



Maruti Suzuki to make oxygen available for medical needs

page 9



Four patients die after fire at a private hospital in Mumbai

page 9



U.S. President Biden reiterates that he will send vaccines to India

page 13



Ruturaj. du Plessis power CSK to the top of the table

page 15

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

NEARBY



SC directs U.P. to shift Kappan to Delhi hospital

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Uttar Pradesh government to shift journalist Siddique Kappan to a hospital in Delhi. A Bench of Chief Justice N.V. Ramana, Justices Surya Kant and A.S. Bopanna directed Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the State, to shift Mr. Kappan to a Delhi hospital for "proper medical treatment".

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Do not hoard oxygen cylinders, pleads HC

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday appealed to citizens not to hoard oxygen cylinders and medicines required for COVID-19 patients so as to avoid creating artificial scarcity. "The nation is facing an unprecedented crisis. It is at times like these that the people need to showcase their best qualities and virtues," a Bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3



Negative test or vaccination must for agents, candidates

Election Commission announces rules for counting day

Dead candidate's wife files case

The wife of Trinamool Congress candidate Kajal Sinha, who recently died of COVID-19, has filed a case of culpable homicide against Sudip Jain, Deputy Election Commissioner in-charge of

West Bengal, accusing the Election Commission of India of "deliberate and intentional omission" leading to her husband's death. Mr. Sinha was fielded from Khardaha. ▶ PAGE 8

ple accompanying winning candidates to collect their certificate of election from the Returning Officer to two.

"In view of the second wave of pandemic and in order to ensure completely COVID-safe arrangements during counting, the Commission has been regularly consulting the Chief Secretaries and the Chief Electro-

ral Officers of all five States/UT and has taken their views and safety measures/ protocol to be followed," an ECI statement said. The poll panel ordered the District Election Officers to be the Nodal Officers for the counting centres to make sure COVID-19 norms are followed.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Centre notifies Act giving more powers to Delhi L-G

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday issued a gazette notification stating that the provisions of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021, would be deemed to have come into effect from April 27.

The Act, which gives the Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi more teeth and significantly waters down the powers of both the elected government and the Legisla-

tive Assembly, will clarify the expression "Government" and address "ambiguities" in the legislative provisions to promote "harmonious relations between the legislature and the executive".

In middle of pandemic
The move comes a day after the Delhi High Court caulked the Delhi government to put its "house in order" over the issue of inadequate oxygen supply in the city, adding that the Centre would be asked to take over if it could

not manage the situation.

Coming as the development does in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Act is expected to trigger another round of confrontation between the L-G and the Delhi government under AAP. The Act defines the responsibilities of the elected government and the L-G along with the "constitutional scheme of governance of the NCT" interpreted by the Supreme Court in recent judgments regarding the division of powers between the

two entities. It will also seek to ensure that the L-G is "necessarily granted an opportunity" to exercise powers entrusted to him under proviso to clause (4) of Article 239AA of the Constitution.

This particular clause provides for a Council of Ministers headed by a Chief Minister for the NCT to "aid and advise the Lieutenant-Governor" in the exercise of his functions for matters in which the Legislative Assembly has the power to make laws.

"This will save thousands of crores of state funds going forward. This will enable more vaccinations and save

Serum Institute cuts Covishield price for the States to ₹300

STAFF REPORTER
PUNE

The Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) on Wednesday announced that it was reducing the price of its Covishield vaccine for the States from ₹400 to ₹300 per dose as a "philanthropic gesture".

"This will save thousands of crores of state funds going forward. This will enable more vaccinations and save

vaccines to the States and vaccinate for free those over 45.

The States, on the other hand, have to negotiate with vaccine companies the price at which they will buy. This again will be from 50% of the

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

The SII had earlier said its per dose price of Covishield was ₹150 for the Centre, ₹400 for State governments and ₹600 for private hospitals. Bharat Biotech, which makes Covaxin, quoted ₹150 for the Centre, ₹600 for the State governments and ₹1,200 for private hospitals.

The SII had then faced criticism over the pricing.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Dark times



Grim scene: COVID-19 victims being cremated in Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Seven patients dead in Meerut, hospitals blame lack of oxygen

Their claims run contrary to U.P. govt's assertion of no scarcity

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Seven patients died in two hospitals in Meerut district, allegedly due to scarcity of oxygen supply, doctors said at a time when the Uttar Pradesh government has asserted that there was no shortage of medical oxygen or medicines at any hospital.

While three patients died at Anand Hospital, four died at the KMC Hospital in the city, reported NDTV, the TV channel.

Anand Hospital's Medical Superintendent Subash Yadav told the channel on Tuesday that the hospital had been facing acute shortage of oxygen for two days. "We were allotted 400 cylinders in a day but were getting only 90, that too five or ten at a time. We were left with four cylin-



ders. There was no oxygen for two hours. We lost three patients due to lack of oxygen," he said.

Important factor
Sunil Gupta, head of the KMC Hospital, said that though he could not pinpoint and say that the deaths had happened only

because of lack of oxygen, "not getting oxygen was an important factor".

Mr. Gupta further said his hospital was receiving only 50-60% of its required oxygen supply. While the availability of oxygen remains an issue, its distribution was also not well organised, he added.

Couple's gift is a 'fan moment' for Kovai

Staying anonymous, they pledge jewels to buy 100 fans for COVID-19 hospital

STAFF REPORTER
COIMBATORE

When some give, they prefer to do it anonymously.

A couple called on authorities of the Government Medical College and ESI Hospital, Coimbatore, on Tuesday and offered to donate fans for the COVID-19 wards. But they would do so without any publicity.

The hospital Dean, M. Ravendran, thought they wanted to give a few fans. When he stepped out of his office, escorted by the couple, he found 100 new pedestal fans lined up in the corridor.

Raised ₹2.2 lakh
The couple then made another surprising revelation: they had pledged their jewellery for ₹2.2 lakh to buy the fans, as

they could not pool in the required sum quickly. "We initially thought they would give just a few. We were pleasantly surprised to see 100," Dr. Ravendran said.

The decision to present one hundred fans came after a Tamil daily carried a report on Tuesday, stating that fans could be donated to the COVID-19 wards as

the hospital administration was unable to operate the central air-conditioning. A local FM station also highlighted the requirement in its morning programme.

"We got 300 fans from the government for the COVID-19 wards. But the number of patients under care was more than

double. There were 720 patients as of Wednesday," the Dean said.

The medical superintendent, T. Ravikumar, said the couple had come to the hospital for COVID-19 vaccination and took an immediate decision to enable much-needed ventilation after coming to know of the requirement.

"When we saw they had pledged their jewellery, we insisted that they limit the donation to five or ten fans and return the rest to the shop. But they requested us to accept all of them. A final call was taken after getting the consent of the District Collector who asked us to honour the couple for their humanitarian gesture," he said. When contacted, the couple did not wish to comment on the donation.

2 die of shock after quake hits Assam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Two people died of shock and at least 10 sustained injuries after an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 struck Assam at 7.51 a.m. on Wednesday.

The earthquake, which was felt across northeast India, Bihar, West Bengal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, also left several buildings and roads in the northern and western parts of the State damaged.

The National Centre of Seismology said the epicentre of the quake, at a depth of 10 km, was Dhemaji in Sonitpur district, and initial analysis showed it was located near the Kapti Fault closer to the Himalayan Frontal Thrust.

The last major quake in the region was of magnitude 6.0 on July 29, 1960.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 8



Breezy move: The donated fans at the Government Medical College and ESI Hospital on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CM YK



(From left) Doctors and hospital staffers seen talking to a patient's attendant; a patient on a wheelchair outside Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

12 new deaths,
over 7,000
active cases in
G.B. Nagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NOIDA

With 12 more fatalities, the COVID-19 death toll climbed to 192 in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Wednesday, according to official data.

The district had registered 12 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday as well.

With 903 fresh cases, Gautam Buddha Nagar's COVID-19 tally went up to 38,519, while the number of active cases reached 7,202, according to the figures released by the U.P. Health Department for a 24-hour period.

A total of 588 patients got discharged during the period, with the cumulative number of recoveries reaching 31,125 in the district, the fifth highest in the State, it showed.

Meanwhile, the number of active dropped to 3,00,041 in Uttar Pradesh from 3,06,458 on Tuesday.

Lodhi Road crematorium turns away bodies for want of space

We have lost count of the number of pyres being lit these days, says a staffer



Pyres burning at a crematorium in Subhash Nagar in Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

think the pyre can be lit, you take the body. There is nothing left inside - no space," said a crematorium staffer to a such family.

After about 15 minutes, the ambulance was permitted to enter the premises and had to wait behind a queue of ambulances before it could reach the ultimate spot.

"You can go inside and check. If you get even an inch of space where you

are running out of wood also. Where do people think the cremation can happen? To add to it, the heat is such that it is becoming impossible to light the pyre. We will most likely have to begin once it cools down. As it is, there is not enough wood left. We lost count of the number of pyres being lit these days. It is an endless

process," said the staffer, while taking a break from managing the groups of people arriving.

South Delhi resident Ranjan Kumar had come to the crematorium after a family member passed away. "My sister-in-law, who was only 45-year-old, died. She was admitted in a hospital in Delhi Cantonment for the last five days. She was on oxygen support throughout the time and unfortunately, we could not save her. We got here in the morning and had to wait for about two hours before our turn came," Mr. Kumar said.

Strict instructions

After about an hour later, another staffer arrived with strict instructions for those manning the gates. "I do not care who is arriving. No more bodies can be allowed inside right now," he announced.

North Delhi Mayor seeks 100 hearses to transport patients

Ask forest dept. to ensure steady supply of firewood, he tells CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

North Delhi Municipal Corporation Mayor Jai Prakash has written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to provide at least 100 hearses or ambulances to municipal corporations to transport patients to available healthcare facilities.

These, the Mayor wrote, can also be used in unfortunate cases where those who could not survive their battle with COVID-19 can be transported to crematoriums and burial grounds for their last rites.

"North Delhi Municipal Corporation had a capacity of cremating 230 persons till April 15 but within 10-12 days the total capacity has been increased to 570 persons.

Three new cremation grounds have been developed besides increasing the capacity of existing ones," he wrote.



North Delhi Municipal Corporation had a capacity of cremating 230 persons till April 15, but the capacity has been increased to 570. Three new cremation grounds have been developed

JAI PRAKASH
North Delhi Municipal Corporation Mayor

is required," he wrote.

"This is to request you to direct the forest department to ensure steady supply of firewood to these crematoriums without fail," he also wrote. He requested the Chief Minister to issue directions to the forest department for the supply of firewood so that the crematoriums could continue doing their work uninterrupted and bereaved families are not troubled.

Prices of medicines, PPE kits and oximeters hit the roof in city

Shopkeepers blame panic buying and hoarding of medicines

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Amid huge demand for medicines, PPE kits, oxygen cylinders and oximeters in the onslaught of the pandemic, medical stores are selling these aforementioned items at exorbitant rates. The shop owners, in turn, blamed people for hoarding that led to unavailability of medicines and devices in the market.



In the last four days, more than 120 vials of Remdesivir were seized. ■ FILE PHOTO

medical stores are getting limited supply of drugs," said Mr. Kumar.

A long queue of customers was seen outside a medical store in Vaishali Sector 4 of Ghaziabad. Pe-

ople said they don't want to take last moment risk and want to stock medicines, oximeter, thermometer, PPE kits and hand gloves. In an emergency situation, a resident of Indirapuram even brought an oxygen cylinder for ₹20,000 from black market.

Safe than sorry

"Rumours circulating on the social media have pushed people into panic buying. Even if there is no requirement of medicines and other medical devices, people are hoarding it for emergency situation. Those who actually re-

quire it are running from pillar to post to get a single vial of Remdesivir or other medicines used in COVID-19 treatment," said Joy Saha, a resident of Vaishali.

Sales monitoring

A medical shop owner in Central Delhi said that after the government started monitoring the sale of Remdesivir, people involved in black marketing started hoarding it. In some cases, a few have bought the injection at ₹1 lakh per vial.

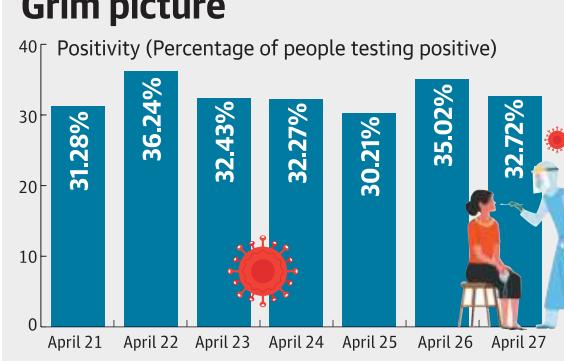
"Oximeters were in the market but there was huge demand and all of them

were sold out. The unavailability is just because of gap in demand and supply. The situation will improve when fresh stock arrives in a few days. But I request people not to buy duplicate oximeter as it will show inaccurate reading," said Sohan Singh, a medical shop owner in Vaishali.

In the last four days, police have arrested around ten people and recovered more than 120 vials of Remdesivir injection from their possession.

The accused used to pose as distributors and relatives of patients to buy injections from medical stores.

Grim picture



Opinions split on whether Delhi's cases have peaked

Experts say current data not enough

infection mostly 10-14 ago, when there was a spike," he said.

Girdhara R Babu, Professor at Indian Institute of Public Health in Bengaluru, said that there are chances that Delhi may have reached the peak of infection, but he cannot confirm at this point.

"Generally, a week is a good time to observe a trend. But in Delhi, the number of tests is currently low. So, I would wait for another week to say whether Delhi has reached a plateau. But there are chances that Delhi could have reached a peak now itself," Dr. Babu said.

But Jayaprakash Mulyil, an epidemiologist and former principal of Christian Medical College, Vellore, said that current data of positive cases and positivity is not enough to arrive at a conclusion on whether we have reached a peak.

"Classically, we count as cases only those people with clinical symptoms. But for COVID, we are counting all people who test positive as cases, even if they are sub-clinical [cases which are not severe enough to present observable symptoms]," Dr. Mulyil said.

Dr. Kishore said that in Delhi about 70-75% of the population may have been infected by the virus till now.

PRESS NOTICE TO BE ISSUED FOR PUBLICATION IN NEWSPAPERS FOR E-TENDERING.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

Online item rates bids are invited by the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Vibhag Division, Bilaspur on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, in electronic tendering system in two covers for the under mentioned work from the contractor/firms of appropriate class enlisted with HP Jal Shakti Vibhag, Central Govt. or any State Govt. Or Central/any State Govt. Undertakings.

Name of work:- Providing Medium Lift Irrigation Project to Changer Area from A.H.C in Tehsil Sh. Nain Devi & Dist. Bilaspur (SH: Replacement of MS/DIGI pipes of various dia encountered with railway track, construction of 10 Nos outlets and construction of thrust block).

Estimated Cost :- Rs. 41326386/-
Bid Security :- Rs. 445765/-
Cost of Bid document :- Rs. 2500/-
Time Limit:- One year
Schedule of tendering:-

1. Date of Online publication	28-04-2021 at 5.00 PM
2. Downloading of e-bid Documents	From 28-04-2021 5.00 PM to 10-05-2021 at 11.00 AM
3. Date of submission of e-bid	From 28-04-2021 5.00 PM to 10-05-2021 at 11.00 AM
4. Physical Submission of Original Bid Security and Cost of bid (in case of offline deposit of Bid security)	10-05-2021 up to 11.00 AM
5. Date of opening of bids:	
1) Cover-1 Eligibility Criteria & Technical bid	On 10-05-2021 at 11.30 A.M
2) Cover-2 Financial Bid	Shall be intimated separately
6. Site Visit	From 29-04-2021 to 02-05-2021 between 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM except on holiday along with the Assistant Engineer/concerned Junior Engineer, Jal Shakti Sub Division Bassi
7. Pre-Bid Meeting	On 04-05-2021 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of Superintendent Engineer Jal Shakti Vibhag Bilaspur. The queries of the bidders to be discussed during Pre-bid shall be submitted till 03-05-2021 at 4.00 PM. No queries shall be entertained afterwards.

Last date of filing/ uploading the tender through e-tendering 10-05-2021 up to 11.00 AM
The tender forms and other detailed conditions can be obtained from the website
<https://htenders.gov.in>

Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti Division
Bilaspur

HP / 0534/21-22 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

IN BRIEF

BJP blames Delhi govt. for deaths due to oxygen crisis

NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhu, on Wednesday claimed that the "lies and deceit" of the Delhi government was exposed. He accused the AAP government of being responsible for the death of people due to its mismanagement of oxygen supply, which was "a man-made disaster".

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer, Mechanical Workshop, N.E. Railway, Gorakhpur for & behalf of President of India invites "OPEN" E-Tender through online (e-tendering) for following work:-

Tender Notice No. EL-WS-GKP-2021-22-04, Tender No. &

Description of Work: EL-WS-GKP-2021-22-04, Repairing/Reconditioning and Up-gradation of out of warranty defective different make ERRUs to Rev-3 or latest of 4.5 KW capacity

(for Non-AC coaches) and 25 KW capacity (for AC coaches) in Mechanical Workshop, Gorakhpur.

Approx. Value: Rs. 20775538.12.

E.M.D. Money: Rs. 0.0, Completion

time/period from the date of

issue of acceptance letter: 12 Months

• E-tender online will be submitted upto 11.00 Hrs. on dated

20.05.2021 • For full details and

submission of bid please see the Indian

Railway IREPS official website

www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer (WS),

Gorakhpur

CPRO/EL=03

About any passenger amenity

complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955

Do Not smoke Bid/Cigarette in train

17 Delhi policemen succumb to virus despite one dose of vaccine

Officers fear fatigue may lower immunity, experts agree

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

As many as 17 Delhi police personnel, who had received only the first vaccine shot, succumbed to COVID-19 during the second wave, till Wednesday, said a senior police officer.

Senior police officers expressed fears of fatigue interfering with the immunity of even the fully inoculated lot, even as medical experts agree.

The officer said that during the first wave of COVID-19, a total of 33 police men died when there was no vaccine. During the second wave, a total of 17 policemen have died so far. The vaccination process of around 82,000 police personnel, who are front-line workers, was completed. But several were waiting for their second dose and simultaneously performing duties on ground and were exposed to the threat of the

virus.

"Policemen are front-line workers and during the pandemic, they are providing all kinds of services to people. In many cases, policemen have cremated bodies when families refused to come forward, fearing infection. Policemen are distributing food packets and performing law and order duties to strictly implement curfew orders," said the officer.

He added that most of the policemen have got the second dose of vaccination, but have not completed two weeks before being exposed to the virus again. Doctors say that after vaccination, it takes about two weeks for a body to build immunity. When the process of second dose of vaccination of policeman was under way, the second wave hit the city and infected them.

"At present, around 2,000 policemen have tested positive and undergoing treatment," added the officer.

Arun Gupta, president of Delhi Medical Council, said that both the vaccines available in the country have efficacy rate of 70%. Even after getting both the doses, 30% people will remain vulnerable. A body will develop immunity only after two weeks of receiving both the doses. Front-line workers, like policemen, doctors and others are working non-stop after being vaccinated. They cannot afford to take leave at this time, he added.

Cases may dip

Jugal Kishore, Head of the Community Medicine Department at Safdarjung Hospital, said Delhi has reached the peak. "We have reached the peak and cases will now go down. The positivity will fluctuate for a few days and then it will also decrease," he said.

On April 15, when positivity and cases were still rising, Dr. Kishore had told *The Hindu* that cases would peak

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, APR. 29
RISE 05:43 SET 18:56
RISE 21:40 SET 07:22
FRIDAY, APR. 30
RISE 05:42 SET 18:56
RISE 22:49 SET 08:15
SATURDAY, MAY 1
RISE 05:41 SET 18:57
RISE 23:52 SET 09:14

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	42	22
Safdarjung	42	22
Palam	43	24

Delhi Palam Today
42°C No large change in weather condition. A partly cloudy sky and very hot day likely. Early evening also to remain warm.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
41°C Morning remain easy. Day would turn hot with the chances of thunder clouds development at few areas.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU

DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiry to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products or services. The publisher can be held responsible for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

IN BRIEF

Getting less oxygen than allotted, says Delhi govt.

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Wednesday said that the State is getting less oxygen than allotted by the Central government. "We received 402 metric ton of oxygen on Tuesday, and 408 metric ton on Monday. We have been allocated the share of 480 metric ton on April 21 and 490 metric ton on April 25. But it is hardly reaching us in that quantity. Presently, the allocation is happening keeping in mind the number of ICU beds and non-ICU oxygen beds," the government said in a statement.

HC appeals to citizens not to hoard oxygen cylinders

Court takes strong note of violent incident at Apollo Hospital

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI



Relatives of patients waiting with empty cylinders for refill at Naraina in Delhi. — SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday appealed to citizens not to hoard oxygen cylinders and medicines required for COVID-19 patients so as to avoid creating artificial scarcity and make them available to people in need.

"The nation is facing an unprecedented crisis. It is at times like these that the people need to showcase our qualities and virtues," a Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli said.

"We appeal to the good sense of people to not resort to black marketing or hoarding of oxygen cylinders or medicines and to make them available to the needy. Hoarding of oxygen cylinders and medicines lead to an artificial scarcity," the Bench said.

"We came across news reports of the incident that took place in Apollo Hospital yesterday [Tuesday] where the hospital staffers and doctors were assaulted by the relatives of a patient. Such kind of incidents are bound to demoralise the medical community, which is serving

"We hope and expect that

tirelessly to save the lives of the people without any rest whatsoever," the court remarked. "We hope that such incidents are not repeated. The authorities and police should also be mindful of such kind of conduct and be vigilant," it added.

The court also noted the submission of senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, that there has been frantic SOS calls from hospitals and nursing homes for supply of oxygen but many a times it was found that the urgency expressed was not genuine.

The court also recorded a suggestion of using old DTC buses for transporting bodies instead of ambulances. It will hear the case again on Friday.

'Reply to prisoners' plea seeking parole'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre, State government, police and prison authority to respond to a plea seeking temporary release on bail or parole of prisoners involved in non-heinous crimes from the three jails in the Capital in view of the surge in COVID-19 cases.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh asked the Ministries of Law and Health, Delhi government, police, office of L-G and Director General of Prisons to give their stand on the plea by May 4.

Advocate Ajay Verma, appearing for the petitioners, argued that recently, in Tihar Jail, 190 inmates and 304 prison staffers tested positive.

The plea stated that of these, 67 inmates and seven prison officials are still undergoing treatment and two inmates have died due to the virus. The plea stated the jails in Delhi are overcrowded with a shocking data of capacity of inmates being 172.4%. The current total number of inmates was 17,285 against a total capacity of 10,026.



The power of AAA
ASSETS | ASSURANCE | ADVANTAGE

OUR UPSC RESULT 2019
300+ SELECTIONS IN CSE 2019

Rau's IAS Study Circle Since 1953

6 IN TOP 10
30 IN TOP 100

AIR 1 PRADEEP SINGH AIR 2 JATIN KISHORE AIR 3 PRATIBHA VERMA AIR 4 HIMANSHU JAIN AIR 6 VISHAKHA YADAV AIR 10 SANJITA MOHAPATRA

GS INTEGRATED COURSE for CSE 2022

ON CAMPUS BATCHES



21 MAY 1 year REGULAR BATCH BENGALURU
4 JUNE 1 year REGULAR BATCH DELHI
5 JUNE 1.5 years WEEKEND BATCH JAIPUR

Commencement dates for on-campus batches are tentative (Subject to Govt. guidelines)

INTERACTIVE-ONLINE BATCHES



4 JUNE 1 year REGULAR BATCH
5 JUNE 1.5 years WEEKEND BATCH

Don't let COVID interrupt your learning.
Use this time to advance your IAS prep!
Experience Rau's Classroom Teaching at Your Home

Why is Rau's IAS considered the most specialized Institution for UPSC CSE ?

Trusted High quality USPC centric Teaching by Experts

Integrated Testing:
Assignments + Class Tests + Test Series

Small batch sizes to enable discussion & doubt solving

Video backup of classes

Comprehensive Study material: Blue work Books + Focus + Prelims Compass + Mains Compass

Quality Improvement Programs for Pre & Mains revision

Highest Selections in UPSC since 1953:
Hundreds of Rau's IAS students ace CSE every year

RAU'S IAS INTERVIEWS

Everything that you need to know and experience delivered by eminent retired - IAS/IPS/IFS - officers at Rau's.
1 DAF Analysis → 2 Mock Interviews → 3 Feedback (incl. video recordings of mock interviews)

Mock Interviews are in progress. Book your session at www.rauias.com

ADMISSIONS OPEN | APPLY NOW

NEW DELHI 011 - 40786050, 9810184722, 7387992102, 8826839973, 7568054231 BENGALURU 080 - 255 35536, 9916035536, 8861822955 JAIPUR 0141 - 4106050, 8209203177, 7568054231

www.rauias.com | 011 - 40786050 | www.elearn.rauias.com



Assets

- 5 operational projects - 11 transmission lines with a network of ~3,698.59 ckm, and 3 sub-stations with 6,630 MVA of aggregate transformation capacity*
- Sound operational track record with high availability

Assurance

- Backing of world's 3rd largest transmission utility* as Sponsor and Project Manager
- TBCB assets on build-operate-maintain basis with 35 years' contract period

Advantage

- Availability-based tariff - High visibility on cash flows
- Large pool of sponsor's assets and debt-funded acquisition strategy

INDIA'S FIRST
InviIT
SPONSORED BY A
MAHARATNA PSU

*As of December 31, 2020. *(Source: www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview#3) as of October 25, 2019 according to the World Bank.

POWERGRID Infrastructure Investment Trust acting through its Investment Manager is proposing, subject to receipt of requisite approvals, market conditions and other considerations, to make an initial public offer of its units representing an undivided beneficial interest in the Trust ("Units"), and has filed the Offer Document with the SEBI, and the Stock Exchanges. The Offer Document is available on the website of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in, the BSE at www.bseindia.com and the NSE at www.nsindia.com and on the websites of the Lead Managers at www.icicisecurities.com, www.axiscapital.co.in, www.adelweissfin.com and www.business.hsbc.co.in/en-gb/in/gen/cipo-open-offer-and-buyback. Investors should note that investment in the Units involves a degree of risk, and for details relating to the same, should refer to the Offer Document, including the section "Risk Factors" on page 50 of the Offer Document, and the section "Forward-Looking Statements" on page 16 of the Offer Document.

These materials are not for publication or distribution, directly or indirectly, in or into the United States. The Units have not been and will not be registered under the U.S. Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act") or any other applicable state securities laws of the United States and, unless so registered, may not be offered or sold within the United States except pursuant to an exemption from, or in a transaction not subject to, the registration requirements of the Securities Act and applicable state securities laws. Accordingly, the Units are being offered and sold (a) in the United States only to persons reasonably believed to be "qualified institutional buyers" (as defined in Rule 144A under the Securities Act ("Rule 144A")) and referred to in the Offer Document as "QIBs" in transactions exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act; and (b) outside the United States in compliance with Regulation S under the Securities Act ("Regulation S") and the applicable laws of the jurisdiction where those offers and sales are made. No public offering of the Units or other securities is being made in the United States.

Adfactors

City police helps Asian para athlete

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police rushed to the aid of an Asian para gold medallist after receiving an SOS call on Wednesday.

DCP (South) Atul Thakur said that they received an SOS call from champion athlete Neeraj who had developed COVID-19 symptoms. He was medically examined. His rapid test report turned out to be negative and RT-PCR report is awaited. He is stable and the doctors have advised him rest.

In another case, the police cremated a man after his son and daughter, who were also ill, were unable to perform the rites. The police also arranged food for the family and counselling was given. Further, their RT-PCR test will also be conducted. If found positive, they will be admitted to COVID Care Centre.

Help of NGOs is also being taken in the matter, said Mr. Thakur.

Smaller Gurugram hospitals, nursing homes feel suffocated

Only registered facilities will be entitled to get oxygen refill, says administration

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

"We need oxygen cylinders every 15-30 minutes depending on the condition of the patient. We cannot have proper sleep at night because we need to arrange cylinders. It is not the job of the doctor. But we do it because we are answerable," said Renu Yadav who is running Aarvy Hospital here.



People queuing up for oxygen refills in New Delhi.
•SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

hospital. Dr. Yadav said that they had written several emails and also tried to reach out to Chief Minister Manohar Lal, but nothing happened.

Crisis averted

She recalled how the hospital was on the verge of completely running out of liquid oxygen on Tuesday morning but they somehow managed to get five cylinders. "The ad-

ministration is willing to help, however, there is not enough oxygen," said Dr. Yadav.

She said that they have now made the patients sign a declaration that hospital would not be held responsible in case of any eventuality due to short supply of oxygen.

The district administration on Wednesday said that the hospitals and nursing

homes located in Gurugram and registered on the government's web portal as COVID hospitals would only be entitled to get cylinders filled through oxygen-refilling stations registered with Gurugram.

Allocated quota

The administration said that hospitals from outside the district sent their vehicles to refilling stations in Gurugram creating undue pressure on allocated quota of the district and they would "in no circumstance" be allowed access to refilling stations.

It also made it clear that hospitals registered with the district need to update their data on availability of beds by 5 p.m. everyday, else the administration might consider discontinuation or limiting their oxygen supply.

Gurugram has an allocated quota of 35 MT of liquid medical oxygen.

Delhi govt. to add more ICU, oxygen beds in coming weeks

CM Kejriwal holds review meeting with health officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday convened a meeting with health officials to review the COVID-19 situation in the Capital.

Mr. Kejriwal, the government stated, deliberated on the plan to increase the number of oxygen beds in the coming days along with strengthening the home isolation system in the city.

"We are noticing that this new strain of COVID-19 is quite dangerous and often leads to respiratory and breathing issues. It has become very important to provide beds to every patient who needs oxygen. We have to expedite the process to add more ICU and oxygen beds in the coming weeks," he said.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the home isolation system and directed that it be further strengthened and that every patient who is re-



Arvind Kejriwal visits Ramlila Maidan to check the 500 ICU bed-facility set up by the government. •PTI

Over the last few days, the Delhi government has been working towards increasing the count of ICU & oxygen beds across Delhi on a war footing.

According to the government, 1,200 oxygen beds will be added by May 10, of which 500 beds' facility will be established at Ramlila Maidan opposite Lok Nayak Hospital and 500 oxygen beds will be added in GTB Hospital while 200 ICU beds will be added in Radha Soami Satsang Beas Covid Care Centre.

Delhi Cong. demands President's Rule in Capital

'Govt. spent crores on false propaganda'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Class 12 student was allegedly strangled to death by his 20-year-old friend after the accused refused to share the password of his iPhone, the police said on Wednesday.

The incident happened on April 21 at a park in north west Delhi's Pitampura. The police said they nabbed the accused, Mayank Singh, a BBA student of a Rohini college. He hails from Pilkhana in Uttar Pradesh.

The father of the victim lodged a missing report after his son did not return home. The victim left his home on April 21 morning, the police said.

On Sunday, the police received information about a decomposed body lying in the park at Pitampura. The police also recovered drugs from the spot.



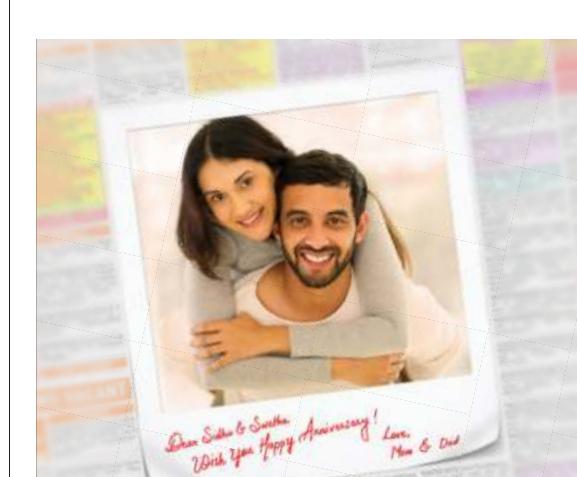
The functioning of the State government in the management of this health disaster has been completely irresponsible and negligent.

CH. ANIL KUMAR
Delhi Congress chief

tional duties towards its residents and has deviated from its duties." Mr. Kumar said.

No concrete steps
The Delhi Congress said that the State government has not taken any concrete steps over the past one year and ignored the warnings issued by medical scientists across the country and abroad about the pandemic.

A GREETING TO REMEMBER



Be it an anniversary, a birthday, an academic accomplishment or even a promotion. Now you can surprise your loved ones by wishing them on

CLASSIFIEDS

For more details, email: classifiedcustomercare@thehindu.co.in
Contact Toll Free Number: 180030700404
For Placing Advertisements Online, Log on to www.thehinduads.com

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Kimiti Devi

General public is here by informed that this girl (depicted in the photo) namely: Kimiti Devi D/o Brajesh R/o A-87, Shanti Marg, Mandawali, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from his house since 31.03.2021. In this regard DD No. 47A dated 01.04.2021 has been lodged at PS Mandawali, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far.

Her physical description is as under:-
Sex: Female, **Age:** 20 years, **Height:** 5'2" ft., **Complexion:** Fair, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Pink Colour Suit-Salwar.

Any person is having information or clue about this missing/kidnapped girl may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> P.S. Mandawali, Delhi
E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in PH: 011-22720808, 22720809
Tel. No.: 011-24368638/24368641 Mob. No.: 8750870628
Fax No.: 011-24368639 DP/461/ED/2021

Govt. of Jharkhand Office of the Director
Ranchi Institute of Neuro-Psychiatry & Allied Sciences
Kanke, Ranchi - 834006 (Ph: 2450303, 2450813)
www.rinpas.nic.in, Director-rinpas@jharkhandmail.gov.in &
Directorrinpas@gmail.com

E-tender notice No. DIR/01/04/2021-2022/Medicine (retender), DIR/02/04/2021-2022/MISC/ Pathology Chemical and Reagent (retender), Clinical Psychology Lab Test Material (retender), Medical Library Books & Journals (retender), Server Software are invited in two bid system (Technical & Price Bid) through e-tendering process only, from competent and eligible agencies, for a period of minimum one year.

Date on publication on website	05/05/2021
Pre-Bid Conference	10/05/2021
Date of start of Online Bid Submission	14/05/2021
Last Date and time for submission of Bids	31/05/2021, 17.00 P.M.
Opening of bidding Technical Part "A"	02/06/2021, 11.30 A.M.
Note: For further details, please visit website http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in	

Letter no. 969, date 27/04/2021
PR 246083 RINPAS (21-22)_D

Sd/-
Director,
RINPAS, Kanke, Ranchi

CM YK

DIPK-868/21

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

Sd/-
(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

For on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

(Er. Neeraj A Trambao)

Executive Engineer, PHE Division Budgam.

IN BRIEF



Education scheme: Jagan disburses ₹1,048 crore

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday credited ₹1,048.94 crore into the accounts of mothers of 10,89,302 students pursuing higher education, under the Jagananna Vasathi Deevena scheme for the academic year 2020-21.

Ramu Kanagal succumbs to COVID-19

BENGALURU
Ramu Kanagal, 53, dancer and son of Kannada film-maker the late Puttanna Kanagal, passed away on Wednesday due to COVID-19. He was undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital. He was running a dance academy, called Kanagal Nrithyalaya, in Bengaluru and had trained several dancers and movie artists.

Kerala to buy one crore vaccine doses

State contracting for 70 lakh Covishield, 30 lakh Covaxin doses; Karnataka adds nearly 40,000 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala will purchase one-crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines from two manufacturers for the 18-45 age group.

A Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday took the decision. The vaccines will cost ₹483 crore. The first 10-lakh doses will be purchased next week and the entire purchase completed

Keeping the virus at bay

Civic staff are striving hard to keep the virus at bay. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States.

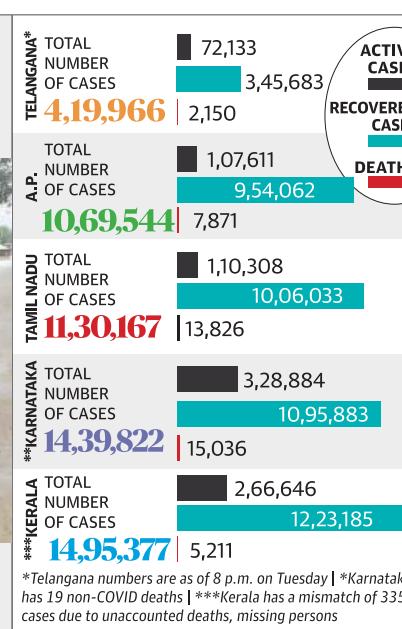


Daily battle: Sanitary workers spraying bleaching powder in a containment zone in Vijayawada on Wednesday ■ V. RAJU

by July. As per the initial estimate, the State will pay ₹294 crore for Covishield at ₹400 per dose and 5% GST and ₹189 crore for 30 lakh doses of Covaxin at ₹600 each including GST. Covishield maker Serum Institute of India (SII) announced a reduction in price to ₹300 per dose for States on Wednesday evening. The Chief Minister said, "The pricing of the vaccine is

inappropriate. They are giving it to the Centre for ₹150 a dose. We have asked them to change the policy and give it free. There is no response from the Centre."

On Wednesday, the daily



said critical non-COVID patients were also admitted to hospitals, and deaths were a combined list. New cases showed a dip at 8,061 on Tuesday, but 56 people died.

On the first day of the 14-day lockdown in Karnataka, people could buy essential commodities from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. Thereafter, police forced shops and markets to close, and barricaded roads.

Karnataka on Wednesday reported 39,047 new cases, 22,596 cases from Bengaluru Urban district, and 229 deaths.

Tamil Nadu's tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 11,30,167 on Wednesday as 16,665 more people tested positive for the infection. In the last 24 hours, as many as 98 people succumbed to the infection, taking the toll to 13,826. The State has 1,10,308 active cases.

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

Row after Minister asks farmer to 'die'

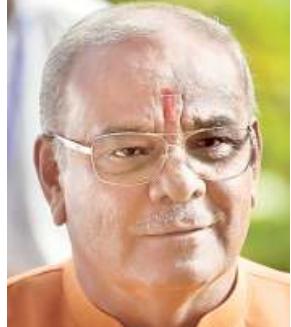
Karnataka CM expresses regret, but Umesh Katti remains unrepentant

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU/BELAGAVI

Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Minister Umesh Katti has landed in a controversy, with an audio of him asking a farmer to 'die' going viral.

The telephone conversation has Mr. Katti telling a farmer association member in Gadag that it is "better you die" when he asked the Minister if people "should live or die" with the government reducing the quantum of rice in the PDS.

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has expressed regret over it and said Mr. Katti should not have spoken thus



Umesh Katti

as a Minister. He also promised to provide five kg rice per month instead of three kg for people of the Belagavi region.

The Opposition demand-

ed Mr. Katti's resignation. KPCC president D.K. Shiva Kumar said Mr. Yediyurappa should sack the Minister for insensitivity to people who are facing problems due to the pandemic and lockdown. A similar demand was made by JD(S) leader and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy.

Mr. Katti, on his part, said he was "forced to say some unwanted words" as he was 'provoked' by the young caller. He did not express regret over his remarks.

"A person claiming to be a farmers' leader called me on Wednesday and asked why the government was reduc-

ing the allotment of rice to poor families. I told him that we had reduced the quantity of rice to 2 kg from 5 kg, but had provided ragi instead. He asked what was being given in North Karnataka where people do not eat rice, and I said jowar will be given in the coming months. But he kept pestering me. The farmer asked should we die and I said it would be a better option. I had to say it as the caller pushed me to it," Mr. Katti said, defending himself.

"No one should die of starvation in the State. But then no one should speak like that, either," he said.

The court had in 2016 ordered an inquiry against the politicians based on a petition by a resident of Malappuram. Former Chief Secretary K.M. Abraham was also named as a respondent in the petition.

However, the VACB found no corruption or irregularity that led directly back to the respondents. The fund, drawn from the Karunya lottery sales, provided financial aid for indigenous persons suffering from severe and chronic ailments such as cancer, which require protracted and expensive treatment.

Bihar government extends night curfew timings by three hours

It will be from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. now; all commercial establishments to close by 4 p.m.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Amid the rise in COVID-19 cases, the Bihar government on Wednesday extended the night curfew timings in the State by three hours.

The curfew will now be from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., an official said. All shops and commercial establishments will close at 4 p.m. The fresh curbs will come into force from April 29. Presently, the night curfew was in force from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the crisis management group chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"A maximum of 50 persons can participate in a marriage ceremony, while 20 can take part in the last rites of a person," said Amir Subhani, development com-



A patient on oxygen support waits for admission outside a hospital in Patna on Wednesday. ■ PTI

missioner and member of crisis management group.

Marriage ceremonies

The night curfew for marriage ceremonies will be effective from 10 p.m., he added.

"All government and non-government organisations

will work with 25% workforce and will be shut by 4 p.m." the official said.

The government will also bear the cost of last rites of those who died due to COVID-19, Mr. Subhani said.

The State reported as many as 13,374 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24-hours,

taking the active case tally to 98,747. The death toll stood at 2,391.

Trains suspended

Meanwhile, in view of a surge in COVID-19 cases, the Eastern Central Railway (ECR) has announced it will suspend 23 pairs of trains from April 29.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.

"Movement of 23 pairs of passenger trains for short distances would be suspended in the state from April 29 till further notice in view of surging COVID-19 positive cases and poor occupancy of passengers as well," Rajesh Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, ECR, said.

However, no decision has been taken yet on movement of long-distance express trains, added Mr. Kumar.



Salutary steps

New norms, under HC nudge, will help prevent a fresh surge after counting day

Amid criticism that it did not enforce steps to curb the spread of COVID-19 during the protracted campaign for Assembly elections in four States and one Union Territory with sufficient vigour, the Election Commission of India has now banned victory processions after the results are declared on May 2. It has also restricted to two the number of persons who can accompany the winning candidate to meet the Returning Officer and collect the election certificate. These are significant steps to prevent any escalation in the already alarming infection rate. Further, the ECI has come up with measures at counting centres, including a stipulation that agents cannot enter the counting hall without producing either a negative test report for COVID-19 or final vaccination reports. While such stringent norms are welcome, it is regrettable that the enforcement of earlier norms for COVID-appropriate behaviour by political parties, candidates and their supporters was often quite lax during the long campaign. The Madras High Court's remark to the effect that ECI officials should bear a great responsibility for the horrific spike in infections, illness, hospitalisation and deaths will resonate with the public. While it was quite in order that the court voiced its displeasure with the ECI for failing to make all parties adhere to its norms, the suggestion by the Bench that ECI officials should bear sole responsibility for the situation was avoidable, bordering on the intemperate. However, the court's caution that the counting process should not become a catalyst for a new surge has undoubtedly helped and led to new norms for counting day activities.

As the election draws to a close, the time may have come for the ECI to reconsider its resort to multi-phase polling as a permanent practice. Granted, some States are prone to violence, but should it not reconsider the practice, taking into account the strides made in communications and logistics? Multi-phase voting has been defended for the last three decades as something necessary because of the time needed to move central forces to different parts of the country; security and sensitivity in select constituencies are also considerations. However, in the present round, the first three phases of the West Bengal elections were held alongside those of Assam, and polling in the three other States and Puducherry was completed on April 6. With only one State left, there was a good case for fulfilling logistical requirements within a week or so and getting the remaining polling work done in one or two phases by April 15. A prolonged campaign contributes to build-up of tension. Covering an entire State in as few phases as possible will help localise the potential for violence, prevent the spread of tension due to the virulence of the campaign, besides reducing the fatigue of forces deployed throughout the campaign, up to the day of counting. A shorter election may be a safer one too.

Shortage and wastage

With vaccines in short supply, more effort must go into curtailing wastage

In the days ahead, Indian adults below 45 will begin registering for a COVID vaccine that on paper will be available from May 1. Amid a crisis of vaccine supply, the Health Ministry had said that a little over one crore vaccines remain in stock with States. An additional 57 lakh would be made available to States over the weekend. The Centre has so far provided nearly 16 crore vaccine doses to States of which the total consumption including wastage is 14.8 crore doses. Maharashtra led the table of vaccines administered with 1.5 crore doses followed by Rajasthan (1.3 crore), Uttar Pradesh (1.25 crore) and Gujarat (1.23 crore). These were also the States that had so far received the maximum number of vaccines, again in that order. Among large States, Tamil Nadu reported a high percentage of vaccine wastage, nearly 8.83%. Only Lakshadweep had a higher 9.76%. Assam, Manipur and Haryana ranked after Tamil Nadu in percentage wastage of vaccines, at 7.7%, 7.4% and 5.72%. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Mizoram, Odisha were the States that had reported no wastage.

That a certain number of vaccines will be wasted is built into the Centre's planning process. In its operational guidelines on COVID-19 vaccination, the Wastage Multiplier Factor has been calculated at 1.11, assuming an allowable programmatic wastage of 10%. This number is factored into how many vials are allocated to States for supply of vaccine to each administrative unit. Wastage in unopened vials can occur due to reasons such as the vaccine reaching its destination after its expiry date; if it has been exposed to temperature outside its normal bounds; suspected contamination and poor vaccine administration practices. Data seem to suggest that six of the top States or Union Territories that are reporting the highest proportion of wastage are the northeastern States, Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli where the relative difficulty of transporting goods – especially those as fragile as vaccine vials – is known. There ought to be deeper analysis for why Tamil Nadu with above average medical infrastructure ends up wasting close to 9% of its vaccines even though it is within acceptable bounds. In the days ahead, there will be more vaccines and manufacturing facilities which could translate to shorter transportation distances and reduced wastage. With the exponential increase in vaccine demand expected in the next six months, there will also be challenges in administration and demand for skilled administrators who will be part of the management of logistics. These ancillary support staff too have to be developed by States along with planning for vaccine supply to enable a smooth, speedy rollout.

Gasping for air, gasping for answers

The people of India are entitled to a full and honest account of what led more than a billion people into a catastrophe



VIKRAM PATEL

The struggle to breathe, or asphyxia, is the most terrifying human experience. Something one takes for granted, which we do more than a dozen times every minute, suddenly becomes an ordeal. I know how this feels having lived through tormenting bouts of asthma in my younger years and, more recently, when I found myself trapped under a raft in the freezing, raging, Zanskar river in Ladakh. The memories of gasping for air and the fear of dying are seared into my brain. Death typically comes as a relief from the terror, as multiple organ systems collapse due to the lack of oxygen, a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas which we are not even aware of until we cannot get enough of it. Oxygen. A word which should signify vitality and exuberance, but which in recent weeks has become synonymous with death and suffering. Who would have ever imagined that the India of 2021 which boasts sending rockets to the stars and manufactures oxygen on an industrial scale, would one day be unable to supply oxygen to save her own people.

The trauma of asphyxia

The word 'trauma' typically evokes extreme events such as rape, sexual abuse and war-related violence. This is not surprising given

that the word gained currency as a medical condition in the aftermath of the Vietnam war when tens of thousands of soldiers from the United States returning from the brutal conflict exhibited a range of distressing symptoms, giving birth to the diagnosis of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). But the truth is that trauma can occur in many more diverse ways, and it is only now, with COVID-19 sweeping the world, that gasping for air has been recognised as a traumatic event. What ties these seemingly unconnected experiences together is that they all evoke the same intense emotions: a toxic brew of extreme fear and utter helplessness. These experiences, especially when sustained over hours or days, literally leave an imprint in the brain so that the hallmark features of PTSD symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks and feeling on edge, recur at any time, sometimes triggered by a totally unrelated event which bear similarity to the trauma.

A recent study from the United Kingdom (<https://bit.ly/2SbDysD>) of over 13,000 survivors of COVID-19 reported a strong correlation between the severity of the infection and subsequent PTSD. While just over 1% of the patients reported breathing problems or hospital admission, the prevalence of PTSD in the months which followed were staggering: 35% of the sickest, and 15% of even those who only needed home assistance. The most prominent symptoms were frightening intrusive images of being breathless or ventilated. Thus, for those who do survive these nightmarish moments on the edge of life, the ordeal is far from over. Even as we struggle to keep those gasping for air alive, we must simultaneously attend to the long-term mental health consequences of survivors, a task even more daunting in a country where trauma-related mental health problems are barely acknowledged.



ments on the edge of life, the ordeal is far from over. Even as we struggle to keep those gasping for air alive, we must simultaneously attend to the long-term mental health consequences of survivors, a task even more daunting in a country where trauma-related mental health problems are barely acknowledged.

A traumatised country

But there is also another kind of trauma which is sweeping across India, as millions of stories of suffering, despair and death percolate into the consciousness of every person. There has been a feverish rise of anxiety and fear across the population, twinned with helplessness as the comfort of knowing that there is a government which they can rely on has evaporated. India has been engulfed, in a matter of a few weeks, into the world's most serious humanitarian crisis, fuelled not just by a more infectious strain of the virus, but also a stunning level of arrogance, greed, incompetence and complacency. The terror reminds me of the weeks that followed the brutal lock-down im-

posed on the same population a year ago, without any warning or preparation. A year on, the horrors have returned to their lives, only this time for exactly the opposite reason: the state did nothing at all as tens of thousands, and then hundreds of thousands, of people were getting infected every day, watching millions congregate at religious festivals and election rallies, oblivious or uncaring about the inevitable cataclysm this would lead to.

The concept of collective trauma has emerged only in recent times, in the aftermath of terrifying events which have affected entire populations, such as following the 9/11 attacks in New York or disasters such as the tsunami in 2004. These events were followed by a dramatic increase in symptoms of psychological distress, including the cardinal features of trauma, for months and years after the event itself had passed into history. And so we also must prepare the country for healing from this mass traumatic experience and we can draw upon lessons from other humanitarian crises to guide our actions. Most immediately, we must find a place to park our anger and rage, as justified as these reactions may be, and search for the compassion lurking beneath it, and support in any way we can the efforts of the thousands of civil society organisations to support those who are gasping for air, not forgetting the continuing support they will need after they can breathe again. The outpouring of community action we are witnessing is a soothing balm for the anxiety many are experiencing as they fear that the state seems to

have collapsed.

Healing through truth

But, long-term recovery of the collective trauma will need resolution of the pent-up rage that is burning a hole in our souls. This will need the equivalent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions which have served to heal the collective traumas of events which affected entire populations, such as apartheid in South Africa. Such an independent Commission would document the facts behind the tragedy unfolding across India, hold individuals and institutions accountable, and offer a path towards restorative justice to heal a deeply wounded nation. Last week, when the Delhi High Court issued an order to the Central Government to ensure the supply of oxygen, I was puzzled by its statement that "As it stands, we all know this country is being run by God." I will never know who was being referred to as God, but I am assuming it must be the spiritual being we pray to in our myriad places of worship. If so, then we must ensure that this is not the final judgment of the apocalypse that has befallen India. The people of this country are entitled to a full and honest account of what led more than a billion people into a catastrophe, if only to put at rest our troubled minds, restore the fractured trust between the people and the state, and be better prepared for the next pandemic.

Vikram Patel is The Pershing Square Professor of Global Health at Harvard Medical School, and a member of the Lancet Citizen's Commission on Re-imaging India's Health System

Temples are not fiefdoms of the state

What is being asserted by the community is the right of representation in the affairs of the management of temples



K. NAGARAJAN

In the article, "The last word on the state and temples" (*The Hindu*, Editorial page, April 22, 2021), in the absence of any answer as to whom temples would be entrusted to – if the government were to cede its control – the writer enters the realm of imagination and divines an answer – "powerful private interests". No doubt the problem of hierarchical division in Hindu society is prevalent. But the issue of government control of temples is distinct from the issue of throwing open Hindu religious institutions to all classes and sections of society. To confuse the two is constitutionally misleading. Separate pieces of legislation exist – the [Madras] Temple Entry Authorisation Act, 1947 – to address these issues.

A myth

A myth is trotted out to justify sovereign control of temples: that Hindu temples were supervised and managed by kings, who "habitually employed ministers to supervise temples and charitable bodies". Like many myths the colonials perpetuated, this too must be disabused: there is not a shred of historical source to support this claim. On the contrary there are inscriptions, cast in stone, that attest that temples were managed wholly and entirely by local communities.

Before turning to the solution, it would seem sensible to ask the question.

State in religion

Why is the community demanding that the government stay away from temples? Unbridled corruption; theft and destruction.

If the gross mismanagement of financial resources and indisputable corruption by the state along with the loss and destruction of temple antiquities were not sufficient reasons for the government to relinquish its (mis)management, a mere glance at state legislations will reveal a deeper malady. The state has assumed the role of religious functionaries to determine who will be heads of Mutts and the authority to conduct *poojas*. For example, The Shri Jagannath Temple Act, 1954 entrusted the committee appointed by the state with the task of ensuring the performance of *seva pooja*. When the Act was questioned by the Raja of Puri before the Supreme Court, in *Raja Birakishore vs The State Of Orissa*, the Court made a revelation: the performance of a *pooja* is in fact a secular act and, therefore, the state is justified in its regulation.

The exercise of state regulation of secular aspects of religion was taken to extreme lengths when the Court ruled that the state, by appointing temple priests, was exercising a secular function (*Seshammal & Ors, Etc. Etc vs State Of Tamil Nadu*). Whatever style of secularism we subscribe to, surely the Indian state is not to tell the believer how he/she is to offer worship to the deity nor is it to tell the custodian of the deity how she will be



R. RAGU

Constitution permit the state to assume ownership of properties belonging to religious institutions and treat them as state largesse to be siphoned off. The only vestige of authority under the Constitution empowering the state to take over property of religious institutions is under Article 31A(b). Even then it is doubtful that this article covers property belonging to religious sects.

The history of legislative practice of endowment laws reveals the state prerogative in ensuring regulation of only secular activities. As a matter of fact, the Shirur Mutt case, while upholding certain provisions of the 1951 Act, struck down a major portion of the Act characterising the provisions as a "disastrous invasion" of religious liberty. In 1959, the Legislature 'cured' the defects pointed out by the Supreme Court, by inserting verbatim the very provisions that the Supreme Court had struck down in 1954.

Applicable to charities

The Waqf Act justification for the legitimacy of control of Hindu religious endowments is misleading. A reading of the Act reveals that it applies to charities and specifically excludes places of worship such as mosques. In fact the Waqf Act supports the argument that the government should not regulate places of worship.

The most fundamental criticism against the release of Hindu temples from government control to the society is two-fold. First, it is asked to whom will the temples be handed over? Second, once restored to the community, will it not perpetuate class hierarchies?

What is being asserted by the community is the right of representation in the affairs of the management of temples. This right of representation can be effectuated by the creation of boards representative of religious heads, priests and responsible members from the *dharmaik sampradaaya*. The logic is simple. Members who profess a particular *dharmaik sampradaaya* will have its due interest in mind.

British legacy

When the British government realised that a secular government should take no part in the management of religious institutions, it enacted the Religious Endowments Act (Act XX of 1863) repealing the pre-existing Bengal and Madras Regulations. Interestingly, in handing over the religious institutions to the society, it created committees in every district to exercise control over temples. Section 8 of the Act provided that the members of the committee to be appointed from persons professing the religion, for purposes of which the religious establishment was founded or maintained and in accordance with the general wishes of those who are interested in the maintenance of the institution.

For this purpose the local government caused an election. In the spirit of equality of all religions, this scheme should be applicable to all religious institutions which would guarantee adequate community representation in the management of their places of worship.

K. Nagarajan is the Treasurer of the Temple Worshippers Society (TWS)

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.

Pandemic fight

The new wave of COVID-19 infections has brought with it misinformation which is only adding to the panic. The right information on vaccination provided from time to time by the authorities could have helped. The government could have also planned better knowing that there is an insufficient volume of vaccines. The traumatic visuals of oxygen shortage are also affecting people. The chaos and panic being felt everywhere is largely due to the lack of clear information. The government should earn the peoples' confidence first by assuring them that it is taking the right steps and not keeping them in the dark.

D.V.G. SANKARA RAO,
Nellimilla, Andhra Pradesh

Courts to the fore

An assertive bar with people such as Prashant Bhushan and Dushyant Dave and retired judges such as Justice Madan Lokur and Justice A.P. Shah and a vibrant press have made the Supreme Court of India say it will not interfere with the power of the High Courts. The Chief Justice of the Madras High Court has rightly pulled up the Election Commission of India for allowing mass election rallies which have contributed immensely to the ongoing second wave of COVID-19. The role of the various High Courts during the COVID-19 pandemic has made them a part of a functional, federal democracy.

N.G.R. PRASAD,
Chennai

The stinging observations

by the High Court on the dismal failure of the Election Commission of India in exercising its constitutional authority to curb blatant violations of safety guidelines by the throngs of gatherings during electioneering are timely and telling. It is equally unfortunate that the BJP President has chosen to criticise the comments by the judiciary, reflecting his scant regard for these observations. A reading of the text of the observations by the High Court highlights the urgency of the situation. After having done a wonderful job in controlling the first wave, the authorities took their foot off the pedal, literally failing to assess the unfathomable impact of the second wave.

The crowds during

electioneering and the festivities

and religious *melas* could not have taken place without the blessings of the powers that be. In fact, many political and religious leaders were in the forefront of the attendant violations. There were also some who expressed the belief that god is there to protect them. The ECI, along with a host of authorities, is accountable. The authorities have now woken up and are battling the virus. I do believe that they will succeed. They must.

S. SHIVARAM,
Chennai

their fear and concern about home care even if the symptoms are mild. It becomes even more desperate in conditions like India's. The main fear is about advancing into the oxygenation phase. I am sure the writer must know that there are no medicines in a home kit that can help people to avoid progression to this stage. The U.S. has a repurposed drug research programmes from universities and medical centres, awaiting their move into a quick bulk phase and subsequent universal protocols. If she could help running some of those phases in India, with its huge patient volunteer base, through the help portal, it would be a wonderful measure.

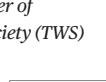
M. BALAKRISHNAN,
Bengaluru

To read more letters online, scan the QR code

IPL matches

Social media feeds have images of COVID funerals at crowded mortuaries and cemeteries, wailing relatives of the dead outside hospitals, and long queues of ambulances carrying gasping patients. In such a distressing situation, no right-thinking person will support grandiloquent entertainment in the background of a grieving nation. Buying the argument that the Indian Premier League offers a semblance of comfort in sorrow hardly makes any sense, given the fact that India is now faced with a huge public health emergency. No doubt, sports has the power to heal wounds, but not always.

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai



Antimicrobial resistance: the silent threat

Tackling the problem would mean engaging the health, agricultural, trade and environment sectors



JEHANGIR CAMA
& ZUBIN CYRUS SHROFF



Since January 2020, there have been over three million deaths globally on account of COVID-19, starkly exposing the vulnerabilities of health systems to infectious diseases, even in the richest countries. The speed of COVID-19's spread across international borders has underscored the need for cross-national cooperation around surveillance, monitoring and disease notification – the key activities that underpin our ability to minimise the impact of acute public health events and maintain global health security. As serious as the current health and economic crisis is, COVID-19 may just be the harbinger of future crises. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the phenomenon by which bacteria and fungi evolve and become resistant to presently available medical treatment, is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in July 2020, "AMR is a slow tsunami that threatens to undo a century of medical progress". AMR is already responsible for up to 7,00,000 deaths a year. Unless urgent measures are taken to address this threat, we could soon face an unprecedented health and economic crisis of 10 million annual deaths and costs of up to \$100 trillion by 2050.

Diverse challenges

AMR represents an existential threat to modern medicine. Without functional antimicrobials to treat bacterial and fungal infections, even the most common surgical procedures, as well as cancer chemotherapy, will become fraught with risk from untreatable infections. Neonatal and maternal mortality will increase. All these effects will be felt globally, but the scenario in the low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of Asia and Africa is even more serious. LMICs have significantly driven down mortality using cheap and easily available antimicrobials. In the absence of new therapies, health sys-

tems in these countries are at severe risk of being overrun by untreatable infectious diseases.

The challenges are complex. Drug resistance in microbes emerges for several reasons. These include the misuse of antimicrobials in medicine, inappropriate use in agriculture, and contamination around pharmaceutical manufacturing sites where untreated waste releases large amounts of active antimicrobials into the environment. All of these drive the evolution of resistance in microbes. This is compounded by the serious challenge that no new classes of antibiotics have made it to the market in the last three decades, largely on account of inadequate incentives for their development and production. A recent report from the non-profit PEW Trusts found that over 95% of antibiotics in development today are from small companies, 75% of which have no products currently in the market. Major pharmaceutical companies have largely abandoned innovation in this space.

Tackling these diverse challenges requires action in a range of areas – in addition to developing new antimicrobials, infection-control measures can reduce antibiotic use. A mix of incentives and sanctions would encourage appropriate clinical use. At the same time, it is critical to ensure that all those who need an antimicrobial have access to it; 5.7 million people worldwide die annually because they cannot access drugs for infections that are treatable. Further, to track the spread of resistance in microbes, surveillance measures to identify these organisms need to expand beyond hospitals and encompass livestock, wastewater and farm run-offs. Finally, since microbes will inevitably continue to evolve and be-

come resistant even to new antimicrobials, we need sustained investments and global coordination to detect and combat new resistant strains on an ongoing basis.

The way forward

There is room, however, for cautious optimism. A multi-sectoral \$1 billion AMR Action Fund was launched in 2020 to support the development of new antibiotics, and the U.K. is trialling a subscription-based model for paying for new antimicrobials towards ensuring their commercial viability. This means that the government will pay upfront for these new antimicrobials, thereby delinking the life-saving value of the drugs from the volume of sales and providing an incentive for their production in market conditions that do not do so. Other initiatives focused on the appropriate use of antibiotics include Peru's efforts on patient education to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions, Australian regulatory reforms to influence prescriber behaviour, and initiatives to increase the use of point-of-care diagnostics, such as the EU-supported VALUE-Dx programme. Beyond human use, Denmark's reforms to prevent the use of antibiotics in livestock have not only led to a significant reduction in the prevalence of resistant microbes in animals, but also improved the efficiency of farming. Finally, given the critical role of manufacturing and environmental contamination in spreading AMR through pharmaceutical waste, there is a need to look into laws such as those recently proposed by India, one of the largest manufacturers of pharmaceuticals, to curb the amount of active antibiotics released in pharmaceutical waste.

While the range of initiatives that

seek to control the emergence and spread of AMR is welcome, there is a need to recognise the limitations of a siloed approach. Current initiatives largely target individual issues related to AMR (such as the absence of new antibiotics, inappropriate prescription and environmental contamination) and consequently, narrowly defined groups of stakeholders (providers, patients and pharmaceutical companies). Regulating clinician prescription of antimicrobials alone would do little in settings where patient demand is high and antimicrobials are freely available over-the-counter in practice, as is the case in many LMICs. Efforts to control prescription through provider incentives should be accompanied by efforts to educate consumers to reduce inappropriate demand, issue standard treatment guidelines that would empower providers to stand up to such demands, as well as provide point-of-care diagnostics to aid clinical decision-making.

Policy alignment is also needed much beyond the health system. Solutions in clinical medicine must be integrated with improved surveillance of AMR in agriculture, animal health and the environment. This means that AMR must no longer be the remit solely of the health sector, but needs engagement from a wide range of stakeholders, representing agriculture, trade and the environment with solutions that balance their often-competing interests. Finally, successful policies in individual countries are no guarantee of global success. International alignment and coordination are paramount in both policymaking and its implementation. Indeed, recent papers have proposed using the Paris Agreement as a blueprint for developing a similar global approach to tackling AMR.

With viral diseases such as COVID-19, outbreaks and pandemics may be harder to predict; however, given what we know about the "silent pandemic" that is AMR, there is no excuse for delaying action.

Jehangir Cama is an industry research fellow at the Wellcome Trust-funded Translational Research Exchange@Exeter Centre, based in the Living Systems Institute, University of Exeter, U.K., and Zubin Cyrus Shroff is a health systems specialist whose work informs health policymaking in LMICs

Misinformed and misleading

The Health Ministry's guidelines for managing COVID-19 ignore evidence, pricing, cost-effectiveness and social relevance



ANUP AGARWAL

The Health Ministry released its first COVID-19 management guidelines about a year ago. The initial treatment guidelines included hydroxychloroquine, which led to panic buying of the drug. Little was known in those initial months. In the last one year, multiple studies have proven the lack of efficacy of hydroxychloroquine. While most practitioners have moved away from prescribing hydroxychloroquine, it still remains in the guidelines released by the Health Ministry on April 22.

While formulating national-level guidelines, the most important factors are strength of evidence, pricing, cost-effectiveness and social relevance. These guidelines not only disregard evidence, but also show the unawareness of policymakers about the struggles of the common populace and the importance of the aforementioned factors.

Disregarding lack of evidence

While hydroxychloroquine is one example that stands the test of time in terms of disregarding evidence, there are several others. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) completed a trial on convalescent plasma (of 464 patients), which proved that plasma does not save the lives of those with COVID-19. This was bolstered by further evidence from the U.K. (more than 10,000 patients). The only benefit of convalescent plasma was shown in a small study from Argentina which demonstrated that plasma prevented progression to severe disease in mild cases when high-titre plasma was infused within three days of disease onset. This strict timeline of three days lends plasma little to no translational value in India as plasma titres are seldom available and are expensive. Plus, there is a lag of 2-5 days in RT-PCR results now. Yet, convalescent plasma is mentioned in the Ministry's guidelines. Similarly, Ivermectin, a drug used against parasites, has been recommended in the guidelines. With no good clinical trials to support its use and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommending against its routine use, one wonders what led to its inclusion.

While evidence was ignored, the importance of pricing and cost-effectiveness was also overlooked. Remdesivir, in shortage now, is being black-marketed across India, although it has no value in saving lives. The only marginal benefit it may have is in reduc-

ing the hospital stay, with a trade-off of increasing the cost of hospitalisation by the steep price of the drug in the black market.

Last year, when hydroxychloroquine was touted as the wonder drug, it ran out of stocks in the market, precipitating a crisis for patients who needed it chronically. Similarly, this year, budesonide inhalers have been included as an option for mild patients based on results of two clinical trials. With more than 80% of COVID-19 patients having only mild symptoms, patients with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) may run out of inhalers. Moreover, according to the PRINCIPLE trial, a trial only in pre-print, budesonide improves only self-reported symptoms in mildly sick patients. It does not yet translate into saving lives or reducing hospital admissions. The larger social relevance of budesonide is still in question. Policymakers should have waited for the final publication, worked with industry to scale-up production of budesonide, and bolstered supply chains till the final results came in, rather than hastily making recommendations that may trigger panic buying and a crisis for patients who actually need it.

Missing from guidelines

What is missing from the guidelines is the lack of guidance on drugs being used for COVID-19. Misused drugs include Azithromycin, Doxycycline, Favipiravir, Ioltizumab and Coronil. These are not mentioned in the guidelines, but practitioners are busy prescribing them. This may cause more harm than good.

Lastly, absence of any mention of monoclonal antibodies from Regeneron or Eli Lilly in the guidelines, the most efficacious antivirals in COVID-19 till date, is baffling. COVID-19 is an administrative nightmare. A stark difference in messaging on COVID-19 management compared to the messaging of the WHO or other trusted sources like the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, U.S. will only create confusion. With the available evidence, and keeping cost-effectiveness and the social relevance of the Indian health system in context, the focus of COVID-19 treatment guidelines should be on oxygen delivery, steroids and anti-coagulants. More treatment does not necessarily lead to better outcomes but will definitely lead to higher out-of-pocket expenditure and healthcare-related bankruptcies and debts. The guidelines should be re-written in cognisance of the current strains on the healthcare system.

Anup Agarwal was the lead author of the ICMR-led Trial on convalescent plasma (PLACID trial) and is a physician at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital Healthcare Services, Gallup, New Mexico, U.S.

Making social welfare universal

Leveraging existing schemes and providing universal social security is of utmost importance

MADHURI DHARIWAL

India is one of the largest welfare states in the world and yet, with COVID-19 striking in 2020, the state failed to provide for its most vulnerable citizens. The country witnessed multiple crises: mass inter- and intra-migration, food insecurity, and a crumbling health infrastructure. The extenuating circumstances of the pandemic has pushed an estimated 75 million people into poverty. The second wave has brought even the middle and upper-class citizens to their knees. Economic capital, in the absence of social capital, has proven to be insufficient in accessing healthcare facilities. Illness is universal, but healthcare is not.

Absorbing shocks
The country has over 500 direct benefit transfer schemes for which various Central, State, and Line departments are responsible. However, these schemes have not reached those in need. The pandemic has revealed that leveraging our existing schemes and providing universal social security is of utmost importance. This will help absorb the impact of external shocks on our vulnerable populations.

An example of such a social protection scheme is the Poor Law System in Ireland. In the 19th century, Ireland, a country that was staggering under the weight of poverty and famine, introduced the Poor Law System to provide relief that was financed by local property taxes. These laws were notable for not only providing timely assistance but maintaining the dignity and respectability of the poor while doing so. They were not designed as hand-outs but as necessary responses to a time of economic crisis. Today, the social welfare system in Ireland has evolved into a four-fold apparatus that promises social insurance, social assistance, universal schemes, and extra benefits/supplements.

A similar kind of social security system is not unimaginable in India. We have seen an example of a universal healthcare programme that India ran successfully – the Pulse Polio Universal Immunisation Programme. In 2014, India was declared polio-free. It

took a dedicated effort over a number of years. However, it shows us what is possible. With the advancements in knowledge and technology, a universal coverage of social welfare is possible in a shorter time frame.

Ease of application

Existing schemes cover a wide variety of social protections. However, they are fractionalised across various departments and sub-schemes. This causes problems beginning with data collection to last-mile delivery. Having a universal system would improve the ease of application by consolidating the data of all eligible beneficiaries under one database. It can also reduce exclusion errors. The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) is one scheme that can be strengthened into universal social security. It already consolidates the public distribution system (PDS), the provision of gas cylinders, and wages for the MGNREGS.

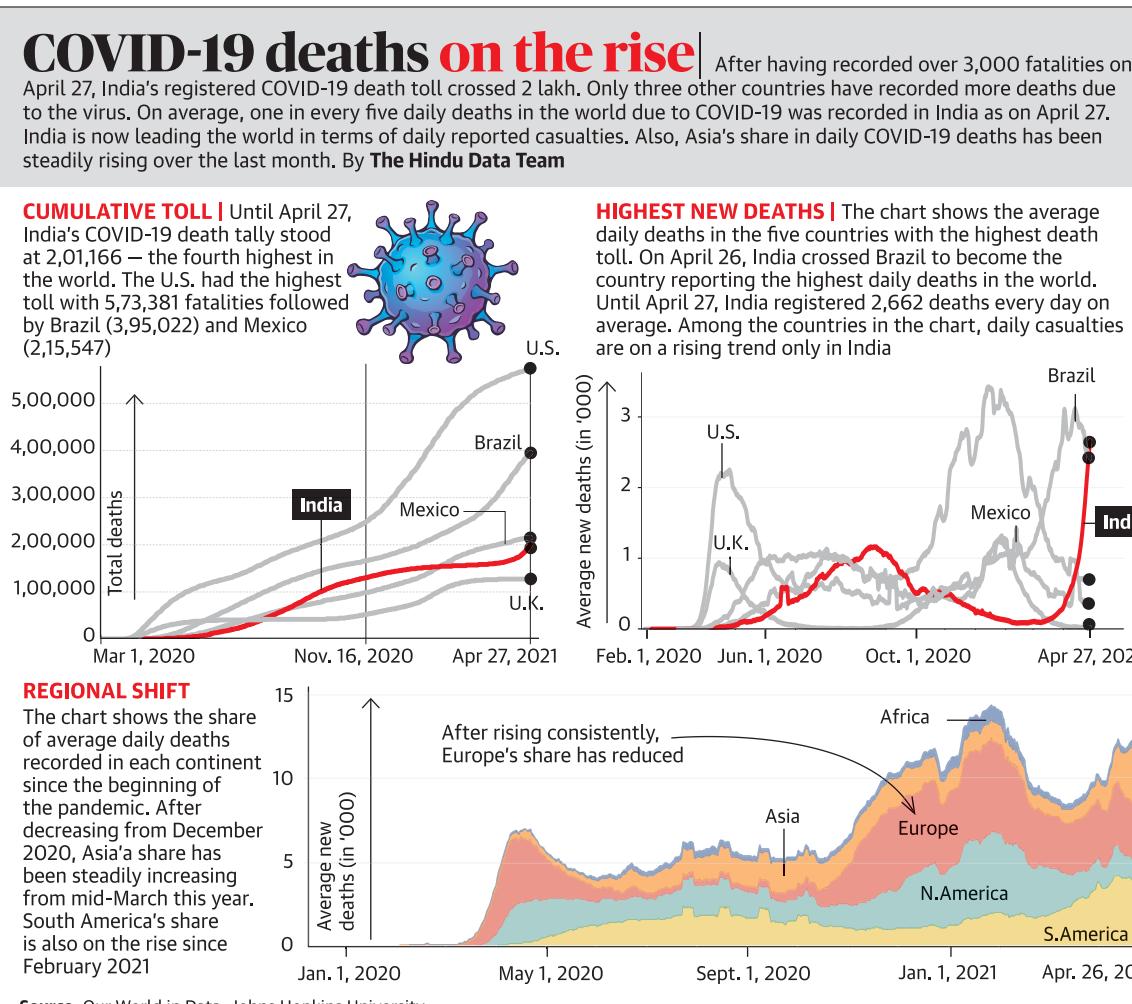
Generally, social assistance schemes are provided on the basis of an assessment of needs. Having a universal scheme would take away this access/exclusion barrier. For example, PDS can be linked to a universal identification card such as the Aadhaar or voter card, in the absence of a ration card. This would allow anyone who is in need of foodgrains to access these schemes. It would be especially useful for migrant populations. Making other schemes/welfare provisions like education, maternity benefits, disability benefits etc. also universal would ensure a better standard of living for the people.

To ensure some of these issues are addressed, we need to map the State and Central schemes in a consolidated manner. This is to avoid duplication, inclusion and exclusion errors in welfare delivery. Alongside, a study to understand costs of welfare access for vulnerable groups can be conducted. This will help give a targeted way forward. The implementation of any of these ideas is only possible through a focus on data digitisation, data-driven decision-making and collaboration across government departments.

Madhuri Dhariwal is Senior Lead, Organization Development, Indus Action



DATA POINT



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 29, 1971

India warns Pakistan

India to-day [April 28] protested strongly against the persistent Pakistani violations of the country's border with East Bengal and repeated intrusions into Indian territory resulting in the death of or injury to nearly 40 Indian nationals and warned the Yahya Khan regime of serious consequences if it continued to indulge in such provocations. The External Affairs Ministry released three protest notes which have been handed over to the Pakistan High Commission here [New Delhi] listing several instances of Pakistani aggressive activities across the Indian border in constant violation of the ground rules governing the disposition of troop deployments on either side. These protest notes drew the Pakistan Government's attention to specific instances of border violations by the Pakistan Army in the last few days with the deliberate intention of provoking a conflict. On the night of April 26 the Pakistan Army came right up to the Indian border at Barnapura near Jalpaiguri and opened fire into Indian territory killing two Indian villagers. The next day there was a further Pakistani incursion in the Boira area north of邦加on which resulted in the death of five Indians including a minor girl and injuries to three other persons.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 29, 1921

The theatre

The theatre, it will generally be admitted, is an institution with great potentialities for the advancement of Nationalism in a country. The Drama, in times of healthy literary progress, tends to truly reflect the varied aspects of national life – political, social, religious and cultural – and in the hands of patriotic playwrights and actors can well be utilised to present before the masses the ancient ideals of National greatness in a popular and impressive form. It provides ample scope for a happy synthesis of all the fine arts and makes an almost irresistible appeal alike to the literate and illiterate mind. Hence the necessity, especially in critical times of National renascence like the present, to pay proper attention to the development of the theatre and exploit it effectively for purposes of patriotic inspiration and National education among the people. The value of the theatre particularly in the education of children is, it is happy to note, gradually coming to be realised in modern times.

FROM PAGE ONE

Vaccine registrations begin for those above 18

At 4 p.m., many who attempted to register for a date complained on social media that they were not getting an OTP. Reports abounded of the CoWIN website remaining inaccessible. However, towards later in the evening more reported as being able to register but unable to get an appointment. The common message was that hospitals were only offering appointments on various dates for those over 45.

An exception was Sanket Vijayasarathy, 29, a technology journalist based in South Delhi, who told *The Hindu* that he had got an appointment for a first dose of the Covishield vaccine. "I tried online at a few hospitals in my pin code but didn't succeed. But when I attempted another place, at Hope Clinic, South Delhi, it showed me an available slot."

He added that he was not

asked to pay. *The Hindu* verified his appointment form, "When I tried for a friend, I couldn't get another," he said.

So far, Delhi, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have said that they have ordered batches of Covaxin and Covishield. Close to 20 States have said they will be offering the vaccine free to their residents.

Though vaccines for those below 45 can only be availed at private COVID-19 centres on payment, States and Union Territories can decide to vaccinate those below 45 from their quotas negotiated with companies by setting minimum age eligibility criteria.

Only 1.8 million doses were administered on Wednesday, a far cry from the 4.5 million peak on April 5. India has so far administered at least 145 million doses, and less than 10% of the country has been fully vaccinated.

Test or vaccination must for agents, candidates



Preparing for polls: Elections officials inspecting voting material in Kolkata on Wednesday. ■ PTI

"No candidates/agents will be allowed inside the counting hall without undergoing RT-PCR/RAT test or without having two doses of vaccination against COVID-19 and will have to produce negative RT-PCR report or RAT report or vaccination reports within 48 hours of start of counting," the EC instructions read.

It added that the DEO should make arrangements for the tests before counting day. "No public gathering outside the counting venue

shall be allowed during the process of counting," the EC said.

It added that counting halls should be large enough to maintain physical distancing and have adequate ventilation. The counting centres as well as sealed outer boxes of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) should be sanitised, it said. If required, postal ballots could be counted in separate halls, it said.

SII cuts Covishield price for the States to ₹300

Following the criticism, the SII had stated last week that Covishield remained "the most affordable COVID-19 vaccine available in the market today". "The initial prices were kept very low globally as it was based on advance funding given by those countries for at-risk vaccine manufacturing. The initial supply price of Covishield for all government immunisation programmes, including in India, has been the lowest," the SII had said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said on Wednesday that despite the Centre announcing the third phase of vaccination from May 1, it would not be possible to begin inoculations on that date as the only two indigenous producers – SII and Bharat Biotech – could not supply the requisite doses.

Mr. Tope further said that the SII had only given a verbal promise of supplying one crore vaccines a month to the Maharashtra government and that a written assurance was pending. Accordingly, the Maharashtra Cabinet had taken the decision to import vaccines to meet its required quantity of an estimated 12 crore doses in order to inoculate 5.71 crore citizens between 18-44 years for the third phase.

In goof-up, 11 in Arunachal added to virus-positive list

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI**

Health officials in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Dibang Valley have ordered a re-test on 11 people who found themselves on the COVID-19-positive list despite testing negative, local dailies in the State reported.

District Medical Officer R. Tatan attributed the faux pas to a clerical error and said officials with the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project have been asked to conduct a re-test on the 11. The error was made on April 26.

Action will be taken against those responsible for the error, but people

need to cooperate at the testing centres too. They are so impatient that they start pushing and shoving instead of waiting for their turn," he told journalists in the district headquarters of Roing.

Dr. Tatan said the error could have occurred due to pressure on the staff, causing loss of concentration.

He added that the district police must strengthen the security at the testing centre at the entry point to control the crowd that "should ideally follow the COVID-19 protocols".

Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday recorded 123 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total to 819.

'Covaxin shields from B.1.617'

People vaccinated with it protected against double mutant variant: study

**R. PRASAD
CHENNAI**

A study has found that people who have been vaccinated with Covaxin have protection against the double mutant (B.1.617) variant first found in India. A preprint of the study carried out by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Bharat Biotech researchers has been posted in *biorXiv*. Preprints are yet to be peer-reviewed and published in medical journals.

So far, 21 countries have detected the B.1.617 variant. Of those, the majority of cases has been reported from India.

The researchers used the sera collected from 28 people who had participated in the Covaxin phase-2 trial. They also collected sera samples from 17 people who were infected with older strains of SARS-CoV-2 virus and had recovered. "Compared with people who have recovered from COVID-19, the ability of the sera of vaccinated people to neutralise the B.1.617 variant was found to be two-fold less."

An earlier study had found that Covaxin neutralises the B.1.1.7 variant first found in the U.K.

"The assurance of neutralisation of B.1.617 variant



Safe bet: A health worker giving a shot of Covaxin in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

those who have recovered from COVID-19," say Dr. Samiran Panda, a senior scientist at ICMR and one of the co-authors of the preprint.

"Compared with people who have recovered from COVID-19, the ability of the sera of vaccinated people to neutralise the B.1.617 variant was found to be two-fold less."

Speaking to presspersons during a conference call on April 27, Dr. Antony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), said: "Despite the real difficulty that we're seeing in India, vaccination could be a very important antidote against this

variant."

The B.1.617 variant has two mutations – E484Q and L425R – of concern. These mutations are found in the receptor-binding domain of the spike protein. Though how the two mutations behave individually is well-known, the combined effect of these mutations when present together is not known.

"Further studies are needed to understand the transmissibility and infectivity of the B.1.617 variant," the authors write.

Dead candidate's wife files case against ECI official

'It showed disregard towards lives'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

In a first, the widow of Trinamool Congress candidate Kajal Sinha, who recently died of COVID-19, has filed a case of culpable homicide against Sudip Jain, Deputy Election Commissioner in charge of West Bengal, accusing the Election Commission of India (ECI) of "deliberate and intentional omission" leading to her husband's death.

Sinha was the Trinamool's candidate from the Khardaha Assembly constituency, which went to the polls in the sixth phase of the ongoing West Bengal Assembly election on April 22.

He died three days after voting for his seat was held on April 25.

Three other candidates died during the election campaign in the State. Two candidates were from the Jangipur constituency – the Revolutionary Socialist Party's Pradip Nandi and the Congress' Rezaul Haque. Samir Ghosh, an independent candidate from the Baisnab-

gar constituency, also succumbed to COVID-19.

In her complaint, Nandita Sinha said the ECI had shown "complete unpreparedness, negligence, lack of accountability and utmost disregard towards the lives of the common people".

West Bengal alone, she said, had 95,000 COVID-19 cases and the ECI had decided to conduct the election over eight phases spanning over 33 days, despite the already precarious situation in the rest of the country.

Centre allots fresh stock of Tocilizumab to States

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Centre on Wednesday said the Union Health Ministry has allocated a fresh lot of the imported drug, Tocilizumab, used to treat COVID-19, to the States.

Though the drug has not been proven to confer significant benefits on those severely afflicted by the virus, it is prescribed by doctors to reduce inflammation that

results from a cytokine storm. The drug went out of stock in the last few weeks and has been replenished in limited quantities, the Health Ministry said.

Maharashtra has been allotted the highest quantity, 800, followed by Delhi at 500. Most States have got between 25 and 200 units of the drug. The States will distribute them to government and private hospitals.

IN BRIEF



'Denial of oxygen shortage appalling'

In the face of denial by the Centre on the shortage of oxygen, vaccines and medicines, Congress leader P. Chidambaram said, "People must revolt against a government that is assuming all the people of India are fools." In a series of tweets, he said both Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's comments denying the shortage of oxygen and vaccines was "appalling".

Rahul asks Cong. workers to be 'corona sevaks'

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday asked people to expose the "blind" system by helping each other. "Keep extending the hand of help and expose truth of the blind system," Mr. Gandhi tweeted. The former Congress chief also sent out an internal message to build a group of "corona sevaks" or COVID-19 volunteers.

Somanathan appointed Finance Secretary

The Expenditure Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, T.V. Somanathan, was on Wednesday appointed the Finance Secretary in the Ministry. Mr. Somanathan is a 1978-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre and is currently the Expenditure Secretary.

No shortage of oxygen in State, says Haryana CM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday said there is no shortage of medical oxygen in the State, although its transportation is a challenge. The State government was taking all steps to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply amid the COVID-19 crisis, he said. At present, the availability of oxygen in the State was about 162 metric tonnes (MT), he said.

2 die of shock after earthquake in Assam

10 others sustain injuries; several buildings damaged; epicentre at Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI**

Two people died of shock and at least 10 sustained injuries after an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 struck Assam at 7.51 a.m. on Wednesday.

The earthquake, which was felt across northeast India, Bihar, West Bengal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, also left several buildings and roads in the northern and western parts of the State damaged.

The National Centre of Seismology (NCS) said the epicentre of the earthquake, at a depth of 10 km, was Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district, and preliminary analysis showed it was located near the Kopili Fault closer to the Himalayan Frontal Thrust.

"The area is seismically very active, falling in the highest Seismic Hazard Zone V associated with collisional tectonics where Indian Plate subducts beneath the Eurasian Plate," the NCS said in a statement, adding that the last major earthquake in the



In pieces: The wall at a building in Guwahati after the quake on Wednesday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

region was of the magnitude 6.0 on July 29, 1960.

"Two persons died due to shock or cardiac arrest. The deaths were reported from Chandrapur in Kamrup (Metropolitan) and Nagaon districts. We received reports that at least 10 people were injured in different parts of the State," G.D. Tripathi, Chief Executive Officer of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority, said.

Some residents of apartments in Guwahati decided against returning to their accommodations as the structures developed cracks. But

he added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

Some residents of apartments in Guwahati decided against returning to their accommodations as the structures developed cracks. But

he added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang district, developed cracks, too.

He added that many high-rise buildings and hotels, mostly in Guwahati, were among the structures that suffered damage. Roads and fields, mostly in Sonitpur and in the adjoining Darrang

INTERVIEW | CHANDRIKA BAHADUR

'Hard to understand why corrective action was not taken sooner'

Reducing movement and activity needed to break the chain of COVID-19, says the Chair of the Regional Task Force of the Lancet Commission

NISTULA HEBBAR

As India grapples with a massive second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chandrika Bahadur, Chair of the Regional Task Force of the Lancet Commission, speaks on why this happened and the way ahead.

India is undergoing a very severe second wave of COVID-19, something that could have been anticipated. What in your view went wrong in terms of anticipation and capacity building?

■ India prepared reasonably well for the pandemic in its early stages. The lockdown gave the medical system time to expand infrastructure, train staff, and build capacity to absorb patients. The rationale for lockdowns across the world in March-April 2020 was to "flatten the curve". It meant taking actions that would bring down the number of cases that needed hospitalisation and treatment enough that they would not breach the limits of the medical capacity of the country. This preparation allowed the country to manage the first wave in 2020, while keeping overall

just as cases were beginning to rise. Second, the vaccination campaign was slower to roll out, largely because of a lower sense of urgency. And third, we didn't invest enough resources to study the emergence of new variants quickly enough.

All these factors were predicated on the assumption that the worst was behind us. So, when the wave began, from a preparedness point of view, we were, in some ways more unprepared than we were towards the end of last year.

Was there enough research being done on why we saw a major dip in the months of January and early February? Did that make the government and people complacent?

■ There was research, but there was no overarching compelling explanation for why recorded numbers dipped so rapidly and so much at the start of the year. The last sero-survey carried out by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) showed exposure rates of



There were enough indications that the situation was going to get difficult

one in five among the respondents sampled, but with wide variations across urban and rural, and within urban between different categories of populations. So, the prevailing popular theory of "herd immunity" was not really backed by evidence. The falling numbers coincided with a continued opening of the economy; new cases didn't rise despite increased mobility, reinforcing the sense of confidence. The lack of a compelling explanation for the fall, in my view, led to the willingness of many people to believe that the worst was behind us.

When the Lancet Commiss-

ion on COVID-19 India Task Force was convened in January, several Task Force members expressed their grave concerns that the prevailing optimism was misplaced, and that a second wave was imminent. Unfortunately, those fears have been completely validated.

What is harder to understand is why corrective action was not taken at the beginning of this wave when numbers started to rise in Maharashtra and Punjab. There were enough indications that the situation was going to get difficult. And even if no one predicted the intensity of the wave, the fact that it was happening should have immediately triggered actions to limit large gatherings and reinforce safe behaviour. None of that happened till it was too late and we are seeing the consequences play out.

We are being told that new mutants are more infectious. How much of the current situation, just in terms of spread, can be laid at the door of the mutations?

■ It is too early to answer this question precisely. The Lancet Commission Task Force has recommended that the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), led by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), set up in December 2020, be supported so it can achieve its goal of testing 5% of all cases every month on a continuous basis. We also recommend that in the short term, laboratories are equipped with TaqPath test kits to identify the B.1.1.7 and other variants. Right now, we are a long way from systematically gathering and analysing this information.

What public health interventions, do you think, need to be made urgently for the mitigation of some of the appalling shortages in medical resources we see?

■ In the short term, the immediate priority is to save lives. Enough has been said on the shortages that hospitals face immediately, in terms of beds, logistics around the supplies of oxygen, and availability of

drugs. The more fundamental issue is of a structure that supports patients at home and helps triage patients effectively, so that only the most critical go to hospital, and those that need to, get the help they need. Mumbai has done that well, and we are seeing the results in terms of hospitalisation rates, and overall management of the pandemic. Reducing movement and activity (through voluntary or imposed closures) is necessary step right now – to break the chain of transmission and stabilise the numbers. In April, we saw the rise of new cases growing at the rate of nearly 7%. This has to be brought down urgently.

Are more waves and troughs anticipated?

■ I don't believe anyone expects this wave to be the last. But the intensity of the next wave will depend on how well we learn the lessons from this one.

If we can ramp vaccinations by an order of magnitude over the next few months, prepare our primary care system to effectively supervise home care and triage patients, ensure a steady supply of the inputs that the vaccine manufacturers are facing right now could not have come at a worse time, given the intensity of the wave. We need to ramp up production and dis-

1 lakh oxygen concentrators to be procured

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The PM CARES fund would be used to procure 1 lakh portable oxygen concentrators, the government said on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi sanctioned the procurement during a meeting held to discuss the liquid medical oxygen supply for COVID-19 management, the Prime Minister's Office said. Mr. Modi ordered that the equipment be sent at the earliest to States with high COVID-19 case burden.

The statement said 500 pressure swing adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants had been sanctioned, apart from the earlier sanctioned 713. "These 500 PSA plants will be established with transfer of the indigenous technology developed by the DRDO and the CSIR to the domestic manufacturers," it said.

WHO pledges aid for India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday pledged oxygen concentrators, laboratory supplies and mobile hospitals for India.

"We need to act with speed, expand hospital capacities and equip them with medical supplies," said Poonam Khetrapal Singh, regional director, WHO South-East Asia Region. The WHO will be procuring laboratory supplies, including 1.2 million reagents, to help India meet the huge demand and need for testing. It will also be providing mobile field hospitals. It is also chartering flights to bring 4,000 oxygen concentrators to help meet the increased demand.

New system for re-registration

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Road Transport on Wednesday proposed new draft rules that will make it easier for defence personnel, government employees and others shifting from one State to another to re-register their vehicles.

The Ministry said it was proposing a system under which allocation would be marked as 'IN' series.

Hospital fire kills 4 near Mumbai

The facility did not have COVID-19 patients; Maharashtra government orders probe

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Four patients were killed in a fire at a hospital in Mumbra, near Mumbai, in the early hours of Wednesday.

The fire broke out around 3.40 a.m. at Prime Criticare Hospital in the Mumbra-Kausa area in Thane district, Thane Municipal Corporation officials said. The hospital had no COVID-19 patients.

Three fire engines and five ambulances were rushed to the spot, and the blaze was doused after a few hours, they said.

The incident comes just five days after 15 COVID-19 patients were killed in a fire at a hospital in Virar, around 50 km from Mumbai.

State Housing Minister Ji-



Charred remains: A person inspecting the damage caused by the fire on Wednesday. ■ PTI

tendra Awhad said the fire broke out due to a short circuit in the meter room of the hospital.

"A high-level inquiry has been ordered to look into the reasons behind this fire and whether any safety rules

were violated," Mr. Awhad said. He added that the kin of each of the deceased would get a compensation of ₹5 lakh, while the injured would be given ₹1 lakh each.

Nearly 20 patients, including six from the inten-

sive care unit, were shifted to other hospitals.

Thane Guardian Minister and State Urban Development Minister Eknath Shinde said the deaths may have been caused due to smoke inhalation while the patients were being shifted.

"The Thane Municipal Corporation will give an additional ₹5 lakh to the kin of those who died, and ₹1 lakh to those who were injured," he said. The inquiry into the incident would involve the police and the Thane Municipal Corporation officials, Mr. Shinde said.

He added that the government had issued directions to conduct fire, structural and oxygen audit of every hospital within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Over 3,000 die for second straight day

Maharashtra reports 985 deaths, followed by Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

For the second day in a row, India recorded over 3,000 deaths due to COVID-19, with 3,535 fatalities till 11.30 p.m. on Wednesday.

As many as 3,79,237 new cases were recorded. The country has so far reported a total of 1,83,68,030 cases and 2,04,701 deaths.

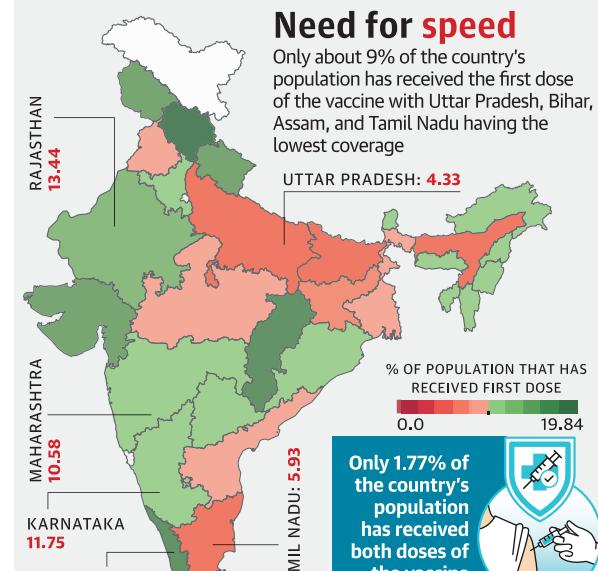
Maharashtra reported 63,309 infections, followed by Karnataka (39,047) and Kerala (35,013).

Maharashtra also recorded a whopping 985 casualties, followed by Delhi (368), Uttar Pradesh (266) and Karnataka (229).

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Lakshadweep.

The data are sourced from covid19india.org, an independent aggregator of daily figures.

As many as 2,68,949 new recoveries were recorded on Wednesday, taking the total



past the 1.5 crore-mark. More than 25 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending at 7 a.m. on Wednesday, more than 8 lakh shots fewer than what was record-

ed in the previous 24 hours.

Only about 9% of the country's population has received the first dose of the vaccine with Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, and Tamil Nadu having the lowest coverage. Only 1.77% of the country's population has received both doses of the vaccine.

More than 17.2 lakh tests were conducted on Tuesday (results of which were made available on Wednesday). This marks a jump of 65,000 samples compared with the previous day.

Globally, India's average daily deaths over the past seven days (2,662) was the highest.

Brazil, where fatalities are on a declining trend, ranked second (2,431).

ed in the previous 24 hours.

Only about 9% of the country's population has received the first dose of the vaccine.

Nearly 20% of the population in Himachal Pradesh

has received the first shot, the highest coverage among the States, followed by Kerala (16.81%).

Lowest coverage

Uttar Pradesh (4.33%), Bihar (4.67%), Assam (5.02%) and Tamil Nadu (5.93%) had the lowest coverage of the first dose of the vaccine.

Only 1.7% of the country's population has received both doses of the vaccine. Uttarakhand (3.33%) and Kerala (3.31%) led the States in this aspect.

More than 17.2 lakh tests were conducted on Tuesday (results of which were made available on Wednesday). This marks a jump of 65,000 samples compared with the previous day.

Globally, India's average daily deaths over the past seven days (2,662) was the highest.

Brazil, where fatalities are on a declining trend, ranked second (2,431).

10,787 ventilators installed: govt.

VIJAYA SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry claimed in an affidavit in the Supreme Court on Tuesday that since October 2020 as many as 10,787 ventilators had been installed in various hospitals across the country.

The Ministry said post-April 1, following requests by the State governments, 3,835 additional ventilators had been dispatched. It said in April, "oxygen concentrators received in donation from

other sources" had also been given to the States. It said the machines were purchased by the Union Health Ministry, and there was no mention in the affidavit if they were procured from the PM CARES fund.

The fund was created on March 27, 2020. Though the government has claimed that it is a "public charitable trust," it is not subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General or answerable under the Right to Information Act (RTI). In a statement on May 13, 2020, the Prime Minister's Office said PM CARES would allocate ₹3,100 crore for COVID-19 relief, including funds for ventilators, migrant workers and vaccine development.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

mation Act (RTI). In a statement on May 13, 2020, the Prime Minister's Office said PM CARES would allocate ₹3,100 crore for COVID-19 relief, including funds for ventilators, migrant workers and vaccine development.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

The fund was created on March 27, 2020. Though the government has claimed that it is a "public charitable trust," it is not subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General or answerable under the Right to Information Act (RTI). In a statement on May 13, 2020, the Prime Minister's Office said PM CARES would allocate ₹3,100 crore for COVID-19 relief, including funds for ventilators, migrant workers and vaccine development.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

The fund was created on March 27, 2020. Though the government has claimed that it is a "public charitable trust," it is not subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General or answerable under the Right to Information Act (RTI). In a statement on May 13, 2020, the Prime Minister's Office said PM CARES would allocate ₹3,100 crore for COVID-19 relief, including funds for ventilators, migrant workers and vaccine development.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

The fund was created on March 27, 2020. Though the government has claimed that it is a "public charitable trust," it is not subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General or answerable under the Right to Information Act (RTI). In a statement on May 13, 2020, the Prime Minister's Office said PM CARES would allocate ₹3,100 crore for COVID-19 relief, including funds for ventilators, migrant workers and vaccine development.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

The fund was created on March 27, 2020. Though the government has claimed that it is a "public charitable trust," it is not subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General or answerable under the Right to Information Act (RTI). In a statement on May 13, 2020, the Prime Minister's Office said PM CARES would allocate ₹3,100 crore for COVID-19 relief, including funds for ventilators, migrant workers and vaccine development.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement" was ₹1,850.76 crore.

On March 12, the Health Ministry told the Lok Sabha that till March 5, as many as 35,269 out of 38,867 ventilators were installed and the "total amount incurred by the government for procurement

A virus on the loose and a scarred nation

Shortage of anti-viral drugs, beds and oxygen haunt patients as families struggle to cope with the death of loved ones during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

Capital casesheet: many do not even make it to ICU

CITY TEAM
NEW DELHI

In the national capital, a horror story that starts with "I have fever" is being played out in almost every family as COVID-19 cases continue to surge. At every step of the way, from getting tested to finding oxygen support and a hospital bed, the healthcare system has been overwhelmed.

Outside hospitals, and in makeshift COVID Care Centres (CCC), patients can be seen waiting in ambulances, cars, autorickshaws and even on the pavement, struggling to breathe as attendants scramble to plead with hospital security and staff to get them admitted.

Palam resident Shraddha Singh, who lost her 42-year-old sister to the virus, said, "She was doing fine initially. However, with a sudden



Paramilitary force personnel deployed outside Lok Nayak Hospital after some doctors and staff were beaten up at a private hospital, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

drop in the oxygen saturation level, she required hospitalisation. We frantically searched for places that

would take her in and even tried seeking help on social media. But the sheer amount of information – a lot of it

not leading anywhere – became difficult. We took her to a hospital nearby and there, in the emergency

ward itself, she passed away.

Some do not even make it to the emergency ward. On Thursday, outside the Sardar Patel CCC, a 45-year-old man who was in the back seat of a car, died after waiting for two hours to seek admission.

The long queues to procure oxygen or have cylinders refilled have seen people queue up overnight.

Anupama Gupta, 56, underwent pacemaker surgery at Artemis Hospital on April 15 and developed COVID-19 symptoms five days later. Her daughter Deeksha said she stood in queues with her mother's reports, seeking beds in several hospitals, but was turned away. "I have tried at least 40 hospitals in Delhi, Gurugram, Sonipat and Panipat, but there are no beds. Artemis has given us a waiting list number of 600,"

said Ms. Deeksha, a Gurgaon resident.

Family members of a 63-year-old COVID-19 patient based in east Delhi, who requested that they not be named, said they were forced to purchase an oxygen concentrator for three times its original price when they failed to get her admitted to the Sardar Patel CCC.

While the struggle to find hospital beds goes from bad to worse, even getting an RT-PCR test in the National Capital Region has become a task in itself. Mayank Gaur, a resident of IP Extension said, "My wife tested positive on Monday and I am trying to get my test done but no laboratory is willing to come for home collection."

(Inputs from Shinjini Ghosh, Jatin Anand, Saurbab Trivedi, Ashok Kumar and Nikhil Babu)



Key step: With demand for ambulances very high, staff have to disinfect them frequently. ■ K. PICHUMANI

Tense drive for a gulp of oxygen

Beds hard to come by in Chennai

R. SUJATHA
CHENNAI

Sandhya Kumar got a call from a friend in Dubai two days ago to help his sister get a hospital bed as she was becoming breathless. Ms. Sandhya and her husband were then returning from Chengalpattu to Chennai.

They started making calls as they were driving back to the city. "We were trying desperately, contacting friends, doctors in the family to find her a bed. Her oxygen saturation level had fallen to 72. Her husband hired an ambulance and took her to two hospitals, but they could not admit her as they were overflowing with patients. They were getting nowhere and they came back home."

All the networking over the phone helped and Ms. Sandhya finally managed to find a hospital with a bed after two hours. The next problem was getting an ambulance. An ambulance service in Purasaiwalkam agreed to transport her for ₹3,500. The ambulance took her to the Government Omandur Multi Super Speciality Hospital. "But she collapsed even as they were preparing for

admission as her oxygen level fell to 40. She was revived in the corridor. Now, we have been told she is out of danger," says Ms. Sandhya.

All-day search
Iyyavu called many hospitals to admit his father, a stroke patient, the whole of Tuesday.

But all of them said they had no beds. Finally, a private medical college in Poonamallee said they had two beds.

"I called the 108 ambulance and he drove us from our house in T. Nagar to the hospital. But when I arrived there, they told me there were no beds with oxygen support. But there were many beds as I went in and checked. I realised they were hesitating as my father was aged. He is 64 years old, and his oxygen saturation level was 91."

Mr. Iyyavu asked the Government Omandur Multi Speciality Hospital, but there were no beds there. He said private ambulance providers demanded ₹6,000 to transport him. Finally, an 108 ambulance came to his aid.

"As we tried hospital after hospital, my father's oxygen saturation level fell to 65. The ambulance driver was helpful. He brought us to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, where he waited until the admission was completed. We had been on the road for eight to nine hours."

Long search for a bed in A.P. hospitals

THARUN BODA
VIJAYAWADA

The search for a hospital bed for COVID-19 treatment in Vijayawada is long and hard. "After scouting for beds in private hospitals in vain, we have finally got admitted to the government-run treatment facility at the Pinnamaneni Siddhartha medical college. This facility is short of staff and there's no one to attend on us. My wife's oxygen level came down to the 70s even with oxygen supply and she was also down psychologically. Assurance by a doctor or medical staff would help her recover," said Murthy (name changed).

"One of my relatives needs treatment. As the government hospitals are full, we are looking for a bed in any private hospital. The government must come up with a much better system to allocate beds to the needy," said M. Raju, a resident of Guntur city. He was in for a shock when he reached the hospital, oxygen cylinder in tow. He was told that there had been a "mistake" and no beds were available. Mr. Prasad had to wait in the lobby of the hospital for nearly two hours after which the hospital authorities asked him to

long wait: Kin of COVID-19 patients standing in a queue for anti-viral drug Remdesivir in Pune. ■ AP

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

With Pune facing an acute shortage of ventilators and oxygen beds, accessing critical health care is not easy.

Balaji Phad, a 28-year-old preparing for his Maharashtra Public Service Commission exam, had a nightmarish experience trying to find an oxygen bed in Pune city. "I tested positive last week. When I went to the nearest Pune Municipal Corporation Hospital for a check, they merely took down my details and put me on a wait list. As my oxygen levels began dropping, I searched for a bed in vain for two days," he said.

Mr. Phad, who hails from Latur district, had no relatives to help him; financially strapped, he was close to tears and frantically began calling his friends as his health deteriorated.

"A friend finally took me to Naidu hospitals, but there were no beds available. Af-

False leads on hospitals tire out breathless patients

ICU beds and oxygen in limited supply in Bengaluru

CHITRA V. RAMANI
BENGALURU

Prabhu Prasad (name changed), 41, tested positive for COVID-19 last week. Since then, he and his wife, who also tested positive, had been isolating themselves at home.

On Wednesday morning, when Mr. Prasad's oxygen saturation levels were dropping, he contacted the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) control room seeking a bed in a hospital. After several calls, he was sent an ambulance and asked to go to a private hospital in south Bengaluru.

He was in for a shock when he reached the hospital, oxygen cylinder in tow. He was told that there had been a "mistake" and no beds were available. Mr. Prasad had to wait in the lobby of the hospital for nearly two hours after which the hospital authorities asked him to

wait outside in the ambulance. He was eventually allotted a bed at another private hospital in the opposite end of the city.

The BBMP administration has admitted that high dependency unit (HDU) and intensive care unit (ICU) beds are limited, though the number of beds with oxygen had been increased. There is not yet a transparent system to track the number of beds available in private hospitals.

The civic body has also been cracking down on priv-

ate laboratories that have not been uploading COVID-19 test results on the Indian Council of Medical Research portal. So far, six private labs have been shut down.

Though 79-year-old K. Chandrappa underwent a rapid antigen test and tested positive on April 16, the private hospital lab had not uploaded the test result or issued a specimen referral form (SRF) ID to him. His daughter found this out the hard way on Wednesday when she scrambled to find him a hospital as his oxygen saturation levels fell.

"The lab has been highly irresponsible. Without SRF ID, the BU (Bengaluru Urban) ID cannot be generated. Both of these are important for seeking any COVID-19 related service, be it ambulance or beds," said Divya C., a teacher and Mr. Chandrappa's daughter.

The lab has been highly irresponsible. Without SRF ID, the BU (Bengaluru Urban) ID cannot be generated. Both of these are important for seeking any COVID-19 related service, be it ambulance or beds," said Divya C., a teacher and Mr. Chandrappa's daughter.

Driven from hospital to hospital, a young life is lost

SERISH NANISSETTI
HYDERABAD

Sheikh Reshma, a 24-year-old PG student, began coughing in the morning at her home at Namdevwada in Nizamabad on Tuesday. Her parents Razzaq and Fatima did not think much of it. But by afternoon, the cough became intense and she was ta-

ken to the Nizamabad Government Hospital at 4 p.m.

"A rapid antigen test came out negative. The doctors told us to take her home," says M. Prashant, who helped the family. The family got a CT scan at the hospital and showed it to a private practitioner, who diagnosed serious damage to the lungs,

suggestive of COVID-19. But the Nizamabad hospital refused to admit her. "By 9 p.m., she had difficulty breathing and we hired an ambulance with oxygen and started towards Hyderabad to admit her in a government hospital," Mr. Prashant says.

At 10.15 p.m., with the ambulance speeding towards

Hyderabad, the family sent out a tweet tagging IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao, the Health Minister and the MLC of Nizamabad: "Any leads. No ventilator beds vacant in govt. hospitals in Hyd. Her condition is serious. Shifting from Nzb to Hyd."

The family reached the gates of the Osmania Hospi-

tal at 10.50 p.m. where they were told there was an oxygen bed available.

After a 20-minute wait, the hospital staff said there were no vacancies, and they should try at the Gandhi General Hospital.

At 11.40 p.m., the ambulance reached the GGH. But after a 20-minute wait, the

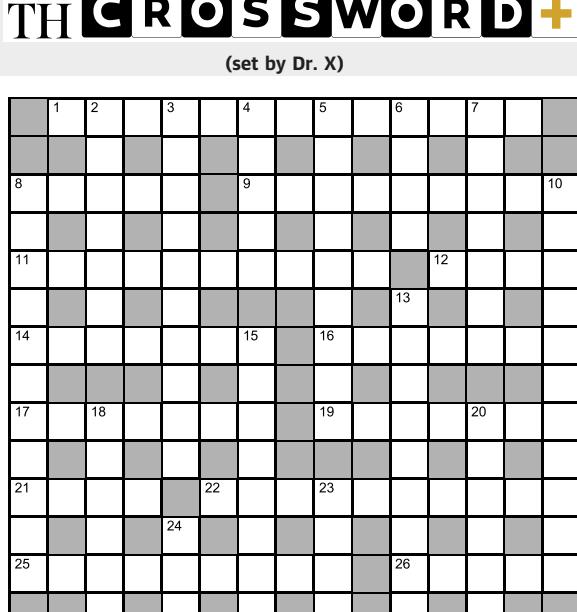
family was told there was no vacancy. At 12.20 a.m., the ambulance raced to the Fever Hospital with Ms. Reshma struggling to breathe. The family was told there were no beds, and they should try the TIMS in Gachibowli. At 1.12 a.m. when the ambulance reached the TIMS, Ms. Reshma breathed her last.

CROSSWORD

13234

(set by Dr. X)

Put your digits to good use.
Type your answers into our online grids!
<https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



ACROSS

- Misgivings about mixing liquor and ecstasy – it's a gamble (6,2,5)
- Spiteful person breaking heart (5)
- Excellent marijuana on reflection, starting to feel cheerful (3,6)
- Unsettled by no self-confidence, one enters to propose (10)
- Brought back a garment worn by ancient Romans (4)
- Wrote on complicated series of musical notes (4,3)

- 16 Inspiration's essentially difficult with deviated septum (7)
17 One roaming around, tense, wanting job essentially? (7)
19 Rumour about old man is disgusting (7)
21 University to reject computer operating system (4)
22 Innkeeper is throttled by guest on vacation – most creepy (10)
25 Chance to come out drinking? Yeah! Extremely good time to get drunk (5,4)
26 Shift closer to espousal bird belonging to thrush family (5)
27 Failed lads with ego shattered have an unhappy existence (4,1,4,4)
- DOWN
- Start to observe criminal holding revolver over a figure (7)
 - Heartless brat snatches container with best dessert (5,5)
 - Accessory involved in sex trafficking (5)
 - Disgust shown by Republican facing dismissal after losing vote (9)
 - Loathsome guy freely snorting line (4)
 - Eviscerate revolting snake at bottom of mast in towing vessel (7)
 - Show of surprise that's precarious (4-2-5)
 - Model performed twirl in style briefly (11)
 - Share flat having staggered rooms (5,5)
 - Take care of controversy over Democrat's slogan (9)
 - Sight of exotic legs enthrals rascal (7)
 - Personal identity of felons roaming around England (7)
 - Child entertained by humorous programme (5)
 - Watched a little yacht in river capsizing (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13233

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



Order of survival

With lockdowns and curfews being updated again, restaurants around the country are back to depending on delivery services, and the pitfalls that come with them

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

AD Singh, the man behind some of India's most popular restaurant and gastropub chains, swears on the value of good waiters and floor staff.

The self-professed "food snob" believes they are key to how enjoyable a dining space is. "At Monkey Bar, we don't have longtime-favourites in our menu. We want our guests to try out new and different things every time, and the people who can guide them are our floor staff," he says, adding that certain servers have proven so valuable that they are carted to different cities when new branches are set up. In this fresh wave of COVID-19 lockdowns, his staff is among his primary concerns.

"We would not have survived the national lockdown without the support of our teams, landlords, vendors, investors and the agencies we work with. Once the lockdown stopped we tried to do our best for them in return. Hopefully, that has built up their confidence and comfort to support us again," says Singh.

Having said that, Singh also acknowledges that some advance notice of impending lockdowns would result in fewer problems. Downing shutters on two days' notice is not easy:

"With more time we can stop fresh purchases, exhaust our perishables, give our teams advance notice to plan their leaves," he explains.

As the founder of the Olive group that owns pubs, restaurants and cafes across Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Pune, Chennai and Goa, Singh is in position to observe and explain how lockdowns and curfews can affect different kinds of dine-in businesses differently.

For instance, "Late night restrictions make it more difficult for us where we have a good bar business or party business, as these both build up and run late. Our cafe The Grammar Room [in New Delhi] does 90% of its business all day, and so restricted timings don't matter to it. OLLY, our Olive cafe in Cyberhub [Gurugram], does great lunch business and early evening, post-work business."

Saturday night out

Singh's words hold true across the board – restaurants thrive on being familiar haunts for gourmands; for families looking to escape the humdrum of domesticity; for harried professionals waiting to unwind.

They cater to different crowds and function at different times of day, but the one thing they de-



pend most on is bringing people to their venue. Once that stops, revenues are bound to plummet. "The Olive group is mainly focussed on the dine-in business and over 90% of our revenue currently comes from that," says Singh.

Riyaaz Amlani of Social also

states that the majority of his revenue comes from people dining in instead of ordering, but admits that this chain is luckier than most. "A lot of restaurants that do not have deep pockets will probably have to liquidate over this round of lockdowns. For any good restaurant, about

15% of their business comes from delivery. That barely covers rentals, never mind other costs of operations," he says over the phone.

Costs include "rent, salaries, food procurement, licensing fees, utilities like electricity. Depending on where your restaurant is, rent alone could take up 15% to 20% of all your costs. Salary would be another 20% to 25%, and raw material anywhere between 15% and 35%," explains Gauri Devidayal, owner of Mumbai-based The Table, over phone.

She adds that with popular delivery apps, commissions (an app can take up to 35% or 40% of the money earned from an order, and charge higher for "discovery") and deep discounts (remember that pizza you bought at half price last weekend?) make things more difficult. "It is impossible to profit at these prices," she says.

If their entire customer base paid at such deep discounts, restaurants would be unable to stay afloat. But now, with a fresh slew of lockdowns in place due to the new wave of COVID-19, Gauri sees direct delivery as the best among severely limited options: "There is nothing we can do

about restaurants being closed, but at least within the delivery-only situation, it will help if diners can order directly. There are still shortfalls in direct ordering platforms and systems, but a little extra effort [from customers who want to help their favourite restaurants survive lockdown] can go a long way," she says.

Mindful alternatives

To that end, alternative apps like Thrive and DotPe give restaurants more control over operations, put them in direct contact with consumers (DotPe links users to restaurants' WhatsApp accounts), and charges fees that are either as low as 5% or kept safe from market fluctuations –



meaning the fees a restaurant pays will not fluctuate depending on how many orders it gets.

Being fairly new, these platforms are still dealing with operational hiccups. And, as Amlani points out, "You need to be an already discovered, established restaurant for people to seek you out directly or through other apps."

Yet, these alternatives must have done something right in the past year, because restaurants and users are flocking to them. DotPe alone boasts of over 10,000 restaurants so far. DotPe recently launched a video campaign #OrderDirect, urging people to use DotPe's platform to order directly from local restaurants. Anurag Gupta, co-founder and COO of DotPe sent out a statement: "Many food aggregators are worsening the situation by introducing heavy commissions and guidelines that squeeze these businesses. This is why we want to encourage people to start ordering from them directly. This will also ensure that their staff can retain their means of living. In fact, if the deliveries for direct orders increase, the restaurant owners can employ more people and take control of their business."



The filmmaker and environmental journalist talks about her Academy Award-winning documentary, *My Octopus Teacher*, produced by her husband, Craig Foster



And the Oscar goes to... A still from *My Octopus Teacher*; Swati Thiagarajan with her team

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A deep dive with Swati

GAUTAM SUNDER

When *My Octopus Teacher* debuted on Netflix, viewers were unsure what to make of it from the title. But then, the word-of-mouth began, and the small project quickly grew into one of the most popular documentaries of 2020.

Tracing the tender, almost mentor-like relationship between a sea diver and a common octopus in South Africa, the 85-minute long film stars naturalist and documentary filmmaker Craig Foster, as he takes us through the wondrous tale in an underwater kelp forest.

Foster's wife, Swati Thiagarajan, also a filmmaker, environmentalist and journalist, served as associate producer and production manager on the project. Originally from Chennai, Swati is renowned for her work as a conservationist, and is a core member of the Sea Change Project, which contributes to the long-term protection of South Africa's marine environment.

This week, *My Octopus Teacher* bagged the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature at the 93rd Academy Awards, (it also won the BAFTA earlier) and Swati's contribution to

the film has been hailed in India, as an important step towards encouraging documentary filmmakers in the country.

Talking to us from South Africa where she currently resides (she virtually celebrated the Oscars win as she could not be in Los Angeles), Swati and her team are still waiting for the achievement to sink in. Excerpts from an interview:

How did you conceptualise the idea for the documentary?

• Craig started to dive in the Great African Seaforest, at the southern tip of South Africa, everyday about

10 years ago, when he needed to recover from facing burnout at work.

The place where he was most happy was always the ocean. So in the process of doing that, he really immersed himself in the Seaforest ecosystem, and learnt how to track under water, when he met his "octopus teacher".

Then began the extraordinary year of being able to observe her life. There was no plan at the time to make a film. The ecosystem slowly revitalised and gave him back energy, and he started filming again really from an exploration study point of view.

It was Craig's authentic, experienced story we wanted to tell; we didn't design it around how a global audience might react. That there was this unbelievable response that was staggering.

What was your role as the associate producer and production manager?

• As Craig is my partner, and I am involved in conservation and wil-

dife myself, he would share with me stories from his diving experiences everyday, and discuss the footage and photographs.

Our executive producer, Ellen Windemuth, is an old friend of Craig's, and had earlier made a film called *The Great Dance* with him. She too advised on the story and then we came up with a rough outline for the documentary.

Did you expect the win at the Oscars?

• It was still a tremendous surprise because our fellow nominees were superb films, and every documentary had the right to win. So it was hard to just believe we would succeed. When they first announced the nominees, and we saw our clip up there, and then they announced the winner... we were so excited. It's still sinking in!

Your win has created a lot of cheer in India as someone representing the country at the Oscars...

• It is lovely if it has created cheer. I reside in South Africa now, but most of my life was lived in India. Right now, I am so absolutely heartbroken at the completely awful situation in the country with COVID-19. The pandemic is because of our exploitation of Nature. It is most certainly my experiences in India that shaped me, my ideas and thoughts... that is the part of India I brought with me to this film.

Your take on the support given to documentaries in India, and whether a win like this could be used for the better?

• We have some of the absolute best filmmakers in India in the documentary field. The work is outstanding, so it is disheartening to see not much support for documentary films in the country.

I don't know if a win like this could make a difference, but the audiences have changed today. This is exciting because it gives everyone the opportunity to think out-of-the-box, reset things, and create funding for documentaries.

My Octopus Teacher is currently streaming on Netflix



Ramzan 'nonbu kanji' being prepared at the Periya Pallivasal in Tiruchi. Photo: M. Moorthy/THE HINDU

Gruel for the fasting soul

Slow-cooked in huge cauldrons, the rice-based *nonbu kanji* is an integral part of *iftar* meals, distributed to those in need during Ramzan

NAHLA NAINAR

A fortnight into Ramzan, the Islamic month of fasting, cooks and caterers have been busy preparing *nonbu kanji*, a nutritious slow-cooked gruel made from rice and other grains across southern India. The gruel is an integral part of the fast-breaking meal (*iftar*) among South Indian Muslims.

While last year's lockdown saw a complete closure of Ramzan activities in mosques, this year, many institutions in Tamil Nadu have opted to resume serving *nonbu kanji* while following hygiene and social distancing protocols.

Using roughly the same spices as biryani, *nonbu kanji* is a meal in itself. Raw rice (*basmati* or *jeeraga samba*) is cooked to a mushy consistency in a flavoursome broth of mutton or vegetables, and then tempered with thinly-sliced fried onions. Recipes vary according to region, and availability of ingredients. "As the *nonbu kanji* is perhaps the only proper food that many poor fasting Muslims can afford to have during Ramzan, we try and reach out to as many needy people as possible," says Mohamed Yusuf, secretary of the Masjid Javeed mosque, which functions under the auspices of the Anna Nagar Islamic Centre in Chennai.

The mosque employs four cooks, who have cleared the COVID-19 test and who wear gloves and masks before they begin the mammoth task of preparing *kanji* from at least 40 kilos of rice per day. So-

cial distancing norms are being followed, with separate entry and exit points to keep the entire process as hygienic as possible, he adds. Close to a thousand people from areas in and around Anna Nagar avail the *nonbu kanji* serving.

In Madurai's Masjid-ut-Taqwa mosque, mass caterer Syed Ibrahim and his mother have been up since 5am, cooking *kanji* with *jeeraga samba* rice using his father's recipe; he starts with the broth rather than sautéing the basic ingredients in oil to keep the dish lighter on the stomach.

The *kanji* is built up in layers, with rice, lentils, fenugreek, coconut shavings, coriander and mint leaves added to the glutinous mix. On some days, minced mutton is added for a non-vegetarian twist. "After the *kanji* is ready here, I go off to Sempatti (55 kilometres from Madurai) to make the same dish at a mosque there," says Ibrahim, adding, "It's not just about the food, but also a kind of social service, because countless people are going to eat what we cook."

At Tiruchi's Periya Pallivasal (Big Mosque) on Tenmuri High Road, *nonbu kanji* is served post noon. "This year, we are making *kanji* from 65 kilos of rice which will feed around 1,200 people," says mosque trustee Maulvi M Zahir Hussain Ilhami.

Zahir adds that though most mass caterers ensure that the entire cauldron of *nonbu kanji* is distributed before 8pm, they "prefer to serve it fresh every day, to keep it as nutritious as possible."



A locked-down army

At a time when most of the country is confined indoors, thousands of Indians are finding simple, yet powerfully effective ways to help friends, neighbours and strangers through the pandemic

TEAM METROPLUS

"Everyone is looking for ways to help," says Deepthi Tanikella, a Chennai-based entrepreneur who has been providing home cooked meals to isolating, COVID-positive people in her neighbourhood for the past month. "I came across an Instagram post by Harshini Sridhar, asking if anyone would be willing to cook for patients. I cook for my family everyday, all I needed to do was make some more," she recalls.

Providing those fatigued by COVID-19 the comfort of a home-cooked meal was a chance Deepthi could not refuse: she is now part of a group of 12 people, spread across Virugambakkam, Alwarpet, ECR and other parts of Chennai, dispatching meals to patients who live in the area.

They are not alone; small groups of eager helpers have mushroomed across the country, following a similar modus operandi – reaching out to COVID patients isolating at home, listing them out by area, confirming meal requirements and assigning each household to a volunteer cook.

Some are small individual efforts, some are more organised groups like the Chennai-based "major-roof-4419" portal on Glide, which helps patients search for food providers by PIN Code. Volunteers commit to a meal or two each – either on a day-to-day basis or for weeks at a stretch, depending on what the patient needs. They cook at home, pack it in disposable boxes and send it over at mealtimes, fresh from their kitchens.

But a will to help is not enough. Deepthi stresses on the need to be organised: "Stock up on aluminium foil containers or other disposables; you can't ask a COVID-positive home to return utensils after every meal. Keep the food simple and include lots of protein if you can. Be clear about what time of day you can commit to. Your phone



number will be shared, so be sure that you don't mind," she says.

Delivery personnel who ferry this food also deserve to know that they are being sent to a COVID-19 positive home, so that they can take precautions to protect themselves.

In Kochi, Reshma Johnson plays it safe by coordinating with the same delivery boy, who keeps it contact-less. The one-woman army started Reshma's Kitchen over a year ago, and has been providing vegetarian meals to families affected with COVID-19 in and around Kakkadan, Kochi, since. Currently, she is providing food to 10 families in quarantine.

Often, those receiving food also receive a dose of comfort. Deepthi, for instance, has formed a special bond with an elderly man who lives away from his children. He eagerly awaits the handwritten notes she adds. She says, "He calls me another daughter".

The grocery runners

Contact-less delivery is something to be kept in mind across tasks. In Hyderabad, volunteer grocery shopper Ajay Roy asks people to leave their car windows rolled down.

He drops their groceries in the car,

Over the past week, volunteers on Twitter have offered to tidy up rooms and water plants. Fatigue being a major component, those isolating are grateful for the extra help

and they pick it up once he leaves.

It is not just COVID patients who need help with chores, but also the old and vulnerable. Rikit Shahi, for instance, says he is happy to pick up even just a single pack of juice for a neighbour, if he knows they are vulnerable and need it. He is offering his services to those who live in and around his locality, Khairatabad. Rikit began helping via a post on Twitter, offering to procure daily necessities for people, including medicines. Rikit says, "I double mask, use a sanitiser and maintain distance. A lot of people call with their daily requests, most of them are elderly people."

Ajay, who runs a homemade food business, began this just to make sure his elderly customers get their daily needs

Mass movement (Clockwise from left) Linda and Ram Prasad of Pet Paws; the team of Vizag Volunteers spreading awareness; Sharada Murthy packing food to be delivered; Dr P A Mary Anitha; and Rikit Shahi on a grocery run

■ KR DEEPAK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



without hassle. He is helping families in quarantine with medicines and food, mostly in and around Sainikpuri and Yalpral. He says, "Most of the families have been my customers who trusted my business and supported me. Now it is my time to support them and help them recover."

Some are going a step ahead, entering homes of recently recovered COVID-19 patients to make sure affected families have a clean, comfortable environment. Over the past week, volunteers on Twitter have offered to tidy up rooms and water plants – fatigue being a major component, those isolating at home are grateful for the extra help.

Fur support

This time last year, when 24-year-old Ranjani Ramakrishnan decided to open her doors in Chennai for abandoned pets in collaboration with an animal shelter, little did she know she would greet a new furry friend every day. "I had so many animals coming and going at home," she recalls fondly.

This time too, Ranjani is doing the same, albeit in Bengaluru where she works. "Pet parents find it difficult to take care of them or feed them when they are COVID-19 positive," she says. As a result, many pets (especially vulnerable ones) might feel neglected and anxious leading to behavioural changes.

Like Ranjani, individuals across the country are now offering to board pets. "When I put up the post, a lot of people wanted to borrow the idea and do the

same," Ranjani continues.

Some volunteers specify requirements, to make it easier to handle the stay. Bengaluru-based Shagun Ohri wrote that she can only take in pets who get along with other cats and dogs. It is imperative to chat with the pet parent and know about the animal's likes, dislikes and food habits before taking them in, says Ranjani.

Linda Alexander of Pet Paws, Chennai, a home boarding facility, is currently housing about 20 pets from isolating families. For individuals who wish to foster pets, Linda has a few pointers: "A bath is absolutely necessary. The leash or collar should also be cleaned well." She adds that fosters should also ask about the pet's vaccination chart. Then adds, "They have to be taken for walks regularly. Find out two things: whether they are human friendly and pet friendly. If they are not human-friendly, it will be difficult to feed them."

When a request arrives, Linda's crew drives to the house donning a PPE suit and wielding sanitisers, and picks up the pet. Once the pet arrives, he/she is given a thorough bath – collars, leash etc – to avoid any possible transmission. Though there is no certified data stating that COVID-19 spreads through dogs or cats, sometimes people do show reluctance to take them in.



Pet Paws has been seeing a steady increase in the number of boarding requests ever since the pandemic began.

It takes a village

Raising a child is no mean feat, especially if said child is bereft of the stimulus of peers and playrooms. Which is why clinical psychologist Dr PA Mary Anitha, who distributes food and beverages to them through her network of volunteers in Kochi, has now turned her attention to children with special needs.

Anitha started the Centre For Empowerment and Enrichment in Kochi, for the care of people with disabilities in 2007 and has been in social service ever since. This time, Anitha is concentrating on COVID-19 affected families that have persons with disabilities in the house. She has a database of such families and is in constant touch with them, enquiring about their situation and needs. She also provides them with online counsellings.

"Children with special needs are especially vulnerable," she says. Since last February, she has overseen care of high-risk children, with 88 volunteers whom she has trained.

Other needs need less medical know-how and more empathy. For instance, friends, neighbours and even strangers are offering up a day or two of their daily schedules to help children out with their homework, guide them through assignments, or just brainstorm concepts, as virtual step-ins for that all-important classroom back and forth many have been missing out on.

Guiding voices

The demand for counselling and emotional support is flooding in, not hospitals, but also from people sitting at home, beleaguered by the constant threat of the pandemic, and scale of tragedy unfolding.

"We have not seen such an unprecedented flood of calls for COVID-19 related queries since last April. We are getting nearly 100 calls a day," says Chandan Acharya, co-founder of Vizag Volunteers, an NGO in Visakhapatnam.

What started as a WhatsApp group with his corporate circle friends and NGOs last year, has now swelled into a social movement. The group has 600 volunteers today, bringing together a gamut of information – from hospital bed availability to plasma donation – on vizagvolunteers.org. The volunteers have also managed to build a community that provides not just medical support but also mental strength to those in home quarantine through telecounselling.

Comforting anxious COVID patients through telecounselling is one of the key areas they are addressing, while attending to a flood of calls enquiring about hospital beds that the organisation realised many patients were rushing to hospitals in a full-blown panic. "If the patient can be under home quarantine, we counsel them periodically through calls and guide them through the process," says Chandan.

Groups like Vizag Volunteers are operating in many cities, and some across cities and states. Pooling in the spare hours and resources of data crunchers, fact checkers and just people who can spare the time to call and get updates from clinics, they are always in need of another helping hand, perhaps yours.

With inputs from Meghna Majumdar, Gowri S, Prabalka M Borah, Nivedita Ganguly and Priyadarsini S

OBITUARY

ASKARI ZAIKI

Decorated Hindi writer Manzoor Ahthesham signed off on a well-spent life in a hospital around midnight in Bhopal on Sunday last. When he breathed his last, he was in the company of a doctor and some paramedical staff as he was a COVID-19 patient and family members were not allowed.

He is survived by the families of two daughters and that of younger brother Ajaz Ghafoor, a well-known interior designer in Bhopal. Manzoor had recently lost his wife and elder brother to COVID-19.

Born in April 1948, Manzoor belonged to one of the middle class families of Afghan lineage in picturesque Bhopal. He was handsome, very polite, unassuming, and friendly. A gentleman to the core, Manzoor had a sensitive heart, a sharp mind, and frugal lifestyle. For more than seven years that I spent in Bhopal as Resident Editor of Hindustan Times from 2000, and even later during numerous visits to the city, I found people had only good things to say about him.

His parents wanted him to do engineering. He took admission, tried for a few years, but gave up, as his interest was in literature. When his brother Ajaz started a furniture showroom in late 70s, he requested Manzoor to help him out by being there. Ajaz fondly says, "Many visi-

Buried in his books

Manzoor Ahthesham was a Hindi writer from Bhopal, who raised important questions about identity of the increasingly alienated Muslim minority



MANZOOR AHTESHAM
3-4-1948 - 26-4-2021

tion has stopped reading books," he would often lament.

During one of the several evenings that I spent with him discussing poetry, novels, plays, and world affairs, he talked very fondly of Orhan Pamuk's writings. It was in July or August of 2006 that he had told me he expected Pamuk to win the Nobel Prize in Literature that year. A couple of months later in October, Pamuk did get the Nobel.

Bhopal's topography – an abundance of greenery, large water bodies, and generally pleasant weather through the year – also helped Manzoor's literary sensibilities to flourish. I remember him telling me once that the name of his highly awarded novel *Sukha Bargad* (A Dying Bayyan), came from Dela Wadi, a forest area near Bhopal having several banyan trees. The novel tells the story of a middle-class Muslim family's struggle to come to terms with the transformation of Indian society after partition, particularly worsening Hindu-Muslim relations.

Some institutions, such as Bharat Bhawan, a premier multi-arts auto-

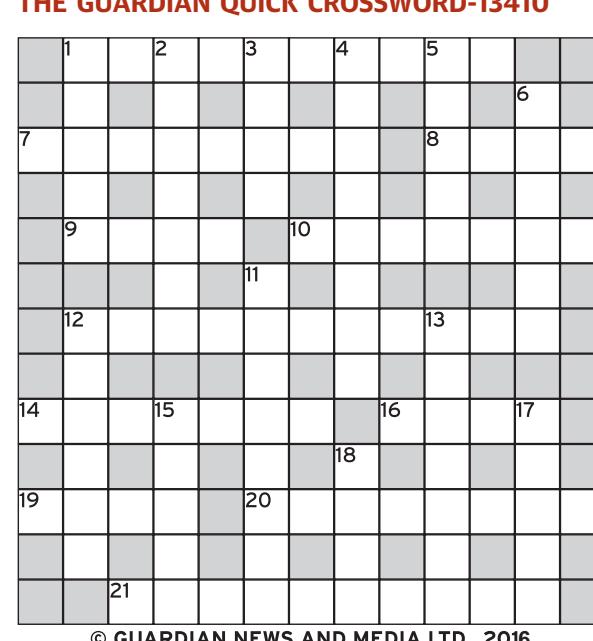
nous complex and museum, and theatre and literary personalities such as BV Karanth, Habib Tanvir, and Shani Gulsher Ahmed helped Manzoor hone his literary skills. His interest in theatre helped him get the role of a professor in Merchant Ivory Production's film *In Custody (Muhabat)* in Urdu in 1993.

In 2007, New York magazine cited *Dastan-e Lapata*, (*The Tale of the Missing Man*) as one of "the world's best untranslated novels." The book, which raises important questions about Muslim identity, was translated into English in 2018 by Jason Grunebaum and Ulrike Stark of the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. It has received the Global Humanities Translation Prize.

Manzoor was a recipient of several awards such as Shikhar Samman, Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad Puruskar, Vir Singh Deo Award, and several others. The government of India honoured him with the Padma Shri, the fourth highest Indian civilian award, in 2003. However, writer and poet Rajesh Joshi was recently quoted in a Hindi newspaper saying that Manzoor had wanted to exchange his Padma Shri with his Sahitya Akademi award which Rajesh had got at about the same time.

Manzoor Ahthesham's first published short story in 1973 was *Ramzaan Mein Maut* (*Death in Ramzaan*). Ironically, we lost him during this time of fasting and prayer.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13410



To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- (4,4)
- 5 Break out (5)
- 6 Dairy product made from curdled milk (6)
- 11 And the rest (Latin) (2,6)
- 12 Not spontaneous (6)
- 13 Hard to catch (7)
- 15 Cavalry sword (5)
- 17 Attire (5)
- 18 Without the natural covering (4)

Solution will appear on May 6, 2021

Solution No. 13409

■ Across	19 Part of speech (4)
1 Impossibly (3-7)	20 Tester (8)
7 Lacking the sense one was born with (8)	21 Despite the prevailing circumstances (10)
8 Au courant (2,2)	■ Down
9 Snare (4)	1 Meteorological boundary between different air masses (5)
10 Obscure completely (4,3)	12 Metaphor for British national newspapers (5,6)
11 Run wild (7)	13 Stared at (4)
12 Run wild (7)	14 Cut of beef (7)
13 Stared at (4)	15 Choose by random selection (4)
14 Cut of beef (7)	16 Regretted (4)
15 Choose by random selection (4)	
16 Regretted (4)	

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

U.S. will send India vaccines, reiterates Biden

He says U.S. is dispatching 'a whole series of help' to India, including Remdesivir and vaccine inputs

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden on Tuesday elaborated on his phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday to discuss the COVID-19 outbreak in India. He said the U.S. was sending "a whole series of help" to India, including Remdesivir and vaccine inputs.

"With regard to India, I spoke at length with Modi, the Prime Minister. We are sending immediately a whole series of help that he needs, including providing for those – Remdesivir and other drugs that are able to deal with this and prevent, in some cases, but recover – help recovery," said Mr. Biden. He was walking away from the lectern at the end of



Help on its way: President Joe Biden at the White House in Washington, in this file photo. ■AP

his remarks on COVID-19 on the North Lawn of the White House, but returned briefly specifically to answer questions on India.

"Secondly, we are sending the actual mechanical parts that are needed for the machinery they have to build a vaccine. And that's being done as well," Mr. Biden said, adding he told Mr. Modi that the U.S. would be able to send actual vials (of vaccine) to India."

"I've discussed with him [Mr. Modi] when we'll be able to send actual vaccines to India, which would be my intention to do."

"The problem is, right now, we have to make sure we have other vaccines, like Novavax and others, coming on, probably. And I think we'll be in a position to be able to share – to share vaccines, as well as know-how, with other countries who are in real need. That's the hope and expectation," he said.

The White House announced on Monday that it was making available some 60 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine for use by other countries over the course of May and June.

India helped us'

"And I might add, when we were in a bind at the very beginning, India helped us," Mr. Biden said as he was leaving the venue.

Co-Chairs of the Senate In-

dia Caucus, Mark Warner (Democrat, Virginia) and John Cornyn (Republican, Texas) wrote to President Biden, urging him to "accelerate U.S. efforts" to support countries like India that had been hard hit by COVID-19.

"As co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus, we are watching with growing alarm the unprecedented surge of COVID-19 cases, hospitalisations and deaths, which has overwhelmed hospitals and the overall health system in India," the Senators wrote.

"Finally, we congratulate you for taking specific actions to remove obstacles that would get in the way of sending excess vaccines to India," they said, asking that similar barriers be removed for sharing vaccines with other countries as well.

N. Ireland leader quits after revolt

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON

Northern Ireland's First Minister Arlene Foster announced her resignation on Wednesday after members of her Democratic Unionist Party signed a letter of no-confidence in her over her handling of the fallout from Brexit.

Post-Brexit trade rules have imposed customs and border checks on some goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K., which has angered the unionists.

Junta launches air raids on rebel areas

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YANGON

Myanmar government forces launched airstrikes against ethnic minority guerrillas in two areas of the country on Wednesday, local reports said.

Fighting has been raging in northern Myanmar in territory controlled by the Kachin Independence Organization, representing the Kachin minority, and in the east by the Karen National Union, representing the Karen. Both groups oppose the military.

EU lawmakers give nod to post-Brexit trade agreement

Sore points like N. Ireland protocol, vaccine supplies remain

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRUSSELS

European Union leaders, their British counterparts and European businesses expressed hope on Wednesday that the final ratification of the post-Brexit trade deal will open a new, positive era of cooperation despite the many divisive topics remaining between the former partners.

Lawmakers at the European Parliament voted 660-5 with 32 abstentions to endorse the free trade agreement. Voting took place on Tuesday but results were not announced until Wednesday morning.

After EU lawmakers ratified the agreement ensuring that free trade continues between the two sides without tariffs and quotas, U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the vote marked the "final step in a long journey, providing stability to our

new relationship with the EU as vital partners, close allies and sovereign equals."

Relations between the EU and the U.K. have been strained since a Brexit transition period ended on January 1. The two sides have argued so far this year over issues ranging from violations of the so-called Northern Ireland protocol, COVID-19 vaccine supplies to the full diplomatic recognition of the EU in Britain.

China pushes defence ties with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka

Defence Minister Wei Fenghe urges the nations to resist 'powers outside the region setting up alliances'

MEERA SRINIVASAN

ANANTH KRISHNAN

COLOMBO

China's Minister of Defence Wei Fenghe, visiting Bangladesh and Sri Lanka this week, has called on countries in the neighbourhood to resist "powers from outside the region setting up military alliances in South Asia".

General Wei's comments in Dhaka on Tuesday came amid a push back from Chinese officials on the India-U.S.-Australia-Japan Quad grouping, which some in Beijing have described as a quasi-military alliance.

Colombo visit

The Chinese Defence Minister and People's Liberation Army General on Wednesday held talks with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka, as he be-



Expanding ties: Sri Lankan PM Mahinda Rajapaksa, right, and China's Defence Minister Wei Fenghe in Colombo on Wednesday. ■AP

gan a two-day visit following his trip to Bangladesh. Both sides had discussions that were "extremely fruitful", said a statement issued by the Presidential Media Division. "He [Chinese Defence Minister] also said the relations between the two na-

tions were further strengthened by this visit," the statement said.

The General's visit comes six months after top Chinese foreign policy official Yang Jiechi was in Colombo in October 2020 for high-level discussions. China on Tuesday also con-

vened a six-country South Asia dialogue on COVID-19 and economic cooperation with the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The senior Chinese official's visit to Sri Lanka coincides with mounting resistance in Sri Lanka to a Bill envisioning laws to govern the China-backed \$1.4 billion Colombo Port City. The Supreme Court recently heard a case on the matter, following some 20 petitions by opposition parties and civil society organisations that challenged the Bill arguing that it "threatened" Sri Lanka's sovereignty. The top court is expected to rule on the case soon. The visiting Chinese official is also scheduled to meet PM Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Beijing has extended over \$2 billion – in loans and a currency swap facility – to Colombo after the pandemic struck, to help the government cope with its economic strain. Prior to that Colombo owed Beijing over \$5 billion in loan repayment.

On Tuesday, General Wei held talks with Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid in Dhaka. A statement from China's official Xinhua news agency quoted him as calling for the two militaries to "increase high-level visits, deepen cooperation in equipment technology, broaden exchanges in specialized fields and forge closer military relations."

"To jointly maintain regional peace and stability," he said, "the two sides should make joint efforts against powers outside the region setting up military alliance in South Asia and practicing hegemonism."

Gotabaya, Solih express solidarity with India

They share concerns over virus surge

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Expressing "deep concern" over the rapid surge in COVID-19 in India, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, informing him of special prayers that the country's Buddhist clergy would hold for the people of India.

Recalling "similar pestilences" faced by humankind in the past, Mr. Rajapaksa sought to assure the Indian PM that "humanity prevailed through perseverance" and that India would "thwart the current havoc of the pathogen", under Mr. Modi's "able leadership" and the "resolute support of dedicated professionals and experts."

"I am pleased to inform Your Excellency that the Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka, following the example of their great teacher Gautama Buddha in Vaisala during a pestilence, plan to compassionately recite the 'Rathana Sutra', to invoke blessings on the people of India and is encouraged by the efforts undertaken by PM @narendramodi and Indian authorities to ease the situation."



Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

our two countries," Mr. Rajapaksa said in a letter dated April 28, 2021.

President Rajapaksa expressed "deep gratitude" for India's donation of 5 lakh doses of vaccines that, he said, enabled his government to launch the vaccination programme.

Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih too expressed solidarity with India in a tweet that said: "Saddened and concerned for our neighbour India as they battle a new wave of Covid19. The Maldives expresses its solidarity with the people of India and is encouraged by the efforts undertaken by PM @narendramodi and Indian authorities to ease the situation."

Sundaram-Clayton Limited

Regd office: "Chaitanya", No.12, Khader Nawaz Khan Road, Chennai 600 006

Tel : 044-2833 2115 Fax : 044 - 2833 2113

Website : www.sundaram-clayton.com Email : corpsec@scl.co.in

CIN : L35999TN1962PLC004792

STATEMENT OF STANDALONE & CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2021

(Rs. in Crores)

S. No.	Particulars	Standalone		Consolidated	
		Quarter ended 31.03.2021 (Unaudited)	Year ended 31.03.2020 (Audited)	Quarter ended 31.03.2021 (Unaudited)	Year ended 31.03.2020 (Audited)
		31.03.2021 31.03.2020	31.03.2021 31.03.2020	31.03.2021 (Unaudited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)
1	Total Income	503.71	394.77	1,288.08	6,451.09
2	Net Profit / (Loss) before tax (before Exceptional Items)	130.00	70.85	136.10	455.14
3	Net Profit / (Loss) before tax (after Exceptional Items)	127.77	61.83	123.10	446.71
4	Net Profit / (Loss) after tax (after Exceptional Items)	82.85	62.05	75.84	307.34
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income / (Loss) (after tax)]	129.13	(2.17)	174.04	390.82
6	Equity share Capital (Face value of Rs.5/-each)	10.12	10.12	10.12	10.12
7	Other Equity	-	-	705.76	-
8	Earnings Per Share (Face value of Rs.5/-each) (not annualised) (In Rs.) (i) Basic (ii) Diluted	40.95 40.95	30.67 30.67	37.49 37.49	82.62 82.62
				4.56 4.56	159.98 159.98

Notes:

- The above is an extract of the detailed format of financial results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the financial results are available on the Stock exchanges websites (www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com) and on Company's website (www.sundaram-clayton.com).
- The Directors at the meeting held on 24th March 2021, declared a second interim dividend of Rs. 11 per share (22%) absorbing a sum of Rs.22.26 Cr for the year 2020-21 and the same was paid on 9th April 2021 to those shareholders who hold shares in physical or in electronic form and whose names appear in the Register of Members and / or Depositories respectively, as at the close of working hours on 2nd April 2021 (Record Date). The Directors do not recommend any further Dividend for the year 2020-21.
- The Company has prepared these standalone and consolidated financial results in accordance with the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rules, 2015 (Ind AS) prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013.

Date : 28th April 2021

India, Australia, Japan push for supply chain resilience

The move is seen aimed at reducing their reliance on China

ANANTH KRISHNAN

The Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) formally launched on Tuesday by the Trade Ministers of India, Japan and Australia brought a wary response from China, which has described the effort as 'unrealistic'.

"As co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus, we are watching with growing alarm the unprecedented surge of COVID-19 cases, hospitalisations and deaths, which has overwhelmed hospitals and the overall health system in India," the Senators wrote.

"Finally, we congratulate you for taking specific actions to remove obstacles that would get in the way of sending excess vaccines to India," they said, asking that similar barriers be removed for sharing vaccines with other countries as well.



Piyush Goyal

hanced utilisation of digital

technology and trade and investment diversification,

which is seen as being aimed at reducing their reliance on China. "The SCRI aims to create a virtuous cycle of enhancing supply chain resilience with a view to eventually attaining strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in the region," and "noted the importance of risk management and continuity plans in order to avoid supply chain disruptions".

Some of the joint measures they are considering include supporting the en-

formation and development of global industrial and supply chains are determined by market forces and companies choices," spokesperson Zhao Lijian said.

"Artificial industrial 'transfer' is an unrealistic approach that goes against the economic laws and can neither solve domestic problems nor do anything good to the stability of the global industrial and supply chains, or to the stable recovery of the world economy."

Mr. Zhao said China hoped that amid the epidemic, "parties concerned will cherish the hard-won outcomes of international cooperation in the fight against the epidemic" and "act in ways conducive to enhancing mutual trust and cooperation, so as to jointly ensure the global industrial and supply chains stable and unimpeded".

N. Ireland leader quits after revolt

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	49,734	1.61
US Dollar	74.36	0.50
Gold	46,518	-0.97
Brent oil	67.69	2.89

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	746.25	-2.90
Asian Paints	2614.55	40.20
Axisc Bank	708.15	8.60
Bajaj Auto	3889.75	104.25
Bajaj Finserv	10489.30	397.95
Bajaj Finance	5280.90	415.85
Bharti Airtel	544.30	10.00
BPCL	417.50	-2.85
Britannia Ind	3478.75	-62.45
Cipla	910.20	-2.20
Coal India	128.50	1.00
Divis Lab	3882.60	-26.35
Drd Reynolds Lab	5044.45	-12.80
Eicher Motors	2521.20	12.10
Grafin Ind	1341.50	9.95
HCL Tech	923.80	-5.05
HDPC	2577.00	58.60
HDFC Bank	1476.80	38.10
HDFC Life	672.60	-6.15
Hero MotoCorp	2926.25	20.75
Hindalco	362.60	-3.65
Hind Unilever	2406.55	26.70
ICICI Bank	621.35	22.60
IndusInd Bank	926.90	44.45
Infosys	1356.00	7.50
Indian Oil Corp	89.40	0.55
ITC	205.50	0.10
JSW Steel	662.65	-3.25
Kotak Bank	1811.45	61.15
L&T	1375.90	-4.75
M&M	782.10	3.70
Maruti Suzuki	6573.80	5.05
Nestle India Ltd.	16633.80	-145.20
NTPC	103.60	1.55
ONGC	103.90	0.70
PowerGrid Corp	220.90	4.25
Reliance Ind	1997.30	8.65
SBI Life	930.40	1.65
State Bank	363.40	10.35
Shree Cement	28687.55	589.00
Sun Pharma	643.40	4.15
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	677.15	3.45
Tata Motors	305.90	4.40
Tata Steel	971.40	-6.35
TCS	3124.10	-7.90
Tech Mahindra	977.40	8.15
Titan	1508.85	13.75
UltraTech Cement	6360.80	34.00
UPL	608.05	10.60
Wipro	489.30	4.25

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.15	74.47
Euro	89.49	89.88
British Pound	102.82	103.26
Japanese Yen (100)	68.05	68.34
Chinese Yuan	11.43	11.49
Swiss Franc	81.01	81.36
Singapore Dollar	55.89	56.14
Canadian Dollar	59.78	60.04
Malaysian Ringgit	18.06	18.15

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Chennai Petroleum logs ₹232-crore profit in Q4

CHENNAI Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd.'s reported standalone net profit stood at ₹232 crore for the fourth quarter ended March against a net loss of ₹1,638 crore in the year-earlier period. Revenue from operations rose 24.7% to ₹14,705 crore, it said in a statement. For FY21, the firm posted a profit before tax of ₹1,277 crore against a loss of ₹3,016 crore in the year-earlier period.

SEBI fines Aptech ₹1 cr. for insider trading

NEW DELHI SEBI on Wednesday slapped a fine of ₹1 crore on Aptech Ltd. for violating insider trading norms in 2016. Aptech had signed a non-disclosure pact with Montana in March, 2016. Thereafter it was found that Aptech had failed to close the trading window in relation to sensitive information pertaining to the press release on its foray into the pre-school segment. PTI

Security firm SIS clocks Q4 profit of ₹102.2 crore

NEW DELHI Security and facility management solutions provider SIS Ltd. posted a consolidated net profit of ₹102.2 crore for the quarter ended March 31 against a loss of ₹39 crore in the year-earlier period. Revenue from operations rose 10% to ₹2,445.2. For FY21, net profit rose 62% to ₹367.2 crore while revenue from operations increased 7.56% to ₹9,127.3 crore.

CDC to invest ₹250 cr. in solar firm Fourth Partner

HYDERABAD United Kingdom's development finance institution CDC Group is investing ₹250 crore in solar energy firm Fourth Partner Energy. The investment would be in the form of non-convertible debentures. The mezzanine capital would be deployed in growing its renewable-solutions platform across India and South Asia, a statement from Fourth Partner Energy said.

'Second wave hurting India's recovery'

Rating agencies flag risks from 'escalating' infections; ICRA says faster vaccine roll-out 'critical'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI India's 'escalating' second wave of COVID-19 infections poses serious downside risks to the economy and heightens the possibility of business disruptions in addition to 'the substantial loss of life and significant humanitarian concerns', S&P Global Ratings said on Wednesday.

While S&P said it may revise its 11% growth projection for this year, rating agency ICRA said that the rise in infections was dampening the economic recovery with several indicators losing momentum in April.

'Permanent output loss' "A drawn-out COVID-19 outbreak will impede India's economic recovery," S&P said in a statement. "This may prompt us to revise our



Time of essence: The longer the second wave lasts, the more severe the impact, says EY India's Srivastava. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

base-case assumption of 11% growth over fiscal 2021/2022, particularly if the government is forced to reimpose broad containment measures. The country already faces a permanent loss of output versus its pre-pandemic path, suggesting a

long-term production deficit equivalent to about 10% of GDP (gross domestic product)," the global rating agency warned.

Stressing that the pace and scale of the post-crisis recovery would have important implications for India's

sovereign credit rating, S&P said that strong economic growth would be critical to sustain the government's aggressive fiscal stance and stabilise its high debt stock relative to GDP.

"The continuing resurgence in COVID-19 cases and proliferation of localised restrictions could dampen the pace of recovery for the Indian corporate sector," ICRA said in a report titled 'Indian economy - Vaccinated against COVID-19'. With sentiment souring, there may be some loss of demand in the first half, particularly in contact-intensive sectors, said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA.

The Indian rating agency also underlined that the actual pace of the vaccine rollout to the wider adult population would impact senti-

ment and growth. "An earlier availability of vaccine imports, enabling a faster coverage of the vaccination drive, may offer a back-end upside to the GDP growth in FY2022, after the disruption that may emerge in the near term," it said.

'Vaccines vs mutants' Economist D.K. Srivastava cautioned that failure to rein in the surge in cases soon would worsen the adverse impact on the economy.

"The longer the second wave lasts, the more severe would be the adverse impact on the economy," said Mr. Srivastava, chief policy advisor at EY India. "There would be a race between the pace of COVID vaccination vis-à-vis the speed at which COVID-19 including its new mutants spread," he added.

The Indian rating agency also underlined that the actual pace of the vaccine rollout to the wider adult population would impact senti-

Limited sops make scrappage policy for vehicles unattractive'

Potential benefit is far less than resale value for small cars'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Limited incentives and poor cost economics for trucks in the Vehicle Scrappage Policy, coupled with lack of addressable volumes for other segments is unlikely to drive freight transporters to replace their old vehicles with new ones, a report said on Wednesday.

Though the scrappage volume of buses, PVs and two-wheelers is expected to be limited as well, the policy's impact on new commercial vehicle (CV) sales could be sizeable, based on addressable volume, ratings agency Crisil Research said in its report.



The policy proposes to de-register vehicles that fail fitness tests or are unable to renew registrations after 15-20 years of use.

According to Crisil, many buses owned by state transport undertakings will have a life of more than 15 years. In comparison, buses oper-

ated for intercity, staff, school and tourist segments typically do not have a life beyond 15 years, and would thus be outside the ambit of the scrappage policy.

As for passenger vehicles, renewal of registration fees is proposed to be increased from ₹600 to ₹5,000 (valid for five years) for PVs older than 15 years, which is a more than eightfold increase.

The potential benefit from scrapping a 15-year-old, entry-level small car will be ₹70,000, whereas its resale value is around ₹95,000. That makes scrapping unattractive, Crisil said in the report.

Zomato files papers for ₹8,250-cr. IPO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Food delivery app Zomato Ltd., backed by China's Ant Group, on Wednesday filed a draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with the Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to raise ₹8,250 crore.

The IPO would comprise fresh issue of ₹7,500 crore and OFS (offer for sale) of ₹750 crore by Info Edge, an investor.

Zomato said it would use the proceeds of the issue to fund growth initiatives and for general corporate purposes.

For the nine months ended December 31, their market ownership jumped by a whooping ₹105 billion. At ₹39 billion of net investments in FY21, FPIs have surpassed their own records in FY10 and FY13 by a wide margin.

With valuations/EPS estimate stretched by 5-10% and the risks to growth outlook rising amid the pandemic, equity investors' positioning is a concern, Swiss brokerage UBS Securities said in a note on Wednesday.

The report further said in the past five weeks alone, FPIs have pulled out ₹2 billion and going by the weekly median of ₹3 million rolling inflows, they are on course to pull out ₹3-4 billion more in the short-term.

Between September 2020 and March 2021, their market ownership jumped by a whooping ₹105 billion. At ₹39 billion of net investments in FY21, FPIs have surpassed their own records in FY10 and FY13 by a wide margin.

The report further said in the past five weeks alone, FPIs have pulled out ₹2 billion and going by the weekly median of ₹3 million rolling inflows, they are on course to pull out ₹3-4 billion more in the short-term.

Between September 2020 and March 2021, their market ownership jumped by a whooping ₹105 billion. At ₹39 billion of net investments in FY21, FPIs have surpassed their own records in FY10 and FY13 by a wide margin.

The report further said in the past five weeks alone, FPIs have pulled out ₹2 billion and going by the weekly median of ₹3 million rolling inflows, they are on course to pull out ₹3-4 billion more in the short-term.

Between September 2020 and March 2021, their market ownership jumped by a whooping ₹105 billion. At ₹39 billion of net investments in FY21, FPIs have surpassed their own records in FY10 and FY13 by a wide margin.

The report further said in the past five weeks alone, FPIs have pulled out ₹2 billion and going by the weekly median of ₹3 million rolling inflows, they are on course to pull out ₹3-4 billion more in the short-term.

Between September 2020 and March 2021, their market ownership jumped by a whooping ₹105 billion. At ₹39 billion of net investments in FY21, FPIs have surpassed their own records in FY10 and FY13 by a wide margin.

The report further said in the past five weeks alone, FPIs have pulled out ₹2 billion and going by the weekly median of ₹3 million rolling inflows, they are on course to pull out ₹3-4 billion more in the short-term.

Between September 2020 and March 2021, their market ownership jumped by a whooping ₹105 billion. At ₹39 billion of net investments in FY21, FPIs have surpassed their own records in FY10 and FY13 by a wide margin.

The report further said in the past five weeks alone, FPIs have pulled out ₹2 billion and going by the weekly median of ₹3 million rolling inflows, they are on course to pull out ₹3-4 billion more in the short-term.

Bajaj Finserv shares climb 4% as net jumps fourfold

Lender posts Q4 profit of ₹979 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Shares of Bajaj Finserv Ltd. (BFL) on Wednesday gained 4% after the company reported a more than fourfold jump in consolidated net profit for the fourth quarter ended in March 2021.

The stock jumped 4.03% to close at ₹10,491.65 on the BSE. During the day, it rallied 5.25% to ₹10,615.95, a 52-week high.

On the NSE, the stock gained 3.94% to ₹10,489.30.

Bajaj Finserv Ltd. (BFL) on Wednesday reported a more than four-fold jump in

Super Kings clinically disassemble Sunrisers, win five in a row

Openers Ruturaj (75) and du Plessis (56) star in chase of 172-run target as Chennai goes No. 1 with a seven-wkt. victory; Pandey top-scores for Hyderabad with 61

IPL 2021

S. DINAKAR

Well begun is half done. Sometimes it is more than that.

Chennai Super Kings openers Ruturaj Gaikwad and Faf du Plessis powered their team to the top of the table with a calculated onslaught. The clinical CSK chased down Sunrisers Hyderabad's 171 by seven wickets in the IPL clash at New Delhi's Feroze Shah Kotla ground on Wednesday.

Ruturaj, who made a delightful 75 of footwork and timing, and du Plessis (56), raised 129 in 13 overs on a good batting surface to snuff out Sunrisers' challenge. Ruturaj got to his front foot for the silken drives and when the bowler pitched a little short, picked runs off his back foot with cuts and pulls.

Footwork is Ruturaj's ally. And he forces bowlers to alter length. The natural grace and rhythm in his batting is hard to miss.

With exemplary hand-eye coordination, du Plessis struck the ball past cover and point, and then powered the ball through mid-off as Khaileel Ahmed and Siddarth Kaul came in for punishment. When left-arm spinner J. Suchith came on, he sashayed down for a six over long-on. Both opened up the field at



Leading the charge: Ruturaj and du Plessis' century stand put Super Kings on course to an emphatic win. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL



will. Ruturaj, using the crease beautifully, pulled Rashid Khan nonchalantly.

However, the skilful Rashid did consume Ruturaj with a quickish leg-spinner, had Moeen Ali taken in the deep and trapped du Plessis leg-before with a googly. It was not enough for SRH.

Earlier, it was Kane Williamson, light on his feet and heavy with his strokes, who

fired SRH to a combative score with a barrage of shots in the end. It was a captivating cameo (26 off 10) but he should have come in earlier.

A six over cover point – the stroke encapsulated Williamson's footwork, still head, balance and timing – off Sharad Thakur was the pick.

And Kedar Jadhav ended the innings with a clubbed last ball six over square-leg off

Sam Curran. The backbone of the Sunrisers innings, after David Warner chose to bat, was the 106-run second-wicket partnership between the left-right combination of a struggling Warner (57 off 55) and a relatively more enterprising Manish Pandey (61 off 46).

Warner's bat-speed is his strength. Although a muscular hitter of the ball, the

southpaw is not without foot work. Yet this was a night when he could not find momentum save for the odd hefty blow. CSK bowled tight and fielded capably.

The swift du Plessis conjured an electric moment when he dived at wide long on after Pandey heaved Lungi Ngidi. Then he took the night flight with the willow with Ruturaj.



The 10K club

- Warner became the fourth batsman to score 10000 runs in T20s.
- Chris Gayle: 13839 runs, 414 ians
- Kieron Pollard: 10694 runs, 479 ians
- Shoaib Malik: 10488 runs, 389 ians
- David Warner: 10017 runs, 303 ians

SCOREBOARD

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

David Warner c Jadeja b Ngidi 57 (55b, 3x4, 2x6), Jonny Bairstow c Deepak Chahar b Sam Curran 7 (5b, 1x4). Manish Pandey c du Plessis b Ngidi 61 (46b, 5x4, 1x6), Kane Williamson (not out) 26 (10b, 4x4, 1x6), Kedar Jadhav (not out) 12 (4b, 1x4, 1x6); Extras (lb-2, w-6); 8; Total (for three wkt. in 20 overs): 171.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-129 (Ruturaj, 12.6), 2-148 (Moeen, 14.5), 3-148 (du Plessis, 14.6).

SUNRISERS BOWLING

Sandeep 3.0-24-0, Khaleel 4-0-36-0, Kaul 4-0-32-0, Suchith 3-0-45-0, Rashid 4-0-36-3.

Toss: Sunrisers; **MoM:** Ruturaj. **Super Kings won by seven wkts. with nine balls to spare.**

Innings scan

SRH	Dots	CSK
36		32
14	Four	25
5	Sixes	1
39/1	PP	50/0
8.55	RR	9.35

POINTS TABLE

Team	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Chennai Super Kings	6	5	1	10	1.475
Royal Challengers	6	5	1	10	0.089
Delhi Capitals	6	4	2	8	0.269
Mumbai Indians	5	2	3	4	-0.032
Kolkata Knight Riders	6	2	4	4	-0.305
Punjab Kings	6	2	4	4	-0.608
Rajasthan Royals	5	2	3	4	-0.681
Sunrisers Hyderabad	6	1	5	2	-0.264

After the CSK-SRH match on April 28

Can RR extend recent supremacy over MI?

Rajasthan has lost just once in the last three seasons to Mumbai, but is stretched thin

AMOL KARHADKAR

It has dominated the mighty Mumbai Indians over the last three seasons, winning five of their six meetings. But ahead of Thursday's clash against the defending champion in Delhi, Rajasthan Royals will have it tough, as it looks to make the most of limited resources.

As if losing Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes to injuries wasn't a big blow, Liam Livingstone and Andrew Tye pulled out because of COVID-related issues. It leaves Sanju Samson's side with only four overseas cricketers: Jos Buttler, David Miller, Chris Morris and Mustafizur Rahman.

The RR team management will also have to ensure

that the recent departures, coupled with the disturbing events outside the bubble, don't end up demoralising the domestic cricketers.

MI, after a five-day break, will be eager to bounce back from successive losses. In addition to improving its mid-table position, the squad will be keen to gift captain Rohit Sharma a victory on the eve of his 34th birthday.

MI will be hoping that Hardik Pandya gets back into his groove. The hard-hitting batsman has been found wanting, with opposition bowlers successfully employing wide yorkers against him. Hardik's inability to find a counter has played a part in MI managing only two wins in the first five games.

MI has a reputation of shifting into a higher gear mid-season and it will hope that the new venue brings with it a change of fortunes.

- MI, which had a five-day break, will be eager to bounce back from successive losses
- RR has only four overseas players: Buttler, Miller, Morris and Mustafizur



Impact players: Hardik Pandya needs to untangle the yorker conundrum, while Jos Buttler will be keen to make his presence felt at the top of the order. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

Pant's instincts versus Morgan's method

Captaincy could prove decisive when the two power-packed sides clash

WRIDDHAAN BHATTACHARYYA

Rishabh Pant is an unpredictable captain. He shuffles his bowlers on instinct and that will hold the key when Delhi Capitals meets Kolkata Knight Riders at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

KKR looked a different outfit when it restricted a star-studded Punjab Kings to 123 for nine, but its batting department remains wobbly. Chasing a modest target, Eoin Morgan's side was three down for 17 before the skipper upped the ante.

Against DC, which is blessed with a variety of spin and pace options, KKR's batsmen will continue to be tested.

Uncapped pacer Avesh Khan has been DC's best bowler, with 12 wickets



In impressive form: While Avesh Khan's bowling has been a revelation for Capitals, Rahul Tripathi has pulled his weight for Knight Riders. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL



in six outings. The addition of Ishant Sharma after R. Ashwin's departure has augured well for the side.

rienced spin bowler has

been among the wickets and

remains a strong source of support for Varun Chakravarthy.

Fast-bowlers Shivam Mavi and Prasidh Krishna have got their lengths and pace variations right, which has kept New Zealand quick Lockie Ferguson out of the mix.

Rahul Tripathi has been the most consistent KKR batsman. Shubman Gill's form is a cause for concern and the opener will be keen on a big score to silence the critics.

Top of the charts

ORANGE CAP
Faf du Plessis (CSK) Matches: 6 Runs: 270

HS: 95 n.o. | SR: 140.62

PURPLE CAP

Harshal Patel (RCB)
Matches: 6 | Wickets: 17

BB: 5/27 | Econ: 8.50

After the CSK-SRH match on April 28

BCCI nod for T20 leagues

QUICK SINGLES



Ending IPL is not the answer: Cummins

Shutting down the IPL is not the answer even as India is struggling to control the COVID-19-induced health crisis, insisted KKR's star pacer Pat Cummins. "We are doing everything we can to make sure we don't take any resources out of the frontline. I don't think so (it's the solution). Playing every

night for three-four hours hopefully contributes to people staying home as it has been a hard routine for them and we can help them get through each day," said the 27-year-old in a TV interview.

Umpires Nitin Menon, Paul Reiffel withdraw

Citing personal reasons, umpires Nitin Menon and Paul Reiffel have decided not to continue officiating in this season's IPL. The Indian returned home after he learnt that his mother and wife had tested positive for COVID-19, while the Australian decided to pull out fearing he may not be able to get back in case flights were banned from India.

Women's T20 Challenge unlikely this year

The three-team Women's T20 challenge, which is held during the IPL, is unlikely to be played this year given the current restrictions imposed by countries on travelling to India due to the massive spike in COVID-19 cases here.

While the BCCI was planning a camp for the Indian women, the tournament has hit choppy waters as none of the Australian, English, South African or West Indies cricketers will be able to travel to India because of the unprecedented "crisis". "Getting Indian players quarantined is not an issue even now but no foreign player is keen to travel in the current climate," a top BCCI source said. "We can find a window later when things get better," the source added.

Owing to the current pandemic situation, the BCCI is giving a one-time permission for the tournament," the letter stated.

BY THE NUMBERS



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID

With a dominant start and a milestone goal by Christian Pulisic, Chelsea showed its strength against Real Madrid in the Champions League semifinals.

Chelsea took control early in Tuesday's first leg to hold the Spanish powerhouse to a 1-1 away draw, with Pulisic becoming the first U.S. international to score in the tournament's last four.

He also surpassed DaMarcus Beasley to become the top American scorer in Champions League history with five goals.

A red-hot Karim Benzema equalised for a lacklustre Madrid squad on a rainy night at the Alfredo Di Stéfano Stadium in the first Champions League match since the controversial Super League folded last week. The second leg is on May 5 in London.

Benzema's goal came a few minutes after he clipped the post with a long-range shot. The French striker controlled a loose ball with his head before turning and firing a volley into the top of the net for his 13th goal in his last 14 matches. It was Benzema's 16th goal in his last 17 home games with Real.

<p

TV PICKS

Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh: 2nd Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 10 a.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1 & Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
AFC Champions League: FC Goa vs Al Wahda, Star Sports 3, 10.30 p.m.
Europa League: Sony Ten 2 & Ten 3 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Friday).

IN BRIEF



Yohan Blake sends his love to India

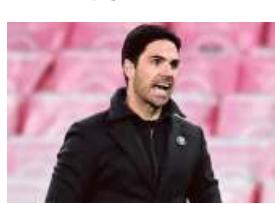
NEW DELHI

Olympic gold medallist Jamaican sprinter Yohan Blake has urged everyone in India to stay safe. "Just want to take this time to send my love to India. I have been watching cricket over the years. I have grown to love the country so much. Wonderful people all around. I am begging everyone to please do what they can to stay safe," Blake wrote on Twitter. ANI

Riya loses in singles, advances in doubles

OEIRAS (PORTUGAL)

Riya Bhatria and Brazilian Gabriela Ce reached the quarterfinals with a 6-3, 6-1 victory over Tessah Andrianjaftrimo of France and Chihira Muramatsu of Japan in the \$25,000 ITF women's tournament. Riya, however, lost the singles first round to Italian qualifier Martina Spigarelli 6-2, 6-1.



'Arsenal owners have shown commitment'

LONDON Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta said on Wednesday he hopes a strong statement from the owners underlining their commitment to the club will end speculation over a potential takeover bid from Spotify founder Daniel Ek. "We spoke to them and I think it was very clear, they have shown commitment and ambition to the club because we all want a successful team on the pitch," said Arteta. AFP

Mayweather to fight YouTube star on June 6

LOS ANGELES

Former world welterweight king Floyd Mayweather said on Tuesday he will face off against YouTube personality Logan Paul in an exhibition bout on June 6. AFP

Nets book a playoff berth

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LOS ANGELES Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving combined for 26 points as the Brooklyn Nets became the first Eastern Conference team to punch its playoff ticket on Tuesday with a 116-103 win over Toronto Raptors. The Nets overturned a six-point deficit with just under 10 minutes remaining in the final quarter to pull away for a win which leaves it on top of the conference with 42 wins and 20 defeats.

Durant finished with 10 rebounds, four assists and two blocks while Irving ended with nine points on a night when seven Brooklyn players posted double-digit points totals.

In Charlotte, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 29 points and grabbed 12 rebounds as Milwaukee Bucks solidified its hold on third place in the Eastern Conference with a 114-104 win over the Hornets.

The results:

Detroit 100 bt Atlanta 86; Philadelphia 121 bt Oklahoma City 90; L.A. Lakers 114 bt Orlando 103; Toronto 112 bt Cleveland 96; San Antonio 146 bt Washington 143 (OT); Phoenix 118 bt New York 110; New Orleans 120 bt L.A. Clippers 103; Chicago 110 bt Miami 102; Minnesota 105 bt Utah 104; Denver 120 bt Memphis 96; Sacramento 113 bt Dallas 106; Portland 133 bt Indiana 112; Milwaukee 114 bt Charlotte 104; Oklahoma City 119 bt Boston 115; Brooklyn 116 bt Toronto 103; Minnesota 114 bt Houston 107; Dallas 133 bt Golden State 103.

CMK

'This could be India's best Olympics'

Sharath believes he is in the best shape and not under-prepared

TABLE TENNIS

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

India's No.1 star paddler Sharath Kamal is staying motivated and eager to perform at his best in the Tokyo Olympics beginning July 23 despite the pandemic wreaking havoc.

The 38-year-old, playing in his fourth Olympics, felt he is not under-prepared and on the contrary is in the best shape mentally going into the quadrennial event.

"I don't think we are under-prepared. As far as training and travel are concerned, it has not been ideal. But I feel I am in a much better situation than last year. In fact, I played well in the World Table Tennis Star Contender series last month in Doha, beating World No. 16 Patrick Franziska of Germany," said Sharath in a virtual press meet facilitated by SAI (Sports Authority of India).



Confident: A. Sharath Kamal feels that his understanding of mind and body, and his experiences will stand him in good stead. ■ FILE PHOTO

TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme) on Wednesday.

No dip "Manika [Batra] and Sathiyan too played quite well in Doha. I thought my level did not dip in the last one year. This could be my and the

country's best Olympics due to my understanding of my mind, body and the experiences that I've had over the years."

Praising TOPS for funding his training, travelling and other expenses, Sharath said, "things became a lot

better once TOPS came into the fold. They have been very forthcoming and open to suggestions. We are able to concentrate on our training. The system has become more professional."

The last couple of years, according to Sharath, have

been very consistent.

"I have been ranked around 40 in the world in the last two years. More than anything, my ranking has done the talking. The 2018 Commonwealth and the Asian Games medals have done us a world of good.

"The 2018 Asian Games bronze medals in men's team and mixed doubles (with Manika Batra) gave us the confidence that we can do well in the Olympics," said the nine-time National champion, ranked 32 in the world.

Not many options

Acknowledging that this would not be the best of Olympics like earlier times when he saw Roger Federer, Kobe Bryant, Novak Djokovic from close quarters. "In a social way it is not going to be the best of Olympics. There will not be much festivities and celebration. We'll have to adapt as we don't have many options," he said.

New 'playbooks' unveiled

TOKYO OLYMPICS

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

The local organisers and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), on Wednesday, pushed ahead with plans to open the postponed Tokyo Olympics in just under three months, unveiling the latest set of rule books to show how the Games can be held during a pandemic.

This version of the 'Playbooks' offers more details than the first edition in February, but much of the specific planning will remain in flux until the final update comes out in June.

Though vaccines are now available, the strategy for the Olympics is geared

around holding the Games in a "bubble" as if there were no vaccines.

Organisers are not expected to announce until June if fans will be allowed into venues – and if so, how many. Fans from abroad have already been banned. The decision on venue capacity was promised to come to this month but has been pushed back.

Daily testing

Organisers are expected to announce daily testing for athletes, up from once every four days.

They are also expected to drop a 14-day quarantine, allowing athletes to train upon arrival. Athletes will be required to stay in the Olympic Village, and venues and training areas.

Asian meet moved from Delhi to Dubai

BOXING

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

The Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC) has moved the Asian boxing championships from New Delhi to Dubai due to the worsening pandemic situation in the country.

"It's unfortunate that we have to shift the venue out of India... but we are left with no options.

"Boxers' safety is most important. We are grateful to UAE for agreeing to co-host it on such a short notice," said BFI president Ajay Singh.

Amid speculation that the Indian team might fly out of the country a few weeks prior to the event to meet COVID protocols in the UAE, BFI secretary Himanta Kalita said the federation would act as per the need.

"As of now there is no such plan. But it is 100 percent confirmed that the Indian team will participate in the event.

"We will follow all necessary safety protocols," Kalita told *The Hindu*.

Six-year ban for Zoysa

For violating ICC's anti-corruption code

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI

Former Sri Lanka fast bowler Nuwan Zoysa has been banned from all cricket for six years after being found guilty of violating the International Cricket Council's anti-corruption code.

The ICC issued a statement on Wednesday saying that Zoysa's ban is backdated to Oct. 31, 2018, when the former Test left-arm pacer was provisionally suspended.

The charges related to the T10 League in the UAE in 2017 when Zoysa was a Sri Lanka bowling coach.



Zoysa. ■ FILE PHOTO

Zoysa, who will turn 43 next month, played 30 Tests and 95 ODIs over a decade until 2007. He took 64 wickets in Tests and 108 in one-dayers.

India to miss World Relays

Flight disruption leaves the athletes stranded at home

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

With many European countries banning flights from India over its rising COVID-19 numbers, the Indian men's 4x400m and women's 4x100m teams will now miss the World Athletics Relays which begin at Silesia, Poland, on May 1.

The relay teams were scheduled to take a 3 a.m. KLM flight to Amsterdam from Mumbai on Thursday but the Royal Dutch Airlines intimated that it would not allow them to board the flight after the Netherlands Government's ban on passenger flights from India.

"We are very disappointed at this moment. There

are no direct flights between Indian airports and Warsaw, Poland.

"This meant that despite the best efforts, the squad could not be rerouted on another airline," Adille Sumariwalla, the president of the Athletics Federation of India, said on Wednesday.

Alternatives "For the last 24 hours we have been consistently trying to find alternatives, we have used all the resources to sort this out, we have been constantly speaking to the organisers, the World Athletics, various consulates and airlines to reroute them.

"Under the present sce-

nario nobody has obliged."

Prominent names

Muhammed Anas, Arokia Rajiv, Amoj Jacob, Nirmal Noah Tom, Hima Das and Dutee Chand were among the prominent athletes who were supposed to take part in the World Relays which are a qualifying event for the Tokyo Olympics and World Championships.

The disappointment comes a couple of days after the AFI withdrew its women's 4x400m relay team from the World Relays as a few of its leading runners – Anjali Devi, V.K. Vismaya and Jisna Mathew – were either injured, not fit or were not ready.

The ASBC on Tuesday informed all member nations about the change.

The prestigious event was scheduled to be held at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in New Delhi.

However, with the newly-imposed international travel restrictions from many

Nepomniachtchi takes title

Wang Hao retires from professional chess

CANDIDATES CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Eventual champion World No. 4 Ian Nepomniachtchi and Anish Giri, the two front-runners of the Candidates chess tournament till Monday, lost their 14th and final round encounters on Tuesday as the competition came to end, 406 days after it started.

Nepomniachtchi, assured of the title after Giri's loss on Monday evening, surrendered rather tamely to the World No. 3 who signed off with three straight wins to make amends for an otherwise sub-par display in the 14-round contest.

The Russian was in the lead



Wang Hao. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

when the event was halted last March after seven rounds. On resumption, he did not let go of his lead and eventually ensured the title with a round to spare.

On Tuesday, Giri lost to

Radjabov holds Carlsen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Teimour Radjabov held World champion Magnus Carlsen four times for a 2-2 deadlock in their first match of the best-of-three quarterfinals of the New in Chess Classic rapid online tournament on Tuesday.

The results: Quarterfinals (Match 1): Magnus Carlsen (Nor) drew with Teimour Radjabov (Aze) 2-2; Levon Aronian (Arm) bt Wesley So (USA) 3-1; Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Aze) bt Alireza Firouzja (FIDE) 3-1; Hikaru Nakamura (USA) bt Le Liem Quang Le (Vie) 2.5-1.5.

selves against the best and I was very happy with the way I performed in the FIH Pro League earlier this month.

"One can practice a lot during training sessions, but a player's actual ability can be judged only during matches and therefore I was delighted to play in a big tournament like the FIH Pro League," said Shamsher in a release issued by Hockey India.

"The competition certainly gave me great exposure and I am sure the experience will help me become a much better player for India," said Shamsher.

HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indian men's hockey team forward Shamsher Singh believes the recent tour of Argentina has given him a chance to test his skills against the best and the exposure will only make him a better player.

The 23-year-old was part of the team which defeated Olympic champion Argentina twice in the FIH Pro League earlier this month.

"One can practice a lot during training sessions, but a player's actual ability can be judged only during matches and therefore I was delighted to play in a big tournament like the FIH Pro League," said Shamsher in a release issued by Hockey India.

"The competition certainly gave me great exposure and I am sure the experience will help me become a much better player for India," said Shamsher.

"To be among the best, we have to constantly test our



Shamsher Singh. ■ FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

"The matches certainly gave me a good idea about the level at which a hockey athlete plays in a big tournament against Argentina."

"The competition certainly gave me great exposure and I am sure the experience will help me become a much better player for India," said Shamsher.

"To be among the best, we have to constantly test our

"The matches certainly gave me a good idea about the level at which a hockey athlete plays in a big tournament against Argentina."

"The competition certainly gave me great exposure and I am sure the experience will help me become a much better player for India," said Shamsher.

"To be among the best, we have to constantly test our

"The matches certainly gave me a good idea about the level at which a hockey athlete plays in a big tournament against Argentina."

"The competition certainly gave me great exposure and I am sure the experience will help me become a much better player for India," said Shamsher.

"To be among the best, we have to constantly test our

"The matches certainly gave me a good idea about the level at which a hockey athlete plays in a big tournament against Argentina."

"The competition certainly gave me great exposure