best Bitters) and a 5% (Golden IPA) ABV.



Put on a state-decreed diet

China has cracked down on food wastage by putting into effect this week, a law that bans diners at restaurants from ordering more than they can eat. Part of a campaign to secure the country's food stocks that Chinese President Xi Jinping says could be affected by the global economic disruption caused by the pandemic, the stringent law also bans the streaming of binge-eating videos called mukbang. Eateries in China have started serving smaller portions, while one restaurant in Changsha city has installed a weighing machine at its entrance, that enables staff to recommend menu options according to the customer's weight. According to the new law, restaurants could be fined up to \$1,550 (₹11,731.79) for misleading consumers into ordering excessive amounts of food and causing waste. And mukbang video making or streaming could earn media companies penalties of up to \$16,000 (₹11,74,840.80). About 35 million tons of food goes to waste in China every year, according to Chinese state media.

Peter Griffin's Table Talk series pans a wide variety of topics, from rural Indian life to ancient Portuguese influences, and is open to everyone curious about food

The world beyond the dinner table



MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

"Food is adjacent to so many other things that impact us: gender, caste, a vast variety of beliefs..." According to former journalist Peter Griffin, discussions around the subject of food can be relatable, fascinating and endless.

He should know: as founder and admin of the vibrant Facebook group Simple Recipes For Complicated Times, he has been privy to the cooking struggles, recipes and cravings of over 6,000 Indians since the group launched, when the pandemic began.

The experience, he says, has taught him something. Something beyond the host of regional recipes, shortcut kitchen "hacks" and produce advice that members have been sharing. From one man's light-hearted rant about disliking nuts to another woman's memories of her aunt in Kashmir, who taught her to be indepen-

dent, opinionated and feminist without actually using the term feminist, food and the kitchen shapes our lives and personalities in ways we often do not realise.

Griffin is now taking these conversations to a different platform, in a different format. His ongoing Table Talk conversation series features an in-depth discussion every other Sunday, each with a noted guest from a far-flung walk of life. From theatre artiste Kirtana Kumar's experience of moving from city to farm and foraging for her own produce, to food writer Antoine Lewis tracing the influence of different countries in what is now considered quintessential-

ly Indian diet, each person brings a different discussion to the table.

He recalls Lewis's conversation in detail: "It was about authenticity. So much of what we consider

authentic, essentially Indian food is actually not Indian. India has about three native spices, yet we call ourselves the land of spices. The chilli is not native to India; it came via the Portuguese, as did the tomato and the potato. The thing with food is that it migrates, morphs, changes. We are not exactly eating what our great-grandparents grew and ate."

His audience for these conversations has so far varied between 10 and 30, but as word spread, the next edition has 50 registrations already. Griffin is both cautious and optimistic; he has enough topics and speakers in mind for another six months, but

recognises that scheduling is a challenge. "It's more of a challenge because I want these conversations to be topical, and cannot predict what topic would be relevant a few months down the line," he states.

Griffin adds, "If it gets success-

Culinary migrant Despite not being native to India, the chilli has become an integral part of the country's food culture, says former journalist Peter Griffin (below)

■ VIJAY SONEJI AND VIVEK BENDRE ful, and I am able to accommodate the number of people who want to come in, then I would have to consider doing it in a webinar format." But to enable that, he would have to spend some money, he observes, "in which I have to make some money off it [Table Talk], at least enough for it to pay for itself."

There are options he can consider, from sponsorship to ticketing, but that is too far in the future to thresh out. For now, his focussing is on the next edition, and the next, with everyone from authors to anthropologists slotted in. "The people I have lined up are knowledgeable, have fun stuff to share and are interesting speakers," he says, and registrations are open.



Peter Griffin has been privy to the cooking struggles, recipes and cravings of over 6,000 Indians since early 2020



Peer support is helping mental health professionals grapple with personal loss, even as they work to guide the rest of the country through its grief

The second is the increasing reliance on community. It is the reason she is soon starting a weekly series of listening circles, where mental health professionals can sit down together (virtually for now) and talk.

"People feel being in the profession means you have to be stoic, that you can't have a breakdown, but to have a tantrum like my daughter did is a healthy thing, a way to express rage and helplessness, not just grief." She hopes the listening circle will help with all this and more.

Frontline forward
Even as therapists help people grapple with spiralling COVID-19-related anxiety, the increase in PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and neurotic disorders such as OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), there have been a few positives from the situation. Their own peer

support groups have gone online, opening them to a pan-India or sometimes global participation.

There is also a discussion on a professional will, a legal document that puts forth the future of treatment for a client, in case of the untimely death of a therapist.

Then there are changes at the college level. "Students have understood that they have a voice," says developmental psychologist Shraddha Kapoor, Associate Professor in the Human Development and Childhood Studies department, at Lady Irwin College in Delhi. "They will tell us, 'We cannot cope.' That they cannot make a deadline, and the teachers and the university are accepting it," she says.

She and the teachers of her college have left their DMs open for students to communicate with them and share personal challenges, or just to talk. About three of four "reach out" daily. "They will open the conversation

with something about a project, test the waters, and then put out something personal," says Kapoor.

Recognising the age gap, Kapoor and her post graduate class did a presentation on how to be happy, as an extension of their study on counselling. The idea was to help students take back some control in the face of so much uncertainty, and to get younger students to reach out to future professionals who will work with children and families.

It is the days to come that we need to keep our eye on, with just .75 psychiatrists (last count in 2019) per 1,00,000 people and no data available of numbers of other mental health professionals. It may be years before people begin to acknowledge the trauma they have been through, before they turn to professionals for help.



When healers need healing

SUNALINI MATHEW

Earlier this month Shalini Anant, an Udaipur-based psychotherapist, posted a message on Facebook in memory of fellow therapist Lovepreet Kaur, who had died after a COVID-19 infection. "You have taken a piece of my heart with you..." it began emotionally. "She was a friend, a lovely human being, a wonderful therapist, a constant learner. It was so sudden; she was so young – just 41," says Anant over a phone call. She took a break from taking on clients over the next few days, to process her loss.

Mental health professionals are burdened with collective grief, personal losses, struggles with COVID-19 and care-giving, the need to listen and partner with clients' heightened emotions, and longer work hours for less money. Many are doing pro bono work, extending their hours, or are offering a reduced fee, with the understanding that people have lost jobs and need their support now more than ever before.

They have been trained to be resilient and to be able to dip into

a toolbox of self-care, but "a pandemic of this scale is going to affect us," says Dr Alok Kulkarni, senior consultant psychiatrist, Manas Institute of Mental Health, Hubli. "The nature and scale has been tremendous."

His sister and brother-in-law are both doctors working on the frontline, and while he worries, he talks of resilience built over the years, by leaning on one another and personal routines such as exercise, mindfulness, and meditation. Grounding rituals such as dancing, a martial art, or gardening, help with the mind-body connect.

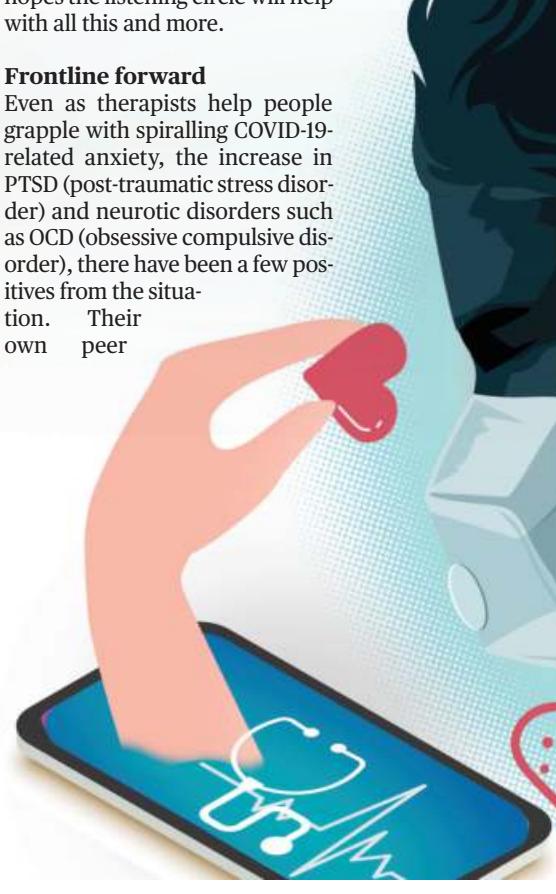
Peer support is a tool that mental health professionals are used to turning to, and not just now, with many going into therapy themselves. "It is a practice, like doing yoga," says Anant.

Coping with COVID-19
Shalini Masih, a psychotherapist from Delhi, is still recovering from the exhaustion that comes with COVID-19. Both she and her husband tested positive, and they needed to isolate from their toddler, who was 'adult' about it at

first, and then one day, threw a tantrum, refusing to be touched by her nanny.

"There was no choice but to put on a PPE suit, double mask and go out to hold her," says Masih. After much coaxing, the little girl, through tears and screams, asked, "Where is my nest?" Unusual, because it was not a part of her active vocabulary. "We may have talked about how a mama bird feeds the baby bird and pointed it out on a few occasions, but that was it," says Masih, who carries her daughter's words as a symbol of the pandemic: "It was a reminder of how unsafe she was feeling because of something that had significantly altered in her world. It is what many of us are going through, because we are seeing our nests crumble."

Masih records two subtle changes in the way relationships function now. The first is in the therapist-client interaction. "When I had COVID-19, my clients were all checking in on me, telling me to take steam or have coconut water and gilyo," she says of the care and concern that comes from human bonding.



Farmers are frontline workers'

Delhi-based artist Pradosh Swain's 20 surreal works focus on the role of farmers

NEERAJA MURTHY

A soldier in uniform descends with a rope tied to his body, to a plough that is chained to the ground.

This image symbolising the role of farmers in society is one among 20 artworks by Delhi-based artist Pradosh Swain as part of Power of Plough, a virtual showcase to be launched on May 15.

"Farmers are silent warriors of the pandemic," says Pradosh over a phone call from Delhi. The launch date is significant as it coincides with

Akshaya Tritiya, which is celebrated as a farmer's festival across Odisha, where the artist hails from.

Pradosh began painting in lockdown 2020 when Work From Home became the new normal. "Farmers feed the world but can never WFH, even during the lockdown. If that ever happens, we will all starve," he says, adding they are all frontline workers too.

He feels that farmer's issue during COVID-19 has never been the focal point of any discussion. "We regularly read newspapers about how farmers'



Making a statement
Artworks by Pradosh Swain
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

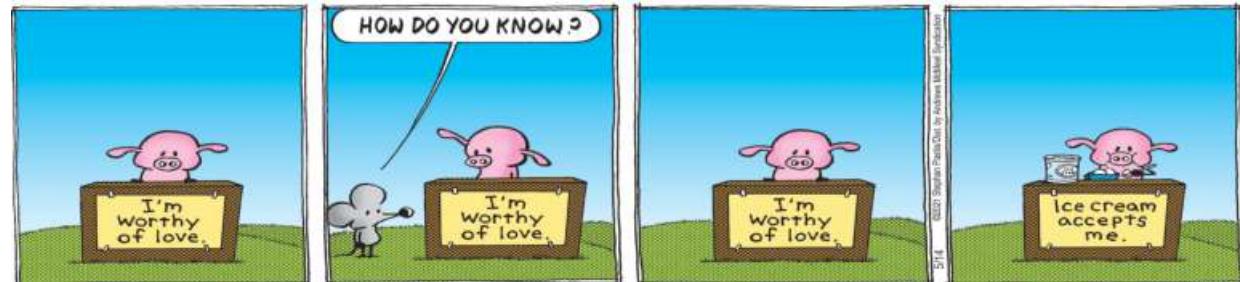
board with a plough by his side. "Why should farming be taken up by only farmers' children? Why can't others too be involved in farming?" asks Pradosh.

Living in Indirapuram in Delhi, Pradosh shares that painting kept him busy and sane during the pandemic. The artworks (can be seen on Pradosh's Facebook page) have been captured in short films made by curator Janardan Paramguru of Five Minute Arts.

POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Israel-Palestine fighting escalates

Riots flare up between far-right Jews and Arabs; flights diverted after rockets target airport near Tel Aviv

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEL AVIV

Israel faced an escalating conflict on two fronts on Thursday, scrambling to quell riots between Arabs and Jews on its own streets after days of exchanging deadly fire with Islamist militants in Gaza.

Defence Minister Benny Gantz ordered a "massive reinforcement" of security forces to quell mob violence across the country, where police stations have been attacked and people savagely beaten on both sides.

Despite global alarm and diplomatic efforts to halt the spiralling violence, hundreds of rockets again tore through the skies over the Gaza Strip overnight.

Israel's Air Force launched multiple strikes with fighter jets, targeting what it described as locations linked to Hamas, the Islamist group that controls Gaza.

In Gaza, 83 people were reported killed since Monday – including 17 children – and more than 480 people wounded as heavy bombardment has rocked the crowded coastal enclave and brought down entire tower blocks.

The Israeli military said it had struck Gaza targets more than 600 times, while Ha-



Deep impact: Palestinians walking past the ruins of a building destroyed in Israeli air strike in Gaza city on Thursday. ■ AP

mas had fired over 1,600 rockets towards Israel.

Israel's civil aviation authority said it had diverted all incoming passenger flights headed for Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport to Ramon airport in the south, as air raid warnings once more went off across Israel.

In southern Israel, seven people were killed, including one six-year-old, after a rocket struck a family home, the United Hatzalah volunteer rescue service said.

Recent days have seen the most violent escalation in seven years between Israel and

Gaza's armed groups, triggered by weekend unrest at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound, which is sacred to both Muslims and Jews.

The unrest has been driven by anger over the looming evictions of Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of east Jerusalem.

Preventing pogroms'

Coinciding with the aerial bombardments is surging violence between Arabs and Jews inside Israel.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP that vio-

lence was at a nadir not seen for decades and that police were "literally preventing pogroms from taking place".

Hundreds were protesting in the Arab town of Kafr Kassem in central Israel, burning tires and torching police vehicles, he said.

He added that nearly 1,000 border police were called in to quell the violence, and that more than 400 people had been arrested.

On Wednesday night, Israeli far-right groups took to the streets across the country, clashing with security

forces and Arab Israelis.

Police said they had responded to violent incidents in multiple towns, including Lod, Acre and Haifa.

Israeli television on Wednesday aired footage of a far-right mob beating a man they considered an Arab until he lay unconscious on his back in a street in Bat Yam, near Tel Aviv.

"The victim of the lynching is seriously injured but stable," Tel Aviv's Ichilov Hospital said, without identifying him.

A state of emergency has been declared in the mixed Jewish-Arab city of Lod, where an Arab resident was shot dead and a synagogue has been torched.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, in unusually strong language, denounced what he described as a "pogrom" in which "an incited and blood-thirsty Arab mob" had attacked sacred Jewish spaces.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that "what has been happening these last few days in Israeli towns is unacceptable. "Nothing justifies the lynching of Arabs by Jews, and nothing justifies the lynching of Jews by Arabs," he said, adding that Israel was fighting a battle "on two fronts".

Mohamed Nasheed flown to Germany for treatment

UN official slams attack on him as 'act of political violence'

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO



Maldivian leader Mohamed Nasheed was on Thursday flown to Germany for treatment, a week after surviving an assassination attempt in capital Male that left him critically injured.

Following the May 6 "terror attack", as Maldives police described the bomb explosion, doctors in a Male hospital performed complex surgeries on the Parliamentary Speaker and former President, to remove shrapnel from his liver, lungs and abdomen.

He was discharged from hospital on Thursday, and medically evacuated to Germany with high security, local media reported. In the first tweet from his account since the explosion, Mr. Nasheed said in the local Dhivehi language: "A special thanks to the health sector of the Maldives. By the grace of Allah, I will stay the course to deliver good governance that you all seek. Eid Mubarak to everyone!"

Linking the blast to religious extremists, the police arrested three persons allegedly involved in the "deliberate act of terror". The Maldives's Parliamentary Committee on National Security Services is probing the security breach that led to the attack on the former President.

Ahmed Shaheed, United Nations special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, who formerly served as Foreign Minister of the Maldives, said it is important to "carefully conceptualise" the May 6 attack.

It is a targeted attempt to assassinate former President Nasheed, an act of political violence for which no one has claimed responsibility to date. It is also a terrorist attack because it is aimed at eliminating former Presi-

dent Nasheed for his political views and activities – which primarily include the promotion of a secular democracy and combating corruption, as Speaker of the Parliament and leader of the MDP, he told *The Hindu*. In his view, the attack sends a "chilling message" to those who stand up to religious extremists and demand an end to impunity and corruption.

Timing of attack

The timing of the attack, Mr. Shaheed said – a Thursday night in the last third of Ramzan – "strongly suggests that this was the handiwork of religious extremists". However, it is too early to foreclose other possibilities or connections, he noted. "Especially since there is a vortex of violence implicating corrupt politicians, religious fanatics and criminal gangs that carry out targeted attacks on individuals who stand in their way," he said.

"What this assassination attempt highlights is not just widespread religious extremism that is suffocating society, but also endemic impunity and corruption that have rendered the state incapable of protecting people from these vicious elements, even when it comes to someone as high profile as former President Nasheed," he added.

Urging President Solih to lead broad-based push back against corruption, impunity and religious extremism, Mr. Shaheed cautioned that the inability to dismantle these structures would make the Maldives "even more vulnerable" to political violence, rendering the country "ungovernable".

Biden hopes 'violence will end sooner than later'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that Israel has a right to defend itself but after speaking with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu he hopes violent clashes with Palestinians will end quickly.

"I had a conversation with

Bibi Netanyahu not too long ago," Mr. Biden told reporters. "My expectation and hope is that this will be closing down sooner than later, but Israel has a right to defend itself when you have thousands of rockets flying into your territory."

Mr. Biden spoke as calls grew internationally for a de-escalation of violence after

national security and defense staff "in constant contact with their counterparts in the West Asia – not just with the Israelis, but also with everyone from the Egyptians and the Saudis to the Emiratis."

Mr. Biden spoke as calls grew internationally for a de-escalation of violence after

intense hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians that have left dozens dead and hundreds injured.

Ensure civilians' safety' Russian President Vladimir Putin and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday jointly called for an end to the ongoing

fighting.

"In light of the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it was stated that the primary task is to stop violent actions on both sides and ensure the safety of the civilian population," the Kremlin said in a statement after a video call with Mr. Guterres..

Tamils' war memorial in Mullaitivu found vandalised

'Height of indecency', says TNA in a statement

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

A new memorial plaque for Tamils killed in Sri Lanka's civil war, along with monuments erected earlier, were found vandalised on Thursday in the northern Mullaitivu district, according to a committee organising the remembrance event falling next week.

Accusing the Army of destroying the war memorials for Tamils, the Mullivaikkal war remembrance committee voiced concern over the "continuing attack" on Tamils' right to memorialisation. The Army denied involvement in the incident.

In the brutal final battle of the civil war in May 2009, tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were trapped and killed in Mullivaikkal, located along the north-eastern coast of the island. Every year, Tamils remember their loved ones on May 18, a day that brings back distressing memories to scores of affected families.

The government, on the other hand, marks May 19 as 'Ranaviru [War Heroes] Day' in the south, hailing soldiers "who fought terrorism", by defeating the separatist LTTE. The end of the war is either about "victory" or tragic loss, depending on which side of the ethnic divide it is viewed from. It remains a sensitive issue in Sri Lanka, 12 years after the war ended.

"We went to place a new stone plaque in memory of those who were killed in Mullivaikkal, last night [Wednesday]. Army and police personnel at the spot asked us to return. We left the plaque nearby and came back. When we went back early this morning, the plaque was missing and other monuments erected there earlier were destroyed," said Fr. Sinnathurai Leo Armstrong, co-chair of the remembrance committee. "I see this as a deliberate, genocidal act. It is a continuation of the Sinhalas' history of trying to erase Tamils' identity," he told *The Hindu*.

Army denies role

When contacted, Army spokesman Brigadier Nilantha Premaratne said the Army had no role in the destruction of the monument. "Most of the monuments have been there for a few years now and there has been no problem. It is possible that some third party vandalised the structures to cause disharmony," he told *The Hindu*. Asked how the new plaque



A Tamil woman praying for her relatives killed in the civil war in Mullivaikkal, in this file photo. ■ AP

went missing, when Army personnel reportedly guarded the area, Brigadier Premaratne said police would probe the incident to find out who was behind the act.

This is not the first instance of Tamils' war memorial being destroyed overnight. Rights groups in Sri Lanka, international watchdogs, and the UN have repeatedly highlighted the denial of Tamils' right to remember. In January this year, authorities at the University of Jaffna bulldozed a memorial erected two years ago in memory of the civilians who died in May 2009. Following student protests and pressure from different quarters, including India, authorities rebuilt the monument on campus, and unveiled it last month.

Demolished people's hearts' Condemning Thursday's development in Mullivaikkal, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) – representing Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east, termed the destruction of the memorial structure "the height of indecency." "The act did not merely destroy a plaque made of stone, but has demolished the hearts of lakhs of Tamil people," a statement issued by Alliance spokesman and Jaffna MP M.A. Sumanthiran said.

The incident was reported after the Army and police inspected the place, the statement said, adding that no one can prohibit the people remembering those who died in the war. "No orders can make those memories fade. We will observe the Mullivaikkal remembrance, in a way that no one can stop us," the statement said.

Riyadh frees Bin Laden patriarch

He was held in a 2017 purge of the kingdom's elite at Ritz-Carlton hotel

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

RIYADH

Saudi Arabia has released construction magnate Bakr bin Laden, more than three years after his detention in a purge of the kingdom's elite that upended his vast business empire, sources told AFP.

The former chairman of the Bin Laden Group, Saudi Arabia's biggest construction company,

was reunited last week with his family in the Red Sea city of Jeddah after being freed from an undisclosed detention site, two people close to his family said.

Mr. Bakr, 70, a half-brother of the late Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, was not reachable for comment..

Mr. Bakr and two other siblings, Saad and Saleh, were snared in a November 2017 purge

that saw hundreds of royals, tycoons and Ministers locked up for months in Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel, then widely dubbed a five-star prison.

The unprecedented crackdown, which rattled private investors just as the kingdom sought to lure capital to help diversify the economy, was described by the government as an anti-corruption measure.

Monks in Myanmar split on anti-junta movement

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

About a dozen monks have been arrested.

But a hardline, pro-military faction within the clergy has also defended the junta. Among that group is Parmaukha, a monk who was once held for inciting hatred against Rohingyas.

The ideological divide is a far cry from the 2007 uprising, when monks led huge protests against the junta.

idco
Your power to grow
ISO 9001 & 14001 Corporation
ODISHA
NEW OPPORTUNITIES

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C)
IDCO, IDCO TOWERS, JANPATH, BHUBANESWAR - 751022

Tender Call Notice No. IDCO/H.O./P.C/ESTE-1/206/03/2016/8004, Dated : 07.05.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT

1. Name of the Work : Improvement of Surge Protection embankment-cum-Coastal Road Phase-A&B (Balance Work) at Paradeep, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha.
2. Estimated Cost : Rs.863.72 Lakh & Rs.1233.87 Lakh (Approx.)
3. Period of Completion : 05 (Five) & 06 (Six) Calendar Months.
4. Other details

Procurement Officer	Bid ID/Tender reference No.	Availability of Tender On-Line for Bidding	
1	2	3	4
Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, IDCO Towers, Bhubaneswar	BidID / Tender Reference No. P.C/EST-04/2021-22	21.05.2021 at 16.00 Hrs.	08.06.2021 up to 17.00 Hrs.

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal, www.tendersodisha.gov.in and Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and may not be seen in the e-Procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in and www.idco.in.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar
OPR-14003/11/0017/2122

Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited
In front of Ram Mandir, Convent Square, Unit-III,
Bhubaneswar-751007
Tel.: (0674) 2380660; Website: www.osmcl.nic.in; Email: logistics.osmcl@nic.in

Bid Reference No.: OSMCL/2021-22/SHORT-IVER/15

Online Bids through e-Tender portal (<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>) are invited from eligible bidders for supply of D08012 - Tab. Ivermectin (Aluminium foil / Blister pack), 12 mg / Tab as per the particulars mentioned below:

SI. No.	Particulars	Date and time
1.	Date & time of release of bid	13/05/2021, 3 PM
2.	Date & time of Online bid submission	Start Date & Time 14/05/2021, 11 AM End Date & Time 21/05/2021, 11 AM
3.	Date & time of Online Technical bid Opening	21/05/2021 11:30 AM
4.	Date of opening of Price Bid	To be informed to the qualified bidders

The bid document with all information relating to the bidding process including Prequalification criteria and terms & conditions are available in the websites: www.osmcl.nic.in and <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. OSMCL reserves the right to reject or modify any conditions of the tender or cancel the tender or cancel the issued purchase order at any stage without assigning any reason thereof.

SD/-
Managing Director,
OSMCL Ltd., Odisha
OIPR-10112/11/0011/2122

CAD-277

Tender Notice

Directorate of Agriculture, Government of Gujarat
Sector - 10 A, Ch Road, Krishibhavan, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India.

Directorate of Agriculture, Government of Gujarat is inviting online tender through <https://nprocure.com> from the prospective bidders meeting the basic eligibility criteria as stated in the Tender document for the below mentioned project work

Tender No.	Name

RIL unit bags bulk of supply at firm's KG-D6 gas e-auction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

As many as 14 users across sectors slugged it on a third-party electronic platform for seven-and-a-half hours to secure natural gas from the eastern offshore KG-D6 block before the oil-to-chemical (O2C) unit of Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) bagged most of the supplies, sources said.

Reliance Industries Ltd. and its partner BP Plc. of the U.K., who are bringing a second set of gas discoveries in their Bay of Bengal KG-D6 block, had offered 5.5 million standard cubic metres per day of additional gas in the auction for a flexible tenure of between 3 to 5 years.

Gas-user companies like Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Reliance O2C, GAIL Gas, Adani Total Gas Ltd., Torrent Gas, Torrent Power and gas trading companies like GAIL, Shell and IGS were locked in the intense bidding war on the e-auction that happened on May 5, sources in the Reliance-BP consortium said.

At the end of the intense bidding war, Reliance O2C walked away with 3 mm scmd of supplies, offering better prices than competitors, they said.

India Gas Solutions (IGS) – a JV of Reliance and BP – bagged another 1 mm scmd, while IOC got a similar volume. The remaining volume was picked by Adani Gas (0.15 mm scmd), IRM Energy (0.10 mm scmd), GAIL (30,000 cubic metres per day) and Torrent Gas (20,000 cubic metres per day). In the three auctions, Reliance-BP has sold about 18 mm scmd of domestic gas from new fields in the KG-D6 block, they said.

'Stalled projects' completion is stimulus'

Centre's push to help fund stranded housing projects lends boost to realty, core sectors: Sitharaman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the government's efforts to help finish stranded housing projects would serve as a 'sustained stimulus' for the ailing real estate sector and drive demand in core sectors including cement and steel.

Speaking at the virtual handing over of apartments to 640 households following the completion of the first stalled residential project funded through the Special Window for Affordable & Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) in Mumbai, Ms. Sitharaman said that the project, completed over 18 months despite the COVID-19 pandemic, indicated 'positivity' for the realty sector.

"I remember, in 2019, the



Pillar of support: The last-mile funding for stalled projects has given priority to middle class families, the FM says. ■ H. VIBHU

number of families that kept calling the Prime Minister and the representations that kept coming to us about the bank loans they had taken, the EMIs they had to pay," the minister said. "2019 was a very testing time for us on

this particular score, because the real estate industry was going through a stressed time, they were cash-strapped," she added.

With banks not lending to the sector, many projects were left almost complete,

translating into 'a perpetual wait' for families who had booked flats, she said.

"For a middle-class family, to have to pay rent and equally the EMI on loans taken for their homes, couldn't have been worse than anything else. It was the biggest burden they were carrying after investing to have a happy home for themselves. It was a Catch 22 situation, you couldn't go elsewhere to find a house, you couldn't get your own house because it wasn't completed," Ms. Sitharaman pointed out.

Last mile funding

Stating the last-mile funding to push stalled real estate projects had given priority to middle class families, she said the cost of apartments helped under the scheme

had been capped at ₹2 crore in Mumbai, ₹1.5 crore in the National Capital Region and 5 other cities, and ₹1 crore in the rest of the country.

"So this particular scheme has primarily and only focused on relieving the suffering of the middle class who invest in their homes by borrowing, and who, for no fault of theirs, suffer because houses are not given to them... because real estate itself went through a cash-strapped situation in 2019," Ms. Sitharaman observed.

"But today, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel," she added.

Eventually, the SWAMIH investment fund-I, managed by SBICap Ventures, would benefit 1,16,000 Indian families awaiting their homes, the minister said.

Relax FCRA norms, ease relief flow, says Nasscom

'Approve vaccines that have WHO nod'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Infotech industry association Nasscom has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to temporarily relax stringent Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) norms so as to ease the flow of overseas COVID-19 relief into the country and grant emergency use authorisation for all WHO-approved vaccines in view of domestic vaccine shortages.



Act and the 2020 amendments. This will enable NGOs to transfer funds between FCRA-approved NGOs and non-FCRA approved NGOs," it said.

Vaccine options

Making a strong pitch for liberalising vaccine imports, Nasscom said the availability of vaccines particularly for the private sector 'continues to be very challenging' though firms are attempting to source them.

"We request the government to provide emergency use authorisation for all WHO-approved vaccines – Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, and others that have gone through stringent approval process globally – to ensure there is no vaccine divide in the country," it said.

The statement assumes significance as States are struggling to source vaccines, and several of them are in the process of floating global tenders to import vaccines. Nasscom also requested the PM to use data more effectively to manage the pandemic and improve the government's response.

"COVID tracking and vaccination, insights, and analytics from data could play a key role in decision-making and early warning signals. We must ensure effective access to data for insights and planning, across all states and key departments, on a priority," it reiterated to the Prime Minister.

Vedanta posts ₹6,432 cr. Q4 net on better volumes

It logged ₹12,521-cr. loss a year earlier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI



Vedanta Ltd. reported a consolidated net profit of ₹6,432 crore for the March quarter of 2020-21 on the back of various factors, including better volumes and lower cost of production.

It had posted a loss (attributable to owners of Vedanta) of ₹12,521 crore in the year-earlier period.

The company's income increased to ₹29,065 crore from ₹20,382 crore.

Vedanta Group CEO Sunil Duggal said the company's businesses delivered record operational performance, maintaining the trajectory of cost and volumes, driven by structural integration and technology adoption.

"Our businesses have

HNI's invest in stocks, stay off fixed income, real estate'

Wealth managers see interest in start-ups, gold as hedge

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

Despite the current uncertain economic environment precipitated by the surge in COVID-19 cases, wealthy Indians and family offices are investing in blue-chip stocks in India and abroad as well as in tech start-ups to maximise returns, according to wealth managers.

They have mostly moved away from investing in low-yielding fixed instruments such as fixed deposits and bonds, and real estate, even as they invest about 5% of their funds in gold which has emerged as a hedge against rupee depreciation, the analysts said. In addition, there are about 100 listed compa-

C Yields from fixed income avenues are giving negative real interest rates

ATUL SINGH

Founder and CEO, Validus Wealth

nies that are attracting investments from this class, they said.

"Equities market in India is a great growth engine, and has performed well over a long time," said Atul Singh, founder and CEO, Validus Wealth, a private wealth management firm with assets close to \$600 million.

Mr. Singh said investing in the fixed-income market has become challenging. "Yields have fallen to a level where they are lower than the infla-

tion expectation, giving negative real interest rates. Mutual funds have disappointed, and hence are out of favour," he said.

"Market-linked debentures have gained popularity as a tax-efficient vehicle for taking debt exposure," he said. These instruments provide about 8% return.

"The average returns on stocks in the past year, have been in the realm of 40% to 50%," said Tanushree Banerjee, co-head of Research, Equitymaster. "Investors cannot take such high returns for granted. They must have a long-term tenure in mind, [for] returns of 15-20%, which are closer to long-term averages."

MSN to make, sell Eli Lilly's COVID drug

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

MSN Labs has joined a small but growing list of drugmakers in India with whom U.S. pharma giant Eli Lilly has got into a royalty-free, non-exclusive, voluntary licence agreement for the manufacture and marketing of Baricitinib, a drug used to treat COVID-19.

Announcing the agreement, the Hyderabad-based company said in a statement on Thursday that it would be introducing the product under the brand name Baridoz in two strengths – 2 mg and 4 mg.

MSN is already into two other COVID-19 drugs – Favilov and Oselow.

Cipla, Sun, Lupin and Torrent are the other firms to have announced agreements with Eli Lilly.

Lockdowns to dent gold sales on Akshaya Tritiya'

Dealers pin hopes on digital demand

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Gold buying on Akshaya Tritiya this year may remain muted as stores are closed following lockdowns in 19-20 cities, dealers said.

However, demand for digital gold and Gold ETFs is likely to witness an increase.

"Consumer demand, as compared with the previous years, has taken a hit as stores are either closed or are operating only for few hours because of the lockdowns," said Suvankar Sen, CEO, Senco Gold and Diamonds.

"We have started seeing online sales to an extent because of Akshay Tritiya and the upcoming wedding season," he added.

"The second wave of COVID-19 is not in favour of the jewellery industry," said Prithviraj Kothari, MD, Ridic Siddhi Bullions.

"The demand will be less as marriages are not happening. However, demand will be more for Gold ETF, digital gold and products that can be bought online."

"Owing to the second wave and investor sentiment driven towards assets with long-term returns, customers are turning to options such as digital gold," said Ashraf Rizvi, founder-CEO, Digital Swiss Gold.

MSN is already into two other COVID-19 drugs – Favilov and Oselow.

Cipla, Sun, Lupin and Torrent are the other firms to have announced agreements with Eli Lilly.

Announcing the agreement, the Hyderabad-based company said in a statement on Thursday that it would be introducing the product under the brand name Baridoz in two strengths – 2 mg and 4 mg.

MSN is already into two other COVID-19 drugs – Favilov and Oselow.

Cipla, Sun, Lupin and Torrent are the other firms to have announced agreements with Eli Lilly.

On a y-o-y basis, the investments recorded more than a sixfold increase due to the low base effect, as in

April sees 67 deals fetch \$7.5 billion; e-com logs \$3.7 billion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

India received venture capital and private equity investments worth ₹7.5 billion across 67 deals in April, a sixfold rise over the same month last year on low base effect, as per the Indian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association-EY report.

"Year 2021 has recorded four straight months of sequential increase in PE/VC investments, increasing from \$1.6 billion in January to \$7.5 billion in April," said Vivek Soni, partner and national leader, private equity services, EY.

"On a y-o-y basis, the investments recorded more than a sixfold increase due to the low base effect, as in

April sees 67 deals fetch \$7.5 billion; e-com logs \$3.7 billion

ogy and IT/ITES.

"E-commerce sector has recorded \$3.7 billion in PE/VC investments in the four months of 2021 compared with \$2.8 billion recorded in full-year 2020. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of e-commerce, which led to a significant increase in the valuation of many direct to consumer businesses," the EY official added.

The largest deal in April 2021 saw a new fund of Blackstone along with ADIA, UC Investments and GIC announcing the acquisition some 75% in Mphasis for about \$2.8 billion.

At \$2.3 billion, the cumulative value of strategic exits in 2021 was the most in three years, as per the report.

Key drivers of PE/VC market have been e-com, pharma, healthcare, edutech, online media, SaaS, technol-

LET YOUR
WARMTH SHOW,
BUT FROM BEHIND
THE MASK.

When the pandemic hit



us first, we braved it together.

Sadly, the times are

once again challenging.

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

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

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

THE HINDU

#KeepTheHabit



* GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

vestments in April 2020 were severely curtailed by the spread of COVID-19."

As many as 15 large deals contributed \$6.1 billion, according to the report.

Key drivers of PE/VC market have been e-com, pharma, healthcare, edutech, online media, SaaS, technol-

ogy and IT/ITES.

"E-commerce sector has

recorded \$3.7 billion in PE/VC investments in the four months of 2021 compared with \$2.8 billion recorded in full-year 2020. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of e-commerce, which led to a significant increase in the valuation of many direct to consumer businesses," the EY official added.

The largest deal in April 2021 saw a new fund of

Blackstone along with ADIA, UC Investments and GIC announcing the acquisition some 75% in Mphasis for about \$2.8 billion.

At \$2.3 billion, the cumulative value of strategic exits in 2021 was the most in three years, as per the report.

Key drivers of PE/VC market have been e-com, pharma, healthcare, edutech, online media, SaaS, technol-

ogy and IT/ITES.

"E-commerce sector has

recorded \$3.7 billion in PE/VC investments in the four months of 2021 compared with \$2.8 billion recorded in full-year 2020. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of e-commerce, which led to a significant increase in the valuation of many direct to consumer businesses," the EY official added.

The largest deal in April 2021 saw a new fund of

Blackstone along with ADIA, UC Investments and GIC announcing the acquisition some 75% in Mphasis for about \$2.8 billion.

TV PICKS

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



Warner handled captaincy issue with class: Haddin

MALE (MALDIVES)
Sunrisers Hyderabad assistant coach Brad Haddin has revealed that David Warner sportingly embraced the team management's decision to remove him as skipper in the now suspended 14th edition of the IPL. "He took it with class. It was a bit of a shock to everyone. Management decided to go in a different direction to try to spark something within the team," Fox Cricket quoted Haddin as saying. ANI

Scheduling IPL 'real challenge,' says RR owner Badale

NEW DELHI
Rajasthan Royals owner Manoj Badale says scheduling the suspended IPL will be "a real challenge" and there is only a small possibility of hosting the League on either side of the T20 World Cup later this year. The lucrative league was "indefinitely suspended" last week after four players tested positive for COVID-19 in the bio-bubble. "I think the challenge is just finding space and calendar. The players are already playing too much cricket," Badale said during a virtual interaction arranged by the Royals. "The calendars are incredibly packed, and particularly this year after COVID, Boards from around the world and trying to get as many competitions and as many Test matches in as possible," he added. PTI

Sports Ministry to give financial aid to bereaved families of hockey greats

NEW DELHI
Kiren Rijiju, the Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, on Thursday announced ₹5 lakh each as financial support to bereaved families of Moscow Olympic gold medalists MK Kaushik and Ravinder Pal Singh, both of whom passed away last week due to COVID-related complications. "We've lost two hockey greats to COVID. MK Kaushik ji & Ravinder Pal Singh ji's contribution to Indian sport will always be remembered. As a gesture of support, the Sports Ministry is handing over ₹5 lakh each to the bereaved families. We stand with them in this hour of grief," Rijiju tweeted. ANI

Aussie players may head home this week

ANI
MELBOURNE
Australian players, media, and coaches who are currently in the Maldives — after the suspension of the 14th edition of the Indian Premier League — may head back home by Sunday. The IPL 2021 season was postponed on May 4 due to a rising number of COVID cases and the entire Australian contingent had travelled to the Maldives due to a travel ban from India.

Awaiting confirmation

Cricket Australia (CA), the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA), and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) are awaiting confirmation from the Australian government that citizens who have recently been to India will be allowed to return to home shores after May 15, ESPNcricinfo reported.

The 38-member Australian contingent may take a charter flight from the Maldives on May 16. This will see the contingent travelling via Malaysia to finally reach Sydney. Upon reaching Sydney, they will have to undergo a further 14-day quarantine.

Powar returns to take charge of India women's team

Cricket Advisory Committee prefers the former off-spinner as head coach over WV. Raman



CRICKET

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Ramesh Powar has returned as the India women's team's head coach with the Cricket Advisory Committee preferring the former India off-spinner over former India batsman WV. Raman. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced Powar's appointment on Thursday through a statement signed by secretary Jay Shah after the CAC, headed by former India pacer and coach Madal Lal, interviewed eight candidates over two days.

"Looking forward to take India Women's cricket ahead. I sincerely thank the CAC and the BCCI for this opportunity," Powar said in a short statement. Raman graciously congratulated and wished Powar the best through a social media post.

Interestingly, Raman had

taken charge of the team in December 2018 following Powar's tumultuous short stint with the team. The veteran coach is understood to have recently had a fall-out with new selection panel, which led to the BCCI advertising for a new coach.

Raman was also interviewed for the post on Wednesday, but the CAC recommended Powar. Despite his recent success with Mumbai's men's team in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, Powar's appointment has raised eyebrows among the women's cricket fraternity.

Tussle with Mithali

After all, the crafty spinner was involved in a bitter dispute with veteran batter Mithali Raj during his previous stint with the team that lasted barely four months starting July 2018. Powar and Mithali's tussle during the World T20 overshadowed India's march into the

semifinals.

Interestingly, Powar set to take over with India women's forthcoming tour to England, he will have to work in tandem with Mithali in two formats.

While Mithali has retired from T20Is, she will be a vital cog in the ODIs and the one-off Test scheduled in England.

The BCCI is expected to announce support staff and the squad for the England tour on Friday.

Powar's previous stint with India women was his first major coaching stint. Since then, he has worked with the Mumbai Cricket Association indoor academy, the National Cricket Academy and Mumbai men's one-day team.

Soon after coaching Mumbai to the Hazare Trophy title in March, he attended a Level-2 hybrid coaches' workshop at the NCA.

Interestingly, Raman had

raised eyebrows among the women's cricket fraternity.

Management decided to go in a different direction to try to spark something within the team," Fox Cricket quoted Raman as saying. ANI

REUTERS
MELBOURNE

Australia skipper Tim Paine has thrown his support behind Steve Smith replacing him as captain of the Test team when the time comes for a leadership change.

Paine succeeded Smith as captain in 2018 after the batsman was banned from international cricket for 12 months and suspended from leadership roles for two years for his role in the Newlands ball-tampering scandal.

Smith said in March he would gladly take the captaincy back if the chance came, and Paine said he deserved to be considered.

Endorsement: Tim Paine, left, says Steve Smith has it in him to lead the Baggy Greens again. ■ AFP

"I think so. Obviously I don't make that decision but the time I played with Steve as captain he was excellent," Paine said in comments published by News Corp media on Thursday.

"Certainly tactically he is



Endorsement: Tim Paine, left, says Steve Smith has it in him to lead the Baggy Greens again. ■ AFP

IOC supports measures to make the Games happen despite public opposition

Anti-Olympics protester forces abrupt end to virtual news conference

REUTERS
TOKYO
The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Wednesday said it supported Japanese measures to counter COVID-19 and was confident the Tokyo Olympics would be a "historic" event, despite wide public opposition.

"We are now very much in an implementation phase with 78 days to go and fully concentrated on delivering the Games," IOC spokesman Mark Adams told an online news conference.

"When the Games happen and the Japanese people are

proud host of an event that will be an historic moment, I think I am very confident we will see public opinion hugely in favour of the Games."

His online news conference, however, ended with a protester, who had signed up as a journalist to ask a question, unfurling a banner reading "No to Olympics" and shouting profanities and "No Olympics anywhere" before being cut off.

Japan has extended a state of emergency in Tokyo and

three other areas until the end of May as the number of cases rises daily, forcing IOC President Thomas Bach to postpone a visit to Japan in May.

An opinion survey conducted from May 7-9 by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* daily showed 59% of respondents wanted the Games cancelled as opposed to 39% who said they should be held. "Postponement" was not offered as an option.

"In terms of Japan and To-

kyo we understand the caution," Adams said. "We are fully in solidarity with them. People are very cautious. We have to fully trust Japanese authorities."

"There will be ups and downs (in public opinion). We have to take account of public opinion on a longer term."

"As things stand now we are moving full ahead. We continue to plan for full Games. That's the way it has to be for us."

World No. 4 and seventh seed, fell 7-5, 6-3 to the 17-year-old Gauff, ranked 35, who reached her fourth quarterfinal of the year.

Defending champion Simona Halep, the third seed, was forced out with a calf injury in her second round match.

The results:

Men: Third round: Novak Djokovic bt Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-2, 6-1; Rafael Nadal bt Denis Shapovalov 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(3); Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Matteo Berrettini 7-6(3), 6-2; Reilly Opelka bt Aslan Karatsev 7-6(6), 6-4.

Second round: Rafael Nadal bt Jannik Sinner 7-5, 6-4; Tsitsipas bt Marin Cilic 7-5, 6-2; Berrettini bt John Millman 6-4, 6-2; Andrey Rublev bt Jan-Lennard Struff 6-7(7), 6-1, 6-4; Denis Shapovalov bt Stefano Travaglia 7-6(2), 6-3.

Women: Third round: Ashleigh Barty bt Veronika Kudermetova 6-3, 6-3; Cori Gauff bt Aryna Sabalenka 7-5, 6-3; Iga Swiatek bt Barbora Krejcirova 3-6, 7-6(5), 7-5; Karolina Pliskova bt Vera Zvonareva 7-5, 6-3; Petra Martic bt Nadia Podoroska 6-1, 6-1, 6-2; Jessica Pegula bt Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-2, 6-4.

Second round: Garbine Muguruza bt Bernarda Perera 2-6, 6-0, 7-5; Angelique Kerber bt Simona Halep 1-6, 3-3 retd.; Barbora Krejcirova bt Sofia Kenin 6-1, 6-4; Iga Swiatek bt Madison Keys 7-5, 6-1.

sian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight-set win over Rus-

ian Veronika Kudermetova. The Australian won 6-3, 6-3 to set up a clash with US teenager Coco Gauff, who earlier ousted Madrid winner Aryna Sabalenka.

Dangerous
"Coco is extremely dangerous. She's played an exceptional tournament thus far. She's got the ability to take the game on. She's aggressive. She can run. She can trust her legs," said Barty.

Belarus' Sabalenka, the

33-year-old next plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of last year's French Open semifinal which the Serb won. Fifth seed Tsitsipas ended the run of home hope Matteo Berrettini 7-6(6), 6-2.

In the women's section, World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty eased into the last eight with a straight

Dhiraj
Raghuvanshi
passes away



RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Former chess player and president of Uttarakhand Chess Association Dhiraj Raghuvanshi lost his battle against COVID at the Teerthanker Mahaveer Medical College & Research Centre at Moradabad on Thursday morning. He was 60.

Raghuvanshi, survived by wife Seema, was getting medical treatment at home for the past two weeks but his condition worsened on Wednesday night and he was hospitalised.

Third tragedy

In less than a month, Raghuvanshi is the third office-bearer of an affiliated unit of All India Chess Federation to pass away. Karnataka Chess Association secretary Hanumantha Rajanna (63) fell victim to the virus before Haryana Chess Association's young president Gaurav Jindal (38) died in a car accident.

Winner of the 1980 Delhi State chess junior title, Raghuvanshi was the president of the Delhi Chess Association from 1995 to 2001. In February this year, he became a member of the AICF's Research & Development Commission.

In his political career, Raghuvanshi was the general secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Youth Congress in 1999 and the vice-president of Uttarakhand State Kisan Congress in 2002, among others.

The country's chess fraternity took to social media to pay tributes to Raghuvanshi.

IN BRIEF



Shafali and Radha set for WBBL contracts
SYDNEY
Shafali Verma, who is set to make her debut in the inaugural edition of The Hundred, will also be a part of the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL). According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, the Indian opener has penned a contract with Sydney Sixers. Left-arm spinner Radha Yadav is also on the verge of signing a contract with one of two Sydney-based teams. ANI



Serena accepts wild card to play at Parma
PARMA
Serena Williams has accepted a wild-card invitation to play at the Emilia-Romagna Open in Parma starting this weekend. The move came immediately after Williams lost in straight sets to Nadia Podoroska at the Italian Open on Wednesday in her first match in nearly three months. AP

Tough start for Indians at British Masters

Indian golfers endured a disappointing opening round at the Betfred British Masters on Wednesday. Shubhankar Sharma (73) was the best among the Indians at Tied-70, while Ajeeet Sandhu (74), a late entrant, was T-94 as the European Tour moved to the UK. S.S.P. Chawrasia (75) was T-115 and Gaganjeet Bhullar (77) was T-140 from the first round. Australia's Matthias Schwab continued his excellent form on the 2021 Race to Dubai as a 66 handed him the lead on day one. PTI

Atletico steps closer to the LaLiga title

Jorginho howler hurts Chelsea as it loses to Arsenal; Milan goes on the rampage against Torino

EURO LEAGUES

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID
With the Spanish league title in sight, Atletico Madrid made sure it didn't falter.

Diego Simeone's team moved closer to ending its title drought in Spain with a 2-1 home win against Real Sociedad on Wednesday, taking a major step toward securing its first league trophy since 2014.

"We could hear them," said Atletico captain Koke, who played his 500th match for the club.

"There are two games left but that's a lot. Everyone is losing points in this league. We have two finals ahead of us."

Ante Rebic netted a 12-minute hat-trick in the second half to help AC Milan rout Torino 7-0 in Serie A and strengthen its chances to qualify for the Champions



Inching ahead: Angel Correa celebrates after scoring Atletico's second against Sociedad. ■ AFP

League.

Theo Hernandez also scored twice on Wednesday as Milan remained level on points with second-place Atalanta, which beat Benevento 2-0.

The two are two points above Napoli and three

above fifth-place Juventus, which won 3-1 at Sassuolo. There are two rounds remaining in Serie A.

Emile Smith Rowe took advantage of a defensive howler from midfielder Jorginho to score the winner as Arsenal beat Chelsea 1-0 at

Stamford Bridge to stop the host from moving third in the Premier League.

It was Arsenal's third straight Premier League victory and a much-needed morale booster after its loss in the Europa League semifinals left the Gunners without

a chance of qualifying for the Champions League.

The results: Premier League: Chelsea 0 lost to Arsenal 1 (Smith Rowe 16).

LaLiga: Sevilla 1 (En-Nesyri 66) bt Valencia 0; Celta Vigo 1 (Nolito 24) bt Getafe 0; Huesca 1 (Ramirez 61) bt Athletic Bilbao 0; Atletico Madrid 2 (Carrasco 16, Correa 28) bt Real Sociedad 1 (Zubeldia 83).

Serie A: Cagliari 0 drew with Fiorentina 0; Torino 0 lost to AC Milan 7 (Hernandez 19, 62, Kessie 26-pen, Diaz 50, Rebic 57, 72, 79); Atalanta 2 (Muriel 22, Pasalic 67) bt Benevento 0; Sampdoria 2 (Verre 32, Balde 80) drew with Spezia 2 (Pobega 15, 73); Inter Milan 3 (Brozovic 11, Vecino 20, Lukaku 90) bt Roma 0 lost to Genoa 2 (Zappacosta 13, Scamacca 61-pen); Sassuolo 1 (Raspadori 59) lost to Juventus 3 (Rabiot 28, Cristiano Ronaldo 45, Dybala 66); Lazio 1 (Immobile 90+5) bt Parma 0.

Bundesliga: Schalke 1 (Harit 6) lost to Hertha Berlin 2 (Boyata 19, Ngankam 74).

stated.

"The female player had come from home. The players were tested on 6th and their results came positive on 7th. They received their first vaccine dose on 29th April."

"One male player and one female player were not vaccinated. They have been tested again on the 10th and their results are awaited tomorrow [14th]. One athlete would also be tested once more in 2-3 days' time." It is learnt that none of the female race walkers are among those who returned positive.

The 31-year-old Irfan had qualified for the Tokyo Olympics way back in early 2019 after finishing fourth in the 20 km event of the Asian Race Walking Championships in Nomi, Japan.

The SAU source said the whole hockey team training at the Centre other than one player has tested negative.

Irfan, four others test COVID positive

ATHLETICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Olympics-bound race walker K.T. Irfan is among five elite track-and-field athletes who have tested positive for COVID-19 at the Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

The tests were conducted last Friday and those who returned positive have been kept under quarantine.

"At least five elite athletes have tested positive for COVID-19 when tests were conducted on Friday. They have been kept isolated from others," a source at the SAU Centre told PTI on condition of anonymity.

The source said another male race walker also tested positive, but his name could not be confirmed.

"Four male players and 1 female player and 4 support staff tested positive for COVID-19," the SAU source

won the bronze in Delhi. Rahi and Chinki were almost identical with their averages.

"It is important to have consistently high performances in international competitions for a year or two. Otherwise, it is not easy to survive in the Olympic atmosphere under pressure," said Rahi.

"I want to see her as a teammate in future, in such high-level competitions," added Rahi.

Air pistol World No.1 and a lawyer by profession, Abhishek Verma felt that there was no room for debate, as the national federation had "strictly followed the laid down selection policy". It was a fair decision," Abhishek said.

Decoding Chinki Yadav's omission from Olympics team

Rahi puts things in perspective as regards the reigning World No. 1 in sports pistol

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

One swallow does not make a summer. Even if you are World No.1, it does not cut much ice with the stringent Olympic selection policy of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI).

The omission of Chinki Yadav, the reigning World No.1 in sports pistol, after she had won the World Cup gold in Delhi in March, beating Rahi Sarnobat and Manu Bhaker, may have been perplexing, to say the least. More so, when the Asian Games gold medallist Rahi and the 19-year-old Manu got the nod to shoot in Tokyo.

way Chinki performed in the Delhi World Cup.

She was not performing that great when the selection policy had started collecting scores for a year or two, reasoned Rahi, who had lost the gold to Chinki in the shoot-off after a tie in a spectacular final.

Yes, in the four World Cups in 2019, Chinki had scores of 584, 580, 571 and 570. A tenth placing was her best.

Undisputed No.1

Manu was the undisputed No.1 in the country with her consistently high scores in the event, even though she had no World Cup medal to show in sports pistol till she

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two World Cup gold medals in 2013 and 2019, put things in perspective.

"I was very happy with the

23-year-old Chinki, who had won the Olympic quota with a good score of 588 out of 600 in the Asian Championship, even though she finished sixth in the final, was herself quite relaxed

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two

World Cup gold medals in

2013 and 2019, put things in

perspective.

"I was very happy with the

best.

about Olympic selection, after her golden fare.

Rahi, who has won two