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NEARBY



Central Vista ancillary projects get approval

NEW DELHI
An expert panel of the Environment Ministry has accorded environmental approval to ancillary projects that are part of the construction of a new Parliament, including a new residence for the Prime Minister.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Capital records 448 deaths, 18,043 cases

NEW DELHI
Delhi reported 448 COVID-19 deaths in 24 hours – the highest since the beginning of the pandemic – taking the toll to 17,414 on Monday. This is the third consecutive day that the city has recorded over 400 fatalities due to the virus. The Capital also reported 18,043 fresh infections in a single day, the lowest since April 15.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

7 Myanmar refugees can approach UNHCR: HC

GUWAHATI
The High Court of Manipur on Monday allowed seven Myanmar nationals, who entered India secretly following the February military coup, to travel to New Delhi to seek protection from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Amarinder warns of total lockdown if rules flouted

CHANDIGARH
Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday warned people against laxity in adherence to the curbs imposed in the State and said if the situation does not improve, he would be forced to consider a total lockdown.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Mamata's swearing-in tomorrow

First priority will be to tackle the pandemic'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee is likely to be sworn in as the Chief Minister of West Bengal for the third time on May 5. She visited Raj Bhavan on Monday evening and tendered her resignation to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

"Hon'ble CM @MamataOfficial called on me and submitted her resignation as CM. She has been requested to continue till alternative arrangements are made," the Governor tweeted.

Mr. Dhankhar congratulated Ms. Banerjee and "wished her a fruitful third term in office to serve the people with dedication and commitment so that State regains past glory".

The Trinamool Congress chairperson was elected to the office for the first time in



The road ahead: Mamata Banerjee addressing the media at her Kalighat residence in Kolkata on Monday. ■ PTI

2011 ending the 34-year Left Front rule in the State. She was again elected in 2016.

Earlier in the day, newly elected MLAs of the Trinamool unanimously elected party chairperson Mamata Banerjee as the leader of the party in West Bengal Legislative Assembly, senior leader Partha Chatterjee said. The MLAs will be sworn in the Assembly from May 6.

Speaking to journalists,

Ms. Banerjee said her first priority would be to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. She said the decision to take oath of office in the next few days was taken to ensure that the State government could take decisive decisions to contain the pandemic.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

POLLS POSTPONED ▶ PAGE 8

BJP BEGINS CONSULTATIONS ON NEXT ASSAM CM ▶ PAGE 9

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

CPI(M) begins steps to form govt. in Kerala

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday submitted his resignation to Governor Arif Mohammed Khan. A Raj Bhavan communiqué said the Governor had accepted the resignation.

The CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) under Mr. Vijayan swept the April 6 election to the 140-member Assembly, bagging 99 seats. Steps to form the new Ministry will begin with the CPI(M) State Secretariat meeting at the AKG Centre here on Tuesday.

The meeting will decide the number of Ministers of the CPI(M) and of the coalition partners.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Local issues crucial to voters across States: survey

CSDS-Lokniti study analyses verdicts of Assembly polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI



The "local" was of utmost importance in the decision-making of voters in the Assembly elections, according to a special post-poll survey conducted by the Lokniti-CSDS for *The Hindu*.

In all four States, the opposition to the CAA was higher than support for it.

Beginning today and over this week, *The Hindu* will publish a series of articles explaining the verdicts in the four States – West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam – and the Union Territory of Puducherry that went to the polls in March-April 2021.

As to the question whether any particular national issue made an impact at all, the surveyors found that one issue was particularly resonant

and Co-Director, Lokniti; Suhas Palshikar, Co-Director, Lokniti; and Sandeep Shastri, National Coordinator, Lokniti.

These data-based articles will detail the key issues that mattered to the electorate, the specificities in each of the States (and Union Territory) that had a bearing on the results, and what were the variables that determined the survey respondents' choices. The articles will also be carried along with a methodological note on how the survey was conducted, the sample size for each State and the method used to weight responses based on the composition of the voters.

REPORT ▶ PAGE 7

Newly elected DMK MLAs to meet today

Stalin may take charge on May 7; EPS reaches out

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI



Victory banner: DMK cadres putting up a poster of party president M.K. Stalin in Chennai on Monday. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

nisters-designate.

The swearing-in ceremony is likely to be held on May 7. Mr. Stalin has already said the event will be held in a modest way at the Raj Bhavan in view of the second wave of COVID-19.

Talking to reporters after paying his respects at the memorial of his father M. Karunandhan on Sunday night, Mr. Stalin said the DMK government would dedicate itself to fulfilling the promises made in the election manif-

esto. "We will also implement the 10-year vision statement released by me," he said.

AIADMK co-coordinator Edappadi K. Palaniswami who resigned earlier in the day as Chief Minister, extended his wishes to Mr. Stalin. "I extend my wishes to Mr. Stalin, who is set to take over as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu," Mr. Palaniswami wrote in Tamil on Twitter, tagging Mr. Stalin's handle.

Thanking him for the wishes, Mr. Stalin requested Mr. Palaniswami's cooperation. "Your suggestions and cooperation are necessary to make Tamil Nadu great. Democracy is both ruling and Opposition parties. Let's protect such a democracy," he said.

ICMR to get royalty from Covaxin sale

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The intellectual property governing the use of Covaxin, jointly developed by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research, was "shared" and the ICMR would receive royalty payments, the organisation confirmed to *The Hindu*.

The partnership between the two organisations involves 12 activities that include clinical and preclinical studies.

Five of these were funded entirely by Bharat Biotech.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

Cannot stop reports on court observations: SC

Turns down ECI plea for media gag

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Media cannot be stopped from reporting oral remarks made by judges during a court hearing. The honest and full reportage of these comments give the public an insight into whether judges are genuinely applying their minds to resolve their crisis, the Supreme Court told a "hurt" Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday.

The ECI had complained to the Supreme Court about certain oral comments made by a Division Bench of the Madras High Court. The HC judges had accused the

ECI of being solely responsible for the super-spread of COVID and said the ECI should be charged with "murder". Soon after, the ECI had approached the HC to take back its words and restrain the media from reporting the comments as FIRs for murder were registered against the poll body officials. But the HC, on April 30, refused to budge, saying there were more pressing issues at hand.

Justice Chandrachud, flanked by Justice M.R. Shah, described the "media as a powerful watchdog".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

23 COVID-19 patients die in Karnataka hospital

Not due to oxygen shortage, says government

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

As many as 23 COVID-19 patients died at the district hospital in Chamarajanagar near Mysuru in Karnataka between Sunday night and Monday morning, with relatives alleging that the deaths were caused by lack of oxygen. One more death was reported from Kamagere in the same district.

However, soon after the incident, State government and district administration went into damage control mode, refuting the allega-



Relatives of the patients grieving outside the district hospital in Chamarajanagar, Karnataka on Monday. ■ PTI

tions. The State government has ordered an inquiry by KSRTC managing director Shivayogi Kalasad, who is to submit a report within three days.

Minister for Health and

Medical Education K. Sudhakar claimed that there were "discrepancies" in three of the 23 deaths and the inquiry would bring out the truth.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

No GST on imports of vaccine, medical oxygen

Relief only for certified global donors

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

Imports of COVID-19 relief material, including vaccines, medical oxygen and Remdesivir vials, will get a conditional 'ad-hoc' Goods and Services Tax (GST) exemption till June 30, the Finance Ministry said on Monday.

These items are already exempt from customs duty and health cess; now integrated GST (IGST), levied on such imports, will be withdrawn for two months for 'relief' materials being donated from abroad'.

The exemption won't be available for domestic companies or charities importing these items if they are purchasing them, even if for free

distribution in the country, senior officials clarified. The relevant notification specifies that the relaxation is for COVID-19 material 'received free of cost for free distribution anywhere in India for COVID relief'.

State chief secretaries were told to appoint nodal officers so that 'entities desirous of importing COVID relief material for free distribution may approach them for certification'.

Global donors would need to register with individual States where they wish to route relief.

Goods already imported but pending clearance from Customs as of Monday, will also be covered.

Some facilities collecting only 50 samples a day

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Getting a free test for COVID-19 continues to be a challenge in Delhi as the government-run centres are accepting only a limited number of people.

At the testing centre in Nehru Homoeopathic Medical College in Defence Colony, the entry gate was found closed at 1 p.m. on Monday.

"We take only 50 people a day. You will have to come



People in the 18-44 age group stand in a queue to receive the first dose of COVID-19 jab in west Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

around 5-6 a.m. tomorrow and stand in line. If your number does not come, then you will have to return another day," an official at

the government-run testing centre said. Testing is free at all government centres.

Many people who came for testing at 1 p.m. were turned away. "When we come for work at 9 a.m., there is already a serpentine queue. We count and take a set number of people and close the gate again. The situation was not like this always, but it has changed in the past one month," said a hospital security official.

The situation was similar at a government testing centre in Begumpur. It tests only 100 people a day.

Many who came for testing at 2 p.m. were asked to come the next day.

The total number of daily tests being conducted in the city for the past 10-15 days

has been in the range of 70,000-80,000. In early April, over 1 lakh tests were being done daily.

Despite this, Health Minister Satyendar Jain said last week that the government had not reduced testing. "The Delhi government has not reduced its testing strategy. In the face of the lockdown, public movement has substantially dropped and footfall has decreased in dispensaries and hospitals. It is only because of the reduced footfall that tests have slightly decreased but otherwise tests are being conducted in large numbers," he had said.

A STEP TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE

The Defence Acquisition Procedure is aimed at helping the country gain a stronger foothold on its production of arms and reduce dependence on external agencies. In August 2020, India's Defence Minister announced an embargo for 101 items with the aim to boost

TURN TO PAGE 9
TO READ MORE



ANIRUDH AGGARWAL

Defence Production and Indigenisation

May 04, 2021 | 7:00 PM

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Fuel pump owners at Singhu appeal to open road

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Fuel pumps allegedly facing closure at Singhu border due to the ongoing protest of farmers and the barricading of roads on both sides of the highway, have urged the Delhi Lieutenant-Governor and the Delhi police to open one side of the road.

The pump owners have particularly asked that the Delhi-Panipat side be opened as farmers have agreed to give way in the wake of spread of the COVID pandemic.

"Several fuel pumps and other business establishments are closed for sale due to ongoing farmers agitation for more than five months now with no income are facing closure and has become difficult to sustain hundreds of employees," said Rajeev Jain, one of the fuel pump owners at Singhu border and executive member of Delhi Petrol Dealers Association (DPDA).

Other businesses at the border include dhabas, garment showrooms, tyre shops and vehicle spare part shops.

Makeshift hospital at Singhu now extends COVID support

'Protesters taking pandemic situation seriously as opposed to initial days'

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The makeshift hospital at the Singhu border protest site is not only taking care of the protesting farmers but also those struggling for oxygen cylinders and ambulances in Delhi-NCR.

Avtar Singh, who runs Life Care Foundation Hospital, recalled an incident about three days ago. With profound grief, he said that an eight-month pregnant COVID positive woman, with her husband, came seeking help in the hope that the hospital could treat COVID-19 patients. Unable to do so, the hospital could only provide her with an ambulance.

"Her husband said that they were unable to arrange an ambulance to go looking for a hospital as her oxygen level was dropping. We then provided them with our ambulance which is fitted with oxygen cylinder and told them that they could keep it for as much time they required," he said.

Unfortunately, the woman couldn't find a hospital for a long time and when she did, ahead of Karnal, she suc-



Avtar Singh of Life Care Foundation Hospital provides an oxygen cylinder to a COVID-infected patient. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cumbed in two hours, Mr. Singh said.

We receive several SOS calls from the neighbouring Singhu village as well, said Mr. Singh. The hospital has been able to provide oxygen to those in need after thorough verification. "When we receive these calls, we don't take the patient's word for it. We tell the family to show us the patient on video call first and check their oxygen levels after which the cylinder is provided," he said.

On Saturday, Mr. Singh

said that they received a call from a family of a 40-year-old resident of Singhu village that his oxygen levels were dropping and they needed a cylinder urgently. "We verified the information and provided the family with an oxygen cylinder. The person's oxygen levels had dropped to 70," he said. The team at the hospital also checks on the patient regularly and guides them as to when should they look for a hospital.

According to Mr. Singh,

those residing in the village find it tougher to arrange a hospital bed or oxygen because they're live on the city outskirts.

The protest, he claimed was continuing and many protesters are now taking the COVID-19 situation seriously as opposed to what how they believed initially when the protest started in November. "Locals like labourers, workers and street vendors are asked to wear a mask strictly because they don't lodge here," he said.

HC seeks update from Centre, Delhi on enlisting Army's help

Hospitals warned over reports of oxygen tankers being detained

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Centre and the Delhi government on the status of seeking help from the Armed forces to set up oxygenated and ICU beds to treat COVID-19 patients saying what the Capital was a "national calamity".

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli said that a "good case" was made out for seeking assistance of the Army due to the immense load on the existing manpower and infrastructure in the Capital.

The court asked Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma to get an update on a letter written by the Delhi government to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh seeking help from the armed forces to set up, operationalise and run 10,000 beds facility and arrangement of oxygen and medical essentials.

Mr. Sharma said the matter was now being looked into by the Defence Minister himself.

Pending with Customs
During the hearing, the HC also enquired from the Centre on the number of ox-



gen concentrators that are stuck at the customs. The High Court made the query after it was informed that Max Hospital has 3,000 concentrators lying in customs.

"People should not lose lives for this that there are resources but they are pending clearance. It should be released so that it can be used," the court remarked.

The government has said that no such consignment is pending with Customs. Referring to a picture shared on social media about 3,000 oxygen concentrators stuck with the Customs, the Ministry has sought information from anybody in the know about where these concentrators are lying so that immediate action may be taken.

The HC also gave a stern

warning to hospitals over reports of oxygen tankers being detained by a private hospital here and forcing the driver to deliver more than the allocated quantity.

'Conduct not acceptable'

"This will not do. This will break the discipline. If everyone was to do this, the tankers will not reach you," the High Court said taking strong exception to Batra Hospital seizing a oxygen tanker on Saturday.

Goyal Gas, which distributes oxygen to hospitals, had complained that its tanker which went to Batra Hospital was detained and driver was forced to deliver more than the allocated quantity. While 2.5 metric tonne was required to delivered, but the tanker was forced to deliver 4.2 metric tonne.

The High Court made it clear that it will not tolerate this sort of conduct from anyone in future.

The Centre also assured the High Court that it will honour the directions of the Supreme Court to ensure the oxygen supply deficit to the Capital is rectified before the midnight.

Plea seeks to regulate cost of HRCT tests for COVID-19

High Court Bench seeks Delhi government's response

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday issued notice to the government on a petition seeking direction to cap the price of High Resolution Computerised Tomography (HRCT) which is used for detecting the presence and severity of COVID-19 infection in the lungs of patients.

Lawyer's plea

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh sought response from the Delhi government on the plea by Shivleen Pasricha, a lawyer, who has

claimed that for detection of COVID-19 amongst suspected/probable patients, the most widely recommended test is RT-PCR.

'Need of the hour'

"At present, the price for getting HRCT done in Delhi is somewhere between ₹5,000 to ₹6,500. As such, regulation of price of the same has become need of the hour... That in light of the present gruesome circumstances in Delhi, regulating the price of HRCT, becomes all imperative and necessary," the petition said.

The plea stated the cost of HRCT in the Capital is "unregulated and very high" beyond what a common man can afford.

It has further claimed that HRCT has, in the current state of circumstances, become one of the most relevant and vital tests, recommended actively by the doctors for the diagnosis, management and treatment of infection in suspected or probable COVID-19 patients.

"Of late, it has been seen that multiple variants of COVID-19 are not detectable through RT-PCR," it said.

Centre, Delhi recriminations no solace to citizens, observes SC

Top court directs Centre to create buffer stock of oxygen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The recriminations between the Centre and Delhi government give no solace to citizens whose lives depend on a "thin thread" of oxygen being made available, the Supreme Court said.

The top court directed the Centre to create buffer stock of oxygen for emergency in collaboration with States and decentralise the location of the stocks so that it is immediately available if the normal supply chain is disrupted.

It asked the Centre to create the emergency stocks of medical grade oxygen

within four days.

A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, L. Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat said the deficit oxygen supply to Delhi must be remedied "forthwith" as "the situation on the ground in Delhi is heart rending".

"Recremations between the Central government [which contends that Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi has not lifted its allocated quantity] and GNCTD [which contends that despite its projected demand the quantity allocated has not been enhanced] can furnish no solace to citizens

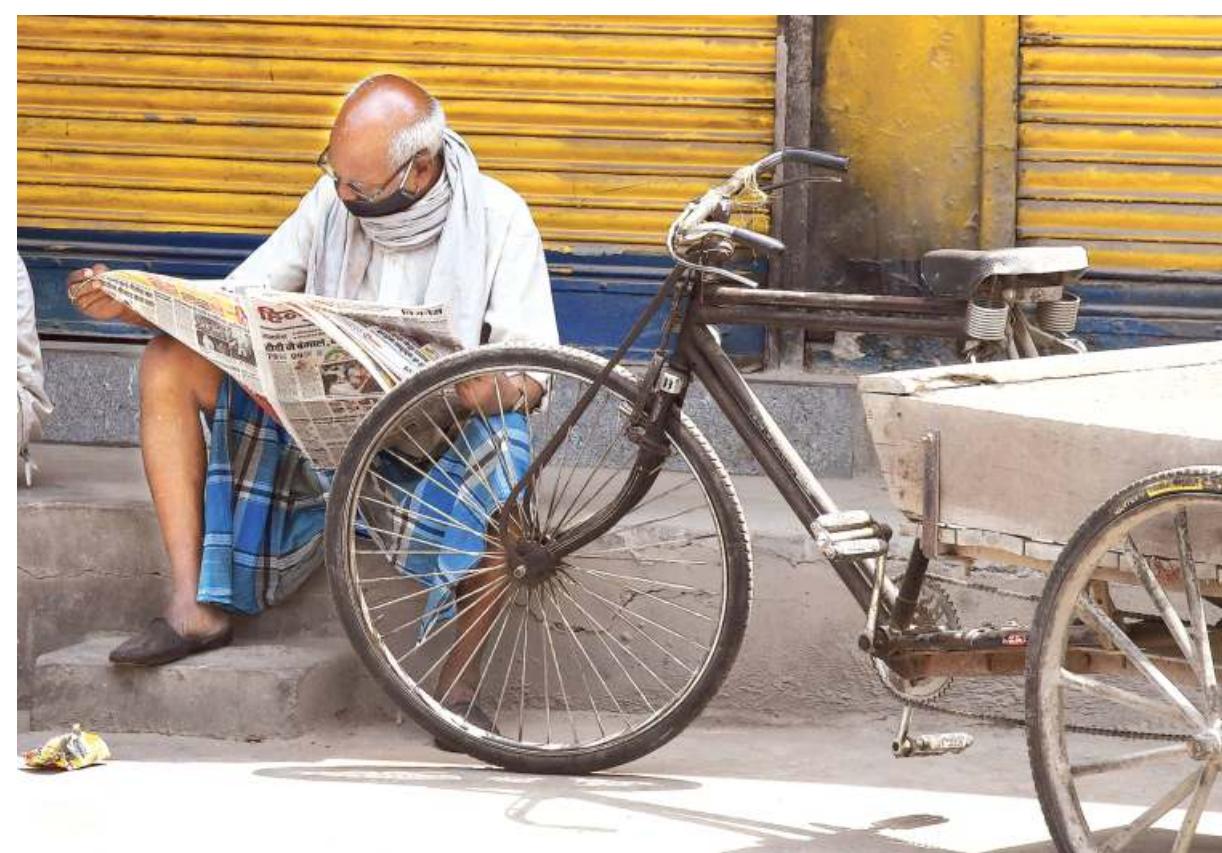
whose lives depend on a thin thread of oxygen being available," the top court said in a 64-page order uploaded on its website on late Sunday night.

In the battle of shifting responsibility of supplying/off taking of oxygen, lives of citizens cannot be put in jeopardy and "the protection of the lives of citizens is paramount in times of a national crisis and the responsibility falls on both the Central Government and the GNCTD to cooperate with each other to ensure that all possible measures are taken to resolve the situation", it said.

decoy customer to purchase the machine. He found Anuj and Shekhar inside a car at Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar and Anuj agreed to sell one oxygen concentrator for ₹10,000 and accepted ₹5,000 as token money. Both the accused were then arrested. Later, Keshav was also held.

During further probe, it was found that the accused were operating from a godown in Janakpuri which was found locked when the police went. When the godown was searched, Anuj's brother Anil was found inside the locked premises with oxygen concentrators. He was then arrested.

Taking stock



A daily wage labourer reads a newspaper in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Airport sets up warehouse for COVID relief items

Flights from across countries brought in 5.5K oxygen concentrators, among other things

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi airport on Monday said it has set up a 3,500 sq metre-dedicated warehouse for interim storage and distribution of COVID-19 relief materials being flown into the Capital from across the world.

The airport said over the past five days, it has handled

around 25 COVID relief flights totalling around 300 tonnes cargo, originating from the U.S., the UK, the UAE, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Germany, Qatar, Hong Kong and China.

The warehouse called "Jeevoday" stores the materials received after Customs clearance, where they are sorted and further distributed

to other parts of the country, the airport informed.

It added that the flights brought in over 5,500 oxygen concentrators, approx. 3,200 oxygen cylinders, over 9,28,000 masks and 1,36,000 Remdesivir injections among other material.

"The Delhi airport has al-

so ensured that priority in landing is given to flights carrying COVID relief aid, and such aircrafts get parking at cargo bays near the cargo terminals, just like the aircraft bringing vaccine consignments are handled on priority, to make sure that consignments are processed and cleared in least possible time after landing," the airport said.

3 more held over fake Remdesivir injection

Accused sold around 5,000 injections

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police arrested three more persons for allegedly manufacturing large quantities of fake Remdesivir injections, an officer said on Monday.

The police said that the arrested have been identified as Ravindra Tyagi, Shrawan Kumar and Rina Kumari.

Tyagi was arrested from Kanpur while Rina and Shrawan were arrested from Delhi. The gang has sold around 5,000 injections in Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, said the police.

"Ravindra had bought around 600 Remdesivir injections from the main accused Aditya Gautam who was arrested during the raid. Rina sold fake injections in Delhi while Shrawan, a graphic designer, helped the gang in manufacturing of

identical wrapper and boxes of original Remdesivir injections.

The Delhi police arrested three more persons for allegedly manufacturing large quantities of fake Remdesivir injections, an officer said on Monday.

The arrested persons were used to deal in medical and surgical equipment and were known to each other. They got in touch with Aditya and in order to earn quick money they also involved in sale of fake Remdesivir.

The members took a medical manufacturing unit on lease in Kotdwara district of Uttarakhand.

"The gang procured large quantity of antibiotic injections from the market that is used in treatment of typhoid and the bottle of injection resembles the shape and size of Remdesivir injections. They used to replace stickers on injection bottles," the officer said.

80 injections, medical equipment seized

Police hand them over to hospitals

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police have released over 80 Remdesivir injections and other essential articles of medical use which were seized by the force on different occasions, they said in a statement on Monday.

These injections were handed over to different hospitals and COVID care centres in the national capital, it said.

According to the statement, so far, 86 Remdesivir injections, used for critical care in high lung infection, have been given away to hospitals that include Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, BSA Hospital, Deepchand Bandhu Hospital, Park Hospital, Kailash Hospital, CDMO, Terapanth Chhatarpur, Rohini Covid Care Centre and DDMA North.

Over 90 Favipiravir tablets have been given to

Deepchand Bandhu Hospital by order of DC North. Over 100 Remdesivir injections are under process of release, awaiting orders from authorities concerned, it said.

Seventy oxygen cylinders have also been released to institutions that include the official in charge of DDMA West district, CDMO Terapanth Ansari Hospital, World Brain Centre Hospital, Aarya Hospital, Bhagat Chandra Hospital in south west district, the statement said, adding that 140 oxygen cylinders freshly seized are in the process of release.

A total of 170 oxygen concentrators were seized by north district police. Of them, 60 were given to AIIMS and 40 to CAPF Hospital. The rest were given to three COVID care centres. Over 100 concentrators seized by Outer North district and others are in the process of handover.

Police crack down on COVID-19 cybercriminals

Eight FIRs have been registered in CyPAD and different police stations

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday ordered crackdown on cybercriminals after they received complaints on COVID helpline.

Taking cognisance of such cheating and fraud cases, eight FIRs were registered in CyPAD and different police stations.

The police said that in

view of the recent malpractices like COVID patients being overcharged by ambulances, harassment faced at cremation grounds, black-marketing of life-saving drugs, oxygen and medical articles, and cheating and fraud in the name of supplying drugs or oxygen etc., Delhi Police urged the general public to call the COVID helpline number 011-23469900

to report such incidents.

Also there are inputs on social media regarding frauds being committed in the name of supplying oxygen and medicines which are now in scarce supply and there is a huge need-induced demand for it, making it easy for online fraudsters to target desperate public to fleece them of their money.

Commissioner of Delhi

Police, S.N. Shrivastava directed all units of Delhi Police to immediately put in place a comprehensive strategy.

Helpline number
The general public is requested to lodge their complaints in this regard on www.cybercrime.gov.in and to make maximum use of helpline 155260.

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, MAY. 04
RISE 05:39 SET 18:59
RISE 01:34 SET 12:21
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 05
RISE 05:38 SET 18:59
RISE 02:14 SET 13:21
THURSDAY, MAY. 06
RISE 05:37 SET 19:00
RISE 02:49 SET 14:17

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	40 24
Safdarjung	40 24
Palam	41 25

Delhi Palam Today
39°C A hot day with partly cloudy sky. Chances of light thunderstorm and dust storm with rain at some places.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C Drop in day temperatures. Light dust storm and thunderstorm may occur at few places.

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IN BRIEF

Nurses held for selling drug in black market

NEW DELHI

The police arrested two nurses of Maharaja Agrasen Hospital for alleged black-marketeering of Remdesivir injections, said an officer on Monday. The police said they received a tip-off. The accused took injections of dead patients in the hospital and sold them for ₹30,000-40,000.

Delhi sees highest daily deaths due to COVID-19

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 448 COVID-19 related deaths in 24 hours – the highest since the beginning of the pandemic – taking the total number of deaths to 17,414, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday.

Also, 18,043 new cases were reported, taking the total cases to 12,12,989. A total of 61,045 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said. Of the total cases, 11,05,983 people have recovered and there are 89,592 active cases.

Out of the total 21,396 beds for COVID treatment, only 6.3% of beds were vacant at 11 pm. Also, only 23 ICU beds were vacant.

Positivity rate

The test positivity rate fell to 29.56%. This means more than 29 out of 100 people taking the test are now COVID-19 positive.

CM holds meeting to strengthen home isolation system

Patient should get call from doctors within 24 hours of positive test, he tells officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday held a review meeting to further strengthen the home isolation system for COVID patients. Apart from Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, senior government officials were also present at the meeting.

The government said the Chief Minister was given detailed information about the facilities being provided to people undergoing treatment.

Govt. opens 301 vaccination sites in 76 schools for 18-44 age group

Capacity of over 45,000 inoculations per day, 3,000 sites to be added soon: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government opened 301 vaccination sites in 76 schools for vaccinating people between 18 and 44 years of age on Monday, said Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

These centres have a total capacity of more than 45,000 vaccinations per day. More than 33 lakh doses have been administered since the beginning of the vaccination in Delhi till now and more than 7 lakh beneficiaries have taken both the doses, the government said.

"Delhi government has received 4.5 lakh vaccination doses until now, on the basis of which 301 vaccination centres have been made in 76 schools across Delhi, vaccinating 45,100 citizens. We want to ensure that all citizens between the ages of 18-45 are vaccinated. We are committed to scale vaccination centres in Delhi in a way that each school has 10 sites," Mr. Sisodia said.

The Minister said in the next few days, 3,000 vaccination



A girl gets vaccinated at a government school in Patparganj on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

centres will start operating in 300 schools across the city. He added that there is a 100% turnout and hopes that it will continue.

‘250 per centre’

"A total of 250 people have been called per centre for today's vaccination drive, with 100% turnout. I am confident this turnout will prevail because I believe our youth is looking forward to getting the COVID-19 vaccine. I met several people who informed me

that while they faced no hindrance in getting vaccinated at the centres, there were challenges with regard to booking appointments. This is so because we only have 4.5 lakh vaccines at the moment with limited centres, but we will resolve these challenges as we continue to expand our centres," he said. The Minister added that vaccination of all people will certainly help to reduce this spike and defeat the virus.

At 3 p.m., officials at a vac-

cination site in Pandara Road said there was a good response today but some came without booking a slot and had to be turned away.

Some people complained that many centres are still inoculating only people above 45 years of age and it was difficult to book a slot. Balkishan, 31, an advocate said, "I have been checking centres in south Delhi and I can't find a slot for people above 18 in my area. I will check tonight again."

Sisodia asks Centre to waive GST on oxygen concentrators for 6 months

These life support machines need to be made more affordable'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday wrote to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, requesting that GST be waived on oxygen concentrators for six months.

These had emerged as "essential life support machines" given the surging COVID cases in the Capital and citizens would benefit if the GST component of their price could be waived, said Mr. Sisodia, who also holds the finance portfolio.

"There is no availability of oxygen concentrators in the market...During this unprecedented health crisis, oxygen concentrators have become essential life support machines. It

would be appropriate if the Centre and the GST Council consider exempting GST on oxygen concentrators for a period of six months to make them more affordable for our citizens," he wrote.

"As you are aware, Delhi is in the midst of unprecedented COVID surge, and the government was working on a



Oxygen cylinders at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Delhi on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

"war footing" at creating 15,000 oxygenated non-ICU beds, 1,200 ICU beds over next 10 days even as more than 50,000 COVID patients were in home isolation.

He expressed gratitude to Ms. Sitharaman for the Centre's decision for allowing the import of oxygen concentrators for personal use through e-commerce portals till July 32 this year and the reduction of IGST on these from 28% to 12%.

Number of beds

Delhi has 16,272 non-ICU oxygen beds and 4,866 oxygen beds and the government

is in the midst of unpreceded COVID surge, and the government was working on a

Gurugram gets 20 inoculation sites

'Shots cannot be given without prior online appointment'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Twenty centres have been set up by Gurugram district administration for COVID vaccination of 18-45 age group.

Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg said the vaccination would not be given without prior online appointment.

‘500 vaccinated in Max’
Max Hospital, Gurugram also launched the vaccination drive for the age group of 18-45 years.

The drive was inaugurated by Dr. Garg and Chief Medical Officer, Gurugram, Virender Yadav. Arpita Mukherjee, vice-president, Operations, and Head, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Gurugram, said: "The hospital had already administered the jab to 500 people from across Gurugram and nearby areas by 6 p.m."

The local administration has set up centres at Primary Healthcare Centres, Community Healthcare



People queue up at Max Hospital in Gurugram to get vaccinated on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Centres and Urban Primary Healthcare Centres at Pataudi, Farrukh Nagar, Sohan, Daulatabad, Bhondsi, Bhangrola, Nathupur, among others, and Civil Hospital in Sector 10 to vaccinate the 18-45 age group.

The vaccination drive for the 18-45 age group was kicked-off on Sunday in Haryana across 200 centres. Covishield vaccine is being administered

at these centres.

Fortis Memorial Research Institute too had launched the drive on Sunday and vaccinated around 100 beneficiaries.

Sameer Kulkarni, Regional Director, Paras Hospitals Gurugram, said they were looking forward to contributing to this national cause, but had not received the supply from the Serum Institute of India or the government so far.

The vaccination drive for the 18-45 age group was kicked-off on Sunday in Haryana across 200 centres. Covishield vaccine is being administered

City gasps for breath as oxygen battle rages on

AAP legislator appeals to Central government to give Capital its allocated share

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The struggle to ensure that hospitals have enough oxygen to treat COVID-19 patients continued on Monday with several facilities reaching out to the Delhi government to provide emergency supplies.

Smaller hospitals like Dharamveer Solanki Hospital, HAHC Hospital, Irine Hospital, IBS Hospital sent SOS calls on social media with the government rushing either D-type oxygen cylinders from their reserves or ensuring tankers reach as soon as possible.

‘Reserves depleting’
Aam Aadmi Party MLA Raghu Chadha said the government's oxygen reserves were quickly depleting.

"We shall spare no effort to address each and every SOS. But we at the Delhi government are raising an SOS too. Please give us our allocated share of oxygen," Mr. Chadha said.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that on



Grieving relatives of a COVID patient, who died at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Delhi, on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Sunday, the Capital received 440 metric tonnes (MT) of oxygen, which was lesser than the allocated quota of 590 MT and much lesser than Delhi's requirement of 976 MT.

The Centre on Saturday

had raised the city's daily quota to 590 MT from 490 MT, amid an acute shortage of oxygen, which is needed to treat critical COVID-19 patients.

He added that only if the oxygen is supplied to the Capital can the number of beds be increased.

BJP urges L-G to ramp up COVID testing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday urged Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal to increase COVID testing and number of vaccination centres for those aged between 18-44 years. It also asked the L-G to give permission to civic bodies to increase the number of hospital beds and set up new vaccination centres. Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta termed "surprising" that the Delhi government had, so far, set up just 77 vaccination centres for the youth across the 11 districts.



DCP (Women Safety) Vrinda Shukla.

Buddha Nagar and 250 people have lost their lives since the beginning of the pandemic last year.

"I thought of taking up the programme on my own when I read a press statement being issued by the Noida police regarding a case where we received an emergency call from a crematorium related to the last rites of a COVID-infected couple that had left a child behind," she said.

"The child was too young to go about the funeral. So, a police team was sent to help. I realised there must be so many children who need assistance," she added.

Last week, Ms. Shukla took to social media and requested volunteers to step forward to help provide aid

to such families. Following this appeal, she now has a team of 35 such volunteers. They, however, do not have a personal interface with the children they seek to help and any assistance which reaches them is through the police in the presence of officials from the district childline. In her capacity as DCP (Women Safety), Ms. Shukla has ensured that all calls made to the emergency number 112 in the district about such children be relayed to her department so that they can be helped. "In one instance, someone stepped forward to bear the cost of the education of two children who lost their parents to COVID and, possibly, if the requisite formalities are completed as per law, to adopt them. The objective is to assist as many children as possible," she added.

She said in case there are children from such families who need assistance, a call can be made to the emergency number 112. Information about such children can also be shared on the district childline – 9870395200.

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Positive patients overcharged for medical services'

Delhi govt. failed to crack down on those profiteering during pandemic: Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Monday alleged that the people battling COVID-19 were being asked to pay exorbitant rates for services like ambulances, oxygen and hospital beds and the government was failing to crackdown on those profiteering during the pandemic.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar alleged that when people were dying in thousands for lack of timely

The black marketing of COVID medicines, oxygen cylinders, beds, exorbitant rates charged by labs for RT-PCR tests being done...

medical attention, private hospitals were either denying admission to serious patients or charging exorbitant rates for a hospital bed. He

added that ambulance service providers were also charging mind-boggling amounts for transporting patients, that to after taking advance payments.

"The black marketing of COVID medicines, oxygen cylinders, beds, exorbitant rates charged by labs for RT-PCR tests were being done and people are cashing in on the misery of the people," Mr. Kumar said.

He added that those who have died due to the virus

are not getting proper final rites as at many cremation grounds, dead bodies are stacked on a single platform to give a mass cremation due to the unprecedented rush of the dead bodies and shortage space for individual cremation.

Take urgent steps'
He called for urgent steps to be taken to ensure that such profiteering during the pandemic is stopped at the earliest.

10 children get help'
As many as 10 children – two siblings each from five affected families – have been aided in one way or another by Ms. Shukla. According to district records, there are currently 7,982 active COVID cases in Gautam

Amarinder warns of complete lockdown if rules not followed

Punjab CM appeals to Centre for more tankers to transport oxygen to the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday warned people against laxity in adherence to the curbs imposed in the State, and said if the situation did not improve, he would be forced to consider a total lockdown.

The Chief Minister said he had so far refrained from ordering a sweeping lockdown in the State because it will hurt the poor the most and would lead to exodus of migrant labourers, plunging industries into chaos again. However, if the people do not stringently comply with the restrictions in place, harsher steps might have to be taken, he added.

Captain Amarinder also appealed to the Centre for more oxygen tankers to be made available to the State,



Policemen patrolling the streets of Amritsar on Monday. ■ PTI

which did not have enough tankers to transport the critical commodity for saving lives of seriously ill COVID-19 patients.

At a COVID-19 review meeting, he said the State urgently needs more tankers, as it currently has only 15 at its disposal, with two more likely to join the fleet by Tuesday. These, he said, were not enough to handle

support has gone up from 4,000 to around 9,000, and though the State government's steps to monitor and streamline supplies through its controls rooms has helped in keeping things stable, the situation remains fluid and a matter of concern, he added.

Increase in demand

The current consumption of oxygen in the State is more than 225 MT daily, while the average increase in demand every day is around 15-20%.

Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan told the meeting that in addition to the shortage of tankers available with transporters in the State, the fact that a tanker takes around 4-5 days to bring the 90 MT allocated quota from Bokaro plant has made things worse.

Rajasthan scrambles to get tankers to transport oxygen

State govt. plans to hire them on rent

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

With only 1% of the cryogenic tankers in the country at its disposal, Rajasthan is trying hard to get the tankers for transporting liquid medical oxygen from the plants situated at places such as Burnpur, Kalinga Nagar and Jammagar. The State government has initiated action to get the tankers on rent.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said here on Monday that the oxygen consumption in the State was increasing rapidly because of the rising virus infection. Since the Centre was allocating oxygen under the national plan, the quota for Rajasthan should be increased in view of the rising demand, he said.

Among the 2,416 cryogenic tankers available in the country, Rajasthan has

only 25 at its disposal. While 23 of them are being actively used, the State needs at least 54 more tankers for bringing liquid oxygen from far-off places.

No plan for tankers

Though the Centre has formulated a national plan for allocation of oxygen to each State, there is no scheme operative for allotment of tankers for transport of the live-saving gas. During the second wave of pandemic, the Rajasthan government has got four nitrogen transporting tanks converted for oxygen transport through the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation.

The State Transport Department has invited applications for getting tankers on rent from different organisations.

U.P. launches probe into death of 5 from 'oxygen supply disruption'

Situation tight, trying to meet requirements: Meerut CMO

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

The Meerut administration has launched a probe into the death of five patients in a private hospital after the kin alleged that the deaths occurred due to disruption of oxygen supply.

The relatives created ruckus in the hospital premises following which police had to appear on the scene.

Ujjwal Gupta said a nurse in the hospital had informed the family that their patient's oxygen support system had run out of gas and that he was facing difficulty in breathing.

"There was nobody to check if the oxygen was over or to refill it," he told reporters, adding that there was no staff or doctor to explain to them how the patient died or how to take his body for final rites.

C Artificial scarcity was being created as people were carrying cylinders in their cars or storing them in homes

AKHILESH MOHAN
Chief Medical Officer Meerut

Chief Medical Officer Meerut Akhilesh Mohan said it is a matter of probe if the deaths took place due to lack of oxygen or other reasons. All the five patients who died on Sunday were co-morbid and seriously unwell, he said.

Mr. Mohan said some of the relatives had alleged that the oxygen supply at the Nutema Hospital had been disrupted for a while.

The CMO acknowledged that in the present situation, the "supply of oxygen is tight," and the ad-

ministration and the government were trying to meet the requirements of all hospitals by providing "some amount" (thoda thoda) to all places.

The requirement had increased a lot and the local infrastructure was not ready for it, he told reporters, adding that they were trying to augment the infrastructure, he said.

Mr. Mohan also said an "artificial scarcity" was being created as people were carrying cylinders in their cars or storing them in homes. "The oxygen that should be in hospitals is inside people's homes."

The fresh allegations surface even after the Yogi Adityanath-led government had claimed there was no scarcity of oxygen in any hospital in U.P.

Punjab faces severe vaccine shortage

Inoculation of 18 plus yet to begin, process for those above 45 years takes a hit

VIKAS VASUDEVA

MOHALI

While the latest phase of COVID-19 vaccination drive for people above 18 years is yet to kick-start in Punjab, the vaccine shortage has now started to hit even the ongoing vaccination for people above the age of 45.

"I will leave for my home now because waiting here in the crowd means exposing oneself to the virus," she said.

No second dose

Brij Mohan, 59, a retired lecturer said he had come for second dose of the vaccine, but the vaccination could not be done as there was no vaccine available. "I got my first dose of Covishield vaccine on March 3, and today I came for the second dose. I have been told that there's no vaccine available and also there's no clarity on when the vaccine will be available," he said.

Another person, who did not wish to disclose his name, demanded a mechanism to be evolved about disseminating information about stock availability and confirmed date for vaccination. "If there's no stock, the government should publicise

it so that we come to know and can be saved from the unnecessary hassle," said the person.

With the State is getting an allocation of only 3.3 lakh vaccines for the 18-plus category from the Serum Institute of India (SII) for the month of May, Punjab government has ordered 70% of the doses to be reserved for individuals with co-morbidities, and the remaining 30% to high-risk category of employees and workers in this age group.

Within these groups, district-wise allocation has also been prioritised based on population index, mortality and density. Given the severe supply constraints, the government has decided to limit the vaccination for 18-44 age group in this phase to major urban centres.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh chaired a high-level virtual review meeting and expressed concern over the fact that even for the 45-plus age group, the

State was in short supply, as a result of which only a few vaccine centres were currently functioning.

Punjab expects 2 lakh doses to arrive on May 4 for vaccination of 45-plus category. Of the 33,46,500 Covishield doses received so far, a total of 32,91,450 have already been utilised.

Limited supply
Punjab has placed an immediate order of 30 lakh doses with Serum Institute of India for 18-44 category but has been informed that the allocation will be 3.3 lakh doses only for the 18-44 age group for the month of May 2021.

In Union Territory, Chandigarh, the vaccination for 18-plus is yet to start, however, the ongoing vaccination of 45-plus population is under way.

"We would be able to start 18-plus vaccination as soon as we get the vaccines," Arun Gupta, Principal Secretary (Health) told, *The Hindu*.

BJP and allies have no Muslim face this time

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI

The treasury bench of the 126-member Assam Assembly will for the first time in at least 50 years have no Muslim representative.

Factors behind defeat
Religious polarisation of votes and consolidation of Muslim votes in favour of the Congress-AIUDF are said to have been factors behind Mr. Laskar's defeat.

The troika of the BJP, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) had the lone Muslim face in Aminul Haque Laskar among their 86 elected representatives in 2016. The BJP dumped the BPF and befriended the United People's Party Liberal for mandate 2021.

Mr. Laskar, who went on to become the Deputy Speaker in the 126-member Assembly, lost the Sonai seat in the Bengali-dominated Barak Valley to Karim Uddin Barbhuiya of the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) by a margin of 19,654 votes.

Of the 31 Muslim victors of the Mahajot, 16 were fielded by the Congress and 15 by the AIUDF. The two parties won 29 and 16 seats, both improving upon their 2016 performance by three seats each.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Mrs Modhavarapu Mangadevi Prakashrao
Age 95 years
Passed away peacefully on the 28th of April 2021.
Dearlly missed by her sons Buchi Prakash & Ashok Prakash, grand children and families.
Luz House / 176 Luz church road, Mylapore, Madras - 600004.

DEATH



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NOTICE

To:
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Corporate Office at No. 54, Floor-2,
"THE PLANET", White Field Main Road,
White Field,Bangalore - 560066.

SITE OFFICE AT: M/s RAFFLES PARK

Survey No. 250, 251, 252, Opp to Soukya

Hospital, Soukya Road, Hoskote Taluk,

Anugondanahalli Hobli, Somethanahalli

Village, Bangalore - 560067.

M/s SAI GLAZING CORPORATION, Plot

No. 642, Pace City-II, Urban Estate,

Sector-37, Gurgaon - 122001.

Sir,

Our clients Mr Ramu, has issued notices

to you to pay storage charges, and lift

aluminium channels & hardware

materials dumped by you at his factory

premises at M/s Trident Architectural

Aluminium Products Pvt Ltd, having its

work address at # 7/1, Vajrashali

Thalaghapatnam Post, Kanakapura Main

Road, Bangalore - 560109. Your inaction

has caused them severe hardship to their

day to day working, and are continued to

suffer huge losses. As on 24.05.2019 our

clients have demanded ₹ 60,00,000/- along

with applicable GST towards storage

charges, calculated as on

21.05.2019, and further charges at

₹ 60,000/- per month along with interest

at 24% of per annum, till the date of

payment and removal of the materials

dumped at his factory premises. Incpite

of their specific demand and requests

you have not taken any action to pay the

amount and to remove the materials from

their factory premises. Through notice

dtt.20.04.2021 they have given you time

to remove the materials within 30 days,

failure in which our client have informed

to sell the materials to the highest offer by

calling offers from two scrap dealers. This

notice is being issued as prudencie to take

all possible steps to showcase you to

take the materials after paying the

amount as claimed in the notice. You will

be liable for the cost, the consequences and

risk.

BALARAM LAW FIRM

No. 30 & 31, HHS Complex, Cubbonpet

Main Road, Silk Exchange Building,

Bengaluru - 560 002.

Mobile: 9880171511, Phone: 42171511

SEARCH FOR MISSING

NARAYAN

General Public is hereby informed that one boy namely: Narayan, S/o: Nand Kishore, R/o: H.No. D-1/79, JJ Colony, Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi, Age: 17 Years, Height: 5'3". Complexion: Shallow, Built: Thin, Face: Round, Wearing: Yellow T-Shirt, Pant and Shoes in Feet has been missing since 12.04.2021 from the area of P.S. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 171/21, Dated 13.04.2021 has been lodged at PS. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing boy but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing boy please inform the undersigned.

Web-site : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-Mail ID: cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011

IN BRIEF

**KC(B) supremo R. Balakrishna Pillai dead**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Veteran politician R. Balakrishna Pillai, 87, died at a private hospital at Kottarakara in Kollam on Monday. Doctors gave age-related ailments, mainly respiratory illness, as the cause of death. Mr. Pillai was ailing since Friday. The funeral will be held with State honours at his ancestral home in Kottarakara in the evening. Mr. Pillai was chairperson of the Kerala Congress (B).

ISRO case: CBI files case against police officers

Case registered to probe the role of officials in the 1994 espionage case

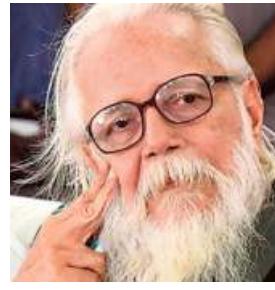
DEVESH K PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case to probe the alleged role of senior Kerala police officials whose names have come up in the Justice D.K. Jain Committee report for allegedly framing space scientist Nambi Narayanan in the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) espionage case of 1994.

It is learnt that the police officials mentioned in the report have also been named in the FIR as accused per-

sons. However, the agency has not revealed their identities. "As directed by the Supreme Court, the particulars are not being divulged," said an official.

Earlier, the Kerala police had registered the first case linked to the espionage allegation on October 20, 1994, against a Maldivian national under the Foreigners Act. They registered the second case under the Official Secrets Act on November 13, 1994, against two Maldivians and others. Both the cases were later handed over to a



Nambi Narayanan

Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the State police.

Besides the two foreign nationals, the SIT arrested four more persons, including two scientists then working with the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre of the ISRO. The probe was then

transferred to the CBI on December 4, 1994. The CBI, in its closure report, submitted that the espionage charge against the scientists at ISRO, including Mr. Narayanan, was not proved and was found to be false. The court accepted the findings.

In a report, the CBI alleged that Siby Mathew, who headed the SIT, did not take adequate steps related to thorough interrogation of the accused persons and the verification of the "so-called disclosure" made by them.

The CBI later submitted in the court that despite having highlighted the lapses, the State government failed to take any action against the

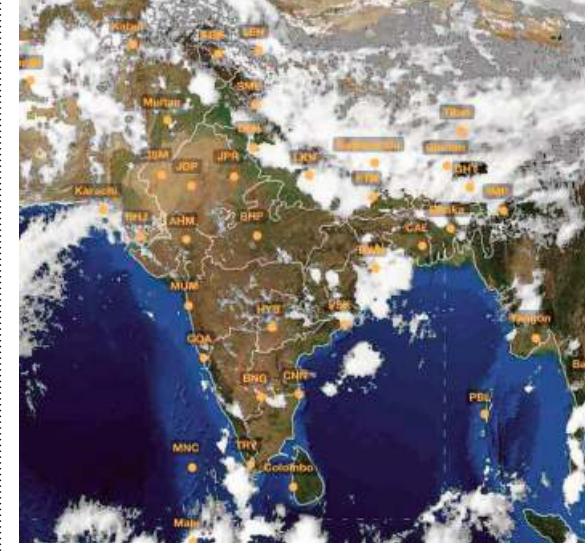
erring officials.

Mr. Narayanan approached the Supreme Court seeking action against such officials. The court, on September 14, 2018, awarded a compensation of ₹50 lakh to him on various counts and also ordered the constitution of a committee for getting the actual scenario and to find out ways for taking appropriate steps against the officials concerned.

Based on the committee's report, the Supreme Court on April 15 directed the CBI to proceed in the matter in accordance with law. The agency has to submit its findings within three months.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA (IMD), POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17:00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Sikkim, West Bengal and Odisha. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, coastal Andhra Pradesh, central Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Lakshadweep

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.5...	36.3...	23.4	Kozhikode	—	35.5...	26.2
Ahmedabad	—	41.0...	28.0	Kurnool	—	38.8...	26.4
Aizawl	—	27.0...	14.2	Lucknow	1.2...	33.3...	24.1
Altanabad	2...	34.2...	25.0	Madurai	1.4...	35.0...	26.6
Bengaluru	—	32.7...	22.7	Mangaluru	—	36.1...	24.2
Bhopal	2...	35.3...	21.4	Mumbai	—	36.1...	26.5
Bhubaneswar	—	39.1...	23.4	Mysuru	—	—	21.6
Chandigarh	—	38.2...	25.7	New Delhi	—	39.8...	24.3
Chennai	—	35.2...	27.2	Patna	—	37.4...	23.2
Coimbatore	—	36.8...	25.6	Port Blair	0.4...	32.7...	26.8
Dehradun	—	33.8...	20.0	Puducherry	—	35.1...	26.1
Gangtok	0.7...	21.0...	14.1	Pune	27...	36.1...	19.7
Goa	10.8...	34.6...	24.7	Raipur	—	38.0...	25.5
Guwahati	11.4...	31.0...	21.4	Ranchi	—	—	20.7
Hubballi	—	34.0...	25.0	Shillong	10.3...	22.0...	12.9
Hyderabad	—	36.7...	25.6	Shimla	26.9...	23.0...	9.9
Imphal	2.9...	27.1...	17.1	Srinagar	—	28.4...	11.6
Jaipur	—	36.8...	26.2	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.3...	26.5
Kochi	—	32.8...	26.2	Tiruchi	—	36.2...	27.0
Kohima	—	25.9...	15.0	Vijayawada	—	37.0...	25.4
Kolkata	3.6...	36.2...	23.9	Visakhapatnam	—	33.8...	27.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	32	43	25	...85	...77	■■■	
Bengaluru	—	5	7	84	25	...43	
Chennai	51	4	35	...20	...24	■■■	
Delhi	17	26	18	244	328	■■■	
Hyderabad	3	72	20	...50	...59	■■■	
Kolkata	20	27	20	...50	...59	■■■	
Lucknow	10	61	101	205	148	■■■	
Mumbai	5	6	48	190	103	■■■	
Pune	6	29	59	73	76	■■■	
Visakhapatnam	16	33	19	29	52	■■■	

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

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

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

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Karnataka records 239 deaths

State adds 44,438 cases; 71 die in Andhra Pradesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka on Monday faced a sharp rise in its active COVID-19 case burden with the addition of 44,438 new cases. Of these, 22,112 were in Bengaluru Urban district. The State now has 4,05,068 active patients. With 239 more deaths, the toll rose to



One test at a time: A health worker collecting samples to test for COVID-19 in Vijayawada on Monday. ■ GIRI K.V.S.

nister Pinarayi Vijayan said disease transmission continued to be very high. The average TPR registered 27.01% on Monday and active cases grew to 3,45,887.

The State had 1,952 patients in ICUs, with 722 requiring ventilators. Fifty patients were newly put on ventilator on Monday.

The State added 45 deaths from the past few days to its official toll.

At 3,814, Thiruvananthapuram had the highest number of hospitalised patients. Ernakulam district, even

with much higher active cases, had fewer hospitalisations at 3,578.

Andhra Pradesh reported 71 deaths and 18,972 fresh infections on Monday. Active cases crossed 1.5 lakh to touch 1,51,852.

In the past day, 1.15 lakh samples were tested with a TPR of 16.46%.

East Godavari, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram reported nine new deaths each, Anantapur and Kurnool seven each, Krishna, Prakasam and Srikakulam six each, Chittoor reported

five deaths, Guntur four, Nellore two and West Godavari one death.

As has been the norm on weekends, Telangana's COVID-19 tests fell sharply on Sunday, and fewer cases were detected. Only 5,695 cases were logged, a drop of nearly 2,000 from the previous day, and 58,742 samples were tested.

Meanwhile, there was no let-up in fatalities, with 49 patients succumbing to the infection on Sunday.

The surge in fresh COVID-19 infections continued across Tamil Nadu as another 20,952 people tested positive on Monday, taking the tally to 12,28,064. The State recorded 122 deaths, including 38 in Chennai, on Monday.

Chennai and its three neighbouring districts of Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram accounted for 47% of the fresh cases.

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

Restrictions in Kerala to get rigorous from today

Bar on unessential travel, crowding

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said the State will further ratchet up restrictions on daily life from Tuesday.

The extra curbs would continue till May 9. They were imperative to retard the momentum of the raging pandemic. The 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew would continue.

The State police would fan out early on Tuesday to prevent crowding and unessential travel. People should have a valid reason to venture out. Travellers should carry identity cards and affidavits detailing their purpose of travel.

Even those travelling alone in vehicles should wear masks. Shoppers should restrict themselves to neighbourhood stalls.

The government has exempted essential services, including private couriers,

from the restrictions. There was no ban on e-commerce activity. Vehicle repair and service centres could open for business.

The government has banned indoor dining. But restaurants could allow takeaways and facilitate home delivery. Shops selling food, groceries, fruits, vegetables, milk, dairy products and meat and fish stalls could open. Markets could open for business.

The State police would monitor the pandemics situation at the grassroots level. They would keep a tab on COVID-19 patients and those under quarantine in their respective panchayat or municipal wards. The members would also extend help to citizens in need.

BMC may resort to aggressive testing policy

Commissioner hopes more tests will lead to reduction in positivity rate in Mumbai

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Even as the daily COVID-19 cases in Mumbai are on the decline, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) wants to increase the number of tests hoping that an aggressive testing policy will lead to reduction in the positivity rate.

As per the data from the BMC, the number of tests in the city has dipped from over 50,000 to 38,000 and even to around 28,000.

On May 3, the civic body conducted only 23,542 tests of which 2,662 were positive. While on May 2, a total of 28,636 tests were conducted, the figure was 37,607 for May 1. Around 43,525 and 38,848 samples were tested on April 30 and 29, respectively. On April 28, around

39,135 tests were conducted

while on April 27 and 26, around 30,428 and 28,328 samples were tested, respectively, as normally observed on weekends.

According to BMC Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal, the number of tests in a single day had gone beyond 50,000 in April. "Our aggressive testing policy has re-

sulted in reduction in the positivity rate. We need to increase the testing to 40,000 a day, if not more," he said, appealing to citizens to come forward and test themselves for the virus



A transient high

Record GST inflows are heartening, but major risks lie ahead

India's GST regime could not have hoped for a better start to its fifth year. Revenues from the tax hit an all-time high of ₹1,41,384 crore in April, surpassing the previous month's record of about ₹1.24 lakh crore. After a disastrous period for the economy following last year's national lockdown, GST revenues hit ₹1.05 lakh crore in October and have shown a steady uptick since then, in tandem with hopes of a sustained recovery. April's numbers, which are essentially driven by the transactions in March, were bolstered by heightened economic activity, no doubt. The spectre of rising COVID-19 cases and the fear of an impending lockdown could also have driven people to make advance purchases in anticipation. Moreover, firms in the process of closing annual accounts may have remitted higher GST based on audit advice, while a gradual tightening of the compliance regime, and pro-active co-ordinated probes against taxpayers using fake bills to evade liabilities, have played no small part. In April 2020, GST collections had dipped to a mere ₹32,172 crore after all activity ground to a halt at four hours' notice in late March. Economic activity may not yet be as badly affected amidst the pandemic's second wave.

So far, going by the restrictions imposed in several States, supply chain disruptions are not expected to be as challenging. However, weakening demand will trigger a recalibration of production and investment plans, some of which has begun to kick in. Consider some indicators – major two-wheeler producers saw sales plummet by around a third in April, compared to March. Plant shutdowns have gradually begun to reduce inventory build-ups. In a report, 'Wall of Worry', Crisil has warned of several indicators sliding since mid-April, including GST e-way bills which fell by over 6%, two weeks in a row. Manufacturing orders' growth hit an eight-month low in April, as per IHS Markit. And the pandemic surge and desperate shortage of health infrastructure have prompted industry leaders to pitch for a stringent lockdown. It would be foolhardy now to expect GST and other tax revenues to stay robust till the government gets a better grip on infections and vaccinations. With the Assembly polls over, the Centre must urgently convene the GST Council. To add to what is already pending – rationalisation of GST rate slabs, a rejig of rates on critical pandemic supplies and the prickly issue of bringing fuel under GST – the Council must begin gearing up early for shortfalls in GST compensation to States that may arise this year. India can ill-afford a repeat of the 2020 face-off between the Centre and States that almost upended the very spirit of co-operative federalism the GST emerged from.

The nuclear challenge

North Korea's economic worries and the U.S.'s nuclearisation concerns need addressing

President Joe Biden's call for "stern deterrence" in response to North Korea's nuclear programme and Pyongyang's angry reaction, accusing the Biden administration of being "hostile", suggest that both countries are headed towards a diplomatic showdown. In his first congressional address last week, Mr. Biden said the nuclear programmes of Iran and North Korea posed a "serious threat to America's security and world security" and promised to respond through "diplomacy and stern deterrence". His administration has also completed a review of the U.S.'s North Korea policy. Mr. Biden is likely to steer between Barack Obama's "strategic patience" and Donald Trump's top-level summity in dealing with the North Korean nuclear challenge. North Korea has remained an unresolved foreign policy puzzle for all post-War American Presidents. In recent times, U.S. Presidents have shown a willingness to diplomatically engage with Pyongyang. The Clinton administration had signed a framework agreement with Pyongyang to halt its nuclear programme. Mr. Obama had initiated talks with North Korea in 2012, which collapsed after Pyongyang launched a satellite. He then adopted a wait-and-watch approach, which came to be called "strategic patience". Mr. Trump altered his predecessor's North Korea policy by reaching out to the regime and meeting its leader, Kim Jong-un, thrice, but without a breakthrough.

In theory, the Trump administration and North Korea had agreed to a complete de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but failed to agree on its formula. In the 2019 Trump-Kim summit at Hanoi, the U.S. proposed removal of sanctions for de-nuclearisation, but North Korea rejected it. Pyongyang had taken a phased approach and sought sanctions removal in return. Ever since, there has been no improvement in ties. After Mr. Biden assumed office, North Korea had conducted short-range missile tests, which the U.S. saw as a provocation. Mr. Biden does not have many good options in dealing with North Korea. The U.S.'s key goal in north-eastern Asia is the de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. And the only practical way to achieve this is through diplomacy as a military strike on North Korea, a nuclear power, is out of the question. Though the Trump-Kim summits did not lead to any breakthrough, they have still created a diplomatic momentum for engagement. Despite its threats to expand its nuclear programme, North Korea sticks to the self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range ballistic missile tests. The North, as acknowledged by Mr. Kim recently, is going through a tough economic crisis and is open to talks. Mr. Biden should seize this opportunity and try to reach common ground with Mr. Kim that addresses both North Korea's economic worries and the U.S.'s nuclear concerns. That should be the focus of the Biden administration's new North Korean strategy.

Under-reporting does hurt the COVID fight

Without good data, accurate projections are impossible, making it difficult to gauge the true state of the pandemic

BHRAMAR MUKHERJEE,
SOUMIK PURKAYASTHA,
MAXWELL SALVATORE &
SWAPNIL MISHRA

India, now home to the world's worst ongoing coronavirus pandemic, is currently reporting nearly a million new cases and 10,000 deaths every three days, according to data released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (covid19india.org). The true extent of the second wave now ravaging India is likely much worse than official numbers suggest.

The reasons

Is it a problem noted only in India? Not capturing all COVID-19 cases and COVID-19-related deaths is not unique to India. Research on the behavioural dynamics of COVID-19 (<https://bit.ly/337IW75>) from a group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimates the global under-reporting factor for cumulative cases around 7 and for deaths 1.4 as of December, 2020. Researchers further note that these factors vary substantially across nations. In India, this problem seems to be particularly acute during the second wave based on empirical evidence and epidemiological models.

Why is it hard to capture all COVID-19 infections and related deaths? There could be several reasons why we cannot capture all COVID-19 infections such as silent asymptomatic infections, barriers to testing due to cost and travel time, reluctance to get tested due to COVID-19 associated stigma, limited availability of tests, obtaining a false negative test (remember that diagnostic tests are not perfect) and alike. Deaths related to COVID-19 that are missed often consist of deaths that happened outside health-care facilities at home, and post-COVID-19 deaths where the cause of death is listed as a pre-existing comorbidity such as heart disease or kidney failure. India also has a poor and delayed infrastructure for reporting of deaths and certifying the cause of death in general, particularly in the rural areas. In a 2017 estimate, one out of five deaths was medically reported.

How do we estimate this under-reporting from epidemiologic models? For modelling growth of an epidemic, what we observe are deaths, cases or hospitalisations. However, what really defines an epidemic is not exactly the growth of these observed quantities but the infections, which in turn become these outcomes (deaths, cases, hospitalisations) with some de-

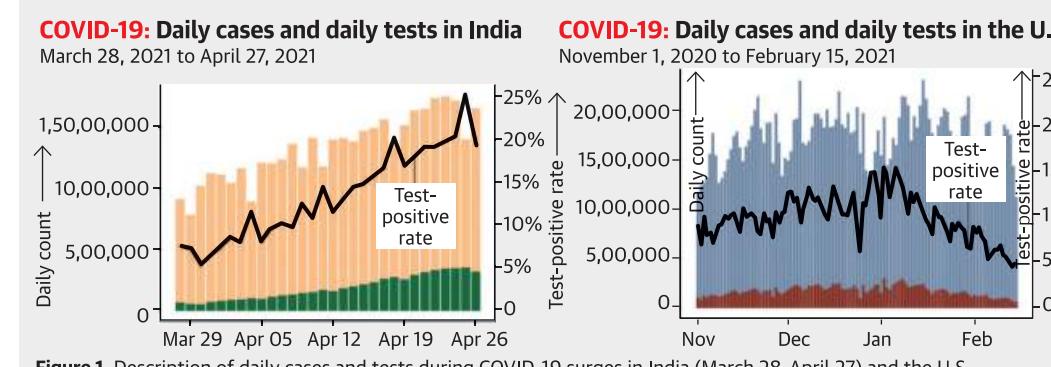
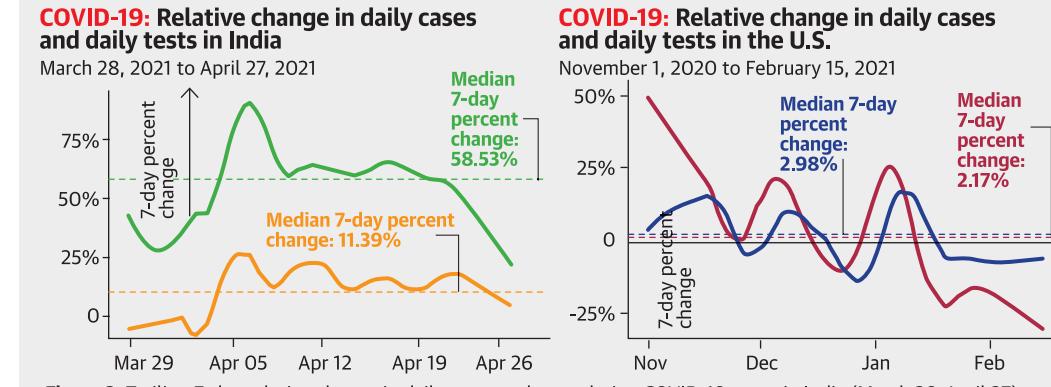


Figure 1. Description of daily cases and tests during COVID-19 surges in India (March 28–April 27) and the U.S. (November 1–February 15). The bar plots are overlaid with the test-positive rate observed over the time period, the orange (grey) bars are the number of tests and the green (red) shaded part represents the number of cases.



Sources: covid19india.org; COV-IND-19 Study Group; JHU CSSE GitHub (cases); The COVID Tracking Project (tests); COV-IND-19 Study Group

lay, and not all infections get converted to these observed quantities. What proportion of people die from an infection is a very important quantity as it allows us to know how dangerous a disease is. Another important quantity is how many infections a health system identifies, that is, how many of these will actually end up being reported as cases. A high number of infections being caught by the health system shows a successful surveillance strategy.

On epidemiological models

In a recent study (<https://bit.ly/3x13luf0>), epidemiological models attempt to capture covert infections by accounting for unreported, but infectious individuals. Expected deaths are then estimated from the estimated number of infections and assumed infection fatality rates based on historical data. Such models (<https://bit.ly/3nG50u6>) indicate the under-reporting factor for cases between 10 and 20 and for deaths between two and five based on data from the first wave for India.

Can we validate what the models are saying? How do we validate the extent of unreported cases? We can cross-check under-reporting of infections directly with serosurveys carried out in India. The third serosurvey

(<https://bbc.in/3eMDPdb>) conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (from December 17, 2020 till January 8, 2021) reports that 21.5% of all Indians above the age of 18 have antibodies present that indicate SARS-CoV-2 infection in the past. Approximately 59% of India's 1.36 billion citizens are above the age of 18. This implies nearly 173 million adults infected. Factoring in the nearly 11 million COVID-19 cases reported by January 8 (assuming most cases are adults), this points to an implied under-reporting factor of roughly 16 for infections. In other words, only 6% of India's COVID-19 infections are reported. Hence, the question of "missing infections" in India is undeniable and not contingent on a belief in the legitimacy of mathematical models – it is evident based on figures released by the Indian government/bodies alone.

Mortality data

How to validate the extent of unreported deaths: During wave 1 (<https://bbc.in/2RlZDZS>), a group of volunteers collected every reported death from obituaries in newspapers and reported almost twice the number of deaths than officially reported. During this recent surge, a recent report in *The New York Times* (<https://nyt.com/2021/04/27/coronavirus-india-death-totals.html>) noted that authorities in Gujarat reported between 73 and 121 COVID-related deaths each day in mid-April. The report added that one of Gujarat's leading newspapers, *Sandesh*, sent reporters to cremation and burial grounds across the State and reported that the number was several times higher, around 600 each day. The extent of this under-reporting is higher than our past model estimates. This current increased case-fatality is not only due to clinical lethality of the virus, but more patients are dying due to not receiving adequate medical care. A way to capture the holistic effect of COVID-19 (direct and indirect impact on mortality) will be to perform a proper excess death calculation where demographers can take the number of people who die from any cause in a given region and period and compare the same with a historical trend based on the past few years and come up with a difference of observed and expected number of deaths. This method of investigating excess deaths is something various nations have explored, such as the United States (<https://bit.ly/3eafKh8>; 22% excess deaths in 2020 and 72% of these attributed to COVID). India has not made historical mortality data and data from 2020 publicly available,

<https://ti.ms/3xExudK2>) noted that authorities in Gujarat reported between 73 and 121 COVID-related deaths each day in mid-April. The report added that one of Gujarat's leading newspapers, *Sandesh*, sent reporters to cremation and burial grounds across the State and reported that the number was several times higher, around 600 each day. The extent of this under-reporting is higher than our past model estimates. This current increased case-fatality is not only due to clinical lethality of the virus, but more patients are dying due to not receiving adequate medical care. A way to capture the holistic effect of COVID-19 (direct and indirect impact on mortality) will be to perform a proper excess death calculation where demographers can take the number of people who die from any cause in a given region and period and compare the same with a historical trend based on the past few years and come up with a difference of observed and expected number of deaths. This method of investigating excess deaths is something various nations have explored, such as the United States (<https://bit.ly/3eafKh8>; 22% excess deaths in 2020 and 72% of these attributed to COVID). India has not made historical mortality data and data from 2020 publicly available,

making this calculation infeasible at this point.

Is India testing enough during wave 2? Lack of adequate testing could be one of the causes of missing infections.

Testing in India

To understand India's scale of testing, let us look at the U.S. during its highest surge in January (November 1–February 15) and India during this recent surge (March 28–April 27) in terms of testing. The bar plots show that India has a maximum daily test positivity ratio (TPR) around 25% and the U.S. had a maximum daily TPR around 15%. More interesting is Figure 2 showing seven-day growth rate in cases versus testing. While testing and cases have grown at a comparable rate in the U.S., in India the growth in reported cases on an average has been nearly five times higher than the growth in testing. India is not testing enough.

How does under-reporting matter? Right now, the country is reeling from skyrocketing infection and death counts. This surge has thrown our health-care systems off balance. Crucial medical supplies run dangerously low and hospitals are forced to turn away patients. These forecasting models are used to predict the need for oxygen, hospital beds, intensive care unit care needs, the peak and duration of the pandemic. Without having more informative data, accurate projections are impossible. Knowing the truth is better for both public and policymakers to gauge the true state of the pandemic.

Finally, the exact extent of under-reporting is debatable, but we should never forget that these numbers represent people. The official system can fail to capture the diseased and the deceased, but families cannot. The tragedies that have unfolded in thousands of families in India, with an astounding number of people that are currently sick and grieving for the dead, can never be captured through the reported staggering numbers and the ones that were missed.

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A 'One Health' approach that targets people, animals

The battle against COVID-19 should also be used as an opportunity to meet India's 'One Health' targets



ATUL CHATURVEDI

The father of modern pathology, Rudolf Virchow, emphasised in 1856 that there are essentially no dividing lines between animal and human medicine. This concept is ever more salient as the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions that took place around World Veterinary Day, on April 24, 2021, focused on acknowledging the interconnectedness of animals, humans, and the environment, an approach referred to as "One Health".

Across the species barrier

Studies indicate that more than two-thirds of existing and emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, or can be transferred between animals and humans, and vice versa, when the pathogen in question originates in any life form but circumvents the species barrier. Another category of diseases, "anthropozootic" infections, gets

transferred from humans to animals. The transboundary impact of viral outbreaks in recent years such as the Nipah virus, Ebola, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Avian Influenza has further reinforced the need for us to consistently document the linkages between the environment, animals, and human health.

India's framework, plans
India's 'One Health' vision derives its blueprint from the agreement between the tripartite-plus alliance comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – a global initiative supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank under the overarching goal of contributing to 'One World, One Health'.

In keeping with the long-term objectives, India established a National Standing Committee on Zoonoses as far back as the 1980s. And this year, funds were sanctioned for setting up a 'Centre for

One Health' at Nagpur. Further, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD) has launched several schemes to mitigate the prevalence of animal diseases since 2015, with a funding pattern along the lines of 60:40 (Centre: State); 90:10 for the Northeastern States, and 100% funding for Union Territories. Hence, under the National Animal Disease Control Programme, ₹13,343 crore have been sanctioned for Foot and Mouth disease and Brucellosis control. In addition, DAHD will soon establish a 'One Health' unit within the Ministry.

Additionally, the government is working to revamp programmes that focus on capacity building for veterinarians and upgrading the

animal health diagnostic system such as Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (AS-CAD). In the revised component of assistance to States/Union Territories, there is increased focus on vaccination against livestock diseases and backyard poultry. To this end, assistance will be extended to State biological production units and disease diagnostic laboratories.

WHO estimates that rabies (also a zoonotic disease) costs the global economy approximately \$6 billion annually. Considering that 97% of human rabies cases in India are attributed to dogs, interventions for disease management in dogs are considered crucial. DAHD has partnered with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the National Action Plan for Eliminating Dog Mediated Rabies. This initiative is geared towards sustained mass dog vaccinations and public education to render the country free of rabies.

Need for coordination
Scientists have observed that there are more than 1.7 million viruses circulating in wildlife, and many of them are likely to be zoonotic, which implies that unless there is timely detection, India risks facing

many more pandemics in times to come. To achieve targets under the 'One Health' vision, efforts are ongoing to address challenges pertaining to veterinary manpower shortages, the lack of information sharing between human and animal health institutions, and inadequate coordination on food safety at slaughter, distribution, and retail facilities. These issues can be remedied by consolidating existing animal health and disease surveillance systems – e.g., the Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health (<https://bit.ly/2SqNHlr>), and the National Animal Disease Reporting System (<https://bit.ly/3aTPBq>) – developing best-practice guidelines for informal market and slaughterhouse operation (e.g., inspections, disease prevalence assessments), and creating mechanisms to operationalise 'One Health' at every stage down to the village level. Now, as we battle yet another wave of a deadly zoonotic disease (COVID-19), awareness generation, and increased investments toward meeting 'One Health' targets is the need of the hour.

Atul Chaturvedi is Secretary, Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairying. The views expressed are personal.

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: In a story titled "Rema scripts historic victory in Vadakara" (some editions, May 3, 2021) it was erroneously stated that "... this is also the maiden electoral victory for a UDF-backed candidate from Vadakara." Actually, Ms. Rema is the second UDF-backed candidate to win from there, the first being K. Chandrasekaran of the erstwhile Janata Party, which was part of the UDF in the 1980 Assembly polls. The second deck headline of the story should have read: "Maiden win for RMPI candidate".

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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.

Election results

The success of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, the Left front in Kerala, and more particularly the defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal should create a sense of complacency among democratically-minded people. The people have received a breather from the divisive politics of the

BJP and suppression of constitutional rights such as the right to dissent. The results have belied talk that the BJP would emerge stronger and victorious. Now, the future lies in these parties giving importance to people's priorities and the constitutional promises including the right to health and education against the cultural agenda of the Centre. They should

broaden their struggle by aligning themselves with similar forces. Therein lies the future of not only democracy but India itself. N.G.R. PRASAD, Chennai

- The Indian National Congress needs to pursue course correction. The party will now need to cling to the apron strings of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in

Tamil Nadu and strengthen Trinamool Congress leader and West Bengal's Mamta Banerjee, not antagonise her. This is also the time for the party to sort out the issues of leadership, factionalism,

ambivalence and, most significantly, accept mistakes. A Congress 'Mukth Bharat' would become a reality sooner or later, if the party does not make immediate amends. The

blame for the lack of a strong Opposition lies squarely with the Congress. R.G.C. SE

Local factors determine electoral outcomes in States

While national leaders can provide support, the ground work needs to be done by local leaders with a mass base and sustained presence in local politics

SANDEEP SHASTRI, SANJAY KUMAR, SUHAS PALSHIKAR & SHREYAS SARDESAI

Even as the nation battles the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Assembly elections have been completed in four States (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and West Bengal) and one Union Territory (Puducherry). Though citizens and governments came to be exposed to the debilitating impact of COVID-19 in the course of these elections, voter turnout did not see any major decline. The five electoral outcomes mirror the diversity that the country represents.

In these trying times, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)-Lokniti conducted a post-poll survey in the States that went to the polls (the post-poll survey was not conducted in Puducherry). Our field investigators followed all the strict protocols that the pandemic necessitated and did a truly commendable job (See methodology). We present in a series of articles, to be published over the next few days, an explanation of the electoral verdict as seen from the perceptions and attitudes of citizens.

This round of State elections is set to impact the trajectory of Indian politics in important ways. The verdicts underscore the specificity of the local in defining and determining electoral outcomes. Three of the four ruling parties/ coalitions secured another term in office, while one was voted out of power. Like Assam, Puducherry, too, decided to entrust power to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). All these States saw a sharp bipolar contest with the third player being relegated to a distant third position. As these were verdicts on who should be entrusted with the responsibility of managing the State administration, the leadership at the State level came to be a key factor.

Like Assam, Puducherry, too, decided to entrust power to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). All these States saw a sharp bipolar contest with the third player being relegated to a distant third position. As these were verdicts on who should be entrusted with the responsibility of managing the State administration, the leadership at the State level came to be a key factor.

Assam saw a polarisation on religious lines like never before and the State leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was able to successfully lead a well-planned election strategy and campaign.

The Trinamool Congress under Mamata Banerjee, which retained power in West Bengal, occupied the centre stage both during the election campaign and when the results came trickling in.

While different parties and alliances have won the five elections, the central theme that connects all the



(Clockwise from top): DMK supporters in Chennai celebrate the Tamil Nadu Assembly election results; BJP supporters celebrate the party's victory in Assam, in Guwahati; Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at a counting station in Kannur. ■ AFP; RITU RAJ KONWAR; S.K. MOHAN

nidhi and Jayalalithaa, the victory of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is a clear indicator of M.K. Stalin having been accepted as the inheritor of his father's legacy by the DMK supporters. In the case of the AIADMK, it is not clear whether supporters of Jayalalithaa see the present AIADMK (and its leadership) as the true successors of her legacy.

In neighbouring Puducherry, the Congress-led alliance (which was dismissed on the eve of the elections) was neither able to garner any sympathy nor convince the voters of its track record in government.

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If the results of the present post-poll survey are compared with those of the post-poll survey conducted after the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it is noticed that the net satisfaction (percentage of those satisfied minus those dissatisfied) with the State government has increased and is uniformly high

CIn all the four States, complete opposition to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was stronger than the complete support for it.

State poll vs national poll The categorical distinction between a national verdict and a State-specific verdict was revealed in the response to the question on whether the development of their State, it was necessary that the party in power at the Centre should be the ruling

elections, it is noticed that the net satisfaction (percentage of those satisfied minus those dissatisfied) with the State government has increased and is uniformly high. In Kerala and West Bengal, the net satisfaction was reasonably high. In the case of Kerala, the net satisfaction with the Central government was in the negative and in West Bengal it had declined as compared to two years ago. In Tamil Nadu, the net satisfaction with the State government was very marginal while the dissatisfaction with the Central government was evident. Assam saw a net satisfaction with both the Central and State government as what was recorded in 2019 and this explains the return of the BJP to power.

The highlighting of the local is also evident in the strong pro-incumbency sentiment in the three States where the ruling party/coalition was returned to power (See Table 3). In Kerala and West Bengal, over half the respondents wanted the ruling party back in power. In Assam this sentiment was expressed by four of every 10 respondents. In Tamil Nadu, which saw the defeat of the incumbent, half the respondents were against the incumbent being given a second chance. Clearly, the voters' perception of the performance of their State governments was critical in the decision on who to vote for.

The focus on the local was also visible in the levels of satisfaction with the State and Central governments (See Table 2). If the results of the present post-poll survey are compared with those of the post-poll survey conducted after the 2019 Lok Sabha

It must, of course, be highlighted that the primacy accorded to the party over the local candidate in the polls was evident in the post-poll survey (See Table 4). Across States, close to six of every 10 respondents said that they kept in mind the party when voting. In Kerala and Assam, three of every 10 respondents stated that the candidate drove their voting choice.

The same view on CAA

On one critical matter, all four States seem to have a common approach – about the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. In all the four States, complete opposition to the CAA was stronger than the complete support for it (See Table 5). In Kerala, more than half the respondents were completely opposed to it while in Assam, close to half the respondents took that stand. In Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, close to one-thirds of the respondents were fully opposed to it. The jury was mixed when it came to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) (See Table 6): it found very strong support in Assam and lukewarm support in Tamil Nadu. In West Bengal, those fully opposed to it were marginally higher than those in complete support of it. In Kerala, there was a very high degree of opposition to the NRC. The response is directly linked to the political preferences of the voters in that particular State.

Thus, the lessons to be learnt from the verdicts in the four States and one Union Territory are evident. State elections are fought on local factors which define and decide the nature and intensity of a verdict. In the electoral competition for a State, it is evident that the nucleus of the campaign is the local leadership. While national leaders of a party can provide support and enhance the visibility of the party, the ground work needs to be done by local leaders with a mass base and sustained presence in local politics.

In Assam, the BJP has been able to adapt to this State-specificity and also project State-level leadership. It reaped dividends on this score. In the other three States, the BJP appears quite some distance from both adapting to the core features of the State politics and projecting credible leadership from the State. This limitation has halted its onward march in these new territories in spite of considerable headway in West Bengal.

Sandeep Shastri is Vice Chancellor, Jagran Lakecity University Bhopal and the National Co-ordinator of the Lokniti network; Sanjay Kumar is Co-director of the Lokniti programme at CSDS; Suhas Palshikar taught Political Science and is currently the Co-Director of the Lokniti programme and chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics; and Shreyas Sardesai is a Research Associate at Lokniti-CSDS.

Table 1: Double engine government

Except in Assam, there was no strong desire in any of the States for a 'double engine' government. Even in West Bengal, more people were strongly opposed to the idea than in favour of it. Compared to 2016, all the States reported a decline in their desire for a double engine government, including Assam. The increase in opposition to the idea was greatest in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

	For State's development it is necessary that the party ruling at the Centre (in Delhi) should also be ruling in the State				
	Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Fully disagree	Non-committal
Assam	41 (46)	22 (24)	5 (8)	15 (7)	18 (16)
Kerala	19 (44)	11 (14)	6 (14)	54 (19)	9 (9)
Tamil Nadu	11 (40)	25 (16)	8 (14)	40 (16)	17 (15)
West Bengal	26 (29)	16 (18)	5 (7)	32 (6)	20 (40)

Note: Figures are percentages and may not add up to 100 due to rounding
Figures outside parentheses are for 2021 and within parentheses for 2016
Source: Lokniti-CSDS surveys during 2021 and 2016 Assembly elections

Table 2: Net satisfaction with national and State governments, 2019 vs. 2021

Net satisfaction with the State government improved considerably in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Central government became more unpopular in West Bengal. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, perception of the Central government improved but continued to be in the negative

	National government		State government	
	2019	2021	2019	2021
Assam	+19	+18	+24	+24
Kerala	-30	-19	+45	+51
Tamil Nadu	-33	-12	-9	+13
West Bengal	+28	+18	+34	+44

Note: Net satisfaction here is percentage of respondents satisfied minus percentage of respondents dissatisfied with the performance of national and State governments
Source: Lokniti-CSDS post-poll surveys during 2019 Lok Sabha and 2021 Assembly elections

Table 3: Anti-incumbency

This sentiment was found to be prevalent only in Tamil Nadu this time. Strongest pro-incumbency was seen in Kerala followed by West Bengal

	Should the State government get another chance?			
	2016		2021	
	Pro-inc incumbency	Anti-inc incumbency	Pro-inc incumbency	Anti-inc incumbency
Assam	40	49	43	38
Kerala	42	49	51	27
Tamil Nadu	41	46	33	49
West Bengal	40	42	53	34

Note: Figures are percentages and have been rounded, the rest of the respondents were non-committal
Pro-inc incumbency here refers to the desire to give another chance to the government and anti-inc incumbency is the desire to see the government go
Source: Lokniti-CSDS surveys during 2021 and 2016 Assembly elections

Table 4: What mattered more while voting: party or candidate?

	Party mattered more than candidate	Candidate mattered more than party
Assam	60	29
Kerala	61	30
Tamil Nadu	53	18
West Bengal	58	21

Note: Figures are percentages and have been rounded; the rest of the respondents mentioned the chief ministerial candidate/a State leader's name/Narendra Modi/something else/ were non-committal
In West Bengal, 9% spontaneously took Mamata Banerjee's name and 3% Narendra Modi's. In Tamil Nadu 19% spontaneously said the chief ministerial candidate.
Source: Lokniti-CSDS post-poll surveys during the 2021 Assembly elections

Table 5: Opinion on CAA

Across all the States, complete opposition to the CAA was greater than complete support for it. The question asked was: Do you support or oppose the Citizenship (Amendment) Act under which Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists and Parsis coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan can get Indian citizenship but not Muslims coming from those countries?

	Fully support CAA	Somewhat support CAA	Somewhat oppose CAA	Fully oppose CAA	Non-committal
Assam	10	10	6	47	27
Kerala	12	6	5	57	20
Tamil Nadu	15	20	4	32	30
West Bengal	21	14	5	33	27

Note: Figures are percentages and may not add up to 100 due to rounding
Source: Lokniti-CSDS post-poll surveys during the 2021 Assembly elections

Table 6: Opinion on NRC

Opposition to the National Register of Citizens was greatest in Kerala. Opinion was polarised in West Bengal although more were strongly opposed to it than in favour of it. Assam was in favour of the NRC while the response to the question was lukewarm in Tamil Nadu.

Question asked in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu: If the NRC is implemented, then every person living in India will have to provide documentary proof of their citizenship to the government. Do you support or oppose the NRC?

Question asked in Assam: Between 2015 and 2019, Assam had conducted the NRC exercise to detect illegal migrants in the State. As a concept, were you in favour of or against the NRC exercise when it took place?

	Fully support NRC	Somewhat support NRC	Somewhat oppose NRC	Fully oppose NRC	Non-committal
Assam	61	14	3	7	16
Kerala	11	8	5	52	24
Tamil Nadu	14	31	9	17	29
West Bengal	25	15	6	35	19

FROM PAGE ONE

Mamata to be sworn in as Bengal CM tomorrow

"We should not indulge in any violence. The most important task at our hand is to serve people in the times of COVID crisis," Ms. Banerjee said.

The Trinamool Congress chairperson said the swearing-in ceremony would be a minimalist event. She also reiterated her demand that Centre should ensure universal vaccination free of cost.

She thanked the people of West Bengal for "resisting the onslaughts of the BJP", saying, "The spine of the people of West Bengal is still straight and upright. Only the women and youth can resist the BJP."

Asked whether the victory would mean that she will play a major role in national politics particularly in 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Ms. Banerjee said, "I am just a street fighter. I can only boost up people so that we can fight a

strong fight against BJP. One cannot do everything alone. It is a collective family and collectively if we can take a decision, there are so many political parties and so many people we are in touch with. All together we can fight the battle for 2024."

Fight against COVID-19' Asked if there was a possibility of a Bengali Prime Minister, she said that in the present times all should fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The TMC chief said leaders across the country, including Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, had called to congratulate her on her victory. Ms. Banerjee added that she did not receive any phone call from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

CPI(M) begins steps to form govt. in Kerala

The State Secretariat meeting will be followed by a meeting of the LDF to decide on Ministers, portfolios and other formalities.

The meeting to select the LDF's Parliamentary Party Leader is likely to be held online amid the COVID-19 second wave.

Official sources said the General Administration Department and the Public Works Department had been alerted to make arrangements for the swearing-in ceremony. Raj Bhavan Hall is to be the venue for the event due curbs in place.

After the swearing-in, the first Cabinet will request the Governor to convene the

15th Kerala Legislative Assembly. The first session of Assembly will be held in May following COVID protocol and the Legislature Secretariat has initiated steps for it, sources said.

Before the House meets, the Governor will administer the oath of office to the Pro term Speaker at the Raj Bhavan. The pro tem speaker will, in turn, chair proceedings of the first session when each of the other 139 elected members of the House will take oath as legislators. The pro tem Speaker will also oversee the formal anointment of the new Speaker of the Assembly.

'States cannot impinge on autonomy of pvt. schools'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday held that the States cannot impinge on the autonomy of private unaided schools to fix and collect 'just' and 'permissible' school fees from parents, especially in the name of the pandemic.

"It is one thing to say the State may regulate the fee structure of private unaided schools to ensure that the school management does not indulge in profiteering and commercialisation, but in the guise of exercise of that power, it cannot transcend the line of regulation and impinge upon the autonomy of the school to fix and collect 'just' and 'permissible' school fees from its students," a Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari said in a 128-page judgement.

The judgment, which would help schools retain their autonomy in deciding fee structure, came on the basis of a series of appeals filed by private unaided schools in Rajasthan against State notifications to defer collection of fees, including reduction limited to 70% of tuition fees by schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education and 60% from the schools affiliated to the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education, in view of the reduction of syllabus due to the aftermath of the pandemic from March 2020.

The judgment concerns around 36,000 private unaided schools, including 220 minority private unaided schools.

Central Vista works get nod

Environment Ministry clears ancillary projects including a new residence for PM



In full swing: Construction of the new Parliament building, which is part of the redevelopment of Central Vista, under way in New Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

ready between 2024 and 2026.

These projects together cost about ₹13,500 crore.

Environmentalists have said that the project has not been considered as a single project and broken up piece

meal to obscure its environmental impact. Several legal obstacles to the project coalesced and were taken up to the Supreme Court which ultimately cleared it. The work on the project has continued despite the second week of

lockdown in the capital that has brought most construction sites to a grinding halt. The construction work for the project has been brought under the ambit of "essential services", a move condemned by the Opposition.

Pak. targets BSF patrol in Samba

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAMMU

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Monday said Pakistani troops fired at the security forces patrolling the International Border (IB) in Samba, Jammu, on Monday morning. The shooting took place around 6.35 a.m. "Pakistan Rangers targeted BSF patrolling party on International Border in Ramgarh sector of Samba district," a BSF official said.

An official said the Pakistani troops manning Tipu and Hussain posts fired four bursts, nearly 20 rounds of small weapons, towards the border outpost of Majra in the Samba sector.

On February 24 this year, the Armies of both the countries reaffirmed their commitment to abide by the ceasefire agreement agreed upon in 2003.

Justice Pant named acting chief of NHRC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Justice Prafulla Chandra Pant, a former Supreme Court judge, has been appointed the Acting Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) with effect from April 25, the commission said on Monday. Justice Pant was appointed a member of the NHRC on April 22, 2019.

The post of Chairperson has been vacant since the former Chief Justice of India H.L. Dattu completed his tenure on December 2.

7 Myanmar refugees can approach UNHCR

Manipur High Court says Article 21 encompasses the right of non-refoulement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

of 1966. "The far-reaching and myriad protection afforded by Article 21 of our Constitution, as interpreted and abdicated by our Supreme Court time and again, would indubitably encompass the right of non-refoulement," the court said.

Non-refoulement is the principle under international law that a person fleeing from persecution from his own country should not be forced to return.

Though India is not a party to the UN Refugee Convention, the court observed that the country is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

bam, convener of the Citizens' Committee Manipur (CCM), said.

The other four are Niang Go Man, Pau Khan Thawn, Cing San Lun and Si Thu Aung.

The last three are journalists who were working with the Mizzima news service banned by the military junta.

Hiding in Moreh
They had been hiding in the border town Moreh until they were brought to Imphal following an order of the High Court on April 20.

"We continue to be deeply

concerned about the plight of thousands of other Myanmar nationals taking shelter in the bordering villages of Manipur without any support and protection apart from the hospitality and warmth of the poor villagers," Mr. Loitongbam said.

The humanitarian sub-committee CCM has provided food, clothing, medicines and utensils donated by the people of Manipur in four villages in Kamjong district and three each in Tengnoupal and Churachandpur districts, housing more than 500 refugees from Myanmar, he said.

Election to two Bengal seats deferred

Poll panel cites COVID-19 situation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday deferred the election to two Assembly seats in West Bengal and a byelection in Odisha in view of the COVID-19 situation.

The polling was earlier rescheduled to May 16 after the death of contestants in the Jangipur and the Samsehan constituencies in West Bengal and Pipili in Odisha.

In a statement, the commission said that after taking all material facts and inputs from the Chief Electoral Officers of West

Bengal and Odisha and taking note of the lockdowns or restrictions under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, a decision was taken to defer the polling and extend the period of election in the Pipili Assembly constituency of Odisha and Jangipur and Samsehan in West Bengal.

Fresh notifications
Fresh notifications will be issued after assessing the pandemic situation, the commission said in the statement.

The commission also lifted the model code of conduct in the three constituencies with immediate effect.

Disband ECI and probe members: Anand Sharma

It acted as BJP's accomplice, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Riding the 10-party *Mahajot* or grand alliance led by Congress, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has staged a comeback in Assam after 15 years.

As constituents of the *Mahajot*, the CPI(M), the CPI and the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) were given a seat each in the Assembly election.

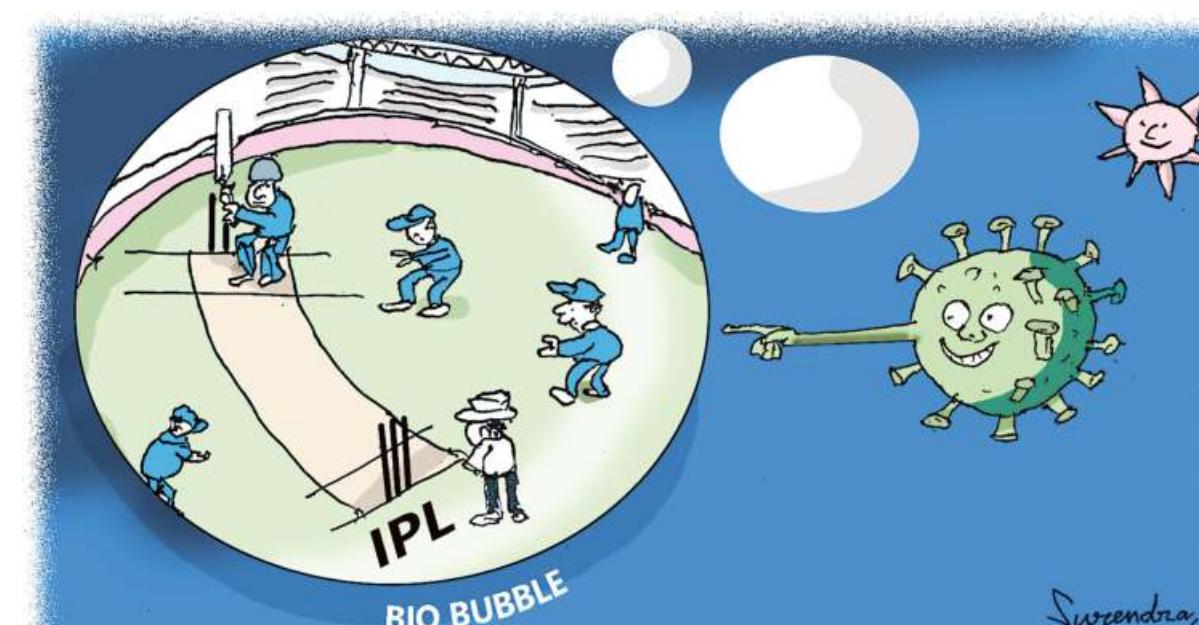
Munin Mahanta of the CPI finished third in the Marigaon constituency behind the Bharatiya Janata Party's Rama Kanta Dewri and Assam Jatiya Parishad's Bani Kanti Das.

Bibek Das of the CPI (M-L) fared similarly in Bederi behind Textiles Minister Ranjith Dutta of the BJP and Independent candidate Jayanta Borah.

But the CPI(M)'s Manoranjan Talukdar defeated Sankar Chandra Das of the BJP by a margin of 10,262 votes to win Sorbhog, a Left bastion that had gone right 10 years ago. Sorbhog is in western Assam's Barpeta district.

The present Election Commission should be disbanded and actions of its members probed. The ECI has disgraced itself and voters trust betrayed. A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court should decide on the composition, qualifying criteria for the appointment of CEC and EC's and firm guidelines for the conduct of free and fair elections as per the Constitution," Mr. Sharma said in a statement, a day after results of polls to four States and one U.T. came out.

On the draw SURENDRA



Six deaths in post-poll violence in Bengal: BJP

Governor summons top officials to discuss the issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The West Bengal BJP leadership on Monday alleged that party supporters were being targeted after the results of the Assembly polls were announced. Party's State president Dilip Ghosh said six persons, including five party supporters, had been killed in the past 24 hours.

"It is most unfortunate that a time when the COVID-19 crisis is at its peak, there is post-election violence in the State. Not even 24 hours have passed, and five persons had been killed and thousands of shops and houses vandalised," he said.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar raised concern about the situation. He said he had directed officials to submit a report on post-poll violence and vandalism. He summoned the Director-General of Police, the Kolkata Police Commissioner and the Additional Chief Secretary, Home. "ACS Home @Home-Bengal who was called by



Happy winners: TMC party workers celebrate their victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections, in Kolkata. ■ PTI

me in wake of rising post poll violence in the State. Thousands of our supporters are turning homeless," he said.

Reports of post-poll violence were coming both from north and south Bengal and almost from every constituency, he alleged.

The BJP would bring the issue to the notice of the State government, the Election Commission of India and other stakeholders.

"Violence is being perpetrated

CPI(M) makes a comeback to Assam House

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Riding the 10-party *Mahajot* or grand alliance led by Congress, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has staged a comeback in Assam after 15 years.

As constituents of the *Mahajot*, the CPI(M), the CPI and the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) were given a seat each in the Assembly election.

He also suggested that the Supreme Court should decide the criteria for a person to qualify for the position of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioner (EC).



APPEAL
Gladis Saikia (5 months) diagnosed to have Large Shunt and PAH is advised to undergo a Elective Surgery for VSD Closure at MDT International. Her family condition is very poor and cannot afford his Hospitalisation & Surgery cost of Rs. 2,60,000/- He seeks your generous contribution for his surgery. Donations sent through ChD/D/NEFT Transfer & IFSC No. CNRB0016018 favouring WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE are entitled for exemption under 80G IT. Please give us your email id.

All correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No.GF 1, Corridor Apartments, O.N.O.13, N.M.29, Pyrocks Garden Road, Chennai - 600006. Ph: 044-42137401/28235324 E Mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com

WWS

23 COVID-19 patients die in Karnataka hospital

Contrary to the Minister's claim, locals and relatives of the deceased said patients on ventilators choked to death as the medical facility ran out of oxygen around midnight.

Efforts at the late hour to replenish supply came too late to save the patients on the life support systems, they said. The district entirely depends on Mysuru for oxygen and supply from there has not been steady, sources said.

Triggers panic
The sudden surge from an average of 8 to 10 deaths per day to 24 in the district (including 23 in Chamarajanagar district hospital alone), has created a scare among people.

However, Dr. Sudhakar,

CM

INTERVIEW | DEREK O'BRIEN

'This is Mamata's victory over Modi'

The Election Commission bent the rules to suit the BJP, says Trinamool leader

SOBHANA K. NAIR

A day after the Trinamool Congress's emphatic victory in West Bengal, senior party leader and *Rajya Sabha* member Derek O'Brien attributed the win to 10 years of people-centred governance by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, even as he alleged that rules were bent to favour the BJP.

Many congratulations for Trinamool's victory. What were the factors that worked in your favour?

■ Thank you! It has only been 12 to 14 hours since the results came in. I haven't sat down to analyse it. But I would say that Trinamool and our captain Mamata Banerjee's proposition to the people of Bengal was widely accepted. And what did we say? Judge us on what we have done in the past 10 years, on how many lives we touched. And then look at the other side, at all the unkept promises made in the past six or seven years, all bluster and lies. Every BJP hoarding, pamphlet, television advertisement had Narendra Modi's face plastered. People have rejected Narendra Modi. This is Mamata Banerjee's victory over Modi and Amit Shah.

In the last three phases of the Assembly election, which coincided with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw a jump in Trinamool's performance.

Do you see a connection between the two?

■ No. Look at the results carefully, Trinamool thrashed the BJP across all the phases. Nearly, all the BJP MPs who thought they could saunter in to contest the Assembly poll here, lost. The Union Minister lost by a margin of 50,000 votes.

Also please understand, the Election Commission of India planned the polling schedule, dividing it into eight phases, to help the BJP build a momentum by the time the election reached Trinamool strongholds. The EC did not even care about the pandemic. They bent the rules to suit the BJP. For example, till now the booth agent had to be a resident of the area. Instead, because the BJP didn't have an organisation, they relaxed the rule allowing anyone to become a booth agent irrespective of their address. They posted Central forces who spoke in Hindi and could not communicate in Bangla. They changed key police officers as per their whims. The EC officials worked like stenographers of the BJP.

The Trinamool has alleged that the EC worked with a bias for the BJP in the election. Now that you have won, what do you plan to do about it?

■ No. EC did not work in a biased manner. The EC is a department of the BJP! Bias is too mild a word for them. All the political parties need



C We will get all the parties together demanding reforms in the functioning of EC

to look at this and we need to protect this institution. We cannot have three retired officers run the elections in this manner. We will get all the parties together demanding reforms in the functioning of EC. We need to do this for our democracy. The current situation can't be allowed to prevail, it is very dangerous for our Republic.

With Trinamool's victory in Bengal, DMK's victory in Tamil Nadu superimposed against the recent electoral reverses that the Congress has had in Bihar, Bengal, Kerala and Assam, one is forced to ask can it continue to lead the Opposition?

■ What the Congress needs to do is up to them. I am not in a position to give them advice. Our first priority, as I said earlier, is to focus on how to tackle COVID in Bengal. Our next priority is to rebuild our team both at the organisation level and in government.

Let me reframe the question. Is Mamata Banerjee going to be the pivot of Opposition unity?

■ We are not putting up our hand like that. We want the other Opposition parties to believe that if you do good work over a period of time and you have the self-belief, Modi-Shah's BJP can be defeated. They are not invincible.

In fact, I will also say that this is a bigger victory than the 2011 one. In 2011, Trinamool unseated a government that had been in power for 34 years. So the anti-incumbency against the Left government also worked in our favour. In this election we defended our ground and our 10 years of governance. And our vote percentage has only gone up.

But having said all this, let me also add Mamata Banerjee was the first leader to call out demonetisation. She said yes to GST, but pointed out right at the outset that the implementation was all wrong. She has credibility and consistency. We are a national party which is strong in one region.

What are the national implications of these elections?

■ A friend sent me a message two months ago which aptly sums up the implication of these results.

He wrote, "Go, win this for 'yourselves'. Go, win this for 'Bengal'. Go, win this for 'us'."

Trinamool Congress bags 213, BJP 77

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA**

The Trinamool Congress won 213 of the 292 Assembly seats that went to the polls in West Bengal, according to the final results announced by the Election Commission of India. This the highest-ever tally of the party. It received 47.9% of the votes, an all-time high. In 2016, it won 211 seats, with a vote share of 44.9%.

The BJP won 77 seats, registering a 38.1% vote share. The Samyukt Morcha got one seat, with the Indian Secular Front or the Rashtriya Secular Majlis Party, winning in Bhangar in South 24 Parganas. Independent R.S. Lepcha, belonging to the Binay Tamang faction of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha won from Kalimpong.

This will be the first time since 1962 that the Left parties will have no representation in the House.

The CPI(M) received just 4.73% votes.

Why no recount, asks Mamata

Trinamool to challenge Nandigram result, says Returning Officer under threat

**SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA**

Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee on Monday said her party will approach the court on the Nandigram election results.

Speaking to presspersons outside her residence, Ms. Banerjee claimed that the Returning Officer for Nandigram did not order a recount of votes as he feared for his life.

While Ms. Banerjee lost from Nandigram, Trinamool won 213 of the 292 seats that went to the polls in West Bengal.

"Everywhere there is one result; at one place it is different. Where did the 8,000 votes lead disappear? Then suddenly the server went slow for four hours, and then there was load shedding for 40 minutes. They have changed many things, including machines," Ms. Banerjee alleged.

She raised questions on why the Election Commis-



Fresh round: Trinamool supremo Mamata Banerjee meeting West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar. ■ PTI

sion refused a recounting of votes. "Anyone can demand recounting of votes. What stake has the Election Commission to deny re-counting," Ms. Banerjee asked.

'Life under threat'

Ms. Banerjee also shared a powerful message that the Returning Officer allegedly sent to an acquaintance,

stating that his life was under threat. "Look at the situation – the RO says there is a threat to his life if he orders a re-counting," she said, as she asked a journalist to read it out.

"Sir, it is not in my purview. Sir, Plz save me. My family will be ruined. I have no other option, but to commit suicide. Life threat is com-

Satisfied with Bengal result: Vijayvargiya

He accuses Trinamool of wreaking violence on BJP workers in several parts of State

**NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI**

A day after the Trinamool Congress won the election in West Bengal, BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya said he was "personally satisfied" with the party's tally that had gone up to 76 from three in the previous election.

He accused the Trinamool of wreaking violence on BJP workers in several parts of the State. "There is anarchy and our people are being attacked and five of them were killed. Some were even chased out of polling centres during the counting," he told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Vijayvargiya, the party in-charge of West Bengal, attributed many reasons for its loss in the State. He asserted that the most important one seemed to be "the surrender of the Congress and the Communist Party of India", especially after the letter by Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar just be-

C With the Congress and Left not having a single MLA, the BJP will be the official party of Opposition in the House and we will occupy a big space of oppositional politics in the State. We promise to be a constructive Opposition
**KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA
BJP LEADER**

and support from women, but said this was more because of her campaign on a wheelchair than speeches by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "She did get sympathy from women for campaigning from a wheelchair which, by the way, she abandoned yesterday evening after winning the polls," he said.

'Close contest'

Mr. Vijayvargiya insisted that in "at least 65 seats" there was a close contest between the BJP and Trinamool candidates, when asked on whether an overdependence

on Trinamool turncoats queered the pitch for the BJP. Many Trinamool turncoats, even former Ministers in the Mamata Banerjee government, lost this time.

"I am personally satisfied by the performance of the party. With the Congress and Left not having a single MLA, the BJP, with 76 MLAs, will be the official party of Opposition in the House and we will occupy a big space of oppositional politics in the State. We promise to be a constructive Opposition. But the Trinamool should restrain its cadre from killing and wounding our people. Even the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) office in Kolkata has been vandalised, let alone some of our offices in the interiors," he said.

The BJP, he stated, would do a detailed "sameksha" (review) of the reasons for the loss. But now, the immediate issue was the security of the party cadre, he added.

He admitted that Ms. Banerjee got much sympathy

for the polls announcing the support of many Opposition parties to Trinamool.

"The heart went out of the Congress and the CPI(M) campaigns after that, with even Rahul Gandhi keeping away, albeit stating that it was due to the COVID-19 second wave. This led to a direct transfer of at least 9% vote from these parties to Trinamool," he said, a reference to a huge minority consolidation behind Trinamool, which swept the Congress and Left strongholds as well.

He admitted that Ms. Banerjee got much sympathy

for the polls announcing the support of many Opposition parties to Trinamool.

Mr. Vijayvargiya insisted that in "at least 65 seats" there was a close contest between the BJP and Trinamool candidates, when asked on whether an overdependence

A step towards self-reliance

The Defence Acquisition Procedure is aimed at helping the country gain a stronger foothold on its production of arms and reduce dependence on external agencies



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Economically, this has led to the rise of the import bill for India which in turn contributes to the rising Current Account Deficit. Further, India procures 60% of its weapon systems from foreign markets which increases its strategic vulnerability. Considering the geopolitical situation around the Indian borders, external dependence and extra dependence on a single player is also worrisome. Hence India needs a solid indigenous defence manufacturing capacity.

Indigenisation would help in furthering the objectives of 'Make in India' in the intermediate term which is in accordance with the 'Atmanirbhav Bharat Initiative' of the government. In the long run, it would take India closer to its dream of 'Make for the World'.

In 2018, the government rose to this occasion and initiated iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) in order to contribute towards the modernisation of the defence industry. iDEX aims to promote innovation and technology development in the areas of defence and aerospace while simultaneously engaging MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia.

This results in concerns of various dimensions for India, including economic, geopolitical, and strategic.

In 2019, the government decided to set up defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu

defence goods and services by 2025; but that is yet to be finalised.

Nevertheless, the execution necessitates a transformative reset. Intent, unquestionably, is good but the intent for execution needs to be better. The multiple stakeholders, viz. private players, both domestic and foreign, need to be apprised about the requirements of the Armed Forces so they are better prepared to realise the goal of indigenisation.

What we have acquired in the space sector needs to be replicated in defence as well.

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BJP begins consultation on next Assam Chief Minister

Himanta Biswa Sarma is seen as a contender for the post

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The BJP on Monday indicated that central observers may be sent to Assam in a day or two, even as internal consultations began on how to determine who would be the next Chief Minister.

The BJP returned to power in Assam with Sarbananda Sonowal as the Chief Minister, but his colleague and campaign powerhouse, Himanta Biswa Sarma, is also seen as a contender for the chair, with the party never clearing the air during the election whether Mr. Sonowal would continue at the helm.

That ambiguity, even from senior leaders, through the campaign fuelled speculation that change might be in the air.

BJP sources said its parliamentary board may soon name central observers to preside over the meeting of



All smiles: AGP president Atul Bora, left, greeting BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati on Monday. ■ PTI

its newly elected party MLAs in Guwahati where they will pick their leader.

The observers generally convey the choice of the top brass to the State leadership which, in turn, is endorsed by the MLAs.

The party won 74 seats, along with its allies the Asom Gana Parishad and the Unit-

ed People's Party Liberal. Mr. Sonowal, from upper Assam, is a long-time BJP man, while Mr. Sarma has been the lynchpin of many of the party's alliances in the northeast. He was at the forefront of handling the COVID-19 pandemic which many attribute as contributing to the BJP's victory.

The observers generally convey the choice of the top brass to the State leadership which, in turn, is endorsed by the MLAs.

The party won 74 seats, along with its allies the Asom Gana Parishad and the Unit-

BJP's image dented: Chidambaram

'Opportune moment for Opposition to come together and take on BJP'

**AMIT BARUAH
SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI**

The Narendra Modi government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has dented the image of the BJP as a party that is fit to run a Central government and impacted the Assembly election result, former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said in an interview to *The Hindu* on Monday.

He said the Opposition and the regional parties managing to defeat the BJP in three of the four States can be the starting point for them to come together to take it on at the national level.

Talking about the Congress's performance in the elections, the veteran leader said the issue was not so much about leadership as it was about addressing the organisational weaknesses, something that the group of 23 (G-23) letter writers had

pointed out to party chief Sonia Gandhi. "What is lacking is organisation. The leadership, as we have it, must get down to address the nuts and bolts of organisation."

He also suggested that national parties such as the Congress should reinvent themselves by empowering State-level leaders in terms of decision-making and claimed that the BJP, which currently centralises decision-making, too will pay a price for adopting a top-heavy approach.

"Well, I can't really pinpoint the reason why West Bengal election results turned out the way they are but I know that travelling the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu and being in close touch with the people over the last five months in preparation for elections, the pandemic and the sharp deterioration in the last two months has completely dented the image of the BJP as a doer, and *Modi Hain toh Mumkin Hain* [It's possible to do with Mr. Modi] has been exploded. He and his Ministers have proved themselves to be completely incompetent. So that played a major part in Tamil Nadu and I assume that would have been a major factor in the people."

(Scan QR code to watch the full interview)



P. Chid

Pfizer seeks expedited nod for its vaccine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Pfizer is in discussions with the government for an expedited approval pathway to make Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine available, its chief Albert Bourla said on Monday, while stating that the firm is donating medicines worth \$70 million (over ₹510 crore) for treatment of COVID-19 patients.

"We are deeply concerned by the critical COVID-19 situation in India, and our hearts go out to you, your loved ones and all the people of India," he said in a mail sent to Pfizer India employees that he posted on LinkedIn.

"Right now, Pfizer colleagues at distribution centres in the U.S., Europe and Asia are hard at work rushing shipments of Pfizer medicines that the Government of India has identified as part of its COVID treatment protocol," Mr. Bourla said. "Unfortunately, our vaccine is not registered in India though our application was submitted months ago. We are discussing with the Indian government an expedited approval pathway to make our Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine available for use in the country," he said.

However he did not say how much money was spent.

The partnership between the two organisations involves 12 activities that include clinical and preclinical studies. Five of these were funded entirely by Bharat Biotech.

The activities funded by the ICMR were: isolating the

ICMR to get royalty from sale of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin

The partnership MoU also includes a clause on prioritising in-country supply

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

The intellectual property governing the use of Covaxin, jointly developed by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research, was "shared" and the ICMR would receive royalty payments, the organisation confirmed to *The Hindu*.



Vital vial: Covaxin was the second vaccine candidate to be granted emergency use authorisation in India. ■ AP

Biotech: Candidate vaccine development, preclinical safety and toxicity studies in small animals (rats, mice and rabbits), phase-1 clinical trials including funding of sites, hiring Clinical Research Organisation (CRO) for trial monitoring, insurance, laboratory testing; phase 2 clinical trials including funding of sites, hiring CRO for trial monitoring, insurance, laboratory testing and all other logistics and hiring a CRO for phase-3 trial monitoring, insurance and laboratory testing.

The activities funded by the ICMR were: isolating the

SARS-CoV-2 virus from a "huge number" of clinical samples, passage testing and confirmation; BSL-3 facility validation of BBIL for Covaxin production; vaccine strain characterisation by ELISA tests, electron microscopy, next generation sequencing; testing serum samples from preclinical studies in small animals; preclinical safety and efficacy in golden Syrian hamsters and preclinical safety and efficacy studies in rhesus macaques (monkeys); testing sera of Covaxin vaccinated individuals for U.K. strain, Brazil strain, South African strain and

double mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2; U.K. variant virus isolation and characterisation, titration, sequencing from clinical specimens and funding the site for the phase 3 clinical trial.

Vaccine pricing

Covishield constitutes over 90% of the country's vaccine supply so far and has been developed as partnership between the Oxford University and AstraZeneca. Serum Institute of India is one among the many manufacturers in the world with a production licence and has to pay royalty to a foreign company. Covaxin on the other hand is almost entirely indigenous and yet is priced higher than Covishield. Both are so far being bought by the Central government for ₹150 a dose. However, Covishield was first offered to States at ₹400 a dose and ₹600 to private hospitals and Covaxin was offered at ₹600 for State governments and at ₹1,200 for private hospitals.

Later Covishield's price was reduced to ₹300 a dose for States and Covaxin reduced theirs to ₹400.

Adequate oxygen available, says Home Ministry official

Govt. working to transport supplies to hospitals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A senior official of the Ministry of Home Affairs said on Monday that there was adequate oxygen supply available in the country, despite the recent spike in demand.

Speaking during the government's briefing on the COVID-19 situation, MHA Additional Secretary Piyush Goyal said he wanted to "reassure all citizens, that despite the increase in oxygen demand, there is adequate supply of oxygen in the country". He added that the government was importing oxygen to meet future needs.

Mr. Goyal said the government was working on the transportation of oxygen from production centres to hospitals. He said the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had developed a real-time tracking system for oxygen tankers. He said States and Union Territories were provided air-lifting facilities for oxygen tankers by the Air Force as many times as they demanded in the past two weeks.

Bengal are showing an increasing trend in daily cases.

"However, these are very early signals and this is too early to analyse the situation. It is important to have continued efforts of containment at district and state level so that we can preserve these gains and reduce cases further," he said.

There are 22 states where the positivity rate is more than 15% and in nine states the positivity rate is between 5 to 15% and five States it is less than 5%.

drive for 18-44 year olds from May 1.

Later during the briefing, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (Delhi) director Randeep Guleria cautioned against the "misuse" of CT scans and biomarker tests.

He said CT scans should not be done for mild cases and added that radiation from one CT scan of the chest was equivalent to 300-400 X-rays.

NEET-PG put off for four months

Interns to be on COVID-19 duty

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Entrance-cum-Eligibility Test (NEET) for postgraduate medical admissions have been postponed by at least four months, the Union government announced on Monday. It said medical interns would be deployed for COVID-19 management duties to address the increasing human resource requirement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the human resource need for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government said in a statement.

"Many important decisions were taken which will significantly boost the availability of medical personnel on COVID duty," the statement said.

The NEET-PG would not be held till August 31 at least. "Students will also be given at least a month's notice before the exam is conducted. This will make a large number of qualified doctors available for COVID duties. It was also decided to allow deployment of medical interns in COVID-19 management duties under the supervision of their faculty, as



Final-year MBBS students are to be deployed in COVID-19 management

part of the internship rotation," it said.

Final-year MBBS students could be deployed for services such as teleconsultation and monitoring of mild COVID-19 cases, the statement said.

Nurses with B.Sc./GNM qualifications may be deployed for full-time COVID-9 duty, it noted.

The individuals providing services in COVID management will be given priority in forthcoming regular government recruitments after they complete a minimum of 100 days of COVID duty," it read.

All such health professionals would be covered under the government's insurance scheme for healthcare workers engaged in COVID-19 care, it added.

HC seeks Centre's reply on Remdesivir

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Centre and several pharmaceutical companies to respond to a petition seeking that all manufacturers of Remdesivir, used in COVID-19 treatment, be allowed to sell it in the domestic market.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh issued notice to the Health Ministry, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, Director General of Foreign Trade and various firms such as Cipla, Zydus and Cadila.

Maharashtra reported 48,621 infections, followed by Kerala (44,438), and Uttar Pradesh (29,192). Maharashtra

U.S. only other country to go over this number

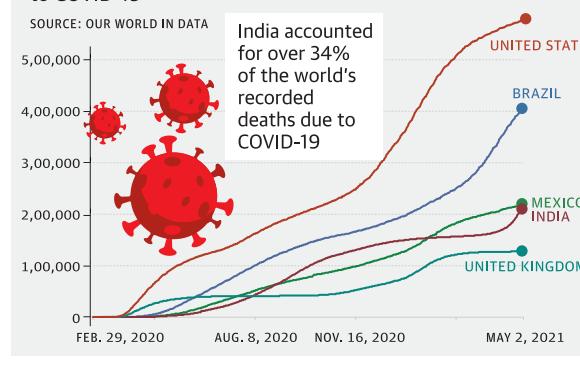
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

With 3,55,836 new cases until 11.30 p.m. on Monday, India's cumulative COVID-19 tally crossed 2 crore and stood at 2,02,75,699. The U.S. is the only other country to have crossed this mark. The country also recorded 3,434 deaths due to COVID-19, taking the toll to 2,22,381.

Over 15 lakh tests were conducted on Sunday (re-

Rising toll | India on Sunday became the country with the third-highest cumulative death toll globally due to COVID-19



tra also recorded 567 casualties, followed by Delhi (448) and Uttar Pradesh (288).

Results of which were made available on Monday.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Ladakh. The data are sourced

Tanzanian diplomat dies of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A Tanzanian official has become the first foreign diplomat to die of COVID-19 in India. The High Commission of Tanzania announced that Col. Dr. Moses Beatus Mlula, Defence Adviser of Tanzania, died on April 28 at the Base Hospital, Delhi Cantonment.

It is learnt that the diplomat was taken to a private hospital in the capital on April 27 but could not be admitted because of heavy rush. He was taken to the Base Hospital where he passed away the next day.

Centre says fresh vaccine orders issued for three months

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

The Centre on Monday said it had placed fresh orders for COVID-19 vaccines to be produced during May, June and July. The government's statement came in the wake of an interview given to the U.K.-based *Financial Times* by Adar Poonawalla, chief executive officer of the Serum Institute of India, that said

"there were no new orders" from the government and the vaccine shortage would continue till July.

A Union Health Ministry statement clarified that "100% advance of ₹1,732.50 crore [₹1,699.50 cr. after TDS] was released to the SII on April 28 for 110 million [11 crore] doses of 'Covishield' vaccine [to be produced] during May, June and July,

and was received by them on the same day. As on date, against the last order of 100 million [10 crore] doses for supplies of the 'Covishield' vaccine, 87.5 million [8.744 crore] doses have been delivered till May 3". The SII tweeted that the Ministry's statement was correct. Mr. Poonawalla tweeted that his earlier comments may have been misinterpreted.

Serum Institute of India set to invest £240 million in U.K.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the U.K.-India bilateral summit, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced £1 billion investment deals by Indian companies that will create 6,500 jobs in the U.K. The biggest in the investment deals is by the Serum Institute of India (SII) amounting to £240 million.

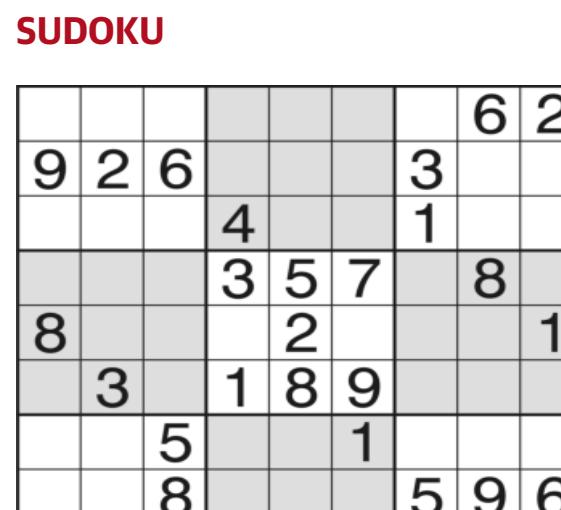
The investment by the SII is aimed at the firm's vaccine business in the U.K. and a new sales office, said an official statement.

"The sales office is expected to generate new business worth over \$1 billion, £200 million of which will be invested in the U.K. Serum's investment will support clinical trials, research and development and possibly ma-

nufacturing of vaccines," said the official statement.

As part of its plans, SII has already started phase one trials in the U.K. of a one-dose nasal vaccine for coronavirus, in partnership with Codagenix INC. Other prominent investment deals announced include ones with Infosys, Mphasis, Wipro, and Goila Butter Chicken, which will invest £3 million.

SUDOKU



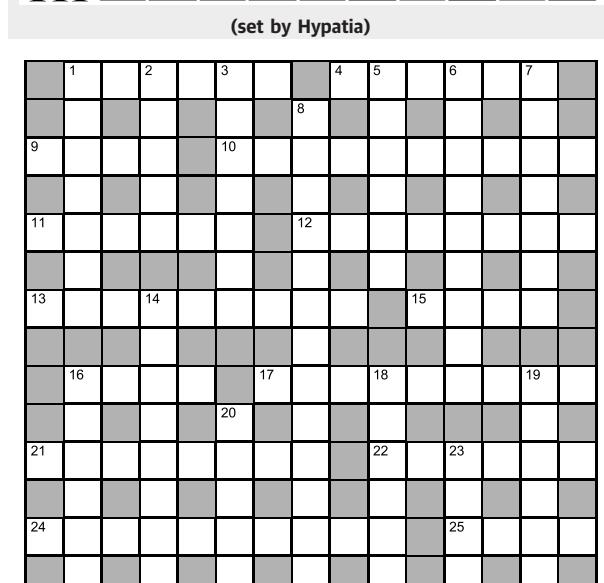
Solution to puzzle 13237



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

TH CROSSWORD + 13238

(set by Hypatia)



ACROSS

- Fuss about one child not finishing martial art (6)
- Restrain that woman blocking a politician (6)
- Every now and then, babies may roll over land (4)
- Lure in principle (6,4)
- Maiden seen possibly by husband on net (6)
- Criminal never had respect (8)

DOWN

- Upcoming street artist's drawing in school magazine (7)
- Jack took plain Vada Paav piece finally (5)
- Prepare girl who's organising competition among setters, say? (3,4)
- Flattering fellow left for shelter (6)
- Bird in painting, on top of grass amidst lions (9)
- Allowances getting large for bold associates (7)
- Abandoned sanctions over discussions (13)
- Pirate taking juice regularly may tuck into brew (9)
- You and I, say, start to see folks dealing with basket cases? (7)
- Blessed at last with love and married (7)
- Ignore gentle fights involving children, initially (7)
- Vulcan nonchalantly carries weapon (6)
- See bottles behind rope (5)

Display keystrokes of genius.
Type your answers into our online grids!

@ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



FAITH

Desika's pen picture

Bhooma Devi asked for Brahma's help, because She was overburdened. Brahma, Siva and the celestials approached Lord Narayana, who was reclining on the milky ocean. There Brahma worshipped the Lord by reciting Purushasukta. Purushasukta says that the world owes its very existence to Him. It is His mercy which is responsible for the world and the many life forms in it. The Lord has a certain attribute, which is so strong, that He cannot go against it. He is bound by it. That powerful characteristic of His is His daya, said V.S. Karunakarachariar, in a discourse. To appeal to that quality of daya, Brahma recited the Purushasukta. Srimad Bhagavatam says that the Lord's response was whispered by Him into Brahma's ears.

But Vedanta Desika, in his Yadavabhyudaya, says that everyone was blessed to have His darshan. And this is most appropriate, for after all, He was going to come as Krishna, and Krishna was most accessible to everyone. He is the Universal parent, father to everyone. And yet, Vasudeva and Nandagopa, were addressed by Him as 'father'. This too was one of His wonderful leelas. The Lord on the milky ocean is described by many poets, including Kalidas. But Kalidas does not talk about Garuda or Visvaksena. But in Desika's work, Garuda and Visvaksena are also mentioned. Garuda touches his shoulders, which have carried the Lord many a time, and wonders if there will be much fighting in the avatara the Lord is about to take. Visvaksena, stick in his hand, is engaged in crowd management! The Lord says that if any apsara maiden wants to be born in Gokula, she can do so. If anyone wants to take the form of a cow in Gokula, that too is possible. This too is His leela, for in no other avatara did He give such options to those around Him.

Solving three problems at once, Odisha startup Nexus Power uses crop remnants to create bio-organic, fast-charging batteries for electric vehicles

Reviving on residue



ANISHA MENEZES

An old Biochemistry book from their grandfather's library was the inspiration for Odisha-born sisters Nikita and Nishita Balsarsingh to create an electric vehicle (EV) battery from crop residue. "It is still so clear in my mind. There was a statement that read, 'Proteins may have potential benefits in electrolytes'. That was the turning point. We pushed ourselves into continuous research and development and founded Nexus Power in April 2019," recalls Nikita.

Rewind to 2016, the EV sector was in its infancy with great potential but skewed demand. Buyers were not convinced of the efficacy of an EV battery over a traditional one. "This gap in the demand and supply forced us to investigate the root cause for the scepticism. Some of the main concerns were long charging time, high prices, and a paucity of local sources to procure lithium, and of course, the toxicity."

According to a report by The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) in November 2020, a total of 5,30,560 EVs (two-wheelers, three-wheelers, cars, and buses) were sold in India. The Balsarsingh sisters aim to take EVs across vehicle segments. The current market caters mainly to low-speed electric two wheelers that use lithium. Nikita elaborates, "We spent almost six months only on theoretical research on bio-organic batteries. Our first prototype was built at home during the lockdown with simple household objects."

The biodegradable batteries are fashioned from crop residue. "A cell

India's Electric Vehicle Transition- A CEEW and Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation Report - Nov 2020

30	% EV sales by 2030, combined with a higher share of public transport would lead to a
31	% reduction in oil imports (worth ₹2,16,043 crore)
36	% in carbon monoxide (CO) emissions
28	% in nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions
29	% in particulate matter (PM) emissions
20	% in greenhouse gas emissions
India's 2030 vision of e-mobility (ie 70% of all commercial cars, 30% of private cars, 40% of buses, and 80% of two-wheeler (2W) and three-wheeler (3W) sales to be electric by 2030) translates into 102 million EVs.	

consists of three structural elements - the cathode, anode and electrolyte. Our process of manufacturing plays with the chemistry of the cell and builds all these elements with nanodot proteins derived from crop residue. Our batteries are lithium ion-free. We procure the crop remains from local farmers, and by applying a unique extraction and filtration process, we manufacture rechargeable energy storing EV cells out of it," explains Nikita.

The materials used at Nexus are derived from natural compounds, which are either underutilised or wasted by other industries. Procurement of crop waste helps the farmers in earning an additional income of ₹25,000 for every 100 batteries. The manufacturing process has been designed to ensure no element of the environment is exploited.

"We emphasise having a sustainable manufacturing process with a zero-waste model. The production of our batteries creates bio-fertiliser as by-products, which we intend to return to the market to facilitate a favourable agricultural yield. That way we ensure a circular and viable green model," Nikita adds.

Looking to investors
While Nexus is built on sharp technology and lofty targets, the company is mostly bootstrapped. The fledgling company has received two fellowship grants of about ₹10 lakh from the Indian Government under its TIDE and NIDHI PRAYAS programme and through KIIT TBI (Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology- Technology

Business Incubator), Bhubaneswar. While the EV sector is ripe for investment, most investors look to the lithium battery market.

Nikita is confident, however, that Indian consumers are ready for a "truly green" battery. "The major differentiator for Nexus is that ours is a truly 'Made in India', fast-charging battery, which aims to make electric mobility more affordable and efficient."

The batteries charge eight to 10 times faster than conventional ones and last 20% to 30% longer. "Most importantly, once the batteries die, they can be recycled at no extra cost, which is not the case with the regular EV offerings.

Made out of bio-degradable material, the cells rule out toxicity hazards and using crop residue ensures that some of it is not burnt, which in turn protects from deterioration of air quality. Our entire process is energy efficient and sustainable," says Nishita.

The siblings have their eye on the new entrants in EV market. "Given a chance, Nexus would love to collaborate with big offerings such as Tesla and Indian vehicle makers like Tata, Mahindra, Hero and others. We are hopeful of collaborations with multiple two-wheeler EV manufacturers across the Asian region for our pilot programme, scheduled for Q3 or Q4 of 2021. A slightly long-term plan would be to develop Nexus batteries for four-wheelers and commercial e-vehicles. We also want to cater to the mobile phone and consumer electronics industry in the future," concludes Nikita.

REVIEW

An affordable all-for-one

The Samsung Galaxy A52 comes at the right time — when everyone is trying to stay budget-conscious but wants the experience of a premium smartphone

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

The best smartphones these days are not defined by individual features such as a production-standard camera, a television-like screen resolution, a long-haul battery, and disruptive design. The real challenge for mobile phone companies these days is to surprise consumers with relatively low prices for progressive technologies. One such example is the Galaxy A52 from Samsung.

The Galaxy A52 is a follow-up from the popular Galaxy A51 series which was a best-seller last year. This recent release resembles the flagship Galaxy S21 but has a sportier design in terms of finish. Our review device was in Awesome Violet and at just 189 grams, it is much lighter than the other Galaxy devices.

The 6.5-inch Infinity-O Display for the Galaxy A52 5G has an Eye Comfort Shield that comes with the Galaxy S21 series. This is like the regular blue light filter but it comes with a special algorithm will adjust your screen's colour depending on various factors, such as how bright it is outside.

The Galaxy A52 5G's 120 frames per second refresh rate with the Qualcomm Snapdragon 750G together sell home the smooth display, without eating into the 4500mAh battery life. However, do not expect an adaptive refresh rate with this device; it is an 'either-or' situation which you have to manually control. This is hardly a compromise, unless you are a smartphone gamer.

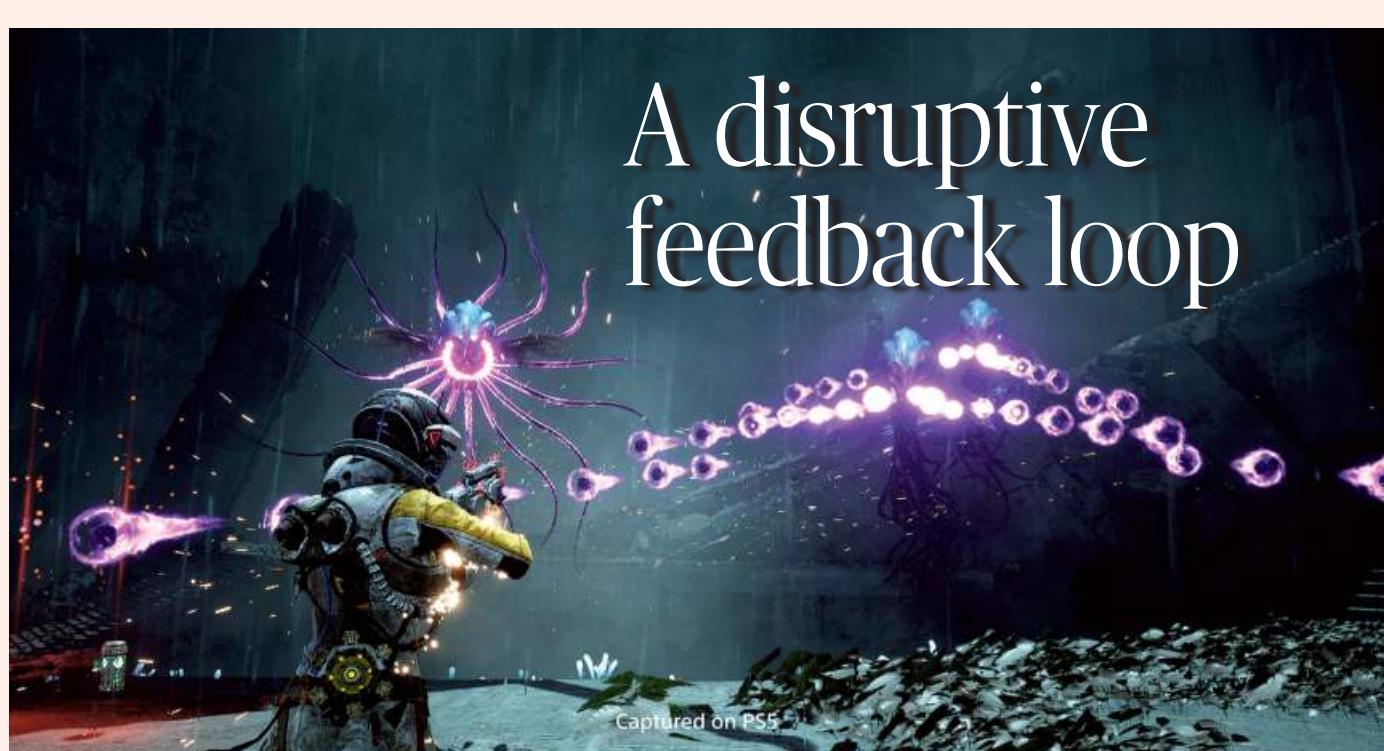
Photography and videography on the Galaxy A52 is a real treat; one can either go high-res on the 64-megapixel main camera with Optical Image Stabilisation, or macro with the dedicated 5-megapixel (f/2.4) rear lens. The depth camera is ideal for those portrait or product shots, without too much blur to ruin the integrity of the composition. The ultra-wide lens is ideal for those small spaces, too.

The best part is, Galaxy A52 is equipped with SuperSteady, Samsung's native stabiliser for smooth moving shots while shooting video.

Though the Galaxy A52 5G promises and lives up to a lot of its features, there is still some overheating and the occasional lag during heavy-duty activities such as gaming and long video shoots. This smartphone is perfect for the basic everyday user who wants to have a device that does it all and not too much. With its starting price of ₹27,999, this is not too bad.

The Samsung Galaxy A52 •
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Never-ending thrills Screenshot from Returnal video game • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

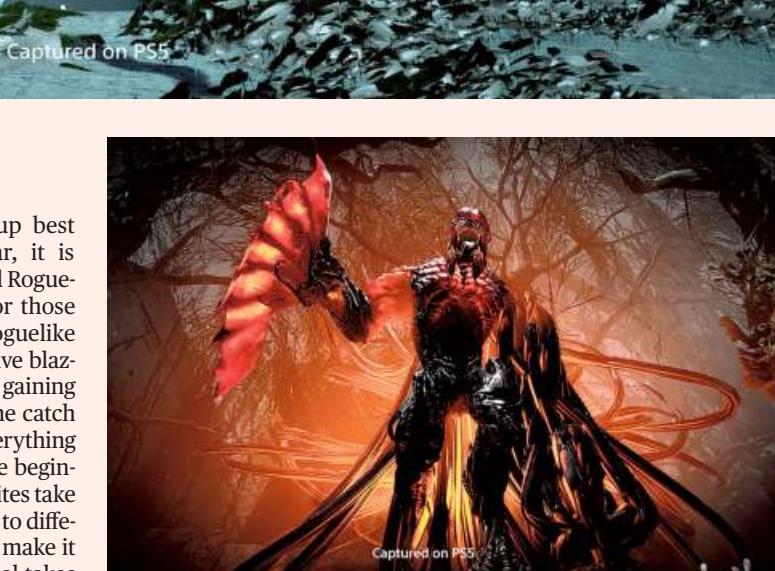


GAMESPOT

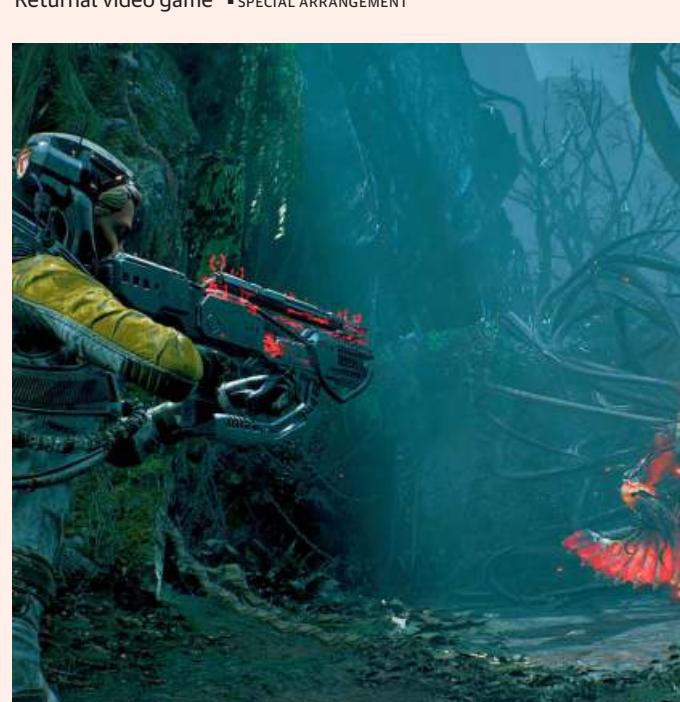
JULIAN ALMEIDA

Sony's latest first-party game is a bullet hell Roguelike that is equal parts satisfying, frustrating, addictive and a dream to control on the DualShock 5's adaptive triggers.

A disruptive feedback loop



Captured on PS5
out like Tom Cruise's Edge of Tomorrow, and if you watched Love Death + Robots' episode 'Beyond the Aquila Rift', it will strike a chord here. You play an



and the ever changing Atropos. If you have ever seen the first Alien movie or Prometheus by Ridley Scott, Atropos looks like it has jumped right out of the planet where they discovered the Derelict. Replacing H.R. Giger's organic art with fairly generic architecture, the mood is still there, as every area is shrouded in a thick mist, with all sorts of creatures. This game is a study in great environmental storytelling.

Fight the fight
Gameplay-wise, Returnal is a cross between Control, Contra and Hades. Being a bullet hell game, you dodge various patterns of glowing orbs and fireballs shot by various aliens while

you pick up various bullet trajectories to kill enemies in fun ways. It is the same here, except the game throws a lot of customisation options to help keep things fresh.

On every run you get to equip parasites (creatures that serve up both functions and malfunctions) so it is up to you to gauge

RETURNAL
DEVELOPER: Housemarque
PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Entertainment
PRICE: ₹4,999 on PlayStation 5

the risks. The goal is to blaze through the levels, which are familiar areas arranged differently every time, with certain goals in mind.

If you die, you repeat the level from the starting point at your ship with nothing. You can retain some permanent abilities, half the fun is finding that perfect build for each session. Returnal, in this sense, has you literally playing safe even in bullet hell.

It may sound frustrating and it sometimes is, especially when you think you are in a good spot and the boss just obliterates you. However, what will keep you returning is the fast and responsive shooting and dodge mechanics. The DualShock 5's adaptive triggers seal the deal here, and after this I cannot go back to a normal controller. Each gun is tactile, and the left trigger has a dual aim-and-fire mode; holding down gives you a tactile click and it switches to a powerful Alt-Fire. A feather touch will go into aim mode, which takes getting used to but always has me coming back.

Being a next-gen PlayStation 5 exclusive, Returnal looks gorgeous, playing at an even 60 frames per second at 4K. The dark levels and bio-luminous creatures look great, but it is hard to make out fatal falls, leading to some embarrassing deaths.

Returnal, making you want a PS5 even more, is a clever mix of genres that blend well. While at times it could be a frustrating endeavour, the rinse-repeat structure does not go stale.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel

SHONALI MUTHALALY

"Zoo life was very cosmopolitan. I grew up with Gujarati friends. And the realisation of being Jewish. So I was really inhabiting three worlds," says author Esther David, over a call from Ahmedabad.

Her latest book, *Bene Appétit: The Cuisine of the Indian Jews*, published by HarperCollins, opens with the lines "Food is memory. Food is culture. Food bonds families and communities." Hence, in the face of a rapidly fading collective memory of the Indian Jewish experience, Esther decided it was time to travel across the country to record their traditions. In the process, she uncovered closely guarded recipes for dishes such as chick-cha-halva, jumping potatoes, agar agar jelly and even a Jewish biryani.

But you are still thinking about the zoo, aren't you? Esther's unconventional childhood was thanks to her father Reuben David, a self-taught veterinarian and influential conservationist who created the Kankaria Zoo in Ahmedabad and was awarded the Padma Shri in 1975.

"My father decided that religion was not really necessary. So yes, we were told we were Jews. But there was no orthodoxy," she says, explaining that she imbibed the idea of being a Bene Israel Jew in "bits and pieces". She adds, "A lot was forgotten. But relatives would come from Israel. Jewish friends would arrive with chick-cha-halwa a fudgy, labour intensive sweet made with whole wheat, coconut milk, nuts and raisins. I would come across a prayer book in Marathi, Hebrew and English... All this made me think about what it meant to be Jewish."

Tracing roots

From 50,000 Jews who lived in India till the 1940s, there are only 5,000 families left.

They form five main communities: The Bene Israel Jews of Western India, the Cochin Jews of Kerala, the Baghdadi Jews of Kolkata, the Bene Ephraim Jews of Andhra Pradesh, and the Bene Menashe Jews of Manipur and Mizoram.

"All these communities found ways to adapt local recipes and ingredients, in

Eating history



Author Esther David travels across India, collaborating with Jewish communities to learn how to cook traditional, closely guarded recipes for her new book, *Bene Appétit: The Cuisine of the Indian Jews*

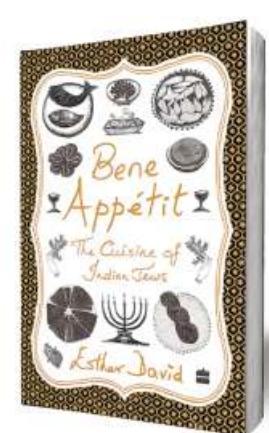
keeping with our dietary laws. Meat must be kosher and you cannot eat it with dairy – so you cannot even put ghee on a *chappati*," says Esther.

To record the recipes from each community, Esther travelled to synagogues and Jewish homes across the country, starting with Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

"Everywhere people were really wonderful. There is a fraternity, a family feeling. They were not only happy to cook these recipes for me, but also to translate and write them down."

While most of the recipes are simple, with tweaks, like using coconut milk instead of dairy in keeping with Jewish dietary laws, the collection is also a fascinating account of a diaspora that blended into India harmoniously, yet managed to retain a unique identity.

"In India, it is difficult to find kosher meat, so many Jews here are vegetarian. When we have the fast of Yom Kippur, we break it with grape sherbet and sweet *puvis* in Gujarat. In Kerala, they eat rose cookies, or *achappam*. The law is it has to be something sweet and salty: and both fit exactly," says Esther,



does not consider herself a great cook, ("I am too impatient,") Esther still worked her way through the recipes in the book, with help. "Chick-cha-halwa is very difficult. You start at 5am and end at midnight," she says. "Now there are shortcuts, but that is another reason I thought I need to document the original recipes."

A sculptor and artist, Esther also drew the charming illustrations that punctuate the book and brighten its cover. Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2010 for English Literature, her previous novels focus on the Jewish experience in India.

Explaining why she decided to plunge into food writing, she says, "My sources are beginning to forget some of the older recipes. Everyone is now into quick cooking and fusion.... Our tastebuds are forgetting our heritage."

Esther's Jewish roots combined with her unorthodox upbringing proved to be the ideal recipe for *Bene Appétit*, since research involved sitting down at many dining tables. "Though there are many rules, my father lived in the land of the tigers," she laughs. "He was very particular that if someone invites you home, you should enjoy whatever they serve."

Esther's Jewish roots combined with her unorthodox upbringing proved to be the ideal recipe for *Bene Appétit*, since research involved sitting down at many dining tables. "Though there are many rules, my father lived in the land of the tigers," she laughs. "He was very particular that if someone invites you home, you should enjoy whatever they serve."

What's for supper? Illustrations from the book; the book cover of *Bene Appétit: The Cuisine of the Indian Jews*; (inset) Esther David

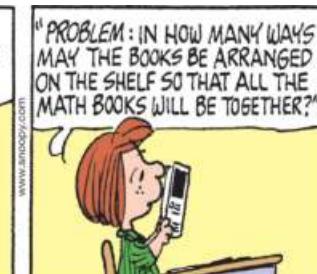
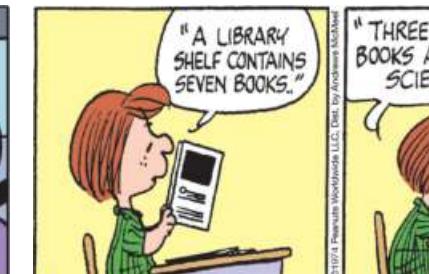
ESTHER DAVID



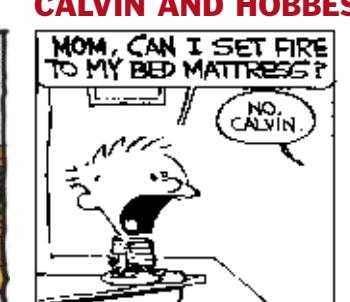
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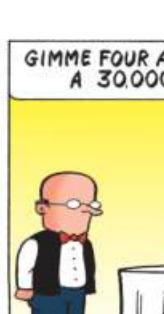
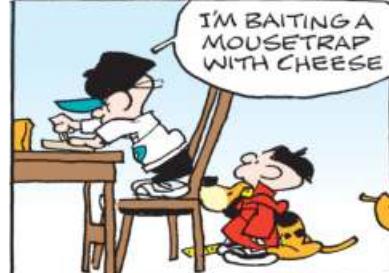
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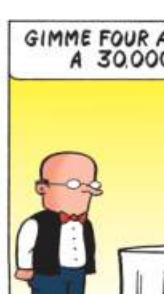
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Connecting the dots

Prof Mrityunjay Tiwary teaches a business elective at IIM-Lucknow using board games



Play-way learning Professor Mrityunjay Tiwary in a class at IIM Lucknow ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

Nikhil Chandra, who graduated from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow this year, was excited about the Business Simulation in his final semester for the simple reason that it involved board games, which he used to play with his cousins as a kid. His was the first batch to have the elective.

Instead of listening to lectures or watching PowerPoint presentations, which Nikhil did in most other classes, in Business Simulation, he played Monopoly and other games. At the end of each class, Professor Mrityunjay Tiwary would connect the games to the business subjects Nikhil and his batchmates were learning.

Jellybean Singh, another student who opted for the elective, says, "The classes used to stretch for probably six to seven hours. But I never really complained about it because it was a lot of fun."

The elective was awarded the campus' Most Unconventional Course last year. Along with fun and games, there is a lot of practical learning, too, says Jellybean. "We have case studies, we have an internship [in our curriculum]. But if you talk about applying the concepts we learn, this is the closest that comes to having a practical subject."

Mrityunjay, during his PhD days at IIM Bangalore six years ago, was more of an outdoor sports guy. His friends, however, were board game buffs.

"At repeated requests, I joined one of the board game meetups in Bangalore," he says, "Then, I used to tag along with my friends when they played. Gradually, I got interested."

The idea of using board games to teach, however, occurred to him just two years ago after playing with his friends. "We usually discuss the game for a minute or two – about our mistakes and other things. So, I just realised that I was talking about some of the concepts that I studied in the management curriculum and that is when it occurred to me to reverse engineer this experience and design a course that uses board games to simulate the application of management concepts."

Mrityunjay spent the next one-and-a-half years putting the course together. It wasn't easy, he says. "These games are made for fun. But here, the objective is to learn. So, I had to tweak the rules of these games and introduce variations."

C The management liked the concept and they approved the budget. But this course also needed a little bit of freedom from our regulations

MRITYUNJAY TIWARY

With volunteers, he conducted numerous trials before launching the course.

There were logistical challenges too. The games are typically made for four or five people. But Mrityunjay's classes had 25 to 60 students. So, he had to alter the single-player games to team games. "It also brought in team dynamics to the course. I could see it made a significant difference; teams lost because of their infighting," he explains.

What about convincing the management?

"They liked the concept. They approved the budget for getting the games and a few other props I required. But this course also needed a little bit of freedom from our regulations. For example, a standard class duration is one-and-a-half hours. And, a game takes about four hours. And, the game has to be played in one stretch. The maximum I was allowed was three hours. But after the first year of the course went well, the management has allowed four-and-a-half hours, so there is enough time for a game followed by a discussion."

Except for Monopoly, Mrityunjay does not divulge the games he uses for teaching. "I want the novelty of the course to be preserved," he says. But this is how it works: the class is divided into groups. Each group has a CEO. The games are complex enough that the CEO cannot keep track of everything. So, there is a distribution of duties. And, each move is made after a discussion.

"These sessions don't teach them new concepts," Mrityunjay explains, "Rather, it helps them apply the concepts they have learnt in this simulated situation." Which is why the elective is available only in the last semester of the course.

With the COVID situation worsening in India, institutions might have to continue teaching online for most of this year too. Mrityunjay's Business Simulation, however, cannot be taught online.

"It's important to see the props, discuss freely with your teammates and opposition... All this won't be possible online," he says.

Embrace diplomacy, Blinken tells N. Korea

At G7 meet, U.S., Japan and S. Korea agree to work 'towards denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday asked North Korea to embrace diplomacy as he briefed allies on a new U.S. strategy that stresses low-key progress rather than Donald Trump's pageantry.

In London for the first in-person Group of Seven (G7) meetings in two years, Mr. Blinken consulted his counterparts from Japan and South Korea on President Joe Biden's new approach, which has already been denounced by Pyongyang.

The State Department said that Mr. Blinken and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi "shared their concerns about North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes" in their meeting.

They agreed to work together, along with Japan's sometime rival South Korea, "towards denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula," a



Balancing act: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, with S. Korea's Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong in London. ■ REUTERS

statement said.

"I hope that North Korea will take the opportunity to engage diplomatically and to see if there are ways to move forward toward the objective of complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula," Mr. Blinken said after meeting his U.K. counterpart Dominic Raab later.

"It is, I think, up to North Korea to decide whether it wants to engage or not on that basis," he said.

Alluding to North Korea's

initial reaction, Mr. Blinken said: "We'll look to see not only what North Korea says but what it actually does in the coming days and months."

He ordered an assessment of North Korea policy after taking over from Mr. Trump whose unusual, highly personalised diplomacy featured three made-for-television meetings with the totalitarian state's young leader Kim Jong-un.

Mr. Trump boasted that

he saved Asia from war and deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. But he was not able to secure a permanent agreement to end North Korea's nuclear programme or even, as the former President considered, to officially end the Korean War after seven decades.

Mr. Blinken acknowledged that successive administrations, including from his Democratic Party, had failed to achieve their goals with North Korea.

"What we have now is a policy that calls for a calibrated, practical approach that is open to and will explore diplomacy with North Korea to try to make practical progress," Mr. Blinken said.

South Korea's dovish government supported Mr. Trump's reconciliation with the North while Japan privately held concerns, fearing a deal under Mr. Trump would have sacrificed its security.

North Korea said on Sunday that the new U.S. approach was a "spurious signboard for covering up its hostile acts".

U.S. officials largely expected a dismissive first reaction from North Korea, which is known for strident statements, including in 2019 describing Mr. Biden as a "rabid dog" who "must be beaten to death with a stick".

The G7 Foreign Ministers are meeting for the first time since the start of the pandemic as concerns ease in many Western nations despite rising casualties in India and Brazil.

The three-day talks in London will set the stage for a leaders' summit next month in southwest England on what will be Mr. Biden's first foreign trip.

South Korea – as well as India, Australia, South Africa and ASEAN bloc chair Brunei – were invited as guests for meetings of the club of seven wealthy democracies.

Myanmar ethnic guerrillas say they shot down helicopter

Junta crackdown under way against the Kachin and Karen

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BANGKOK

An ethnic rebel group in northern Myanmar said it shot down a government military helicopter on Monday during heavy fighting over a strategic position.



Fierce clashes: Kachin Independence Army (KIA) fighters in Kachin province, in this file photo. ■ AFP

The country's ethnic minorities have been fighting for decades against the central government for greater autonomy.

Government offensive is under way against the Kachin and the Karen, another ethnic minority in eastern Myanmar that maintains its own armed force and also has been the target of air strikes. The fighting in Ka-

COVAX to buy 500 mn doses from Moderna

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

The COVAX global programme, which has relied heavily on AstraZeneca vaccines, said on Monday it has struck a deal to buy 500 million doses of Moderna's COVID-19 jabs.

The doses will broaden the portfolio of vaccines under COVAX, which seeks to ensure poor countries have equitable access to vaccines to combat the pandemic. Moderna is expected to start supplying the vaccines in the final quarter of 2021, with 34 million doses available before the end of the year, the scheme's co-leader Gavi announced in a statement.

Russia turns to China to make Sputnik V jabs to meet demand

It announced three deals for 260 mn jabs with Chinese firms

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TAIPEI

Earlier, criticism about Russia's vaccine have been largely quieted by data published in *The Lancet* that said large-scale testing showed it to be safe, with an efficacy rate of 91%.

Yet, experts have questioned whether Russia can fulfill its pledge to countries across the world. While pledging hundreds of millions of doses, it has only delivered a fraction.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said demand for Sputnik V significantly exceeds Russia's domestic production capacity.

To boost production, the

Russian Direct Investment Fund, which bankrolled Sputnik V, has signed agreements with drug makers in India, South Korea, Brazil, Serbia, Turkey, Italy and others. There are few indications, however, that manufacturers abroad, except for those in Belarus and Kazakhstan, have made any large amounts of the vaccine so far.

Airfinity, a U.K.-based science analytics company, estimates Russia agreed to supply 630 million doses of Sputnik V to over 100 countries, with only 11.5 million doses exported so far.

Assad to face two 'rivals' in May vote

Constitutional court, appointed by him, approves three out of 51 applications

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DAMASCUS

A Syrian Former Minister and a member of the Opposition will face Bashar al-Assad in this month's presidential election, the constitutional court said on Monday.

All 48 other applications

were ruled out for "failing to meet constitutional and legal requirements", the court president said without elaborating.

They have until May 7 to appeal.

Applicants needed to gather support from at least 35 Members of Parliament, each of whom is only allowed to back one candidate.

Exiled opposition members are de facto ruled out by an electoral law that stipu-



Bashar al-Assad

lates candidates must have lived in Syria continuously for at least the past decade.

The election will be the second since the start of a decade-long conflict that has killed over 3,88,000 people

and forced more than half of Syria's pre-war population from their homes.

Damascus has invited lawmakers from allied countries such Russia, Iran, China, Venezuela and Cuba to observe the electoral process.

West rejects 'outcome'
Western members of the UNSC, led by the U.S., France and Britain, rejected the outcome of the May 26 poll in advance, a position denounced by Russia as "unacceptable".

Mr. Assad, who has already been in power for 21 years, was elected by referendum in 2000 and 2007.

For the first multi-candidate poll in 2014, only two candidates besides Mr. Assad, out of 24 applicants, were allowed to run.

U.S. officials in West Asia to reassure jittery allies over Iran

This comes amid Vienna talks on nuclear deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ABU DHABI

Iran denies reports on prisoner swap agreement with U.S.

TEHRAN

Top Biden administration officials and U.S. Senators crisscrossed the West Asia on Monday, seeking to assuage growing unease among Arab partners over America's re-engagement with Iran and other policy shifts in the region.

The trips come as the U.S. and Iran, through intermediaries in Vienna, discuss a return to Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal with world powers that former President Donald Trump abandoned three years ago. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf allies, excluded from Obama-era nuclear negotiations, have repeatedly pressed for a seat at the table, insisting that any return to the accord must address Iran's ballistic missile programme and support for regional proxies.

Sen. Chris Coons, a key Biden ally, told reporters in Abu Dhabi that he hoped to allay the sheikhdom's "understandable and legitimate concerns" about the return to the landmark deal and to create "broader engagement" with Gulf partners.

Mr. Coons said "close consulta-

Media is facing censorship, say Pak. journo

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISLAMABAD

The media is facing growing censorship, attacks and harassment in Pakistan that are threatening freedom of the press, a union of journalists said on Monday, on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day.

The government said there are no curbs on journalists in the country.

There were 148 documented attacks or violations against journalists in Pakistan from May 2020 to April 2021 – an increase over previous years, according to *The Dawn*. It said these incidents included six murders, seven attempted assassinations, five kidnappings, 25 arrests or detentions of journalists, 15 assaults and 27 legal cases against journalists.

On Monday, President of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Shahzada Zulfqar and Secretary-General Nasir Zaidi said freedom of the press will not be "surrendered at any cost."

tion" with the UAE about the ongoing talks in Vienna was "important, expected and happening," adding that he hopes the Emiratis may not just be notified, but actually help."

"I did not in any way mean to suggest that there was some deal in the works where the Emiratis would be securing anything," he said. "Vienna is the place where the U.S. government is negotiating."

Senator Chris Murphy joined the flurry of diplomatic activity in the region this week, jetting to Oman, Qatar and Jordan for dialogue on a political solution to the war in Yemen.

Mr. Coons said "close consulta-

ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION	
(Ministry of Education, Government of India)	
Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110 070	
Ph. No.: 011-2958100 Website: www.aictc-india.org	
NOTICE	
AICTE proposes to conduct online interview for empanelling of consultants (Administrative/ Financial/ Legal/ Parliamentary Affairs/ General) to engage upon requirements, from recently retired Central Govt./State Govt./ Autonomous Bodies/Central or State Universities officials on short term contract basis in AICTE Hq. & Regional Offices.	
For details please visit AICTE's website: www.aictc-india.org	
Advt. No: Admn./Estt./05(01)/2021	Member Secretary, AICTE

GOVT. OF ODISHA	
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES	
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, DRAINAGE CIRCLE, UNIT-8, BHUBANESWAR-751012	
E-Procurement Notice No.SEDC-BBSR-01/2021-22	
email Id :- sedrainagebbsr12@gmail.com	
1. Name of Works	: Improvement to Sheragada town Drain in Sheragada town under Hinjili Assembly Constituency in DOAB No. XVII of Ganjam District.
2. Total Number of Packages	: 1 nos. individual package
3. Estimated Cost of Individual Packages	: Rs.159,32,985/-
4. Bid Identification No.	: SEDC-BBSR/DD-BAM-01/2021-22
5. Period of Completion	: 11 (Eleven) Calendar months
6. Availability of Tender	: 03.05.2021, 11.00 Hours to 17.05.2021, 17.00 Hours On-Line
7. Date of Opening of Technical Bid.	: 18.05.2021 at 11.00 hours in the O/o the Superintending Engineer, Drainage Circle, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar.
8. Date of opening of Financial Bid	: 20.05.2021 at 11.00 hours in the O/o the Superintending Engineer, Drainage Circle, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar.
9. Date of Lottery	: 21.05.2021 at 12.00 hours in the O/o the Superintending Engineer, Drainage Circle, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar.
10. Procurement Officer	: Superintending Engineer, Drainage Circle, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar-751012.

Further details can be seen on the Govt. web site www.tendersissa.gov.in.

Addendum / Corrigendum/ Cancellation if any required will be published only in Govt. web site www.tendersissa.gov.in

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Drainage Circle, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32409/11/001/2122

A-85

NOTICE INVITING BID

Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL)

In front of Ram Mandir, Convent Square, Unit-III,

Bhubaneswar-751001

Tel.:(0674) 2380950; Website: www.osmcl.nic.in ; Email: logistics.osmcl.od@nic.in

Bid Ref.No.: OSMCL/2021-22/DRUGS-DHS-RE-TENDER/11 Date: 05/05/2021

Online Bids through e-Tender portal (<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>) are invited from eligible bidders for Supply of Anti Cancer Items & Drugs & Medical Consumables (Re-Tender) as per the particulars mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Particulars	Date and time
1.	Date & time of release of bid	05/05/2021, 3 PM
2.	Date & time for submission of queries by E-Mail id - logistics.osmcl.od@nic.in	10/05/2021, up to 5:00 PM
3.	Date & time of Online bid submission	Start Date & Time 12/05/2021, 3 PM End Date & Time 02/06/2021, 6.00 PM
4.	Date & Time for submission of Tender Documents, Tender Document Fee of tender document.	Start Date & Time 03/06/2021, 10 AM End Date & Time 09/06/2021,11.00 AM
5.	Date & time of Online Technical bid Opening	09/06/2021, 11:15 AM
6.	Date of opening of Price Bid	To be informed to the qualified bidders

The bid document with all information relating to the bidding process including cost of bid document, Prequalification criteria and terms & conditions are available in the websites: www.osmcl.nic.in and <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. The Authority reserves the right to accept / reject any part thereof or all the bids without assigning any reason thereto.

Sd/- Managing Director, OSMC Ltd., Odisha

OIPR-10112/11/0007/2122

CAD-215

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	48,718	-0.13
US Dollar	73.95	0.18
Gold	46580	0.64
Brent oil	67.65	0.65

NIFTY 50

PRICE CHANGE

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	761.40	31.35
Asian Paints	2582.15	45.75
Axis Bank	702.75	-12.15
Bajaj Auto	3851.85	18.10
Bajaj Finserv	11041.70	0.05
Bajaj Finance	5551.15	99.25
Bharti Airtel	558.85	22.10
BPCL	416.00	-5.80
Britannia Ind	3439.25	-9.75
Cipla	910.20	-0.15
Coal India	132.20	-0.85
Divis Lab	4074.00	11.65
Drd Reddys Lab	5185.95	22.85
Eicher Motors	2396.25	-25.40
Grasim Ind	1414.55	12.80
HCL Tech	907.70	8.75
HDFC	2418.50	-1.60
HDFC Bank	1414.45	2.15
HDFC Life	671.90	6.80
Hero MotoCorp	2793.25	-25.90
Hindustan	369.95	5.55
Hind Unilever	2408.00	54.25
ICICI Bank	596.75	-3.75
IndusInd Bank	913.60	-21.35
Infosys	1352.05	-2.30
Indian Oil Corp	91.45	0.60
ITC	200.95	-1.65
JSW Steel	723.25	5.40
Kotak Bank	1725.45	-23.35
L&T	1342.50	2.05
M&M	752.95	0.40
Maruti Suzuki	6597.85	142.20
Nestle India Ltd.	16506.75	197.50
NTPC	104.25	1.80
ONGC	107.70	-0.45
PowerGrid Corp	220.80	0.75
Reliance Ind	1959.05	-35.45
SBI Life	958.60	29.90
State Bank	350.60	-2.90
Shree Cement	27989.85	79.35
Sun Pharma	659.20	4.75
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	677.10	7.60
Tata Motors	293.00	-0.85
Tata Steel	1064.75	30.75
TCS	3037.00	1.35
Tech Mahindra	957.70	-2.70
Titan	1423.95	-67.70
UltraTech Cement	6350.15	71.20
UPL	617.80	10.90
Wipro	487.35	-5.40

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.72	74.04
Euro	88.86	89.25
British Pound	102.26	102.71
Japanese Yen (100)	67.35	67.65
Chinese Yuan	11.38	11.43
Swiss Franc	80.80	81.16
Singapore Dollar	55.37	55.62
Canadian Dollar	59.94	60.23
Malaysian Ringgit	17.95	18.04

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



ALL curtails production as COVID slows demand
NEW DELHI
Ashok Leyland Ltd. on Monday said it had curtailed production due to a dip in demand following the surge in COVID-19 cases. The company said in a regulatory filing it had carefully studied the demand situation, and efforts were being made to match the demand on the one hand, while being cognisant of the disruptions in the supply situation. PTI

Chemplast files papers for ₹3,500-crore IPO
NEW DELHI
Chemplast Sammar Ltd. has filed papers with SEBI to raise ₹3,500 crore via an initial public offer. The offer comprises fresh issue of shares worth ₹1,500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of ₹2,000 crore, according to the draft red herring prospectus. The OFS includes sale of shares worth ₹1,850 crore by Sanmar Holdings Ltd. and ₹150 crore by Sanmar Engineering Services. PTI

Verizon to sell Yahoo, AOL for \$5 billion
NEW YORK
AOL and Yahoo are being sold again, this time to a private equity firm. Verizon will sell Verizon Media, which consists of the pioneering tech platforms, to Apollo Global Management in a \$5 billion deal. Verizon said on Monday it will keep a 10% stake in the new company, which will be called Yahoo. As part of the deal, Verizon will receive \$4.25 billion in cash, preferred interests of \$750 million and the minority stake. AP

Bajaj Auto says April sales lift it to top spot
MUMBAI
Bajaj Auto Ltd. said it had emerged as India's largest motorcycle manufacturer in April by clocking worldwide sales (including India) of 3,48,173 units, of which 2,21,603 units were exported. "Our wide range of motorcycles covers the entry, middle- and premium-level segments, allowing us to engage with a wide spectrum of customers," said Rakesh Sharma, ED.

Factory output growth decelerates: PMI

IHS Markit survey shows April production, new orders expansion at 8-month lows on COVID surge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

India's manufacturing sector activity was largely flat in April, as rates of growth for new orders and output eased to eight-month lows amid the rise in COVID-19 cases, a monthly survey showed.

The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 55.5 in April, little changed from March's reading of 55.4.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

'Further slowdown'

"The PMI results for April showed a further slowdown in rates of growth for new orders and output, both of which eased to eight-month lows amid the intensification



Brighter shores: New export orders increased for the eighth consecutive month, the fastest since October 2020. • REUTERS

of the COVID-19 crisis," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit.

Ms. Lima also noted that "the surge in COVID-19 cases could dampen demand further when firms' finan-

cials are already susceptible to the hurdle of rising global prices."

The daily COVID-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported, taking the total tally of

April saw the steepest increase in input costs for nearly seven years

POLLYANNA DE LIMA,
IHS Markit

cases to 1,99,25,604, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on May 3.

Surging input costs

On the prices front, survey participants also signalled a steep increase in input costs, the quickest since July 2014, and upward revisions to selling prices.

"April saw the steepest increase in input costs for nearly seven years drive the sharpest upturn in output charges since October 2013. Data for the coming months will be important at verifying whether client demand is resilient to these challenges or

if producers will have to further absorb cost burdens themselves to secure new work," Ms. Lima said.

The survey, however, noted that while output and sales increased at the slowest rates since last August due to an intensification of the COVID-19 crisis, there was a faster upturn in international orders. New export orders increased for the eighth consecutive month in April and at the fastest rate since October 2020. The rise was associated with a pick-up in international demand for Indian goods, the survey said.

On the job front, although manufacturing employment continued to fall, the rate of contraction recorded in April was marginal and the weakest in the current 13-month sequence of job shedding, it noted.

'OPEC share slid as India's oil imports shrank 11.8%'

Country bought more U.S. crude: trade

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

OPEC's share of India's oil imports fell to the lowest in at least two decades in the year to the end of March as overall purchases by Asia's third-largest economy fell to a six-year low, data obtained from industry and trade sources showed.

Total crude imports by the world's third-biggest oil importer fell to 3.97 million barrels per day (bpd) in FY21, down 11.8% from a year earlier, data showed.

India bought more U.S. and Canadian oil at the expense of that from Africa and West Asia, reducing purchases from members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to about 2.86 million bpd and squeezing

the group's share of imports to 72% from about 80% previously. That is the lowest share since at least FY02, before which crude import data is not available.

U.S. and Canadian oil accounted for about 7% and 13% respectively of India's imports compared to 4.5% and 0.60% a year earlier.

The U.S. emerged as the fifth-biggest supplier, up two places from FY20.

'AI divestment less likely on second wave'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the second wave of COVID-19 likely to exacerbate financial stress staring at the aviation sector, the chances of a successful disinvestment of Air India (AI) "may be less certain", consultancy firm CAPA said.

"The government would need to at least have a Plan B ready," it said in its report titled, "Key Trends in Indian Aviation in FY 2022: Impact of Second Wave".

In January 2020, the Centre unveiled a fresh effort to sell 100% stake in AI, and later sweetened the deal, allowing suitors to decide how much of debt they would take on. The exercise is now at the financial bidding stage.

THE HINDU GROUP

CII's Kotak urges firms to voluntarily curtail operations

'Safeguarding lives is the highest collective national priority'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after mooting more stringent restrictions on economic activity to contain the 'suffering' from the pandemic, CII president Uday Kotak on Monday urged companies to take 'voluntary measures' to break the COVID transmission chain by minimising all activity that requires in-person presence at the work premises for the next two weeks.

Auto makers including Maruti Suzuki, Hero MotoCorp, JCB India and Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India have taken the lead by halting production temporarily or advancing maintenance schedules, to protect their employees, Mr. Kotak said, pointing out. Similarly, services sector firms such as Kotak Mahindra Bank, TCS and Infosys have adopted a work-from-home system.

"The healthcare system

and medical personnel are stretched to the limit and exhausted. Measures to break the chain of transmission are of paramount importance to mitigate human tragedy and loss of lives, alongside augmenting health infrastructure and medical supplies," Mr. Kotak said, asking all 'responsible' corporates to strive to protect their employees and ensure "their employee balance sheet" remains healthy.

Stressing that 'safeguarding lives' is the highest collective national priority now, Mr. Kotak reiterated the urgent need to heed the advice of experts on containing the spread.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR,

BUT FROM 6 FEET AWAY.



we braved it together.

Sadly, the times are once again challenging. While we do our best to support one another, we need to stay cautious too. Let us bring back all the habits we practised religiously last year. The virus has not gone anywhere. Neither should our precautions.

THE HINDU

#KeepTheHabit



come before mid-May and the situation should improve thereafter," he said. "With such assumptions, we expect exports to continue on the growth trajectory as the order-book position of exporters is very encouraging," he added.

"We expect the peak to

Natco gets nod for COVID drug Baricitinib

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Drugmaker Natco Pharma has received emergency use approval for Baricitinib tablets, 1 mg, 2 mg and 4 mg strengths, from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) in India.

Baricitinib, in combination with Remdesivir, is used for treatment of COVID-19 positive patients, Natco said in a release. The company said it intends seeking a compulsory license based on emergency use and in light of the grave and serious public health emergency across India due to the pandemic. The company is ready to unveil the product this week, so as to make it available to the patients across India, Natco added in the release.

KKR-RCB postponed amid COVID fears

Monday's fixture to be rescheduled after Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier test positive



Varun. • SPORTZPICS/IPL

IPL 2021

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The Indian Premier League game between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Kolkata Knight Riders scheduled in Ahmedabad on Monday was postponed after two KKR players – Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier – tested positive for COVID-19.

A statement issued by IPL, which confirmed the rescheduling of the match, said the KKR camp will be tested on a daily basis now.

"Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier were found to be positive in the third round of testing in the last four days. All other team members have tested negative for COVID-19," the statement read.

"Both the players have isolated themselves from the rest of the squad. The Medical Team is in continuous touch with the duo and mon-

We are a little fortunate that we have a bit of a break because our next game is on May 8 (against Capitals)

VENKY MYSORE
KKR CEO

itoring their health. Meanwhile, the Kolkata Knight Riders have now moved towards a daily testing routine to identify any other possible cases and treat them at the earliest.

"The Medical Team is also determining the close and casual contacts of the two positive cases during the 48 hours prior to collection of the sample that returned the positive test results," the statement added.

The Hindu understands that a few other members of the squad are "showing symptoms".

According to the IPL's 'Health and Safety Protocols' booklet, distributed to the franchises on March 19, each "close contact" of an "affec-

ted person" has to isolate for "six days" and return "3 negative tests on day 1, 3 and 6".

Varun is understood to have visited a designated hospital for a scan, something that is allowed according to the rulebook.

Rescheduling one match, especially this year with the IPL following a caravan format, is going to be a tougher task than normal.

Even if KKR gets the go-ahead to resume competing ahead of its next scheduled fixture on May 8 in Ahmedabad, it will be a challenge to reschedule Monday's game without affecting other matches.

As per the original schedule, RCB is supposed to leave for Kolkata on May 7, while KKR is scheduled to travel to Bengaluru on May 9 for the last leg of the league stage.

It is understood that the IPL authorities will announce the reworked schedule on Tuesday.



Warrier. • FILE PHOTO

Super Kings affected as well

Bowling coach Balaji, team-bus driver diagnosed with COVID

S. DINAKAR
AMOL KARHADKAR

At least two members of the Chennai Super Kings contingent, including bowling coach L. Balaji, have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

It means that CSK's next match, against Rajasthan Royals on Wednesday, will in all likelihood be deferred since Balaji and his "close contacts" will have to be isolated for six days.

It was revealed on Monday that the reports of Balaji and a member of the logistics team (bus driver) for the tests conducted on Sunday were positive.



L. Balaji. • SPORTZPICS/IPL

PCR test conducted on Monday are awaited.

Neither CSK nor RR has been officially notified about a change in plan for Wednesday's match but according to a BCCI official, CSK "cannot be allowed to play" as per the health and safety protocols for the tournament.

Ashwin to rejoin Capitals

Meanwhile, R. Ashwin is set to join Delhi Capitals for the league stage's last leg in Kolkata, starting on May 9.

According to a DC insider, Ashwin will serve the mandatory week-long isolation before re-entering the bubble next week.

Ashwin had left the squad due to COVID-19 concerns in his family at the end of the Chennai leg last week.

Meanwhile, the Capitals team has been put in isolation in Ahmedabad since Monday afternoon as a 'precautionary measure'.

Results of another RT-

Told *The Hindu*. "The rapid antigen showed negative results but the RT-PCR tests came positive. But the symptoms are mild."

While K.S. Viswanathan, the chief executive officer, was also diagnosed with the infection, a rapid antigen test on Monday was found to be negative.

"One's health is most important," a CSK source

Not letting us get back home is a disgrace, says Slater

Commentator lambasts Australian PM Scott Morrison

TODAY'S MATCH

MUMBAI INDIANS VS. MUMBAI INDIANS

DELHI, 7.30 P.M. IST

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 17

SRH 8 | MI 9

FORM GUIDE

(last five matches, latest game first)

SRH L|L|L|W|L

MI W|W|L|L|W

STAR SPORTS 1 & STAR SELECT 1 (SD & HD)

STARSPORTS.COM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Cricketer-turned-commentator Michael Slater, who is currently doing commentary in the IPL here, has launched a scathing attack on his country's Prime Minister Scott Morrison for not allowing its citizens to return from COVID-19 hit India, calling the travel ban a "disgrace".

Australia has shut its borders and not allowing any commercial flights from India because of the massive COVID-19 surge here which has led to all the players, support staff and commentators, who might have wanted to leave the IPL, in a fix.

The government has made it clear that Australians who are engaged in the IPL will have to make their



Slater. • FILE PHOTO

vernment neglect," Slater tweeted.

Threatening a five-year jail term or hefty fine, the Australian government temporarily barred its citizens from entering the country if they happened to be in India within 14 days of their intended arrival. The decision was announced after a meeting of the National Cabinet last Friday and came into force from Monday.

Aims to check spread
The move aims at keeping the COVID-19 spread in check in Australia as India is facing a surge in cases.

The decision was also based on the proportion of overseas travellers in quarantine in Australia, who have contracted the infection in India, according to Health Minister Greg Hunt.

IN BRIEF

India drops to third in ODI rankings, NZ on top

DUBAI

India retained the second place in the ICC T20I team rankings but dropped a rung to third in the ODI chart. The Kiwis have replaced reigning world champion England as the No. 1 side in the ODI

rankings. New Zealand also gained in T20Is, moving up from fifth to third after series wins over the West Indies, Pakistan, Australia and Bangladesh. Australia is down from third to fifth. PTI

Tottering Sunrisers face revived Mumbai Indians

Hyderabad in disarray after Warner's removal; Rohit & Co. back at its best with two successive wins

AMOL KARHADKAR

A change of venue has worked for one team, while a change in captaincy hasn't turned the fortunes of the other. No wonder then that Tuesday's IPL clash between Mumbai Indians and Sunrisers Hyderabad will start with the defending champion enjoying the tag of favourite.

After winning just two of its five games in Chennai, Rohit Sharma & Co. seems to be back in business in the national capital, notching up successive wins to revive its campaign. And the last-ball heist that Kieron Pollard pulled off against arch rival Chennai Super Kings over the weekend would have boosted its confidence further.

With shorter boundaries and a quicker deck at the Kotla working in MI's favour, the five-time champion



Boult goes full tilt at Williamson.

• SPORTZPICS/IPL



Absorbing battle: It will be quite a contest when Boult goes full tilt at Williamson.

• SPORTZPICS/IPL

would be hoping that Hardik Pandya, who has been lacklustre so far, and Suryakumar Yadav, who has had a dip of late, will be back at their best against a tottering SRH line-up.

In addition to a formidable opponent, SRH has other battles to fight – getting the mood in the camp right, for instance. Despite David Warner putting up a brave front hours after being axed as

captain and performing all the duties of a reserve player, SRH looked in disarray against Rajasthan Royals.

With a solitary win in the first half, SRH will be hoping for individual brilliance to

fire the team up. Can Kane Williamson, reinstated as captain midway through the tournament, deliver the much-needed boost against an attack led by Kiwi compatriot Trent Boult?

With the Sunrisers' middle- and lower-middle order having been found wanting time and again, the onus will be on the top three to make a match of it.

The government has

It is for the players to decide: Smith

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JOHANNESBURG

Graeme Smith, South Africa's Director of Cricket, said the country's cricket board is always there to help but it is up to the cricketers to decide if they want to continue playing in the IPL.

"We've offered support to the players and made ourselves available to them should there be any concerns," said Smith. "Ultimately, it is in their hands to make a choice (about continuing their participation)."

As many as 11 South African players, including white-ball skipper Quinton de Kock, pacer Kagiso Rabada and former captain Faf du

Plessis, are currently participating in the IPL for various teams.

While there are no Proteas players in KKR, du Plessis, Lungi Ngidi and Imran Tahir play for CSK.

Many countries, including Australia and New Zealand, have banned flights from India but South Africa has still kept its borders open, with travellers needing to submit a negative test report within 72 hours of travelling.

Harris shocks Dimitrov in opening round

Latter saves three match points before going down; Bopanna-Shapovalov through

MADRID OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov fell in the first round of the Madrid Open on Monday, losing in three sets to South African Lloyd Harris.

Harris, who beat World No. 4 Dominic Thiem and Denis Shapovalov en route to the final in Dubai in March, pulled off another upset by ousting Dimitrov 6-3, 3-6, 7-6(5).

The World No. 54 held off a late fightback from 13th seed Dimitrov, who saved three match points in the final set before breaking back to force a tie-break.

"It was an up and down match, I had a set and a break, then I was a break up in the third too," said Harris. "I got a little bit nervous at the end, but I was happy to close it out."

Two-time quarterfinalist John Isner battled past Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic 6-4, 7-6(5), 6-4; Aslan Karatsev bt Ugo Humbert 7-5, 6-4; Lloyd Harris bt Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 3-6, 7-6(5); Dominik Koepfer bt Reilly Opelka 6-4, 6-4; Daniel Evans bt Jeremy Chardy 7-6(6), 6-7(7), 6-2; Fabio Fognini bt Carlos Taberner 7-6(4), 2-6, 6-3.

Women (round-of-16): Ashleigh Barty bt Iga Swiatek 7-5, 6-4; Petra Kvitova bt Veronika Kudermetova 6-3, 4-6, 6-4; Belinda Bencic bt Ons Jabeur 7-6(2), 4-3, retd.



Hanging tough: Harris held his nerve to get past Dimitrov in three sets. • GETTY IMAGES

Left-arm finishes with a match-haul of 11 wickets as Bangladesh is dismissed for 227

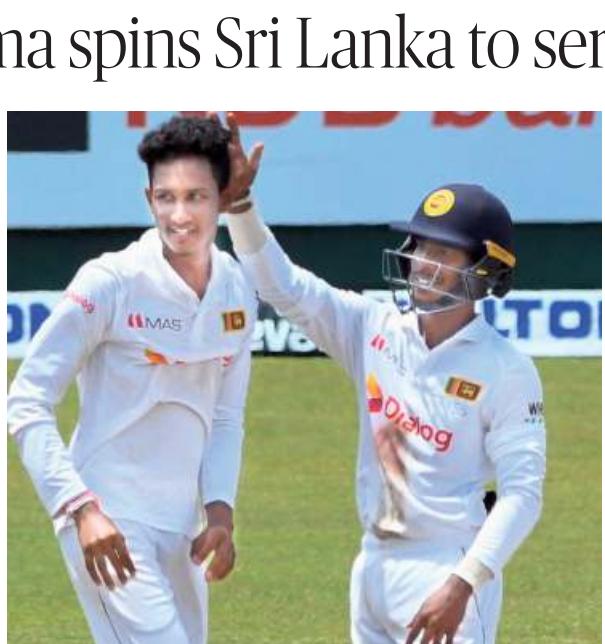
BANGLADESH IN SL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PALLEKELE

Sri Lanka spinner Praveen Jayawickrama enjoyed a dream debut as he claimed 11 wickets to seal a 209-run victory over Bangladesh in the second Test here on Monday.

Chasing a daunting 437 to win, Bangladesh was dismissed for 227 in the first session of the final day after resuming at 177 for five as Sri Lanka wrapped up the match, and the series 1-0, after 90 minutes of play.

The 22-year-old left-arm



Making an immediate impact: Jayawickrama, left, had a dream start to his international career. • AFP

narijaya's eight for 44 against the same opponent in Dhaka in 2018.

Bowling change works

Mendis was replaced after a 15-over spell during which he took two wickets and the change worked immediately as part-time spinner Dhananjaya de Silva struck with his second delivery.

Tajul Islam, on two, at-

tempted a late cut, but only managed to edge it to wicket-keeper Niroshan Dickwella.

Mendis returned to have Taskin Ahmed caught by Dimuth Karunaratne.

Jayawickrama then mopped up the tail. Mehidy Hasan fell first to take the young bowler's match haul into double figures, before the left-arm spinner sealed the Test and the series three balls later when he trapped Abu Jayed leg-before.

Jayawickrama is the 16th Test cricketer to take 10 wickets or more on debut but only the second this century after Australia's Jason Krejza, who took 12 wickets against India at Nagpur in 2008.

Sri Lanka captain Karunaratne was named 'player of the series'.

The scores: Sri Lanka 493/7 dec. & 194/9 dec. bt Bangladesh 251 & 227 in 71 overs (M. Rahim 40, Ramesh Mendis 4/103, Jayawickrama 5/86).

Man-of-the-Match: Praveen Jayawickrama.

Player-of-the-Series: Dimuth Karunaratne.

Sri Lanka won by 209 runs to clinch two-match series 1-0.

Off-spinner Ramesh Men-

TV PICKS

IPL: Star Sports 1 & Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Champions League: Sony Ten 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

IN BRIEF



Conte has justified wages: Inter CEO Marotta
MILAN
Inter Milan CEO Giuseppe Marotta insists that Antonio Conte is worth every penny of a salary that makes him the highest-paid coach in Serie A. "It is better to sign one less player but have a good coach. He has a salary that reflects the honours he has won," Marotta told SkySports Italia. REUTERS

Lukaku celebrates with Inter fans

MILAN
Belgian international forward Romelu Lukaku took to the streets of Milan on Sunday to celebrate with Inter fans after capping "the best year" of his career with the Serie A title. The 27-year-old was pictured on the streets of Milan in a car, waving the team flag and greeting "Nerazzurri" fans. "This is the best year of my career," Lukaku told Sky Sports Italia. AFP

Real's Varane to miss Chelsea return leg

MADRID
Raphael Varane is set to miss Real Madrid's crunch Champions League second leg against Chelsea on Wednesday after the club confirmed he has sustained an adductor injury. "After the tests carried out today on our player Raphael Varane by the Real Madrid Medical Services, he was diagnosed with an injury to the right adductor muscle," Real Madrid said in a statement on Monday. AFP

Manas Dhamne starts off with a fluent win

SIERRE (SWITZERLAND)
India's brightest young talent, the 13-year-old Manas Dhamne opened with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Gianluca Marin of Switzerland in the first round of the ITF grade-3 junior tennis tournament here.

Para shuttlers to miss Spanish international
NEW DELHI
Top para shuttlers Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam's preparation for the Paralympics suffered a blow as the Indian team will not be able to compete at the Spanish International due to the new quarantine rules imposed in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tournament is scheduled to be held from May 11 to May 16. PTI

Thisara Perera retires



Thisara Perera. ■ FILE PHOTO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE COLOMBO
Former Sri Lanka skipper Thisara Perera announced his retirement from international cricket on Monday, ahead of a white-ball tournament against Bangladesh.

The 32-year-old all-rounder – who captained his country in the limited-over formats – told Sri Lanka Cricket that he was stepping down to clear the way for youngsters.

Perera has played 166 ODIs and scored 2,338 runs. He has also taken 175 ODI wickets, conceding 5,740 runs. In the shortest form of the game, he has played 84 matches and scored 1,204 runs and taken 51 wickets for 1,717 runs. Perera also played six Tests scoring 203 runs and taking 11 wickets.

Barcelona edges a nail-biting encounter

Messi nets a brace in see-saw game against Valencia; Bale hits hat-trick for Tottenham Hotspur

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE VALENCIA

Lionel Messi missed a penalty but still scored twice, including an exquisite free-kick, as Barcelona edged a five-goal thriller with Valencia on Sunday to stay within touching distance of the top of LaLiga.

After Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid both won on Saturday, there was no margin for error at Mestalla, where Barca's 3-2 win reduced the gap behind Atletico back to two points, now with four games left to play.

Gabriel Paulista headed Valencia in front early in the second half before Messi missed a penalty, only to smash in from the resulting scramble.

Griezmann and a superb Messi free-kick looked to have then made the victory secure but Carlos Soler's stunning strike from distance left Barcelona holding on at the end, a nerve-wrack-



Pouncing on it: Lionel Messi is the quickest to react and score after a scramble in front of goal following a missed penalty. ■ AFP

ing win meaning it could overtake Atletico Madrid next weekend if it beats Diego Simeone's side at Camp Nou.

"We knew we would not have any calm games," said Gerard Pique. "We are still in the fight. Calm games mean

you're not competing for anything."

Gareth Bale scored a hat trick as Tottenham stayed in the Champions League qualification race with a 4-0 win over relegated Sheffield United on Sunday.

Bale took his Premier League tally to eight goals in

ble since returning on loan from Real Madrid for this season, and Son Heung-min also netted, as Tottenham rose to fifth place – five points behind Chelsea with four games left to play.

Bale claimed his first treble since returning on loan from Real Madrid for this season, and Son Heung-min also netted, as Tottenham rose to fifth place – five points behind Chelsea with four games left to play.

Bale took his Premier League tally to eight goals in

Rested City welcomes a tired PSG

Manchester team odds-on favourite to progress

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS MANCHESTER

A rested line-up faces a tired team with its back to the wall after losing the Champions League semifinal first leg 2-1. According to the tournament's history books, Paris Saint-Germain has only a 7% chance of reaching its second straight final in a competition it's desperate to win.

Manchester City, meanwhile, is odds-on to reach its first Champions League final and coach Pep Guardiola had the luxury of resting most of his key players at the weekend with the Premier League almost won.

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino couldn't rotate his squad too much over the weekend because PSG is still second in the French league



Different strokes: While PSG boss Pochettino sweats over his team, City manager Guardiola has much leeway. ■ AFP

and under pressure to keep its title.

Speedy recovery

But he is hopeful that star striker Kylian Mbappe will be available after he sustained a right calf injury in the first leg. PSG's top scorer with 37 goals this season, Mbappe has shown signs of a speedy recovery.

Pochettino rested midfielder Leandro Paredes and right back Alessandro Florenzi on the weekend, suggesting both will start the semifinal. He used midfield schemer Marco Verratti for only 30 minutes against Lens on Saturday to keep him fresh to face City.

Tonight's match: City vs PSG, 12.30 a.m. (Wednesday).

Magnus Carlsen takes the honours

Stops Nakamura for his first title on the Champions Tour

NEW IN CHESS CLASSIC

RAKESH RAO NEW DELHI

Displaying amazing resolve, Magnus Carlsen bounced back to thwart Hikaru Nakamura's bid to force a tie-breaker and win the New in Chess Classic rapid online title on Sunday.

Having won the first match of the final on Saturday, Carlsen gained the 2-2 draw he needed. In fact, Carlsen reached a completely winning position in the fourth game but accepted Nakamura's draw-offer.

Nakamura started well by winning the first game. He held a better position but



Magnus Carlsen.
■ FILE PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

settled for a draw in the second. Thereafter, it was Carlsen's turn to win.

In a must-win situation to stay alive in the final, Na-

kamura messed up his position in the fourth game and conceded defeat by offering a draw.

This meant Carlsen won his first title on the Champions Tour that commenced in November. The World champion topped the preliminary league in each of the previous events – Skilling Open, Airthings Masters, Opera Euro Rapid and the Magnus Carlsen Invitational – but could not emerge as champion.

The title also took Carlsen (185 points) to the top of the Champions Tour standings. Wesley So (145), Teimour Radjabov (109) and Anish Giri (105) trail Carlsen.

fear them any more," said Nisha in a Hockey India release.

Nisha was part of the Indian team that toured Argentina in January this year of the team's tour to Germany in February.

"I feel getting that expo-

sure to play against such top

teams early in my career will

help me improve as a player

and I am grateful for the op-

portunity. These tours have

certainly helped in boosting

my confidence levels as I un-

derstand better what it takes

to play the higher ranked

teams," said the 25-year-old.

"Both Argentina and Ger-

many play very tactical

hockey and the way they

communicate and look for

gaps to penetrate into the

circle is very unique. De-

fending against them was

not easy but at the same

time, there was so much to

learn from them," she ad-

ded.

Moving forward, Nisha

wants to remain focused on

the areas the chief coach

wants her to work on and

continue contributing to the

team's exploits.

"With the Olympics fast

approaching, all players

want to prove their mettle

in order to find a place in the

team. There is a healthy

competition within the core

group which pushes each

other to perform better."

Don't fear playing top teams: Nisha

Tough mental make-up needed to face Argentina, Germany

HOCKEY

ANI BENGALURU

Playing against World No. 2 Argentina and No. 3 Germany in their home countries has been a big confidence booster for young Indian women's hockey defender Nisha.

Having made her debut in 2019 at the FIH Women's Series Finals Hiroshima 2019 when India played against Uruguay, Nisha has been gaining the right exposure at the international level to build on her game.

"Playing against top teams like Argentina and Germany requires a tough mental make-up. Initially, I was worried about taking on a world class team but having played those matches on their home ground, I don't

fear them any more," said Nisha in a Hockey India release.

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Messi nets a brace in see-saw game against Valencia; Bale hits hat-trick for Tottenham Hotspur