



Rajya Sabha MP and Congress leader Rajeev Satav passes away

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Rural spread of COVID-19 a reality, says Union Health Ministry

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NEARBY



Lockdown extended till May 24, says Kejriwal

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Sunday extended the ongoing lockdown by another week till May 24. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the lockdown has brought about a reduction in the number of COVID-19 cases.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Delhi sees less than 10,000 cases for 3rd day

NEW DELHI
The Capital recorded 6,456 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, with 262 deaths and 9,706 recoveries, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. The bulletin added that 62,059 tests were conducted in the past 24 hours with a positivity rate of 10.40%.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

'Can FCRA account deadline be extended'

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has asked the Union Home Ministry to consider whether the April 1 deadline for opening Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act account for NGOs seeking to receive foreign funds can be extended in view of the pandemic.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 5

Five killed as gale force winds, rain pummel Kerala, Karnataka

'Very Severe' Cyclone Tauktae expected to cross Gujarat coast this evening

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM / MANGALURU / PUNE

Gale-force winds, heavy rain and high tidal waves swept the coastal belt of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa as Cyclone Tauktae hurtled northwards towards Gujarat on Sunday, leaving at least five persons dead, damaging hundreds of houses, uprooting electricity poles and trees and forcing large-scale evacuation.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Tauktae, which has intensified into a "very severe cyclonic storm", is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and reach the Gujarat coast on Monday evening.

High wave warnings with flooding of low-lying areas and damage to property have been issued for Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Lakshadweep, and south Tamil Nadu. A joint bulletin issued by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) in Hyderabad and IMD forecast "damage" over Porbandar, Amreli Junagarh, Gir Somnath, Botad and Bhavnagar, plus the coastal areas of Ahmedabad.

An estimated 1.5 lakh people are being shifted from



Causing destruction: A house that collapsed because of Cyclone Tauktae at Minakaliya Panambur in Mangaluru on Sunday. ■ MANJUNATH H.S.

low-lying coastal areas in Gujarat while 54 teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) have been deployed in the State.

Maharashtra, too, is bracing for the cyclone as the Met Department predicted heavy to very heavy rain at isolated places in north Konkan, Mumbai, Thane and Palghar, and extremely heavy rainfall in Raigad on Monday.

Four deaths were reported from Karnataka's Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga districts. Roads in coastal dis-

tricts were washed away and about 12 km of beachfront from Kulai to Sasihithlu in Dakshina Kannada district was eroded, leaving several houses in danger.

Levels in Kerala dams up
The water level in many dams across Kerala rose after heavy rain in the catchment areas, prompting the authorities to sound an alert.

The IMD issued orange alerts for heavy to very heavy rain in three Kerala districts – Ernakulam, Idukki and Malappuram – and 11 districts have been put on yellow alert for Monday. The

cyclone-related toll in the State went up to three after a 71-year-old woman from Kozhikode district died when a coconut tree fell on her on Saturday.

Gusty winds and heavy rain started lashing several parts of Goa since Sunday morning. Power supply in several areas was disrupted as hundreds of electric poles were uprooted due to the high-speed winds, State Power Minister Nilesh Cabral said. Restoration work was hampered due to the strong winds, he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

+ Israel bombs home of Hamas Gaza chief

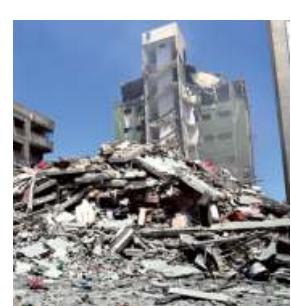
42 killed in worst daily death toll yet

REUTERS
GAZA/JERUSALEM

Israel bombed the home of Hamas' chief Yehya Al-Sinwar in Gaza early on Sunday and sirens warning of rocket attacks sounded in Israeli border towns shortly after dawn as hostilities stretched into a seventh day with no sign of abating.

At least 153 people have been killed in Gaza since Monday, including 42 on Sunday, the highest daily death toll in a single day. Israel has reported 10 dead, including two children.

The Security Council met on Sunday to discuss the worst outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence in years. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reminded all sides "that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs," said UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric in a statement on Saturday.



A building destroyed by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza on Sunday. ■ AP

Both Israel and Hamas, the Islamist group that runs the enclave, insisted they would continue their cross-border fire after Israel destroyed a 12-storey building in Gaza City that housed the U.S. Associated Press and the Qatar-based Al Jazeera media operations. The Israel military said the al-Jala building was a legitimate military target, containing Hamas military offices.

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ADEIU TO SOUMYA ▶ PAGE 5

'COVID-19 response over next 6-18 months critical'

Top WHO scientist warns of more waves

RAMYA KANNAN
CHENNAI

Predicting that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have subsequent waves as well, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist at the World Health Organization, who has been maintaining a keen eye on the developments in India, says the efforts put in in the next 6-18 months will be most critical in battling the pandemic.

"A lot depends also on the evolution of the virus itself, the ability of vaccines to keep up with variants, and it also depends on the duration of protective immunity of vaccines. A lot of this is changing," she says.

"We know that there will be definitely an end to the acute phase of the pandemic – when we have vaccinated about 30% of the world's population, which is what we would like to see by the end of 2021. Then we can start seeing a significant reduction in the deaths." Then



Soumya Swaminathan

2022 can be about ramping up vaccination.

Making clarifications on treatment protocols, Dr. Soumya said it was important for the people to understand that the wrong drug given at the wrong time could actually have more bad effects than good.

Many of the drugs commonly being used now have not been shown to have any effect. Nations can customise the WHO protocols for their local contexts, she advises.

INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 9

Congress flays arrests by Delhi police

Over 20 people were held over posters that questioned export of vaccines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Challenging the arrests of over 20 persons by Delhi Police for posters that surfaced across the city questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to donate vaccines to neighbouring countries, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi posted the "offending" poster on Twitter, daring the police to arrest him.

All the posters pose the question: "Modiji humare bachon ka vaccine videsh kyon bhej diya?" (Why did you send vaccines meant for our children abroad?) Mr. Gandhi said, "Arrest me too."

The persons were arrested under the rarely used Pre-



Huge backlash: A poster at Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's official residence.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

vention of Defacement of Property Act and most of them have been released on bail.

Celebrate, India is a free country. There is freedom of speech, except, when you ask a question of the Honourable Prime Minister," Con-

gress leader P. Chidambaram wrote on Twitter.

Congress Chief Whip in the Rajya Sabha, Jairam Ramesh, put up the poster next to his nameplate at his official residence opposite the Lodhi Garden.

'Lawless state'
"I am shocked and stunned. May vehemently disagree but under what authority, what law, what power can you arrest those who put up posters," said Rajya Sabha member Abhishek Manu Singhvi said. He said this "smacks of a lawless state gone amuck".

At a press conference, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera asked who else does one pose the question

to if not the government. "Narendra Modi wanted to be known as the vaccine guru of the world. So, it is obvious that only one person – Mr. Modi – alone can answer these questions." He said the vaccine policy was kept centralised till the situation was in control. As soon as it went out of hand, the Centre handed over the power to the States to negotiate on their own with the manufacturers.

CPI general secretary D. Raja said, "Narendra Modi and Amit Shah are not monarchs to run this country as they please." CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the vaccination drive has slowed down.

The second COVID-19 wave shows signs of peaking

Drop in cases not accompanied by an increase in testing

THE HINDU DATA TEAM
CHENNAI

Weeks after registering a sudden bump in cases and leading the world in daily case load, the number of new COVID-19 cases in India has shown a consistent dip in the past week – from a seven-day rolling average of 3.92 lakh on May 8 to 3.41 lakh on May 15. There was also a drop in the test positivity rate (TPR: number of positive cases identified per 100 tests) that fell from 22.6% to 19% in the same period.

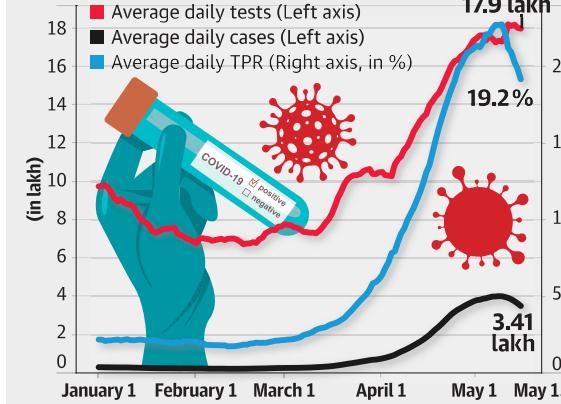
While these figures suggest that India's second COVID-19 wave is on the wane, a look at data using three parameters – the TPR, average daily cases and average daily tests over time – shows that the drop in cases was not accompanied by an increase in testing. In fact, the number of tests carried out remained stable around 18 lakh per day even as the TPR reduced after May 8.

Breaking the data down also shows that the COVID-19 picture is not uniform across the States. While some States managed to bend the COVID-19 daily cases curve, others achieved a peaking of cases only by decreasing the number of tests conducted.

At least 11 major States have reduced their testing levels recently. Of those 11, in

Keeping count

India's average daily test positivity rate (TPR) fell significantly after peaking on May 9. However, the drop in positivity did not coincide with an increase in testing. The number of daily tests was around 18 lakhs last week



four States, the positivity rate is on the rise.

Lowering the number of tests would mean missing out on identifying a number of infected people even as the COVID-19 graph would show an "artificial peaking".

In States such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka and Rajasthan, the positivity rate has been on the increase, even as the number of tests have decreased.

This is not an optimal strategy for the States as the reported infections have been kept low due to fewer tests and an "artificial" peak-

ing of cases has been depicted.

In Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Goa and Delhi, on the other hand, both the testing rate as well as the positivity rate are on the decline. While these States are better off than the previous set, data indicate that they should maintain their testing rates, instead of letting them fall, to ensure the share of positive cases is not going down due to decreased testing.

POSITIVITY UNEVEN ▶ PAGE 8

LIC's Sabse Pehle Life Insurance

LIC's BIMA JYOTI
Plan No. 860 UIN: 512N339V01
A non-linked plan to pile up your gains with Guaranteed Additions on Basic Sum Assured.

LIC's TECH-TERM
Plan No. 854 UIN: 512N333V01
A low cost Online Pure Protection plan to ensure financial security for your family.

LIC's SHIP
Plan No. 852 UIN: 512L334V01
A Regular Premium ULIP that provides life insurance cover and growth of investment.

LIC's SARAL Jeevan Bima
Plan No. 859 UIN: 512N341V01
A low-cost non-linked Pure Risk plan to provide financial security to your family.

LIC's JEEVAN AKSHAY VII
Plan No. 905 UIN: 512N314V02
An Immediate Annuity plan to ensure life-long guaranteed income.

LIC's NEW JEEVAN SHANTI
UIN: 512N338V01 Plan No. 858
A Deferred Annuity plan to ensure a steady income throughout your life.

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A Government Subsidized Pension Scheme for Senior Citizens.
Eligibility: Age 60 years & above
Contribution: Rs. 10/- per month
Pension: Rs. 100/- per month
An Immediate Pension plan for senior citizens with a term of 10 years.

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Six feet from your doorstep

Delivering everything from gourmet delicacies to home-cooked food and essentials, technology is helping people stay in and safe during the lockdown

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
NEW DELHI

Under the shade of a flyover at Lajpat Nagar stand about a dozen young men dressed in bright orange or red t-shirts, leaning against their modified motorcycles, the seat for the pillion rider replaced by a large, insulated case. Glued to their phones, the young riders maintain distance from each other, chatting about the number of deliveries they completed the previous day and the pandemic. Soon, as lunchtime begins to loom, they scurry to the numerous restaurants in the vicinity to pick up orders, navigating the somewhat empty roads of the Capital.

"We are out at work while everybody is at home. These days, we don't even see the face of the people who have ordered as most customers opt for contactless delivery and ask us to leave the order on a stool outside their house," says Rajesh Kumar, who works for an app-based food delivery service.

Wearing a double mask and carrying a bottle of sanitiser in his pocket, Mr. Kumar says he prefers not to remove his helmet while making deliveries. He feels safer wearing it when entering residential spaces, he says. "Dur-



To the rescue: At Champaran restaurant at Netaji Subhash Place during the lockdown in New Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ing the initial phase of the lockdown last year, people were apprehensive of ordering from outside. It has changed this time and many are relying on us to deliver meals, as entire families are sometimes infected," says Mr. Kumar.

Mandeera Bora, a teacher, says when her entire family was down with COVID and nobody could step out, delivery apps came to their rescue. "Be it ordering food since we were not feeling good enough to cook or medicines, the entire process

was so easy, convenient and stress-free," says Ms. Mandeera.

Demand for home food

The pandemic has also witnessed a demand for home-cooked food due to diet regulations as well as pocket-friendliness. Sakshi Seth, a teacher, says courier service apps that pick up food from home chefs and deliver have been a blessing. "More than half my family, including cook and house help, were down with COVID together. When we craved for home food, courier

services came as a blessing as they were reliable and made life so much easier by letting us focus on recovery instead of exerting ourselves in the kitchen," she says.

Many Delhites with no experience in the food delivery space have started opening up their kitchens to help those in need.

Kavita Dawar, who started Mother and Daughter's Co along with her mother, says as a family, they were frustrated listening to news about people suffering so much due to the pandemic. But instead of feeling helpless, they started a venture to provide "maa ke haath ka khaana" and be a family to the ones staying away from their homes and those that have lost their near and dear ones.

Food for needy

"On the very first day, we provided 10 meals and now we are providing about 100 to 150 meals every day at a minimal pricing. We use the proceedings to provide free meals to needy and unprivileged people," Ms. Dawar says.

She adds that the handwritten post-it notes they send with their deliveries have been appreciated and they have received feedback that the notes have helped several people stay positive, as they

know there is someone to take care of them.

Kavita's husband Pranay used to run a wedding planning company and has employed workers who are out of work as delivery boys. "We have created an opportunity for these workers who were struggling without pay and have trained them to make contactless deliveries," says Mr. Dawar.

Changing dynamics

While the home delivery ecosystem has stepped in, the restaurant industry that has been hampered by the shutting down of dine-in services has been relying on the duopoly of the app-based delivery services for business.

Restaurant owners admit the dynamics of the business have changed drastically during the pandemic and home delivery has become far more important than what it was in the pre-pandemic days.

The National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) says that with massive dollar-dumping, tech aggregators are trying to become digital landlords that control the entire ecosystem. To ensure that restaurants get a larger share of the profit, the association has partnered with tech providers to come up with an "order

direct" platform so that alternate platforms can be explored for home delivery, giving restaurants a larger share of the profit as well as help them cater to loyal customers directly.

Speaking on the initiatives the NRAI has taken, President of the association Anurag Katriar says: "We are committed to take better control of our business and our customer data and become digitally more self-reliant as an industry. Ordering directly from restaurants will benefit lakhs of small restaurants across the country and will give them an alternative from the current digital landlords."

He added that the NRAI will unveil industry-friendly tech solutions, "which will hopefully change the contours of this trade and benefit lakhs of business owners rather than a handful of digital giants".

Rahul Singh, founder and CEO of Beer Café, observes: "While we believe the aggregators need to be more business-friendly, one can't deny the role they have played in creating a robust distribution channel, driving up volumes for the restaurants. We therefore will continue to coexist in the typical love-hate relationship. Tech, after all, has to be an enabler and not a distorter."

HC advances summer vacation of district courts

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has advanced the summer vacation of district courts starting from May 17 to June 16 in view of the "alarming rise" in COVID-19 infections and the toll it has taken on the health and lives of judicial officers and staff of subordinate judiciary.

The 30-day period has been declared as vacation month for the current year for the members of Delhi Judicial Service.

The High Court has also asked the district judges to ensure that bare minimum staffers are called physically and that "the majority of the officials mandatorily work from home, till the time the situation becomes normal".

HC break

On the other hand, the Delhi High Court has decided that its summer vacation would remain the same which was already scheduled from June 5 to July 2. It also said that the existing system of functioning through videoconference shall continue till June 4.

The High Court also said all the pending routine or non-urgent matters listed in the court between May 17 and June 4 shall be adjourned to corresponding dates between July 30 and August 18.



+ Two foreigners arrested in oxygen racket case

Accused along with accomplices duped over 1,000 people across India of ₹2 crore

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two foreign nationals were arrested for allegedly cheating people on the pretext of providing oxygen cylinders, the police said on Sunday.

The accused were using more than 20 bank accounts and had duped more than ₹2 crore from over 1,000 people across India, said the officers.

The accused have been identified as Cheema Benne (42), hailing from Nigeria and Jonathan Kojo (44), a permanent resident of Ghana, they said.

On May 5, one complainant reported that he was in need of an oxygen cylinder for his relative who was suffering from COVID-19 and found a phone number on social media, the police said.

When the complainant contacted the alleged person, he asked him to pay



People outside an oxygen-refill plant at Mayapuri Industrial Area. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

₹16,000 for the oxygen cylinder and ₹4,000 as transport charges, following which the complainant transferred ₹20,000.

The accused assured him that the cylinder would be delivered to his address. However, the victim did not receive any cylinder and when he tried to contact the accused, they blocked his

number, a senior police officer said.

"During investigation, it was found that the foreign nationals were part of a cheating racket. On Thursday, the police apprehended Benne from Green Park, South Delhi. On his instance, his accomplice Kojo was also arrested on Saturday," Additional Commissioner of Pol-

ice (Crime) Shibesh Singh said. The police recovered 163 SIM cards, 19 mobile phones, five laptops, four debit cards and other articles.

Social media

During interrogation, Benne disclosed that he along with his accomplices in India and abroad were cheating people through different modes. After seeing the rising demand for oxygen cylinders in Delhi, they planned to cheat people through social media. They flashed their mobile numbers on different social media platforms promising to provide oxygen cylinders to needy, the police said.

One of the accomplices in Bangalore provided bank accounts to receive the cheated money. Their other accomplices in Africa too assisted in this fraud.

Police arrest man over oxygen cylinder scam

The accused swindled over ₹3 lakh

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old man was arrested for allegedly duping people on the pretext of providing oxygen cylinders to them, the police said on Sunday.

The accused has been identified as Jai Kishan, a resident of Jahangirpur. The police said a case was registered on Tuesday in which complainant, Himanshu, said that his family members had tested COVID positive and he needed oxygen cylinders as his father-in-law's condition had started deteriorating on April 27.

He came across an advertisement on WhatsApp which assured home delivery of oxygen cylinders.

After the complainant called on the mobile number, the man asked him to

transfer ₹20,000 and ₹30,000 in advance for two oxygen cylinders of 20 kg each, a senior police officer said.

The complainant transferred the money but did not receive any cylinder. When he asked the accused to refund the money, the man blocked his number, the police said.

During interrogation, the accused disclosed that his family had no source of income due to the lockdown.

He knew that there was a huge requirement of oxygen cylinders for COVID patients in the city, the police said.

So he planned to cheat people who were in urgent need of the cylinders. He had cheated more than 10 people and collected around ₹3 lakh, the police said.

Man stabbed to death by couple over ₹100

Police looking for accused husband

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old man was stabbed to death on Sunday allegedly by a couple over ₹100 in west Delhi's Raj Park, the police said.

The deceased has been identified as Ajeeet, a resident of P-block, Mangolpuri.

On Sunday at 2.45 p.m., the police received information regarding the incident. The police reached Sanjay Gandhi Hospital and upon enquiry, it was found that Ajeeet was brought to the hospital by his father. He was declared dead. He had a stab injury behind his right knee, a senior police said.

During preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the deceased had to pay ₹100 to the accused, Jitender,

der, a resident of P-block, Mangolpuri, the officer said.

On Sunday, Jitender asked him to return his money. On this issue, a heated argument ensued between them which led to a quarrel. The deceased beat the accused on the spot and refused to pay the money.

Thereafter, Jitender went back to his home and returned with a knife. His wife also accompanied him. In order to teach a lesson to Ajeeet, Jitender and his wife Reshma again quarrelled with him and started beating Ajeeet. Later, Jitender attacked Ajeeet with the knife and the couple ran away from the spot, the police said.

Reshma has been arrested while search for Jitender is under way, the police said.

The darkness deepens

SUNALINI MATHEW
NEW DELHI

"She died in my arms," says Sunaina Magan, her voice breaking over the phone, as she talks about her mother's passing in Lady Hardinge Hospital last month. It was the 13th day of Ms. Magan's brother's death, and her mother, burdened by grief, the disease, and the trauma of getting medical help, succumbed to COVID-19.

Ms. Magan, 41, whose father is recovering from COVID, bid goodbye to her mother and brother at a zoom prayer meeting on the latter's therhavi (the 13th day ritual); she explains the Hindu belief of the soul leaving for its final abode). But while she is grappling with the loss, she recalls the horrors leading up to it, including rude, often absent, doctors. "I have held the feet

and in a few hours he was gone," she says, of the shock to the whole ward, who by then had bonded with each other.

Young doctors newly experiencing death at this scale, some doing 24-hour shifts, took it more stoically, even rationally.

"In the casualty ward, patients increased so rapidly that the doctors - five or six of them - could not cope with the 50 to 60 patients inside and the lines of stretchers outside," says Shaaz Arif Beg, 24, who was interning at GTB Hospital in April.

It is the unexpected nature of the blood clot formation in the disease that has left doctors feeling helpless. "There was a young



Living a nightmare: Kin of COVID-19 victims outside the mortuary Maulana Azad Medical College on Sunday ■ R.V. MOORTHY

girl, about my age, who was getting better. We had told her family we would be releasing her that day," he says. At lunch, she threw up, and died. "Explaining the death of a young person to the family is hard, because they want to know why," he says, adding that doctors may not know the reason

immediately, and that is even more difficult to explain.

Difficult task

His experience of telling a spouse of the loss of their loved one was also difficult, though he is not able to say why - his age showing through - at not identifying

fying with the loss of a life partner. His most devastating encounter, which he calls "a nightmare", was the death of friend and classmate Dr. Anas Mujahid. "Death is just a number on a sheet until it happens with family or close friends," he says, honestly.

But the cremation is not often a closure. Sandeep Kumar remembers first the difficulty in finding a space, the tug of war with the hospital that refused to keep the body of his uncle, the high cost of the ambulance to drive just a few kilometres, and the kriya-karam (rituals) that barely took place, three pandits among seven bodies, moving quickly from one to another.

"The worst was the fact that the lakkad-walla was just wearing a thin mask and no PPE kit. There were several PPE kits just thrown around right there," he says, adding that the men at the crematorium were so overworked that they had not a minute to even drink water.

In a sense Mr. Kumar and his

family - his aunt has just recovered from COVID; his cousin is still grappling with it - has still not come to terms with the death. "We have not been able to tell our mother, though she cross-questions us like a journalist," he says. It has been 20 days since the death of his uncle.

Shalini Masih, a Delhi-based psychotherapist, says there's both a collective and individual response to death. While the individual response is based on several factors, some that may go back to childhood, the collective response has been one of "shared humanity". "It's good to remember that I am moved because I have the capacity to empathise, even with people we never had a chance to know."

She quotes a client, a fan of Harry Potter, who spoke of the end of the series, when the snitch (a golden ball with silver wings) opens. It had the message, "I open at the close," with the Resurrection Stone at its heart that united Harry with all his loved ones who had died.

Timings**DELHI**

MONDAY, MAY. 17
RISE 05:30 SET 19:07
RISE 09:37 SET 23:58
TUESDAY, MAY. 18
RISE 05:30 SET 19:07
RISE 10:34 SET 00:00
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 19
RISE 05:29 SET 19:08
RISE 11:34 SET 00:41

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	40	22
Safdarjung	40	22
Palam	41	24

Delhi Palam Today
39°C A comfortable morning and hot day. Thunder clouds development likely at few parts.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
36°C Cloudy sky and moderate surface winds likely. Rain and thunderstorm likely with gusty winds at some places.

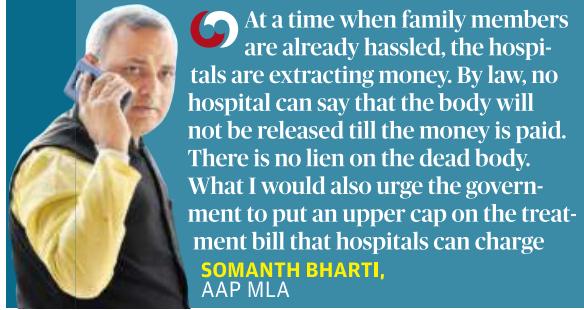
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IN BRIEF

Plea in HC for vaccine supply on priority basis
NEW DELHI
A plea in the Delhi High Court has sought directions to the Centre to ensure that COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech supply the jabs to the national capital on a priority basis.

Max Hospital refused to release body until bill of over ₹22L cleared, allege kin

Hospital authorities say no complaint received from family



At a time when family members are already hassled, the hospitals are extracting money. By law, no hospital can say that the body will not be released till the money is paid. There is no lien on the dead body. What I would also urge the government to put an upper cap on the treatment bill that hospitals can charge

SOMANTH BHARTI,
AAP MLA

leasing the body. The hospital has so far not received any complaint from the family of the bereaved person," the statement read.

The patient's nephew, Dildar Singh, said: "He had been admitted on April 24 and late last night [Friday], we got a call from the hospital stating that he had died. The hospital then refused to release the body till the bill of over ₹22 lakh was cleared. After insurance and the little that we had been able to pay, around ₹13 lakh was still pending."

"We told the hospital that we have given all that we could, and it is impossible for us to pay more. He was the sole earner in his family and how will we manage this huge sum? While the doctors are doing their best, the hospitals are looting from patients. At a point when a family member has expired and we are already

vulnerable, how can we be in the mindset to be haggling over the bill? We had to sign an undertaking before the body was released but we will take a call later on whether we want to appeal or not," said Mr. Singh.

AAP MLA Somanth Bharti, who also intervened in the matter before the body was released, said: "At a time when family members are already hassled, the hospitals are extracting money. By law, no hospital can say that the body will not be released till the money is paid. There is no lien on the body. What I would also urge the government to put an upper cap on the treatment bill that hospitals can charge."

Taking to social media, Mr. Bharti wrote that Sohan had been a volunteer with him who had helped serve several COVID-affected families.

Max hospital, said: "The COVID patient was admitted to Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, Saket on April 23 and was shifted to the ICU on April 24 after his condition deteriorated. His parameters were unstable and despite best efforts by a multidisciplinary team of experts, the patient succumbed to his condition past midnight on May 15. The family was informed about his demise. Meanwhile, the hospital initiated the protocol for handing over the body of a COVID patient."

"His nephew arrived at the hospital on Saturday morning and the body was released at the same afternoon post due formalities and undertaking for settling outstanding bill/dues. We firmly deny allegations that there was any delay in re-

As uncertainty looms over lockdowns, migrants scramble to leave GB Nagar

Week-long curfews and extensions in the district have led to income loss for many workers; they are leaving in smaller groups unlike last year

JATIN ANAND

Their groups may have gotten smaller, but their collective sense of helplessness continues to be as compelling a reason to make the long journey back home now as it was last year.

Seeking shelter from the noonday sun on a grassy patch below the Yamuna Expressway or waiting for the soaring mercury to gradually subside at abandoned roadside tea stalls along the highway, migrant workers are exiting Gautam Buddha Nagar daily as one district-wide lockdown gives way to the next.

"You can call it curfew or lockdown, but it means the same thing for people like me who have to dig a well every day to drink water. Each day without work is a struggle, leave aside one entire week," said Gopaladas, one of over a dozen migrant workers from Bihar's Saharsa district awaiting a ride home



Migrants wait for transport near the Yamuna Expressway over the weekend. ■ JATIN ANAND

near the 'Zero Point' in Greater Noida on Saturday.

"I should have listened to my younger brother who left with some of his friends at the dry-cleaning shop where we all work, the day after the first weeklong curfew was announced; he told me he had a feeling it would get extended again but I told him there was no point spending money on a trip home in a

hurry; I was wrong," he added.

Rendered jobless due to the continually extending lockdown to contain the second wave of COVID — a night curfew through most of April followed by a lockdown week after consecutive week so far this month — construction and factory workers, roadside vendors, barbers, mechanics, eatery opera-

tors, printing press, dry cleaners' and even restaurant employees constitute the daily trickle back to their rural roots.

"There aren't lines [of migrant workers] on the roads like [during the March 2020] lockdown last year so it may look like everything is fine but that is not so," said Sunder Kant from Darbhanga.

"Many of those who went to their villages last year, like my younger brother who is now working on agricultural fields there, didn't come back because they had doubts about things being normal despite government announcements; if they had it would have been as bad now as it was then," he added.

Willing to utilise any means available — from hitchhiking on personal vehicles to cramming themselves inside trucks' and goods carriers' metallic storage compartments irrespective of the heat or fear of COVID infection — and to pay any price to reach destinations located as far as some districts of Bihar, the migrant crisis, they said, may not "look as bad" like last year but has forced many to reconsider their decision to return to the city yet again.

"I came back to Greater Noida a month and a half ago after spending almost a year at

home. Things were getting better daily; there was work almost every day of the week but then the lockdown happened again. Now I think I shouldn't have come back in the first place," said Sarvesh Singh, a construction worker, also from Saharsa.

Operations scaled down
Ranjit Yadav, a 55-year-old contractual factory worker from Gorakhpur, complained that employment opportunities for daily wagers like him had been few and far in between throughout May.

"Factories are functioning but not at their full strength because of the lockdown. Operations have been scaled down; given the lesser working hours they are mostly making do with employees on their payroll or with a less number of younger labourers instead of old hands like me," he said.

"At this point, you can't even blame the thekedaar

[contractor]. How will he get me to work given the circumstances? I would rather go back home and work on the fields for around the same wage; at least I'll get to see my family more often," he added.

Gyanesh Kumar from Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh said while the plying of state-run, as well as private buses this year, was a significant relief for those seeking to go home, journeys had gotten more expensive.

"I used to be able to reach home in around ₹250 to ₹300 earlier. Now they charge around ₹50 to ₹100 more — both public and private buses; the government should have at least thought about maintaining reasonable fares for people like us," he said. "Here we are struggling to fill our stomachs more than once a day and now this additional expenditure only to be able to go home seems more than unfair," he also said.

Lockdown extended till May 24, announces CM

DDMA asks officials to ensure strict compliance with rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Sunday extended the ongoing lockdown that was in place till May 17 by another week till 5 a.m. on May 24.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the lockdown that was first imposed on April 19 has brought about a reduction in the number of cases and a dip in the positivity rate as well.

Positivity rate

"The number of COVID cases is decreasing in Delhi and recovery has increased but we do not want to lose this gain, therefore, lockdown is extended. In the past 24 hours, Delhi has reported around 6,500 cases and the positivity rate has come down to 10% from 11%," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Hoping that in the next week, there will be greater recovery, he said: "As far as I can understand, Delhi is slowly coming back on track. The lockdown is to continue as it is, no conces-



Connaught Place wears a deserted look due to the lockdown in the city. ■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

sions will be given. Last week, the government had announced the closure of the Delhi Metro as a part of a more stringent lockdown."

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), in its order, told officials to ensure strict compliance with the lockdown rules and take action against those found to be violating the rules.

"The situation of COVID-19 in NCT of Delhi has again been reviewed and ob-

served that positive cases, as well as positivity rate, is still high and the bed occupancy [oxygen supported/ICU beds] in the dedicated COVID-19 government and private hospitals/nursing homes is also on the higher side... curfew needs to be extended for another week in the territory on NCT of Delhi except for essential activities/services) for overall well-being and safety of the people of NCT Delhi," the DDMA order read.

City sees less than 10,000 cases for the third consecutive day

Atishi says only 1 day of Covaxin stock left for those above 45 yrs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 6,456 fresh COVID-19 cases on Sunday along with 262 deaths and 9,706 recoveries, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

The bulletin added that 62,059 tests were conducted in 24-hours with a positivity rate of 10.40%. The total cases now stand at 13,93,867 with 21,506 deaths. There are 62,783 active cases in the city with 39,211 people under home isolation.

This is the third consecutive day when Delhi has recorded less than 10,000 cases. On Saturday, Delhi had reported 6,430 cases, the lowest since April 7. It reported 8,506 cases on Friday, 10,489 on Thursday, 13,287

on Wednesday, 12,481 on Tuesday, 12,651 on Monday and 13,336 on last Sunday.

At 10.40%, Sunday's positivity rate is the lowest since April 11 when it stood at 9.4%.

Releasing the vaccination bulletin, AAP MLA Atishi said Delhi has only one day of Covaxin stock left for those aged

vaccine doses for this age group, of which 41.68 lakh have been administered," Ms. Atishi said.

In the 18-44 age group so far, the Capital has received 8.17 lakh doses of which 5.25 lakh have been used till Sunday morning, she added.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal visited GTB hospital to review the work and video calling facility for the COVID patients with their family members.

We have understood that if the patient gets medical strength, then their recovery is faster, so we had started a video calling facility for patients to talk to their relatives, Mr. Kejriwal said. He said this also helps reduce the stress of the relatives.

"There were some services that we had started, and some obstructions were faced. I had received some complaints regarding that and now that has been resolved. I talked to some of the patients and whatever problems were being faced, have now been solved. All doctors and nurses are working on this," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Police harassing volunteers for putting posters questioning PM'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party leader Durgesh Pathak on Sunday alleged that Delhi Police is harassing their volunteers for putting posters questioning the Prime Minister regarding the unavailability of vaccines. He added that AAP will not bow down to such intimidation from the police.

"Today [Sunday] two workers from Karawal Nagar, two from Ghonda, workers from Rithala, Ambekar Nagar, Mangoli, Kalkaji, and Mangolpuri were imprisoned. Around 500-550 of them were called in the morning and interrogated by police till night," Mr. Pathak said.

"I would like to tell the police and the BJP that you cannot arrest somebody for asking such questions because we live in a democracy. But despite this if you want to arrest, then we would like to tell you that these posters were put up by AAP, these posters were put up by me," Mr. Pathak said.

Recoveries higher than fresh COVID cases in Gurugram

The trend continues unabated and the number of active cases in the district stands at 24,926

ASHOK KUMAR

In a reversal of trends over the past 10 days, the number of recovered COVID patients recorded daily in Gurugram is constantly more than the fresh cases, bringing down the active cases by around 15,000.

Consequently, oxygen and Intensive Care Units are now available in some of the hospitals registered with the State government for treatment of COVID patients.

Though the number of new cases is constantly on a

decline in Gurugram for more than a fortnight now, the recovered patients outnumbered the fresh cases for the first time in the city during the current wave on May 7. As many as 4,253 patients were declared recovered on May 7 compared to 3,588 fresh cases, bringing down the number of active cases to 39,000. The trend continues unabated and the number of active cases in the district stands at 24,926.

Also, the number of daily new cases fell below the 2,000-mark on May 15 for the first time during the current wave with 1,691 fresh cases. As per the latest daily report on May 16, the district witnessed 1,864 new cases against 4,912 recoveries.

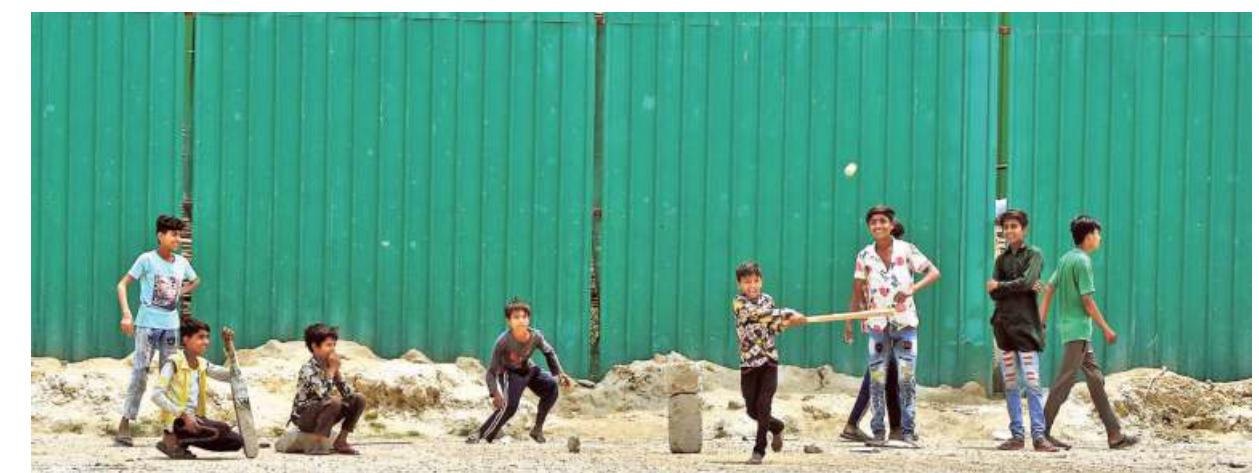
Daily deaths

However, the number of daily deaths continue to in double digits. With 12 deaths on May 16, the district has recorded 683 deaths so far, including 466 deaths in cases with co-morbidities. Around 10,000-12,000 COVID tests are conducted daily in the district.

The decline in the number of active cases also reflected itself in the availability of oxygen and ICU beds in hospitals in the district. More than 20 hospitals registered with the state government showed availability of oxygen beds, including Civil Hospital, SGT Medical College and Research Institute, ESI Hospital, Medeor Hospital, and Artemis Hospital, on May 16. SGT Medical College and Research Institute also showed 39 vacant ICU beds.

Similarly, Sunrise Hospi-

Playtime



Teamwork: Children playing cricket on a hot Sunday afternoon in the city. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Govt. deploys staff to answer distress calls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Delhi government has deployed staff from its Department of Social Welfare to attend to distress calls and other queries from senior citizens impacted by the pandemic.

A team of four officials has been sent to the office of the divisional commissioner to support helpline number 1077 that is run under the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), the department said in an official order.

Section officer G.C. Meena, senior assistant Kumar Gandharva, welfare officers Kuldeep Saini and Vijay have been deployed for the task, it said.

Vaccine drive grinds to a halt in Kashmir due to acute shortage

All 10 districts failed to administer doses to the eligible population on Sunday

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The COVID-19 vaccination drive has come almost to a naught in the Kashmir valley, with all the 10 districts failing to administer doses to the eligible population on Sunday. However, the Jammu region saw 9,144 doses administered to the eligible population.



A man on a horse-cart home delivers rice amid lockdown in Srinagar on Sunday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

doses of vaccine were administered on Sunday in Jammu, which included 3,093 citizens above 45 years old," officials said.

Jammu has already administered 5,63,880 doses compared to Srinagar's 1,97,57. According to official figures, the Jammu division, with 10 districts, has been able to administer doses to 85.66% of its population compared to the Kashmir division, with 10 districts, at 61.15%.

No doses were administered in north, south and central Kashmir on Sunday due

to continuous shortage of vaccines, both Covishield as well as Covaxin.

Hundreds of locals queued up outside the Kashmir valley's main hospitals, including the Shri Maharaja Hari Singh hospital, the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, the Jawahar Lal Nehru hospital etc. but failed to get their due second doses of Covishield.

"I am 78-year-old from Srinagar's Nowshera area and have many of my family members and neighbours afflicted by the pandemic. I am waiting for my second dose for the past two weeks but have failed to receive the shot. It has only made me vulnerable," Shabir Ganai, a retired employee, said.

Danish Bhat, an elected corporator of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), said the Public Health Centre, Lalbazar, Srinagar, has halted vaccination for the past six days due to unavailability.

National Conference provincial president Nasir Aslam Wani has asked the Lieutenant-Governor's administration "to remove bottlenecks".

Door-to-door service'

Mr. Wani said at most far-off places in Kashmir the vaccination centres are miles away and make it difficult for people to visit them. "Kashmir needs door-to-door vaccination," he added. The shortage comes as Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha had set a timeline of 10 days for achieving the target of 100% vaccination of the above 45 years age group with the first dose of vaccine on Saturday (May 15).

"Now, after duly considering the fact that the number of COVID positive cases are still high in the State, in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 22(2)(h) of the Disaster Management Act,

Lockdown in Haryana extended till May 24

Positive cases high in the State: govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

The Haryana government on Sunday extended the lockdown in the State for another week till May 24. This is the second extension after it was first imposed for a week on May 3.

'Stringent measures'

Making the announcement, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij, in a tweet, said: "Mahamari Alert/Surkshit Haryana extended from 17 May to 24 May. Stringent measures will be taken to implement the Alert."

"Now, after duly considering the fact that the number of COVID positive cases are still high in the State, in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 22(2)(h) of the Disaster Management Act,

2005, the undersigned in my capacity as Chairperson, State Executive Committee hereby extends the Mahamari Alert/Surkshit Haryana... for another one week, i.e., from 17.05.2021 (05.00 a.m. onwards) to 24.05.2021 (till 5.00 a.m.) in the State of Haryana along with the guidelines to be implemented (during this period) issued earlier," read the order by Chief Secretary Vijai Vardhan.

Revised guidelines

The Haryana government had last week revised the guidelines for the lockdown to cap the number of people at weddings and funerals to 11. Wedding processions were also banned in the State. Weddings can now be conducted only inside homes or at courts.

State's overall restrictions," said Capt. Amarinder in an official statement here.

Reviewing the State's COVID-19 situation at a meeting, he said while the restrictions so far has shown results, with some decline in daily infection numbers, there is a need to extend the curbs due to high positivity rate of 13.1% as of May 15 and case fatality rate (CFR) standing at 2.4%.

Strict implementation

The Chief Minister said the district authorities will continue to ensure strict implementation of all directives of the Union Home Ministry or the State government on COVID appropriate behaviour, including social distancing norms, regulating crowds in market places and public transport.

Jagannath temple closed till June 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PURI (ODISHA)

Keeping in view the surge in COVID-19 cases in Odisha and also in Puri, the authorities of the temple of Lord Jagannath in the pilgrim town on Sunday announced that the 12th century shrine would remain out of bounds for the public till June 15.

Meanwhile, the Ganjam district administration has urged all attendees, including the bride and bridegroom, to undergo COVID-19 tests prior to weddings. The appeal came in the wake of wedding functions becoming a source of infections.

“We request all that anyone seeking permission to marry should come with a COVID-19 negative report. Since not more than 50 people can attend a marriage, it will not be difficult to undergo a COVID-19 test. Then we can be assured that the wedding does not become a source of infections,” said Ganjam District Collector Vijay Amrutha Kulange.

The famous temple is closed for the devotees since May 5 as a State-wide lockdown was imposed by the Odisha government.

The Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration made the decision to keep the temple closed for people till June 15 at a review meeting chaired by SJTA Chief Administrator Dr. Krishan Kumar and attended by Puri Collector Samarth Verma.

Bride loses battle with virus

She died in ambulance after a 10-hour search for an ICU bed

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

A young bride lost the battle against COVID-19 after a frantic day-long search for a hospital bed allegedly ended in disappointment in Bhubaneswar.

Ambulance-borne Swarnalata Pal (25) was taken from one hospital to another for nearly 10 hours, but she could not secure admission to an ICU (intensive care unit). She breathed her last in the ambulance.

She had only been married for three weeks when she met the tragic end. Her marriage to Bishnu Charan Bhola, a resident of Indolokusia village on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, took place on April 28.

“Before her death, Swarnalata had mild fever. On Saturday, her husband came running to me to inform that

she was experiencing shortness of breath and was required to be shifted to a hospital. We took her to a government hospital at Athantara by an ambulance. Since the hospital did not have an ICU facility, we were asked to rush the patient to the Capital Hospital,” said Nirjanan Bhol, a relative of the victim.

'Delay by family'

“The family delayed spotting COVID-19 symptoms in Swarnalata. Her oxygen level started dipping. COVID-19 test was conducted on her upon reaching Capital Hospital. She tested positive. Since there was no ICU bed available, we took her to AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences)-Bhubaneswar and a few private hospitals. We could not find any ICU. She was still in the

Positive mothers should continue kangaroo care'

Proper hygienic practices must, says NE's only doctor of medicine for neonatology

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

A COVID-19 positive mother should continue with kangaroo care with proper hygienic practices and preferably let vaccinated persons take care of the infant six feet away when not breastfeeding or in contact with her, the only doctor of medicine for neonatology in the Northeast has said.

Kangaroo mother care (KMC), initially developed in Colombia, is a method of care practised on babies, usually on a pre-term infant, where the infant is held skin-

to-skin with his mother, father, or substitute caregiver.

“There are no special precautions for the babies born of COVID-19 positive mothers. If there is no provision for separate delivery room for such a mother, her bed should be separated from the rest of the delivery beds. All life-saving birth practices like skin-to-skin care, delayed cord clamping, early breastfeeding, and KMC should be continued with proper hygienic practices,” Reeta Bora said in an interaction facilitated by the Assam centre of the UNICEF.

Professor of paediatrics and neonatology at Lakhimpur Medical College, Dr. Bora is a member of the Indian Academy of Paediatrics' National Neonatology Forum.

Hygienic practices

She said COVID-19-affected mothers could directly breastfeed their new-borns and infants, provided they maintained the hygienic practices such as periodic handwashing, wearing of masks while feeding, keeping the infant at a distance of six feet distance while someone who was unaffected took

care of the baby, preferably vaccinated and without any high-risk factor for infection.

Dr. Bora allayed fears about the effect of vaccination in pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, pointing out there was no global scientific evidence to presume it was harmful.

“The vaccines currently in use have proved to be safe for pregnant and lactating mothers. The Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India has recently advocated vaccination in pregnant women and lactating mothers,” she said.

2 killed in Rajasthan clash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOTA

Two people were killed and one injured in a clash between two groups over alleged illegal mining of soil near an agricultural field along the Pipalaj dam in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district, police said on Sunday.

Fifteen people have been booked and 10 of them detained in connection with the violence that took place

near Gangpura village under Bhawani Mandi police station area on Saturday afternoon, they said.

The deceased have been identified as Giriraj Gurjar (35) and Basantilal Gurjar (25), both residents of Gangpura village, the police said.

No arrests have been made so far. The bodies of Giriraj and Basantilal were handed over to their family members after post-mortem.

Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited
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Eastern Court, Janpath, New Delhi-110050

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NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Tendering Tender Notice No. 20/2021

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) North Eastern Railway, Itaznagar for and on behalf of the President of India invites “OPEN” e-tender through on Line (E-tendering) for the following work.

S.No.-1. Description of works:

Construction of foundation and other civil work (Except steel structure) in connection with provision of Foot Over Bridge at Roshnupur & Piplansa Station. (Under sanctioned work Provision of FOB at GHJ, KLI, RDN, RHN, SKA, DRO, SWRT & PLS (8 nos.) being high level platform at these stations). Approximate Value (Rs.): ₹ 1,04,37,972.94, E.M.D. Money (Rs.): ₹ Nil. Cost of Tender Form (Rs.): ₹ Nil. Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter: 06 Months. S.No.-2. Description of works: Construction of Type-II-02 Qtr's (RUPC-02, BHJ-02, LKU-01, KPV-01, FBD-02) units for RPF staff at BHJ stations. (Under sanctioned work Construction of Type-IV-01 Qtr (KSJ-01 units) & Type-III-04 Qtr's (PKV-01, KGM-01, KJN-01, PBE-01 units) and Type-II-08 Qtr's (RUPC-02, BHJ-02, LKU-01, KPV-01, FBD-02) units for RPF staff at different stations). Approximate Value (Rs.): ₹ 20,69,837.33, E.M.D. Money (Rs.): ₹ Nil. Cost of Tender Form (Rs.): ₹ Nil. Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter: 06 Months.

(1) On line e-tender can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs of dated 08.06.2021

(2) For Full details and Submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.)

CPRW/W-30 Itaznagar

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955

Never travel on roof and foot boards.

near Gangpura village under Bhawani Mandi police station area on Saturday afternoon, they said.

The deceased have been identified as Giriraj Gurjar (35) and Basantilal Gurjar (25), both residents of Gangpura village, the police said.

No arrests have been made so far. The bodies of Giriraj and Basantilal were handed over to their family members after post-mortem.

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Asstt. General Manager (Admn.) NP

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4 NORTH & EAST

Vaccine drive grinds to a halt in Kashmir due to acute shortage

All 10 districts failed to administer doses to the eligible population on Sunday

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The COVID-19 vaccination drive has come almost to a naught in the Kashmir valley, with all the 10 districts failing to administer doses to the eligible population on Sunday. However, the Jammu region saw 9,144 doses administered to the eligible population.</p

IN BRIEF



Srisailam offers 'worship from home' facility

KURNOOL
The management of the Srisailam temple here in Andhra Pradesh has decided to re-introduce the 'worship from home' service, where people can view sevas on YouTube. The fee for the 10 services offered by the temple is fixed at ₹1,116.

Bowring to treat cases of black fungus from today

The Karnataka government has formed a four-member committee to advise on the treatment of mucormycosis, also known as black fungus. From Monday, treatment for the disease will be launched at Bowring Hospital, Health and Family Welfare Minister K. Sudhakar said.

Kerala village bids adieu to Soumya

She was killed in a missile attack in Israel

A CORRESPONDENT
IDUKKI

The village of Keerithodu in Kerala's Idukki district on Sunday bid a tearful adieu to Soumya Santhosh, who was killed in a missile attack in Israel.

Her body was brought to the village on Saturday night, and was placed for the public to pay homage till noon. People from all walks of life paid their last respects to her. Collector H. Dinesan placed a wreath on behalf of Governor Arif Mohammed Khan.

Promises help

Israel Consul General Johnatan Sadka reached Keerithodu to pay homage. He said that the people of Israel considered Soumya an angel.



Village in gloom: Idukki Collector H. Dinesan paying tributes to Soumya Santhosh on behalf of the Kerala Governor at Keerithodu village on Sunday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

This was a very complicated time for all, he said. "Soumya was a victim of terrorism. It is an unbelievable

loss to the family and her son. The Israel government will provide all support to the family," he said.

Soumya had been working as a caretaker to an elderly woman at a house in Ashkelon, which borders the

Three States exceed 25% positivity

A.P. hits new peak of 24,171 cases; Kerala tests drop

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Karnataka's 31,531 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday represented a test positivity rate (TPR) of 27.84%. Of the new cases 8,344 cases were in Bengaluru Urban district.

The Department of Health said 1.13 lakh tests were carried out for the day. There were 403 more deaths. There are over six lakh active cases.

Kerala's graph, after the highest spike on May 12 of 43,529 new cases, showed a dip. However, testing too was dipping. On Sunday, the State reported 29,704 new cases from 1,15,982 samples. The TPR showed a slight re-



Caution pays: A man in a PPE kit buying fruits at a market in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

duction at 25.61%.

persons were admitted, while total hospitalised cases stood at 37,117.

ICU admissions were rising. A total of 3,686 patients were in ICUs, and 64 were newly admitted.

Ernakulam continued to have the maximum active

cases at 68,352, while Thiruvananthapuram had 45,093. Andhra Pradesh hit a fresh peak with 24,171 new cases on Sunday, and added 101 deaths. Active cases rose to 2,10,436. The daily TPR had been rising even after the 18-hour curfew from May 5. The 94,550 samples tested in a day returned a TPR of 25.56%.

In spite of a lower number of tests in Telangana, 3,816 new cases and 27 deaths were reported on Sunday. Daily screening was lower by nearly 20,000 tests.

The number of active cases in Tamil Nadu rose to 2,19,342 with another 33,181 persons testing positive on Sunday. A total of 311 persons died taking the toll to 17,670.

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

YSR Cong. MP moves SC for bail in sedition case

He alleges vindictive action by party

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A YSR Congress MP has approached the Supreme Court seeking bail in a sedition case registered against him.

Narasapuram MP Kanumuri Raghurama Krishnam Raju, represented by senior advocate Adinarayana Rao and advocate Tatini Basu,

alleged that the registration of the case against him was a "vindictive action" by his own party's government led by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Vocal critic

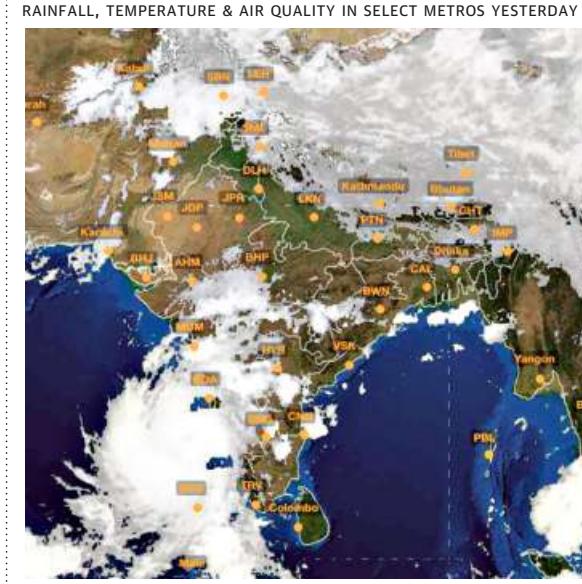
Mr. Raju, a vocal critic of the State government, said the High Court refused to consider the grounds in his bail

Gaza strip. Her husband and nine-year-old son stay in Ker-

ala. The funeral was held at Keerithodu. Nitya Sahaya Matha Church at 2 p.m. Idukki Bishop Mar John Nelikunnel led the funeral service. Idukki MP Dean Kuriakose, Kerala Janapaksham leader P.C. George and Idukki district panchayat president Gigi K. Philip attended the funeral.

Mr. Kuriakose said the State government failed in adequately paying last respects to the woman who lost her life in a foreign country. Not a single representative of the State government attended the funeral or paid respects to the family. No one from the government was there to receive the body at Nedumbassery airport, he said. "The District Collector attended the funeral as a representative of the Governor," he said.

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP; INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty wind at isolated places over east Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Kerala and Lakshadweep and with lightning at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Meghalaya, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1...	33.4...	24.5	Kozhikode	7...	26.7...	23.8
Ahmedabad	0.1...	43.5...	30.9	Kurnool	3...	36.8...	26.5
Aizawl	...	26.3...	17.9	Lucknow	...	39.8...	25.6
Allahabad	...	41.5...	27.4	Madurai	2...	37.2...	24.8
Bengaluru	...	27.8...	21.4	Mangalore	...	30.6...	23.3
Bhopal	...	39.9...	28.1	Mumbai	0.8...	34.8...	27.8
Bhubaneswar	...	37.4...	27.4	Mysuru	2...	34...	20.6
Chandigarh	...	39...	21.6	New Delhi	...	39.7...	22.4
Chennai	...	37.1...	29	Patna	...	40.2...	24.4
Coimbatore	8...	28.9...	22.9	Port Blair	...	33.6...	26.5
Dehradun	...	34.5...	17	Puducherry	...	34.6...	26.6
Gangtok	14...	21.4...	14.9	Pune	9.6...	31.5...	23
Goa	...	31.5...	22.6	Raipur	...	38...	27.5
Guwahati	0.6...	31.2...	22.8	Ranchi	...	36.7...	22.1
Hubballi	...	24...	23	Shillong	0.7...	26.5...	16.4
Hyderabad	...	34.5...	24.9	Shimla	0.7...	28.9...	17
Imphal	0.3...	30.5...	17.7	Srinagar	...	22.7...	7.2
Jaipur	...	39.6...	25.1	Thiruvananthapuram	58...	32...	23.2
Kochi	137...	...	23.8	Tiruchi	0.1...	39.2...	26.2
Kohima	...	24.5...	14	Vijayawada	...	34.8...	27
Kolkata	...	36.5...	27.8	Visakhapatnam	8...	34.8...	27

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Yesterday

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ahmedabad, Guntur recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 224 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Gadag, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 17.

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.

NO₂: 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.

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Lessons from a hidden curriculum

There is uncertainty in the air and our educational priorities are undergoing a sea-change. How do we counter it?

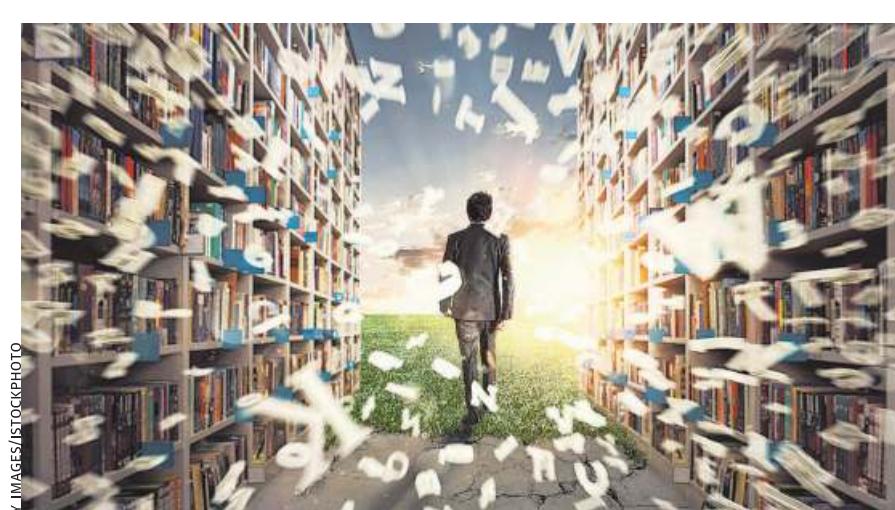
■ SALIL SAHADEVAN

We are on a disruptive reset, educationally. The pandemic has exposed the value of the hidden curriculum represented by the unwritten, unofficial, and unintended lessons, gathered from family, classrooms, and the broader culture of beliefs and norms. This is subtle and far removed from the formal syllabus. How does it enact in different dimensions and how do we address it?

Out of syllabus

The first dimension is the lost certainty. Our traditional educational practice encourages a mental model of certainty. But the pandemic contradicts the false certainty assumed in a written syllabus. A medical practitioner recently wrote how the pandemic has seen professionals adapting to changes and physicians from different specialties practising in areas entirely outside their discipline. Similarly, subjects are still taught as if we have unlimited certainty of natural resources. We limit ourselves by discussing opening of institutions and conducting exams and continue to encourage a false sense of required status quo.

The second dimension draws attention to variability. Beyond the simplistic notion of replacing class-



Reconcile to the fact that some educational structures are obsolete and figure out solutions, some of which may be unorthodox

This also means pressure on institutions using outdated pedagogy.

Misplaced priorities and choices are the fourth aspect. The pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of our existing procedures and priorities.

What can be done

Here is how institutional leadership can make sense of the hidden curriculum:

Solutionist approach:

Many universities have reported dozens of pandemic-related inventions and

solutions. Tavian Jean-Pierre, a young futurist, suggests a simple pedagogical template. First, highlight a knowledge gap. Second, point out that we do not have the resources to solve it, if we continue to think and operate at the current level. Third, show the work that is going on to try to solve it and invite students to be a part of that.

New spaces and actors: Localised learning approaches such as small group outdoor works, safe pods by neighbourhoods, and miniature community centres are possible experiments. Educators may also include parents, volunteers, older children, and experts outside of academia. A live curriculum requires learning design collaborations and

practitioners outside of the traditional academia.

Short-term measures: The urgent short-term measures, which are already in progress, include continuing safety as a priority, immunity building, vaccination drives, engaging families, and weaving into the virtual campus. In hard-to-reach places, use television, radio, and content transfer through drives as practical emergency ways to make students feel connected.

Long-term pre-distribution measures: This involves equal access to material through sustained investments. India's true potential can be explored only if long-term pre-distribution measures are met.

New certainty: Assuming that this period of uncertainty is fleeting will be an educational error. Instead, deconstructing it and taking this as a humbling moment for educational change may result in seamless learning. Reconcile to the fact that some educational structures are obsolete and figure out solutions, some of which may be unorthodox.

The conclusion of the pandemic's educational relevance is yet to be written.

Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal.

The writer is Education Officer, University Grants Commission.

Choose your path

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This Q&A column by Nandini Raman, practising counsellor and trainer, may help



NANDINI RAMAN

I am currently in the second semester of MBA. But I am more interested in designing and editing. I would like to get certified in graphic design and animation. Should I opt for a job or continue studying after MBA? — Sneha Girish

Dear Sneha,

Stay alert and mindful of opportunities that come your way during campus placements as it gives you a realistic assessment of your market value. Once employed, dabble with photography, designing, and editing in your free time. See if the 'fad wears off' in a while. If it doesn't, then you know for real. Then, you can always take a sabbatical to enhance your skillset with a full-time course.

I am in my final semester of BA English Literature and want to become a teacher. Is it necessary for me to complete

For more articles, columns, and news on scholarships and admissions, see <https://www.thehindu.com/education>



Using all options

Enabling other manufacturers to produce Covaxin is a necessary step

As the second COVID-19 wave continues to ravage the country, it is now clear that universal and swift vaccination is the only way out to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. But with only 3% and 10.4% of the total population estimated to have taken the second and a single dose, respectively, the goal of vaccinating a substantial number of people to achieve immunity against SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, remains a tall order for India. Supply constraints in delivering the only two vaccines available to Indians so far – Covishield and Covaxin – (the Russian-developed Sputnik V vaccine has just been deployed) are one of the reasons why the pace of vaccination has fallen. Karnataka and Maharashtra have halted vaccination for the 18-44 age group to address this as well. While the manufacturers, Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech, have promised an augmentation in production capacity, the dependence on them till other vaccines, including those from abroad, are made available over the long term, will remain a constraint in the pace of vaccination and expose much of the population to the possibility of infection. India has rightly sought (along with South Africa) a temporary waiver of provisions in the TRIPS Agreement to facilitate universal access to COVID-19 vaccines. But the Centre has done nothing to bring vaccines and medicines under a statutory regime in India to allow for wider availability and a diversity of options.

In fact, the Centre's submission to the Supreme Court that the "exercise of statutory powers... under the Patents Act, 1970... can only prove to be counterproductive at this stage", is clearly contradictory to its international position for a temporary waiver in the TRIPS Agreement. The Agreement allows exceptions to the rights of patent owners by grant of compulsory licences. Section 100 of the Patents Act, 1970, allows the Centre to license specific companies to manufacture the vaccines, while Section 92 of the Act allows the Centre to issue a compulsory licence in circumstances of a national or an extreme emergency. Considering the impact of the second wave, the daily toll and the high case load, the Centre should revisit its rigid and contradictory stance on the issue of compulsory licensing that would allow the manufacture of vaccines and important drugs without the consent of the patent holder. In the case of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, which was developed in collaboration with the publicly funded ICMR and the NIV, even this route is redundant. The ICMR can license other public sector vaccine manufacturers to help augment its supply over the medium term. As of now, two central PSUs, Indian Immunologicals Ltd and BIBCOL, have already entered into a technology transfer agreement with Bharat Biotech, besides the Haffkine Bio-pharmaceutical Corporation based in Mumbai. Other manufacturers can also re-purpose their plants to produce the vaccine.

Artless and heartless

The govt. must respond to concerns about demolitions in Central Vista redevelopment

The Government of India's Central Vista redevelopment project is highly questionable as a national priority at any time, and more so in the midst of a pandemic. The project includes the construction of a new Parliament building, and new residences for the Prime Minister and the Vice President. A new Parliament building is indeed required; and there is a strong case for reorganising the existing offices of the central government. However, the architecture and timelines of the redevelopment as it is happening now are less about the need and more about an imperious obsession with grandeur. The irony is that a colossus built amid the ruins of a pandemic could turn out to be a monument to the government's disregard for public good. The misplaced determination of the Centre to complete the project before the next Lok Sabha election in 2024 is characteristic of the showmanship that has befallen governance in India, but there is no justifiable urgency in razing to the ground a row of buildings and then rebuilding. Last week, 76 scholars, artists, writers, curators and museum professionals put the spotlight on a particularly concerning aspect of the project. The National Museum of India, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), and the National Archives Annex are set to be demolished to make way for new buildings.

These experts have called for an immediate suspension of the project, and wide public consultations on the path ahead. There are valid concerns about the conservation of the collections housed at these centres. Relocation of the treasures at the National Museum, archival records at the National Archives and manuscript holdings at the IGNCA can be an extremely challenging task even during ordinary times. It is a complex operation that requires detailed planning and expertise. Such changes around premier institutions take place only after wide consultations in any part of the world; and certainly not in the opaque and cavalier manner as is being planned here. Artefacts at the National Museum still lack a complete inventory, the experts have pointed out, flagging the risk of loss or mishandling. The Central Vista redevelopment project is clearly being implemented in a hurry. The government's intolerance towards any public scrutiny of the project is such that even photography of the construction is now banned. The country is facing an unprecedented health crisis, the ripple effects of which are being felt in the economic, social and political spheres too. The government will lose nothing if it were to suspend the project, and take the Opposition and the public into confidence on the future course, in calmer times.

The road from Ladakh is paved with disruptions

China-India ties are moving into a zone of problems even as New Delhi grapples with pandemic-related issues



SUSHANT SINGH

It has been a year since the news of tensions between Indian and Chinese troops on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh first broke. Dismissed as a "routine" event in the first few weeks by officials, the truth about the extent of Chinese ingress could no longer be hidden when India lost 20 soldiers in a violent clash with soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in mid-June. As has been evident from commercial satellite imagery, sparse official statements and a few interviews, the crisis eventually involved seven places: Depsang plains, Galwan, Gogra, Hot Springs, North bank of Pangong Tso, Kailash range and Demchok.

Border crisis

The situation at Galwan was resolved a few weeks after the deadly clash, and the two sides disengaged from the face-off site. The Indian Army had occupied certain heights on the Kailash range in end-August, where it was in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the Chinese. In February this year, the two sides agreed to disengage from this location and from the north bank of Pangong Tso. This was announced by India's Defence Minister in Parliament, where he also said that the two armies will convene the next meeting of the senior commanders within 48 hours after the complete disengagement in the Pangong lake area "to address and resolve all other remaining issues". The last such meeting of commanders was held on April 9, but the Chinese have refused to even discuss the remaining issues.

Such an outcome was not entirely unexpected. It was written in this newspaper ("Looking after the Ladakh walkback", February 17, 2021; <https://bit.ly/3bsLvAi>) that India had lost its only leverage on the Kailash range for the sake of disengagement on the north bank. This happened after India re-

versed its position of simultaneously resolving all the flashpoints in Ladakh rather than deal with them piecemeal. India's military rationale was evident: with soldiers and tanks of the two armies barely a few metres apart, the situation was explosive and could escalate into a major crisis with a minor incident or accident. It was also clear that by restricting itself to its own side of the LAC on the Kailash range, India had not taken control of the more dominating peaks like the Black Top and had a weak hand to play with. Politically, the Narendra Modi government seemed keen to announce a closure of the border crisis by creating the impression of an honourable solution against a major power.

Three months later, no such closure is in sight. With the PLA troops denying India access to territories it controlled by patrolling, the government's avowed aim of restoring the *status quo ante* as of April 2020 remains unfulfilled. Even on the north bank of Pangong, a new *status quo* has been created where the patrolling rights are yet to be restored. Similarly, the Kailash range has seen neither de-escalation nor de-induction so far.

In each statement, both India and China reiterate the need "to ensure peace and tranquillity" in border areas. Even if there have been no further deaths after June and no firing after early September, the peace on the border is both unstable and unsustainable. Ongoing tensions, with massive deployments on each side, belie any hope of tranquillity. That the security establishment in New Delhi is cognisant of the volatility and risk can be gauged from the fact that the Indian Army has undertaken a major reorientation of its units and formations towards the China border.

COVID-19 and geopolitics

Even as the situation on the border poses a tricky challenge for India, its geopolitical concerns have been exacerbated by the devastation caused by the mismanagement of COVID-19. Through its 'Vaccine Maitri' programme, New Delhi was presenting itself as a better alternative to Beijing's vaccine diplomacy, particularly in South



Asia. Shaken by scenes of massive suffering and public criticism, the Modi government has backed off on existing contractual commitments to supply vaccines to its friendly neighbours. Countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have started procuring vaccines from China, further casting doubts on India's reliability as a partner and raising questions about its ability to act as a counter to China. Sensing the opportunity, Beijing also moved in quickly, organising a meeting with all South Asian countries except India, ostensibly to deal with the pandemic.

New Delhi was also the lynchpin of the Quad's pledge to deliver a billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine throughout the Indo-Pacific by the end of 2022, an effort focused on countering Chinese influence in the region. With India now trying to import vaccines for its own population and renegeing on its commitments to other poor countries under GAVI's COVAX scheme, the proposal now seems to be on a weak footing. The abysmal failure of the Modi government to anticipate and deal with a public health crisis has diminished India's aura as an emergent power. A Prime Minister tomming the mantra of 'Atmanirbhara' or self-reliance has been forced to reverse a 16-year-old policy to accept global aid and laid bare India's vulnerabilities, further reducing its standing as the Quad's anchor.

A weaker India is not only less attractive as a partner globally, it makes New Delhi more dependent on the United States to deal with China. That India has been acting at the behest of the U.S. has been one of China's presumptions and this would only confirm Beijing's worst fears. It would further strain India-China ties, directly linking them to the vagaries of the China-

U.S. relationship. The hypothesis that India can safeguard its land borders by strengthening its oceanic prowess could then be put to test, a scenario New Delhi wants to avoid at all costs.

Meanwhile, the threat of a two-front collusive threat after the Ladakh crisis forced the Modi government to seek peace with Pakistan. The back channel talks, facilitated by the United Arab Emirates, led to the announcement of the ceasefire on the Line of Control which has held so far. But there have been contradictory voices emerging from Islamabad and the process seems to be floundering, as Pakistan awaits the steps on Kashmir promised by the Modi government. No political environment has been created in India for any such step so far.

New Delhi's preoccupation with the pandemic may brook a delay of few weeks but fears of failure, a routine happening in India-Pakistan engagements, loom large. It is hard to predict the Pakistani course of action hence, but if the past is an experience to go by, it has usually been spiteful, reckless and dangerous, especially when India is seen as weak. Coupled with the imminent American military withdrawal from Afghanistan and a win for the Taliban, the signs are ominous. An assertive China and a vengeful Pakistan acting in concert on the land borders is India's military nightmare, which New Delhi will have to avoid at all costs.

Chinese supplies

Meanwhile, Beijing has made certain significant moves towards New Delhi in the recent days. China's President Xi Jinping sent a message to Mr. Modi to convey sympathy and express condolences over the pandemic, which was the first communication between the two since the border crisis began last year. The Chinese Foreign Minister spoke to his Indian counterpart twice and offered help to deal with the pandemic, which led to an early clearance and approval of cargo flights from China. The Chinese Ambassador to India has been highlighting the supplies and the material being sent to India.

Beijing's efforts have been largely confined to private companies

and donations from the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, unlike other countries which have pledged government help to India. Curiously, much of the Chinese media ambiguously frames it as Chinese aid, while India explicitly avoids that framing and lays stress on the point that these are largely commercial contracts between private companies. Even if the Chinese intent is to project itself on a par with other global powers providing relief and aid to India, the fact remains that India is heavily dependent on China for crucial medical supplies. State-owned Sichuan Airlines had suspended cargo flights to India for 15 days beginning last month, but the supply chains have been kept open by Beijing. This is in tune with the Indian demand from Beijing that the supply chain should remain open but the other demand to ensure stable product prices has not been met.

More point scoring

If the recent weeks during the pandemic provided an opportunity for the two Asian giants to work together, that hope has been lost as both governments have focused on point scoring. That reflects the broader state of bilateral ties, but is also a fundamental difference emanating from the ongoing border crisis. As the talks between India and China have floundered, New Delhi has taken a position that the border issue is central to the bilateral relationship. This runs contrary to Beijing's argument that the boundary question cannot be seen as the whole of the bilateral relationship. In an ideal world, New Delhi can hope for a settlement that delineates and demarcates the LAC in some form but Beijing has ruled out any such proposal. With soldiers of both armies facing each other in Ladakh and a lack of trust between the two countries as the two governments talk past each other in a period of geopolitical churn, it is clear that the China-India bilateral relationship is moving into a zone of increasing disruptions, and attendant risks of conflagration on the disputed border.

Sushant Singh is a Senior Fellow with the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

It is getting from bad to worse for women workers

In the pandemic, women have borne a disproportionate burden of the severe disruptions to life and the economy



ROSA ABRAHAM & AMIT BASOLE

The COVID-19 pandemic has destroyed millions of livelihoods and led to a sudden and large increase in poverty and a massive disruption of the labour market in India. Women workers, in particular, have borne a disproportionate burden. As the country meets the challenge of the second wave of the pandemic, it is crucial to learn lessons from the first wave to chart the policy path ahead.

A widening gap

Even prior to 2020, the gender employment gap was large. Only 18% of working-age women were employed as compared to 75% of men. Reasons include a lack of good jobs, restrictive social norms, and the burden of household work. Our recently released report, 'State of Working India 2021: One Year of Covid-19' (<https://bit.ly/2RmW29p>) shows that the pandemic has worsened the situation.

The nationwide lockdown hit women much harder than men. Data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd. show that 61% of male workers were unaffected during the lockdown while only 19% of women ex-

perienced this kind of security. Even by the end of the year, 47% of employed women who had lost jobs during the lockdown, had not returned to work. The equivalent number for men was only 7%.

Men who did lose work were able to regain it, even if it was at the cost of increased precarity or lower earnings, because they had the option of moving into fallback employment arrangements. Thus, 33% of formal salaried men moved into self employment and 9% into daily wage work between late 2019 and late 2020. In contrast, women had far fewer options – only 4% and 3% of formal salaried women moved into self employment and daily wage work, respectively. Nearly half of the women workers, irrespective of whether they were salaried, casual, or self-employed, withdrew from the workforce, as compared to only 11% of men.

Even as new entrants to the workforce, women workers had poorer options compared to men. Women were more likely to enter as daily wage workers while men found avenues for self-employment. Daily wage work is typically far less remunerative than self employment as on average, between September to October 2020, a daily wage worker earned about ₹7,965 compared to a self-employed worker who earned nearly twice that at ₹12,955. So, not only did women enter into more precarious work, it was also likely to be at very low earnings compared to men.



Women tended to lose work disproportionately irrespective of the industry in which they were employed. For instance, the share of women in job losses in education was three times their share in that industry. So, while around 20 out of 100 workers in education were women, amongst those who lost work, about 70 out of 100 were women. Similarly, in the health sector, 40 out of 100 workers were women, while of the 100 in this sector who lost work, 80 were women.

Growing domestic work

With schools closed and almost everyone limited to the confines of their homes, household responsibilities increased for women. Married women and women from larger households were less likely to return to work, suggesting that the burden of care may be a reason for poor employment recovery. But even for those women who managed to remain employed, this came alongside a massive increase

in the burden of household work. The India Working Survey 2020 found that among employed men, the number of hours spent on paid work remained more or less unchanged after the pandemic. But for women, the number of hours spent in domestic work increased manifold. In February-March, about 10%-20% of women reported spending between two to four hours on domestic work. This share had increased to about 50% by September. This increase in hours came without any accompanying relief in the hours spent on paid work.

The course to take

The long-standing question of women's participation in India's economy has become more urgent with the pandemic disproportionately impacting women's paid work and increasing the burden of unpaid care work. The following measures are needed now: expansion of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the introduction of an urban employment guarantee targeted to women as soon as the most severe forms of mobility restrictions are lifted.

We further propose co-ordinated efforts by States to facilitate employment of women while also addressing immediate needs through the setting up of community kitchens, prioritising the opening of schools and anganwadi centres, and engagement with self-help

groups for the production of personal protective equipment kits. Further, a COVID-19 hardship allowance of at least ₹5,000 per month for six months should be announced for 2.5 million accredited social health activists and Anganwadi workers, most of whom are women.

But this is not enough. The National Employment Policy, currently in the works, should systematically address the constraints around the participation of the women's workforce, both with respect to the availability of work and household responsibilities. The pandemic has shown the necessity of adequate public investment in social infrastructure.

The time is right to imagine a bold universal basic services programme that not only fills existing vacancies in the social sector but also expands public investments in health, education, child and elderly care, and so on, to be prepared for future shocks. This can help bring women into the workforce not only by directly creating employment for them but also by alleviating some of their domestic work burdens, while also overcoming nutritional and educational deficits that we are likely to be confronted with as we emerge from this crisis.

Rosa Abraham is Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University. Amit Basole is Associate Professor of Economics, Azim Premji University.



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.

Gaza conflict
The world of diplomacy has so far failed to quell the worst escalation in fighting between Israel and the Palestinians. From what we read, the acts of Israel are in gross violation of human rights and various resolutions passed by the UN. Despite several countries criticising Tel Aviv, Israel continues to act with impunity. The silence of India, once a votary of international human rights,

does not help the situation in West Asia.
S.K. KHOSLA,
Chandigarh

Vaccination policy
The timing of extending the gap between the two doses of the Covishield vaccine is questionable. This announcement seems more like a cover up by the government for its confused and unequal vaccination policy. It is imperative to dramatically

ramp up our vaccination drive and to prevent more viral mutations which could render the vaccines ineffective. Also, with children forecast to be at risk during the third wave, if it occurs, parents need to be immunised quickly.
Dr. THOMAS PALOCAREN,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Endangered elephants
It appears that the measures adopted by the government are insufficient

in preventing the loss of elephants on train tracks (Inside pages, "186 elephants killed on rail tracks in over 10 years", May 15). The root cause is that tracks have been laid through elephant corridors ignoring the basic fact that elephants are migratory animals. It is essential to provide sufficiently wide and easy-to-cross pathways especially on migratory routes. The railways should think of

"flyover rail tracks" resting on pillars in vulnerable stretches, with the length of each such flyover ranging from half-a-kilometre to one kilometre. The cost of constructing such tracks is a comparatively less price to pay for providing elephants safe passage.
KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

■ On reading the report, "Assam elephants died in two groups 1 km apart" (May

15), I am not sure if it is common that lightning strikes down such a huge herd. The Forest Department must investigate this. Incidentally, *The Hindu*, on May 8, reported man-elephant conflict brewing at Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh. Wildlife enthusiasts hope the Forest Department steps in and takes control.
Savitri C.V.,
Chennai

In Kerala, a humane lockdown

Lockdowns should be imposed only after adequate preparation and planning



VENU RAJAMONY

At a time when several States are already under one form of lockdown or another, it seems facile to debate whether there should be a national lockdown or not. Indians are witness to never-before-seen sights of bodies floating in the Ganges, drought of medical oxygen, collapsing health infrastructure, a faltering vaccination drive, and the pandemic stretching its tentacles rapidly into rural areas.

With a national positivity rate of about 20% and over 4,000 daily deaths, India must do what it needs to do – a national lockdown if unavoidable; if not, regional lockdowns/micro-containment zones. It should, however, ensure that the implementation of any lockdown is humane and protects the interests of those likely to be worst affected. Lockdowns should be imposed only after adequate preparation and planning, involving experts. Moreover, adequate notice should be given to the affected people so that they have enough time to prepare themselves.

The Kerala model

The lockdown in Kerala offers some important lessons. Realising that night curfews and weekend lockdowns were insufficient to halt the rapid rise in infections, a complete lockdown from May 8 to 16 was announced on May 6. This provided the State with about two days to prepare for the event as compared to the national lockdown imposed last year with a four-hour notice.

From the beginning of the pandemic last year, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan took command and was the main face of the government's response. Through daily press briefings, he provided detailed information on the rate of infections and fatalities; the availability of beds, ICUs, oxygen and vaccines; as well as measures taken to deal with the crisis. This paid handsome dividends in the recently concluded Assembly elections for the Left Democratic Front. The people liked the idea of a strong leader presiding over their interests and acting as a guardian in a time of



crisis. Assured now of a second term, Mr. Vijayan has provided a smooth continuum in leadership and decision-making. He has continued his daily press briefings and communicated the gravity of the situation with facts and figures, steps being taken by the government, and the need for the public to cooperate.

The response to the second wave at the national level and in Delhi has been marked by confusion, conflicting authorities, lack of transparency and no clear assumption of responsibility or willingness to answer uncomfortable questions. People have been forced to use personal networks to scrounge for oxygen and beds in hospitals. In refreshing contrast, in Kerala, there is clarity on where the buck stops. Most Chief Ministers value their engagement with the media and are open and accessible. It is, however, not known how many of them engage with the media on the COVID-19 issue as intensely as Mr. Vijayan does and that too on a daily basis. The Prime Minister, Home Minister and Health Minister as well as Chief Ministers of the worst-affected States would be well advised to follow suit and see transparency as an important part of the COVID-19 response toolkit. A direct, open and proactive approach in this regard would go a long way in building popular trust and confidence that the crisis can be overcome.

A commendable aspect of the current lockdown in Kerala has been a clear articulation of the principle that no one in the State should suffer from hunger or lack of medical attention. To this end, food kits are being delivered to homes. Community kitchens and Janakeeya hotels (people's hotels) have been opened. First-level treatment centres and second-level treatment centres have been set

up to ensure that patients are screened and treated appropriate to their symptoms. Only the most serious cases reach the district and specialty COVID-19 hospitals. Dominical care centres have also been created to provide shelter, food and treatment to those who do not have the space at home to be quarantined.

In private hospitals, 50% of the beds have been declared as COVID-19 beds. Focused efforts are underway to assure migrant workers that they need not flee to their hometowns in panic because of the lockdown. Communications in Hindi have been issued, clarifying that they will be provided food as well as vaccination.

Similar to the 'Mumbai model', beds are allotted through centralised control rooms in each district. These rooms also monitor requirements of oxygen and ambulances. Orders have been issued pegging the cost of RT-PCR testing and treatment charges in private hospitals at a reasonable level. The Kerala High Court has stepped in to supervise the government's response. It has dismissed challenges from private labs to the reduction of charges and in response to a PIL, approved a rate card for hospitals prepared by the government. Coming down on private hospitals, the court pointed out how shocked it was at the usurious charges levied by some for the simplest of services.

Having empowered local bodies and devolved finances to them long before the crisis, elected officials at the grassroots level are Kerala's first line of defence in the fight against COVID-19. Panchayat members and municipal councillors, irrespective of their political affiliations, function as foot soldiers. They look out for fresh infections amongst their constituents, motivate people to get vaccinated, supervise the implementation

of the lockdown and ensure the supply of medicines and provisions to those in need. Commendably, the Opposition led by the Congress has called upon everyone to work together. Leaders from both the Opposition and ruling party have been setting up help desks, providing ambulances and organising food packets.

As a new government assumes office on May 20, the crisis will continue to be the most important item on its agenda. While good systems have been set up, there are complaints that the health workers are unable to cope. There are also reports of oxygen shortages in some parts of the State. There is fear that if numbers continue to rise, bed and oxygen shortages will become unavoidable.

Preparing for future waves

Clearly, the war against COVID-19 is going to be long-drawn and even a well organised State like Kerala will be kept on its toes. The second wave will pass but preparations still need to be made for a third and fourth wave. More lockdowns will be inevitable until such time the vaccination programme makes adequate progress and herd immunity is acquired. What is important is to mitigate the impact of these lockdowns on the lives of the poor by guaranteeing food and equitable access to healthcare. The Kerala model deserves attention in this regard. There are also best practices from other States which could be emulated across the country, such as the Tamil Nadu government's announcement of incentives for healthcare workers.

Twelve Opposition parties have in a joint letter urged the Centre to immediately begin a free universal mass vaccination campaign and ensure uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen and vaccines. They have also called for the invoking of compulsory licensing to expand domestic vaccine production. The convening of an online meeting of non-BJP Chief Ministers to support and reiterate these demands would be good follow-up to the letter. This could serve as a useful exercise in cross-learning amongst States. It could also reinforce the need to protect the people and formulate a just and equitable response to the pandemic.

Venu Rajamony is former Ambassador of India to the Netherlands and former Press Secretary to President Pranab Mukherjee

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

The elusive mustard seed

The task of journalists is to bring attention to the toll that this pandemic is taking on everyone



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

reality. He said there is a total abandonment of sensitivity in a moment of tragedy when politics should take a backseat.

The present narrative of positivity, seen even in the high-profile Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh event called 'Positivity Unlimited', intended to counter the 'negativity' around the fight against COVID-19, urges citizens not to question those in power and their failure in planning for a disaster and mitigating the pain caused by the pandemic.

Glossing over failures

Some slogans have had the power to transform people's life. Mahatma Gandhi's anti-colonial struggle had a powerful slogan at its heart: 'Quit India'. B.R. Ambedkar mobilised millions of people to walk out of humiliation through his powerful writing, 'Annihilation of caste'.

But if slogans are meant to save those in power and gloss over the complete failure of governance, then their vacuousness is seen by all. Rhetorical flourishes touch no one's heart. This government came to power with the slogan, 'minimum government, maximum governance'. But the pandemic has clearly proved that what we have is more government and less governance.

A famous story in Buddhism, 'Kisa Gotami and the Mustard Seed', should be the guiding principle for journalism. The Buddha did not gloss over death, loss and pain. When Kisa Gotami went to the Buddha with her dead son and asked him to bring her son back to life, the Buddha asked her to bring him a mustard seed from a home that had not seen death. Those who are talking about positivity are in search of that elusive mustard seed. What the Buddha taught Kisa Gotami was that loss is universal. The task of journalists is to bring attention to the toll that this pandemic is taking on everyone. It is also a fact that those who are worried about the international media's coverage of India are also jubilant when these publications carry positive reports about India.

This does not mean that the newspaper is not covering positive developments. For instance, it carried a long-form report titled 'Beating back the pandemic in Mumbai' (May 15). This report meticulously documented how the financial capital of India is trying to contain the spread of the pandemic. It pointed out that the Brihamumbai Municipal Corporation met the second wave of the COVID-19 challenge on a war footing by learning from the lessons offered by the first wave.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Restructuring the tribunals system

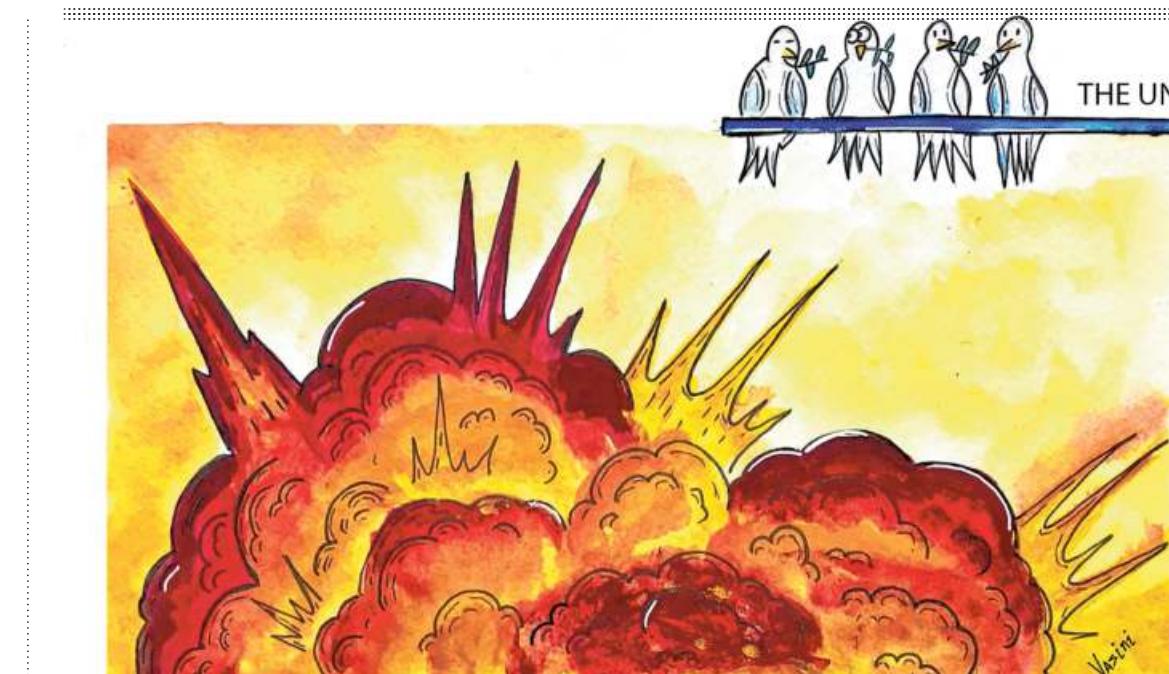
It is time to set up a National Tribunals Commission

AAKANKSHA MISHRA &
SIDDHARTH MANDREKAR RAO

The Centre has abolished several appellate tribunals and authorities and transferred their jurisdiction to other existing judicial bodies through the Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance 2021. This Ordinance has been challenged in the Supreme Court.

Sharp criticism
The Ordinance has met with sharp criticism for not only bypassing the usual legislative process, but also for abolishing several tribunals such as the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal without any stakeholder consultation. Despite the Supreme Court's direction in *Rojer Mathew v. South Indian Bank* (2019), no judicial impact assessment was conducted prior to abolishing the tribunals through this Ordinance. While the Ordinance has incorporated the suggestions made in *Madras Bar Association v. Union of India* (2020) on the composition of a search-cum-selection committee and its role in disciplinary proceedings, it has also fixed a four-year tenure for Chairpersons and members of tribunals "notwithstanding anything contained in any judgment, order, or decree of any court" by blatantly disregarding the court's direction for fixing a five-year term. Further, the Centre is yet to constitute a National Tribunals Commission (NTC), an independent umbrella body to supervise the functioning of tribunals, appointment of and disciplinary proceedings against members, and to take care of administrative and infrastructural needs of the tribunals. The idea of an NTC was first mooted in *L. Chandra Kumar v. Union of India* (1997), but it has still not seen the light of day.

Initiating dialogue and promoting awareness about the NTC is vital for overcoming the government's inertia in establishing such a body. Developing an independent oversight body for accountable governance requires a legal framework that protects its independence and impartiality. Where the institutional design is not properly conceived, partisan interests can twist the law to serve political or private interests. In India, executive interference in the functioning of tribu-

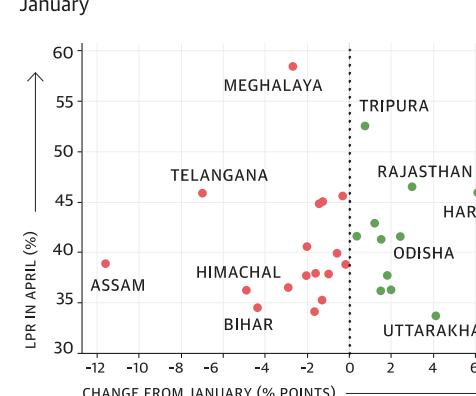


DATA POINT

In search of jobs

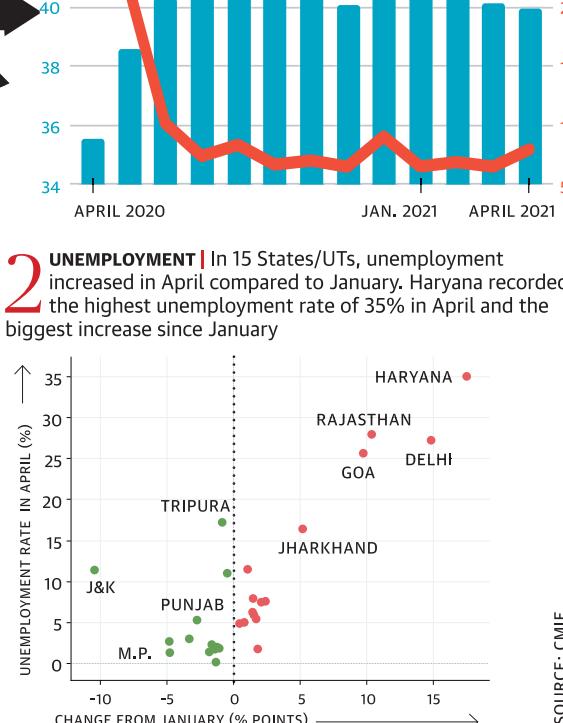
In April 2021, the Labour Participation Rate (employed plus those actively searching for jobs) dropped sharply for the third consecutive month to 39.9%. This is the lowest LPR since May 2020, the month of a stringent nationwide lockdown. Despite a smaller labour force looking for employment, a greater proportion failed to find employment. The unemployment rate increased to 7.9% in April. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Goa, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Telangana and West Bengal are the worst-affected States. The data was sourced from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy

1 LABOUR PARTICIPATION RATE | In 17 States/UTs, the LPR decreased in April compared to January. Assam recorded the most decrease in LPR from January



LOCKDOWN IMPACT | India's unemployment rate increased from 6.5% in January to 7.9% in April. At the same time, the LPR decreased from 40.5% to 39.9%. According to the CMIE, the fall in LPR was due to the local lockdowns in several States. However, the unemployment rate increased as the economy could not provide employment to the large numbers who sought work

2 UNEMPLOYMENT | In 15 States/UTs, unemployment increased in April compared to January. Haryana recorded the highest unemployment rate of 35% in April and the biggest increase since January



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 17, 1971

U.S. wary of giving aid to Pakistan

President Yahya Khan's special emissary, Mr. M.M. Ahmed, has so far made no significant headway in his quest for American aid to bail Pakistan out from imminent bankruptcy though he was readily given hearing by President Nixon and Mr. Henry Kissinger, National Security Adviser. The Administration has so far been wary about making any commitment to Pakistan in this regard because of the sustained pressure from Congress and the press in this country [Washington, May 16]. East Bengal sources here who have been keeping a tab on Mr. Ahmed's activities say that in return for U.S. assistance, Mr. Ahmed has offered a package deal which includes drastic devaluation of the Pakistan rupee and the early establishment of "a responsible Government, in East Pakistan by the 'representatives of the people'". Both are recognised as fake offers here. Economists doubt whether in Pakistan's current financial plight even a 100 per cent devaluation can boost its export earnings. The other proposal – "a representative government" – under the aegis of discredited politicians handpicked by Mr. Yahya Khan is also not regarded as a durable political solution by the authorities here.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 17, 1921

Lala Lajpat Rai

Lala Lajpat Rai emphasised that the spirit of fearlessness and courage to stand by principles, for which the Congress was fighting, was demanded of every Indian at this supreme moment. 150 years of British rule, he said, had produced such a slave-m mentality that even great intellectuals among Indians, thought that the attainment of Swarajya by India, by 32 crores of the population within one year, was impossible. It was to remove this mentality that the time of one year was given. When India gives up this slave-m mentality, she would attain Swarajya. He was glad that the courage with which Congressmen went to gaol was quiet proof. Personally, he had attained Swarajya, which was knowing the truth, speaking the truth fearlessly, and even dying for the vindication of truth.

Referring to the possibilities of the Afghan invasion, he asked those who threatened them with it to remember that they who were Non-Co-operating with the British Government, would not have any other foreign power ruling over them.

FROM PAGE ONE

5 killed as rain pummels Kerala, Karnataka

In Karnataka, more than 70 villages in seven districts, including Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu and Hassan, were affected by the cyclone, the Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority officials said.

The highest rainfall of 385 mm was recorded at Nada Station in Kundapura taluk of Udupi district, which was the worst-affected, and 15 stations recorded more than 200 mm of rainfall in the district. Rainfall was accompanied by strong winds with speeds reaching up to 90 km per hour.

According to the Cyclone Warning Division of the IMD, by May 18 the wind speed is expected to increase to 150-160 km per hour, gusting up to 175 km per hour. High waves in the range of 3.5-6.6 m till Monday night and high winds are forecast beyond 10 km off the coast of Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat, the INCOIS bulletin added.

Officials said nearly a dozen relief camps were functioning in the State. There had been damage to 112 houses, 139 electricity poles and other infrastructure in the coastal areas.

Severe sea erosion in the coastal districts of Kerala forced the district administrations to open more relief camps. Eight new camps have been opened in Alappuzha. In all, 359 people from 122 families have been shifted to 19 relief camps in the district. Rise in river water levels led to waterlogging in parts of Kuttanad. The Irrigation Department raised 23 shutters of the Thottappally spillway and majority of the Thanneermukkum bund.

In Ernakulam district, the coastal stretch from south Chellanam to Nayarambalam has been ravaged by sea erosion. The Thrissur district administration said spillway shutters of the Peringalkuthu dam would be opened if the water level crosses the permitted limit of 419.41 m. In a statement, the administration urged people living on the banks of Chalakudy river to be cautious.

Shutters of the Malankara dam in Idukki district are expected to be opened as the water level has increased, the district authorities said. Twenty-one houses were fully destroyed and 354 others were damaged in the district. Crop damage was reported in 294 hectares.

Families living in coastal areas and low-lying areas of the State have been shifted to relief camps. The Navy on Sunday deployed its diving and quick reaction teams in

the coastal village of Chellanam in Ernakulam district, which was hit by tidal waves. Tidal waves also lashed Kaipamangalam, Chavakkad and Kodungallur in Thrissur, Pallithura in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrikannapuzha in Alappuzha, and Beypore and Koyilandy in Kozhikode districts.

NCMC meets

The National Crisis Management Committee, headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, met on Sunday in the national capital. He directed the agencies to ensure "uninterrupted" functioning of COVID-19 hospitals in the States affected by the cyclone and secure "zero loss" of lives.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Saturday reviewed the preparedness of the States, Central Ministries and agencies concerned to deal with the situation arising out of the cyclone and asked them to take every possible measure to ensure that the people were safely evacuated.

The IMD said Tauktae would cross the Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district by early Tuesday and tidal waves are likely to inundate several coastal districts during the landfall.

"The very severe cyclonic storm Tauktae over the eastern Arabian Sea moved nearly northwards with a speed of about 11 kmph during the past six hours," it said.

"It is very likely to intensify during the next 24 hours. It is very likely to move north-northwestwards and reach the Gujarat coast on the evening of May 17 and cross the coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district early on May 18," the IMD said.

With the cyclone intensifying, wind speeds along and off the Gujarat coast in Porbandar, Junagadh, Gir Somnath and Amreli districts will reach 150-160 kmph gusting to 175 kmph by Tuesday morning.

It will reach a speed of 120-150 kmph, gusting to 165 kmph over Devbhoomi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar districts during the same period, the IMD said.

"With the cyclone likely to affect power supply, hospitals treating COVID-19 patients have been asked to ensure power back-up. Arrangements have also been made to ensure uninterrupted generation of medical oxygen in the eight manufacturing units and buffer stock has also been created," Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said.

(With inputs from Hyderabad and PTD)

Israel bombs home of Hamas chief

The AP condemned the attack, and asked Israel to put forward evidence. "We have had no indication Hamas was in the building or active in the building," it said in a statement.

In what Hamas called a reprisal for Israel's destruction of the al-Jala building, Hamas fired 120 rockets overnight, the Israeli military said, with many intercepted and around a dozen falling short and landing in Gaza. Israelis dashed for bomb shelters as sirens warning of incoming rocket fire blared in Tel Aviv and the southern city of Beer-sheba. Around 10 people were injured while running for shelters, medics said.

In a burst of air strikes early on Sunday, the Israeli military said it struck the home of Yehya Al-Sinwar in the southern Gaza City of Khan Younis. Mr. Sinwar, who was released from an Israeli prison in 2011, heads the political and military wings of the Hamas in Gaza.

Another air strike killed a Gaza neurologist and wounded his wife and

daughter, Palestinian medics and relatives said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a televised address late on Saturday that Israel was "still in the midst of this operation, it is still not over and this operation will continue as long as necessary".

Hamas began its rocket assault on Monday after weeks of tensions over a court case to evict several Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, and in retaliation for Israeli police clashes with Palestinians near the city's Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site, during the Muslim holy month of Ramzan.

Speaking to crowds of protesters in Doha, Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh said late on Saturday the underlying cause of the hostilities was Jerusalem. "I say to Netanyahu: do not play with fire," he said, amid cheers from the crowd. "The title of this battle today, the title of the war, and the title of the intifada, is Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem," using the Arabic word for 'uprising'.

States to get 51 lakh doses in three days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

More than 1.84 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses are still available with the States and the Union Territories, while nearly 51 lakh doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The Centre had so far provided 20,28,09,250 doses to the States and UTs free, it added. Of this, the total consumption, calculated based on an average up to May 14, including wastage, was 18,43,67,772 doses, according to the data available at 7 p.m. on Saturday.

"More than 1.84 crore doses [1,84,41,478] are still available with the States and UTs to be administered.

States such as Punjab, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have been increasing their rate of testing, but their TPR has also increased, suggesting that they still need to augment testing to capture more infections. In Kerala and Himachal Pradesh,

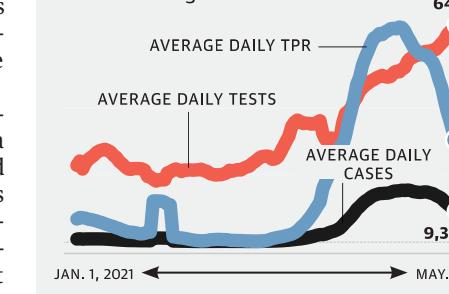
State-wise positivity is uneven

COVID-19 testing has to be augmented to capture more infections

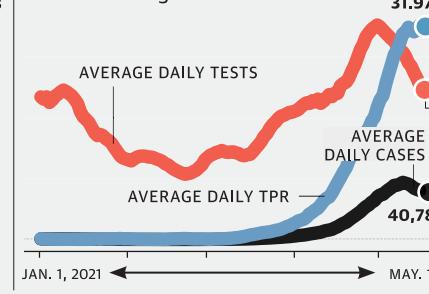
THE HINDU DATA TEAM
CHENNAI

The right way | Chhattisgarh's test positivity rate (TPR) is dropping despite an increasing number of tests (red), which is an ideal strategy to follow. In comparison, Karnataka is exhibiting the opposite trend

Chhattisgarh: The State conducted an average of over 64,000 tests daily till May 15 while its average TPR was 14.71%



Karnataka: The State conducted an average of 1.27 lakh tests daily till May 15 while its average TPR was 31.97%



Curfew extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHOPAL

The coronavirus-induced curfew in State capital Bhopal and Berasia town in Madhya Pradesh was on Sunday extended till May 24 by Collector Avinash Lanvaniya, an official spokesperson said.

Shahid Jameel quits INSACOG advisory panel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Shahid Jameel, eminent virologist and head of the advisory group to the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), resigned from his post on Friday.

Dr. Jameel confirmed to *The Hindu* that he had quit but did not give any reasons for his departure.

Multiple scientists who are part of INSACOG – a group of 10 laboratories across the country, tasked with tracking evolving variants of the coronavirus – told *The Hindu* that Dr. Jameel's decision appeared to be sudden as he had not communicated reasons for his resignation to consortium members but one of them cited "government pressure" as a potential reason.

Dr. Jameel, who is Director, Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University, has been critical of aspects of the government's handling of the pandemic.

Second consignment of Sputnik V arrives in India

It comprises second dose component

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

India on Sunday received the second consignment of Sputnik V, the Russian vaccine that recently joined the country's arsenal against COVID-19.

"Second batch of Sputnik V arrives in Hyderabad, India," the vaccine developers tweeted.

Russia's Ambassador to India Nikolay Kudashov said in a tweet: "Given the recent launch of the Russian vaccine in the Indian vaccination campaign, this second delivery has become very timely."

Describing Sputnik V as a Russian-Indian vaccine, he told news agency ANI, "We expect that its production in India will be gradually increased up to 850 million doses per year... There are

plans to introduce single-dose vaccine soon in India-Sputnik Lite."

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, the marketing partner of Sputnik V in India, tweeted that "the consignment that arrived today in Hyderabad contains 60,000 doses of the second dose component of the #SputnikV vaccine. Samples from the consignment will be sent for release to the Central Drugs Laboratory."

The first consignment consisting of 1.5 lakh doses that arrived in Hyderabad on May 1 was cleared for use on May 13 by the Central Drugs Laboratory in Kasauli. Samples drawn from all consignments would be sent to the central facility in Himachal Pradesh to 12-16 weeks. This has been accepted by the Government of India on May 13," said a Union Health Ministry release, adding that this had been communicated to the States and the Union Territories.

The COVID Working Group chaired by Dr. N. K. Arora had recommended extension of the gap between the first and second doses of Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks. This has been accepted by the Government of India on May 13," said a Union Health Ministry release, adding that this had been communicated to the States and the Union Territories.

The Ministry clarified that the requisite changes had now been carried out in the

CoWIN digital portal. "As a result, further online or on-site appointments will not be possible if the period after the first dose date for a beneficiary is less than 84 days," the Ministry said.

However, appointments already booked online for the second dose will remain valid.

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Boosting defence: People waiting to receive shots at a vaccination centre in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Due to pandemic, unidirectional teaching has become multimodal'

Personalised content key, says expert

MADHUVANTI S. KRISHNAN
CHENNAI

SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), in association with *The Hindu*, hosted its sixth webinar on 'How COVID-19 is Redefining Jobs and Lifestyle', as part of the SRM Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance

existing career paths changing drastically. She stressed that it was important to pursue one's passion and advised students to develop both skill sets and positive outlook.

"Your attitude can make or break you," Ms. Verma said. "Make the most of what you have and be ready to adapt to changing situations."

Roles refined

N. Venkata Sastry, director, Career Center, SRMIST, pointed out that the pandemic had redefined the roles of both students and teachers.

While the latter are now using online tools, quizzes and polls, students have become active learners, he said. "Prepare for VUCA – Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. Focus on what you have and can control, while embracing reality so that you can create another VUCA – Vision, Understanding, Clarity and Agility," he advised.

The session concluded with the speakers fielding questions from the audience. The session can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3tVdjk>

Editors Guild condemns attack on Gaza building

It housed offices of media outlets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India on Sunday condemned the air strikes by Israel on a building in Gaza City that housed the offices of media outlets such as Al Jazeera and The Associated Press.

The Guild in a statement said: "Besides the loss of hardware and office space, the bombing destroyed what was described as 'home' by some of the journalists. Given the recent

background of escalating conflict in this region, EGI sees this as a de facto attack on news media by the Israeli government, which disrupts the flow of news from this highly volatile region and which has global security implications." It urged the Indian government to take up the issue with the Israeli government and demanded an independent inquiry. It also reiterated the need for ensuring the safety of journalists.

1,621 teachers, staff died during polling duty in U.P.

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

to illness on counting and voting days had faced suspension and salary cuts.

Uttar Pradesh Prathmik Shikshak Sangh president Dinesh Chandra Sharma said the number of primary education department teachers and staff to die on polling duty during the pandemic had gone up to 1,621. The union released a list of the 1,621 people.

Moreover, he added, many teachers and staff with heart conditions died due to "tension" and heart attacks, those who were absent due

'Attitude is key'
Anshula Verma, life coach and founder of HappyFitYou, spoke about students having to cope with lack of personal interactions and

INTERVIEW | SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN

'What we know so far is that variant B.1.617 is definitely more transmissible'

As per our current knowledge, vaccines that are available in India are still highly effective against the new strain, says WHO Chief Scientist

RAMYA KANNAN
CHENNAI

Among the key voices of the World Health Organization (WHO), Soumya Swaminathan, with her clarity of thought, articulation and deep awareness of the Indian context, has emerged as a reliable voice amid the COVID-19 pandemic maelstrom. In an online interview, she provides detailed responses to a range of topics that are simmering, resolves some doubts, and advocates strategies to adopt gainfully. Investments in healthcare are crucial, she says, because it is now clear that there is nothing without health, and without sufficient physical and mental well-being, it would be impossible to take the path to recovery. Edited excerpts from the interview:

There seem to be signs that the variant B.1.617 was first described in India is highly transmissible, but is there data to show that it is more virulent or resistant?

■ Yes, I think what we know so far is B.1.617 is definitely more transmissible, one and a half to two times more than the original strain. In fact, it's even more transmissible than the B.1.1.7, which was identified in the U.K., and which had at one point become the predominant strain in India. But it's now being replaced by the B.1.617.

So far, the WHO has four variants of concern, the lat-

est being the B.1.617, now found in about 50 countries worldwide.

Now, there are sub-lineages that have been described, the B.1.617 itself has been divided into different strains – each of them has a slightly different set of mutations, with slightly different properties. We are looking for more results coming through at the moment. I haven't seen any data that say it causes more severe disease, there is some preliminary data that it has a reduction in vaccine neutralising antibody activity. Now, that's a lab study.

What we don't have is data from the real world as to

whether there is a higher chance of getting infected, or of getting seriously ill with the new variant after vaccination with either Covishield or Covaxin, or any of the other vaccines. There's really an urgent need for us to do more comprehensive research studies, which go hand in hand with sequencing. The sequencing alone is not going to give us the information we want; you need the data on the clinical profile of patients, epidemiology and transmission. We need data on people who received the vaccine and have been followed up for a period of time to look at breakthrough infections [and] what the rate and pattern of breakthrough infections is. We expect breakthrough infections. So, it's not a surprise, but we need to see the rate at which they are occurring. And, whether people are really getting ill, or getting mild infections after vaccination. So, that is really going to give us the information we need about this variant and will be important for us to plan ahead.



We expect breakthrough infections ... but we need to see the rate at which they are occurring

As far as people are concerned, does it make any difference?

■ I think for the public what is important is that it doesn't really matter what variant it is. The variant of the virus is still the same virus, and it's still behaving in the same way and having the same effects on people. A particular variant may be more transmissible, which is what we're seeing in India today, that it spreads much more easily, but you have to give it the opportunity to spread. So, I

think people should remember that they have to do the same things – they have to wear a mask, avoid crowds, preferably avoid meeting people in indoor settings with poor ventilation, maintain physical distance as far as possible, and [follow] basic hygiene. So, the principles of public health and of personal protection have not changed at all. They are the same. So, it really doesn't matter whether it's one variant or another, we need to do the same things especially when community transmission is happening at such a high rate.

So the message is to go ahead and get vaccinated?

■ Absolutely. As per our current knowledge, the vaccines that are available in India are still highly effective against the new strain. Of course, everybody knows somebody who has had two doses of the vaccine and was infected, maybe even hospitalised. There is no doubt that such cases will occur because none of the vaccines offers

100% protection. But the vast majority of people who receive two doses will be protected against severe disease that leads to admission to the ICU. That is why we need the data at the population level, and anecdotal evidence is not good enough for us to say that vaccines are not working at this point. We firmly believe that vaccines are providing a good amount of protection to people.

You have mentioned future waves. Is it possible to have a prediction about how long COVID-19 is going to last?

■ We're at the stage of the pandemic where it's still a very acute and difficult phase. We have to focus on how we get through the next six to 18 months, which could be the most difficult. And then talk about the long-term plan on whether it's going to be elimination or control.

A lot depends also on the evolution of the virus itself, the ability of vaccines to keep up with variants, and on the duration of protective

immunity of vaccines. At this point, I think it's hard to predict the long term. We know that there will be definitely an end to the acute phase of the pandemic – when we have vaccinated, let's say, about 30% of the world's population, which is what we would like to see by the end of 2021. Then we can really start seeing quite a significant reduction in the deaths due to this infection, and then 2022 can be really ramping up vaccination to cover 60% to 80%.

With so many variations in treatment protocols, what is the right path for governments to take?

■ At the WHO, we have 'living guidelines', which are evidence-based, and they are updated regularly whenever there is a change in the available evidence. So, based on that, we have made recommendations on a number of drugs.

So far, we have only one drug that has a big impact on mortality, and that is steroids (dexamethasone). But again,

it is important to note that it only has an impact when it is given to people who are in hospital receiving oxygen. So, it is given at the stage of the disease where there is inflammation that is preventing the oxygen from flowing to the lung, and it's given to reduce that inflammation.

It is important for people to understand that the wrong drug given at the wrong time can actually have more bad effects than good. Many of the drugs commonly being used now like doxycycline, azithromycin and ivermectin have not been shown to have any effect.

In fact, the WHO has provided a recommendation against the use of ivermectin except in clinical trials, and also against the use of remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir, etc.

Countries need to develop national treatment guidelines, that are evidence-based, frequently updated, and context-specific for each country.

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

AAP worker was behind posters: police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

After arresting a number of people for putting up posters across the capital questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the vaccination policy, the Delhi police on Sunday claimed that an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) worker is behind the plot.

"Police, while patrolling to enforce Lockdown announced by DDMA, created by GNCTD, noticed walls in several areas being defaced by pasting posters. Accused persons on questioning told an AAP member & President of Ward 47, Arvind Gautam, was behind it in Mangolpuri. He is absconding," the Delhi police said in a tweet.

An FIR was registered under relevant sections at the Mangolpuri police station earlier this week for defacement of a wall adjacent to Kanjhawala Road by pasting posters that said, "Modiji humare bacchon ki vaccine videsh kyu bhej diya [PM why did you send vaccines of our children to foreign countries?]" There were no details of the printing press or the publisher mentioned on these posters.

From the video footage, the accused pasting the posters around 4 a.m. were identified, the police said. The accused disclosed during interrogation that Mr. Gautam of Sultanpur Majra, an AAP worker, had sent an order on WhatsApp to one Rahul regarding the subject matter of printing and ₹9,000 for printing and affixing these posters.

Farmers, police clash in Haryana

CM was in Hisar to inaugurate a hospital; police lathi-charge, lob tear gas at farmers

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Several farmers, including women, and police personnel, sustained injuries in a clash during the visit of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal to Hisar on Sunday to inaugurate a hospital for COVID-19 patients.

Siege call withdrawn
Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuji) president Gurnam Singh Charuji, in a video message, alleged that the police pelted stones on the farmers and fired rubber bullets at them. BKU (Charuji) spokesperson Rakesh Bains said that farmers across the State blocked roads for two hours in protest against police action and a call was given to lay siege to all police



Farmers trying to breach the police barricade during their protest in Hisar on Sunday. ■PTI

stations in Haryana on Monday. Later the call to lay siege was withdrawn as the police released the detained farmers.

The clash broke out around noon when a large number of farmers gathered at the venue for the inauguration of the 500-bed Chaudhary Devi Lal Sanjeevani Covid Hospital in Hisar to protest against the visit of Mr. Lal. Suresh Kumar, Haryana vice-president, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, claimed that the farmers were holding a peaceful protest against the visit of the Chief Minister in accordance with the call

given by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha when the police allowed a few hundred of them inside and resorted to unprovoked lathi-charge. He added that the police fired tear gas shells on them.

"It is immediately difficult to ascertain the exact number of farmers injured, but at least 50 have sustained injuries. It includes women as well. The police also fired rubber bullets," said Mr. Kumar. Agitated farmers later laid siege to the residence of Haryana Superintendent of Police, Balwan Singh Rana, demanding action against the police officers and the

release of farmers detained by the police.

The Haryana Police in a press statement claimed that 20 police personnel, including five women, and Deputy Superintendent of Police Abhimanyu Lohan had been injured in an attack by "miscreants" on a police team outside the Hospital. The police claimed that the "miscreants" also damaged five police vehicles.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Upasna told *The Hindu* over phone that the farmers continued to hold the protest even after the Chief Minister had left the venue, and pelted stones on the police.

"The mob turned violent and tried to run over the police officers with tractors. We fired tear gas shells and used mild force," said Ms. Upasna.

Haryana Congress chief Kumari Selja, and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sushil Gupta, also the AAP's in-charge for Haryana, condemned the use of force against the farmers.

Congress leader Rajeev Satav dead

He recovered from COVID-19 but died of post-infection complications

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/PUNE

Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Satav died on Sunday following post-COVID-19 complications after 24 days of hospitalisation. He was on ventilator support for the last few days.

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said that Satav had recovered from the COVID-19 infection but died of fibrosis in the lungs.



Rajeev Satav

He is survived by his wife and two children.

The Congress leader was elected to the Rajya Sabha in March last year, for what was

his first term in the Upper House. He served as a Lok Sabha member from 2014 to 2019 from the Hingoli Lok Sabha constituency in Maharashtra and had been a legislator in the Maharashtra Assembly.

Former Chief Minister Ashok Chavan recalled how Satav had a meteoric rise through his abilities.

Satav was counted among the inner circle of supporters of former Congress pre-

sident Rahul Gandhi.

Mr. Gandhi condoled his demise. "He was a leader with huge potential who embodied the ideals of Congress," he said on Twitter.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed sorrow at his death.

Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president Nana Patole and Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar expressed their condolences.

Use PM-CARES fund for vaccines: plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A plea was filed in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to utilise the PM-CARES fund for immediate procurement of vaccines and establishment of oxygen plants, generators and their installation in 738 district hospitals across the country.

The petition, filed by advocate Vipul Sharma, said the government should loosen its PM-CARES purse strings and help common people in accessing medical care and oxygen.

"These government hospitals are easily accessible at no cost to common people of every district in the country who are desperately seeking medical oxygen as basic life-saving support," the petition said.

The petition also asked for a stay on an April 24 notification of the Centre granting exemption on "import duty of medical equipment relating to oxygen generation" owing to its acute demand. It said the exemption was wrongfully capped for only three months and people may need these equipment beyond that period.

Even if such infrastructure was available, the Centre said, "simultaneous vaccine without priority classification would lead to commotion", the Centre told the Supreme Court.

The document indicates that the available health infrastructure and manpower may not match up.

"To illustrate, having received one crore vaccine doses for a particular State

Two CDSCO officials held on bribery charge

₹25 lakh seized from their premises

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested two Medical Device Officers with the Ahmedabad-based Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) for allegedly demanding bribe to facilitate issuance of a medical device manufacturing licence.

The arrested officials have been identified as Parag Bhushan Gautam and R. Mohan. "The agency has seized ₹25 lakh in cash during the searches on their

premises," said an official. The agency received a complaint from Jinish Patel, director of Hygeia Ortho Private Limited (Ahmedabad), alleging that Mr. Gautam had demanded a bribe.

On March 24, Mr. Patel submitted an application to the CDSCO for a licence. Upon inspection of the factory premises, Mr. Gautam allegedly demanded ₹3 lakh each for himself and Mr. Mohan and about ₹5 lakh for the Deputy Drugs Controller for issuance of the licence.

Entire globe is a unit, Centre told SC on vaccine exports

Simultaneous vaccination without priority classification would have led to commotion, says affidavit

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The "entire globe is a unit" during a pandemic, said the government in the Supreme Court for its decision to export vaccines amidst a raging second wave of COVID-19 in the country.

A page in the Ministry of External Affairs' website shows that between January and April 2021, India exported 663,698 lakh "Made in India COVID-19 vaccine supplies" to over 90 countries and UN health workers and peacekeepers.

"Once an epidemic takes [the] form of a pandemic, its management has to be done keeping the entire globe as [a] unit," a March 11 affidavit of the Health Ministry said.

According to the affidavit,



Controversial step: Doses of Covishield being received at the Velana International Airport in Male in January. ■FILE PHOTO

port was "limited" and done giving "highest priority to domestic needs".

Moreover, the government, in the affidavit, said both vaccine exports and staggered immunisation were done to avoid disproportionality between the production of COVID-19 vaccines and the country's "available" health infrastructure and manpower. Simultaneous vaccination without priority classification would have led to "commotion", the Centre told the Supreme Court.

The document indicates that the available health infrastructure and manpower may not match up.

"To illustrate, having received one crore vaccine doses for a particular State

or city, the vaccine drive would need sufficient number of medical staff who can administer the vaccines and infrastructure like hospitals, primary health centres, etc

... It is needless to mention that manufacturing of vaccine would not be proportionate to the available manpower and infrastructure facilities in the country," the government said.

Even if such infrastructure was available, the Centre said, "simultaneous vaccine without priority classification would lead to commotion".

"Under the circumstances, the produced vaccine, which is beyond manpower and infrastructure facilities involved in importing these highly sophisticated medical equipment in India by over 300 hospitals," it said.

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No. HFW/KSMSCL/COVID/IFQ/Syr/28/2021-22 Date: 16-05-2021

QUOTATION NOTIFICATION

Ref: Quotation Notification No. HFW/KSMSCL/COVID/IFQ/Syr/28/2021-22, Dated:16.05.2021.

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

1) Quotation for Sterile disposable syringe with hypodermic needle 2ml-23Gx1".

Details regarding specification, Terms and Conditions and other information are available in the website <http://www.kdlws.kar.nic.in/> from 17.05.2021 to 19.05.2021 the eligible firms shall Mail the KSMS

UNSC calls for end to violence in Gaza

Its chief warns that crisis could plunge region into an 'uncontainable security and humanitarian crisis'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GAZA CITY

Israeli strikes killed at least 42 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, the worst daily death toll yet in the almost week-long clashes, as the UN Security Council met amid global alarm at the escalating conflict.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pleaded for an immediate end to the deadly violence, warning that the fighting could plunge the region into an "uncontainable security and humanitarian crisis".

"Fighting must stop. It must stop immediately," Mr. Guterres said as he opened a Security Council session delayed by Israel's ally the U.S., calling the violence over the past week "utterly appalling".

The heaviest fighting in years, sparked by unrest in Jerusalem, saw the rivals again trade heavy fire, with the death toll rising to 192 in the crowded coastal enclave of Gaza since Monday and at 10 in Israel, according to



Nowhere to go: Palestinians outside their homes after they were destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in the city of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Sunday. • AFP

authorities on either side.

Israel told the UNSC that the violence was premeditated by Hamas, urging condemnation of the militants during the UNSC session.

"It was completely premeditated by Hamas in order to gain political power," said Israel's Ambassador to the

world body, Gilad Erdan.

Mr. Erdan said that Hamas escalated tensions due to internal Palestinian political manoeuvring after the Palestinian Authority President, Mahmud Abbas, delayed long-awaited elections.

Israel said on Sunday morning its "continuing

wave of strikes" had in the past 24 hours struck over 90 targets across Gaza, where the destruction of a building housing news media organisations sparked an international outcry.

In Gaza, the death toll kept rising as emergency teams worked to pull out bo-

dies from vast piles of smoking rubble and toppled buildings, as relatives wailed in horror and grief.

Israel's Army said that about 3,000 rockets had been fired from the coastal strip towards Israel – the highest ever – of which about 450 failed launches fell in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system had intercepted over 1,000 rockets, the Army said, in almost a week during which Israeli residential buildings have been hit, with over 280 people suffering injuries.

"The intensity of the conflict is something we have not seen before, with non-stop airstrikes in densely populated Gaza and rockets reaching big cities in Israel," said the International Committee of the Red Cross.

At least 58 children have lost their lives in Gaza, local health authorities said, more than 1,200 people have been wounded and entire buildings and city blocks reduced to rubble.

India calls for 'immediate de-escalation' of hostilities

We urge both sides to show extreme restraint, desist from actions that exacerbate tensions: Tirumurti

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

India called for an immediate de-escalation of the situation between Israel and Palestine at the first public United Nations Security Council meeting held since the current surge in hostilities between the two parties entered its seventh day, killing at least 149 people in Gaza and 10 in Israel, including many children. The virtual public meeting was held on Sunday after diplomats reached a compromise following U.S. objections to a

public meeting, Reuters reported.

"Immediate de-escalation is the need of the hour, so as to arrest any further slide towards the brink. We urge both sides to show extreme restraint, desist from actions that exacerbate tensions, and refrain from attempts to unilaterally change the existing status-quo, including in East Jerusalem and its neighbourhood," India's Permanent Representative and Ambassador to the UN, T.S. Tirumurti, told the Security Council on Sunday.

"The indiscriminate rocket firings from Gaza targeting the civilian population in Israel, which we condemn, and the retaliatory strikes into Gaza, have caused immense suffering and resulted in deaths," Mr. Tirumurti said, adding that India had lost one of its citizens, a care-giver in Ashkelon (Soumya Santosh, 30, from Kerala).

The trust deficit between Israel and Palestinian authorities was increasing, as there were no direct negotiations between the two, he said. "We believe that every

effort should be made to create conducive conditions for resumption of talks between Israel and Palestine," Mr. Tirumurti said.

The UN, Qatar and Egypt are trying to broker a ceasefire. Mr. Tirumurti said India had already voiced its concern over the violence in Jerusalem at closed-door meetings of the 15-member council held earlier this week (neither of which resulted in a joint statement).

"In both these meetings, we had expressed our deep concern over the violence in

Jerusalem, especially on Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount during the holy month of Ramadan [Ramzan], and about the possible eviction process in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, an area which is part of an arrangement facilitated by the UN," he said.

He said India supported the efforts of the Quartet (UN, U.S., EU and Russia) and others, and expressed India's support to the "just Palestinian cause" and its "unwavering" support for the two-state solution.

Iran press worried over poll turnout

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iranian newspapers voiced concern on Sunday about the potential turnout for next month's presidential poll, a day after candidate registration ended with several heavyweights joining the race.

The reformist press was particularly worried, arguing that a low turnout would favour the conservative camp as in legislative elections last year.

According to the election committee, close to 600 hopefuls including 40 women have registered for the June 18 vote to elect a successor to moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who is constitutionally barred from running for a third consecutive term.

But only a handful will be allowed to run after vetting by the Guardian Council, a conservative-dominated, unelected body in charge of overseeing elections.

According to the reformist Shargh daily, "various polls" show that "more than half" of eligible voters are expected to stay away.

The election is already widely viewed as a likely showdown between conservative Ali Larijani, a former parliament speaker, and ultraconservative judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi.

A record 57% of Iranian voters stayed away from the February 2020 legislative elections.

This was attributed to the disqualification of thousands of candidates, many of them reformists and moderates, as well as voter disappointment with the economy and Mr. Rouhani's performance.

The government-run Iran daily called for authorities to "guarantee the presence of candidates from (different) political orientations" to promote a "formidable turnout".

Seven die in Indonesia after selfie bid on boat

It flipped as people moved to one side

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JAKARTA

Seven Indonesians drowned after an overloaded boat capsized because of tourists attempting a selfie in a reservoir on Java island, police said Sunday.

The accident happened when all 20 passengers suddenly moved to the one side of the vessel to take a group photo on Saturday in the Boyolali regency, said Central Java police chief Ahmad Lutfi.

'Overcapacity'
"The cause of the accident was overcapacity," Mr. Lutfi told reporters.

"The 20 people took a selfie on the right side then the boat lost balance and flipped."

Police added that 11 people were rescued but seven

were found dead. Rescuers were searching for two people still missing.

Authorities said they will look into whether there was negligence by those managing the boat rides at the reservoir.

Lutfi said that the boat was helmed by a 13-year-old.

Boat accidents are common in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of around 17,000 islands, due to lax safety standards.

In April, rescuers were rushed to find 17 fishermen after two boats collided in West Java. Three were found dead and 13 were still missing when the search ended.

And in January last year, 10 people went missing after a boat carrying 20 migrant workers to neighbouring Malaysia capsized off the coast of Sumatra island.

Fighting resumes in southern Afghanistan

With the end of the Id ceasefire, Taliban fighters 'attack checkpoints on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KANDAHAR

Fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces resumed on Sunday in the restive southern province of Helmand, officials said, ending a three-day ceasefire agreed by the warring sides to mark the Id-ul-Fitr holiday.

Violence has soared as the U.S. military presses ahead with a plan to withdraw all of its troops by September, bringing an end to a 20-year military operation in Afghanistan.

"The fighting started early today and is still ongoing," Attaullah Afghan, head of the Helmand provincial council, told AFP as a three-day temporary truce ended late on Saturday.

He said Taliban fighters attacked security checkpoints on the outskirts of Lashkar

Gah, the capital of Helmand province, and some other districts.

'Don't blame us'

An Afghan Army spokesman in the south confirmed fighting had resumed, and the Helmand Governor's office said that 21 Taliban fighters had been killed so far.

"They (Afghan forces)

started the operation... do not put the blame on us," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP.

Washington has vowed to end America's longest war but missed a May 1 deadline to pull out, as agreed with the Taliban last year in return for security guarantees and a promise to launch talks with the Afghan

government.

President Joe Biden pushed back the date to September 11 – exactly two decades on from the terrorist attacks in the United States which led Washington to invade Afghanistan and oust the Taliban.

Tens of thousands of Afghans have been killed and millions have since been displaced by the conflict, which has seen a resurgent Taliban take hold of large swathes of the country.

Nishank Motwani, an independent Afghanistan expert based in Australia, said the Taliban viewed the American withdrawal as a win.

"It gives the insurgents a proclamation of victory, boos-kends their removal and eventual return to power, and signals that the end is in sight for the Afghan republic

in its current state," he said.

Government forces have continued to receive vital air support from U.S. warplanes, and there are concerns over whether they would be able to hold back the insurgents without Washington's help.

"It is now going to be very difficult for us to conduct operations," an Afghan army officer said.

"Our aircraft can't fly at night so the night operations are going to be difficult."

The truce was largely held during the Id holidays that ended on Saturday. The calm was, however, broken on Friday by a blast at a mosque on the outskirts of Kabul, which killed 12 people. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the blast, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadis groups.

Kurz expects to be charged but cleared in perjury case

Austrian Chancellor rules out resignation, if indicted

REUTERS
VIENNA

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz expects to be charged but eventually cleared in an investigation into whether he gave false testimony to a parliamentary commission, he said on Sunday, ruling out the idea of resigning if indicted.

The investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors, made public last week poses a stiff political challenge for the conservative Mr. Kurz, 34, who governs in coalition with the Greens.

Mr. Kurz has painted himself as the victim of opposition parties trying to trap him into saying something that could be construed as perjury before the commis-



Sebastian Kurz

sion, which is looking into possible corruption under his previous coalition with the far-right Freedom Party (FPO) which collapsed in 2019.

"After every word of mine on 58 pages (of testimony) is put on the scale, I certainly

expect a criminal complaint, that's right," he told the *Krone* newspaper in an interview, adding he had not yet been questioned by prosecutors.

But he said he was confident he would be exonerated in the case, which centres on whether he answered truthfully when asked about appointments to state holding company OBAG.

"I have spoken to numerous lawyers and several university professors. The tenor was always the same: no one can imagine that there will be a conviction here," he told the paper.

In a separate interview with the *Oesterreich* newspaper, he rejected the idea of stepping down if indicted.

Myanmar rebels say six dead in clashes

Unrest brews in Chin, where residents have formed an anti-junta defence force

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

Six opposition rebels have been killed after days of clashes in Myanmar, an anti-junta defence force made up of civilians said on Sunday, as Britain and the United States condemned the military's violence against civilians.

The country has been in uproar since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 coup, triggering a massive uprising which authorities have sought to quell with lethal force.

Some in the anti-junta movement have set up local militias armed with homemade weapons to protect their towns from security forces – which have killed at least 790 civilians according to a local monitoring group.

In the western state of Chin, the town of Mindat has emerged as a hotspot for un-

rest, where some residents have formed the Chinland Defence Force (CDF).

"Six members of our CDF who tried to protect the security of the people in Mindat attacked (junta forces) and sacrificed their lives for the national revolution," said a CDF statement on Sunday.

A spokesman also told AFP that over 10 have been wounded this week, while five Mindat residents were arrested by the military.

With mobile data blocked across the country, details about the fighting have been slow to come out, and on-the-ground verification is made harder as locals are fearful of retaliation.

The spokesman, who declined to be named, said CDF fighters set fire to several army trucks, destroying them, and ambushed reinforcement troops, while the military has attacked the town with artillery.

By Sunday, the CDF had retreated into the jungle, he said. "We will not stay any more in the town... but we will come back to attack soon," he said. "We only have home-made guns. This was not enough."

He added that residents remaining in Mindat – which has been under martial law since Thursday – were afraid to leave their homes for fear of being targeted by the military.

The United States and U.K. embassies in Myanmar sounded the alarm on Saturday on Mindat's unrest, calling for security forces to cease violence.



In unison: People rallying in support of the Chinland Defence Force, which has clashed with the junta, in Hpakant. • AFP

ASK US

AARATI KRISHNAN

Q. My father has received a sum of ₹8 lakh after retirement and he is adamant on keeping that sum as a fixed deposit in a public sector bank. The interest rates are very low. What other options can you suggest? An option that is more secure than share market and gives interest more than 5.25%.

SIDDARTHA SHETTY

A. Your father is not wrong in his decision to park his retirement proceeds in a safe avenue. If capital safety is his priority, he may have to make do with low rates in the current market situation. Exploring market-linked options like mutual funds can put his retirement proceeds at risk.

However, if he is keen on earning regular income, he can explore three options which would be as safe or even safer than public sector bank deposits while offering better rates. One, the post office Senior Citizens Savings Scheme, which offers quarterly interest payouts and has a five-year lock-in period. The scheme is central government-backed and therefore carries high safety.

The interest rate is announced at the beginning of every quarter, the current rate is 7.4% until June 30 2021. Up to ₹15 lakh can be parked per individual in this scheme. Two, he can invest in the 5-year post office time deposit or Monthly Income Account that offer 6.7% and 6.6% until June 30. Three, he can consider the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana, a pension scheme from LIC open only to senior citizens. The scheme currently offers interest at 7.4%, and allows up to ₹15 lakh to be invested with a 10-year lock-in period. All of these schemes are as safe as fixed deposits with the only minus being that they require money to be locked in for 5 or 10 years. The Senior Citizens Savings Scheme, however, allows early withdrawal after one year, with a penalty, if there are emergency needs. If your father needs liquidity, this should be his preferred option. Do ask him to act before June 30 2021 as the rates may change.

Q. I am 24 years old and working in the private sector. As my total income exceeds the amount not chargeable to tax, I want to invest some of my money. But I don't have a clear idea where to invest. I have heard about PPF, fixed deposits, SIPs and ELSS but not sure which to choose. Could you please help me?

THADDI SANTOSHI

A. Where and how you should invest your money should depend on your financial goals. Saving on taxes should not be your only goal, though once you decide on your goals you can consider tax-efficiency too to choose investment products. You may have many plans for the next 5-10 years of your life – taking a holiday, buying your parents something, getting a vehicle or pursuing higher education. All of these dreams will require money. You need to save and invest out of your current income to fulfil those dreams without having to borrow.

We suggest that before you look for investment options, map out your financial goals, with the time period by which you would like to achieve them. This will decide where you can invest. For goals within the next 1-3 years, you can simply consider recurring deposits with your bank. For 3 to 5-year goals, look at post office schemes like the 5-year deposit and the NSC. For goals beyond 7 years, you can consider SIPs in equity mutual funds. For very long-term, 15-year plus goals like retirement, there is the Public Provident Fund.

Having done the above exercise, you can make tax-efficient choices for each of the goals. As a young salary earner, you should be looking to maximise your Section 80C investments, which allow you to deduct up to ₹1.50 lakh from your annual income while calculating income tax. NSC, 5-year post office time deposits, PPF and SIPs in equity linked savings schemes are some options that can fit into your goals and also offer 80C tax breaks. Along with other investments, though, do invest in a health insurance plan for about ₹5 lakh to take care of any medical emergencies. Save about 6 months' worth of expenses in a fixed deposit to take care of other emergencies, like job loss. If you have dependents, it would also be good to buy a pure term insurance plan so that your nominees get a lump sum in the event of an unfortunate event happening to you.

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

For a life term of no regrets

In a pandemic, it is easy to rush into buying a life insurance policy. But a considered choice will help secure the future of dependants

SAJJA PRAVEEN CHOWDARY

In July last year, just as many others fearing the pandemic, Ashish (35), bought a term life insurance policy at ₹300 per month with a cover amount of ₹50 lakh to protect the financial future of his dependants that included his wife and two children. However, within a few days, he realised that while deciding on the cover amount, he did not take into consideration the home loan of ₹50 lakh he had to repay.

Fortunately, he got the cover amount enhanced to ₹1 crore as his insurer provided a grace pe-

riod of 30 days to make changes in the policy. Had Ashish not enhanced the coverage amount, his family would have not been able to meet even half of the expenses upon his demise.

Similarly, four years ago, Bengaluru resident Nishant (45) bought a term life insurance with a ₹2 crore cover for future financial protection of his family that included his 42-year-old wife and two children aged 19 and 17.

While buying the policy, Mr. Nishant had cho-

sen the right life cover, but did not think through as to how his family would manage the corpus of ₹2 crore upon his demise.

Unfortunately, Mr. Nishant passed away due to a terminal illness last year and his family received ₹2 crore from the insurance company. On the advice of near and dear ones, his wife invested the entire amount in a shopping complex, which was coming up nearby, but is nowhere near completion now. She is stuck in a limbo on the expenses that are to come up in the next two months for the children – post graduation in the U.S.

Remember core goal

In both scenarios, the core objective of a term life insurance plan – financial protection of the dependants in case of the sudden demise of the breadwinner – could have been better served. While the intent of buying the term life insurance was right, the decision had been taken without evaluating and comparing certain important aspects.

While planning to buy a term life insurance plan, it is important that you do two things – one is to review and calculate the financial needs of your family in the coming years; and second, to compare the plan

that you opt for with those available in the market, to choose the most suitable one.

For the first, consider the financial needs of your family and the life cover that you need. Your financial status today may not be the same tomorrow, it will only increase with time.

Similarly, the expenses of your family are sure to rise in the years to come. When deciding on the cover amount, there are a few things that must be considered including the current family expenses, liabilities such as home or car loan, one-time expenses like children's education and marriage, and retirement planning of the spouse.

Part lump sum options

For the second, select the best plan from those available in the market. For example, Mr. Nishant's family would have been in a better position had he compared and chosen a plan that had terminal illness benefit, wherein Mr. Nishant could have received the ₹2 crore death cover months before his death.

He could have allocated the money for the right financial instruments had he chosen a plan



When deciding on the cover amount, one should consider the current family expenses, liabilities such as home or car loan, and one-time expenses like children's education and marriage

whether the family should be given 'a lump sum ₹2 crore on death' or '₹50 lakh on death and ₹15 lakh every year for the next 15 years'.

Another important aspect that demands your due consideration while buying a term life insurance plan is coverage tenure – the number of years you want your policy to protect you. Ideally, you must buy a term plan by factoring in the earning capacity or retirement age. This is since you would have taken care of your children's education or marriage, and post-retirement planning by then. The other aspect is the coverages your plan provides, such as terminal illness and waiver of premium in case of disability.

One of the strong pillars of comprehensive financial planning is protecting the future of your dependants through a term life insurance policy. In the past few months, there has been an increase in the sale of term plans across all customer segments. It is true that the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of financial protection in the minds of consumers in a way like never before. While it is good that more and more people are rushing towards buying term plans to provide financial protection to their dependants, it is equally important to buy the right product after comparing the various plans available, especially amid growing concerns around the second wave of the pandemic which is considered more dangerous than the first wave.

(The writer is Business Head – Term Life Insurance, PolicyBazaar.com)

IMAGE: GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK. IMAGING: J.A. PREMKUMAR

COVER NOTE: COVID COVER

Beyond all suffering, tears and loss

Battles are waged against the pandemic every day. Won or lost, one has to foot the bill. A health cover is a boon in these testing times

K. NITYA KALYANI

The most optimistic hearts have been broken by the second wave, and the stoic are shaken.

Society struggles to get out of the pit rushing to the aid of a neighbour, stranger or a loved one to procure oxygen, medication or a hospital bed. Battles are waged every day. Won or lost, at the end of it are the bills.

What is the situation if one has to make a COVID-19 health insurance claim?

If you have a hospitalisation policy, it will pay for your COVID-19 treatment as per policy terms. The disappointment is that many non-medical expenses, like PPE kits and sanitisation costs, that characterise COVID treatment protocol are not payable.

However, the Insurance

Regulatory and Development Authority of India has announced that treatment at home, provided it is on a doctor's recommendation, is covered, as also treatment at makeshift or temporary hospitals, including hotels with COVID-care facilities, which have come up in response to the surge in cases.

These are pandemic-specific measures and they don't apply to isolation which is a precaution, not a treatment.

Cashless treatment

Coming to cashless treatment, yes, you are entitled to cashless treatment at network hospitals, as usual, including at makeshift or temporary hospitals put up by the network hospital.

Another pandemic instruction to insurers has been that they should sanction cashless

claim requests within 60 minutes.

You should hold your insurer and TPA to these norms. If you find resistance, please send a written complaint to the grievance officer of your insurance company – their contact information and instructions are available on the IRDAI website (www.irdai.gov.in) under the link 'Grievances'.

You can escalate the complaint through IRDAI's call centre and the Integrated Grievances Management System, both of which are available in the same 'Grievances' section.

If treatment is at a non-network hospital, you should pay your hospital bills and seek reimbursement from the insurer by going through the claims process.

Claims for treatment costs at such facilities fol-

low the same norms depending on whether they are put up by a network or a non-network hospital.

A network hospital means one that is empanelled by your insurance company and is part of its Preferred Provider Network which is usually countrywide. Insurers have arrived at pricing matrices for treatments at these hospitals and have put in place systems for documentation and payments.

Your insurer will provide you with a list of the network hospitals along with your policy. Or you can get it from your agent, the company's website or your Third-Party Administrator (Health Services) or TPA.

Inform your TPA

The TPA is an important link in your claims pro-

cess. It is to the TPA you first intimate your impending hospitalisation. In case of emergency hospitalisations, you can inform them at the earliest with the policy details and other information they need.

Usually, your health insurance identity card will suffice to start the process. The smart thing to do is to ensure it is handy and keep a scanned copy of it on your phone.

Document check

Ensure you have all relevant documents such as doctors' prescriptions and every document and bill from the hospital including the discharge summary, payment receipts, medicine bills - ensure the patient's name appears on each bill, it's easy to forget amid anxiety - test requisitions, results, bills and receipts, bills for consumables like PPE kits, gloves and masks. This applies especially if you are not going the cashless route. And in the melee, don't forget to renew your health insu-

rance policy.

COVID-19 treatment at government facilities is free and some States have started announcing free treatment at private hospitals also, for beneficiaries of mass insurance programmes.

If you know any such case where somebody has succumbed to the virus, you can advise the family to make a life insurance claim under schemes such as the Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, which has a sum assured of ₹2 lakh with an automatic premium debit of ₹330 through the linked bank account – usually the Jan Dhan Account on June 1 every year.

Similarly remind them to claim under any employer schemes and EPFO Group insurance schemes as also group policies under their bank accounts, credit cards or even mobile phone connections.

With entire families facing financial devastation, every little bit helps.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)



Flip side: Many non-medical expenses like PPE kits and sanitisation costs are not payable. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"You know what? We might have to close our fixed deposit to keep our recurring deposit going!"

PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs) Loan amount- 5 lakh Tenure - 5 years	EMI (Rs) Loan amount- 1 lakh Tenure - 5 years	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
HDFC Bank	10.50-21.00	10,747-13,527	2,149-2,705	Upto 2.5% (Max Rs 25,000)
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Upto 1.5% (Max Rs 15,000)
Bank of Baroda	10.00-15.60	10,624-12,053	2,125-2,411	Rs 1,000-10,000
Axis Bank	10.49-21.00	11,122-13,527	2,224-2,705	1.5%-2%
ICICI Bank	10.50-19.00	10,747-12,970	2,149-2,594	Upto 2.25%
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Upto 2.75%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.75-24.00*	10,809-14,384	2,162-2,877	Upto 2.5%
Bank of India	9.35-12.35	10,464-11,211	2,093-2,242	Upto 2% (Max Rs 10,000)
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322	Upto 1%
Federal Bank	10.49-17.99	10,744-12,694	2,149-2,539	Upto 3%
Union Bank of India	8.90-13.00	10,355-11,377	2,071-2,275	Upto 0.5%
South Indian Bank	10.85-14.40	10,834-11,738	2,167-2,348	2%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.55-12.90**	10,513-11,351	2,103-2,270	Upto 1%
Indian Overseas Bank	12.05	11,135	2,227	Upto 0.75%
Dhanlaxmi Bank	11.90-15.70	11,097-12,079	2,219-2,416	Upto 2.5% (Min Rs 1,250)

*Digital Personal loan starting at 10.50% p.a.

** Interest rate of 8.55% p.a. offered to Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. Staff

NEW CAR LOAN-RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Bank	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs) Loan amount-5 lakh Tenure-5 years	Processing fee (% of loan amount)

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TV PICKS

Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 12.15 a.m. (Tuesday)

IN BRIEF



Michael Hussey leaves for home, finally

CHENNAI Having recovered from COVID-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey left for Australia on Sunday via Doha. Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for COVID-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday. PTI



Archer doubtful for New Zealand Test series

LONDON England's star-pacer Jofra Archer's participation in the upcoming Test series against New Zealand was thrown into doubt after his long-standing elbow injury resurfaced during Sussex's county championship game against Kent. The 26-year-old fast bowler has a history of elbow injuries that saw him miss two Tests against India and the currently-suspended IPL earlier this year as well as games in South Africa at the start of 2020. PTI



Australian rider Jack Miller made it back-to-back wins on his Ducati with a dramatic victory in a rain-strewn French MotoGP at Le Mans on Sunday. Miller, who won the last race in Spain, finished ahead of French pair Johann Zarco, also on a Ducati, and Fabio Quartararo, on a Yamaha, who takes over the lead in the championship. AFP

TOKYO para-athletics team selection in June NEW DELHI The Indian para-athletics team for the Tokyo Paralympic Games in August-September will be picked during trials to be held here on June 15 and 16, the national governing body has said. Only those who have a valid International Paralympic Committee (IPC) licence card and have achieved Minimum Qualification Standard for the Games are eligible. They should bring COVID-19 negative reports taken 72 hours prior to the trials, a statement from the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) said. PTI

India likely to tour Australia in September

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September.

India, which has played only one series amid the COVID-19 pandemic, tours England next month to play its first Test in seven years besides three ODIs and as many T20s.

Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint during a podcast that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20 Internationals.

"We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said on No Balls: The Cricket Podcast, hosted by Kate Cross and Alex Hartley.

The BCCI had also approved the tour of Australia ahead of the World Cup in New Zealand next year.

Swiatek 'double bagels' Pliskova

The teenager runs away with the title, without losing a game, in just 45 minutes

ITALIAN OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
ROME

Polish teenager Iga Swiatek crushed Czech ninth seed Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-0 to win the Italian Open on Sunday.

The 19-year-old reigning French Open champion took just 45 minutes to 'double bagel' the 2019 Rome winner two weeks before she opens her title defence in Roland Garros.

Swiatek, ranked 15, claimed her third WTA title having followed her Roland Garros success with a win in Adelaide in January.

Overwhelmed

"I'm really, really happy," said an emotional Swiatek. "I'm overwhelmed, at the beginning of this tournament I would not have dreamed of winning it."

Swiatek swept through the first set in just 20 minutes, with Pliskova winning just four points.

Pliskova tried to fight back



Smacking success: Iga Swiatek warmed up for the defence of her French Open crown with a ruthless demolition of Karolina Pliskova in the final. ■ AFP

in the third game of the second set, holding a double break to go 2-1, but the Polish player ruthlessly snuffed out any return.

"I will just quickly forget about today," said Pliskova,

the World No. 9, who was playing in her third consecutive Rome final. The former World No. 1 retired injured in last year's final to Romania's Simona Halep.

"I've had some great

matches here, in the past I did well."

Djokovic makes it

Meanwhile on Saturday, defending champion and

World No. 1 Novak Djokovic

battled past Italian Lorenzo Sonego 6-3, 6-7(5), 6-2 to set up a clash with nine-time winner Rafael Nadal for the sixth time in the Italian Open final.

Djokovic had two match points in the 12th game of the second set of his semifinal before Sonego forced a third set to the delight of the home crowd in the Foro Italico.

The Serb saved three break points in the first game of the third set, coming back from 0-40 before powering towards his 11th Rome final.

"I think I bounced back very well after the second set and 0-40, maybe if he started with a break up in the third it would be different," said Djokovic.

"I've only myself to blame for not closing the match in the second set, I could have and should have."

The results: Women: Final: Iga

Swiatek bt Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-0.

Men: Semifinal: Novak Djokovic

bt Lorenzo Sonego 6-3, 6-7(5), 6-2.



Sachin Tendulkar. ■ FILE PHOTO

Battled anxiety for many years, says Tendulkar

But the pre-game quirks were important part of his preparation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar on Sunday said he battled anxiety for a major part of his 24-year-old career before realising that his pre-game quirks were an important part of his preparation.

Talking about mental health, Tendulkar said acceptability is the key.

"Over period of time I realised that besides preparing physically for a game, you have to prepare yourself mentally also. In my mind the match started long before I entered the ground. The anxiety levels were very high," Tendulkar said in an interaction organised by Unacademy.

"Making tea, ironing my clothes also helped me prepare for the game. I would pack my bag the day before the game, my brother taught me all of it and it became a habit," said the 48-year-old.

night, I would start doing something to keep my mind comfortable."

That "something" included shadow batting, watching TV and playing video games into the wee hours of the day. Even making his morning cup of tea helped him prepare for the game.

"Making tea, ironing my clothes also helped me prepare for the game. I would pack my bag the day before the game, my brother taught me all of it and it became a habit," said the 48-year-old.

77.

The lanky bowler, with his trademark moustache, also served as coach and a BCCI match referee. His last assignment was coach of Saurashtra's Under-23 season in 2019-20.

"It is an immense loss to the world of cricket. Rajendra Sir was one of the finest men I have met.

"I am fortunate to have played many matches with him as our head coach, manager and mentor," said Jaydev Shah, the Saurashtra Cricket Association president who is the longest-serving captain in First Class cricket.

77.

relying on VAR for assistance.

The results: Premier League: Crystal Palace 3 (Benteke 32, Zaha 76, Mitchell 84) bt Aston Villa 2 (McGinn 17, El Ghazi 34); Tottenham 2 (Kane 45, Hojbjerg 62) bt Wolves 0; West Brom 1 (Robson-Kanu 15) lost to Liverpool 2 (Salah 33, Alisson 90+5).

Serie A: Fiorentina 0 lost to Napoli 2 (Insigne 56, Venuti 67-og); Benevento 1 (Lapadula 13) drew with Crotone 1 (Simy 90+3); Udinese 0 lost to Sampdoria 1 (Quagliarella 88-og).

Saturday: Premier League: Southampton 3 (Adams 27, Tella 60, Walcott 82) bt Fulham 1 (Carvalho 75); Brighton 1 (Welbeck 84) drew with West Ham 1 (Benrahma 87).

Serie A: Juventus 3 (Ronaldo 24, Cuadrado 45+3, 88-og) bt Inter 2 (Lukaku 35-og, Chiellini 83-og); Roma 2 (Mkhitarian 42, Pedro 78) bt Lazio 0.

Will always remember Kohli as the best: Paine



Admiration: Tim Paine says Virat Kohli is a player you would love to have in your team. ■ FILE PHOTO

I wake up each day stronger than before



T. Natarajan... on the road to recovery. ■ FILE PHOTO

Under. "For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world," Paine said.

"He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good.

"But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, he is certainly someone I will always remember," he added.

Last year Paine had said Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me".

Goalkeeper Alisson keeps Liverpool in with a chance

West Ham's Champions League hopes takes a hit; Juventus hangs on for another day

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES
WEST BROMWICH

Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker scored a 95th minute winner as the Reds beat West Brom 2-1 on Sunday to keep a place in next season's Champions League in their own hands.

Jurgen Klopp's men would have needed favours from Leicester and Chelsea in their final two games of the campaign had they failed to beat the already relegated Baggies.

But the Brazilian was sent forward for a corner deep into stoppage time and headed home Trent Alexander-Arnold's delivery.

Liverpool moved one point behind fourth-placed



Saviour: Goalkeeper Alisson gives Liverpool a lifeline with this glancing headed goal. ■ REUTERS

Chelsea and three behind Leicester.

West Ham's faint hope of scraping Champions League qualification was left hanging by a thread after it need-



ed a late strike from Said Benrahma to draw at Brighton 0-1.

Substitute Benrahma rifled home his first goal for the club with just three mi-

notes to go, leaving the Hammers five points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea on only two fixtures remaining.

Juventus kept alive its Champions League qualification hopes by winning at Serie A champion Inter Milan 3-2. Juan Cuadrado scored twice for Juventus, converting a clinching penalty kick in the 88th minute. Juventus rose to fourth ahead of its final game at Bologna next weekend.

Antonio Conte's Inter squad had already ended Juventus' record run of nine straight Serie A titles, and it could have ended his former team's chances of reaching the Champions League.

Referee Gianpaolo Calvarese had a busy game, awarding three penalties and

relying on VAR for assistance.

The results: Premier League: Crystal Palace 3 (Benteke 32, Zaha 76, Mitchell 84) bt Aston Villa 2 (McGinn 17, El Ghazi 34); Tottenham 2 (Kane 45, Hojberg 62) bt Wolves 0; West Brom 1 (Robson-Kanu 15) lost to Liverpool 2 (Salah 33, Alisson 90+5).

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Lovlina finds Pune camp useful



Lovlina Borgohain. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Having taken the first jab of the COVID-19 vaccine, Lovlina feels good.

"It is a massive boost to be here in Pune and focus on training for the Olympics in a safe environment. It was good to get vaccinated and take another step in defeating the virus. Although we still need to take maximum precautions and stay safe, mentally it helped a lot."

She missed out on a long stint in Europe, having contracted the infection, but got some exposure when she competed in the Boxam event in Spain in March last. The lanky boxer is now keen to make the most of the Asian championships in UAE later this month.

"Before a mega event like the Olympics, it is very important to test our mettle. The Asian championships is a perfect platform for putting our preparations to test against the best boxers from Asia. This will also boost our confidence and help us improve our game," said Lovlina.

Good sparring partner
"Arundhati is a promising boxer and, like me, she likes to box from a distance. It will be good to have sparring sessions with her. It will help me in my preparation."

Kobe Bryant inducted into Hall of Fame

Wife Vanessa speaks movingly about his love for the game, players and fans

BASKETBALL

REUTERS
UNCASVILLE (CONNECTICUT)

Thank you: Michael Jordan kisses Vanessa Bryant after she accepted her late husband Kobe Bryant's enshrinement into the Hall of Fame. ■ AP

The 18-time All-Star joined the NBA straight out of high school and would go on to enjoy one of the most decorated careers in the history of the sport, claiming NBA Finals MVP honours twice and earning the adoration of fans for his larger-than-life persona.

Bryant, the fourth-highest scorer in league history with 33,643 points, grew up idolising the five-time league

MVP Jordan and the two superstars' careers overlapped by a handful of years.

"Kobe would thank all of the people who helped him get here, including the people that doubted him and the people who worked against him and told him he couldn't attain his goals ... after all, he proved you wrong," said Vanessa, prompting a grin from Jordan.

Duncan also honoured

Other inductees in the 2020 class included five-time NBA champion and three-time NBA Finals MVP Tim Duncan, 10-time Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) All-Star and four-time Olympic gold medalist Tamika Catchings, and 15-time NBA All-Star Kevin Garnett.

The ceremony at the Mohegan Sun Resort & Casino was postponed from August due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

IN BRIEF

**Zidane to leave Real at season end: reports**

MADRID
Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has told his players he will leave the LaLiga club at the end of the season, Spanish media reported late on Saturday. Radio station Onda Cero said Zidane informed the players about his decision before last weekend's draw at home with Sevilla. Newspaper Marca said he addressed the team on May 8, a day before that game. **REUTERS**

North Korea withdraws from WC qualifiers

SEOUL
The Asian Football Confederation has announced North Korea has pulled out of qualification for the 2022 World Cup. Though no official reason has been given for pulling out of next month's qualifiers in Goyang, south of Seoul, South Korean media has reported that it is because of concerns over COVID-19.

Shubhankar finishes T-34; Richard Bland wins

WISHLAW (UK)
Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma ended tied 34th with a total score of 284, after returning his best card of the week at 3-under 69 at the Betfred British Masters here. Richard Bland claimed an emotional maiden European Tour victory on his 478th appearance after the veteran overcame young Italian Guido Migliozzi in a play-off to win the title after both had finished on 13-under 275. **PTI**

Veteran motorsports official Anand Swadi passes away

MUMBAI
Anand Swadi, a leading figure in the Indian motorsports community and a former FMSCI president, has passed away. He was 97. 'Dada', as he was lovingly called, was instrumental in the formation of Maharashtra Automotive Sports Association (MASA).

Coach creating match situations for me: Sindhu**P.V. Sindhu. ■ FILE PHOTO****PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI
The lack of competitions before the Olympics is a major concern for Indian shuttlers but not so much for P.V. Sindhu, who trusts her Korean coach Park Tae Sang to create match situations for her in training itself.

Owing to the raging COVID-19 pandemic, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) has been forced to cancel the remaining three Olympic qualifiers in India, Malaysia and Singapore.

Asked if the cancellations will affect her preparations, Sindhu said: "Well, we were thinking that Singapore will be the last event before Olympics but now we don't have another option, so I am playing matches against different players and my coach Park is trying to create match situations for me in training."

"Different players have different styles like Tai Tzu (Ying) or Ratchanok (Intanon) have different styles of play but Park is there to guide me, to prepare me for it," Sindhu said.

"Obviously, we will be playing each other after a few months and there will be something new in our games, so I will have to prepare for that," she added.

The 25-year-old endorsed BWF's decision to cancel the events, saying life is more important than sports.

CM YK

Shankar wins the Big 12 meet again

The National high jump record holder comes close to his best with a 2.28m effort

ATHLETICS**STAN RAYAN****KOCHI**

A couple of months ago, Tejaswin Shankar made it clear that his next big goal was to jump 2.33m, and it did not matter whether the Olympics happened or not. He explained that the height, being the Olympic entry standard, would make him happy even if the Tokyo Games are not held.

The 22-year-old from Delhi, representing Kansas State University, was close to his best on Saturday while winning the high jump gold in the Big 12 outdoor track and field championships at Manhattan, USA.

He was just a centimetre below his Indian men's record as he retained the Big 12 title with 2.28m. He had won the Big 12 gold in 2019 earlier.

Opening at 2.06m, Shankar needed his third jump to clear 2.25m but sailed over 2.28 with his first try. He attempted 2.31m twice and the Tokyo height of 2.33 once, but could not clear them.

The 2.28m will place him

in the joint 12th spot in the World Athletics' high jump top list this year and could put him in a decent rung in the Road to Tokyo rankings in the next few days.

There are 32 spots in the high jump in Tokyo and 14



Nearly there! Tejaswin Shankar, who claimed the Big 12 gold in 2019, was just a centimetre below his Indian men's record. ■ TWITTER/KSTATETFXC

athletes have already made the cut through the entry standard.

Third title this year

It was Shankar's third title this year – he won the Jim Click Shootout in Arizona

with 2.19m on April 10 and the John Jacobs Invitational with 2.25 in Oklahoma later that month.

His next event could be the NCAA outdoor championships in Oregon in early June.

Shankar, who is on a scholarship at the KSU, missed out the three Indian Grand Prix legs and the Federation Cup in Patiala in February and March.

But now while the other Indian athletes are unable to travel for training and competitions abroad, he is on good ground competing in the US with the Olympics just over two months away.

The next two national meets in India, the Grand Prix-4 and the Inter-State Nationals, are scheduled to be held in Bengaluru in June but that look doubtful with the rising COVID-19 cases in the country.

Balachandran Nair passes away

Was a former coach of the Indian team

BADMINTON**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT****THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

Former India badminton coach S. Balachandran Nair (69) passed away here on Sunday due to COVID-19. He is survived by his wife and daughters Priya and Prija, who are former badminton players.

Balachandran, who was under treatment for Multiple Myeloma for some time, tested positive two weeks ago and died at the Government Medical College.

In a coaching career spanning more than three decades, Balachandran trained prominent players like U. Vimal Kumar, Sanave Thomas, V. Diju, Thomas Kurien, Fatima Nazreen, and Ayyappan Krishnan.

He was also the coach of

**S. Balachandran Nair.**

the Indian team for more than a decade and had accompanied squads to various tournaments around the world.

Known to be a tough disciplinarian, Balachandran was a pioneer in introducing innovative fitness drills.

Leicester claims maiden FA Cup

Tielemans' strike the difference in the final against Chelsea



On top: Leicester's players are over the moon after lifting the FA Cup on Saturday. ■ AP

FOOTBALL**ASSOCIATED PRESS****LONDON**

Youri Tielemans was preparing for the FA Cup final when he received a text message with a clear instruction: Aim for the top corner.

When the ball landed at the Leicester midfielder's feet, 63 minutes into the 140th final, a powerful shot from 30 metres was aimed just where he had been advised.

It was a sensational way to win the FA Cup for the first time in Leicester's 137-year history, 1-0 against Champions League finalist Chelsea.

Return of fans

Even sweeter than the strike was Leicester being able to celebrate in front of its own fans as Wembley Stadium hosted England's biggest

crowd – more than 20,000 who tested negative for the coronavirus – in 14 months.

"Wow, what a finish," Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel said. "I didn't dare to celebrate because there's always VAR."

Not that time. Instead, the video assistant review came to Leicester's rescue in the 89th minute to prevent Wes Morgan from a moment of heartache.

Marginal offside

The 37-year-old club captain had been on the pitch for only seven minutes when he accidentally deflected in former teammate Ben Chilwell's cross. But one of those marginal offsides that so irritate players and fans was detected and the roars of Leicester fans were even louder than the moment Tielemans scored.

The result: Chelsea 0 lost to Leicester City 1 (Tielemans 63).

the first in 1949 at the old Wembley – Leicester's name is finally etched onto the cup of world football's oldest competition.

The team from central England is a champion again, five years after Morgan collected the Premier League trophy.

In a game of few chances, Thiago Silva's slack pass allowed Leicester to score. Ayoze Perez intercepted the clearance and Luke Thomas passed across to the unmarked Tielemans to drive forward before striking past goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga.

Saves from Schmeichel as much as VAR helped to preserve the lead; he used one hand to push Chilwell's shot onto the post in the 78th and blocked Mason Mount's volley in the 87th.

The result: Chelsea 0 lost to Leicester City 1 (Tielemans 63).

Rangers complete Scottish Premiership undefeated



Invincibles: Rangers emulated Arsenal's unbeaten title-winning run when it claimed the Scottish Premiership without losing a match. ■ AP

all 18 games at home, conceding only four goals.

Rangers allowed only 13 goals all season, a new British record that eclipsed the 15 by Jose Mourinho's Chelsea in 2004-05.

The Aberdeen result was also Rangers' 26th clean sheet, a Scottish record.

In the three years it's been enjoyable. But we've had to suffer at times and had some setbacks. But we never lost belief that we'd one day get to this moment.

STEVEN GERRARD**Manager**

Milwaukee Bucks dominates Miami Heat

James back with a bang as Lakers overcome Pacers

NBA**REUTERS****MILWAUKEE**

In what could be a playoff preview, Khris Middleton posted 21 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, leading host Milwaukee Bucks past Miami Heat 122-108 on Saturday night.

LeBron James scored seven consecutive points over a one-minute stretch late in the fourth quarter to help Milwaukee defeat host Indiana.

James, playing his first game since May 2 and just his third since March 20, finished with 24 points, a team-high eight assists and



Intense action: Miami Heat's Trevor Ariza and Milwaukee Bucks' Khris Middleton go after a loose ball. ■ AP

seven rebounds. Julius Randle collected his sixth triple-double of the season as helped host New York remain in the mix for the fourth seed in the Eastern Conference with a win over Charlotte.

Milwaukee, which is 11-3

Conference, while the Heat (39-32) fell to sixth place.

Kyrie Irving scored 22 points as Brooklyn got a significant contribution from its reserves and pulled away down the stretch for a victory over visiting Chicago.

Super trio

The game marked the first time Brooklyn's three stars of Irving, James Harden and Kevin Durant played in the same game since Feb. 13.

It was only the eighth time they played together this season and the trio were on the floor together for about 16 minutes.

The results: Brooklyn 105 bt Chicago 91; LA Lakers 122 bt Indiana 115; New York 118 bt Charlotte 109 (OT); Phoenix 140 bt San Antonio 103; Boston 124 bt Minnesota 108; Milwaukee 122 bt Miami 108.

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